



# The Society for the Study of Social Problems

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July 28, 2015

Dear Governors and Legislators:

The murders of nine members of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC on June 17, 2015 is surely a tragedy, but Governor Nikki Haley's courageous statement of June 22, 2015 to take steps to remove one of the longest and most enduring symbols of what President Obama has called our nation's "original sin," is praiseworthy. On behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), one of the oldest and most respected social science organizations in the country, we would like to commend Governor Haley, and the other governors and legislators who have advocated removing the confederate flag and urge those opposed to its removal to consider seriously and humanely what that flag represents to so many people in the country, but especially African Americans.

The "Stars and Bars" is a stark reminder to many across the nation of the divisions that remain today based on the pain and terror wrought first by slavery and then by the Jim Crow apartheid system. The symbolism of the confederate flag helps to maintain hate, anger, and discrimination that continue to prevail in our society. The Confederate Flag reminds not just African Americans but all citizens of how change will remain elusive if we continue to hold on to symbols of our past that dishonor our country through the perpetuation of systematic racism. Simply stated, the War Between the States supposedly ended over 150 years ago. Allowing the Confederate Flag to fly at government buildings today prevents that war from fully ending. Individuals who wish to fly the flag outside of their homes and on their trucks are free to do so; although we believe that the Confederate flag belongs only in a museum.

By removing one of the most divisive symbols of our nation's history, we create the space in which the southern states' heritage and tradition become a vanguard for change, representing a new reality for our history, ancestry, and legacy. Let generations to come realize that the United States of America can change hearts and minds by fully retiring symbols of such division.

Sincerely,

Marlese Durr, Ph.D., President  
The Society for the Study of Social Problems

Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D., Executive Officer  
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Nancy Mezey, Ph.D., Vice-President  
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