A SOUTHERN CROSS TO BEAR

The Confederate battle flag had nothing whatever to do with the gruesome murders Dylann Roof committed in the Emanuel AME Zion church in Charleston, South Carolina.

But Gov. Nikki Haley is right to seek its removal from a monument to Confederate soldiers on the grounds of the state capitol. Conservative CNN commentator Erick Erickson explains why:

"I have a number of black friends and I do not know any of them who would feel comfortable coming into my house if I were flying the Confederate battle flag," he said. "If a Christian is to love his neighbor, he cannot fly a flag that so many of his neighbors associate with the defense of slavery."

And, as Gov. Haley noted, "the hate-filled murderer" and others of his ilk have appropriated the Southern Cross as a symbol of white supremacy. It no longer matters that for many Southerners who followed it into battle, it wasn't.

On April 12, 1961, I raised the Confederate battle flag on the flagstaff of my elementary school in Lake Delton, Wis. (I'd just read a children's book about the Army of Northern Virginia. I thought being a Rebel was cool.)

That stunt earned me a trip to the principal's office, and the first discussion in my young life about slavery. I've remained a Civil War buff. But ever since, all my heroes have worn blue.

There's no question slavery was the cause of the Civil War. Some Confederates, such as Nathan Bedford Forrest, were vile racist murderers. But others weren't fighting to protect the South's "peculiar institution."

Robert E. Lee was more critical of slavery than were Union generals U.S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. Lee was against secession. He fought for the South because he could not fight against Virginia, his home state.

Patrick Cleburne, the "Stonewall of the West," was denied the promotion warranted by his exploits on the battlefield because he urged the Confederate Congress to free the slaves. Despite rejection of Cleburne's plea, several thousand blacks served in the Confederate Army.

We should all thank God the South lost. But it is false and malicious to assert all Confederates were virulent racists, akin to Nazis.

Because left wing journalists are more left wing than journalists, they want you to think public displays of the Southern Cross are a problem for Republicans. So few mention the monument to Confederate soldiers was placed on the capitol grounds by Gov. Fritz Hollings, a Democrat; fewer

that when Gov. David Beasely, a Republican, wanted to remove it, Democrats in the legislature opposed him.

In 2001, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, a Republican, unilaterally removed the Confederate flag from the grounds of the state capitol in Tallahassee.

Mississippi, Arkansas and Georgia incorporate Confederate symbols in their state flags. In 1987, Gov. Bill Clinton signed a bill affirming the pride of place in the Arkansas flag for the star representing the Confederacy. In 1992, posters and buttons for Clinton-Gore featured the Southern Cross.

It's time to remove the Southern Cross from the state flag, said the Speaker of the Mississippi House, a Republican.

A disproportionate number of mass shootings are committed by white racists, leftists imply.

But the massacre in Charleston is only the 2nd of 70 mass shootings since 1982 (four or more victims) committed by a white supremacist. (Another murdered six Sikhs in Oak Creek, Wis, in 2012.) There've been three racially motivated mass killings in which whites were gunned down by a black man.

Race hustlers such as Deray McKesson of Black Lives Matter descended on Charleston like vultures on carrion. South Carolinians - black and white - told them to go home.

I was for drawing and quartering the creep, so I was shamed when relatives of his victims forgave Dylann Roof. The Holy Spirit moves mightily in the Emanuel AME Zion church.

Defacing Confederate monuments, slandering white Southerners, promoting racial tension for political gain won't prevent mass shootings. By coming together in love, South Carolinians, black and white, showed us what may.

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