

Willkommen

Amana has been welcoming guests to its community for decades; literally there are big signs as you drive into town doing just that. People come here from all over to enjoy the various specialty shops, the artisans, the restaurants and the ever-popular festivals and events. For those of us who live here, these seven villages that make up the Amana Colonies offer much more; like wonderful neighbors, a great school district, and Grant Wood scenery out our windows. Amana is a small town, but in the best ways possible, so I was saddened to see a confederate flag flying at a neighbor's house in the next village.

I understand the first amendment and the person's right to fly the flag but I wondered about their motivation and what they were trying to convey by displaying it loud and proud from their front porch. There's only one reason I think it would be acceptable and it comes with a caveat; if that person was a direct descendant of a soldier who died in the Civil War fighting for the South.

Mothers in the South and the North gave their sons to war. History will be the judge in any war, especially a civil one, but their service and their sacrifice should be honored and respected, as with all our veterans. I'm not talking about honoring their mission, but their humanity. But in the best case scenario (honoring a soldier) there's still a stipulation, and that's what the confederate flag stands for.

Nearly a hundred years after the Civil War, the confederate flag was used to fight against civil rights for blacks. Once again it was a symbol of racism and inequality that brought about the ugliness of the KKK, cross-burnings, lynching's and the Jim Crow South. It scarred an entire generation of blacks in the South, who were so oppressed they were forced to rise up against it. Bless those that did. Bigotry is such an obnoxious thing, usually born from ignorance.

I'd like to think we've come a long way since then but the confederate flag is still being used to divide, again by white supremacy groups, who are vile at best, chanting their hateful rhetoric, only this time instead of hoods they have tiki torches and they express the angry looks on their faces. Sad young men. They're very afraid of not being seen, of not being relevant, so they chant louder in their quest to be heard.

Maybe we should reach out to them and say...we hear you, what is that you're afraid of?  
Why to boost yourself must you take from someone else?

Iowa is snow white when it comes to diversity, but we've always been a state that has fought for equal rights for all. What's that saying...until there's justice for all, there is no justice. So you don't have to be a person of color to be offended by the confederate flag; it's an equal-opportunity offender.

I went to the internet and typed in: What to do if your neighbor flies a confederate flag? I'm not sure what jewel of wisdom I was expecting; almost all said...move on, get a life, and leave it alone. First amendment and personal property rights aside, they argued that anyone who displayed the confederate flag had brass....boldness, and was unlikely to take it down because you find it offensive. In fact, it might embolden them or start an argument you don't want to start. Indeed I don't want to start an argument; this is a friendly little community....which is why it's so sad to see a symbol that so many find hateful.

To be fair, with election season upon us, I'm not crazy about political signs going up in every other yard. Politics these days is almost as divisive as a civil war and as soon as you proclaim your alliance half your neighbors have to unfriend you....not sure why you'd advertise. But a political sign is different than a hate symbol. As neighbors we should be able to talk to each other, even about our differences, with civility and respect even if our politicians can't.

As for the neighbor with the confederate flag; I don't know who you are and I don't want to judge you or see anyone else judge you for the flag you fly. If the flag represents pride in your heritage or a fallen soldier from your ancestry, then by all means you should honor it. My father-in-law was a vet from WWII who recently died. At the funeral my husband was presented with a WWII flag from the coffin. The family decided to frame it and display it along with his uniform. It's also a great way to preserve the flag. In that spirit, I would be happy to have your flag framed for indoor display. My gift, one veteran family to another.

If you're wondering why, it's because I've lived here for decades, Amana is my home. I've always felt welcome here and I want everyone else who comes here or lives here to feel the same way, including you.