

A box that shouldn't be checked

This is getting ridiculous. At a time when Americans are at each other's throats and the world is becoming increasingly dangerous, Joe Biden is putting up flags celebrating homosexuality. Today I read that newly approved Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, is going to carry out yet another reversal of Trump policy and allow a flag (called the 'Pride flag') that represents homosexual lifestyles to fly over U.S. embassies during the so-called, "Pride Month."

According to a recent report in Breitbart.com, Blinken was quoted as saying, "We've seen violence directed at LGBTQI people around the world increase, and so I think the United States playing the role that it should be playing in standing up for and defending the rights of LGBTQI people is something that the Department is going to take on and take on, immediately. Raising the *Pride flag* is one way to outright show LGBTQ solidarity." Blinken also confirmed that he has plans to approve an envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTQ persons, a position created by Barack Obama in 2015 that wasn't filled during the Trump Administration.

This has gone too far. We banned the Confederate flag from flying over military bases. We don't fly the 'Black Power' flag or the 'Gadsden flag,' nor do we raise the 'Jolly Roger' over our embassies. Old Glory used to be enough to indicate that on the ground below was built a house of diplomacy that represented equality, opportunity and hope. We never treated our flagpoles as a highway billboard for the latest special interest group to pressure us to display their messages. That begs the question, "Why do homosexuals get special treatment when there are many other groups that comprise far greater numbers that get pushed into the background?"

One group in particular that deserves more recognition is the unborn, those killed in the womb, fetuses that are discarded by abortionists each and every year and condoned by our laws. Where is their flag, the acknowledgement of their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? And what about the chronically weak and sickly, those who suffer in silence with dementia, with cancer or lesser afflictions? Abused women and children? Then there are the victims of religious persecution around the world. Where's their flag on American embassies?

If the alphabet soup acronym of homosexuals want to party hearty during 'their month,' let them. If they want to put on passion plays that speak to their issues, let them. If they want to wear pink hats or sport body piercings or tattoos, let them, but their flag should not be flying over our nation's embassies. I say that as a retired member of the diplomatic service that proudly served my country - and ALL of its people - in one of those buildings in five countries for twenty years.

Though I'm sure I will be criticized for the following comparison, I make it to illustrate one simple point...we have to stop pandering to special interest groups, especially those who want to liken their current situation to persecutions that no longer take place in America. In the early 1800s and 1900s we saw a massive influx of foreigners to the United States. Immigrants from all over the world were landing on our shores. All were hoping for a better life, a more prosperous life, one that afforded them the unique opportunities that only a country founded on individual liberty could offer. When these millions saw our American flag for the first time, many wept with gratitude. One family was mine that came to the U.S. in 1862, from a then impoverished Scandinavian country, Norway.

The journey by ship from Norway to England to America was long and fraught with hardship and danger. The family included my great, great grandfather and his wife and children and his aging father who was a widower. Because of his age and his lack of kin in his small farming community they couldn't leave the old man behind, so he braved the voyage along with everybody else.

All on that ship in 1862 were hoping for a better life. Some were merchants; some were farmers and some may have even been homosexuals. I don't know. They did have one common wish and that was to be independent of government's long arm, to eke out an existence for themselves and to embrace 'choice' as a guiding principle. In 2000, I journeyed back to Norway to attend a huge family reunion. I brought with me an American flag that had flown over the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. along with a letter from the American Ambassador which I presented to the Mayor of the small village of Nissedal.

Earlier that day, we, the American visitors and our local relatives, watched a special 'emigrants farewell play' being performed that honored those who left for the 'new world.' I am sure that some members of that 200-person audience practiced alternative sexual lifestyles, but no one was taking their names. All, however, were touched by the power of the personal courage displayed by the emigrants that gave up everything they owned to crowd into a sailing ship that would forever remove them from their homeland, their relatives and their friends.

I mention this typical American story of the nineteenth century to underscore that we are all united under one banner that best expresses what we as Americans stand for. That is the freedom to be ourselves, to make our own choices (and to live with them), to practice our religion or no religion at all and to love the people we choose. We shouldn't be expecting our government to give us some real estate on an official flagpole to fly our special interest group's symbol either here or abroad.

There is only one symbol that should occupy that space, and it has 13 bold stripes and fifty proud stars on it. If you disagree, that is your right - whether you practice what you preach or choose to keep it to yourself. All I ask is that you don't impose your beliefs on the rest of us.

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