



So, I'm pulling into the driveway after work one day, and I spot a white truck off to my left. The layers of brown-black dirt are caked around the bottom. The back window of the truck has a full-sized Confederate Flag painted across, and two smaller versions are on the bumper.

I tried to imagine whose house the truck belonged to: it couldn't be my neighbor's to the right; they're black. It was parked nowhere near my neighbor's on the other side, but they were white. Did I live next to racists? Wait a minute, I thought. Is a person automatically a racist if they have the Confederate Flag on their car?

I try not to prejudge. When people make assumptions about Atheists-like, we assuming hate God, or that we have no morals-I get infuriated. So, why was I prejudging this person, and his oft-used car?

Then I got scared. The image of the confederate flag has always scared me. I got lost once and saw a Confederate Flag above a door. I was finding my way back home, in Mountlake Terrace, WA (not the most diverse neighborhood in the late 80's).

Because I was raised in the north, where the confederate flag has ALWAYS carried negative overtones, that flag anywhere near me or my family has always meant that I should be on alert. When I see the confederate flag, images of burning crosses and people in white clothes ravage my mind; I'm scared of people who have pure hate in their heart.

As I sat peering through my car window in the driveway, another thought emerges: am I being irrational?

The confederate flag is also seen by many as a symbol of southern pride in the Midwest; they argue that it has nothing to do with racism. The flag, according to 'the southern pride' doctrine means love of the south; a love of the rich traditions and customs of the south.

I think that's a cop-out. Whether you love the south or not, the Confederate Flag is a represents people who were satisfied with the enslaving of humans.

But I'm new to the south; I'm a Yankee in the worse sense. A tree huggin, recycling, soy-bean eating, flaming liberal! I am completely biased on the subject of the Confederate Flag.

When we talk about the Confederate Flag in our house, I try to put my bias aside and tell what we know to be true: The Confederate Flag was used by the KKK to shield malice and hate; the north invaded the south-- murdering, raping and pillaging southern states like they were sworn enemies, not our fellow Americans--how is the south supposed to recover from that? There are Americans today, born and raised in the south, whose families know these facts like it was 1865. Southern people were given no recompense for the atrocities committed by the north.

Now, I agree with why Lincoln went to war. Slavery was wrong, and we needed our country to stay together. At the same time, I must be fair. Anyone who values the truth must honor the pain and suffering of our Southern ancestors. Until we make amends and acknowledge these truths, and have them in school textbooks, the confederate flag will continue to hold the vitriolic emotion of culture that feels stripped of its honor.

Am I right? It's so hard to be an Atheist in the Heartland!