

Title:

Colors of the American Flag

Word Count:

778

Summary:

The colors of a flag are more than pretty decoration. They are often meaningful symbolism.

Keywords:

colors, flag, Continental Congress, Betsy Ross, red white blue, symbolism, stars stripes, U.S., American

Article Body:

I would imagine that even before the ink on the Declaration of Independence had dried, the sentences: "Are we gonna have a flag? We gotta have a flag! Britain has a flag!" were echoed by members of the Continental Congress. But then, a flag is important. It is a symbol representing a group and their beliefs -- a means of identification.

It has long been reported that in May of 1776, Betsy Ross sewed the first version of the flag we use today. The American flag has, of course, gone through several design transformations since then, as states were added to the nation and stars were added to the design.

Symbolism Abounding

Unique and appealing as the design is, I think our flag is also full of symbolism. To me, the red stripes indicate courage, blood and suffering. The white stripes mean truth, purity and open-mindedness. The word stripes, itself, is associated with oppressions, struggles, punishments and lessons learned. An enduring flag represents a state of surviving or coming-of-age the hard way.

To me, the stars on our flag represent goals, dreams and the future -- what we all aim for, in our own way -- the infinite, the stars. The color blue is usually identified with peace, tranquility and spirituality. Hopefully, our dreams and future will be surrounded by peace and spirituality, just as the stars on the flag are surrounded by the blue.

Our flag is very much like our country. It is woven together by many threads,

just as our nation is woven together by many nationalities, religions, philosophies and personalities.

The flag needs to be held up and supported to wave free, just as our country needs support to continue to remain as free as it has been. Any little breeze can cause a reaction. A harsh wind can make the flag angrily whip around on its foundation. But, even when it becomes weathered and torn, hanging on by only a few strands, as long as it is still connected to its foundation, it will continue to hang on and wave freely. It's the wind blowing against the flag that keeps it waving, that allows the stars (as well as the stripes) to be seen. It's the winds of properly-channeled protest and criticism brought against a nation that keeps it changing and shaping and thus, prevents it from sinking into a false euphoria or apathy...or worse.

Not as Simple as it Seems

The flag is not black and white, and neither are most issues involving it. You will note, that there is one more red stripe than white, showing that there will be more pain and struggle than there will be purity and truth.

An amendment ("H.J. Res.10") giving Congress the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag, has been up for vote several times. However, "desecration" means more than being burned or shredded in anger and protest. Through the popular sale of interpreted versions of our flag that's been placed on items ranging from paper notebooks and jewelry, to shirts and table cloths, it's been proven that the flag has a marketing appeal as well as a patriotic one. But Title 4, Section 8-d, 8-g and 8-i of the U.S. Code (rules and regulations) forbids wearing it or placing an image of it on anything that is meant to be thrown away. The code also says that it is not be be used for advertising purposes. Therefore, it is always interesting to see how "desecration" is interpreted.

An Implied Pledge?

Any flag represents a nation or group's future, as well as it's past. So, before you burn it or praise it, condemn it or pledge allegiance to it, you should take another look at it and really see it for what it represents.

Sometimes I think that our nation's "pledge" has gone to another rectangular object...a green one. With all the crime and corruption in this country, it's as if the "Pledge of Allegiance" has been subconsciously rewritten to:

<blockquote><i>I pledge allegiance to the dollar

of the United States of America.

And to the buying power for which it stands.

One cartel, under the stock exchange, insatiable,

with affluence and greed for the fortunate.</i></blockquote>

May Our Flag Always Wave Free!

Since the 9-11 tragedy, the red, white and blue American flag has been seen on more cars and flying from more buildings than ever. Maybe we should continue to wave our flag even more and be ever cautious to see that it continues to represent the freedom, justice and integrity for which it has always been known.