

Why Do They Hate Dixie?

“Howard Dean wants the white trash vote,” wrote *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer in mockery of the Vermonter. “[T]hat’s clearly what [Dean]

meant when he said he wanted the votes of ‘guys with Confederate flags in their pickup trucks.’”

After Dean was savaged by Al Sharpton, who called the Confederate flag an “American swastika,” Krauthammer was rhapsodic. His humiliation serves Dean right, Krauthammer chortled. He should never have pandered to Southern “yahoos” and “rebel-yelling racist red-neck[s].”

What is it in the wiring of these neocons that they so loathe the white Southerners who cherish the monuments, men, and memories of the Lost Cause?

Last December, Krauthammer, David Frum, and Jonah Goldberg squabbled noisily over who was first to join the media mob that lynched Trent Lott for his tribute to Senator Thurmond on Strom’s 100th birthday. When Lott lost his leadership post, these neocons reveled.

Why the Hollywood Left hates Dixie is easy to understand. It is conservative, Christian, traditionalist, hostile to the cultural revolution. But why do the neocons? After all, the folks Krauthammer calls “white trash,” are the most reliable conservative voters in America, God-and-country people. They enlist in disproportionate numbers in the military and die in disproportionate numbers in America’s wars.

The neocons are pro-Israel. So, too, are these folks who believe in standing by Israel because the Bible tells them so. Yet, when it comes to Southerners who revere the Confederate flag, neocons like Krauthammer echo that *Washing-*

ton Post writer who dismissed white Southern Christians as “poor, uneducated and easy to command.”

Yet, even the *Post* did not use the venom Krauthammer employed. Indeed, I never heard George Wallace or Lester Maddox, whom I came to know late in their lives, use the kind of language on political foes that Krauthammer uses on people he doesn’t even know.

A point of personal privilege: I have family roots in the South, in Mississippi. When the Civil War came, Cyrus Baldwin enlisted and did not survive Vicksburg. William Buchanan of Okolona, who would marry Baldwin’s daughter, fought at Atlanta and was captured by General Sherman. William Baldwin Buchanan was the name given to my father and by him to my late brother.

As a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, I have been to their gatherings. I spoke at the 2001 SCV convention in Lafayette, La. The Military Order of the Stars and Bars presented me with a battle flag and a wooden canteen like the ones my ancestors carried.

Has Krauthammer been to one of these meetings? Has he any knowledge of these people he calls “white trash”?

Discussing the Dean-flag issue, one *New York Times* columnist wrote of the campaign “to remove the Stars and Bars from the top of the South Carolina Statehouse.” But it was not the Stars and Bars, first flag of the Confederate States of America, that flew over that statehouse. It was the battle flag of the Confederate army, with St. Andrew’s Cross

on it, on which, tradition holds, the apostle Andrew was crucified.

And that flag atop the statehouse flew beneath Old Glory. What were South Carolinians saying by putting it there? Only this: “We are proud of the bravery of our grandfathers who fought under this blood-stained banner, but we are Americans and the Stars and Stripes represents our country now and forever.”

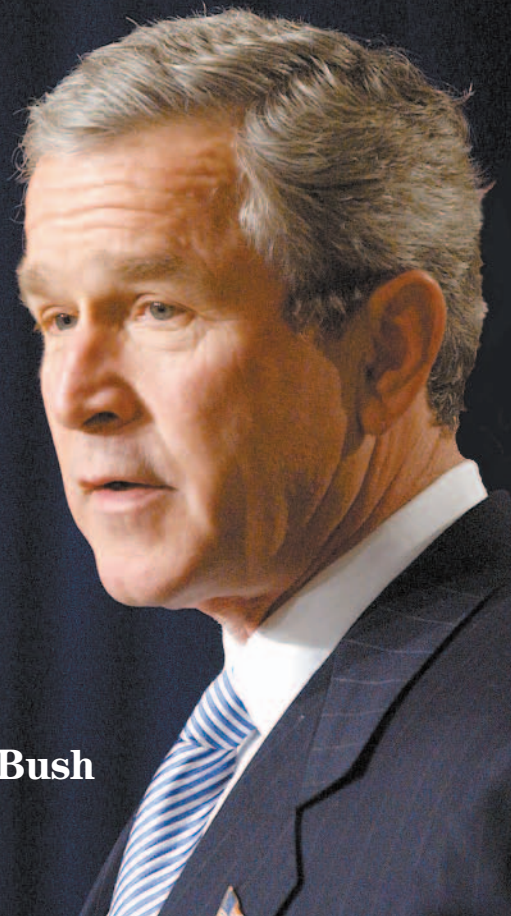
What is wrong with that?

To Krauthammer the battle flag is a racist symbol. And, yes, it has been used by racists to insult and intimidate. But so, too, has the Christian cross when it was burned on hillsides. And so, too, has the American flag.

These symbols are abused because they have power. But to Southern kids who put battle-flag decals on book bags, and their fathers who put replicas on cars and trucks, it does not mean they hate anyone. It means: “We love our Southern heritage and we shall never forget our ancestors who fought and died under this flag.”

Late in life, Joshua Chamberlain, the Union hero who won the Medal of Honor for holding Little Round Top when Lee sent the Texans to turn Meade’s flank on the second day at Gettysburg, said that whenever he saw that flag, it recalled to him the indomitable courage of the men who had fought under it. At re-enactments of Civil War battles, high-school football games, and NASCAR races, that flag is ubiquitous across the South.

If Krauthammer and the neocons really believe the only folks who cherish this symbol are “white trash” and “yahoos,” that tells us more about them than it does about the South, of which they know nothing. ■



Righteous Anger

The Conservative Case Against George W. Bush

By Doug Bandow

SOME LIBERALS ADMIT that they hate President George W. Bush. Many conservatives say they are appalled at this phenomenon. Indeed, some of them believe any criticism of the president to be akin to treason. So much for the political tone in Washington.

American politics have never been for the faint-hearted. Even George Washington suffered some public abuse, and presidential campaigns involving revolutionary luminaries John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were vitriolic. After the Civil War, Republican candidates routinely waved the "bloody shirt"; one GOP stalwart denounced the Democrats as the party of "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion."

The GOP did not treat Harry Truman with kid gloves, and Democrats never let fairness impede their attacks on Barry Goldwater in 1964. Richard Nixon was widely reviled on the Left. Some fringe partisans expressed sorrow that John Hinckley failed in his assassination attempt against Ronald Reagan. And then there was Bill Clinton. Some Republicans saw him as a drug-dealing murderer whose wife killed family friend Vincent Foster.

Now Jonathan Chait of the *New Republic* says simply, "I hate President George W. Bush." Not one to hold back, he explains, "You decide Bush is a dullard lacking any moral constraints in his pursuit of partisan gain, loyal to no principle save the comfort of the very rich, unburdened by any thoughtful consideration of the national interest, and a man who, on those occasions when he actually does make a correct decision, does so almost by accident." More concisely, charges James Traub in the *New York Times Magazine*, "George Bush is a craven, lazy, hypocritical nitwit."

Chait's recent essay has triggered a spate of conservative responses. Bush is wonderful, liberals are irrational, and the whole thing is bad for America. These are rather hilarious arguments coming from conservatives. For instance, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks calls the phenomenon of the Bush haters a "core threat to democracy." Yet, as Brooks acknowledges, the Clinton years were also well populated with haters. Brooks now regrets having not spoken out more clearly against the latter.

Better late than never, perhaps, but his conversion looks awfully convenient, as does that of other conservative Bush defenders. Hatred of Bill Clinton never made sense. In contrast, anger was fully justified.

I never understood why conservatives invested so much emotion in Clinton. He was a charming and bright but enormously flawed, highly ambitious man of few principles. That warranted criticism, not hatred. But I joined in early and often. During his first summer of discontent I urged Clinton's critics to "pile on" as opposition mounted to his policies. Over the years there was a moral imperative to take aim in the target-rich environment: the attempted government takeover of the health-care system, the pork-barrel stimulus package, the use of jackboot tactics against critics of federal policies, the endless claims of victimization, the unjustified Kosovo war, the sale of administration access for campaign contributions, the special-interest Whitewater and cattle-futures pay-offs, the sustained efforts to cover up such abuses, and the presidential perjury in federal court proceedings.