

That Offensive Flag

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Some people take offense when they see others flying the Betsy Ross flag.

Other people take offense when they hear people deriding the Betsy Ross flag as a symbol of America's birth as a slave-holding nation.

When you're deciding what to be offended by, it may be worthwhile to consider some historical facts. If you are in the group of people offended by the Betsy Ross flag, you might be interested to know that it wasn't the first American Flag. Each of the thirteen colonies had their own flag and the revolutionary army had its own flag. But all that was before the colonies formed themselves into a nation.

Some dates:

1770 - One of the first armed conflicts occurred in what is known as the Boston Massacre.

1775 - The Battle of Lexington was the first pitched battle of the revolution. Battles were fought under a flag known as the Grand Union flag.

It took almost a year to write, but the Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4th, 1776.

America is still not a nation, but a coalition of colonists.

It wasn't until September 3rd of 1783 that Britain recognized the United States as an independent nation.

But it was back in 1777 that the Congress adopted the resolution which described our flag. As has become rather typical, congress neglected to include instructions on the placement of the stars, mentioning only the bars and the number of stars in a field of blue. As a result, the first flags were created by local entrepreneurs and an unofficial contest began. The first American Flag of the U.S. Navy was the Francis Hopkins flag. The Betsy Ross flag was eventually chosen by Executive Order of President Washington.

Back to the source of those who take offense at our history. Back in 1770 when all this started, there were thirteen colonies involved. There were others, but they remained loyal to the crown and are now known as Canada. At the time, the practice of holding slaves was universal. American Indians practiced it and many Americans are still unaware today that many American Indians were taken back to England as slaves to the British. Slavery had been practiced for all of recorded history. The first nation to

completely forbid slavery was Vermont. At the time, Vermont was caught in between the future Canadian colonies and the more resistant ones to the south.

By the time of the Declaration of Independence, of the thirteen colonies which would form the Union, five had aligned with Vermont's ideology and had also forbidden the practice. The colonies argued over this ideological division and it almost prevented the formation of the nation.

One possible outcome of the debate would have been the erection of two new nations. The northern one, consisting of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, would forbid slavery and the southern one, consisting of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, would allow it. By the time the Constitution was written, Maine had divided itself from Massachusetts and was also in the camp of forbidding the practice.

But that didn't happen. What did happen was that a compromise was reached and a single union was formed in 1789. While we celebrate the birth of the United States as being on July 4th 1776, the term of labor was nineteen years: 1770 to 1789. It would take time for the infant nation to grow and mature. More than 70 years would pass before Abolitionists achieved the upper hand in setting the ideals for the nation. The birth of the United States can be seen as that of a nation born into the practice of slavery or it can be seen as the birth of the first great nation to eliminate slavery.

Either way, were it not born at all, slavery might continue to this day, as it does in many other parts of the world, now more than 240 years later.

In many ways, the birth of America was also the birth of the movement to end slavery.

REFERENCE:

<https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/american-revolution-history>