*RESOLUTION # (XXX)*

**A RESOLUTION TO REQUEST THAT THE ARKANSAS STATE LEGISLATURE REMOVE ALL REFERENCES TO THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA ON THE ARKANSAS STATE FLAG BY REDEFINING THE CONFEDERATE STAR TO THE UNITED STATES STAR AND THAT IT DO SO BY ADOPTING ARKANSAS HOUSE BILL 1736[[1]](#endnote-1)**

Submitted by Bret Schulte, Associate Professor, School of Journalism and Strategic Media;

Michael Pierce, Associate Professor, Department of History

Author(s): Will Teague, GPSC Research Council Chair

**WHEREAS**,the Arkansas State Flag currently has four blue stars that surround the word “ARKANSAS” with a single star positioned above the state’s name that commemorates the state’s membership in the Confederate States of America (CSA);[[2]](#endnote-2)

**WHEREAS,** commemorating membership in the former CSA is degrading to African Americans and non-African Americans alike in the state as the Civil War was fought over states’ rights to own African Americans as property and to deny them citizenship, basic human rights, and dignity;

1. The Declaration of Clauses of Seceding States uses the words “slave” or “slavery” 83 times. Comprised of statements made by the legislatures of Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, each state made it plainly clear they abandoned the United States of America in favor of the maintenance of slavery. As the Mississippi legislature candidly stated, “our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery – the greatest material interest of the world.”[[3]](#endnote-3)
2. The Constitution of the Confederate States of America uses the words “slave” or “slavery” 10 times. In article 1, section 9 the CSA constitution states that no “law denying or impairing the right of property in negro slaves shall be passed.” The document makes it clear that African Americans were to be considered property by using that word in the same sentence as “slave” 3 times.[[4]](#endnote-4)
3. The Arkansas state constitution drafted after it joined the CSA in 1861 uses the words “slave” or “slavery” 7 times. In article 7, section 3 the document reads “the General Assembly shall have no power to pass laws for the emancipation of slaves.”[[5]](#endnote-5)

**WHEREAS,** the Confederate star is an insult to the legacy of the thousands of Arkansans that remained loyal to the United States and fought in its armies and to those that created resistance movements that resulted in being hunted and killed by Confederates;[[6]](#endnote-6)

**WHEREAS,** the state flag design was first adopted in 1913 and contained to reference to or commemoration of the Confederacy;[[7]](#endnote-7)

**WHEREAS**, the star commemorating the state’s membership in the CSA was added to the flag ten years later in 1923, and nearly five decades after the end of the Civil War and the dissolution of the CSA,[[8]](#endnote-8) and therefore, cannot be part of the Reconstruction Era or a reconciliation effort; furthermore, the star’s meaning was re-confirmed in 1987 when then Governor Bill Clinton signed Act 116;[[9]](#endnote-9)

**WHEREAS,** the star’s initial adoption was at a time of significant racial strife and hatred both in the state and the nation;

1. In 1915 the second iteration of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was born in part due to the commercial success of the film *Birth of a Nation* which depicted the organization as heroic and African American men as bestial, violent, and a menace to white women*.[[10]](#endnote-10)*
2. In 1919, the state of Arkansas experienced and subsequently attempted to minimize to the greatest extent possible and at all levels of government one of the worst race massacres in American history when black sharecroppers, some of which were veterans of World War I, were slaughtered by a white mob in Elaine, Arkansas, after attempting to unionize in order to profit from their crops and escape from the peonage system imposed upon them by the white minority of Phillips County.[[11]](#endnote-11)
3. In the 1920s the state of Arkansas witnessed at least 22 lynchings of black men, many of which were the results of unproven accusations of speaking to or acting indecently toward white women. Two of these lynchings occurred the year the state legislature added a commemoration of the CSA to the state flag.[[12]](#endnote-12)
4. In the early 1920s the Arkansas KKK first formed in Little Rock and had 7800 members at its peak.[[13]](#endnote-13)
5. In the 1920s KKK rallies attracted hundreds and thousands in Arkansas, including a rally of 1800 men in Poinsett County in 1922 and between 3500 and 5000 men in the same county in 1923.[[14]](#endnote-14)
6. In the election of 1922, the Klan successfully elected KKK members for four state representative seats and the state senate seat from Pulaski County (Little Rock). [[15]](#endnote-15)
7. In 1923 the Women of the KKK was founded in Little Rock. By the end of that year it had spread to all 48 states.[[16]](#endnote-16)
8. In 1924 two other KKK organizations were formed in Little Rock and Arkadelphia.[[17]](#endnote-17)

**WHEREAS,** the star’s adoption also came while the wrongly accused African Americans of the Elaine, Arkansas, race massacre languished in prison in 1923;[[18]](#endnote-18)

**WHEREAS,** the star’s adoption was pushed by a Pulaski County state congressman, Neil Bohlinger, a known member of the KKK;[[19]](#endnote-19)

**WHEREAS,** evidence demonstrates that any symbol or representation of Confederate icons in the state of Arkansas may be viewed as a symbol of violence and oppression of African Americans and other minority groups;

1. Commemorations in the form of statues, flag design, street names, bridges, parks, schools, etc., proliferated during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras in order to serve as a reminder to African Americans of their subordination in the community and the nation.[[20]](#endnote-20)
2. In the 1920s the State of Arkansas erected at least 6 monuments to and created 3 other commemorations of the Confederacy. Before 1900, the state only had three total tributes to the CSA. Since 1900 the state has created a total of 64 commemorations to the CSA.[[21]](#endnote-21)
3. In 1957 the Little Rock 9 were harassed by white Arkansans that displayed Confederate flags while screaming obscenities and racial slurs at African American children that only wished to attend school. Eight of those students are alive today and have provided oral histories documenting their experiences, emphasizing both the racism and violence they endured.[[22]](#endnote-22)
4. In 1994 a KKK rally was held on the steps of the Arkansas State Capitol. A Confederate flag was flown at that rally. [[23]](#endnote-23)
5. The current head of the KKK has an office in Harrison, Arkansas. The entrance to his office features multiple Confederate flags, and he has bought billboards that read “Diversity is a code word for #whitegenocide”.[[24]](#endnote-24)
6. At Bikes, Blues, and BBQ in Fayetteville in 2017 the Confederate flag was sold by vendors alongside swastikas and Nazi SS merchandise.[[25]](#endnote-25)
7. The KKK is a designated hate group that continues to exist and fly the Confederate flag in Arkansas today.[[26]](#endnote-26)

**WHEREAS**, former CSA states have set a recent precedent for the removal of the Confederate star by removing CSA symbols from publicly owned places and objects;

1. In July 2015, South Carolina removed the Confederate flag from statehouse grounds after a white supremacist, Dylan Roof, committed mass murder of African Americans attending a church service.[[27]](#endnote-27)
2. In October 2015, Confederate Boulevard in Little Rock, Arkansas, was renamed. The mayor of that city noted that “This debate should only make us stronger and more tolerant of one another. Let’s hope we can all go forward.”[[28]](#endnote-28)
3. In March 2017, Arkansas decoupled Robert E Lee Day from Martin Luther King Jr Day. When signing the bill Governor Asa Hutchinson commented, “This is an education bill in which the discussion educated each of us, and we learned that history needs to be viewed not just from our own lens, but through the eyes and experiences of others.”[[29]](#endnote-29)
4. In June 2020, the city of Little Rock, Arkansas, removed a Confederate monument. The mayor said that the statue “was erected during the United Confederate Veterans Reunion in 1911, a period of rampant segregation, inequality, and oppressive Jim Crow laws. It does not represent the values of our city today nor the diverse citizenry who stand for unity and justice for all.”[[30]](#endnote-30)
5. In June 2020, Mississippi removed the Confederate flag from its state flag design.[[31]](#endnote-31)

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** because the confederacy existed for the sole purpose of perpetuating the subjugation and enslavement of african americans; because the star insults the legacy of the arkansans that never left the united states of america and died defending it; because the star was added at a time of racial violence and animosity in both arkansas and the nation; because the star was added by a state government run in part by members of the kkk; because there are still citizens of this state that possess a living memory of the racism associated with the confederate flag; because it is categorically undeniable that the kkk proudly flies the confederate flag in commemoration of the confederate states of america and its policies of white supremacy, the graduate-professional student congress of the university of arkansas finds the state flag’s commemoration of the confederacy to be exclusionary, divisive, and morally reprehensible; furthermore, the graduate-professional student congress finds the secretary of state website’s declaration that the flag is “a proud banner that flies for all arkansans,” to be culturally insensitive, ahistorical, and patently false.[[32]](#endnote-32)

**THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED,** the graduate-professional student congress requests in the name of historical accuracy, human dignity, racial reconciliation, inclusivity, and mutual respect that the arkansas state legislature adopt house bill 1736 so that the confederate states of america is no longer represented by any component of the state flag, that the star commemorating arkansas’s membership in the confederacy will be redefined to instead commemorate the state’s membership in the united of states of america, and the current star designated to the united states will instead represent the native american nations that once held jurisdiction over the state’s territory so that the flag can indeed serve as a proud banner for all arkansans.

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

Vote Count: Aye \_ Nay \_ Abstentions

Legislation Status: Passed Failed \_ Other

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Rachel Slank, President Pro Tempore Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

James DiLoreto-Hill, GPSC President Date



Figure 1: The blue star above the word “ARKANSAS” was added in 1923 to commemorate Arkansas’s membership in the Confederate States of America.

From left to right, the three blue stars on the bottom currently represent the nations that have held jurisdiction over Arkansas: France, Spain, and the United States.

1. Text of Arkansas House Bill 1736 as it was proposed in March of 2019 can be found here: <https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Bills/Document?type=pdf&chamber=HB&source=Bills&bill=1736&ddBienniumSession=2019%2F2019R> Last Accessed: July 2, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. See Figure 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Civil War Primary Sources, “The Declaration of Causes of Seceding States,”, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/declaration-causes-seceding-states> Last Accessed: June 21, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. “Constitution of the Confederate States of America.” <https://www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/selections/confed/trans.html> Last Accessed: June 21, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. “1861 Arkansas Constitution,” Arkansas Secession Convention. <https://digitalheritage.arkansas.gov/constitutions/4/> Last Accessed: June 21, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Jeannie M Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002, 183 – 184; Thomas A DeBlack, “Civil War through Reconstruction, 1861 through 1874,” December 11, 2018 <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/civil-war-through-reconstruction-1861-through-1874-388/> Last Accessed July 3, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Arkansas Secretary of State John Thurston, “The Story of the Arkansas Flag,” <https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/education/arkansas-history/history-of-the-flag/story-of-the-flag#:~:text=The%20twenty%2Dfive%20stars%20mean,and%20Michigan%20to%20the%20Union.> Last Accessed: June 21, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Igor Bobic, “As Governor, Bill Clinton Kept ‘Confederate’ Star on the Arkansas Flag,” *Huffpost*, June 22, 2015. <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bill-clinton-arkansas-confederate_n_7638542> Last Accessed July 3, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Foner, Eric & John A Garraty, eds., *The Readers Companion to American History*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991, 625 – 626. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Stockley, *Blood in Their Eyes*. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Brent E Riffel, “Lynching,” *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/lynching-346/> Last Accessed: June 21, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Dianne Dentice, “Ku Klux Klan (after 1900),” *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas,* <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/ku-klux-klan-2755/> Last Accessed, June 22, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Whayne, *Arkansas,* 310. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Charles K Alexander, “White Robes in Politics: The Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, 1922 – 1924,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 1963. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Jacqueline Froelich, “Women’s Klan Rises in Arkansas,” July 26, 2017. <https://www.ualrpublicradio.org/post/womens-klan-rises-arkansas> Last Accessed: June 22, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Dianne Dentice, “Ku Klux Klan (after 1900),” *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas,* <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/ku-klux-klan-2755/> Last Accessed, June 22, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Grif Stockley, *Blood in Their Eyes*: *The Elaine Race Massacres of 1919,* Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Pres, 2001. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Steve Brawner, “A Facebook star and a star on the flag,” March 13, 2019. Arkansas Secretary of State John Thurston, “The Story of the Arkansas Flag,” <https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/education/arkansas-history/history-of-the-flag/story-of-the-flag#:~:text=The%20twenty%2Dfive%20stars%20mean,and%20Michigan%20to%20the%20Union.> Last Accessed: June 21, 2020. Last Accessed: July 1, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Miles Park, “Confederate Statues Were Built to Further A ‘White Supremacist Future.,’” August 20, 2017. [https://www.npr.org/2017/08/20/544266880/Confederate-statues-were-built-to-further-a-white-supremacist-future](https://www.npr.org/2017/08/20/544266880/confederate-statues-were-built-to-further-a-white-supremacist-future) Last Accessed: June 21, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. “Whose Heritage: Public Symbols of the Confederacy,” Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1W4H2qa2THM1ni53QYZftGob_k_Bf9HreFAtCERfjCIU/edit?pli=1#gid=1205021846> Last Accessed: June 21, 2020; It should be noted that in 2015 and 2017 the state of Arkansas removed two such commemorations of the CSA by renaming a street in Little Rock and by decoupling Robert E Lee Day from Martin Luther King Jr Day. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. “Oral history clips,” National Park Service, Little Rock Central High School, April 10, 2015. <https://www.nps.gov/chsc/learn/historyculture/oral-history.htm> Last Accessed: July 2, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. “Ku Klux Klan Rally,” *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas,* <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/media/ku-klux-klan-2499/> Last Accessed: June 22, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Bret Schulte, “The Alt-Right of the Ozarks,” April 3, 2017. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2017/04/what-harrison-arkansas-fight-with-the-kkk-says-about-the-alt-right.html> Last Accessed: June 22, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Leslie Newell Peacock, “Swastikas, SS bolts, Confederate flags: Biker wares in Fayetteville,” September 22, 2017. [https://arktimes.com/arkansas-blog/2017/09/22/swastikas-ss-bolts-Confederate-flags-biker-wares-in-fayetteville](https://arktimes.com/arkansas-blog/2017/09/22/swastikas-ss-bolts-confederate-flags-biker-wares-in-fayetteville) Last Accessed: June 22, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Southern Poverty Law Center, “Hate Map by State,” <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map/by-state> Last Accessed June 22, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Stephanie McCrummen and Elahe Izadi, “Confederate flag comes down on South Carolina’s statehouse grounds,” *The Washington Post*, July 10, 2015. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/07/10/watch-live-as-the-Confederate-flag-comes-down-in-south-carolina/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/07/10/watch-live-as-the-confederate-flag-comes-down-in-south-carolina/) Last Accessed: July 1, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Steve Barnes, “Arkansas capital renames street long known as Confederate Boulevard,” *Reuters*, October 20, 2015. [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-arkansas-Confederate/arkansas-capital-renames-street-long-known-as-Confederate-boulevard-idUSKCN0SF02920151021](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-arkansas-confederate/arkansas-capital-renames-street-long-known-as-confederate-boulevard-idUSKCN0SF02920151021) Last Accessed July 2, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Associated Press, “Arkansas Ends Robert E Lee-Martin Luther King Jr Holiday,” *NBC News,* March 22, 2017. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/arkansas-ends-robert-e-lee-martin-luther-king-jr-holiday-n736976> Last Accessed: July 2, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. “City of Little Rock removes Confederate monument from MacArthur Park,” *KARK News*, June 18, 2020. <https://www.kark.com/news/local-news/city-of-little-rock-removes-confederate-monument-from-macarthur-park/> Last Accessed July 2, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Kate Smith, “Mississippi to remove state flag, the last to display Confederate battle emblem, *CBS News*, June 29, 2020. [https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mississippi-state-flag-remove-Confederate-battle-emblem/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mississippi-state-flag-remove-confederate-battle-emblem/) Last Accessed: July 1, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Arkansas Secretary of State John Thurston, “The Story of the Arkansas Flag,” <https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/education/arkansas-history/history-of-the-flag/story-of-the-flag#:~:text=The%20twenty%2Dfive%20stars%20mean,and%20Michigan%20to%20the%20Union.> Last Accessed: June 21, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)