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The New Intolerance

by **Patrick J. Buchanan** ([more by this author](#))

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"This was a recognition of American terrorists."

That is CNN's Roland Martin's summary judgment of the 258,000 men and boys who fell fighting for the Confederacy in a war that cost as many American lives as World Wars I and II, Korea, Vietnam and Iraq combined.

Martin reflects the hysteria that seized Obamaville on hearing that Gov. Bob McDonnell had declared Confederate History Month in the Old Dominion. Virginia leads the nation in Civil War battlefields.

So loud was the howling that in 24 hours McDonnell had backpedaled and issued an apology that he had not mentioned slavery.

Unfortunately, the governor missed a teaching moment -- at the outset of the 150th anniversary of America's bloodiest war.

Slavery was indeed evil, but it existed in the Americas a century before the oldest of our founding fathers was even born. Five of our first seven presidents were slaveholders.

But Virginia did not secede in defense of slavery. Indeed, when Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated, March 4, 1861, Virginia was still in the Union. Only South Carolina, Georgia and the five Gulf states had seceded and created the Confederate States of America.

At the firing on Fort Sumter, April 12-13, 1865, the first shots of the Civil War, Virginia was still inside the Union. Indeed, there were more slave states in the Union than in the Confederacy. But, on April 15, Lincoln issued a call for 75,000

volunteers from the state militias to march south and crush the new Confederacy.

Two days later, April 17, Virginia seceded rather than provide soldiers or militia to participate in a war on their brethren. North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas followed Virginia out over the same issue. They would not be a party to a war on their kinfolk.

Slavery was not the cause of this war. Secession was -- that and Lincoln's determination to drown the nation in blood if necessary to make the Union whole again.

Nor did Lincoln ever deny it.

In his first inaugural, Lincoln sought to appease the states that had seceded by endorsing a constitutional amendment to make slavery permanent in the 15 states where it then existed. He even offered to help the Southern states run down fugitive slaves.

In 1862, Lincoln wrote Horace Greeley that if he could restore the Union without freeing one slave he would do it. The Emancipation Proclamation of Jan. 1, 1863, freed only those slaves Lincoln had no power to free -- those still under Confederate rule. As for slaves in the Union states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri, they remained the property of their owners.

As for "terrorists," no army fought more honorably than Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Few deny that.

The great terrorist in that war was William Tecumseh Sherman, who violated all the known rules of war by looting, burning and pillaging on his infamous March to the Sea from Atlanta to Savannah. Sherman would later be given command of the war against the Plains Indians and advocate extermination of the Sioux.

"The only good Indian is a dead Indian" is attributed both to Sherman and Gen. Phil Sheridan, who burned the Shenandoah and carried out Sherman's ruthless policy against the Indians. Both have statues and circles named for them in Washington, D.C.

If Martin thinks Sherman a hero, he might study what happened to the slave women of Columbia, S.C., when "Uncle Billy's" boys in blue arrived to burn the city.

What of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, at whose request McDonnell issued his proclamation? What racist deeds have they perpetrated of late?

They tend the graves of Confederate dead and place flags on Memorial Day. They contributed to the restoration of the home of Jefferson Davis, damaged by Hurricane Katrina. They publish the Confederate Veteran, a magazine that relates stories of the ancestors they love to remember. They join environmentalists in fighting to preserve Civil War battlefields. They do re-enactments of Civil War battles with men and boys whose ancestors fought for the Union. And they defend the monuments to their ancestors and the flag under which they fought.

Why are they vilified?

Because they are Southern white Christian men -- none of whom defends slavery, but all of whom are defiantly proud of the South, its ancient faith and their forefathers who fell in the Lost Cause.

Undeniably, the Civil War ended in the abolition of slavery and restoration of the Union. But the Southern states believed they had the same right to rid themselves of a government to which they no longer felt allegiance as did Washington, Jefferson and Madison, all slave-owners, who could no longer give loyalty to the king of England.

Consider closely this latest skirmish in a culture war that may yet make an end to any idea of nationhood, and you will see whence the real hate is coming. It is not from Gov. McDonnell or the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Mr. Buchanan is a nationally syndicated columnist and author of [Churchill, Hitler, and "The Unnecessary War": How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World](#), ["The Death of the West,"](#) ["The Great Betrayal,"](#) ["A Republic, Not an Empire"](#) and ["Where the Right Went Wrong."](#)

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