

# Remembering Walter E. Williams, Confederate Patriot

By Carole Hornsby Haynes, December 7, 2020

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The legendary “freedom fighter,” brilliant economist, and long time columnist, Walter E. Williams died on December 2 at the age of 84. Brilliant, witty, and incisive, he was one of the most influential conservative thinkers of our time.

Professor Williams showed early in life that he would march to his own drumbeat when, after being drafted, he was “kicked out of the U.S. Army – not dishonorably discharged –for being too much of a smartass and independent thinker” about the racial discrimination toward blacks. He refused to be labeled “African American,” saying that he used to be colored, then a Negro, then black and he was jumping off the merry go round at that point.

He ignored political correctness about the ‘treasonous South’ and proudly displayed the Confederate battle flag in his office. When presented with a certificate of appreciation in 1995 from the Sons of Confederate Veterans, he said his beloved grandmother in Virginia was “fiercely loyal to the Confederacy.” **When visitors questioned Dr. Williams about why he as a black man would have a Confederate flag in his office, he said “it was to give him the opportunity to explain the virtues of secession to whoever asked about it.”**

On July 22, Professor Williams wrote that Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley’s testimony before the House Armed Services Committee to rename Confederate-named military bases showed him to be historically ignorant. Milley denounced the South as he claimed, “The Confederacy, the American Civil War, was fought, and it was an act of rebellion. It was an act of treason, at the time, against the Union, against the Stars and Stripes, against the U.S. Constitution.” Milley was parroting the propaganda that Southern secession and Confederate generals were treasonous. This has been repeated often enough that today most Americans believe states have no right to secede. Yet there is much evidence that the states came together in a

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voluntary agreement with secession viewed as an unalienable right to check the abuse by a central government.

Let's look at the facts. Why would the colonies fight a bloody revolution to gain their independence from a tyrannical British government only to be bound eternally in another government with no safeguard to exit should the government change character?

There is absolutely no evidence that secession was illegal because it was not prohibited by the Constitution. **Nor was there a need to prove the right of states to secede because under the 10th Amendment, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."**

Nor did the Constitution sanction the federal government to force states to obey federal laws because that would be considered war on the offending state by the others.

The right to secession is based on the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson and John Locke and the *Declaration of Independence*, "**...whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of the ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government...**"

During the drafting of the Constitution, a proposal was made to suppress any state that tried to secede. That idea was soundly rejected. During the ratification debates and in ratification documents, states declared their right to dissolve their relationship with the United States. Fear of a federal usurpation of their powers brought narrow margins of ratification by Virginia, New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Alexis de Tocqueville noted in *Democracy in America*, "The Union was formed by the voluntary agreement of the States; in uniting together they have not forfeited their nationality, nor have they been reduced to the condition of one and the same people. If one of the states chooses to withdraw from the compact, it would be difficult to disapprove its right

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of doing so, and the Federal Government would have no means of maintaining its claims directly either by force or right."

Numerous Northern newspapers argued for the right of secession. The *New York Daily Tribune* (Feb. 5, 1860) wrote, "If tyranny and despotism justified the Revolution of 1776, then we do not see why it would not justify the secession of Five Millions of Southrons from the Federal Union in 1861." *New York Times* (March 21, 1861) held a similar sentiment, "There is a growing sentiment throughout the North in favor of letting the Gulf States go."

The secessionist movement did not begin with the South. Combinations of New England states threatened secession five times because they believed the government's policies were detrimental to their financial interests.

**Secession was defended in both houses of Congress with Abraham Lincoln arguing in a 1848 speech to the U.S. House of Representatives that Texas had the right to secede from Mexico.**

The term Civil War is a misnomer because a civil war is a struggle between two or more entities trying to take over a central government. **The Confederates did not intend to take over the United States government anymore than the American Revolutionaries intended to take over Great Britain.** Both wars were wars for independence.

Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and other Confederate generals were fighting for Southern independence from the Union yet they are denounced as traitors. Should we also denounce General George Washington as a traitor because he fought for American independence from Great Britain?