

Let Us Not Desecrate the Flag

By David Chandler

How do we desecrate the flag?

We desecrate the flag when we trivialize the commitment to this country that the flag is meant to represent. George Bush desecrated the flag when he used it to slander his rivals in his presidential campaign.

We desecrate the flag when we use the flag to express hate. When this country was involved in an immoral war in Vietnam, some made desperate attempts to raise the consciousness of Americans by demonstrations and symbolic actions, including occasionally the burning of a flag. Others expressed their blind loyalty and intolerance of dissent by displaying flags on bumper stickers with the phrase "Love it or leave it." It was the bumper stickers rather than the flag burnings that desecrated the flag.

We desecrate the flag when we allow our leaders to place themselves above the law. Oliver North desecrated the flag when he lied to Congress and the American People in the name of "Patriotism" and "National Security." We desecrated the flag when we responded by treating him as a national hero.

We desecrate the flag when we use it to rally the support of Americans for purposes that are contrary to our principles. We desecrate the flag when we support dictators simply because they are "friendly" to the U.S. These dictators support our business interests while violating the human rights of the people in their own countries.

We desecrate the flag when we use the flag to silence dissent. It is the right to dissent that sets this country apart.

In a fundamental sense the proposed amendment to protect the flag from desecration itself desecrates the flag. It raises up a physical object for idolatrous worship, with the express purpose of silencing dissent. When the flag itself is held sacred, we have diverted our attention from the principles the flag is supposed to represent. This is in fact the most fundamental desecration of the flag.