

Wearing the flag is fodder for Aussie Day yobbos

ROEL TEN CATE JR

January 22, 2010

[Comments 27](#)

If consuming large amounts of alcohol is what fuels the Australia Day fire of nationalism, then overt displays of the Australian flag is kindling.

Exhibiting the Australian flag on Australia Day is, for most people, simply a way of expressing pride in our great nation. Wearing the flag now though – be it as a temporary tattoo on the face, a permanent tattoo on the body somewhere, as a shirt or a hat, or anything – is no longer the innocuous show of allegiance to Australia that it once was. To an anti-social minority, every display of the flag means a vote in support of violence-based nationalism.

We all know who this minority is. They can usually be seen on Australia Day with their shirt off, beer can in hand, often wearing the flag as a cape, and being generally loud. Wherever there is incivility on Australia Day, you won't have to look far to find cape-wearers.

But they are not solely to blame. All those who choose to publicly exhibit the flag – whether they have pure intentions or not – are inadvertently encouraging these flag-abusers in their little game of misguided nationalism. And the larger the amount of people displaying the flag, the more cover they then have in which to conduct their brand of nationalism/racism/bigotry.

But the abusers are less about patriotism and nobility, and more about fear, ignorance and insecurity. By becoming obnoxiously drunk and tending towards violence they are not protecting, but demeaning our society, and the flag with it. Australia is a multicultural society. Deal with it.

In Australia we are lucky to even have the option of "donning" the flag. The US Flag Laws and Regulations, section 4d, states: "The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding or drapery . . ." In China wearing the flag is simply seen as disrespectful.

To ban wearing the flag in Australia would be a little over the top. But do we really need to be displaying it everywhere anyway? Wearing the flag less, thereby discouraging those who abuse it, may be the only way to preserve the tradition.

Instead of wearing the flag on Australia Day one could: dress up as Steve Irwin (god rest his soul) or Dame Edna; drink an all-Aussie beer; start reading a book of Aboriginal literature; eat a meat pie, kangaroo stew or have a barbecue with Australian products only; watch an Aussie movie such as *Samson and Delilah* or *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*; or listen to Aussie music all day.

Either way, if you don't like seeing incivility on Australia Day, publicly flaunting the Union Jack/Southern Cross motif won't help matters. There is nothing wrong with having pride in one's country, but not everyone needs to know about it — especially those who, when they see it, will exploit it for their own malignant intentions.

Roel ten Cate (jnr) is a freelance writer.

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How we treat the Australian flag says a lot about how we treat other people. Photo: Michele Mossop

»«

»The irony is, those of us who don't care for the flag are likely to be most offended by its desecration when worn as a cape.«

»The US has its Flag Laws and its propensity for doing silly things with its flag - that's their way. We imitate their contradictions and exceptionalism as an assertion of our contradictions and exceptionalism - that's our way. We're just working on a higher plane of self-parody; it only seems like collective, rudderless idiocy to the untrained eye.«

»This sort of foolishness is perhaps inevitable, when the national day is ostensibly a celebration of white folks' arrival here (so patently inappropriate it almost gets us thinking), but is actually just a convenient summer proxy for Fourth of July.«

»So I don't see how the sane majority can stop the enthusiasts from making clowns out of themselves.«

»«

Bob | Carlton - January 26, 2010, 7:33AM

»«

»Very good article. Samuel Johnson once said: 'Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel' - too true in many cases ...«

»«

Richard | Toorak - January 26, 2010, 8:16AM

»«

»great article. Australia day is fast becoming a day I dread. Spend some time in the eastern suburbs of sydney and watch as the cape wearing bogans descend and turn a once peaceful suburb into something that looks like a drunken battlefield. Banning the flag is not the answer, but hopefully, one day, the focus will be changed from something as low brow as flag waving and getting drunk at a barbeque, and perhaps focus on the bigger picture, a day that unites us, not embarrasses us«

»«

fitter | sydney - January 26, 2010, 9:09AM

»«

»I'm sick to death of anyone that wants to wave the Australian flag or celebrate Australia day now being labeled as racist yobbo bogans. Seems the last few years, being proud to be an Aussie has suddenly become taboo.«

»Nobody condones violence or racism and everyone that celebrates being Australian should not be put into the same group as the Cronulla rioters or the other idiots that ruin it for everyone on Australia day.«

»I will be attending the football in Melbourne tonight and will be wearing my socceroos shirt to celebrate Australia day.«

»«

Daniel | Melbourne - January 26, 2010, 9:07AM

»«

»Flag-waving is an American institution, and, the poorly educated brainwashed youth who are most often seen imitating Americans, like sheep, are the new-wave morons we see wrapping themselves flags now.«

»«

icurhuman2 | Noraville - January 26, 2010, 8:40AM

»«

»I don't like the flag, I don't like overt nationalism, I don't like the stereotype bogans and racists either. But I also dislike the sanctimonious tone this article takes. There are those who actually like the flag and would like to display it as part of a personal commitment to their patriotism; why tell them they "are inadvertently encouraging these flag-abusers"? Why do the aggressive actions of the minority have to impact on the peaceful actions of the majority? If someone is being a drunken, macho, racist dickhead then call them on that, not on what their wearing.«

»«

Andrew McIntosh | Glenroy - January 26, 2010, 8:35AM

»«

»I cannot stand flag waving.«

»As icurhuman2 said; "it is an American institution..."«

»And what's with these permanent flag fixtures from people's front windows of their homes? What are they trying to say? It just looks so absurd and so overstated.«

»@Bob | Carlton - January 26, 2010, 7:33AM --- fantastic post!«

»«

SDC | inner west - January 26, 2010, 11:11AM

»«

»Easy to resolve this - just encourage every ethnic club, aboriginal office etc to fly the Australian flag. For example, make sure every mosque has it flying - it removes it from the preserve of bogans.«

»Of course a lot of the more precious who carry on about Americanising won't like it - but most countries are proud of their flags and display them at every opportunity and in fact for Americans it serves as a unifying symbol.«

»«

Anthony | Melbourne - January 26, 2010, 10:36AM

»«

»What a short sighted article and thoughtless responses.«

»Firstly, overt national pride and proudly flying the national flag unites rather than divides the US population. One nation under one flag serves to reinforce the population that the country is a melting pot.«

»Secondly, Australians have been living, serving and dying under the Australian flag for over a century. I think the flag warrants this respect. Recent isolated incidents, inflamed by tabloid media, have served to throw a negative light on the flag.«

»I think it's time that we were proud of our flag and acknowledged the ever changing population that makes up our amazing (and still young and learning) nation.«

»«

John | Great Southern Land - January 26, 2010, 10:04AM

»«

»After the wasted Hansen Howard era, now Australia Day where we and the mad monk of Abbottsolute denials bigots celebrate the anniversary of the arrival of the first boat people on the 26th of January 1788, "well what else is Australia Day it in it's present form"? Has gone from the green and gold Wattle being our national flower to the thorny boganvillea!

Herds of Bogans wearing Chinese made England at night flags? If they had any respect for the British Union Jack and the Victorian State symbol of the Southern cross, they would leave it up a flag pole? Just what these imaginary British saints and Victorian State emblem and a single star for the whole rest of Australia are suppose to represent to us in Australia is anyones guess?«

»«

HFR | Tweed - January 26, 2010, 9:50AM

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