

A plea to angry Southerners
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By Rick Snee

So a couple of years ago, I'm sitting in a bar in the Charlotte International Airport (in North Carolina). It's the morning, so I'm drinking my coffee, smoking a cigarette and reading the paper. A soccer mom asks me if she can "bum a smoke," so I said, "Sure, no problem." She laughs and says in a thick Boston accent, "Thats a nice sahthahn accent ya got there."

I was taken aback. Me? A hayseed? I heatedly fired back: "Yeah? And that's ah wicked ahsahm Bahstahn accent ya got there."

I got defensive because someone pegged me as a Good Ol' Boy. Sure, I was born in Hawaii and lived there for seven years. But I also lived four years in Texas and 14 years in Virginia, and I've spent several summers in Alabama over the past three years. That means I have lived at least 72 percent of my life in the former Confederate States of America.

Like it or not, I am a Southerner. I don't like NASCAR, but I do enjoy whiskey, guns "Freebird" and hushpuppies. I'm not ashamed of the people – it's the stereotypes stemming from post-Civil War history.

From the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial to the 2003 courthouse Ten Commandments hoopla, the South consistently baffles and irritates the nation. Dixie is second only to California for setting bizarre legal precedents. Alabama stunned us again last year by upholding its ban on dildos – or, as Lewis Black jocked, devil sticks.

Then I read an article on *First Coast News*, an ABC and NBC television news affiliate: "Georgia Mother Seeks Ban on Harry Potter Books For Promoting Evil and Wicca Religion." The Associated Press reported that Laura Mallory, a suburban Atlanta mother, has urged the "[Georgia] Board of Education to remove Harry Potter books from school libraries." She claims the books encourage the practice of Wicca and the recent bout of school shootings in Colorado and Pennsylvania.

Mallory's sensationalized claims ignore a fact from both crime reports: neither shooting was committed with a wand. But Southerners have a history of making melodramatic pronouncements before stupid acts. *Sic semper tyrannis*, Lincoln.

Banning *Harry Potter* books from public schools is ludicrous. They belong in children's libraries far more than on the bookshelves of those over the age of 18. Even Harry's finished with the series at 17 years old.

Beyond stunting childhood literacy rates, Mallory's argument bears a stronger consequence if she succeeds: Georgia will be the first U.S. State unable to realize that magic is fictional, something David Blaine has consistently proven with his "tricks."

Fortunately, there may be hope for us.

"Victoria Sweeny, an attorney representative the Gwinnett County Board of Education, responded that if schools were to remove all books containing reference to witches, they would have to ban mainstays like [*Macbeth*] and [*Cinderella*] as well," the AP said.

Now is the time for other sensible and/or closeted Southerners to follow Sweeny's common sense example. We must salvage our pride and denounce kooks like Laura Mallory. Otherwise, if the South threatens secession again, the rest of the Union won't "give a damn."

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