

The Southern Swastika  
Edmund Coleman  
Runner-up of the state and national competition  
Legacy Junior Public Speaking Award

What can we see in the sky every night that is a stepping stone from patriotism to racism?

Good Afternoon, I am Ned Coleman and today, I will be delving into the idea that five stars which once transformed a colony into a nation, are now displayed on the back of an SS commodore Ute. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, today I will be talking about how the Southern Cross has become the southern swastika.

Australia's key values and the symbols that stand for them have been twisted from mate-ship to racism, from acceptance to jingoism, from camaraderie to hatred.

In 1854, the southern cross was a symbol that ignited the birth of democracy in Australia, through the Eureka Stockade. The Ballarat miners, stood as mates, united under the Southern Cross, stood proud, and demanded freedom. Today, when I see the Southern Cross, I don't see mateship, I just see racism. During the Cronulla riots, a mob of so called 'aussies' united under the southern cross and began the racist attacks that embarrassed Australia globally. The saw skin, not soul; and took to violence.

I was walking down the street the other day, when a SS commodore ute sped past me, it left only three things behind... the stench of redbull and sweat, incredibly loud, and incredibly offensive music ringing in my ears and the imprint in my brain of a sticker with the southern cross and a caption below it reading, to put it in elegant terms; 'be off with yourselves, we're full.'

My short encounter with the ute provoked two notions inside me: one being - 'what was that band and where can I get their music?' and the other being 'was that sticker what I thought it was?'

The Southern Cross has been twisted from a symbol of the nation to a symbol of nationalism. It has been twisted from pride to prejudice. The symbol on that ute used to stand for acceptance. Now, it stands for jingoism.

The big day out music festival held every year in cities throughout Australia have enforced a ban on the Australian flag in recent years. Why? Because at these concerts young people have worn the Australian flag in a manner that the organizers have identified as causing fear and racial tension amongst festival goers. How has it come to this? Ladies and gentlemen, how has it come to the point where we have to ban our national flag, a flag that over the years thousands of Australians have given their lives defending because some knucklehead racists have turned our flag into a symbol of hatred.

What is the difference between the Australian flag draped around a coffin, containing an Australian who died for us, who died for our country, who gave his life, for our flag, a flag that stands for camaraderie and the Australian flag draped around a racist youth at the big day out, a flag that stands for hatred?

To me, they are two different flags. One stands for hatred, racism, prejudice and everything that a real patriot would despise. The other flag, the flag that is draped over the coffin during a ramp ceremony, stands for mate-ship, camaraderie, courage, happiness, loss, and sacrifice; flag that stands for our great country.

That young Australian with the ute full of misplaced national pride and love for his country, sadly, and worryingly believes that a sticker on his car with the Southern Cross that says 'be off with yourself, we're full,' is supposedly a statement of not only patriotism but something that should be admired and approved by others.

What this sorely mistaken Australian youth doesn't realize is that the Southern Cross' light shines on all of us. Not just a particular type of person. The Southern Cross light shines on the whole country and illuminates everyone.

So next time you see the Southern Cross in the night sky, don't use it as a stepping stone from patriotism to racism. Use it as a reminder that everyone in the whole country can step outside and bask in the glow of those stars not just a select few...

Let's turn the Southern Cross back into a symbol of pride, not prejudice.