

Should Flag Burners Burn?

by

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Should burning the flag be a protected form of free speech? Consider this:

- Was the flag burner trespassing?
- Did the flag burner hurt anyone?
- Did the flag burner catch anything else on fire?
- Did they burn a public flag that they did not own?
- Was it an act of treason, in and of itself?

If the answer is “no” for all five questions, then the flag burner is not a criminal. They were just someone that took their own flag onto public property where they are entitled to go, and they burned it (unfortunately they don’t have a flag anymore) but didn’t hurt anybody or anything in the process. If we’re going to send a person to jail for this, then we will have to reevaluate thousands of actions that people perform every day that should be equivalently considered obnoxious, disturbing, anti-patriotic, or criminal. There will be social accountability enough from family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues that the flag burner will have to face, and possibly realize that “I will never do that again!”

Come on, we’ve got to get a grip on ourselves, take a step back and get some perspective, and not be so mentally and spiritually brittle! This is America. We are tough, flexible, resilient, and open-minded, so we can absorb the actions of a flag burner. We can’t rule-make a person into being civil and/or patriotic – it’s either in their heart, or it’s not.

