

HISTORY OF (a few) FLAGS

Flags. A definitive symbol of a nation, territory, organization, or even person. Flags are universal. You see them in your day to day lives, but have you stopped to admire them?

It is time someone finally tells you about the beauty in flag design, and the humor in flag design fails. Come with me on a journey through the history of (a few) flags!



Like art and design movements, flag designs have changed throughout history. The history of flag design is parallel to the history of a nation. Germany is a perfect example of this: starting with the Weimar Republic flag, they first adopted this classic tricolor design in 1919. Then when Adolf Hitler came into power, he got rid of the Weimar Republic flag and replaced it with two simultaneous national flags which I will refer to as the Imperial Tricolor and the Nazi Party Flag.

After World War II, the country was divided in two and thus had two separate flags once again. West Germany kept the Weimar Tricolor and East Germany used the Weimar Tricolor while adding the national emblem: a hammer and compass inside a wreath of wheat. Once the

reunification of Germany happened, the country adopted the Weimar Tricolor as the national flag once again and it is continuously used to this day.



This is a very blatant comparison between flag design and the country's historical events but most flag design history follows a very similar trajectory. Many African nations' earliest flags are those of the European countries that colonized that region. South Africa for example, has a very unique history in its flags. The first documented flag of the Union of South Africa was similar to many British colonies. Though it, nor the similar ones created, were not intended to become the formal flag of the area. Once the Dutch settlers felt the need for a more identifiable flag, they came up with a monstrosity: **Flagception**.

The flag that they came up with was the perfect example of great idea, poor execution. This flag has three other flags within it. The flag of the Boer Republics, United Kingdom, and the Orange Free State flags all in the middle of the Prince's Flag (The national flag of The Netherlands from the 1570s-1652).



Horrible design and horrible history. This flag design was introduced in 1928 and continued to be used and flown proudly by the government of South Africa during apartheid. The country changed its flag design to the modern one in 1994. The flag has now been seen as a hate symbol and a sign of white nationalism because of its tie to apartheid.

The current design is one of my favorite country flags because of its bold use of many colors and simple and recognizable design. It is often a fine line between a good flag and bad flag when using many colors but South Africa pulls it off!



Not all flag history equates to war and depressing times, let's take a look at the history of the flag of New Mexico...

In 1912, New Mexico was granted statehood. The state did not have an official flag for a few years but by the time of the San Diego World's Fair, in 1915, a single man decided to take matters into his own hands. Ralph Emerson Twitchell, the Mayor of Santa Fe at the time, created a design. It was certainly a design, I am not sure if there were many design choices...

The Twitchell flag includes a lot of historical items on the state: the U.S. flag, their statehood number (47), the name of the state, the state motto, and the state seal. Similar to the second South African flag, the ideas were there but the end result was lackluster.

The best part about this design is that the state used this flag design unofficially for 13 years and then a physician and archaeologist, named Harry Mera, created the best flag design out of all of the flags for the U.S. state flags: the current flag of New Mexico.

To wrap up, let's talk about a fun story between two vastly distinct countries and their flag's history.



Berlin, 1936, the summer olympics (yes the one hosted by the nazis). Liechtenstein sent 6 athletes and Haiti sent 1 athlete. Imagine for a second being in the audience, you see a flag with two bands of color: blue on top and red on the bottom.

Soon after, Liechtenstein added a royal crown to the upper left corner of the flag to distinguish their flag from that of Haiti. Haiti also continued to use their civil flag as well as their official country flag.

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