

Rainbow flag

A **rainbow flag** is a multicolored flag consisting of the colors of the rainbow. The designs differ, but many of the colors are based on the seven spectral colors of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet that compose the visible light spectrum. The actual color attributed as "blue" is cyan.^{[1][2]}

There are several independent rainbow flags in use today. The pride flag represents LGBT pride (since 1978). The international peace flag is especially popular in Italy (since 1961). The International Co-operative Alliance adopted a rainbow flag in 1925. A similar flag is used in Andean indigenism in Peru and Bolivia to represent the legacy of the Inca Empire (since ca. 1920).

American Revolutionary War writer Thomas Paine proposed that a rainbow flag be used as a maritime flag, to signify neutral ships in time of war.^{[3][4][5]}



A flag using the seven colours of the rainbow.



A 12-band rainbow flag.

Contents

Rainbow flags in various cultures and movements

- Andean indigenism
- Armenian Republic proposed flag (1919)
- Basque nationalism
- Bene Ohr Jewish movement, U.S. (1961)
- Buddhist flag (1885)
- Cooperative movement (1921)
- Jewish Autonomous Oblast (1996)
- LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Pride (1978)
- Meher Baba (1924)
- Patriots of Russia political party (2005)
- Peace movement (1961)
- Reformation

Other rainbow flags

Use of rainbow flag in various settings

Use of rainbow flag colors in different designs

References

Rainbow flags in various cultures and movements

Andean indigenism

A flag with a seven-striped rainbow design is used in Peru,^[6] Bolivia and Ecuador as a symbol of native peoples, and is anachronistically associated with Tawantin Suyu, or Inca territory. Although commonly believed in Peru to be a flag of the Incan Empire, the oldest known rainbow flag dates back only to 18th century and was used by Túpac Amaru II during his pro-indigenous revolt against the Spanish.^[7] María Rostworowski, a Peruvian historian known for her extensive and detailed publications about Peruvian Ancient Cultures and the Inca Empire, said about this: "I bet my life, the Inca never had that flag, it never existed, no chronicler mentioned it".^[8] The National Academy of Peruvian History has stated on the topic:

"The official use of the wrongly called 'Tawantinsuyu flag' is a mistake. In the pre-Hispanic Andean world the concept of flags did not exist, it did not belong to their historic context".^[9] – National Academy of Peruvian History

The Flag of Cusco was introduced in 1978 and is still the official city emblem. In Ecuador, a rainbow flag is used by the Pachakutik political party (1995), which is composed mostly of left-wing indigenous people.

Armenian Republic proposed flag (1919)

Rainbow flag proposed after Armenia regained independence after World War I. It was designed by famous Armenian artist Martiros Saryan. It was not adopted as the country instead went with three stripes using the colors used in a past Armenian kingdom. The artists used muted, richer colors reflecting Armenian fabrics and carpets.^[10]

Basque nationalism

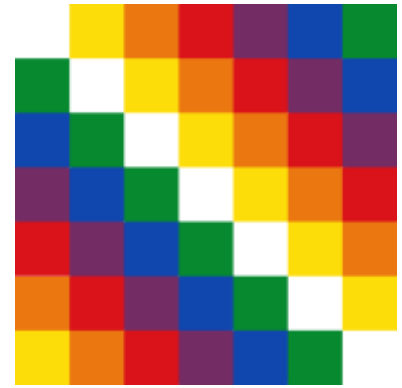
The leftist Herri Batasuna party used a rainbow version of the Ikurriña (Basque national flag) from 1978 until it was dissolved in 2001.

Bene Ohr Jewish movement, U.S. (1961)

In 1961, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi designed the rainbow tallit (prayer shawl) as a symbol of the Kabalah for the members of the Jewish *Bene Ohr* ("The Children of Light"). It is a vertically presented rainbow, with each colour separated by black stripes of varying thicknesses. The colors represent aspects of God; the black stripes and white spaces represent aspects of creation and protection.^[11]

Buddhist flag (1885)

A flag to represent Buddhism was designed in Sri Lanka in 1885 and modified to its current form in 1886. In 1950 it was adopted by the World Fellowship of Buddhists to be a symbol of all forms of Buddhism around the world.



Wiphala



Current flag of the city of Cusco, wrongly associated with the Inca Empire.



Rainbow flag proposed for Armenia by artist Martiros Saryan.



Herri Batasuna flag (Basque nationalism)

It consists of six vertical colored segments, the first five of which are usually blue, yellow, red, white, and orange, while the sixth is a combination of the first five. Variant colors are often found.



Buddhist flag

Cooperative movement (1921)

A seven-colour rainbow flag is a common symbol of the international cooperative movement. The rainbow flag has been the cooperative emblem since 1921 when the International Co-operative Congress of World Co-op Leaders met in Basel, Switzerland to identify and define the growing cooperative movement's common values and ideals to help unite co-ops around the world.

In Essen, Germany in 1922, the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) designed an international co-op symbol and a flag for the first "Co-operators' Day," which was held in July 1923. After some experiments with different designs, a famous French cooperator, Professor Charles Gide, suggested using the seven colours of the rainbow for the flag. He pointed out that the rainbow symbolized unity in diversity and the power of light, enlightenment and progress. The first co-op rainbow flag was completed in 1924 and was adopted as an official symbol of the international cooperative movement in 1925.



Until 2001, the International Co-operative Alliance used a rainbow flag

In 2001, the ICA's official flag was changed from a rainbow flag to a rainbow logo flag on a white field, to clearly promote and strengthen the cooperative image, but still use the rainbow image. Other organizations sometimes use the traditional rainbow flag as a symbol of cooperation.

Like the rainbow, this flag is a symbol of hope and peace. The seven colours from flags around the world fly in harmony. Each of the seven colours in the co-operative flag have been assigned the following meaning:

- red: stands for courage;
- orange: offers the vision of possibilities;
- yellow: represents the challenge that GREEN has kindled;
- green: indicates a challenge to co-operators to strive for growth of membership and of understanding of the aims and values of co-operation;
- light blue: suggests far horizons, the need to provide education and help less fortunate people and strive toward global unity.
- dark blue: suggests pessimism: a reminder that less fortunate people have needs that may be met through the benefits of cooperation.
- violet: is the colour of warmth, beauty, and friendship.

The ICA has been flying a flag with its official logo since April 2001, when its Board decided to replace the traditional rainbow flag. Its use by a number of non-cooperative groups led to confusion in several countries around the world.^[12]

Jewish Autonomous Oblast (1996)

Another variation of rainbow flag is used by Jewish Autonomous Oblast, situated in the Far Eastern Federal District of Russia, by the Chinese border. Proportions 2:3. Adopted first of October 1996.^[13]

The Jewish Autonomous Oblast has a flag with a seven-colour rainbow. The number of colours is meant to symbolize the seven-branched Jewish Menorah.

LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Pride (1978)

The rainbow flag was popularized as a symbol of the gay community by San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker in 1978. The different colors are often associated with "diversity" in the gay community (but actually have literal meanings). The flag is used predominantly at gay pride events and in gay villages worldwide in various forms including banners, clothing and jewelry. Since the 1990s, its symbolism has been transferred to represent the extended "LGBT" (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community. For the 25th Anniversary of the Stonewall riots, held in 1994 in New York city, a mile-long rainbow flag was created and post-parade cut up in sections that have since been used around the world.

The flag was originally created with eight colors, but pink and turquoise were removed for production purposes, and since 1979 it has consisted of six colored stripes. It is most commonly flown with the red stripe on top, as the colors appear in a natural rainbow.^[14] Aside from the obvious symbolism of a mixed LGBT community, the colors were determined to symbolize:

life (red),
healing (orange),
sunlight (yellow),
nature (green),
harmony/peace (blue), and
spirit (purple/violet).^[15]

The removed colors stood for sexuality (pink) and art/magic (turquoise).^[16]

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, a black stripe was sometimes used to represent AIDS victims.

Meher Baba (1924)

During a debate among Hindus, Parsis, and Iranis regarding the creation of a flag to be flown near a shelter, Meher Baba responded that the flag "should be of seven colors" because they represented "the seven planes of consciousness." He specified that "red should be at the bottom" because it symbolized lust and anger, and "sky blue at the top" because it symbolized the "highest state of spirituality and oneness with God". Baba later added that the colors "also represent sanskaras". However, he left the selection of the other specific colors to personal conclusion. The finished flag was first raised on April 23, 1924.^{[17][18]}

The flag is flown each year near Meher Baba's samadhi (tomb-shrine) in Meherabad, India during the week of Amartithi (the anniversary of his death on January 31, 1969).

Patriots of Russia political party (2005)

Rainbow is used as an element of flag of Patriots of Russia (Russian: Патриоты России, *Patrioty Rossii*) political party.

Peace movement (1961)



Flag of Jewish Autonomous Oblast



Originally called the "Gay pride" flag, the six-bands version became the most widely recognized since 1979, and now represents the LGBT movement.



Meher Baba flag

This rainbow flag in Italy was first used in a peace march in 1961, inspired by similar multi-coloured flags used in demonstrations against nuclear weapons. It became popular with the *Pace da tutti i balconi* ("peace from every balcony") campaign in 2002, started as a protest against the impending war in Iraq. The most common variety has seven colours, purple, blue, azure, green, yellow, orange and red, and is emblazoned in bold with the Italian word *PACE*, meaning "peace".^{[19][20]}



PACE flag (Italian for 'peace')

Common variations include moving the purple stripe down below the azure one, and adding a white stripe on top (the original flag from the 60s had a white stripe on top). This flag has been adopted internationally as a symbol of the peace movement.

Reformation

The reformer Thomas Müntzer (1489–1525) connected socially revolutionary claims with his preaching of the gospel. He is often portrayed with a rainbow flag in his hand. The Thomas Müntzer statue in the German town of Stolberg also shows him holding a rainbow flag in his hand. In the German Peasants' War of the 16th century, the rainbow flag together with the peasants' boot ("Bundschuh") was used as the sign of a new era, of hope and of social change.

The choice of the rainbow in the form of a flag harkens back to the rainbow as a symbol of biblical promise. According to the Bible, God first created the rainbow as a sign to Noah that there would never again be a worldwide flood,^{[21][22]} also known as the Rainbow covenant.

Other rainbow flags

Buddhist LGBT flag	Gay pride flag (original eight-color version, June 1978)	Gay pride flag (seven-color version, November 1978)	Greek peace flag
Lingua Franca Nova flag	South Africa flag (referred to as the "rainbow flag")	PACE flag without text	

Use of rainbow flag in various settings



Marchers carry the LGBT pride flag at the pride parade on Christopher Street Day, Berlin, Germany (1997)



Parada Równości, Warsaw, Poland (2006)



"Pace da tutti i balconi": peace flags hanging from windows, Milano, Italy, (March 2003)



Statue of Thomas Müntzer waving a rainbow flag, Stolberg, Germany (2007)



LGBT flag at Ipanema Beach, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2006)

Use of rainbow flag colors in different designs



Jewish Pride flag
(Stockholm Pride, Sweden, 2015)



LGBT health awareness



Rainbow Family of Living
Light banner



Circular Rainbow Flag of
Wu-Wo Tea Ceremony



Rainbow protest flag
used by Not in Our Name



Rainbow Madonna
(Poland)^[23]

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