



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on October 24, 2016

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National Anthem Protests

When San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick opted to figuratively “stand up” against alleged oppression of black people in America by not standing for the playing of the national anthem in a pre-season game of the National Football League (NFL), it vividly illustrated the cultural divisions that exist in American society.



“I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people,” the second-string pro player said, in explaining his action after his initial pre-season game protest. Kaepernick’s sit-down protest has continued into the regular season.

Not surprisingly, the Kaepernick protest has led others to emulate him, even beyond the NFL. In Camden, New Jersey, Woodrow Wilson High School Coach Preston Brown and his assistants even took a knee along with their high-school players. The district issued a statement indicating that, while they support “standing for the flag,” it is a “personal issue, and we strongly respect our students’ experiences and their exercising our country’s First Amendment rights.”

At Maury High School in Norfolk, Virginia, football players took a knee behind the endzone when the anthem was played. Coach Chris Fraser told the *Virginia Pilot*, “We didn’t make an issue of it, and if they believe in a cause that’s fine.”

In fact, while the controversy has centered on the playing of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” it has been somewhat overlooked that Kaepernick’s problem is really with the entire country. Kaepernick was alluding to incidents in which black criminal suspects have been shot by police officers — particularly white officers — such as the situation in Ferguson, Missouri, where a white officer had shot a young black man who was allegedly surrendering with his arms up in the air while pleading, “Don’t shoot!” — giving birth to the “Hands up, don’t shoot!” mantra used in protests after the event. A grand jury refused to indict the white officer when multiple witnesses — almost all African-American — and forensic evidence disputed that claim, as did a U.S. Justice Department report.

The reality is that 93 percent of black homicide victims are murdered by other blacks, and most of the rest are killed by Hispanics. The vast majority of people shot by police are white, and whites are actually more likely to be shot by law-enforcement officers. Police killings of black suspects have actually declined dramatically over the past few decades.

But Kaepernick paints a different picture — one that is greatly at odds with the facts. “Cops are getting paid leave for killing people,” Kaepernick said after his protest, leading a retired police officer from Norfolk, Virginia, to respond with an [open letter](#), which “went viral” on Facebook.



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In the letter, Chris Amos spoke of the time he himself was shot in the line of duty, in an altercation in which he was forced to kill a 19-year-old attacker. "You see I am a retired police officer that had the misfortune of having to shoot and kill a 19-year-old African American male. And just like you said, I was the recipient of about \$3,000 a month while on leave which was a good thing because I had to support a wife and three children under 7-years-old for about two months with that money."

Amos went on to compare his own rehabilitation with any football-related injuries that Kaepernick may have suffered. He told Kaepernick that he was struck "by a couple of rounds fired from a gun about two feet away, into my chest and thigh. We also both make our living wearing uniforms, right? You have probably ruined a jersey or two on the field of play. I still have my blood stained shirt that my partners and paramedics literally ripped off my back that cold night in January."

"Are there some bad apples within my profession? Absolutely and they need to be identified and fired or arrested!" Amos continued, adding, "Colin, I have buried seven friends, killed in the line of duty and three others who have committed suicide. I have attended more funerals than I care to remember of neighboring departments who have lost officers in the line of duty.... So whether you stand or sit during the national anthem means very little to me. As for me and the men and women on whose team I was privileged to serve, we will put on our ballistic vests, badge, and gun, kiss our loved one's goodbye, for some tragically for the last time, and out into a shift of uncertainty we will go. We will continue to protect and continue to serve and we will be standing at attention Colin, not just for the playing of our national anthem, but far more importantly for the playing of Taps."

It is not known what Kaepernick thought of Amos' open letter, nor what the NFL quarterback's motivations are for trashing not only the national anthem and the flag, but the country itself. It could be a sincere concern over the deaths and mistreatment of African-Americans at the hands of the police. No one can be sure what Kaepernick really thinks, but we do know that he is a supporter of Fidel Castro and Malcolm X. When Kaepernick appeared at a press conference about his protest, he wore a shirt depicting a meeting in Harlem in 1960 between the communist dictator and Malcolm X. Kaepernick's girlfriend, Nessa Diab, a disc jockey for MTV, is an open supporter of the communist dictatorship in Cuba, and a vocal proponent of Black Lives Matter.

Orlando Sentinel reporter George Diaz expressed the views of many Americans of Cuban ancestry, in responding to Kaepernick's support for Castro:

My family left there [Cuba] in 1961. We left our home, our furniture, most of [our] valuables and our relatives behind because we were seeking freedom. It wasn't for money, not the opportunity to visit Disney and Universal. We wanted to be free, and the United States, bless its soul, gave us that opportunity. So yes, I find it personally insulting that Kaepernick is oblivious to the fact that Castro is one of the most vile dictators of modern times with extensive human rights violations.

To those who argue that at least Kaepernick has gotten a conversation started on race relations, Diaz responded that, in Cuba, "such conversations can get you in prison."

Exactly. In the United States, there are no such laws that imprison individuals for political beliefs or protests, and few would suggest that we should implement such laws now for disrespecting the American flag. But it is certain that there are many people living in brutal dictatorships such as Cuba, North Korea, Iran, and elsewhere who would gladly trade places with Kaepernick.

On opening day in the NFL, various teams and players participated in protests. Kansas City Chiefs



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cornerback Marcus Peters even indicated solidarity by raising his right fist, enclosed in a black glove, recalling the 1968 Mexico City Olympics protest by Tommie Smith and John Carlos. [The origins of the clenched-fist salute are clearly communist](#), however. In 1970, John Lautner, a former top official with the Communist Party USA, told *American Opinion* magazine (forerunner to *The New American*),

The clenched-fist salute has been used among revolutionaries for many centuries as a symbol of defiance, comradeship, and solidarity. It was employed during the bloody French Revolution of 1789.... At the formation of the First International in London in 1864 ... Karl Marx and his followers gave the clenched-fist salute, as did his followers in Brussels in 1889.... Since the Third International, the Comintern begun at Moscow in 1919, it has been the official salute of all Communist Parties throughout the world.

Not surprisingly, Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump disagreed with what Kaepernick did: "I think it's personally not a good thing, I think it's a terrible thing. And, you know, maybe he should find a country that works better for him. Let him try, it won't happen." The rock group KISS opened their performance in Worcester, Massachusetts, by leading the entire arena in the Pledge of Allegiance. Lead singer Paul Stanley challenged Kaepernick's actions: "You should remember, patriotism is always cool. Loving your country is always cool." A similar view was expressed by Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who said of Kaepernick, "It's very easy when you're sitting there, rolling in millions of dollars to disrespect this country."

One coach made it very clear that he disagreed with Kaepernick's disrespect for the flag. John Tortorella, the coach of Team USA for the 2016 World Cup of Hockey, was blunt: "If any of my players sit on the bench for the national anthem, they will sit there for the rest of the game." Tortorella coaches the Columbus Blue Jackets and has a son who is in the U.S. Army Special Forces.

"We're in a great country," Tortorella told reporters, "because we can express ourselves. And I am not against expressing yourselves. That's what's great about our country. We can do that. But when there are men and women that give their lives for their flag, for their anthem, families that have disrupted, traumatic physical injuries, traumatic mental injuries for these people that give us the opportunity to do the things we want to do, there's no chance an anthem and a flag should come into any type of situation where you're trying to make a point."

A number of players have openly supported Tortorella, including Team North America defenseman Seth Jones. "I have no problems with the comments. You're not going to see me sitting down." Jones, who plays for Tortorella, is the son of a former National Basketball Association player, Popeye Jones, and is the highest-drafted African-American in the National Hockey League.

Tiki Barber, also an African-American and a former running back for the New York Giants, tweeted that he disagreed with Kaepernick's actions. A current black player for the Giants also took issue with the protest. "You've got to respect the flag."

President Barack Obama weighed in, as well: "I think he [Kaepernick] cares about some real, legitimate issues that have to be talked about. If nothing else, he's generated more conversation about issues that have to be talked about." Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton echoed Obama's statement, telling reporters outside a Florida fundraiser, "I applaud what he is doing. He makes great points, and if sitting down during the national anthem is his way of registering his protest, then we must respect that."



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But one must ask if Clinton would insist “we must respect that” if a football player or coach was protesting, say, same-sex “marriage,” or abortion? Would Obama express appreciation for a professional athlete who “generated more conversation” by opposing illegal immigration or maybe a corporate executive who gave a donation to a cause, taking the opposite position as Obama?

When former Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow, an evangelical Christian, began kneeling in prayer after touchdowns, other NFL players and coaches did not praise his starting a conversation, or say he must be respected, or that he is just “exercising his constitutional rights.” Some members of the Detroit Lions NFL team even mocked his “Tebowing” prayer pose during a game. *Saturday Night Live* ridiculed Tebow in a skit. Another player, Kansas City Chiefs player Husain Abdullah, was actually penalized for kneeling in prayer in the end zone after a touchdown.

As Selwyn Duke wrote recently in *The New American*, “Would the NFL be so tolerant of an athlete who sat for the Anthem as a protest against big government?” I would add, would Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama “applaud” them, if they did?

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell delivered a mixed response to Kaepernick’s actions. “I support our players when they want to see change in society, and we don’t live in a perfect society.... On the other hand, we believe very strongly in patriotism in the NFL.... Players have a platform, and it’s his right to do that.”

But when the Dallas Cowboys requested to wear a decal on their helmets during the season in order to pay tribute to the five police officers murdered in the ambush during a Black Lives Matter protest, Goodell’s NFL did not say, “Players have a platform, and it is their right to wear those decals.” No, the NFL flatly denied the request. Demetrick Pennie, president of the Dallas Fallen Officer Foundation, was “extremely upset” over the denial. “These are our friends and our loved ones.... It hurts not to have the NFL fully support us.”

While the NFL argued the Cowboys could not wear the decals because of their supposedly strict rules against putting extra material on helmets, some recalled that the Green Bay Packers wore decals on their helmets to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Lambeau Field.

It appears the NFL has a double standard. Players are required to wear jerseys and attend press conferences as a condition for being a player on the team; so clearly, players are required to follow certain rules to continue as employees in the NFL.

Retired college football coach Lou Holtz, who won a national championship at Notre Dame, learned that supporting a conservative Republican politician was not something to be respected — at least not at the University of Arkansas, where Holtz coached until 1983. When Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) was facing reelection in 1984, Holtz taped two television endorsement ads for Helms. This led to Holtz’s ouster. Although Bill Clinton was governor of Arkansas at the time, there is no record that either he or his wife, Hillary, defended Holtz’s freedom to express his “constitutional rights.”

And it is not just *football* athletes and coaches who have been punished for expressing the wrong type of political views — at least wrong in the eyes of the Left. Atlanta Braves pitcher John Rocker was actually suspended and ordered to submit to a psychiatric evaluation for making statements against illegal immigration. In a 1999 interview with *Sports Illustrated*, Rocker said he would retire before he would play for the New York Yankees, or the New York Mets. “The biggest thing I don’t like about New York are the foreigners. You can walk an entire block in Times Square and not hear anybody speaking



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English.”

Certainly Rucker’s comments were politically incorrect, but it appears that this idea of support for an athlete expressing himself on current issues is limited to an athlete making comments that are popular with the Left. It is the *content* of the remarks that matters. To some, it seems that complaining about not hearing the English language while in America is worse than support for a communist dictator.

Rucker has also advocated the right to keep and bear arms, observing, “The Holocaust would have never taken place had the Jewish citizenry of Hitler’s Germany had the right to bear arms.”

For that matter, it is not just those involved in sports who must toe the progressive line to get applause from the liberals. The co-founder of Mozilla, Brendan Eich, was forced to resign from his post as CEO after it was discovered that he had given money to Proposition 8 in California, the initiative that made it part of that state’s Constitution that marriage was between a man and a woman. But Obama did not praise Eich for adding to that conversation, and Clinton certainly did not “applaud” Eich’s involvement in public affairs.

After Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran self-published a book in 2013 for a Christian discussion and study group he led, he was summarily fired. His offense? In six pages of the 162-page book, Cochran took the orthodox Christian position that any sexual relations outside of a male-female marriage were contrary to God’s will. As David French wrote in *National Review*, “The City of Atlanta has apparently made its own determination on sexual morality, and city employees now must either express the city’s viewpoint or remain silent.... Endorse sexual liberty, or shut your mouth.”

But in the case of an NFL player who wants to trash America, that player is praised by the president and the nominee of the Democratic Party to succeed him.

There are all types of injustices that occur in America, as in any other country, and certainly we would expect concerned Americans to work to better their nation. But how does refusing to respect the national anthem possibly lead to a more just society?

Did Francis Scott Key, the author of “The Star-Spangled Banner” (originally a poem entitled “Defence of Fort McHenry”), write the song to be a racist anthem, or otherwise promote social injustice? Shaun King of the *New York Daily News* made that charge, asserting that in the third stanza, Key “openly celebrates” the killing of slaves. In fact, King insists that Key’s stirring tune “was rooted in the celebration of slavery and the murder of Africans in America.” The lyrics King refers to are: “No refuge could save the hireling and slave from the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave.” According to King, black men, called the Corps of Colonial Marines, were serving in the British military. “Key despised them. He was glad to see them experience terror and death in war — to the point that he wrote a poem about it.”

This is deceitful. The song certainly does not “celebrate” slavery or the murder of slaves. It is likely that Key did despise anyone who was involved in the attack upon Baltimore’s Fort McHenry during the War of 1812, which inspired the writing of the poem that later became our national anthem. One might recall that Americans were also not too fond of the German mercenaries, the Hessians, whom King George hired to suppress the American War for Independence.

Attempting to invade a country, after all, whether one is German or African, is not the best way to win the love of that country.



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And killing invading soldiers has generally not been regarded as “murder.” What does King think the African mercenaries were intending to do to the defenders of Fort McHenry?

Yes, after the successful defense of Fort McHenry, Key was inspired to write a poem. He had been sent by President James Madison to negotiate the release of a civilian prisoner on a British warship. The attack upon Baltimore, however, had commenced, and delayed the release, and Key was detained until after the battle, which lasted through the night of September 13-14, 1814. When the first rays of sunshine lit up the “star-spangled banner” flag flying above Fort McHenry the next morning, an inspired Key took out an envelope he had with him and began to pen on it the first words of his poem. It is ludicrous in the extreme for anyone to contend, as King did, that Key wrote the poem even thinking about slavery, much less that it was “rooted in the celebration of slavery.”

Key’s own record on slavery was certainly mixed. Although he did own slaves, he also freed slaves. As a lawyer, Key even took on cases of several slaves seeking their liberation — cases for which he took no fee. His frequent public criticism of slavery’s worst cruelties were so powerful that they were noted in a newspaper account of his death. The writer stated, “Key convinced me that slavery was wrong — radically wrong.”

One of Key’s most famous cases of legal work was for his friend Congressman John Randolph of Roanoke. After Randolph’s death in 1833, Key and other attorneys worked to carry out his wishes that his more than 400 slaves would be not only freed, but provided with funds from Randolph’s estate to buy them land in the free state of Ohio so that they could support themselves.

Hardly the resumé of a pro-slavery fanatic, as he is unfairly pictured by King.

“The Star-Spangled Banner” is a song rooted, not in slavery, but in an historical event critical to the survival of the United States in the War of 1812. Had Baltimore fallen, it is unlikely the war would have ended in a draw, as it did in 1815. It does not celebrate an aggressive war by the United States, nor slavery, but rather a battle in which a hostile foreign power was repulsed from our shores.

The poem was soon put to music and, in the burst of patriotic fervor following the War of 1812, became a popular and beloved American tune. It only grew in popularity in the 1800s, often part of Independence Day celebrations, and the U.S. Navy adopted it for official use in 1889 (an odd choice, if the song was “rooted in the celebration of slavery”). In the last days of World War I, it was played at the 1918 World Series. By World War II, it was played before *every* major league baseball contest.

By then, Congress had essentially ratified the people’s choice of “The Star-Spangled Banner” as our national anthem. Responding to a petition signed by five million people, Congress adopted the song as our national anthem in 1931.

Since that time, the national anthem has inspired millions of Americans — though apparently not Kaepernick. But the national anthem is not the first heritage symbol of our country that has come under attack by the leftists who want to see us merged into some sort of world government. It will not be the last.

As an American citizen, Kaepernick enjoys the right to denigrate the flag, the national anthem, and the country itself, where he has become a multi-millionaire. No doubt there are millions of people all over the world who would love to trade citizenships with him, even without his wealth.

But this freedom of expression goes both ways. Americans who vehemently disagree with his views have



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an equal right to denounce his sit-down protest. Teams also have a right to bench or suspend players who do not abide by the standards set by the teams. That, however, is not the position of those on the Left. To them, all others must conform to their secular progressivism, or face termination from their jobs, and other punishments.

Atlanta City Council member Alex Wan summed up the attitude on the Left about those holding views with which they do not agree, in discussing the firing of the fire chief. Allowing that each individual has a “right to have their own thoughts,” Wan warned, “But when you’re a city employee, and those thoughts, beliefs, and opinions are different from the city’s, you have to check them at the door.”

If, on the other hand, you express opinions favored by the secular progressives, then you will be praised and “applauded.”

Photo showing Colin Kaepernick and teammates taking a knee during the playing of the National Anthem: AP Images



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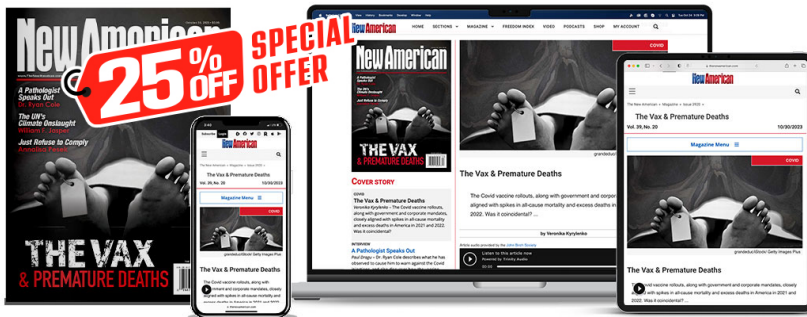
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