



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on August 31, 2016

Kaepernick's Protest Against National Anthem Just Latest Attack on American Heritage

"We must do away with it like South Carolina did with the Confederate Flag over their state house," wrote Shaun King in the *New York Daily News*. The "it" that he was referencing was the "Star-spangled Banner," the official national anthem of America since 1931.

King's comments were a full-throated endorsement of the decision of San Francisco 49er quarterback Colin Kaepernick (shown) to protest the song, by refusing to stand during its presentation at a recent pre-season game of the National Football League. Asked later why he would not stand for the playing of the national anthem, Kaepernick responded, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people."



At the time of the recent controversy over the removal of the Confederate Flag in South Carolina, many warned that attacks upon such symbols would not stop at Confederate emblems, but would soon include efforts to remove other signs of American heritage not connected at all with the Confederate States of America. The Confederate "battle flag" had nothing to do with slavery, and Abraham Lincoln did not call for 75,000 volunteers to abolish slavery; he called them up to keep 11 southern states from seceding. After all, slavery remained legal under the flag of the United States until the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865.

In fact, while the controversy has centered on the national anthem, it has been overlooked that Kaepernick said he would not stand up to show pride in the *flag* of the United States. It is not just the flag or the song, but the entire country that bothers the 49er's quarterback, if his comments are to be taken at face value.

Representative Peter King (R-N.Y.) was incensed: "Colin Kaepernick's refusal to stand for the National Anthem is entirely wrong. It is also an indicator of how low our cultural standards have been degraded that anyone is actually supporting this behavior." But some highly placed individuals are supporting Kaepernick. Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton told reporters in Florida, "I applaud what he is doing," adding, "He makes great points." King disagreed with Clinton's evaluation in support of Kaepernick's claims that African-Americans are undergoing severe oppression in the United States. "Kaepernick charges that America 'oppresses black people and people of color' even though America has elected and re-elected an African-American president." King also stated, "If he is reciting the fraudulent Black Lives Matter theme that police are targeting African-Americans, then he is clearly wrong and misguided."



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It is not yet known how many other black NFL players would agree with Kaepernick. Tiki Barber, a black former New York Giants running back, tweeted, “#idontagree.” Victor Cruz, a black player with the New York Giants, also took issue with Kaepernick: “Regardless of how you feel about the things that are going on in America today and the things that are going on across the world with gun violence and things like that: You’ve got to respect the flag and stand up with your teammates.”

But what of the song, the “Star-spangled Banner,” and its author, Francis Scott Key? Shaun King of the *New York Daily News* charges that it is a racist anthem, written by a racist author. “As it turns out, Key’s full poem actually has a third stanza which few of us have ever heard.” King claims that, in that third stanza, Key “openly celebrates” the killing of slaves.

In fact, Shaun King insists that Key’s stirring tune “was rooted in the celebration of slavery and the murder of Africans in America.”

This is downright false.

The song certainly does not “celebrate” slavery or the murder of slaves. According to Shaun 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.” There’s no doubt that Key did despise anyone involved in the attack upon Baltimore’s Fort McHenry, which inspired the writing of the poem, which 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, whether one is German or African, is not the best way to win the love of that country.

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 his 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, delayed the release, and Key was also detained until after the battle, which lasted through most of the night of September 13-14, 1814. When the first rays of sunshine lit up the “star-spangled” flag above Fort McHenry the next morning, Key took out an envelope he had with him and began to pen on it the first words of his poem. It is ridiculous 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 manumitted slaves. As a lawyer, Key took on cases of several slaves seeking their liberation — cases for which he took no fee. His frequent public criticisms of slavery’s cruelties were so powerful that they were noted in a newspaper account at 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 be not only freed, but provided the funds from Randolph’s estate to buy land in Ohio to support themselves.

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



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If King is looking for a perfect person in American history, he will be unsuccessful. And if either King or Kaepernick wants to find the perfect song as America's national anthem, they will be unable to do so.

While other songs have certainly been suggested as replacements for the "Star-spangled Banner," they all have their shortcomings.

"My Country, 'Tis of Thee" certainly is inspiring, what with its references to "liberty" and letting "freedom ring." And the tune is no doubt a great one. But it is borrowed from "God Save the Queen." Do we really want our national anthem to use the same tune as a British patriotic song?

"America the Beautiful" has been offered as a suitable national anthem; however, much of it is about the physical landscape of the country ("amber waves of grain") while little is said about the founding principles of liberty. Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" is another great song, but the militant atheists would never get on board with that one.

"The Battle Hymn of the Republic" has also been suggested. But if one is looking for a song devoid of controversy, this is likewise not a good choice. Julia Ward Howe wrote the words in 1861 at the outbreak of the Civil War, using the tune of "John Brown's Body." It was no coincidence. She was the wife of Samuel Howe, who had funded the murderous raids of John Brown, as a member of the Secret Six. After murdering several farmers in Kansas, Brown (who is conceded even by admirers to have been insane) seized the federal arsenal in Harper's Ferry, Virginia, with the hope of overthrowing the U.S. government. Hardly the historical background one wants for a national anthem.

Not surprisingly, some on the Left have even had the temerity to recommend "This Land is Your Land" — a song more appropriate as the anthem for a communist regime. In fact, its author, Woody Guthrie, was a regular columnist for an official communist newspaper, in which he once praised Joseph Stalin for the Soviet invasion of Poland.

Which brings us back to Key's "Star-spangled Banner."

A point in its favor is that it is rooted, not in slavery, but in an actual historical event, which was 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 in 1815. It does not celebrate an aggressive war by the United States, but a battle in which a hostile foreign power is 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 heard at Independence Day celebrations, and the U.S. Navy adopted it for official use in 1889. In the last days of World War I, it was played at the 1918 World Series. By World War II, it was being played before *every* baseball game.

By then, Congress had responded to a national campaign by the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and made it the national anthem of the United States. Five million people had signed the VFW petition, and with President Herbert Hoover's signature, the "Star-Spangled Banner" became official in 1931.

Since that time, the national anthem has inspired millions of Americans — though apparently not Kaepernick. But, again, the "Star-spangled Banner" is only the latest heritage song or symbol in the crosshairs of those who denigrate America. And it will not be the last.

In the case of Kaepernick, some have suggested that his relationship with his Muslim girlfriend Nessa Diab may have been the single most important contributor to his decision to protest the playing of the national anthem. According to TerezOwnens.com, she may be converting Kaepernick to Islam. Reports



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indicate that they intend to have a traditional Muslim wedding. (Interestingly, Key used the same tune in a song that celebrated America's victory over the Islamic Barbary pirates, only a few years earlier from his writing of our national anthem.)

Diab is an MTV dj, and she has been a vocal proponent of Black Lives Matter, and has even shown support for the communist dictatorship in Cuba.

It is reported that Kaepernick's status with the team was uncertain, even before his protest, and that while he began his career with great promise, his performance has declined to the point that he may be not survive the team's final cut after this week's final pre-season game.

As an American citizen, Kaepernick enjoys the right to say whatever he likes about the country in which he has been made a millionaire.

And, of course, other Americans have a right to reject his nonsense.

[Photo of Colin Kaepernick: by Mike Morbeck](#) (Flickr: Colin Kaepernick) [[CC BY-SA 2.0](#)], via [Wikimedia Commons](#).



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