



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 29, 2021

## Olympic Athlete Protests National Anthem at Trials, Prompting Public Backlash

Olympic hammer thrower Gwen Berry is getting some backlash for her protest against the U.S. National Anthem this weekend, though it is unlikely she will be penalized for her actions, which have been embraced by the Left and SJWs since former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick made it [trendy](#) to be an anti-American athlete.

Berry placed third in the women's hammer throw on Saturday at the trials in Oregon, which qualifies her for the Tokyo Olympics. As she stood on the podium alongside winner DeAnna Price and second-place finisher Brooke Andersen, the National Anthem began to play, prompting Berry to turn her back to the flag and pull a shirt over her head with the words "Activist Athlete" on the front. Price and Anderson both placed their hands over their hearts and devoted their attention to the American and Oregon flags.



AP Images

Berry claims she was "set up" when the anthem was played with her on the podium.

"They had enough opportunities to play the national anthem before we got up there," Berry said. "I was thinking about what I should do. Eventually I stayed there and I swayed, I put my shirt over my head.

According to Berry, the anthem was supposed to be played before she walked out, but instead played while she was out on the podium.

"I didn't really want to be up there," she said. "Like I said, it was a setup. I was hot, I was ready to take my pictures and get into some shade."

Unlike at the actual Olympics, the national anthem is not played during medal ceremonies at the trials, but instead played once per day at a scheduled time. On Saturday, it was scheduled to be played at 5:20 p.m., explained a USA Track and Field representative.

Spokeswoman Susan Hazzard said, "We didn't wait until the athletes were on the podium for the hammer throw awards. The national anthem is played every day according to a previously published schedule."

Berry's actions prompted an immediate uproar on social media, the Daily Wire notes, with critics calling for Berry to be kicked off Team USA and prohibited from competing in the Olympics.

"What is wrong with people?" asked former Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker.



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“Growing up, everyone stood for the American flag. Didn’t matter your politics, race, sex, income, religion; everyone stood for the flag. It was one of those civic rituals that brought us together,” he added. “It still should today.”

Fox News contributor Lisa Boothe asked on Twitter, “Why do we have athletes representing American who don’t like America?”

Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) observed that Berry’s protest was emblematic of the anti-American sentiments of the Left.

“Why does the Left hate America?” Cruz asked. “Sure, we have our faults, but no nation in the history of the world has liberated more people from captivity, has lifted more out of poverty, has bled more for freedom, or has blessed more w/ abundance. God bless America.”

Ricochet editor Bethany Mandel observed that if America was truly the oppressive country critics like Berry contend it is, there would be actual, harsh repercussions for Berry’s actions.

“I’d like to see someone from an actually oppressive country try this s\*\*\*,” she tweeted, adding that she would like to see Berry removed from Team USA.

The Daily Wire’s Matt Walsh predicted that despite Berry’s “spoiled rotten child” behavior, she will likely “be lionized as a hero.”

This is not the first time Berry had made political statements during anthems, and ironically, it was Berry’s raising of her fist at the August 2019 Pan-American Games in Peru that prompted U.S. Olympic athletes to be prohibited from making political statements during anthems in January 2020.

Berry’s actions at the 2019 Pan American Games caused her to lose some of her sponsorships, and she received a 12-month probation from the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee for her actions, according to CNN. Berry said the punishment was “extremely devastating because they cut off all my revenue.”

By April of last year, however, the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee reversed course on the policy, allowing Colin Kaepernick-inspired kneeling and other forms of protests during the National Anthem, the *New York Post* reported.

And in the post-George Floyd era, it is unlikely Berry will be removed from Team USA for her shameful display, even if she is supposed to be representing the very country she clearly does not support.

In an open letter to athletes earlier this year, U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee CEO Sarah Hirshland wrote that “respectful demonstrations on the topic of racial and social justice” would be permitted at the Olympic and Paralympic Trials, CNN reported. Hirshland, however, warned that there may be backlash if athletes choose to engage in those demonstrations.

“While we support your right to demonstrate peacefully in support of racial and social justice, we can’t control the actions others may take in response,” the letter said.

It’s worth noting that there is [a ban on “protests and demonstrations” at the Tokyo Olympics](#) after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) upheld Rule 50, which dictates that “no kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas.”

Berry has defended her actions, asserting, “I don’t really want to talk about the anthem because that’s not important. The anthem doesn’t speak for me. It never has.”



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“My purpose and my mission is bigger than sports,” Berry said. “I’m here to represent those ... who died due to systemic racism. That’s the important part. That’s why I’m going. That’s why I’m here today.”

To that, radio talk-show host Mark Davis remarked that Berry “needs to learn that it’s not about the anthem ‘speaking for her,’ it’s about a moment of gratitude for this country that makes her Olympic dream possible.”

“Shameful self-absorption,” he added.

In the face of continuing criticism, Berry responded that the comments reveal that Americans value “patriotism over basic morality” and that the post-George Floyd commercials and statements pertaining to “black lives” were really just “phony sentiments” and “a hoax.”

On Monday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the president has not directly addressed Berry’s actions, but “respects” Berry’s right to protest, Yahoo News reported.

Though Biden is “incredibly proud to be an American,” Psaki claimed, he “would also say, of course, that part of that pride in our country means recognizing there are moments where we are, as a country, haven’t lived up to our highest ideals, and that means respecting the rights of people, granted to them in the Constitution, to peacefully protest.”

And in 2020, then-presidential candidate Joe Biden’s campaign staff [donated](#) funds to the Minnesota Freedom Fund to provide bail and legal counsel for the rioters who looted and destroyed building during “mostly peaceful” protests in Minneapolis. And while Biden’s opposition to cash bail in general as “modern-day debtors prison” was made public, the campaign refused to comment on whether the staffers’ donations were made in coordination with the campaign, Fox News reported.



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