



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on November 9, 2017

## NAACP Urges Calif. Legislature to Ask Congress to Rescind “Racist” National Anthem

The California Hawaii NAACP last week began visiting state legislators’ offices in the California state capitol to distribute copies of two resolutions that the organization passed at its state conference in October. One urges Congress to rescind “one of the most racist, pro-slavery, anti-black songs in the American lexicon”: the national anthem. The other expresses support for former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who was the first major professional athlete to kneel when “The Star-Spangled Banner” was played before games last season. His form of protest was copied by other NFL players during this year’s NFL season and has become a highly publicized source of controversy that even attracted the attention of President Trump.



“We owe a lot of it to Kaepernick,” said California Hawaii NAACP President Alice Huffman, as quoted by the *Sacramento Bee*. “I think all this controversy about the knee will go away once the song is removed.”

It was Huffman who proposed the idea of the resolutions at a recent NAACP state convention. “We’re not trying to protest the flag at all,” Huffman said. “We’re protesting this racist song that has caused so much controversy in America, and we’re just trying to get it removed. So, whatever comes out in the future as a national anthem, we can all stand proudly and sing it.”

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“This song is wrong; it shouldn’t have been there, we didn’t have it ‘til 1931, so it won’t kill us if it goes away,” Huffman insisted, as quoted by TV station CBS 13 in Sacramento.

The CBS report noted that Colin Kaepernick started the NFL protests to bring attention to what he regarded as “systemic racial injustice in the country.” But Huffman alleges that Kaepernick’s message was lost when it turned into a debate about the flag. “The message got distorted, the real intentions got overlooked, it became something that’s dividing us, and I’m looking for something to bring us back together,” she said.

Huffman told CBS that the NFL protests led her to look at the lyrics of the “Star Spangled Banner,” especially the parts of the anthem we don’t typically sing, such as beyond the first stanza. “It’s racist; it doesn’t represent our community, it’s anti-black,” she alleged.

Interestingly, Kaepernick never cited the words that Huffman says are offensive to black Americans as a reason for kneeling during the playing of the “Star Spangled Banner.”



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During a 2016 interview with NFL Media, Kaepernick made this statement explaining his reason for refusing to stand for our national anthem:

I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people are getting paid leave and getting away with murder.

In an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* on September 25, Kaepernick's former teammate, San Francisco 49ers safety Eric Reid, wrote: "Why Colin Kaepernick and I Decided to Take a Knee." He wrote:

In early 2016, I began paying attention to reports about the incredible number of unarmed black people being killed by the police. The posts on social media deeply disturbed me, but one in particular brought me to tears: the killing of Alton Sterling in my hometown Baton Rouge, La. This could have happened to any of my family members who still live in the area. I felt furious, hurt and hopeless. I wanted to do something, but didn't know what or how to do it. All I knew for sure is that I wanted it to be as respectful as possible.

A few weeks later, during preseason, my teammate Colin Kaepernick chose to sit on the bench during the national anthem to protest police brutality. To be honest, I didn't notice at the time, and neither did the news media. It wasn't until after our third preseason game on Aug. 26, 2016, that his protest gained national attention, and the backlash against him began.

Reid approached Kaepernick and the two of them discussed "how we could make a more powerful and positive impact on the social justice movement." He continued:

After hours of careful consideration, and even a visit from Nate Boyer, a retired Green Beret and former N.F.L. player, we came to the conclusion that we should kneel, rather than sit, the next day during the anthem as a peaceful protest.

Kaepernick's and Reid's allegations that our nation's police officers regularly engage in shooting unarmed black people are contrary to the facts. As just one example disputing Reid's allegations, an article in the *Washington Times* on April 21, 2015 stated: "An analysis released last week shows that more white people died at the hands of law enforcement than those of any other race in the last two years, even as the Justice Department, social-justice groups and media coverage focus on black victims of police force." Another report from the Federalist Papers Project the following day cited Peter Moskos, an assistant professor at New York City University's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, who concluded that during the period ranging from May 2013 to April of 2015 that roughly 49 percent of those killed by law-enforcement officers were white, while only 30 percent were black.

While the numbers still seem to substantiate Kaepernick's claims of unethical targeting of blacks by police (since blacks only make up 13 percent of the U.S. populace), it must be remembered that, as *Wall Street Journal* editor Jason Riley, who happens to be black, noted: "Blacks commit seven to 10 times more violent crimes in this country than whites do." So if anyone were to complain about police targeting, it should be whites.

These figures do not address another significant point, however: Even if Kaepernick's and Reid's allegations about disproportionate police violence against black citizens had some basis in fact, does publicly showing disrespect for our national anthem do anything to solve the problem?



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Returning to the statements made by Huffman, pointing to Kaepernick's kneeling during the national anthem as evidence that the long-revered song is racist and the cause of controversy, there simply is no connection. Kaepernick never said he was objecting to the anthem and did not mention any words in the song to which he was taking issue. His protest was strictly against what he perceived to be law enforcement's treatment of black citizens. He never objected to the anthem itself.

Yet, the NAACP proposal is not intended to disrespect the flag, Huffman said. "We're not trying to protest the flag at all," she said. "We're protesting this racist song that has caused so much controversy in America, and we're just trying to get it removed. So, whatever comes out in the future as a national anthem, we can all stand proudly and sing it."

Even that statement belies reality. The lyrics to which Huffman objects are found in the rarely sung third stanza of the anthem. Furthermore, if we are to infer that Francis Scott Key was being derogatory to blacks, we would also have to assume that he also hated "hirelings," who are mentioned in the same stanza — not likely. In truth, the objectionable lyrics in question are impossible to interpret and are left to conjecture, unless we can bring Francis Scott Key back from the dead so he can explain their meaning to us. We offer the words below, and challenge anyone to tell us exactly what Key's intentions were:

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore  
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,  
A home and a country, should leave us no more?  
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.  
No refuge could save the hireling and slave  
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave,  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."

As an interesting aside, there were reputedly black British troops at the fort, called the Corps of Colonial Marines, [who could have been the objects of the song](#). Deciphering the meaning of these words would make an interesting exercise in an English literature class, but no person without an agenda would say they warrant the wholesale scrapping of our national anthem.

But then again, the NAACP always has an agenda.

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