

opinion

The flag is a symbol: Respect it

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On Aug. 18, 2016 Colin Kaepernick, former San Francisco 49'ers quarterback, first kneeled for the national anthem.

In just over a year's time, the meaning of kneeling during the anthem has changed from a declaration against the oppression of people of color and ongoing issues with police brutality to a public demonstration against the words of President Trump.

over 100 NFL players decided to take a knee, lock arms or remain in the locker room during the national anthem after Trump tweeted out his displeasure with athletes that choose to kneel.

Over the weekend of Sept. 23-24,

The outrage towards Trump started after he stated the following at a rally on Sept. 23.

"Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now. Out! He's fired. He's fired!"

The statement was direct, firm and as we can see now has had unending ramifications, but Trump may not be in the wrong when saying this and I believe that NFL owners should heed those words.

According to TIME, the NFL's

"The national anthem must be played prior to every NFL game, and all players must be on the sideline for the national anthem. During the national anthem, players on the field and bench area should stand at attention, face the flag, hold helmets in their left hand, and refrain from talking. The home team should ensure that the American flag is in good condition. It should be pointed out to players

and coaches that we continue to be

judged by the public in this area of

respect for the flag and our coun-

try. Failure to be on the field by the

start of the national anthem may

result in discipline, such as fines,

suspensions, and/or the forfeiture

game operations manual states,

of draft choice(s) for violations of the above, including first offenses." Taking a knee during the anthem is punishable by the NFL, but even though they have choosen not to punish those who have taken a knee I still argue that it is com-

pletely unacceptable.

As a journalist, I fully understand and firmly want to protect the rights that are displayed in the First Amendment and I would encourage everyone else to do the same. That is why I do not have a problem with players acting against opposing viewpoints, but rather a problem with the avenue that players, coaches and owners

are choosing to use to convey their feelings.

The American flag should not be taken lightly.

It is not just a piece of cloth flown above schools, stadiums and outside of houses but rather it is a sym-

It is a symbol of the millions of men and women who have fought and died so that we may exercise our First Amendment right of free speech and the many other freedoms that this great country provides us with.

After Kaepernick's initial protest in the fall of 2016, there was much backlash, not only on Kaepernick but also on his team and the NFL as a whole.

In fact, there was so much backlash that one AFC general manager said that other teams, "genuinely hate him and can't stand what he did [kneeling for the national anthem]. They want nothing to do with him."

Kaepernick lost potential jobs because of the stand that he took on very hot issues in our country, and now the same thing that has cost him his job is being applauded by millions of Americans.

My argument is not that players and coaches should not be allowed to speak their mind and stand up for what they believe in, but it is rather the manner in which they do so.

In today's world, information is so readily available and there are so many ways to express your thoughts and beliefs.

Why not use one of the many outlets that are available to you and take your stand there, rather than taking a knee during the one event that has the power to unite an entire nation.

Lebron James, who has been very outspoken about his displeasure with the President said that he would not kneel during the anthem but he would rather speak up for what he believes needs to be heard.

This is the approach that I believe the kneeling players in the NFL should take.

Use the platform that you have been given to insight change in the world.

Athletes have press conferences before and after games and many other times throughout the week: use those to speak up about what your beliefs are, instead of disrespecting the flag.

Even if the intent is to bring awareness and not to disrespect those who have served or are serving, the way it is viewed is the same.

So the bottom line is, speak up for what you believe in, but please do not disrespect the flag that serves as a symbol for those who have fought to give us the freedom to protest and to speak up for what we believe in.



NFL players kneeling for the anthem has sparked many debates over the past few months.

It is not about the flag or the anthem

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To quote one of my personal favorite human rights activists, Malcolm X, "you're not supposed to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality. Wrong is wrong, no matter who does it or says it."

This is a quote that I think really hits home in light of recent events in the NFL.

When NFL players and teams started taking a knee in solidarity with Colin Kaepernick, it started a huge controversy across the country.

In 2016, Kaepernick knelt during the national anthem in a preseason game. In a press interview he explained himself saying, "I am not going to stand up and show pride in a country that oppresses black people and people of color."

Many people interpreted not standing for the national anthem as a form of disrespect to the military. However, it has nothing to do with the military.

Athletes are kneeling as a way to protest police brutality, racism, and the oppression of people of color in America.

Police brutality is wrong, racism is wrong, the oppression of people of color in this country is wrong, but when someone with a lot of influence tries to peacefully protest it, it somehow becomes an issue of patriotism.

On one hand, it is true, Kaepernick is not very patriotic, but you do not have to be considered patriotic to be American.

You do not even have to be patriotic to support our military.

I personally do not consider myself to be patriotic, but that does not mean I do not support the U.S. military.

I could never be in the military. I could never do what they do.

I think it is amazing that people care enough to fight for their country. I appreciate all that they have done past, present, and future for my rights. But I do not "have or express devotion to and vigorous support for one's country" as the definition of patriotic suggests.

While I appreciate the military, I do not agree with a lot of what this

ountry does.

It is hard to succeed in this country unless you are a straight, white male and I do not agree with that.

There are Nazis marching the streets and our President calls them "very fine people" and I do not agree with that.

Police officers are killing people and getting a "slap on the wrist" punishment for literally taking someone's life, and I do not agree with that.

I am sure I will get backlash for saying that I am not patriotic, but that does not mean I do not love this country. I am just not proud of it. Neither is Colin Kaepernick.

Neither are many NFL athletes. Which is where the Malcolm X quote rings true.

The reality of the situation is America is not perfect. People are being oppressed and we need to acknowledge that and work towards stopping it.

However, people are so blinded by patriotism that instead of seeing the reality of the situation, they are getting pissed about whether someone is standing or kneeling down. Even then, once some NFL athletes saw just how angry people were getting, once they saw that it was becoming an issue of disrespecting the military rather than an issue of ending oppression, they tried other things.

Now athletes are not just taking

a knee, they are raising fists and linking arms as well. All of which directly mirror civil rights protests.

Martin Luther King Jr. took

a knee. In the 1968 Olympics, Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists. The people who marched from Selma to Montgomery linked arms.

Failing to acknowledge the connection between the two and the reality of the situation, is just whitewashing history and yet again missing the entire point of the protests.

The NFL athletes who have decided to protest by taking a knee are not disrespecting the flag.

It is protesting the way America treats people of color.

However, that is not what everybody wants to make it.

People are uncomfortable with

ing at it as a form of protest they look at it as a form of disrespect.

The men and women who fought

the topic of race so instead of look-

The men and women who fought and died for this country did not do it for a flag. They did not do it for a song. They did it for our freedom. If we can not peacefully protest without the fear of losing our jobs, are we actually free?

No

I appreciate everyone who fights for my freedom. I genuinely do.

Honestly, limiting showing my respect for the things that they do for this country to merely a symbolic flag and song is ridiculous. The best way to respect the military is by expressing and using the freedoms that they fought so hard for us to have.

Whether it is raising a fist, linking arms, or taking a knee, it is a peaceful protest against the country itself, not the people who died for it.

I can still respect the men and women who bravely risk their lives for this country while still acknowledging and protesting the problems within it.

Collegian

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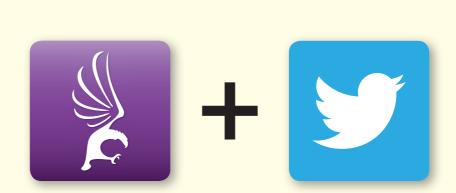
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