



# Athletes Should Respect The Flag

Matthew Noyes

October 5, 2017

President Trump and the NFL have stirred up quite a scene over the past couple of weeks. The president's comments about firing NFL players were inappropriate because it is not the president's job to be involved with such affairs.

At the same time, the anti-American movement propagated by 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who, by the way, cares so much about politics that he did not vote in this past election, is a disgrace. Kaepernick stated "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color" despite being in a country that has no legal discrimination and holds opportunity for anyone who wants to work for it.

When people kneel for the anthem, they are not considering what it actually stands for. Kneeling shows dishonor and reproach for the countless men and women who have fought, suffered, and died so that even people as senseless as Kaepernick can disrespect the flag and the anthem. The anthem and the flag emulate what it means to be American; kneeling in protest of the anthem and flag is wrong because of what they represent.

The flag of the United States of America as well as the national anthem, The Star-Spangled Banner, are symbols that represent values. These values include those enshrined in the Bill of Rights: the idea that men and women are and should be free, as well as individualism. Regardless of whether or not someone supports a given policy, practice, or administration, the flag exceeds those things. It doesn't stand for specific laws, politics, or politicians; it is above those things. It is a symbol that stands for the liberty and freedom for people to live their own lives as they see fit. Who could oppose such a patriotic notion?

A minority of Americans thought Trump should have commented on the NFL, 35 percent to be exact, according to a poll by the CATO Institute. But at the same time, a supermajority of Americans themselves stand for the anthem. According to a poll by Reuters/Ipsos, "69 percent of Americans say they stand in silence while the national anthem is played." Most people agree that the president should not have become involved in this issue, just as most Americans agree that kneeling in opposition is wrong — a finding reported in the Ipsos poll conducted for Reuters. In such a divisive time, it's tragic that Americans do not rally around one of the few things that we are overwhelmingly united on: the flag, the anthem, and what they stand for.

That being said, nobody has to stand. Dissent is important to society and everyone has the right to kneel even if it is considered unpatriotic. Establishing and defending that principle has cost countless lives from the time of the American Revolution to present day. However, every American should stand because of what the anthem and flag stand for. Since President Trump

and the NFL exchanged verbal blows, this issue has come off as a very divisive one. However, in reality we, the American people, agree on these three contentions: the president should not call for players to be fired, people have the right to protests even if it means dishonoring the value of liberty with the thousands who died protecting it, and that people should choose to honor the anthem and flag.

Although people have every right to kneel down or even burn the flag, it does not mean they should. If instead people rallied around the flag and used it as a platform for their agenda, it would be more effective in impacting the public.

Patriotism is holding values above all else — the values of self-determination and freedom. Unlike nationalism that claims a nation-state's or a race's superiority, patriotism surpasses such a fallacious notion. Patriotism is the belief in freedom for all, regardless of origin, race, gender, religion and nationality. The flag and the anthem are symbols of larger ideas that benefit everyone.

I may not agree with people dishonoring those symbols, but I am compelled to fight for their right to do so. That being said, I encourage everyone everywhere to respect these symbols and the broader message of freedom they represent.