



EVERYONE SHOULD STAND FOR THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

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The national anthem stands for freedom—even the freedom to do foolish things...like protesting the national anthem.

But, like my mama always said, just because you are free to do the wrong thing, it doesn't mean that you should.

Starting in 2016, some professional football players have refused to stand when the national anthem is played before a game. Some of them kneel, some of them sit on the bench, some of them raise their fist, and some don't even come out of the locker room.

This was all started by San Francisco 49er quarterback Colin Kaepernick. His idea was to protest the alleged mistreatment of black people by police—and by America in general.

As he put it, “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color.”

Kaepernick no longer plays in the league because, apparently, NFL owners are racist against backup quarterbacks who don't throw well. But his protest lives on and has spread to college and high school athletes. Even elementary school kids have gotten into the act.

I like football, and I sing the anthem publicly at events. This doesn't make me an expert, but I've got a problem with some things here. First, the protest is based on something that just isn't true. And second, even if it were true, the protest is misdirected and self-defeating.

Let's start with problem one.

Despite what we're told by Black Lives Matter and their media allies, the police are not engaged in a coordinated campaign to destroy the black race.

As Harvard Professor Roland Fryer—who happens to be black—and others have shown, there is no evidence of racial bias in police shootings. In any case, the thing that makes headlines—police shootings of unarmed black men—is very rare. How rare? Statistics show that an unarmed black man is more likely to be killed by lightning than by a policeman.

So, if police are trying to persecute black folks, they're doing a really bad job.

Am I saying racism doesn't exist? Of course not.

Am I saying racist cops don't exist? Of course not.

But I would say this: Blacks have a lot more to fear from black criminals than from the police. The police keep us safe. And they risk their lives every day doing it. That sounds like it's a lot more deserving of a "thank you" than a "screw you."

Now, problem two:

The protest is misdirected and self-defeating.

The American flag and the national anthem are symbols that represent our country. Even if some police officers are racist jerks, it doesn't make sense to protest those particular jerks by demonstrating against the country as a whole.

Martin Luther King, Jr. protested discrimination against blacks on city busses by boycotting city busses. He never denigrated the flag or the anthem. In fact, he did the opposite. He argued that the people who oppress blacks are the ones denigrating the flag and what it stands for.

And what does it stand for?

Ironically, it's the protestors themselves who give us the answer: it stands for freedom. The fact that you can disrespect the anthem and the flag proves that you're free!

Anyone who doesn't stand for the anthem would do themselves a favor if they studied some current events. They'd learn that oppressive countries don't allow anyone to publicly disrespect national symbols, much less earn millions of dollars while doing it.

You won't see anyone sitting for their national anthem in North Korea or Iran. Well, you might—but that will be the last time you see them.

Which brings me to my final point: In America, where you are free to sit or stand during the national anthem, sitting when you should be standing is more a statement about you than about America. And you don't come off too well. You come off, frankly, as ignorant and ungrateful: ignorant about a country that works to correct its faults, and ungrateful for the opportunity and freedom that it offers all its citizens.

For that, I'm standing.

How about you?

I'm Joy Villa for Prager University.