

To Stand...

...Or Not To Stand Colin K. Sits For His Rights

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*"Congress shall make no law...
abridging the freedom of speech..."*

-The First Amendment

This essential section of our constitution promises everyone in these fair states the right to political expression. Colin Kaepernick, a quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers and self-proclaimed social activist, made waves in the news and in the public - not for making a last minute game winning touchdown, or trash talking a fellow athlete, but for a song and some socks. But that song wasn't just any song - it was the Star Spangled Banner. And they weren't just any socks, they were socks depicting cartoon pigs wearing an eight-pointed police officer's cap. The symbolism there is pretty straight forward.

Though the national anthem brings up a number of strong patriotic feelings in a lot of people in this country, it's important to realize that its lyrics echo the ideals of men who would defend Kaepernick in a heartbeat. Like it or not.

George Washington said on the matter of free speech, "If the freedom of speech is taken away then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter." Thomas Jefferson said, "... For as long as we may think as we will, and speak as we think, the condition of man will proceed in improvement."

It is obvious that the men who not only drafted the Constitution but founded the entire United States believed very strongly that

any man, woman, or child holds the right to express their beliefs in a peaceful and harmless manner.

Many have said that Kaepernick's actions are an insult to men and women who have served and died for this nation, but it's an important to realize that those people who died for the nation didn't die for the anthem - they died for the rights of every American citizen. And of these rights the most core and valuable to the operation of our society is the freedom of speech and political expression.

Kaepernick's stance caught on with many in the athletic arena. From the Woodrow Wilson High School football team in Camden N.J., to professional U.S. female soccer player Megan Rapinoe, sportsmen and women alike are kneeling during the national anthem. The relatively simple action of refusing to stand has given both youth and adults inspiration to shed their political apathy.

Kaepernick's act could even be perceived as patriotic in and of itself. The man believes there are dire issues in the nation's current society, and he chose to use his influence as a professional athlete to make a statement. The exercise of his constitutional right is a truly American act.

No matter how disagreeable a person's actions may be, no matter how different their opinions, if someone is expressing them peacefully and reasonably, then that person is within their full constitutional rights to do so.