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Kneeling as Part of our Freedom

One argument that has been going on throughout mainly the United States and has hit some parts of the world is the protest some NFL players and now teams are taking to show they are going against the treatment of minorities, police brutality, and now Trump saying that NFL owners should fire players taking a knee during the National Anthem by taking a knee or sitting down while the Nation Anthem is on. The argument at hand is whether or not the players and now coaches should be protesting during the National Anthem. Some say it is their right to protest like this and are doing it in good nature and others say this is disrespectful to our country, what we stand for, and our military serving our nation. Both sides of this argument are valid and provide enough detail to form a debate. Through this debate NFL owners are trying to change the ruling but are unsure if it will ever happen. Through this debate, readers need to keep in mind that it is peoples’ right to knee or do whatever they want to during the National Anthem, but it is not respectful to our military.

The first form of protest happened on September 1, 2016 when Kaepernick, former quarterback of the 49ers a NFL team, knelt during the National Anthem instead of standing. This ignited the United States to go into a huge debate that is still ongoing today. Kaepernick first started taking a knee during the National Anthem to show the world watching what he was “standing up against.” He wanted to protest the anthem over treatment of minorities and specifically 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," (Kaepernick, ESPN Interview) Kaepernick said in a press conference after first sitting out during the anthem. "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 getting paid leave, and getting away with murder" (Kaepernick, ESPN Interview). In this Kaepernick shows he is fighting for the treatment of minorities in the United States. When Kaepernick first did this, it was one man against the world but he had an impact on many. Teammates of his started taking a knee as well but then Kaepernick’s contract was up and he hasn’t been signed since. Starting this year every team throughout the NFL had multiple players take a knee during the National Anthem leading to Trump to obviously get angry about the situation. Players, coaches, and managers each participated in the kneeling during the National Anthem on the first day of the NFL season to show the world the message they are all trying to get across. After this happened, President Trump expressed his opinion on the matter by saying “Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a b\*\*\*\* off the field right now, out, he's fired. He's fired,'” Mr. Trump said. “You know, some owner is going to do that. He's going to say, 'That guy that disrespects our flag, he's fired.' And that owner, they don't know it [but] they'll be the most popular person in this country” (Trump, The Independent). After the President said this most of the United States knew about the protests and even parts of the UK. Players even started protesting Trump as a form of kneeling during the NFL. Two NFL teams have annual games in London and after seeing the rest of the NFL, Trump’s comments, and what has been going on in the United States today, the players took a knee showing different parts of the world the issues at hand in the United States.

The question at hand is “should players be kneeling during the National Anthem and what can the NFL do about it?” This is a form of protest in the United States started by Colin Kaepernick and backed up by other teams showing the rights we have as humans. Kneeling during the National Anthem sparked a debate in the United States and once again people are divided. There are two sides of this debate being kneeling during the National Anthem is part of our human rights to show our expressions and freedom of speech and show what we stand up for and the other side being kneeling during the National Anthem is a sign of disrespect for our soldiers and for our country. Now there is a valid obvious point on each side but there usually is with most protests. The way this protest is different is it is very widespread and the actions the NFL player, coaches, and owners are protesting will most likely still be happening for a very long time to come. This is a nation that has to come together to see the actions of the NFL players and see what it is doing as a country and that is why it will take a long time to heal because it is so widespread.

These protests are a good thing when you look into it because it shows what needs to change and that the people of the United States are looking out for those changes. Although the protests are a good thing, it may look bad if you just tune into a Football game by turning on your TV and you see players kneeling when the anthem is being sung. There are alternatives to this form of protest like using social media to protest against minorities, but by NFL players kneeling during the National Anthem, they know it has the biggest impact for viewers to take action themselves and see what needs to change. While players, coaches, and owners are kneeling during the National Anthem, they know their actions are dishonorable but they are doing it anyway to show things need to change and that they believe in what they are “standing up for.”

To say this form of protest is disrespectful is true, but people have the right to do it, as told to us by our amendments and that’s why it is being performed. Actions that can be taken against these protests is the NFL commissioner to change the ruling for pre-game participation but again it is their right to do this form of protest. Of course, this makes many mad that believe everyone should stand during the National Anthem and show pride to our troops and country but it is their right to protest and Mr. Obama even weighed in on the protests and showed us his side of the argument saying “There are gonna be a lot of folks who do stuff we don’t agree with...but as long as they’re doing it within the law, then we can voice our opinion objecting to it, but it’s also their right," (Obama, Time) Obama said during a CNN town hall event last September, not long after Kaepernick first knelt. Obama did not call for the NFL to fire or suspend any of its players for the incident. Instead, he encouraged onlookers to think about why Kaepernick was taking action. “I want Mr. Kaepernick and others who are on a knee, I want them to listen to the pain that that may cause somebody who, for example, had a spouse or a child who was killed in combat and why it hurts them to see somebody not standing. But I also want people to think about the pain he may be expressing about somebody who’s lost a loved one that they think was unfairly shot,” (Obama, Time) Obama said. I agree with Obama in every way. He took both sides of the debate and reduced the argument into one by saying both parties should look outside of their beliefs and see how both actions taken place in the protest may affect both parties and how they can change.

Kneeling during the National Anthem is disrespectful but within the law for players, coaches, and owners to do so as expressed to us by our amendments. The United States and other parts of the world see what is going on and now it is time for them to stand up and come up with a solution to change this. Minorities being treated differently should not be happening and kneeling during the National Anthem should not be happening. Yet these two issues are both here today and have sparked debates across the world. As Obama said, neither party is right or wrong, we just need to come together as a nation to solve this issue. We should take action on this matter but while doing so keeping in mind that whoever wants to kneel during the national anthem has the right to do so as explained in our amendments. Of course, it is disrespectful for players and people to kneel during the National Anthem, but it is their right to do so and the world needs to realize this before jumping to conclusion and making this debate about what is right and wrong based on emotion.

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