
Colin Kaepernick's Political Rebellion Exposes US Reality

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Much has happened since Colin Kaepernick, the 28-year-old San Francisco 49ers quarterback, made national and international news when he was spotted sitting during the playing of the U.S. national anthem at a National Football League pre-season game on Aug. 26.

Although he took the tactic of quietly sitting in protest against police brutality and the general oppression of Black and other people of color, the result created a loud firestorm of both support and criticism.

What Kaepernick has done since Aug. 10, when he sat during the anthem in the first pre-season game, is nothing short of a heroic political act of rebellion. His stance has tarnished the façade even more of the U.S. being the "greatest democracy" on the face of the Earth.

He boldly stated on Aug. 27, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses Black people and people of color ... There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder." Some of the police getting paid leave were those recently acquitted for the murder of Freddie Gray in Baltimore.

On Aug. 28, a Black GI started #VeteransForKaepernick on Twitter to answer critics who said that Kaepernick's protest disrespected veterans and active duty soldiers. Thousands of military personnel stated that they defended Kaepernick's constitutional right to protest. Many GIs were angry that right-wing critics were speaking on their behalf.

They wanted to thank Kaepernick for helping to give them a voice for their issues as well. The tweets were posted by Black GIs, men and women, speaking about police brutality they face at home, along with their family members. Others raised the general plight of veterans, who fight imperialist wars abroad but return home traumatized with

mental, emotional and physical trauma. They spoke of facing no hospital care, homelessness and no jobs, resulting in an average of 22 vets committing suicide every day.

#VeteransForKaepernick became the No. 1 trend worldwide on Twitter for almost two days.

As to be expected, police organizations, especially in the Bay Area, have condemned Kaepernick's views on police brutality. The San Francisco Police Officers Association issued a letter to NFL commissioner Roger Goodell and 49ers CEO Jed York, demanding that Kaepernick be strongly reprimanded and apologize for his "foolish" statements.

Some members of the Santa Clara police "union," who "work" the 49ers games, have threatened to boycott those games, particularly in response to Kaepernick's wearing socks during practice sessions that depict the police as pigs.

High-profile athletes can help expose the myth that the police as a force are protectors and servers, rather than the deadly occupiers they really are, whether it's Kaepernick or even members of the Women's National Basketball Association's Minnesota Lynx, who wore Black Lives Matter T-shirts following the police murders of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile in July. Police also threatened to boycott the Lynx's games.

Seven anonymous NFL executives launched vile attacks on Kaepernick, including labeling him as a "traitor." Interviewed by Mike Freeman of Bleacher Report, an online sports publication, one executive stated, "He has no respect for our country. F__k that guy."

Another executive told Freeman that he would rather resign than sign Kaepernick to a team. An NFL general manager told Freeman that he had never seen a player more hated by NFL executives than Kaepernick, according to the Guardian.

On Sept. 2, before the start of the last pre-season game for the 49ers against the Chargers in San Diego—a heavily militarized city—Kaepernick was joined by another Black teammate, Eric Reid, in kneeling down while the national anthem was played. "I just wanted to show my support for him and the cause that he is trying to bring awareness to," Reid stated.

On the same day, Jeremy Lane, a Seattle Seahawks player, sat during the anthem in a game against the Oakland Raiders. Lane told the Seattle Times, "I wasn't trying to say anything, just standing behind Kaepernick. I just liked what he's doing and I like standing behind him."

And then there is Megan Rapinoe, a professional soccer player with the Seattle Reign, who bent on one knee during the playing of the anthem before a game in Chicago on Sept. 4. Rapinoe, who is white and a lesbian, is the first known non-NFL player to openly take "a nod from Kaepernick."

In an interview with espnW, she stated, "I am disgusted with the way he has been treated and the fans and hatred he has received in all of this. It is overtly racist ... We need a more substantive conversation around race relations and the way people of color are treated." She has pledged to keep kneeling before every game this season.

These acts of solidarity were joined Thursday by the amazing announcement that the entire Seattle Seahawks NFL team will be joining Kaepernick's protest in their home opener Sunday against the Miami Dolphins, when the whole team will take a knee during the national anthem.

Support for Kaepernick's stand has also come from the legendary singer Harry Belafonte and actors Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins and Rosie O'Donnell. The number of supporters will continue to grow.

Kaepernick's protest has even helped to expose the racism behind the words of "The Star Spangled Banner," written during the War of 1812 by Francis Scott Key, an aristocrat and slaveowner. The third stanza of the anthem celebrates the massacre of the Colonial Marines, Black men who escaped slavery and joined the British Royal Army to win their freedom outright. There is a growing debate on whether the anthem should be played at sports events at all.

Kaepernick, as an individual, reflects the Black Lives Matter struggle ever since he stated on Twitter that the police murder of Alton Sterling was a "lynching."

Calling Kaepernick "a noble and courageous man," Belafonte told TV One's Roland Martin in an interview, "To mute the slave has always been to the best interests of the slave owner ... When a Black voice is raised in protest to oppression, those who are comfortable with our oppression are the first to criticize us for daring to speak out against it."
