

# National Anthem Abstinance



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**Dedication:**

To the entire Paige family,

Thank you so much for loving and thinking of me. People may never know how much you love them, unless you tell them.

I love you.

Sincerely,

William

## Introduction

Many people believe we are living in a post racial United States. Ironically some who make and / or support this claim would cite the back to back elections of Barack Obama, the first Black president of the United States as an excellent example of this supposed post racial era. The irony is that President Obama's two terms in office are actually near perfect examples of how the United States is absolutely not in some post racial period.

In fact, race in regard to President Obama's two terms in office seem to be more apparent than ever before in U.S. history. To elaborate, firstly there's the allegation that some citizens, specifically Black Americans voted for Barack Obama merely because he is Black. To suggest that people who voted for Barack Obama casted their ballots based on the candidate's skin color as opposed to his political views is insulting to many Americans. Secondly, some argue that conditions for Black Americans have not improved during the presidency of Barack Obama. When considering unemployment of Blacks in America, poverty for Blacks in America as well as income inequality for Blacks, some go so far as to suggest that conditions for Black Americans have actually gotten worse during the two terms of President Obama.

While thorough investigation and analyses of any statistical data used to make these claims is required, the realization is such that regardless of the race of the president of the United States this nation and society has much more deeply rooted and systemic issues with which to deal.

Before we as an American society and specifically Black Americans can make any claims that we are living in some post racial environment, we must at least agree that very deeply rooted issues exist.

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To make this point abundantly clear, while considering race as a social construct also realize money is a product of social construction. Money is not real. Think about that. Money is only valuable because people give it value. Through social construction people have agreed that a currency is the acceptable medium of exchange for goods and services.

A dollar is only valuable to a person because that person knows he or she can exchange that dollar for merchandise and / or products. It matters not if we are speaking about 1 dollar, 2 dollars or 3 billion dollars; money is only valuable because people give it value. Money is not real. This statement is true regardless of inflation, and deflation, monetary, economical or fiscal policy. Money is a social construct.

Drawing a parallel between the two social constructs of money and race helps us to understand and appreciate the incredible challenges involved when dealing with these two concepts.

Understanding that money is a product of social construction, consider the following scenario. A person goes grocery shopping. After acquiring their groceries, the person decides to forgo the register and cashier to simply bagging up their items and then walking out of the store, without paying. You can surely imagine this scenario will not end well for our person in question.

While money just as race may be considered a product of social construction, living in this day and age we do not have to be numismatics, economist or even historians to realize the history, power and influence of money in the world as well as in our daily lives.

Money isn't real however anyone attempting to live especially in the United States without money is going to have some challenges.

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Simply denying that money exists will not allow a person to make transactions without the power to purchase. Believing that we are living in a post money environment will not work out well for us as we are submersed within a society that is not only powered by money but was built upon money, greed and the love of money.

Similarly, as our society is submersed in a culture of race, simply saying we are living in a post racial society will not bring about justice or even real change to heal the ills of the society in which we live. Ignoring race will not end racism. Just as with the social construct of money, our society was built on the idea of race, racial injustice and improper education.

These bad ingredients are baked into the American pie so to speak. We've all been eating this poison for far too long and are too sick to simply wish the sickness away or ignore that our nation is ill. Too many people have suffered and died, too many people are frustrated, fed up and angry. Too many people feel hopeless and are depressed.

While surely anger is a healthier state to be in than depression, anger needs direction else it turns inwards and becomes a tool which can facilitate self destruction.

While depression, anger and frustration are all branches of trees in the forest of Black American pain within the United States, at the root of these trees are racism, greed, injustice and improper education.

Throughout Black American history including the survivors of U.S. slave industry, America has never truly addressed the issues of Black Americans. These issues have transformed into "Black on Black crime", a disproportionate number of police brutality cases in Black American neighborhoods, a school to privatized prison industry pipeline and several other chronic problem that are plaguing not just Black Americans, all Americans.

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Likewise, Black Americans have yet to collectively address our own issues in this country. However the effects of so much anger and frustration have been culminating over centuries and generations of pain and inequality. American society is seeing the manifestation of this build up in cities such as Ferguson and Baltimore where frustration and injustice is giving way to civil unrest and social uprising.

Now is the time to begin channeling the energy of the masses of the people to create and construct positive change to bring about justice. While by any means necessary justice will be obtained, to acquire justice without bloodshed and without anarchy would be good.

Too openly, officially and collectively discuss the issues of injustice faced by Americans is a good thing.

I challenge us all to think.

Thank you,

William Danney

## Opening Thoughts

So, Colin Kaepernick, quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers decided to express some strong thoughts and feelings. Mr. Kaepernick's choice of expression was exercising his 1<sup>st</sup> amendment right to abstain from standing during the American national anthem ritual which most notably includes standing while the anthem is either being played or performed.

By exercising one of the principals that the United States was founded upon, Mr. Kaepernick succeeded in pissing off all kinds of people. It seems many of these pissed off people mistakenly confused participation in a ritual with a personal or social obligation.

" This is bigger than football" Colin Kaepernick is a hero if only for simply using his celebrity, high profile status and power to force citizens of the United States to start having serious conversations about race, justice and equality.

Although I could use this document to list the reason why people particularly Black people in the United States should not stand for the national anthem, that is not the purpose or focus of this paper. The objective of this document is to offer you the reader reasons why and how we should understand Colin Kaepernick's expression of his 1<sup>st</sup> amendment right.

## Some People Say

### **“Sitting there like a fool”**

Some of the criticism I've heard about Mr. Kaepernick's action of 1<sup>st</sup> amendment expression include people saying “He was sitting there like a fool”. I must wonder if the same sentiment was expressed when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other activists' utilized civil disobedience through sit ins to bring about change to the unjust laws of the United States.

### **“Why Now”**

I've heard some people criticize the young man by asking, “Why, after 6 seasons of collecting a pay check from playing football did you all of a sudden decide to sit out the national anthem?” After I heard this criticism, I reflected on my own personal experience. I live in Baltimore. The scene, environment and feel of Baltimore remind me of the “Field negro, House negro” scenario as it was most notably explained by Malcolm X. With that said, at times Baltimore's environment is similar to being raised in “The House” and then realizing and awakening to, the reality of your situation. For a person who is in the Black American condition such as I, this can be a mind blowing and life altering experience. Anyone that has gone through this awakening can walk you through how transformative as well as disruptive this process can be. For a celebrity, who has a significant portion of their life played out in the public I can only imagine the intensity of this process is increased.

Proper education is being called into existence in the United States. Obviously, the U.S. is a country that is still discovering its conscience. For example, Columbus Day is still celebrated in some states. Even in 2016 as more Americans are being properly educated about the true history of Christopher Columbus being a

mass murdering serial rapist, some states still opt to celebrate a lost sailor who discovered nothing. As with Christopher Columbus, proper education is being called into existence to understand the origins of rituals such as the pledge of allegiance and standing for the national anthem. Colin Kaepernick may not have been seeking a full academic analysis of American history when he decided to exercise his 1<sup>st</sup> amendment right. However, Mr. Kaepernick's action of expression helps all Americans begin to understand that proper education is required in the United States.

### **“He’s Racist”**

I've heard some critics express that Colin Kaepernick's statements following his 1<sup>st</sup> amendment expression were racist. It's interesting that due to the history of the United States and its unique connections with Black Americans, actions taken by Black Americans to assert themselves are perceived as racists.

*“Because of the stigma of the history of the United States whereas, whereby people are afraid of the violence that may be associated with liberation. Because it almost seems like it has to run concurrent. You know in order to be pro Black it almost seems like we have to assert ourselves aggressively. Because we don't have enough platforms to disseminate this type of information.”*  
(Amun-Re Sen Atum-Re (Bro. POLIGHT))

It appears to be challenging for many White and Black Americans to understand how Colin Kaepernick can abstain from the ritual of the national anthem while he accepts a paycheck which is facilitated by a White team owner as well as White fans that purchase tickets to see him play.

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For all those who do not understand, what Colin Kaepernick did by exercising his 1<sup>st</sup> amendment right, it's called courage. This is the same courage exercised by Muhammad Ali when he became a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War. Professional athletes face enormous criticism and scrutiny when they decide to express their personal thoughts, ideas and beliefs especially if those thoughts, ideas and beliefs are in opposition to public opinion.

## My Personal Criticism

The only criticism I have for Mr. Kaepernick and his national anthem abstinence involves semantics. In an early statement after expressing his 1<sup>st</sup> amendment right, my young brother said,

“They’re bodies lying in the street and people are getting paid leave and getting away with murder”.

Mr. Kaepernick has made it clear that his statement about “murder and paid leave” were directed towards law enforcement. While many of the police brutality and excessive force situations have unfortunately ended with police officers committing homicide i.e. killing citizens, we cannot legally say that the police have committed murder.

Homicide is the killing of one person by another. Murder is a form of criminal homicide in which the perpetrator intended to kill the other person. In most scenarios where police officers have killed a citizen, the homicidal acts were considered justifiable as the officer may have felt that their life was threatened. Therefore the officer decided to use deadly force to defend him or herself. So while the officer may have had a plan to kill. Legally a homicide is deemed criminal, excusable, or justifiable.

In Nov 2014 I published a short essay about Michael Brown and the social unrest that had been occurring in Ferguson. The essay issued a challenge to citizens to find out and understand how grand juries are organized and structured.

The point of the challenge was to help people understand that grand juries are ex parte proceedings meaning that they are one sided. Prosecutors have no judicial oversight and complete digression in regard to who will be or who will not be indicted. Prosecutors choose the evidence and the jurors. As the joke goes, many states can “indict a ham sandwich” if the prosecutor chose to do so. In situations where we see no indictments and

these cases never go to trial, citizens should understand that this can be attributed to how laws have been written as well as how state governments and local municipalities has been structured. For those of us who are reading this essay and didn't get what I just said, VOTE. You have to vote in order and in chaos to "legally" change and reconstruct government.

## **Significance of Symbols**

Many United States patriots and veterans of different ethnicities and races have fought and died for the U.S. The United States flag and the national anthem serve as reminders of these brave men and women. However it is a extreme double standard to partially remember pieces of American history while ignoring the deep roots of the American slave industry which launched and fueled the economy of United States and poised the this country to be a super power.

As mentioned in the opening, " This is bigger than football" Colin Kaepernick is a hero if only for simply using his celebrity, high profile status and power to force citizens of the United States to start having serious conversations about race, justice and equality. It seems, some American citizens would rather not have these conversations and continue choosing not to see the problems. Perhaps that's the reason why so many people are expressing very strong reactions to Mr. Kaepernick's choice to abstain from the ritual of the national anthem and exercise his 1st amendment right.

## Closing Thoughts

Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is the ability and willingness to summon up the personal resources to face fear. I consider Colin a hero based on my own personal experiences. As I began studying Islam in high school, I remember arriving to a point where taking part in the national anthem ritual was no longer appropriate. Other students ridiculed me. Teachers and faculty labeled me a trouble maker and said that I was only seeking attention. I had to call up courage to stand up for what I believed in and face those that mocked me.

Later in life when I began studying with Jehovah's Witnesses, I experienced similar cultural challenges. Again I had to call on courage to deal with people and their attitudes towards beliefs they did not understand and knew very little about.

Even still later in life, as I read, study and research to elevate my level of being, I have to summon up courage. I am pro Black. I live it and I speak about it. My experiences are my own and are pieces of me and who I am. Just as your experiences are a part of you. Part of the point and purpose of this life is to share our experiences with each other in a way that helps us grow to be better.

I've been called a coon, a sambo and a sellout by other Black people because I speak about some of the issues within the so called Black American community that we as Black Americans must deal with and solve ourselves.

I've been called a racist and a Black supremacist because I speak about how and why people in the Black American condition must generate and establish true power in the United States.

A person must call upon deep personal resources to deal with and publically speak about issues in the so called Black American community. Between the detractors who attack me personally for

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bringing illumination to social and economic issues that exist in inner city Black American neighborhoods and the critics that scrutinize everything I say and do simply because I decided to stand up as a Black man. Being "pro Black" can become exhausting.

So many different types of courage and strength as well as other personal resources are required to replenish a person's energy to continue creating new ways to deliver and disseminate proper education. With that said I applaud Colin Kaepernick for his expression of assertion.

I challenge us all to think.

Thank you,

William Danney

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