

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

570 days ago, I created a poll: The right to freedom of expression should be extended to everyone- agree or disagree.

94.4% agreed. 5.6% disagreed (actually, that 5.6% was one person)

The results did not surprise me. Freedom of speech is one right that we are all proud to claim- not just Americans, but people in many other free democracies throughout the world. And in places where it is denied, millions secretly yearn for it.

Yet, sometimes, when it actually comes to people freely expressing themselves, it seems that some people have forgotten that it must be supported and protected, whether or not one agrees with what is expressed, or HOW it is expressed.

That means that neo-Nazis can march down the street wearing swastikas. It means that Donald Trump can insult entire nationalities, ethnicities, and religions. And if a “news” organization chooses to lie to the viewing public, that, too is protected speech.

We might not LIKE some of those expressions, but we must allow them all to assure that the rest of us can speak, write, or demonstrate our feelings and opinions, speak facts that some would like to deny or hide, demand that injustice be ended, that corruption be reformed. We not only have a right, but a responsibility-- a duty, vital to our democratic system, to speak up when there is wrongdoing, whether in private enterprise, government, military, or the local police.

Jackie Robinson: “I cannot stand and sing the anthem. I cannot salute the flag”

One more bit of baseball via which we may reflect on [the Colin Kaepernick controversy](#). In [1972 Jackie Robinson wrote his autobiography](#). In it he reflected on how he felt about his historical legacy as a baseball player, a businessman and as a political activist.

“There I was, the black grandson of a slave, the son of a black sharecropper, part of a historic occasion, a symbolic hero to my people. The air was sparkling. The sunlight was warm. The band struck up the national anthem. The flag billowed in the wind. It should have been a glorious moment for me as the stirring words of the national anthem poured from the stands.

Perhaps, it was, but then again, perhaps, the anthem could be called the theme song for a drama called The Noble Experiment. Today, as I look back on that opening game of my first world series, I must tell you that it was Mr. Rickey’s drama and that I was only a principal actor. As I write this twenty years later, I cannot stand and sing the anthem. I cannot salute the flag; I know that I am a black man in a white world. In 1972, in 1947, at my birth in 1919, I know that I never had it made.”

Everyone also has the right to disagree with someone's speech, and say so. But if your whole point is that you don't like the way they said it, you are being irrelevant.

And, if you don't think that the oppressed minorities in this country have a right to tell the world what they KNOW, and how they feel about it, and what they think should be done about it, then you'd better re-read the First Amendment.

--cosmicrat August 31 2016

ANTHEM ATERMATH

"THE DECISION OF San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick to sit during the pregame playing of the national anthem has had a larger impact than anyone could have foreseen."

The initial point had nothing to do with the anthem itself. It was a valid statement of protest, that in many places our nation's justice system was not living up to the principle we have long held to be one of our most important: equality under the law.

But the ensuing controversy has brought attention to the lyrics of the anthem, and to the sentiments and attitudes of its author, a lawyer named Key.

Francis Scott Key defended slavery in court, and prosecuted those who advocated abolishing slavery. Perhaps this would be a good time to look for a new anthem.

--cosmic rat Sept. 14 2016.