

# PRO/CON: Is a sporting event the best venue for a protest?

By Tribune Company, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.12.16

Word Count **605**



Rashard Robinson (33) and Antoine Bethea (41) of the San Francisco 49ers raise their fists in protest during the national anthem before a football game against the Dallas Cowboys at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California, October 2, 2016. Photo by Ezra Shaw/Getty Images

## PRO: Everyone has the right to protest at any time

Colin Kaepernick is a football player. He plays for the San Francisco 49ers. Recently, Kaepernick did not stand when the national anthem played. The song, "The Star-Spangled Banner," plays before most sports events. Most people stand when it plays.

Kaepernick said not standing is a way to protest. He said the United States is not fair to African-Americans. That is why he will not stand.

Many were angry about Kaepernick's protest. They felt it was disrespectful to America.

### **Kaepernick Has Support**

However, lots of people in the sports world supported Kaepernick. They said he is allowed to protest. They stood up for him, even if they did not want to protest themselves.

Chip Kelly is Kaepernick's coach. He supports Kaepernick. He said protesting the national anthem was "his right as a citizen."

### **Past Pro Protesters**

Kaepernick is not the first athlete to protest. In the past, others have protested unfair treatment, too.

In 1967, the boxer Muhammad Ali said the Vietnam War was wrong. He refused to fight in the war.

In 1968, Tommie Smith and John Carlos ran in the Summer Olympics. They both won medals. When they were given their medals, they led a protest. They put their fists in the air. This was the black power salute. They did it to show support for African-Americans who were being treated badly.

### **Asking Us To Do Better**

These sports stars got into trouble for taking a stand. Smith and Carlos lost their medals. Ali was stopped from boxing for many years.

Today, however, most people think they were brave.

Our country still has problems. Not everyone is treated fairly. Many athletes and coaches know this. They are asking us to do better, and we should listen.

*ABOUT THE WRITER: Tim Wendel is the author of 11 books, and is the writer in residence at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C.*

## **CON: Players should not protest during the national anthem**

Many Americans watch sports to relax. They turn on the game to forget life's troubles.

Football player Colin Kaepernick may change that.

Kaepernick is not the only athlete who is protesting. In July, there was a protest in the Women's National Basketball Association. Players for the Minnesota Lynx wore Black Lives Matter T-shirts. Black Lives Matter is led by people who believe black people are treated unfairly in the United States.

Kaepernick is very famous, though. His actions have led to more protests.

Some people support Kaepernick. The public may not, though. Fewer people are watching football games this fall. A new survey says Kaepernick is the most disliked professional football player.

## **Protesting America**

People should be allowed to express their views. However, "The Star-Spangled Banner" is not a good thing to protest. By protesting this song, the athletes are protesting America.

Recently, there have been awful events between black men and the police. The police have killed men who did not have any weapons on them. Many think this was wrong. It's not America's fault, though. The people involved do not stand for the whole country.

## **Standing Tall For America**

If athletes want to make a difference, there are better ways.

Kaepernick has said he will give money to charities that work on fair treatment for all races. Maybe he should have done that before protesting.

Some athletes may sit during "The Star-Spangled Banner." However, those of us who are proud of America should stand tall. When "The Star-Spangled Banner" plays, it's not a time for politics.

*ABOUT THE WRITER: Merrill Matthews is a resident scholar with the Institute for Policy Innovation in Dallas, Texas.*