

# Republican Perspective

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by John Littig

## Kaepernick---Dissing the Anthem

A side-by-side picture titled "Two Quarterbacks" is circulating on the web. Tim Tebow taking a knee and praising God; Colin Kaepernick taking a butt to protest the Star Spangled Banner and, he says, America itself. The caption says: "Tebow prays--- Media criticizes him for expressing his beliefs on the field. Kaepernick sits during National Anthem---same media praises him for expressing his beliefs."

Looked to me like an issue crying to be written about. So I researched. As often happens, there was more to it than the side-by-side and its caption.

First of all, the caption was absolutely correct.

Heisman trophy winner Tebow was indeed vilified for expressing his faith. Commentary included: annoying, overexposed, religious nut-job. Descriptions of the commentary included: nastier, more personal, more intense; a torrent of mockery. Detractors were quoted as: delighting in every errant pass, wanting him to fall flat on his face. Tebow's worst offence was appearing in an anti-abortion Super Bowl commercial---he had good reason to participate since doctors had advised his mother to abort him because of anticipated birth defects. He owed his very life to her refusal. Among Tebow's defenders were fellow athletes Tim Hasselbeck, Curt Schilling, Kurt Warner, and pastor Howell Scott, who named the hatred "Tebow Derangement Syndrome."

Kaepernick, on the other hand, was lauded for dishonoring "The Star Spangled Banner." USA Today's headline proclaimed : "More power to 49ers' Colin Kaepernick for taking a stand against social injustice." Later, USA Today ran another article featuring the pro-Kaepernick position of Tommie Smith, who was ejected by the IOC from the U.S. team and from the Olympic village for his anti-American protest in 1968. NBA owner and billionaire Mark Cuban posted his support, including "Kaepernick has taught us we can still disagree in this country." The Boston Globe jumped in, praising Kaepernick's anti-American activism as similar to the "hands up don't shoot" and "I can't breathe" movements.

Why do I say anti-American? Well, here's why. The anthem, and the flag, are symbols of America. You can't diss the anthem and the flag and then still claim to love

America and its military. And Kaepernick himself saves us from debating that obscure and ludicrous position. He says: "I am not going to stand up and show pride in a flag of a *country* that oppresses black people..." He opposes the *country*, not just its symbol. He comes right out and says so.

Now you may think that Kaepernick has a First Amendment *right* to speak his beliefs---to disrespect our anthem, our flag, even our nation. And of course he does. But just because you have a *right* to do something does not mean that it is *right* to do it.

I was hoping (since there's a sequel coming) to end this writing on a high note. And I found that high note in White House spokesman Josh Earnest's statement: " I certainly, don't share the view that Mr. Kaepernick expressed....but we surely all acknowledge and even defend his right to express those views." Earnest also said Kaepernick's refusal to stand for the Anthem "objectionable." So I thought the White House had gotten it right: condemn Kaepernick's disrespect but acknowledge his right to be disrespectful.

Unfortunately, President Obama then weighed in. He pulled the rug out from under his spokesman and turned the high note sour.

Here's what Obama said: "...my understanding, at least, is that he's exercising his Constitutional right..." And: "...when it comes to the flag, the national anthem, and the meaning it holds for our men and women in uniform and those who fought for us, that is a tough thing for them to get past, to then hear what his deeper concerns are. But I don't doubt his sincerity...I think he cares about some real, legitimate issues that have to be talked about. And if nothing else, what he's done is he's generated more conversation around some topics that need to be talked about."

So Obama found nothing to criticize except that military people might find it difficult to overlook Kaepernick's action and thus not be able to appreciate his "deeper concerns." Obama voiced agreement with the importance of Kaepernick's message, but not even a hint of disagreement, let alone condemnation, of Kaepernick's disrespectful action. And he seemed to think only military people would care about that.

Ex-Niner Jerry Rice managed to say what Obama didn't: "don't disrespect the flag."

Next time, the sequel: "Kaepernick---Like Minds Think Alike."