

# Republican Perspective

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## Racist and Divisive Patriotism

In this year's Iowa State High School Boys Basketball Tournament, rivals Valley High and Des Moines North High faced off in the first round. Valley High's school colors are orange and black, but for this game many of their fans turned out in patriotic red, white, and blue.

Some supporters of North High charged racism. Huh? Erin, one of the North High moms, is quoted: "For the supporters of one team from a primarily white part of town to paint themselves as the 'team of the USA' it strongly implies that the other team, the less white team, is less American."

On the other side, Valley High student Mallorie said "This country is the United States of America and our colors are red, white, and blue no matter what color of skin you have or what race you are. The intention to offend anyone...was nowhere in the thoughts of any of our student body. Why would it be? We all live in America."

Valley High's student body is 76% white. North High's is 31% white (28% Hispanic, 25% Black, the remainder are other races). Some of the reporting says that North High has a significant but unspecified population of refugees, but I've been unable find any data on this. So the thinking goes that displays of patriotism by Americans, in America, is offensive to minorities and refugees (if there are any refugees in Des Moines). An odd concept that refugees would resent the national symbols of their refuge, but let's forge ahead.

Complainers at North High included the assistant coach, but not the head coach who said that he did not notice the USA apparel or see sinister intention by the Valley High students, "...we are proud of our diversity at North High..." So not all saw it the same way.

There were, of course, the inevitable allegations of racial slurs, including the chant "deport them." These may have been imaginary, since none of the officials, administrators, or teachers present said they heard any such thing.

Apparently Valley High supporters come decked out in USA apparel for games they believe to be of special significance. (Probably a more likely occurrence in the heartland than here on the left coast.) For example, they did it for their football game against Dowling Catholic High earlier this school year. More on that in a moment.

Probably the most discouraging comment came from North High student DeNasja: “Even if that was their theme for the game, I feel like they should have switched that because everyone knows North is a more diverse school.” Translation: minorities and refugees (if any) are rightly offended by American patriotism, so don’t display America’s colors.

Sadly, Valley High’s student council was moved to send the usual obligatory and groveling letter of apology (“deeply sorry if we have offended anyone”) but also pointed out “we have traditionally dressed in such a fashion for great games such as the one last night.”

Was it Valley High’s motive to demean North High for their diversity? Well, remember Dowling Catholic High? Dowling is 87% white compared to Valley High’s 76%. That would seem to militate against the claim of racial motivation for wearing the red, white, and blue.

But the bigger picture. The complainers claim offense at having to view the red, white, and blue. They go beyond being unsupportive, or even indifferent, but instead are hostile to America’s colors. Or at least hostile to having it displayed by a group perceived as whiter (and therefore more American?) than they are. This is very sad, because it says that we are no longer a melting pot but instead a hopelessly fractured society.

And a solution. Note to the offended: embrace your national colors. The Harlem Globe Trotters wear red, white, and blue. If they can do it, so can you. The flag is our common ground. The red, white, and blue belongs to all of us. Join up.

For those who care, Valley High won the game 57-55.