

Name _____ Date _____

What do you think? Using the following texts, discuss where you stand on the controversy of standing, kneeling, or sitting during the playing of the US National Anthem.

American Legion, VFW Call on NFL Players to Respect National Anthem

cnsnews.com

By Craig Bannister | September 26, 2017 | 10:37 AM EDT

The Veterans of Foreign Wars and The American Legion are openly criticizing National Football League (NFL) players for protesting the American flag by kneeling during the national anthem.

“There is a time and place for civil debate, and wearing team jerseys and using sporting events to disrespect our country doesn’t wash with millions of military veterans who have and continue to wear real uniforms on real battlefields around the globe,” VFW’s national commander Keith Harman, a Vietnam combat veteran, said in a statement Monday.

PATRIOTISM, RESPECT FOR FLAG CANNOT BE ‘ORDERED’

NEWSEUM

Posted on September 25, 2017 by Gene Policinski - *Chief operating officer of the Newseum Institute and of the Institute’s First Amendment Center.*

Donald Trump is singing the wrong song about freedom, patriotism and First Amendment values.

Over the weekend, Trump:

- Called on NFL owners to fire players who kneel or otherwise protest during the national anthem and display of the American flag
- Said fans should stop going to games to punish NFL team owners who fail to dismiss those players
- Observed that patriotism should be required of athletes in return for “the privilege of making millions of dollars” on the field.

Trump couldn’t be more off-tune about how to honor our flag, or more off-key on the core values of the First Amendment. It’s also worth noting he’s out of sync with what our own history tells us of failed government attempts to mandate patriotism with a law or an enforced ritual.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, speaking Sunday on ABC’s “This Week” said, “They (high-profile athletes) can do free speech on their own time.”

Multiple owners also pushed against Trump’s admonition, saying they support players’ sincere attempts to call attention to serious social ills. New England’s Robert Kraft, described as a longtime Trump buddy, said he was “deeply disappointed by the tone of the comments made by the President.” Kraft said, “I think political leaders could learn a lot from the lessons of teamwork and the importance of working together toward a common goal,” and that he supports players’ “right to peacefully affect social change and raise awareness in a manner they feel is most impactful.”

Those last words echo a 2011 Supreme Court decision that defended free speech even under what most would consider despicable circumstances — using funerals as places of political protest. In writing the majority opinion in *Snyder v. Phelps*, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote “Speech is powerful. It can stir people to action, move them to tears of both joy and sorrow, and — as it did here — inflict great pain. On the facts before us, we cannot react to that pain by punishing the speaker. As a Nation we have chosen a different course — to protect even hurtful speech on public issues to ensure that we do not stifle public debate.”

Our nation was born of dissent — skillfully documented in Stephen Solomon’s “*Revolutionary Dissent: How the Founding Generation Created the Freedom of Speech*” — and has a long history in which public protest both echoed public sentiment or brought marginalized views into the mainstream consciousness, from Colonial-era protests over taxes to the long battle over slavery and segregation, to women’s suffrage and dozens of other major issues. Even before they were written into our Constitution, the First Amendment rights of free speech, press, assembly and petition have been the engines of social change.

The principle behind protecting unpopular protests was upheld in 1989 in a case that declared that even desecrating the flag itself as a means of protest was beyond the power of presidents or Congress to exact punishment. “If there is a

bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable,” the court said in *Texas v. Johnson*.

NFL players kneel for anthem in unprecedented defiance of Trump

The Guardian

Bryan Armen Graham and Martin Pengelly in New York

Sunday 24 September 2017 18:11 EDT

“If NFL fans refuse to go to games until players stop disrespecting our Flag & Country, you will see change take place fast. Fire or suspend!” Trump wrote on Twitter. “NFL attendance and ratings are WAY DOWN. Boring games yes, but many stay away because they love our country. League should back US.”

Later, at an impromptu media scrum as he headed back to Washington from his Bedminster, New Jersey golf club, Trump was asked if he was inflaming racial tensions by criticising protesting players who are almost all black.

“This has nothing to do with race,” he said. “I never said anything about race. This has nothing to do with race or anything else. This has to do with respect for our country and respect for our flag.”

Marc Short, White House director of legislative affairs, told Fox News Sunday players had “a first amendment right” to protest but added: “NFL owners also have a right to fire those players.”

The Hall of Fame quarterback Kurt Warner addressed the issue on the NFL Network.

“[The flag is] a symbol of the ideals of our great country: one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all,” he said. “The anthem: it’s a reminder to us of those things. The president of the United States, his role is to uphold and to fight for the rights of every person, every American. And so when I heard the comments, I was so disappointed because I believe [Trump’s] comments are completely contradictory to what the flag represents.

“We have this narrative that these protests are contradictory to our flag and contradictory to our military. I don’t see them that way. I see them as complementary to the ideals to the flag, to the military and what they fought for.

“I have not heard one player that has not been more than grateful to our military. This isn’t about that at all. It’s about standing up for the ideals of the flag.”

A Louisiana High School Just Threatened to Bench Athletes Who Kneel During the Anthem

“The players and coaches should stand when our National Anthem is played in a show of respect.”

Mother Jones

Edwin Rios Sep. 28, 2017 2:28 PM

Less than a week after President Donald Trump railed against NFL players protesting police brutality by kneeling during the national anthem, the principal of a Louisiana high school sent a memo making it clear that student-athletes who don’t stand during the anthem would face a loss of playing time and, if they continued, removal from their team.

The directive came after Scott Smith, superintendent of the Bossier Parish School District, where Parkway High School is located, issued a statement that said students should stand during “The Star-Spangled Banner” out of respect for military personnel.

“In Bossier Parish, we believe when a student chooses to join and participate on a team, the players and coaches should stand when our National Anthem is played in a show of respect,” read Smith’s statement. “Our principals and their coaching staffs have sole discretion in determining consequences should a student athlete elect not to stand during the National Anthem and they are making their expectations known to players and their families this week. As Superintendent, my administration will be in full support of these school-based decisions.”

The district’s announcement quickly drew criticism from civil liberties advocates, who noted that the Supreme Court ruled in 1943 that it was unconstitutional for a school to require a student to stand during patriotic ceremonies like the Pledge of Allegiance. Punishments for kneeling during the anthem, they argued, likely wouldn’t hold up in court.