The Controversial Issue Of Kneeling Down During A National Anthem

Posted on March 22, 2019

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Introduction

The national anthem of the USA is known as “The Star-Spangled Banner”, which was officially recognized on 3rd March 1931. It was signed by the then-president of the USA, Herbert Hoover. Before 1931, other songs like “Hail, Columbia” and “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” were sung at the American officialdom. However, these songs did not get the status of the American national anthem. The lyrics of the anthem are from a poem written on 14 September 1814 by an American amateur poet named Francis Scott Key.

When the national anthem was first recognized, there was no prescribed behavior during its playing; however, in 1942, a law was passed stating that men wearing uniforms should salute during the playing, and men should remove their hats and stand at attention. By the end of that year, the law was revised, and now both men and women had to stand up with their hands over their hearts and face the direction of the music. Since then, numerous changes in the law were made regarding the behavior of the listeners during the playing of the national anthem. But there was never a law to kneel down during the national anthem. The tradition of kneeling down started as a protest in 2016, when some of the U.S. athletes kneeled down in protest against police brutality and racial inequality. Since then, kneeling down during a national anthem has been a controversial issue.

Discussion

The poem “Defense of Fort M’Henry” was written in 1814; this was the time when the United States of America was in a state of war with the United Kingdom. The war occurred because of the British attempt to block trade routes in the USA. The United States suffered a lot during this war because the British were the greatest naval power at that time, and America was not so strong. The war resulted in the capture of American troops and the burning of the capital, Washington DC, in 1814. However, the American troops were able to stop the British invasion in many states. Francis Scott Key wrote this poem during his trip to Maryland; he was highly impressed with the fact that despite America facing hardships during the war, the flag of America was still flying over the fort in the morning after a night of bombardments (Whiteley). His poem was published a week later and was made the national anthem by Congress a few years later.

The tune of the national anthem was inspired by a popular British song, “To Anacreon in Heaven.” The tune of this poem is quite difficult to sing for those who are nonprofessional singers because of its wide range and high pitch. The lyrics of the Star-Spangled Banner are also relatively challenging to memorize. The lyrics of the anthem are deeply embedded in the history of the USA, which is full of wars. In the lyrics, the use of words like brave and freedom depicts the significance of these two attributes in the life of the American people (Ferris). The Star-Spangled Banner is usually played at the start of public sports events and concerts in the United States. The controversy of kneeling down during the national anthem started in 2016 as a protest by athletes against ethnic discrimination and law enforcement agency ruthlessness. The protests began when Colin Kaepernick, an American football player, sat down and then kneeled during the playing of the national anthem in the National Football League (NFL). This was against the tradition of standing during the playing of the national anthem. The action of Colin Kaepernick received mixed reactions from Americans as some called it discourteous to the US flag and an unpatriotic act. The protesters believed that kneeling down was better than sitting as a silent protest against racial discrimination. They stated that their actions would bring to light the issue on which the world is silent. On the other hand, many people believed it to be disrespectful towards the people who had died for the sake of the country. And many others believed it to be disrespectful towards the whole country.

Despite much negative feedback, the practice of kneeling down during sports events by players became more widespread in 2017. More than 200 players kneeled down during National Football League (NFL) games as a protest in response to the situation where U.S. President Donald Trump called on the owners to terminate the players who were protesting. Donald Trump also believes that kneeling during the playing of the national anthem is disrespectful towards the military (Edelman).

Conclusion

A national anthem is a beautiful thing which ignites a sense of patriotism in the heart of every listener. During the playing of the national anthem, everybody feels proud of their country and of the men who gave their lives for the sake of their country. It is important to respect the national anthem in every possible way and to follow the protocols during the playing of the national anthem. The Star-Spangled Banner has a beautiful 200-year-long history, and the lyrics of the poem remind us of the glorious past of America and the hardships faced by our country during the war. I believe that although it is very important to raise a voice against issues of ethnic discrimination and police brutality, there are 100 different ways to protest against the issues apart from disrespecting the national anthem.

Works Cited

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