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DWA (District Writing Assessment) Essay

“Was refusing to stand during the National Anthem a sign of disrespect to America?”

It has always been a tradition to take a stand during the national anthem in order to honor those we have lost. Yet sometimes it is just fine to break those tradition and trends. Throughout the past year, NFL players such as Colin Kaepernick and Brandon Marshall have taken a knee during the national anthem when it has been played in their football games. When Colin Kaepernick first did this on August 26, 2016, the public was shocked and angered at Kaepernick’s actions. Many people argued that his actions were disrespectful to those who had fought in wars. Yet others believed Kaepernick’s actions were not disrespectful at all and has gotten people who have suffered from racial injustice to feel they are not alone in this combat and that they are not alone in this combat and that there are people thinking about these situations. These situations have lead to multiple arguments based on whether or not this was the right thing to do, and whether it was disrespectful. Though, it can be said that the NFL players did not commit a disrespectful action as they are guaranteed their freedom of protest by the First Amendment, should be able to use their free voice, and are just trying to protest against raciality and police brutality.

To begin with, what the NFL players had done was not disrespectful as they are guaranteed the freedom to do this. For instance, the First Amendment, adapted by Cornell Law School, states, “It guarantees freedom of expression by prohibiting CONgress from restricting the press or the right of individuals to speak freely. It also guarantees the right of citizens to assemble peacefully and to petition their government.” Meaning everyone has the right to speak freely about anything, even the government, through words or actions. And this was just what these football players had been doing. All these football players were using their free speech. As long as they are protected by the law, these actions should not be considered disrespectful.

Another article listing the Pros and Cons of refusing to stand for the national anthem (Document A) explains, “When a person believes the United States of America is not living up to its ideals of freedom, liberty, and justice for all, refusing to stand for the national anthem is appropriate and justified. Protest is a guaranteed freedom in the United States Constitution.” This shows kneeling is not a disrespectful action as it is a type of freedom that is definitely written in the Constitution as it is a type of protest. Essentially, since our law states that protest is a protected speech, it should be declared that kneeling during the national anthem is not disrespectful as it is a protest protected by law.

The NFL player’s actions during the national anthem are not considered disrespectful as the people who took action to do this should use their free voice, apart from the fact that it is protected by law. Document A explains the pros and cons of this. It then states, “NFL commissioner ROger Goodell originally disagreed with those actions, but later said: ‘I truly respect our players wanting to speak out and change the community... We want them to use their that voice.’” In other words, the football players should be allowed to use their free voice as they

are trying to speak out against racial injustice. And when using one's free voice, their actions should not be considered disrespectful and unhonorable. Not only that but the same article continues to explain, "The San Francisco 49ers said in a statement, 'In respecting such American principles as freedom of religion and freedom of expression, we recognize the right of an individual to choose and participate, or not, in our celebration of the national anthem.'" What this means is that the individuals should be able to use their free voice as they have the right to be doing what they did. If people are allowed to show their opinion on something as it is in their right and since they should speak out, then one's behavior and actions should not be thought of as disrespectful. Same goes for the NFL players as they should be using their free voice; and, as a result, their actions were not disrespectful.

Lastly, to conclude it all, the NFL players' decision to kneel was not dishonorable as they were simply trying to prove their point and protest against raciality and police brutality. According to Brandon Marshall, he states in Document A, "the message is I'm against social injustice... I'm not against military or police or America at all." Meaning that all he was doing was protesting, and there is nothing wrong with protesting based on one's beliefs or thoughts should never be categorized as disrespectful, NOT only that but the same goes document states, "A letter signed by 35 US veterans states that 'Far from disrespecting our troops, there is no finer form of appreciation for our sacrifice than for Americans to enthusiastically exercise their freedom of speech. In other words, these veterans were basically stating that the football players' actions were not disrespectful to them as they were simply protesting the ways of American society and government. Through their actions of protest, the NFL players had caused rage as ,any argued this to be very dishonorable to those who fought in war. However, it should be

considered that protest is not a disrespect to our country and more of an honor for showing one's beliefs.

Ultimately, what these NFL players have been doing is not disrespectful as they are protected by law, they should use their free voice, and since they were just protesting certain circumstances.