

Colin Kaepernick, The Super Patriotic Draft Dodger's Rag: "Fire the Son-of-a-Bitch"

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*So I wish you well, Sarge, give 'em Hell!
Kill me a thousand or so
And if you ever get a war without blood and gore
I'll be the first to go
– Phil Ochs, The Draft Dodger's Rag*

*"Guess that makes me a proud bitch."
– Teresa Kaepernick, Colin Kaepernick's mother's response to Trump's comment about her son.*

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In the true spirit of patriotic opposition, Colin Kaepernick took a courageous knee when he protested the current and historical treatment of black Americans and people of color during the playing of the National Anthem. For his patriotism, the NFL has made sure he remains unemployed, and now, when our reality-television president urges NFL teams to fire any "son-of-a-bitch" who dares follow Kaepernick's example, the NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell releases a sanctimonious statement calling Trump's demented words "divisive comments," revealing an "unfortunate lack of respect" for NFL players. NFL owners and others chimed in with the word of the day – "divisive." Exactly who is being divided from whom is left to speculation?

The hypocrisies of this lurid spectacle continue to mount daily.

Kaepernick knelt on principle during the Obama presidency. His was a lonely act. Now that the buffoonish Trump tweets and speaks his grotesqueries, it has become easy to emerge from the woodwork and join the crowd in supporting the man who made his solitary witness. Cheap grace, the German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer termed the desire for "salvation" without paying a price. He said this before being executed by Hitler for his opposition to Nazism.

Who among those kneeling today in solidarity with Kaepernick are willing to pay a price? What's the NFL's price? The Tycoons who own the teams? Who among them agrees with a man who gave his life for black liberation, Dr. Martin Luther King, who made it emphatically clear that the fight against racism involved opposing a trinity of devils when he said:

We must recognize that we can't solve our problem now until there is a radical

redistribution of economic and political power... this means a revolution of values and other things. We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together... you can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others... the whole structure of American life must be changed. America is a hypocritical nation and [we] must put [our] own house in order.

Colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, racism – this is U.S. history, not the myths proffered by mythmakers, politicians, and schools. The system of exploitation is old and enduring, and the point of its spear is war. It is great that many players join in solidarity with Kaepernick. Racism must be opposed and freedom of speech exercised and defended. But it would be better indeed if more of those who rightly oppose Trump's disgusting comments and support Kaepernick speak out about the triple devils King warned about. The system of racial exploitation does not stand alone; never has. Nor will it fall alone.

The Star Spangled Banner is a celebration of war, meant to stir martial emotions. It also contains racist lyrics. And football is the war sport par excellence, extremely violent, and deeply tied to the spectacle of cruelty that dominates American society today and that has caused so much suffering for black people and other people of color for centuries. In the 1960s, Brazilian television, in an effort to distinguish football (soccer) from American football, aptly termed it "military football." And while it, like other sports, has been an avenue to wealth and "success" for some black Americans (a tiny minority), its war-like structure and violent nature is noted with a nod and a wink. Heck, it's fun to play and exciting to watch, and is just a colorful spectacle that we can't do without, despite all the concussions, pain killers, and crippling life-long injuries. Lasting effects similar to those suffered by veterans returned from war zones. The gridiron is a war zone.

That the NFL is a conditioning agent for the love of war and violent aggression is usually passed over. Its language, like all good linguistic mind control, becomes powerfully invisible.

Colin Kaepernick, like all quarterbacks, is the field general who throws bombs to flankers as he tries to avoid the blitz. Each team defends and conquers the enemy's territory, pushing its opponent back through frontal assaults and pounding the enemy's line. This is mixed with deceptive formations and aerial assaults behind the opponent's line. When none of this works and the enemy goes on the offensive, a different platoon is brought in to defend one's territory. One's front line must then defend against a frontal assault and hit back hard.

The analogies are everywhere, and as with many aspects of "everywhere," what's everywhere is nowhere – its familiarity making it invisible and therefore all the more powerful.

In a society of the spectacle, NFL football is the most spectacular and entertaining mass hypnotic induction into the love of war and violence that we have. Goodell says that "the NFL and our players are at our best when we help create a sense of unity in our country and our culture." These are swell sounding words that were essentially forced out of his mouth by Trump's mad rantings. Words involving a double-entendre as well: The good of being united against racism on one hand, if that is what Goodell meant; the bad of being united to promote patriotic militarism, violence, and war on the other. Hypocritical contradictions, at best.

And where in all this is Colin Kaepernick, the forgotten man? Has he decided to study war no

more, but to study Dr. King's true legacy and his naming of the three demons that must be confronted and exorcised if MLK's "Beloved Community" is to be established?

Great ironies abound here. Who among Kaepernick's current supporters said one word when the mixed-race, neo-liberal Democrat, Barack Obama, suavely mass murdered his way around the world with seven wars, while showing his "cool" skills on the basketball court? Coolness works. Obama was given a free ride. More than that; he was treated like a rock star by the entertainment/sports complex. And now that he is cashing in with speeches to Wall Street, who calls him out on that? Obama, while always standing front stage, was all about operating back stage, very CIA-like. "One may smile, and smile, and be a villain," wrote Shakespeare, who was quite an expert on acting.

Trump is the obverse. His back stage is his front stage. He is an easy target. He makes himself one; thinks coolness is to generate heat and draw audience attention to it. It is an aspect of his celebrity reality-TV mindset: create buzz around your "brand," make it hot, whether good or bad, it doesn't matter. Titillate, provoke, tweet garbage sure to arouse passions. Agitate the audience. He is an expert at feeding the beast that is America's entertainment circus, the spectacle of con-men and prestidigitators extraordinaire. Flip Trump and you have Obama. Flip Obama and you have George W. Bush. Flip George and you have Bill Clinton. Flip Bill and you have the tail that wags the dog - Hillary. Or the reverse. Rotating little people going round and round, in and out, disappearing and appearing on a cuckoo clock with terrible music and mockingbird sounds.

There's only one coin in these United States, and it's counterfeit.

Trump goes to the United Nations and says he is "ready, willing, and able to totally destroy North Korea" and its 25 million people. Who will take a knee for the North Korean people threatened by the public ranting of a man willing to commit genocide?

Who took a knee for the world when Obama announced a 1 trillion dollar nuclear weapons upgrade? When he savagely attacked Libya, Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan; sent drones worldwide in search of victims? Did the NFL issue a statement of condemnation on the deaths of innocent children at the receiving end of American bombs?

Who is linking arms for all the innocent victims killed by Trump in eight months? What communities are the NFL Commissioner and team owners referring to when they say the league and the players are forces for good in our communities? Does "ours" mean a small circle of friends, outside of which the enemies lurk who should be annihilated? Over there, over there, send the bombs, send the bombs, over there. Far from our "communities." Is that the theme song? Is that the distinction?

What about Dr. King's "Beloved Community"?

Our goal is to create a beloved community and
this will require a qualitative change in our souls
as well as a quantitative change in our lives.

Who will take a knee for a radical redistribution of economic and political power? Who will link arms for the end to capitalist exploitation and the amassing of obscene wealth by a few at the expense of the many? Who will refuse to support war and war-making? Who will tell it like it is and say that the demon of racism can only be eliminated if the others are? Liberals

won't. Conservatives won't. Who will? Who will pay a price?

MLK paid the ultimate price for confronting these demons. When U.S. government forces killed him in Memphis, he had taken a knee for all the exploited and oppressed people of the world community, the beloved community.

"America is a hypocritical nation and [we] must put [our] own house in order," he told us.

Hypocritical comes from the Greek *hypokrites*, a stage actor; pretender, dissembler. There are too many actors on this stage of moral outrage – far too many hypocrites. For years many NFL teams accepted Pentagon money to pimp for the war makers, but their pimping days started long before and continue to the present day, even if they say they no longer accept their client's payoff. What do the owners stand for? Capital accumulation? Exploitation? War? And all the liberals jumping on the moral outrage train of racism? Obama was okay as he killed, maimed, and exploited – wasn't that their silent mantra? So Trump is a conservative? What kind of true conservative would threaten foreign wars and tweet absurdities?

Welcome to the phony circus, where the man on the hire wire, the daring one, Colin Kaepernick, is home studying American history and learning about all the confidence men.

So I hope and pray.

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