

# FORUM

## In defense of Kaepernick's 'stand'

**Ron Daniels**  
Guest Columnist

The uproar continues over San Francisco 49er quarterback Colin Kaepernick's



Colin Kaepernick

decision to sit down, rather than stand, during the playing of the National Anthem. Kaepernick said his decision was intended to protest the continued injustices being inflicted on Black people, including police brutality and killings.

Though the negative tide has turned somewhat, his protest was initially met with a torrent of criticism from various quarters. He was called everything but a child of God for refusing to "honor America" and our men and women in the armed forces. The "love it or leave it" sentiment was very strong.

Indeed, Frederick Douglas might well have whispered into the ear of Colin Kaepernick, "Right on, Brother. What to Black people is your Anthem and your Flag!" Or Kaepernick may have been inspired by an "American icon," Jackie Robinson, who reflected in his autobiography on standing for the Flag as he carried the weight of the race on his shoulders as the first African-American to play Major League Baseball: "As I write this twenty years later, I cannot stand and sing the anthem. I cannot salute the flag; I know that I am a black man in a white world."

In many respects, Jackie Robinson, a World War II veteran, was/is symbolic of all the men and women, the patient patriots, who paid the price for Colin Kaepernick to sit or kneel during the playing of the National Anthem and the salute to the Flag. Africans in America and people of conscience and goodwill should resolve to stand with and defend him in his righteous pursuit to end the oppression and injustice of Africans in America. No struggle, no progress!

Dr. Ron Daniels is president of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century and Distinguished Lecturer at York College City University of New York. His articles and essays also appear on the IBW website [www.ibw21.org](http://www.ibw21.org) and [www.northstarnews.com](http://www.northstarnews.com).

Washington reluctantly armed to fight in the battles of Bunkers Hill and Breed Hill, to the thousands who took up arms to fight for our own freedom in the Civil War, Black people have fought, bled and died aspiring to be free in a nation which repeatedly rewarded our military service with a failure to protect and defend us as citizens.

We have been among America's most patient patriots.

Thousands of Black troops went off to fight Kaiser Wilhelm during the First World War to save democracy, only to return to the United States to be gunned down in the streets in their military uniforms in the "bloody red summer of 1919." We fought against Hitler and Tojo in the Second World War to once again return to an America where we were not free. Soldiers fresh off the battlefields faced humiliation, intimidation, lynching/murders and police violence in the segregated South and "dark ghettos" in the North.

Indeed, the hypocrisy of fighting for freedom and democracy abroad while being denied "freedom and justice for all" at home helped to fuel the civil rights, human rights, Black Power and Nationalists/Pan Africanists movements

through which change can be galvanized.

And, Colin Kaepernick has courageously chosen to exercise his First Amendment right to point out longstanding, persistent injustices, "intolerable acts" that are being heaped upon African-Americans who are supposed to be full citizens of this nation -

Most importantly, generations of African-Americans have paid the price for Colin Kaepernick and any Black person to sit during the playing of a flawed Anthem replete with hypocrisy.

Every time I hear the words "that our Flag was still there" in the Anthem, I'm filled with anger/outrage. When the War of 1812 was fought, some 3.5 million Africans were still enslaved and the 500,000 or so "free" Blacks could not vote and were subject to racial discrimination and violence. "Our Flag?" We didn't have a Flag. For Black folks, singing that line and most of the Anthem is ludicrous!

That notwithstanding, Blacks have spilled blood to protect and defend America even when America refused to protect and defend Black people. From Crispus Attucks, who died in the initial skirmish of the American Revolution, to the hundreds of "freedmen" whom George

So, when I took to the airways for my weekly radio show Vantage Point on WBAI, 99.5 FM on the Pacifica Network in New York, I unleashed a commentary which made the following points (listen to the commentary at [www.ibw21.org](http://www.ibw21.org)):

Colin Kaepernick There is no law that states that anyone must stand during the playing of the National Anthem or the Pledge of Alliance to the Flag. It is a strongly held "custom" and societal expectation that one stand, but no law which compels it.

On the contrary, Colin Kaepernick has a constitutional right to express his views through protest. Freedom of speech is one of the most important cornerstones of this imperfect union. It is one of the avenues

What you need to know about voting on Nov. 8

Julianne Malveaux Guest Columnist

Are you ready to vote? Are you registered? These may seem like simplistic questions, especially for those who are aware, but every year some folks are denied access to the polls, because they didn't register on time, or they moved and their address does not match the address the registrar of voters has, or SOMETHING.

The presidential election is likely to be a nail-biter, and there are local races that are also close. Your best bet is to make sure you know what the requirements for voting are in your state. Check out [www.vote.com](http://www.vote.com); the site lists the requirements for all 50 states.

A few states (now including North Carolina) allow voter registration on the day of an election, but most states require you to

register between 11 and 30 days before the vote. Some states allow online registration, most allow registration by mail (with requirements about the date a registration is post-marked), and almost all allow in-person registration.

The terms and conditions of voting are still being negotiated in some states, so it makes sense to stay on top of voting rules. A federal appeals court recently kicked discriminatory North Carolina voting terms to the curb, saying that that state discriminated against African-Americans with "surgical precision."

Efforts to reduce the number of days available for early voting, or to eliminate Sunday voting, disproportionately affect African-American voters. North Carolina Republicans are deliberate and mindful in their attempt to sideline African-American voters, since most African-Americans are Democrats. They want to deliver their state to Donald Trump and they want to ensure that

Sen. Richard Burr and Gov. Pat McCrory, both Republicans, are also re-elected.

North Carolina isn't the only state with electoral shenanigans. Texas, Kansas, Georgia and Alabama have also implemented restrictive measures that are being appealed by civil rights groups, the League of Women Voters, the NAACP and others. [A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia on Sept. 9 blocked Kansas, Georgia and Alabama from adding proof-of-citizenship requirement to voter registration form.]

Disputes revolve around things like absentee ballots, purges of inactive voters, and issues of whether ballots will count if they are cast in the wrong precincts. In our "democracy," it seems that we do more to discourage voters than encourage them, and while the voting process could be seamless, plans to prevent as many as 50,000 Kansas voters from going to the polls, for

example, make no sense in a "participatory democracy."

Some folks don't want it to be participatory, though. Republicans now control most state legislatures, and have been passing voter suppression laws since 2010, when they began to take control of state houses. Civic participation organizations, like the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the National Coalition for Black Civic Participation, and others, are fighting back, preparing to have people available to help voters, especially in battleground states, and with hot lines (1-866-OUR-VOTE) and other forms of voter assistance. In an election that is likely to be close, it is important that every voice be heard.

I'm still not clear why polling suggests that this vote is so close. Secretary Hillary Clinton, for all her imperfections, is a stunningly superior candidate to the bumbling Donald Trump who just recently praised Russia's Vladimir

Putin as a "better leader" than President Obama. Now, that's just downright unpatriotic, not to mention short-sided, and tone-deaf. While folks are running Colin Kaepernick down for being unpatriotic, Trump gets away with comments that border on the treasonous, and is still considered a "credible" candidate for president. Really?

Donald Trump goes to one Black church and gets all kind of mainstream media coverage. Hillary Clinton visits numerous Black churches, and the mainstream media is absent. Donald Trump blusters his way through an interview with Matt Lauer on national security, and is hardly challenged and, certainly, never interrupted. Hillary Clinton offers substance to an extremely biased Lauer who was, at best, unprepared for the interview. Instead of getting kudos on her performance, too many have noticed that Hillary didn't smile. National security is no laughing matter, folks.

We have stark choices in this election, but some of us won't be making choices because we won't be prepared to vote on Nov. 8. Now is the time to make sure you are prepared.

Are you registered? Where will you vote? Will you be out of town or unable to get to the polls on Nov. 8? Can you do early voting or vote via an absentee ballot? These aren't questions to ask on Nov. 5; they are questions to ask now. Don't shake your head on Nov. 9 and say you didn't like the outcome if you didn't bother to vote on Nov. 8. The stakes are high!

NNPA Newswire Columnist Julianne Malveaux is an author, economist and president emeritus of Bennett College in Greensboro. Her latest book "Are We Better Off? Race, Obama and Public Policy" is available via [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

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