

What NFL Players Get Wrong about America

It started with Colin Kaepernick, the San Francisco 49ers quarterback who, before he was let go, made headlines for taking a knee during the playing of the national anthem to protest perceived wrongs against racial minorities.

Then other NFL players followed suit.

Now even [eight year-old football players in Cahokia, IL](#), are getting into the act.

Eight year-olds? Protesting racial injustice? Do they even know what it is?

The controversy caused by these protests is now a major league headache for the NFL. One blogger today posted a picture of the consequences of the politicization of his favorite sport: A [half-empty 49ers stadium](#) for Thursday Night Football.

But here is my question: Why are these players protesting during a ceremony in which we take a brief bow to the principles of our country? That's what singing the national anthem is. That's what putting our hands over our hearts means.

It is an acknowledgment that we live in a country which, however well it does or doesn't live up to them, honors certain principles: That we are all created equal, that we all enjoy the "unalienable" rights of life, liberty, and happiness.

Why would you protest the real or perceived infringement of these rights during a ceremony that honors them?

What these players don't get is the distinction between *America* and *Americans*.

America is the set of ideals that we profess as a nation. They are outlined most importantly in the Declaration of Independence. I'm willing to bet that most of the NFL players who take a knee during the playing of the national anthem couldn't tell you a single thing about what is in that document. In fact, most if not all of them have probably never even read it.

Americans are those of us who enjoy the benefits of these principles, but often do not live up to their high aspirations.

Even if all of the concerns about racial injustice were justified, the ceremony in which the national anthem is played is the last place you should be protesting. To do so is to imply that these principles are the cause of the injustices they are protesting. But they're not.

They're the cure.