

Take heart, Colin Kaepernick. They hated us in the 1960s too

by Charles E Cobb, Jr

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The backlash against [Colin Kaepernick](#) – and all of his colleagues who are refusing to stand for the national anthem – is growing. His protest against racism and police brutality is being widely panned as ‘unpatriotic’ and some have gone as far as to call him a ‘traitor’. I would say the backlash is puzzling, except it’s not. I have long recognized that this is a common response to black protest – one I witnessed as far back as the civil rights movement.

Within the context of sports protest, the raised black-gloved fists of protest by John Carlos and Tommie Smith at the 1968 Mexico Olympics comes immediately to mind. Less noticed than their dramatically raised fists, was the fact that both athletes wore black socks and no shoes when they accepted their medals. This was to represent the poverty of African-Americans in the United States. They suffered insult and abuse when they returned home. Time magazine wrote: “Faster, Higher, Stronger” is the motto of the Olympic Games. “‘Angrier, nastier, uglier’ better describes the scene in Mexico City last week”

Most Americans opposed the sit-ins when they erupted in 1960; and opposed the Freedom Rides when they took place in 1961. Young black people were pushing too hard, demanding too much too soon was the typical charge. The country was changing; give it time. Most black people it should be said here were not engaged in sit-ins or Freedom Rides for there was risk, sometimes great risk, involved in public protest. But it also must be said that the country changed because of aggressive pushing against segregation and white supremacy and the silence that supported it.

Protest will always make someone uncomfortable, or governments uncomfortable. It is, however, the American way – a liberty for which blood has been shed at home and overseas. The civil rights movement of the 1960s, for example, was not only a struggle for civil rights, but for civil liberties – the right to speak and to engage in public protest.

And yet, to this day, some forms of protest are more criticized than others. I cannot help but notice that the public rage being directed at Kaepernick and those emulating him is disproportionate. Compare Kaepernick’s ‘crime’ with that of the Bundy brothers and their group, which orchestrated an armed takeover of a federal wildlife refuge in Oregon. While Kaepernick has been called unpatriotic, the Bundy brothers and the rest of the so-called Citizens for Constitutional Freedom were never labeled that way.

Those behind the takeover of the wildlife refuge felt that they were acting to assert an American way of life they felt was under assault. Yet Kaepernick and his colleagues feel that their lives are under assault too, that they do not matter, to borrow from a slogan currently rising in prominence politically. As these football field protests have grown from a single act to actions by a growing number, so too has the backlash.

And, while I draw the line at violent protest such as the armed Malheur National Wildlife Refuge protest or Ku Klux Klan terrorism which plagued the country for a century after the Civil War, I do not make a distinction between good protest and bad protest.

There are protests that reflect what I agree with or what I believe in and those that do not. But that issue is not fundamental to their legitimacy. The protesting athletes are simply trying to push the country to live up to its professed ideals. To accuse them of being unpatriotic – now that is what seems un-American to me.

Civil Disobedience; A Necessary Evil, but Still An Evil

By Justitia | Sept. 8, 2016

Civil disobedience is a necessary "evil" but an "evil" nonetheless. It has always been an effective tool for bringing attention to an issue and affecting change, but civil disobedience, in itself, must always be punished and never directly rewarded.

According to the Lawrence Journal World about 20 protesters staged a sit-in at the Tuesday City Commission meeting demanding that the Commission sign letters of support with Black Lives Matters and with American Indians protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. The meeting was disrupted for 45 minutes and the Commission caved to the protesters' demands issuing letters at a special meeting on Wednesday.

We are seeing more of this type of protest. We have seen protesters blocking roads to prevent people from getting to work or events. Protesters have disrupted public and private meetings. And we have seen protesters stand-off against the government. These types of protest are nothing new. The Founders of our country first did it with the Boston Tea Party and later led an armed revolution against the government. It has always been part of the American culture.

However, whether I believe in the cause or not, I contend that any protester that disrupts a meeting, trespasses on public or private property (yes, this includes the Bundys), or violates the law should be punished and not rewarded. We cannot reward people for protests that violate the law and attempt to coerce the government and others to acquiesce to the protesters' demand.

Our government, and in the above case, the Lawrence City Commission, sets a dangerous precedent when they reward illegal behavior. The sit-in protesters were rewarded for disrupting the Commission meeting; like petulant children throwing a temper tantrum, they got their way. The Commission has now opened the door to other protesters encouraging them to throw "temper tantrums" by disrupting meetings to bring attention to their cause. The protesters, rightfully should expect that in the name of equal treatment, no legal action be taken against them.

Our country has legal ways of petitioning the government and they should be the first course of action to affect change. It is acknowledged that they do not always work and sometimes more drastic action is needed, but we should never accept unlawful action, regardless of the cause. To do so is to risk devolving into anarchy.

A civilized nation needs rules of law that must be enforced, but it also needs those brave enough to challenge those rules by breaking them. It takes courage and conviction to stand against unjust government actions, but it is courageous only if there are consequences for those actions. When there is no consequence, courage simply becomes chaos. With chaos comes anarchy and with anarchy comes the ruin of a nation.

No cause is so just that illegal behavior intended to coerce should be rewarded because it decays the foundation of our great nation. Illegal protests, especially violent ones, by groups or individuals, whether they be the Black Lives Movement, the Bundys, pro-life groups, or college students must not become the norm; our nation's survival depends upon it.

The petulant child throwing a temper tantrum "reward" should be a time-out, not giving them their way.