

It's a Grand Old Flag

Professional athletes knelt or put their fists up in the air when the anthem was sung. Didn't they go to school? Don't they know the rules?

In the small town in Oklahoma where I grew up, I shivered as "Old Glory" passed on parade. In school, we learned how to hang the flag (stars on the upper left) and where to place our hand (over the heart) when we said the pledge of allegiance. We learned how to dispose of it when it was old and worn. They were more than suggestions. Everyone did it. It was the right thing to do.

When our flag enters the arena at the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, I get goosebumps. Likewise, when they hoist the flag and play the anthem as one of our athletes is awarded a gold medal. When the flag married sports, it didn't bother me. Today some kids think the last two words of our national anthem are: "Play ball."

The athletes defended it as freedom of speech. The Constitution guarantees it. So, what's their point?

They say something is wrong in our country. No one should be surprised. Politicians say that and ask for our vote so they can fix it. Religious leaders regularly tell us our country needs to be changed.

When football players and owners knelt, they said what politicians and religious leaders say every time they open their mouths. "We think something is wrong in our democracy, and we should fix it."

If there is anything wrong in our country, the person who calls our attention to it—politician, religious leader, sports figure, or PTA president—is more of a patriot than those of us who don't speak up.

"Black Lives Matter" does not imply white lives *don't* matter. The message is the life of a black person should not matter less than the life of a white person. Overwhelming evidence suggests the life of a black person in our system is not given the same value as the life of a white person. What's wrong with protesting inequality?

Did those players and owners who took a knee disrespect our flag? No, they said our flag is not just a beautiful piece of material blowing in the wind. It stands for liberty and justice for all, equal liberty and equal justice. Perhaps they're more patriotic than those of us who only stand and cheer.