Explains: National anthem is icon of patriotism, protest

Associated Press

San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick's recent decision to not stand during the national anthem as a way of protesting police killings of unarmed black men has drawn support and scorn far beyond sports. The Associated Press explains how "The Star-Spangled Banner" became a ritual of American public life, its complicated racial origins and how the song has been used as a form of political resistance.

THE ANTHEM AS RITUAL

The national anthem and sports first merged in the early 20th century, when "The Star-Spangled Banner" became part of baseball games. The anthem is played before the start of every U.S. major sporting event, where fans and players are expected to salute the flag by placing a hand over the heart while singing along. Not doing so is considered unpatriotic by some.

'It's important to remember that a lot of these traditions that we take as timeless or dating back to the

founders are pretty recent innovations," said Kevin Kruse, a historian at Princeton University.

BLACK ATHLETES AND POLITICAL PROTEST

Kaepernick's protest was the latest in a history of actions by black athletes meant to call out the discrepancies between the experiences of people of color and America's professed ideals, said Penn State historian Crystal Sanders.

In 1968, Olympians Tommie Smith and John Carlos lifted their black-gloved fists as the national anthem was played after they won the gold and bronze medals in the men's 200-meter sprint — a gesture seen as radical and an endorsement of black power. Boxer Muhammad Ali, celebrated as an American hero after his death in June, was arrested in 1967 after his refusal to be drafted into the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War was seen as an act of civil disobedience. Jackie Robinson, who broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball, wrote in his autobiography that he was unable to sing the national

anthem or salute the flag.

Former Denver Nuggets point guard Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf was suspended by the NBA after refusing to participate in the national anthem pre-game ceremony in 1996. More recently, NBA players including Derrick Rose and LeBron James have worn T-shirts reading "I Can't Breathe" in reference to Eric Garner, who was killed by New York City police officers in 2014. Last month, Carmelo Anthony, Chris Paul, Dwyane Wade and James opened the ESPY Awards with a message about gun violence against minorities.

"The outrage we're seeing in light of the Kaepernick decision ... is just another example of our country's lack of a real understanding of what it means to be a person of color in the United States," Sanders said. "Wealth, education, attire ... none of that prevents us from being victims of racial discrimination."

WHY CONTROVERSY?

Kaepernick's decision has outraged some who see his protest as offensive and un-American. It

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is also an unwelcome distraction for those who view sports as a way to transcend conflicts around race, gender, politics and other uncomfortable subjects in American life.

Others have come to his defense, saying his decision to sit out the national anthem and flag salute is protected as freedom of expression under the U.S. Constitution.

HOW "THE STAR-SPAN-GLED BANNER" WAS BORN

Watching the bombing of Fort McHenry while detained on a British ship during the War of 1812, attorney Francis Scott Key was inspired to write "The Star-Spangled Banner" as he saw the American flag flying overhead in the early morning hours of Sept. 14, 1814. The flag's presence signaled the retreat of British ships from Baltimore's harbor and the U.S. survival of a battle that lasted 25 hours. The showdown galvanized the young country and the flag became a symbol of determination

and victory. "The Star-Spangled Banner" was popular among the branches of the armed forces throughout the 19th century, but more than a century would pass before the song would become the national anthem. President Woodrow Wilson signed an executive order declaring it so in 1916, and Congress passed an act confirming the order in 1931 that was signed into law by President Herbert Hoover the same year.

THIRD VERSE

Key supported slavery and came from a powerful plantation family in Maryland. His background may have influenced the song's third verse, which includes the lyrics, "No refuge could save the hireling and slave/From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave.'

These words have been interpreted as a reference to the Colonial Marines, black recruits to the British forces who fought in exchange for their freedom.

Kaepernick's objection to saluting the flag was not related to the third verse of the national anthem, but his protest has brought fresh attention to this forgotten stanza.

September 1, 2016



A woman demonstrating against Donald Trump's meeting with the Mexican president carries a sign during a morning protest at the Angel of Independence Monument that drew just a handful of people in Mexico City on Wednesday.

Mexico angry at president's 'humiliating' meeting with Trump

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY Mexico's president was savaged on social media and in political circles following his joint press conference Wednesday with Donald Trump, with many seeing a national humiliation in his welcoming of a man who has derided migrants as rapists and criminals.

President Enrique Pena Nieto said Mexicans "aggrieved" and had disagreements with presidential Republican candidate, but he never did what people here wanted most: demand that Trump apologize. Adding to the anger, in the press conference Trump repeated his promise to build a border wall between the countries.

'Trump can leave at ease now. The humiliation was complete," Televisa news anchor Carlos Loret de Mola tweeted, after lamenting that Trump would dare to reiterate his intention to build a wall "in our face and home."

Pena Nieto later appeared to contradict Trump when he said in a tweet that during their private meeting he told the Republican candidate clearly that Mexico would not pay for the wall. In their joint press conference, Trump had said they did not discuss who would pay for the wall's construction at which point Pena Nieto said nothing.

While Trump tried to mend fences by calling Mexican-Americans "spectacular" and "amazing," and arguing that illegal immigration and the flight of manufacturing jobs were hurting Mexicans as well as Americans, his words did little to win hearts and minds south of the border.

Mexico security analyst Alejandro Hope called the meeting "a disaster."

"Trump didn't alter his positions one little bit," Hope said. "He just dressed them up a little in less incendiary language." Of Pena Nieto, Hope said "in the end, he gave Trump an opportunity to show off, while getting nothing in return. Good work, guys.'

Writer Angeles Mastretta wrote in her Twitter account that Mexicans saw "what was expected: a president who isn't capable of demanding

apologies ... how sad." Many Mexicans were disappointed and disgusted that Trump was invited at all. After all, Mexicans have already made — and beaten to pulp — pinatas of Trump. They created a video game in which players can throw soccer balls, cactus leaves and tequila bottles at a cartoon image of Trump.

But when the man himself came to Mexico, he was treated with kid gloves and given a warm reception at the presidential residence. The meeting could end up hurting Pena Nieto, whose popularity is already at an all-time low near 20 percent, according to recent polls.

Former President Vicente Fox said that Trump was trying to boost his sagging campaign. "He fooled him (Pena Nieto) ... he's using him to try to recover lost votes.

Artist Arturo Meade joined one of the few small protests prior to the meeting with his 2 ½-year old son Mariano, and shook his head in disgust.

This is an insult and a betrayal," he said. "What can this meeting bring us, except surrealism in all its splendor?"

Many Mexicans felt the Republican candidate had left Pena Nieto flat-footed by accepting an invitation that Pena Nieto had made simply for appearances' sake.

El Universal newspaper wrote in an editorial that Trump "caught Mexican diplomats off guard" by accepting the invitation.

"They wanted to invite Hillary (Clinton), but that meant inviting both of them and nobody thought Trump would accept first," said Hope. "What's in it for Mexico? Here there's nothing to gain. The upside is all for Trump.

Historically, the golden rule of Mexico's foreign policy has been to avoid being seen as taking sides in U.S. politics; hence the two invitations, even though Mexico favors Hillary Clinton's position on a path to citizenship for migrants.

Yolanda Herrera, 66-year-old Mexico City housewife, sought to put the best light on what, to many, felt like a national humilia-

tion. "Let's hope that ... he sees that he was really wrong about what he said," Herrera said of Trump. "I think this is a display of the fact that we Mexicans are a very sympathetic people."

AFTERNOON

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Thursday Morning

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