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Kneel Down for What You Believe In

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“Please stand for the national anthem.” At almost any sporting event you go to, you’ll hear a booming voice recite some variation of these words before the game begins. You then do as instructed. You rise. You don’t think about it; you don’t consider what it signifies, shows, or means. Without hesitation, you just rise. But a few athletes have thought about it, hesitated, and have not done as instructed.

Colin Kaepernick and Megan Rapinoe are two athletes who have chosen to kneel during the national anthem. Though both are admirable for doing so, the case with Rapinoe is a little different. As Victor Mather said in an article in *The New York Times*, “While Kaepernick was on a professional league team, Rapinoe is on the national team and was representing her country, raising the stakes. She was aware of this pressure and still chose to kneel.”

Now that I’ve explained why this is a big deal, you’re probably wondering what would have made it seem

worth it to Rapinoe to do this. What made it seem worth it was the fact that the night before their match against Thailand, not even two miles from the hotel she and her teammates were staying at in Columbus, Ohio, a thirteen-year-old boy, Tyre King, was fatally shot by a police officer. What made it worth it to her was that she recognized that the flag doesn't protect every American equally. What made it worth it to her was that, as a gay American, she knows how it feels to stand (or kneel) before the flag, looking at it, and understand that it doesn't protect all of her liberties the way it does someone else's.

As you would imagine, her actions caused an uproar of reactions, both good and bad. Though she did point out that it's her First Amendment right to peacefully protest, many people still believe that she was disrespecting the flag. She responded to this in her letter to the Players' Tribune: "I can understand if you think I'm disrespecting the flag by kneeling, but it is because of my utmost respect for the flag and the promise it represents that I have chosen to demonstrate this way. When I take a knee, I am facing the flag with my full body, staring straight into the heart of our country's ultimate symbol of freedom – because I believe that it is my responsibility, just as it is yours, to ensure that freedom is afforded to everyone in this country." In addition, while the U.S Soccer Federation doesn't necessarily agree with her decision to act this way, they didn't enforce any sort of punishment on her, even after she kneeled for the second time.

The action she's taken to try and make a necessary change in the country we live in are

brave, inspiring, and admirable. It is actions like this that become the stepping stones for change to truly happen. Sometimes it's good to stop for a moment, take a knee, and think about what you're doing so blindly and without hesitation.