

Take a Knee. Take a Seat. Take a Chill Pill.

“Wouldn’t you love to see one of these NFL owners,” US president Donald Trump thundered from the stage of a September campaign rally, “when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, ‘Get that son of a bitch off the field right now, out. He’s fired. He’s fired!’”

Many seem to agree that professional football games are no place for political statements. Well, at least they agree now. I don’t recall a peep from them for nearly a decade of the US government shelling out millions of dollars to turn professional football games into combination political statements and military recruitment rallies.

Meanwhile, the *Houston Chronicle* reports, a Texas high school student has been expelled for sitting through morning prayers to the god called government, also known as “the Pledge of Allegiance.”

C’mon, people — relax!

Is it truly important that someone you don’t know didn’t assume your preferred bodily posture while a song you like was played?

Is it the end of the world that a high school student doesn’t practice the same (secular) religion as you?

I was brought up to respect the flag. The Marine Corps reinforced that tendency. A 48-star flag adorned my grandfather’s casket (he served in the navy in World War Two). A 50-star flag just may cover mine one of these days. My personal politics notwithstanding, I’m a little bit attached to its symbolism.

But at the end of the day, the flag is a piece of cloth that some people don’t attach positive, let alone reverent, feelings to. The cry that some people “died for” it is, frankly, disrespectful to those people and whatever their real reasons were for taking up arms beneath it.

The national anthem is a song that glorifies the killing of rebellious slaves, some of whose descendants are likely among those criticized for failing to stand while it’s played (ask the grandchild of an Auschwitz survivor to stand for the Deutschlandlied and see how he or she responds).

And the “Pledge of Allegiance” was written by a flag salesman to, you guessed it, boost his flagging sales numbers (sorry, couldn’t help myself there).

If it bothers you to the point of distraction that some people are, by your lights,

insufficiently respectful of the Stars and Stripes, your priorities are way out of whack. And if the flag does indeed stand for freedom, you're part of the problem, not part of the solution.