

Megan Rapinoe and the Presidential Medal of Freedom



by Gary Fouse

Like many (if not most) people, I was disgusted by this week's awarding of the Presidential Medal of Freedom award to woman's soccer star and activist Megan Rapinoe. I had no issue whatsoever with Simone Biles getting the award, but why would this award be given to someone who trashed her own country and refuses to stand for the National Anthem?

I have no problem with Rapinoe being a gay activist. That is her right, and I sympathize with some of the issues that face gays in this country though they have it much worse in many other countries. I was opposed to gay marriage, but now that it is the law of the land, I feel we need to move on to more important issues. I am absolutely opposed to male athletes

declaring themselves female and competing in women's sports. Lia Thomas is the most obvious example. Rapinoe supports transgenders crossing over into female sports. Again, that is her right, but I feel that it endangers women's sports in general.

But Megan Rapinoe has taken her protest a step further, like ex-footballer Colin Kaepernick, she refuses to stand for our National Anthem and has used this form of protest in international competition. She has also made derogatory public comments about her country.

All of which is her right to do so. If those are "freedoms" that she is advancing, I would argue that she already has those freedoms. That is part of the greatness of America and sets it apart from dictatorships where such words and actions would land somebody in jail and possibly in front of a hangman.

That leads me to my second point: Has this Presidential Medal of Freedom award been cheapened to the point where we should just do away with it? Keep in mind that this is the highest award a civilian can be given. The Congressional Medal of Honor, given to military personnel who exhibit bravery in combat above and beyond the call of duty, is our most sacred award, and I would argue that it has not been cheapened or abused.

Several years ago, I felt warm-hearted over the Presidential Freedom Award being given to my longtime baseball hero, Ernie Banks (by President Obama). But I would seriously question why the award is given to an athlete for their skills on the playing field. To me, there really should be something else. Jackie Robinson would qualify in my book because he broke the baseball color barrier and took a ton of racist abuse in doing so. When we are talking about black civil rights, he was a giant, something approaching Martin Luther King's contribution to our country. Banks himself was a pioneer in that respect being the first black player (along with second baseman Gene

Baker) to join the Cubs. Banks basically won everybody over due to his sunny disposition and became Mr. Cub, the greatest and most beloved Cub ever.

Much like the Nobel Peace Prize, I feel this Presidential Medal of Freedom has become politicized. I get the impression that the latter is becoming an award for celebrities. I would rather see it reserved for people like the anonymous cops and firefighters who raced into the burning towers on 9-11, or the anonymous passengers who sacrificed themselves to stop the 4th plane from reaching Washington DC. Those are acts that should represent the civilian equivalent of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

If Megan Rapinoe is a great soccer player who, in addition, has advanced the cause of gay athletes, I am fine with all that. That she has exhibited such disrespect for her own country and done it on an international stage should have disqualified her from any consideration for this award.