

Complete version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" showing spelling and punctuation from Francis Scott Key's manuscript in the Maryland Historical Society collection.

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light, What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming, Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming? And the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air, Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there, O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes, What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep, As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses? Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam, In full glory reflected now shines in the stream, 'Tis the star-spangled banner - O long may it wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore, That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion A home and a Country should leave us no more? Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution. No refuge could save the hireling and slave From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave, And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation! Blest with vict'ry and peace may the heav'n rescued land Praise the power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation! Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just, And this be our motto - "In God is our trust," And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

<http://www.history.com/news/9-things-you-may-not-know-about-the-star-spangled-banner>

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"The Star-Spangled Banner," Americans hazily remember, was written by Francis Scott Key about the Battle of Fort McHenry in Baltimore during the War of 1812. But we don't ever talk about how the War of 1812 was a war of aggression that began with an attempt by the U.S. to grab Canada from the British Empire.

However, we'd wildly overestimated the strength of the U.S. military. By the time of the Battle of Fort McHenry in 1814, the British had counterattacked and overrun Washington, D.C., setting fire to the White House.

And one of the key tactics behind the British military's success was its active recruitment of American slaves. As a [detailed 2014 article](#) in *Harper's* explains, the orders given to the Royal Navy's Admiral Sir George Cockburn read:

Let the landings you make be more for the protection of the desertion of the Black Population than with a view to any other advantage. ... The great point to be attained is the cordial Support of the Black population. With them properly armed & backed with 20,000 British Troops, Mr. Madison will be hurled from his throne.

Whole families found their way to the ships of the British, who accepted everyone and pledged no one would be given back to their "owners." Adult men were trained to create a regiment called the Colonial Marines, who participated in many of the most important battles, including the August 1814 raid on Washington.

Then on the night of September 13, 1814, the British bombarded Fort McHenry. Key, seeing the fort's flag the next morning, was inspired to write the lyrics for "The Star-Spangled Banner."

So when Key penned "No refuge could save the hireling and slave / From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave," he was taking great satisfaction in the death of slaves who'd freed themselves. His perspective may have been affected by the fact he owned several slaves himself.

Francis Scott Key's later life:

By 1833, Key was a district attorney for Washington, D.C. As [described](#) in a book called *Snowstorm in August* by former *Washington Post* reporter Jefferson Morley, the police were notorious thieves, frequently stealing free blacks' possessions with impunity. One night, one of the constables tried to attack a woman who escaped and ran away — until she fell off a bridge across the Potomac and drowned.

"There is neither mercy nor justice for colored people in this district," an abolitionist paper wrote. "No fuss or stir was made about it. She was got out of the river, and was buried, and there the matter ended."

Key was furious and indicted the newspaper for intending "to injure, oppress, aggrieve & vilify the good name, fame, credit & reputation of the Magistrates & constables of Washington County."

You can decide for yourself whether there's some connection between what happened 200 years ago and what Colin Kaepernick is angry about today. Maybe it's all ancient, meaningless history. Or maybe it's not, and Kaepernick is right, and we really need a new national anthem.

The Intercept is an online publication launched in February 2014 by [First Look Media](#), the news organization created and funded by eBay founder [Pierre Omidyar](#).^[2] The editors are [Glenn Greenwald](#), [Laura Poitras](#), and [Jeremy Scahill](#).

The magazine serves as a platform to report on the documents released by [Edward Snowden](#) in the short term, and to "produce aggressive, adversarial journalism across a wide range of issues" in the long term.^[4]In a press release announcing his hiring as editor-in-chief, John Cook stated "I am thrilled to be able to help them build a truly great outlet for the sort of aggressive, muckraking reporting that they embody