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This is Dianne Daniels for Brookings Harbor Voices.

I feel sorry for all these athletes and their supporters taking a knee for the national anthem. It's sad that what they see in the flag and anthem invokes such strong hatred they feel compelled to show it. For me, the flag and anthem bring goosebumps and tears.

I've seen how America's been a force for good and freedom; not only through reading history and current events, but up close and personal during 21 years in the Navy. Travelling the world, seeing how lives are lived in many countries, has only reinforced how lucky I am to be enjoying what America offers.

Is America perfect? No, but nowhere else comes as close. Why else do so many continue to hope to come to this "land of opportunity", seeing it as a beacon in the dark.

The flag and anthem are two symbols of our country. They are powerful uniters. No matter the team, political party, race, religion, or whatever, the flag and anthem say we're Americans together. Look at 9/11, the Iwo Jima Flag raising, and say the flag doesn't represent America.

The "take a knee" thing began the divisiveness: an effort to disunify Americans, tarring the entire country because of several black youth deaths by cops. These "protesters" don't want to debate the issue, just the free speech right to take a knee itself. How can they expect change by refusing to discuss it, with facts?

We can't change the past, only the future. America has been through many turbulent times. We have gotten together, listened to each other, and worked together to improve and advance the lives of all Americans. Rather than these vague protests, seen as disrespectful and hurtful to tens of millions of Americans, let's sit down and begin the real work of tackling the nation's problems to make America Great for All.

Thank you for listening. And have a nice day on the Wild Rivers Coast.