

Silent protest at UB football game starts conversation about free speech, Black Lives Matter

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At the Buffalo versus Army football game on Saturday, members of the Black Student Union (BSU) protested silently by wearing all black, holding up their fists and sitting during the national anthem.

This act has become a national phenomenon started by 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who refused to stand for the national anthem as a way to voice the importance of the Black Lives Matter movement.

We at *The Spectrum* commend BSU's actions. Their silent protest was a way to start a conversation on campus about the Black Lives Matter movement. The group exercised their right to free speech calmly.

BSU speaks for those who are too afraid to speak or act themselves. In a school of 30,000, there are bound to be others who agree with BSU's message and can empathize with their emotions.

Though it was only a small group of 15 to 20 students who were involved, they speak for hundreds of others who are too afraid to act. Their few moments of protest spoke volumes for those who don't feel confident sitting during the anthem or speaking out.

This isn't the first time BSU arranged a peaceful protest. In the wake of the White Only, Black Only signs controversy last year, the group staged a walkout from classes and a protest at President Satish Tripathi's annual State of the University Address. Their voices were loud and clear that they were disappointed in the school's actions.

On Saturday, it was a smaller group of BSU and other affiliate members who took the time to organize themselves and get their message across at the game.

Part of our editorial board felt it would have been more effective if BSU took a stance during the tailgate or on the field. Because of the dwindling attendance at the game since the team lost the first two games, there may not have been enough people to notice BSU's actions.

But sometimes, being silent is the most effective way to get a message across.

Other editors felt BSU's message was clear. There was no need to be vocal or draw attention from everyone in the stadium. Any rowdy or violent behavior would cause their message to be muddled by their actions.

The time seems appropriate, since other similar protests have taken place during a football game's national anthem. The group could have seen a larger audience, perhaps at a different game. But they did what they had to do. They were noticed and started a very important

conversation on campus, which is everyone's right to free speech.

Looking forward to upcoming football games, it would be interesting to see if members of the football team will participate in future protests. Perhaps players don't feel the need to kneel during the anthem, or maybe they were specifically instructed to stand.

But there's also a possibility that BSU's decision to sit during the anthem is the start of students feeling comfortable speaking up and exercising their rights. We at *The Spectrum* hope BSU continues to speak out for those who are hesitant and to incite meaningful rhetoric about the Black Lives Matter movement.

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