

The Anthem Blues

The Los Angeles Times, a newspaper in a wee bit of economic trouble, recently featured a column suggesting America embrace a new national anthem possibly because the Star Spangled Banner, with all that rockets red glare stuff, may make some sensitive souls feel “unsafe.”

Writer Jody Rosen opined: “the very idea of a national anthem, a hymn to the glory of the country, feels like a crude relic, another monument that may warrant tearing down. But if we must have an anthem, it should be far different than the one we have now, positing another kind of patriotism ... and it would also be neat if it was, you know, a decent song.”

Ms. Rosen goes on to suggest that the new anthem of the United States be a song by the late Bill Withers called “Lean On Me.”

Is that neat, or what?

So, I am envisioning the Olympics, an American has just won a gold medal and, as the honor is placed around his or her neck, the world hears this:

“Sometimes in our lives,
we all have pain, we all
have sorrow.

“But if we are wise, we know
there’s always tomorrow.

“Lean on me, when you’re
not strong – and I’ll be your
friend, I’ll help you carry on ...”

Fabulous. The entire stadium singing along. What a message. Everyone is safe. Everything will work out. You know?

Forget the relic lyric “land of the free, home of the brave.” That’s not inclusive enough! Some of us are wimps,

don't we have a right to be represented in the national anthem? Talk about triggering!

So Jody's idea is cool, groovy, and, yes, neat. But it won't work. The lean on me song is too emotional, the anthem must be stirring. If football players are going to brutalize each other, they can't be singing "lean on me when you're not strong" right before the on-field carnage begins.

Therefore, I am proposing that the new national anthem be a tune that cuts across boundaries. A song that reflects the vibrance of our country.

That's right, "Livin' in America" by James Brown is the only choice.

I mean, seriously, how brilliant is this? Remember when Rocky IV knocked the pudding out of the big Russian guy, Drago?

Well, that happened immediately after the late Mr. Brown sang "Livin' in America" just before the fighters were introduced. Believe me, Rocky would not have been ferocious had he just sung "Lean On Me."

Which is against the rules of boxing, by the way.

So let's get down with the new national anthem. Hit it:

"Superhighways, coast to coast, easy to get anywhere ...
when there's no destination that's too far – and
somewhere on the way, you might find out who you are.

"Livin' in America, eye to eye – station to station.
Livin' in America, hand to hand across the nation!"

Who needs the War of 1812? I can tell you, Francis Scott Key would gladly step aside for that.

Also, it would be impossible for Colin Kaepernick and his crew to kneel with James Brown wailing! They'd be rockin' in the free world along with everyone else. Another problem solved.

So let's do this people! Take it home, James:

"Livin' in America, so nice with your bad self."

"Livin' in America – I feel good!"