

August 22, 2017

Mr. Roger Goodell
Commissioner
National Football League
280 Park Avenue, Suite 2
New York, New York 10017-1216

Re: Mr. Colin Kaepernick

We, the United We Stand Coalition of faith-based, social, and civic individuals, stand in solidarity with Mr. Colin Kaepernick. We -- along with many other citizens of America -- recognize the absurdity in the current state of affairs: Mr. Kaepernick has not been offered a contract to play this upcoming National Football League season despite his proven abilities, playoff and Super Bowl experience, and his past season statistics.

We will not be silent as the NFL actively participates in the ostracization of Mr. Kaepernick. This ostracization, we believe, is a retaliatory act of aggression against Mr. Kaepernick's protest of the American National Anthem during the 2016 NFL season.

African-American athletes have consistently encountered resistance when they aligned with the Black Freedom Movement. Muhammad Ali and Colin Kaepernick are examples of great athletes whose careers were sabotaged as a result of their advocacy. Olympic sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos were suspended from the US Olympic Team and received death threats after raising black gloved fists during the national anthem at the 1968 Olympics. These attempts to silence black resistance and protest, were met with even greater movements of resistance. We stand with Colin Kaepernick because we affirm the sacred right of all citizens to engage in civil disobedience and nonviolent direct action when they disagree with the state of affairs in America. Civil disobedience and nonviolent direct action have been used to compel America to remain true to its expressed ideals. Colin Kaepernick's decision to kneel during the national anthem in protest of racial inequality and police brutality was a moral act, to raise the consciousness of Americans who were otherwise ignoring the reality of racial injustice.

We are now calling on the NFL to take action in two ways.

As you know, the NFL does not currently have a policy on the books as it relates to expressed advocacy. To remedy this, we are requesting the NFL implement a policy guaranteeing the freedom of speech of players to express their concerns on social justice issues. These issues include, but are not limited to: racial inequality, police brutality, criminal justice reform, immigration reform, gender pay equity and reproductive rights). Furthermore, within this policy, the NFL shall safeguard players from intimidation, ostracization, and exclusion by owners, sponsors, coaches, players, and staff. Any team suspected of prohibiting or outright denying a player his rights shall be punished under the tampering guidelines set forth by the NFL.

Secondly, it is indisputable that long held racial beliefs are embedded in of the fabric of the NFL and many of these beliefs still govern who makes it to the field. To that end, we are requesting

the NFL establish a unit tasked with developing a league wide plan to improve racial equity. This unit shall provide recommendations to the NFL leadership and the NFL shall provide considerable resources to implement the recommendations.

In 1946, the NFL's "unofficial" ban of African-American players was lifted as a direct result of journalists, activists and players coming together pushing the league to be better. Today, we stand on the shoulders of Kenny Washington, Woody Strode, Roger Jessup and the activists and journalists who not only demanded but fought for change.

It is our hope that you will cooperate with our community, help bring an end to the ostracization of Colin Kaepernick and implement the aforementioned policies and procedures to safeguard future players.

The time for change is now.

Respectfully Submitted,

The United We Stand Rally Coalition

Rev. Stephen A. Green, The People's Consortium for Human and Civil Rights, Inc.

Tamika D. Mallory, Co-Chair, Women's March

Symone D. Sanders, CNN Political Commentator

Linda Sarsour, MPower Change, Co-Chair Women's March

Rev. Mark A. Thompson, Host of "Make It Plain"

Jamal-Harrison Bryant, Empowerment Temple AME