

An Open Letter to Colin Kaepernick

Dear Colin,

You're obviously getting a ton of responses to your decision to sit during the national anthem, both negative and positive, but as I just read that you intend to continue to sit during the singing of the anthem, I felt your actions and comment deserve yet another response.

In short, I admire your courage, but I question your judgment, and there is due cause for many to charge you with hypocrisy. Are you sure your actions were righteous?

Explaining why you will continue to sit, you said. "I'm going to continue to stand with the people that are being oppressed. To me, this is something that has to change. When there's significant change and I feel like that flag represents what it's supposed to represent, this country is representing people the way that it's supposed to, I'll stand."

Again, I admire your courage, since it is very possible that this incident will cost you millions of dollars in the coming years and will follow you the rest of your professional career. So this is not an easy thing to do, and I think it's excellent that you feel a responsibility to use your very public platform to be a role model.

That too is commendable—but that doesn't mean it is right.

First, when you take an individualistic stand like this, you are putting your whole organization, and most particularly your whole team, in a negative light.

Isn't "team first" the mentality on which the NFL is built? Aren't you taught to put the good of the team before your

personal interests and points of view? And as you've been struggling on the field for some time now, haven't you expected your team to have your back?

Yet now you've decided that getting your personal message out is more important than cultivating team solidarity. Is that a right thing to do?

As New York Giants player Victor Cruz said, "The flag is the flag. Regardless of how you feel about things that are going on in America today, and the things that are going on across the world with gun violence and things of that nature, you've got to respect the flag, and you've got to stand up with your teammates. It's bigger than just you, in my opinion. I think you go up there, you're with a team, and you go and you know you pledge your allegiance to the flag and sing the national anthem with your team, and then you go about your business, whatever your beliefs are."

You said last week, "To me, this is bigger than football, and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way."

Perhaps it's the exact opposite? Perhaps your act was actually selfish?

Second, many of your fans find it odd that you can so easily bash the very country that enabled you to earn more money in a few years than most of us can imagine earning in several lifetimes. In fact, you're playing in a league where more than 70 percent of the players are people of color, yet they enjoy equal opportunity, equal stardom and equal pay.

Perhaps you could have chosen a better setting for a protest than during the national anthem before an NFL game? Can you see how this can seem hypocritical?

And why protest our flag, which stands for the things that make America great? As Dr. Ben Carson said, you "disrespect[ed] our national anthem and flag after so many

people have sacrificed so that [you] could have the freedoms that [you have] today, so that [you] could make a very, very good living in this 'racist' land."

Third, and most importantly, you need to ask yourself if you are being moved by truth or by political talking points.

There's no question that there are grievous examples of white police officers mistreating black suspects, but recent studies have indicated that black officers are more likely to shoot black suspects than are white officers, while there are also examples of black officers mistreating white suspects. And there are plenty of examples of white officers mistreating white suspects.

Are you sure that your stance is fair and righteous?

Milwaukee Sheriff David Clarke, himself an African-American, recently asked, "Where is Black Lives Matter? If they cared about the lives of black people they would be marching against the liberal establishment in these large urban areas and demanding a better quality of life and a better way of life. But no, that's not what they're doing. They're instead using the police as a straw man"

Maybe you could be focusing on the larger, very real challenges faced by African-Americans today?

You said, "There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder."

But is this the biggest issue in the inner cities of our nation? And how many law enforcement officers are actually "getting away with murder"?

When Dwayne Wade's cousin, the mother of four, was shot to death while pushing her stroller, was that the fault of allegedly racist police?

When there are now 90 shootings a week in Chicago, is that the

fault of allegedly racist police?

When 3-year-old Devon Quinn was shot and paralyzed when the car he was riding in was shot up, was that the fault of allegedly racist police?

There's a reason that many black Americans are raising their voices against the Black Lives Matter movement—some have dubbed it the Black Lies Matter movement—and you would do well to consider what they have to say.

Perhaps they could help you focus on the very real problems that do exist in America, including issues of racial discrimination and injustice, and perhaps you could determine to act first and speak later, using your influence in a positive way behind the scenes, and then saying to others, "Follow my lead."

That would be both courageous and righteous.