

Are You Fed Up With Ferguson, Football and Falsehoods?

“A nation of well-informed men who have been taught to know the prize which God has given them cannot be enslaved. It is in the region of ignorance that tyranny begins.” –Benjamin Franklin

I just returned from Ottawa, Canada, where I addressed a conference of Nigerians passionate to pursue God. They're part of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, the largest church network in Nigeria with its 186 million population.

They asked me to bring four messages, but the key assignment was, “Dare to Stand.” Nigeria is under assault from Islam, now about 40 percent of the population. They are disgusted with ignorance and lukewarmness in churches and asked me to bring the *Bullseye Challenge* to help ignite them for revival.

I told them that when God's people under Nehemiah's leadership had restored the walls of Jerusalem, only to later succumb to ignorance and compromise, their brilliant leader was likewise disgusted. He took radical action as Jesus did in the temple to realign them with the purposes of God (Read Neh. 13 to grasp the depth of his emotion!).

Disgust is a basic emotion like anger, fear and grief. It is a marked aversion triggered by something highly distasteful like the smell of rancid food or ongoing rebellion and passive parents.

Musically sensitive people are often disgusted by the cacophony of inharmonious sounds. Christians are disgusted when Jesus is mocked and blasphemed.

Currently things are mushrooming with on-field protests in the National Football League. Multitudes are experiencing

increasing disgust with the situation. What's going on, and what should we do?

Ignorance Regarding Ferguson

Rush Limbaugh, rabid football fan and radio commentator with 25 million listeners weekly, said recently he's so "disgusted" at the NFL protest situation that, "For the first time ever I didn't watch a football game this past Sunday" (Sept. 25 broadcast). He's not alone judging by the ratings.

As I weigh in on this hot-button development, let me affirm that for decades, I've worked for racial reconciliation and against any bigotry, discrimination and prejudice. My conversion experience stems from a relationship with a black minister in Cleveland's inner city, and I have special affinity for my black brothers and sisters.

We regularly engage with inner-city black youth. I work hard to build bridges of communication and trust with minorities. One of my heroes is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (whose poster is in my study), and I have a special tie with his niece, Dr. Alveda King.

We just returned from another educational vacation, this time to Montgomery and Selma, Alabama (after a previous one to Birmingham). We strive to go ever deeper in understanding the black experience from slavery to civil rights to the present. In the past month we've watched, *The Long Walk Home*, highlighting Rosa Parks and "Selma" on the transformative civil rights event that happened there.

What disgusts me about the growing protests at football games is that people are capitalizing on ignorance from false narratives to further divide our country, disrespect the American flag and the National Anthem, plus alienate people who simply want to enjoy the escape and entertainment of a good game.

If players like mega millionaire Colin Kaepernick want to exercise their “freedom” by not honoring our flag and anthem, they can simply stay in the locker room during our traditional two minute tribute. Why do they have to repeatedly call attention to themselves and constantly trumpet what they call “systemic racism permeating America,” by regularly repeating the fabricated refrain, “Hands up, don’t shoot!” which never even happened in the Ferguson incident.

What?

That’s right, this narrative that he, players and the media continually spin never happened.

Michael Brown was not simply an innocent and promising young student walking on a street and when confronted by a cop looking for trouble cried out, “Hands up. Don’t shoot!” as the racist cop callously shot him in the back.

The meticulously conducted and carefully scrutinized Grand Jury investigation and trial proved that the heavyweight Brown:

- * Was possessing and on drugs
- * Was fleeing a robbery he had committed
- * Was fleeing the scene after assaulting a frail minority store owner
- * Repeatedly rebuffed police orders
- * Initiated attack on a policeman
- * Grabbed an officer’s gun
- * Fired the gun two times
- * Was shot in the altercation
- * Never made the “statement.”

As Black Lives Matter, athletes and reporters keep spinning the false narrative, the ignorant remain incensed. I’m disgusted at what’s unfolded and now is escalating.

A week ago, 25 8-year-old boys on a football team in Illinois

decided they wanted to follow the example of Colin Kaepernick, who isn't even playing football in the NFL anymore. Imitating his example, they all knelt down with their backs to the flag instead of standing to show respect during our National Anthem.

Some think this is cute, while others lament what's happening across America. It's spreading to major-league baseball, colleges and will soon invade the NBA.

Now Things Are Exploding

Donald Trump inflamed things when he spoke at an Alabama rally saying he'd like to see a courageous NFL owner get the agitators off the field pronouncing, "He's fired!" I personally wouldn't communicate the message the way he did but that's our politically incorrect, non-people-pleasing president!

While players tweeted, spoke out critically and many knelt down in defiance and solidarity with Mr. Kaepernick, others set a different example.

- Pittsburgh Steelers Super Bowl-winning quarterback Ben Roethlisberger said, "I personally don't believe the anthem is ever the time to make any type of protest."
- His teammate, Alejandro Villanueva, a former Army Ranger, stood proudly with his hand over his heart during the National Anthem.
- Other players and coaches refused to show contempt as they recollected American patriots who returned home in caskets covered by the very flag these protesters dishonor.
- A friend and Family Research Council leader, Lt. General Jerry Boykin, decries the ignorance and grievous displays with this statement: "I served the nation in uniform for over 3 1/2 decades, and I served in part so that these players could choose to disrespect the

traditions, history and sacrifices of a great nation. But I find it disgusting and disturbing that men like Kaepernick, who are living the American dream embodied by our flag and the anthem, are so determined to belittle and denigrate the veterans and men and women currently fighting to ensure the continuance of that very dream.”

Here’s the deal: Whether it’s tearing down monuments, suppressing conservatives on campuses, lambasting unpopular political leaders on talk shows and at award ceremonies or politicizing football games, we need to direct our disgust into proclamation of the gospel and a declaration of truth amidst today’s widespread ignorance and deception.

Tim Tebow dropped to his knees to pray, and it was met with condescension. Many well-intentioned yet ignorant athletes drop to their knees in protest, and it’s met with celebration. May we realize the severity of what’s happening to further divide our nation and drop to our knees in intercession.