

~~JUST DO IT.~~

LET THEM BE HEARD

LEGITIMIZING AND CRITIQUING ATHLETE DRIVEN SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS



Left - Right: Bill Russell, Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown, Lew Alcindor



In 1967, Muhammad Ali was drafted to fight in the Vietnam War, but publicly refused to enter the army citing religious reasons (Ali is Muslim). He did not agree with the reasons for fighting the war in Vietnam, and was very outspoken regarding his refusal to impose violence on a group of people that he had no "quarrel" with.

Brown, Russell, and Alcindor's intentions for attending the meeting are still unclear. The popular belief is that they sat beside Ali to offer their support and demonstrate their solidarity with another high profile black athlete during the Civil Rights Era. A more nefarious account of the day reveals that Bob Arum, a boxing promoter, reached a deal with the government on Ali's behalf, allowing him to fight overseas at military troops in lieu of serving in the military himself. Arum had financial partners on this deal that included John Ali, Herbert Muhammad (Arum, H. Muhammad, and J. Ali pictured standing behind the athletes), and Jim Brown. These men stood to make substantial amounts of money from these overseas bouts, and according to this account, were there that day to convince Ali to take the deal. He refused, and two weeks later, Ali was convicted of draft evasion, sentenced to five years in prison, and stripped of all Boxing achievements. **These differing stories are simply the tip of the iceberg when it comes to athletes' completely legitimate support of serious social movements being clouded, co-opted, or taken advantage of for financial reasons. This magazine is dedicated to introducing and legitimizing case studies of professional athletes using their voice for good, while uncovering the hidden motivations of those looking to benefit off these athletes' influence and platform.**

MANIFESTO

REDIRECTING THE DIALOGUE SURROUNDING ATHLETES' PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

JUST LET THEM BE HEARD.

The synergy between prominent athletes and social justice movements has always been a highly controversial subject. Common arguments surround whether or not athletes hold the proper credentials to discuss these matters. People question their motivations, acting as if they are one dimensional figures.

WHY IS THIS THE NARRATIVE?

As athletes continue to thrive in this era of ubiquitous media, their influence will continue to grow. Why are some of society's most idolized people barred from using their influence for positive social change?

THE DEBATE OVER THE LEGITIMACY OF ATHLETES' VOICES MUST END.

WE ARE REDIRECTING THE NARRATIVE. Muhammad Ali. Tommie Smith. John Carlos. LeBron James. Colin Kaepernick. These are just a handful of examples of athletes who have used their platform of influence to raise awareness for a variety of social justice movements. We are witnessing this platform grow to new levels, and the corporate entities that pull the strings behind their respective sports are taking notice. The NFL's funding of Players Coalition and Nike's piggybacking of Kaepernick's protest for advertising are just a few examples. **THIS IS WHERE**

WE WANT THE FOCUS. The motivations of these corporations is not aligned with the athlete, but with their own profit-driven agenda. Our digital magazine will look to provide the necessary information on the entire scope of these athlete driven social justice movements. The movement itself, to the progress made by the athlete, and the often hidden corporate veil will all be discussed.

BY PRESENTING ALL OF THE FACTS, THE DOMINANT DIALOGUE WILL NO LONGER QUESTION THE ATHLETES' MOTIVES. WE STAND TO EMPOWER ATHLETES TO USE THEIR VOICE, WHILE CRITIQUING THE CORPORATE CO-OPTATION OF THESE MOVEMENTS.

WE DEMAND . . .

-starting a dialogue about athletes' activism and the demeaning portrayal of their efforts by the news media

- a deeper look into the incentives of large corporations that latch onto athletes' movements, often times for their own benefit

- visibility for the different reactions to athletes' activism in order to show that the narrative is changing and athletes will not "shut up and dribble"

- a shift in the narrative to focus the blame NOT on athletes who protest but to critique corporations that fund groups and use the platform for either personal gain as in NIKE or for leverage as in the players' coalition that is now funded by the NFL

- people to be more skeptical of the news they are fed and urge them to dive deeper in conversations about the criticism activists face as they are called unpatriotic or overly sensitive

We want to change the focus the athletes themselves to instead the media outlets and corporations that take advantage of the for the political or economic profit.

We plan to reach not only those involved in the sports world, but also those who are interested in activism and corporate realities. With the power of social media today, athletes have the ability to reach outside of their respective fan bases and influence anyone who is scrolling through their feed. That being said, we intend to create a project that reaches beyond sports fans and can impact everyone who sees it. Athletics are a universal entity, and we hope to draw an audience with different perspectives and

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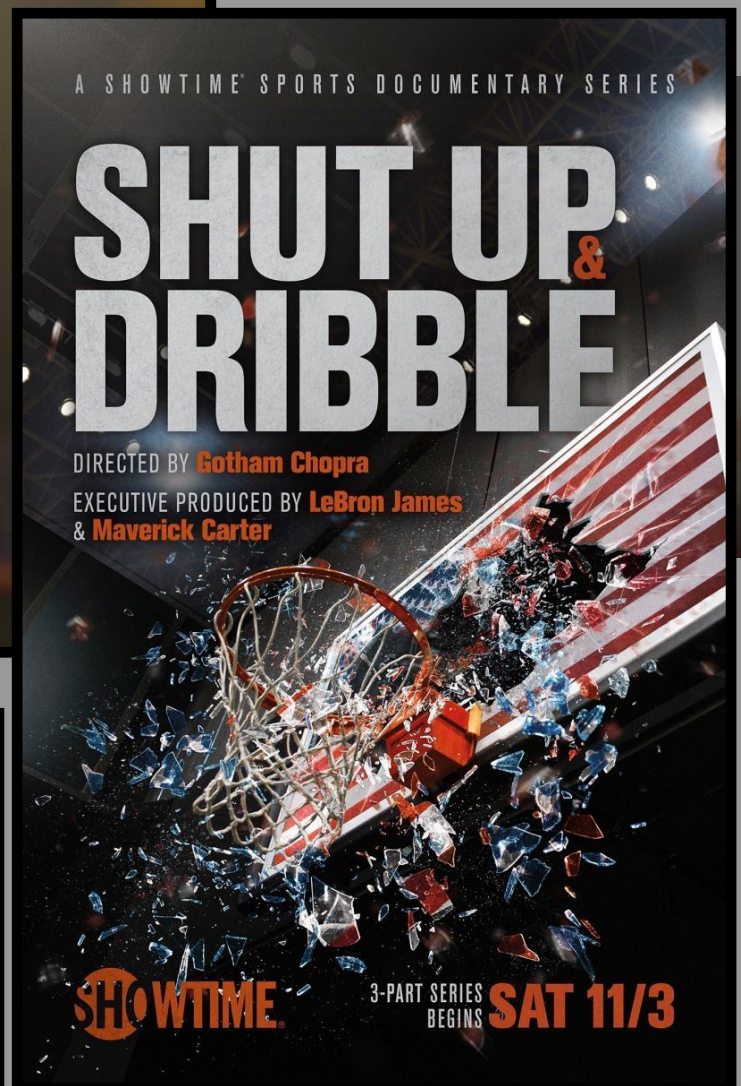
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MORE THAN AN ATHLETE

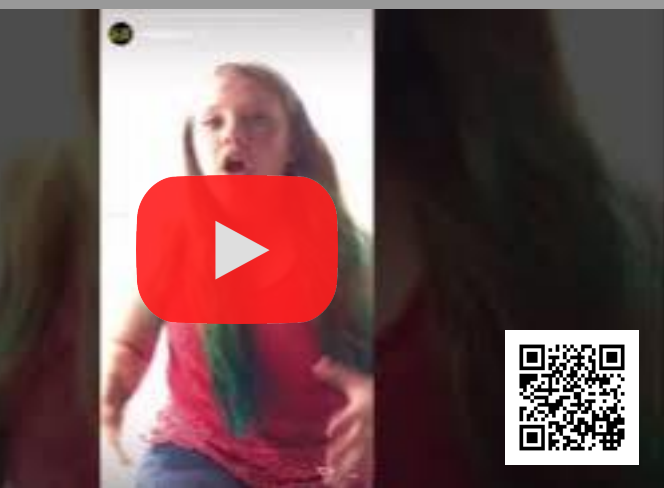
Ever since his Twitter tribute to Trayvon Martin in 2012, LeBron James has been at the forefront of social media activism among professional athletes. His pregame demonstrations include wearing a “I can’t breathe” shirt to show solidarity with the death of Eric Garner, and more recently a “enough” shirt that calls for more gun control following the Thousand Oaks shooting. These are simple yet powerful actions that demonstrate how LeBron and many other professional athletes can reach millions watching in the stands and on television. But he has not stopped there. Fresh off the debut of his Showtime documentary series *Shut Up & Dribble* as well as the opening of his personally-funded public school in Ohio, James is redefining what it means to be a professional athlete in the 21st century.



Where LeBron shines the most as a social activist is on Instagram. He has done a brilliant job attempting to shift the narrative, as well as the attention, away from himself as he strives for social change. Every year during the NBA playoffs, LeBron logs off of social media in order to focus on basketball. But last May, despite not being on the platforms, he handed over his Instagram account to a handful of grassroots activists. Each day, a different activist would be highlighted by posting short videos on LeBron's Instagram using the story feature. This allowed them to spread information about their efforts to the 40+ million followers LeBron has garnered.



ALWAYS BELIEVE



This innovative technique is a prime example of how athletes in this day and age can call for social change, without giving corporations the ability to co-opt their movements. In addition, everyday people who are passionate about different issues have the chance to grow their awareness exponentially while reaching a new audience. When you consider that a major portion of LeBron's following are young male sports fans, these activists can educate people who might not seek out this valuable information on their own.



Hopefully the innovative Instagram stories return next spring. Nonetheless, it is exciting to think about what strategies LeBron has up his sleeve next. Playing in Los Angeles has greatly increased his ability to impact the film and media industries to perhaps create more content that will help promote awareness and activism for a more equal and beneficial future.

GRIDIRON ACTIVISTS

The NFL and its complicated relationship with Social Justice Movements



HOW IT STARTED

In August 2016, Colin Kaepernick took a knee during the playing of the National Anthem before a 49ers game as a way of protesting racially instigated police brutality and the systemic racial inequality that is prevalent in the United States. He has since become an icon on both sides of the political and ideological spectrums (with vastly different depictions of his reason for achieving celebrity-status). As athletes continued to kneel during the National Anthem, the NFL faced a dip in ratings, attacks from the President, and a growing need to address what had overtaken the 24 hours news cycle.

A PROPOSED SOLUTION

The NFL and NFLPA (players association) began meeting with a handful of players to discuss what the NFL could do to help the communities these players are voicing concern for, while also limiting negative backlash from fans. The solution? The NFL wrote an \$89 million check to fund Players Coalition, a group aiming to, “end social injustices and racial inequality so future generations have opportunity to thrive without barriers.” Among the group is Malcolm Jenkins, Anquan Boldin, Doug Baldwin, Demario Davis, just to name a few. The absence of Eric Reid and Colin Kaepernick from this group has caused Players Coalition to receive a fair share of criticism. This critique mainly stems from the fact that Reid and Kaepernick have spoken out against select members of the group (most notably, Malcolm Jenkins) for in essence, selling out to the NFL and ending a social justice movement that they had no business negotiating the end of. Jenkins and the rest of the Coalition agreed to no longer take a knee, raise his fist, or perform any other act of protest or symbolism during the National Anthem.

THE CONTROVERSY

“Don’t try to capitalize on something [the protest movement] you never participated in.” That was Reid’s response when asked why he was not in full support of Players Coalition. For context, Players Coalition was originally intended to focus on criminal justice reform. The players and the league decided that this would be an area where they could create concrete social change. Reid believed that this was an easy way for the league to brush off the protesting players and end the backlash from fans. He (and Kaepernick, who maintained his silence throughout this period, likely due to the pending collusion lawsuit he filed against the NFL) wanted the players who actively protested to separate from Players Coalition in order to focus on racial oppression. This separatist group would be led by Colin Kaepernick himself, and within a few weeks, Kenny Stills, Russell Okung, Michael Thomas, and Eric Reid left Players Coalition just days before an agreement was to be made by the league. Reid’s outrage over the Players Coalition and its deal with the NFL has only grown more tense over the course of the 2018 NFL season. Much of the controversy stems from Reid’s belief that the NFL was able to successfully convince players to end the acts of protest, even though many of these players were never involved with the movement to begin with.



POSITIVE OUTCOMES -- CONTINUED CONTROVERSY



Despite the controversy surrounding the formation of Players Coalition, those who are involved with the group have remained dedicated to affecting positive change, especially related to criminal justice reform.

The power of influence that these athletes have is no secret. That influence is even more effective in their hometowns, or local communities in which they play. Players utilized their platforms over the course of 2018, advocating for criminal justice related amendments and bills that would be voted on over the course of the year.



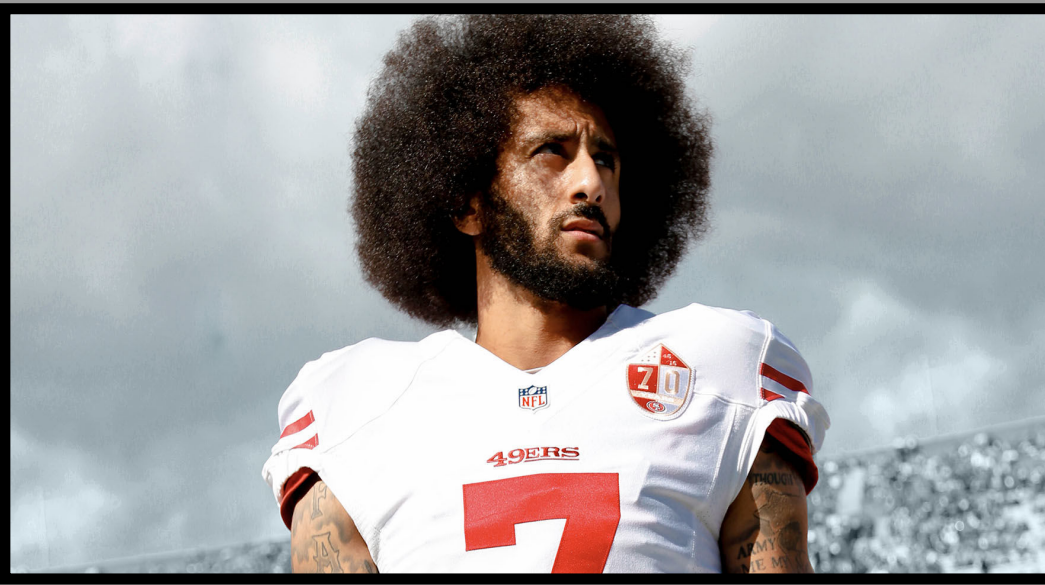
HOUSE BILL 265 - LA

In Louisiana, House Bill 265 was a tightly contested bill that would return voting rights to convicted felons who are five years removed from their sentence. In Louisiana, around 32% of the population is black, and this law was disproportionality eliminating voting rights people of color. Two days before the vote, Benjamin Watson and Demario Davis, members of both the New Orleans Saints and Players Coalition penned a public letter advocating for their support of the bill. Numerous local reports came out after the bill was approved that the public letter had substantial impact on young, black voters throughout Louisiana.

AMENDMENT 4 - FL

After Anquan Boldin's 14th season in the NFL, he was a free agent looking for his next team (and sizable NFL veteran contract). That off-season, his younger cousin was shot and killed by police in his home state of Florida. Boldin retired from the NFL, citing his interest in pursuing social activism as his main reason. In 2018, Boldin rallied four other Florida sports legends, Grant Hill, Stan Van Gundy, and Warrick Dunn to assist him in advocating for the passing of Amendment 4. Amendment 4 would restore voting rights to convicted felons after their sentence is completed. The 4 figures used their platform to influence voters, and demonstrate their commitment to creating positive social change.





**I'M
WITH
KAEP**

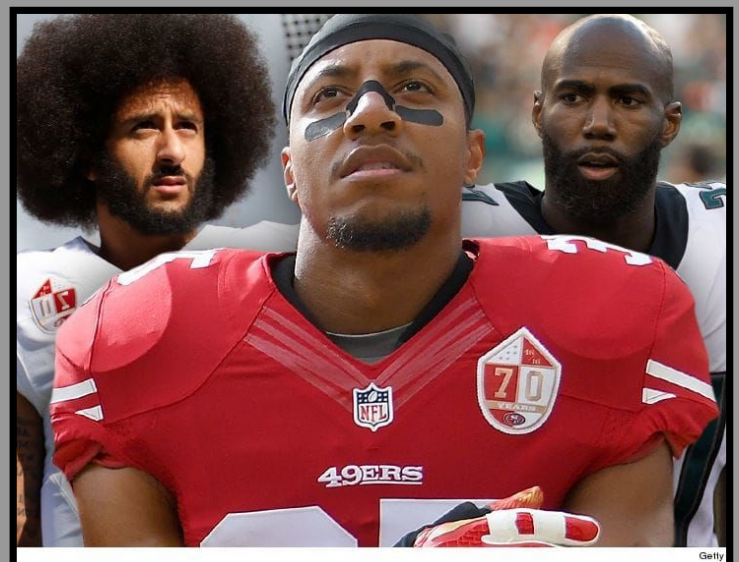


While he has been out of the NFL for two seasons, Colin Kaepernick has not given up on his passion for social justice. In 2017 alone, Kaepernick's "Million Dollar Pledge" was able to provide additional funding to countless foundations and activist groups. Included in these foundations were *Assata's Daughters*, a group focused on the empowerment of black women in Chicago, *United We Dream*, the largest immigrant youth-led network in the country, and *Meals on Wheels* who are committed to providing meals to senior citizens who can't afford food, or are physically unable to collect their own food.

IN CONCLUSION

When Colin Kaepernick decided to take a knee to demonstrate his frustration with the mistreatment and oppression of people of color, he set off a revolution of NFL athletes using their platform for social good. The controversy surrounding the formation of Players Coalition is not any individual's fault. There were simply differing visions of how the movement would move forward.

This does not devalue the work of the Players Coalition and their attempts to solve issues in their communities. As we become further removed from Kaepernick's initial movement, it will be interesting to see if these athletes can find common ground, allowing their social activism to become even more effective. Our focus should be on the NFL's desire to silence the protest.



The Ad Heard Round the World?

How NIKE and other companies have used athletes and social justice activism for their own profit







First the [@NFL](#) forces me to choose between my favorite sport and my country. I chose country. Then [@Nike](#) forces me to choose between my favorite shoes and my country. Since when did the American Flag and the National Anthem become offensive?

How did the public react?

Many athletes, including LeBron James and Colin Kaepernick, have used their platform as an effective way to project their voice on social justice movements important to them. They have also paired up with several organizations and company endorsements to do so. In two new Nike advertisements, Nike has pushed the envelope in terms of an organization that advocates for social and political change. Nike and Kaepernick have paired up to promote their new campaign that stands behind him with his protest of racism, police brutality and social injustice. While many companies, especially those as large as the multinational corporation like Nike, try their best to refrain from political stances, Nike is just doing the opposite.



ThePostGame 
@ThePostGame

.@JimBrownNFL32 gives us the 'real deal' on @Kaepernick7, flag, anthem and being an activist.

♡ 484 11:09 AM - Aug 24, 2017



More participants

The first advertisement that has stirred up the most controversy as it depicts unsigned NFL player Colin Kaepernick front and center with the phrase "Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything", along with the company logo and slogan "Just do it" (pg 10-11). This is a nod to Kaepernick's protest against police brutality and for the Black Lives Matter movement. Kaepernick's protest has caused controversy within the NFL and the nation as a whole due to players kneeling during the national anthem in protest.

Helping or hurting?

Many people, politicians, and celebrities have taken sides on this movement showing their support or disdain on social media. Former player Jim Brown has his own take on the issue. Contradicting opinions stem from both athletes and politicians such as President Trump (he has had his fair share or opinions shared on twitter). Other Nike boycotters have even shared videos of themselves ravaging their Nike apparel. Regardless of the type of media attention this advertisement has received, it has started a movement or debate of its own on whether or not advertisements should be involved in such political movements.

Backlash to the Kaepernick advertisement has hit Nike's bottom line temporarily. The company received a three percent decrease in its shares following the release of the new advertisement. Many people have also gone to show their disapproval of the new campaign on social media with tweets and images of people discarding their Nike apparel.

Even with the controversy of the campaign and following dip in profit, Nike has remained steady and continues on with its stance. Online sales surged 30% shortly after the release of the Kaepernick ad.

The New York Times

Colin Kaepernick's Nike Campaign Keeps N.F.L. Anthem Kneeling in Spotlight

"This is because I'm seeing things happen to people that don't have a voice: people that don't have a platform to talk and have their voices heard and affect change. So I'm in the position where I can do that, and I'm going to do that for people that can't!"

— Colin Kaepernick

Serena Williams Says Colin Kaepernick's Activism Should Leave "Every Human" Feeling Grateful

By ANGELA CHEN | Sept 2 2018 | 



NIKE Dream Crazy Campaign

The other advertisement is a video with many social activist athletes such as LeBron James, Colin Kaepernick, and Serena Williams depicting the struggles and good they do on and off the court.

Nike for a long time has been a company that promotes change and activism for its consumers with campaigns titled: What will they say about you, Equality, and Title IX. It could be said that Nike tries their best to appeal to its clientele of youthful athletes who want to push for social change

The video advertisement airs on television during games played in the NFL, MLB, and other networks such as ESPN. The campaign of NIKE is not revolutionary in its form of media as it uses professionally produced commercials and airs on major forms of broadcasting (TV, YouTube, Social Media). However, even though it's not new media, it is still groundbreaking in the way that it disrupts the social norms of most commercials and makes the audience take a step back and give



and acceptance. This advertisement seeks to reach a broad audience that is interested in sports and physical activity.

The advertisement advocates for dreaming big and not being held back by others' expectations for you or your stereotype. It is effective because it uses a multitude of examples of different sports, backgrounds, and challenges people have faced to be where they are today. What makes this advertisement effective is its multiple examples of athletes and sports/activities to reach out and connect to as many people as possible. Chances are that one can relate to at least one example in the commercial. The two commercial advertisements are connected with Kaepernick delivering the same line as in his personal promotion with Nike.

a double take of what they are consuming during traditional viewing experiences. It also uses similar concepts from Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed as it encourages its audience to take a step back and realize their oppressors, their oppressor's tactics, and their own ways of combating the stereotypes and to push the boundaries.

It will be interesting to follow Nike and their stance on supporting athletes who promote social change through activism. One can track the media coverage on the campaign as well as social responses on different social media platforms.

"Nike did their market research. They knew that an investment in Colin Kaepernick was an investment in being on the right side of history, which correlates to millennials, their attitudes and views,"

*- Russell Okung
Football offensive tackle*



Thank You

Believe in something.
Even if it means sacrificing everything.

~~let them be heard.~~
~~Just do it.~~