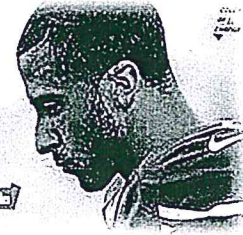


Taking a Knee for Justice? –Jarryn Charles

Recently, Colin Kaepernick, former quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, has come under fire for his political protest that started in 2016. Colin, frustrated with the police brutality and unequal treatment of black citizens, decided to take a knee while the

national anthem played during an NFL game. Kaepernick has been widely criticized for his decision; being accused of “hating America” and disrespecting the many soldiers who fought for our country. Because of his beliefs and willingness to take action, Kaepernick has been misrepresented, misunderstood, and mistreated because of his stance on political and social justice in America.

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Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, and Sandra Bland. These are the names of black citizens who were taken from this earth unnecessarily and unjustly by officers of the law. Colin and many other citizens started to take notice of the growing list of lives being taken by police, unfortunately, mostly all of them being persons of color. *“I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color,”* Kaepernick said, via NFL.com. *“To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.”*

Yes, many people have fought in the armed forces in our country and have given their lives for freedom. But that’s the ironic part. Those people gave their lives so that everyone in our country could have the same freedom and equality that was promised to them in the Constitution of the United States and the Emancipation Proclamation. So, is it wrong to protest the fact that the country is not upholding its end of the bargain? Is it wrong to ask for equality and justice? Is it wrong to demand that our country treat all of its citizen fairly? Many critics also feel that his timing and venue were not appropriate. A writer for The Baltimore Sun News stated, *“We of course all have the right to express our opinions peacefully, but it should be at the right time and place. Our place of employment shouldn't be that time or place. We have an obligation to our employer not to create or associate ourselves with controversial subjects while we're on the job. I wouldn't go to my job wearing a T-shirt that excoriated President Donald Trump, even though I think he's doing a terrible job, not only because it's disrespectful but more importantly it's against my employer's rules of conduct. However, in my off hours if I want to protest against the president's policies that's my business as long as I do it peacefully.”* But what if Dr. King didn’t march or protest in Selma, Birmingham, or Washington D.C.? Many people at that time, including the president, felt that his “I Have a Dream” speech was inappropriate because of its message, timing, and venue. But now, that speech is one of the most widely read, regarded, and talked about speeches because of its urgent message and timing. Where else would he be able to gain the attention of most of this country’s citizens, outside of his place of employment, which happens to be an NFL game.

The irony of this situation is that there are football players all across the league who have been charged with crimes such as illegal drug activity, domestic violence, animal cruelty, and gun violence, and they are still able to play each and every week. They still have contracts, and they are still members of NFL teams. What Colin did was not illegal. Torrey Smith, a former