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Opinion

As Trump Distorts NFL Players' Messages, Let's Join Together

As teams gear up for the NFL season, President Trump is reviving his destructive and diversionary attacks aimed at turning fans against players.

The league office stepped in it, by unilaterally declaring that players who do not wish to stand during the national anthem, should stay in the locker room. The NFL players association had little choice but to force negotiations over that insult.

Jerry Jones, the owner of the Dallas Cowboys, is a decent guy. But he stuck his foot in it as well, when he recently announced that the Cowboys had to stand for the anthem and couldn't stay in the locker room — or else. The league wisely told him to zip it, while the policy was under negotiation and so it goes.

So much of this is a false narrative. Fake news.

Trump dishonestly insists that the players are disrespecting the flag. In fact, the players kneeling during the anthem were expressing a silent protest not against the flag, but against police brutality and the reality of structural racial inequality.

Kneeling before the flag in silent, nonviolent protest is not disrespectful to the "stars and stripes." In fact, it's just the opposite. It is a sign of deference and respect, a call



Rev. Jesse Jackson

NNPA
Columnist

to honor what the flag is truly supposed to represent.

Burning the flag is constitutionally protected, but is a desecration. Burning a cross is a desecration. It is violent. Kneeling before the cross, or during the anthem, on the other hand, isn't a desecra-

“The only way to fight hate is with self-perseverance and love

tion; it is a call for help.

Colin Kaepernick was and is concerned about Blacks being beaten and killed by police. He kneeled during the anthem to highlight how the values of the flag were being ignored on the streets. He wasn't disrespecting the flag — he was protesting those who trample its values. He was being a patriot.

Now Trump wants to light the dynamite again. His politics prey and thrive on division. He hopes to divide us

one against the other, while his administration rolls back protections of consumers, workers and the environment, allowing corporate lobbyists to rig the rules, with lards of more and more tax cuts and subsidies on entrenched interests and the wealthy.

So, he purposefully peddles the false narrative that the players are disrespecting the flag.

Jones, who is a Trump supporter, isn't a bad man. Beyond the playing field, beyond contracts, he has been a decent guy. He paid for the funeral of Cowboy great Bob Hayes. But Jones has allowed himself to be turned into Trump's pawn in this diversion. The reality is that we would not have the Dallas Cowboys in Dallas, were it not for those protesting for their rights.

The victory of the Civil Rights Movement opened the way to a New South. The nonviolent protests and resistance pulled down the old barriers and walls in the South, clearing the way for the Cowboys and the Spurs and the Rockets of the New South, where Blacks and Whites could play on the same team and wear the same colors — where fans root for the colors of their team, not the color of the players' skin.

Successful protests — at

the cost of far too many lives — finally ended slavery and apartheid in this society. We should be honoring the protesters, not distorting their message.

Kaepernick was right to protest what is going on in our streets. He has paid a heavy penalty for expressing his views in a nonviolent and dignified fashion. One of the best quarterbacks in the league, he has effectively been banned, a blatant conspiracy that ought to constitute a clear violation of anti-trust laws.

Kaepernick stands among giants. Curt Flood in baseball and Muhammad Ali during the prime years of his boxing life were banned, but in the process, they changed sports and the country for the better.

There have always been politicians who profit by appealing to our fears. There have always been politicians who seek to divide us for political gain.

We've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go to fulfill the flag's values of liberty and justice for all. The players expressing their views in nonviolent and dignified fashion aren't disgracing the flag, they are expressing its values.

Let us turn against those who would divide us and join together to make America better.

Congressman Ron Dellums: A 'Fierce' Focused Fighter

When the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) holds its Annual Legislative Conference this September (Sep. 12-16), I hope there will be a tribute to one of its founders, Congressman Ron Dellums, who made his transition on July 30.

Dellums was a fierce, focused fighter for justice, an anti-war activist who served in the military, authored several CBC Alternative Budgets (budgets that focused on human needs rather than military buildup) and was an indefatigable fighter for South African freedom.

He is the epitome of congressional activism, progressive leadership, and stellar integrity. After 27 years in congress and a term as Mayor of Oakland, he had a much lower profile in recent years. Still, his name remains synonymous with principled leadership, and he will be sincerely missed!

Dellums blazed on the national political scene, decried by then Vice President, Spiro Agnew, as a "radical" from "Ber-zerkely." Dellums had the right response, telling the *Washington Post*:

"If being an advocate of peace, justice, and humanity toward all human beings is radical, then I'm glad to be

Julianne Malveaux
NNPA
Columnist

called radical. And if it is radical to oppose the use of 70 percent of federal monies for destruction and war, then I am a radical."

With this as a definition of "radical," the question really is, why aren't there more radi-

“If being an advocate of peace, justice, and humanity toward all human beings is radical, then I'm glad to be called radical

cals in our nation?

I'm not sure what Congressman Dellums would think of the organization he co-founded. While he became somewhat less confrontational the longer he served in Congress, the fight never left him. He didn't mind calling presidents or his colleagues out, though he did it in a way that even conservative House Speaker Tom Delay (R-TX), described as gentlemanly.

Upon Dellums' retirement from the House of Representatives in the middle of his term in 1998, Delay spoke on

his greatness.

"We are losing one of its finest members, a member that I have great respect for, because he always did his homework, was so articulate and eloquent on this floor," Delay said. "He always got my attention when he stood up and took the microphone."

Emphasizing Dellums' ability to stop every member of Congress in their tracks, Delay also mentioned the late congressman's aptitude to claim the respect that both sides of the aisle had for the

ic Socialists of America. His alternative budgets reflected socialistic principles, elevating human needs over military needs, embracing pacifism instead of war and military intervention.

He had a masters' degree in social work, and it showed, both in his interactions with people and in the alternative budgets he worked on.

When I was a professor at UC Berkeley, I brought a group of students (I called them Bey-Bey's kids because some of them were so wild) to D.C. to soak up some public policy knowledge.

Congressman Dellums' team told us that he only had 30 minutes, but when he met the group, got engaged with them and began to answer their questions. He took off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves, pulled out a flip chart and broke down the CBC Alternative Budget. We were there for almost two hours, far more than the allotted time.

He acknowledged that the Alternative Budget had no chance of passing, but said that he worked so hard on it, because it was "a possibility." He persistently fought for the right thing, even if the right thing was a long shot.

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