

Voices: Colin Kaepernick and the hypocrisy of image

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Thirty-two teams in the league, with each team carrying about two quarterbacks, and a quarterback who has led his team to a Super Bowl cannot get job.



Dante Wright There has been chatter among the NFL and its fans about the reason for Colin Kaepernick's inability to find work in the NFL, even as a backup quarterback. Back in May, Giants owner John Mara said, "All my years being in the league, I never received more emotional mail from people than I did about that issue." His quote suggests that the issue of Kaepernick's patriotism and activism is the reason for his unemployment.

Other reasons have emerged that state he'd be a distraction, he doesn't care about football, he doesn't want to play football, he's not a good player, and he hasn't expressed that he actually wants to play.

Everyone has a reason for his scarlet letter.

Who needs to change?

The most recent reason for Kaepernick's unemployment is from Michael Vick, who states that Colin Kaepernick will not get a job until Kaepernick changes his image, starting with cutting his hair. If anyone knows about changing one's image, it is Vick, who, after being a successful quarterback, found himself in the federal penitentiary for running a dogfighting ring.

Vick was given a second chance to play in the NFL. Vick meant well, but his advice does not reflect the reason for Kaepernick's league-wide blackballing. In fact, it is not Kaepernick that needs an image change, but the league itself.

What is it about Kaepernick's image that needs to change? He has no criminal record and no record of drug or domestic abuse. He is not out partying all night, and he is level-headed and to himself. In other professions, this would be a laudable person to have as an employee and representative. So, what is it that makes his image undesirable?

'A willingness to risk'

Kaepernick is a rebel rouser . . .

. . . for the right reasons, calling our attention to the bigotry and hypocrisy of our nation. In doing so, he questions what patriotism is by protesting — peacefully I might add — the national anthem.

He holds camps for disenfranchised youth of color, teaching them their rights, and he is outspoken and knowledgeable about the pain in black communities. He has opted to use his platform, as Muhammed Ali did in the past, to not only raise awareness but to be an activist.

This is the image everyone wants him to change.

Why not just be a football player? they say. However, Kaepernick got it right. Our positions of power and privilege are to be used to transform

society. There must be a willingness to risk it all for what is hard yet right. In fact, we must be willing to take the righteous path even if that path leads us away from the things we love.

The NFL's image

While Kaepernick's image is being questioned, it is interesting to me that the NFL's image is not. They are a league that insists on signing players who have a history of domestic abuse, among other problems, and while these crimes certainly create problems and distractions for teams and fans, they are not deal breakers for players receiving sizable paychecks.

They are not hurdles too high for players and teams to jump over, but an outspoken black activist is a deal breaker. He is too much of a distraction. He takes away from the joy of the game, while these other issues are mere stains. What hypocrisy!

As the league overlooks abuses against humanity, they blackball someone who calls attention to them and wants to transform them. While the NFL boasts of paid patriotism, it neglects to see that the atrocities committed against women by their players and against sex slaves by their fans and employees during the Super Bowl are in direct contradiction to the patriotic fervor they espouse.

The bottom line is that Kaepernick hurts their bottom line and shines a light on the nation and the NFL's tarnished image.

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