

# NFL Fans Union (NFLFU) Speaks Out

In 1982, the National Football League and the players were at logger heads. The players wanted a bigger piece of the profit pie and the owners didn't want to pay them more.

In the process of arguing, both forgot about the people who provide the money for the high profits owners were keeping and the high salaries players were demanding.

The players decided to strike.

I called my attorney and told him to file Articles of Incorporation for an organization I named the National Football League Fans Union... the NFLFU (get your mind out of the gutter). We were a fan advocacy organization. I, a conservative, started a union... which proves you cannot believe everything you hear about conservatives!



I called a press conference to announce the formation of the NFLFU. I got permission from the owner of the Denver Broncos at the time, Jerry Phipps, to hold the event at Mile High Stadium. I stood on the 10 yard line in front of the South stands at Mile High Stadium and read a press release. About 75 members of the media were invited... 50 showed up.

We got good coverage throughout the U.S. and around the world. I still have the clippings from the papers in many of the cities that have NFL franchises... and many more.

The players' union (yes, the players belong to a union) and the owners were abusing the fans whose financial support pays their salaries and provide their profits.

What was the problem in 1982? Both sides were showing a lack of respect and appreciation for the fans.

What is the NFL problem in 2017? It is clearly a lack of respect by players for the fans, their nation, their flag, and their military. Player political opinions have been blatantly forced on the fans and millions of television viewers who tune in to watch a football game, not get an uninformed political opinion.

All Kaepernick and his minions have achieved is to make it clear that football players disagree with the people who elected President Donald Trump to office. They are so arrogant as to think they know better who should have been elected. Donald Trump did not call players SOB's... I would, but he did not. He suggested that owners call them SOB's... And he has since Tweeted that owners are afraid of their players. He's right about that, too.

Players want to force their political opinions on fans by protesting the flag of the nation that makes it possible for a bunch of guys – many of whom would be flipping burgers if not for the opportunities America makes possible. The fans really do not give a damn what football player opinions are about politics. Players do not have a right to force us to pay a large sum of money to find out what they do not like about the world off of the football field. They sell people tickets for one thing and provide another. In fact, it sounds like fraud to me... but I'm not a lawyer.

Let's make one thing very clear. The Constitution gives the right of free speech to all people. When you act as an individual, you may peacefully protest to your heart's content... but when you go to work, your employer is not forced by the Constitution to put up with your protests. Your co-workers have rights, too. And so do those who finance the business that provides your employment. Thus, any team owner can take action against players "going to a knee" if they choose (I hate that term.) When football players go onto a football field, they enter as (highly over-paid) employees, not as individuals.

The same thing we see as we watch players go to one knee to insult our flag and country as the national anthem is played is the same problem we had in 1982 when I got so angry I started a union for the fans to give them a say in the game they subsidize. The owners and players have no respect for people – and they have a very high opinion of themselves.

Taking a knee when the National Anthem is played is not the core problem; it is merely a symptom of it.

Who owns the stadiums in which football games are played? These days, major corporations often build the stadiums and get a huge amount of advertising from it. But who owns the land? Who pays the property taxes? What kind of tax breaks do owners get to keep a team in a city because of the huge sales tax income the city/county get from \$15 a beer charges with 50,000 people in the stands every game, every football season? How much does that increase taxes for average people in cities with NFL franchises? If tax breaks are given to one party, other parties must pay for what the first party avoids paying.

Though it differs from team-to-team (sometimes it's the city/county, sometimes it's the owners, sometimes it's a combination of the two), but the public often pays for the stadiums, the property, the taxes, the tickets, and on and on. This results in lucrative television contracts paid for by ridiculously high advertising costs to corporations (which results in increased costs of products you buy from football advertisers, from Budweiser to Ford, because it adds to costs).

If there were no people in the stands, televised football games would be about as exciting as licking envelopes. Advertisers certainly wouldn't pay much for 30-second ads without the excitement the fans bring to the game. And the fans have made it very clear that they are opposed to football players – many of whom are not the brightest candle on the cake – advertising their political opinions on the field.

When someone pays from \$50 to \$100 for a ticket to see a football game, the last thing on their priority list is to have players disrespect their nation, their flag, and the military that makes it possible for those doing the disrespecting to earn ridiculous salaries because they can

catch and throw a football – or because they are able to prevent another team from running with or throwing and catching a football.

Can you imagine the arrogance of a player who walks onto a football field thinking that his political opinions are so important he can force the person who paid a lot of money to watch a football game aware of them?

The league, the owners, and the players all receive massive rewards at the expense of America's football fans. Billions of dollars go to the NFL... even the Department of Defense has paid them money. Perhaps it's time for the NFL to pay some of it back?

The American people have invested approximately \$7 billion in the various NFL teams. They have received no respect, gratitude, thanks or appreciation from the league, the owners, or the players. And that is the core problem that needs to be solved.

What's the old 1970s song? R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

It's too bad the NFLFU didn't get enough financial support in 1982 to remain active. We sold memberships, NFLFU hats and bumper stickers, but it needed a full-time representative and I was a financial consultant who was traveling all the time. We did do a lot of good, but once the season began, prostituted though it was, people lost interest.

And that's part of the core problem, too.

We want things to go the way they are supposed to go, the way people promise us they will go when we buy season tickets or any other product – even when we elect politicians. When things don't go the way we want them, we become angry... as if we have no responsibility for doing what is needed to make sure things go the way people have promised us they will go before taking our money.

"We are not pro-player; we are not pro-owner," I said during that 1982 press conference. "Neither are we anti-player or anti-owner. We are pro-fans! We want fans to have a right to the first class football on which ticket sales were made. We feel both owners and players have the responsibility to provide this based on the ticket prices charged."

If fans really want the going to one knee to stop, get 50 fans in each city to file a class action suit demanding a \$10 rebate for all fans who find the one-kneeing offensive (for each game in which it has occurred). It is not part of what they paid for. It will be amazing how quickly team owners begin fining players for one-kneeing the National Anthem.

We encouraged people to write letters to sponsors of televised football games. "Tell them that you will not purchase the sponsor's product because anyone associated with the game of football during the 1982 season does not have the better interests of the people at heart." I would encourage people to do the same in 2017.

We recommended that fans boycott all products advertised by NFL players. We demanded refund policies be put in place. For example, when season ticket sales promotion literature was sent to the general public, no one told them the season was going to be interrupted by a player strike (though management was aware it was a possibility). We achieved that objective.

We – the NFLFU – were concerned about the lack of third-party mediation. Talks were going nowhere. Management was represented in the talks and so, through their union, were players. But fans, whose ticket purchases finance the game, were not represented. The NFLFU offered to provide trained mediators to help bring the players' strike to a conclusion acceptable to everyone.

The NFLFU wanted management and players to guarantee no loss of ticket priority for fans who refused to buy tickets during

a player strike year. Teams like the Denver Diapers – oops, I mean Broncos – and Seattle Snowflakes – oops, I mean Seahawks – have a waiting list for upgrading existing season ticket seats when other people with better seats let them go. If you miss buying your seasons tickets one year, you lose your position on that list. We won that one, too!

The NFLFU even challenged a Supreme Court ruling made in 1922. It held that professional sports were exempt from typical antitrust provisions because no product was sold. I felt that ruling, made in a 1922 economic environment of manufacturing rather than a 2017 economy of technology was antiquated. It was – and it still is. The challenge was never resolved.

Perhaps we need a Special Counsel appointed to the FBI to investigate whether professional sports are exempt from antitrust provisions because each team certainly is a product... especially when political positions are forced on fans! Maybe they could add that to Robert Mueller's witch hunt list.

This entire issue is about respect... for our nation, our flag, our military and the people who work hard to support them all. We all have problems. I would love nothing better to have a pre-game two minutes to air my grievances to millions of people watching the game... but the fans didn't pay \$98 a ticket to know what I have on my mind – and they didn't pay to hear what football players have on theirs (unless it has to do with football).

The military fights, bleeds, and dies so those players can make (I didn't say "earn") their ridiculously high salaries. Our military fights under that flag.. Military caskets come home draped with the flag that the players dishonor. 64% of Americans agree with President Trump's position on this issue... the other 36% are progressives and communists (which appear to be pretty much the same thing, these days... based on Colin Kaepernick's support for communist Cuba, he's probably in that

group, too). NFL television ratings are already down 11% this year compared to last (and they were down last year, too – perhaps an attestation that League Commissioner Roger Goodell isn't up to the job he has?). Commissioner Goodell issued a statement saying that President Trump is responsible for the divisiveness being caused by player misbehavior (according to Goodell's own Game Operations Manual). A small man in a big job.

The NFL's Game Operations Manual says that "all players must be on the sideline for the National Anthem" and must "stand at attention, face the flag, hold helmets in their left hand, and refrain from talking or face discipline 'such as fines, suspensions'," and teams may be required to forfeit draft choice(s) if owners allow misbehavior. Well, owners are ignoring the misbehavior so perhaps it's time for the League to impose some forfeits of draft choices.

Just because our Department of Justice has ignored constitutional law for the past 30 years does not mean NFL team owners and the National Football League should ignore their own Game Operations Manual.

What the people feel about NFL players who so disgrace their nation, their flag, their military, and the people who go to work every day to support those things and who love those things, goes beyond disgust.

The Jacksonville Jaguars and the Baltimore Ravens are the worst. They played a league game in London and about two dozen of them went to one knee for America's *National Anthem* and stood for *God Save the Queen*, the British Anthem. Their statements that they mean no disrespect for our nation when they go to one knee is a lie. Their actions prove they lie.

Jacksonville is a Navy town. My son's aircraft carrier was berthed there. If the President decided to give Georgia – or perhaps South Carolina – the financial opportunity of the



thousands of sailors that are currently housed in Jacksonville, it would be an economic disaster for the Jaguars. No one would have any money to attend the games. Gosh, that would just break my heart.

As for Baltimore... who would expect anything else from a city run like that one is? We all saw what Baltimore is all about in the matter of Freddie Gray's death and the riots that ensued. All six police officers charged by Marilyn Mosby, Baltimore's State Attorney, were found innocent of his death and in mid-September the federal government said no charges were being considered by them.

Core Problem: No Respect for the People – in a lot of places.

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