
Three Strikes. I'm Out of Sports.

"Integrity is choosing your thoughts and actions based on values rather than personal gain."

- Chris Karcher

As you know, I co-founded TFSEM back in 2001 with Lee Rouson, the former NY Giants two-time Super Bowl champion running back. For almost two decades, I was blessed to work with numerous active and retired professional athletes, including 13 years with NY Giants players and coaches. I lived most guys' sports fantasies on a regular basis. Trust me, I could start telling you stories about them on a Monday, and by Sunday I wouldn't come close to being finished.

The 2015 season was my last one with the Giants. By then, I started to see not only my age but also the color of my skin as a challenge both personally and in business. I was as old as many of the players' grandfathers, and as a white guy from

the Bronx, I found it more and more difficult to earn the trust of these young Black men. American media and our out-of-control, politically-correct society will never say it but I will: reverse prejudice is real.

Strike One.

Though my work ended with professional teams, I still maintained a very active business and personal life with individual athletes. I hosted several meet-and-greets at my Spring Lake, NJ office, and I sponsored a number of athletes at civic, business and recreational events.

When the NFL's Colin Kaepernick and athletes in other sports started taking a knee and displaying what I believe to be blatant disrespect for the United States during the National Anthem, I and millions of other Americans took offense. The difference in my case, however, was that my business life was almost immediately negatively impacted. The fact that I openly spoke out against it only added to the furor I experienced from some in the sports world.

Strike Two.

While the COVID-19 pandemic brought a halt to any and all sports-related marketing and business development, the entrance of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement into the forefront of daily life and the attacks on any and all who dared to speak out against it, led me to make one of the toughest decisions of my life.

As a devout Catholic Christian, how could I engage with professional athletes and teams who openly and loudly supported an organization that preached acceptance of politically-correct issues that directly contradict my faith?

I'm not talking about justice or equality; these are Biblical concepts. God created us alike and in His image, and He loves us all equally. The Bible says:

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him. - Romans 10:12

God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. - Acts 10:34-35

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. - Galatians 3:28

Based on everything I have learned in life and in church, I know that society does not determine our value. God does.

My beef with BLM isn't about social justice, it's some of the lesser-known beliefs the organization espoused which directly conflict with my Christianity. Because the BLM movement so openly promotes lifestyles and concepts which are contradictory to the teachings of the Bible and the tenets of my faith, I felt it would be the ultimate in hypocrisy to wear my faith on one sleeve and a BLM armband on the other.

I aggressively wrote and spoke about this and before too long, clients and other interested parties departed, expressing dismay over my stance.

One professional athlete with whom I had developed a personal relationship came to discuss the BLM topic with me and we went to lunch. (To his credit, I respect and appreciate the fact that he didn't just drop me like a hot potato. He reached out to discuss his views and hear mine—a strategy that few people employ today.)

During our meal, he tried to compassionately school me on his side of the argument and told me all of the reasons why I was wrong in my evaluation of the movement. I listened to everything he had to say and then asked him how he would feel if the waiter, cook and busboy came to our table and instead of serving us lunch, gave us a sermon of sorts about a social issue—any social issue? After 10 or 15 minutes, what would be his reaction?

He said, "Since I came here to eat, not to listen to them, I'd want my meal. What they do on their own time is up to them."

I agreed, saying that the restaurant is in the business of feeding people.

Similarly, I explained, he and the pro sports teams were in the entertainment business. Just like he wanted only to be served and fed by the restaurant, fans in stadiums and watching on TV—people who pay a lot of money to see him and others play a game they had loved since childhood—simply wanted to be entertained.

Studies show a number of reasons fans watch sports. Columbia Journalism Review reported that there are eight common motivations for sports fandom, among them: getting one's self-esteem from sports; watching because it's exciting; needing an escape from real-world troubles; and because sports provide a sense of belonging and a connection to a wider world.

So whether the fans are watching to relive their glory days playing high school ball or because they are hoping to get away from the world for a few hours, nobody's tuning in to be lectured about a social issue—any social issue.

I noted that what he did on his time was his business, but his job was to play and people watch because they want to see him play (and hopefully win) at the game. I added that these were people who sunk a pretty penny into his career by paying for tickets, buying a jersey with his number on it, and otherwise financially supporting his livelihood; and he'd been paid handsomely to do it.

I told him that I believed what he was doing during the game was akin to the waiter and busboy campaigning instead of serving our meal. I added that if players protested before or after the game, most viewers wouldn't have a problem with it. But being forced to participate in their social statement didn't fall into the category of entertainment.

He thought about it for a moment and agreed. But the following week he was back on the field making a social statement. It was that response that clinched my decision to end that part of my life.

Strike Three.

In the months that followed, I gave away to worthy causes and good people tens of thousands of dollars of sports memorabilia, and I closed the books on Trinity Financial Sports and Entertainment Management Company.