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NAACP Requests Meeting with NFL Commissioner to Discuss First Amendment Issues and Colin Kaepernick

YOUTH & COLLEGE MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN TODAY'S NYC "UNITED WE STAND" RALLY

BALTIMORE (August 23, 2017) – In a letter mailed today, the nation's oldest civil rights organization is requesting a meeting with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell to discuss the issue of First Amendment rights and free speech issues surrounding players, including former San Francisco 49er's quarterback, Colin Kaepernick.

In a letter sent to NFL Commissioner, Roger Goodell, NAACP interim President and CEO, Derrick Johnson, said:

"Last season, Mr. Kaepernick chose to exercise his first amendment right by protesting the inequitable treatment of people of color in America. By quietly taking a knee during the national anthem, he was able to shine a light on the many injustices faced by people of color, particularly the issue of police misconduct toward communities of color. As outlined in your office's public statement, this act of dissent is well within the National Football League's stated bylaws. Yet, as the NFL season quickly approaches, Mr. Kaepernick has spent an unprecedented amount of time as a free agent, and it is becoming increasingly apparent that this is no sheer coincidence. No player should be victimized and discriminated against because of his exercise of free speech – to do so is in violation of his rights under the Constitution and the NFL's own regulations." For a full copy of the letter click here:

The NAACP's regional branches including the New York and Connecticut State Conferences, the Providence Youth Council and the St. John's University College Chapter will also participate in the New York City-based "**United We Stand**" rally in support of Colin Kaepernick's right to free speech, which will take place on August 23, 2017 at 5:00pm in front of the NFL Headquarters at 345 Park Avenue, New York, NY. New York State Conference President, Dr. Hazel Dukes, and National Youth and College Coordinator, Anthony Davis, will speak at the rally.

"This issue of athletes using their right to free speech to take a stand on issues has always been an important one in our community," said NAACP State President Hazel Dukes. "Right now, the action of the league seems to imply to young black men that this league, which is comprised of 70% African Americans, only values Black lives if they are wearing a football uniform."

Organized by a coalition of civil rights, faith-based and civic organizations including The Justice League NYC, The People's Consortium for Human and Civil Rights, Rainbow PUSH Coalition, Tamika Mallory and Symone Sanders, the rally will draw attention to the quarterback's current situation: Although the NFL is well-into the pre-season, Kaepernick remains a free agent, unsigned by any of the 32 teams in the league.

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Although the NFL will enter the pre-season, Kaepernick remains a free agent, unsigned by any of the 32 teams in the league.

“The purpose of this rally extends much further than Mr. Kaepernick getting a job this season,” said Anthony Davis, Coordinator for NAACP Youth & College Division. “The decision of NFL owners to abstain from signing Mr. Kaepernick for no reason other than his protests of police brutality against black and brown bodies in America sends a menacing message to other professional athletes that in order to retain their jobs they must stay silent on issues that matter the most to them.”

ABOUT THE NAACP:

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation’s oldest and largest nonpartisan civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities. You can read more about the NAACP’s work and our six “Game Changer” issue areas by visiting NAACP.org.

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