

Sacred Heart University

Professional Athletes Using Their Social Media and Public Image to Effectively Facilitate Social
Change

Mia Sansanelli

HN-300-E

Professor Marmo-Roman and Professor Steele

4/20/22

Introduction:

Professional athletes have always played an important role when it comes to leisure and entertainment, but for some athletes, the more essential responsibility they hold lies in their work as social justice activists. Celebrities, such as high-profile professional athletes, can exhibit tremendous influence over the public consciousness, which may lead to greater connections and significant prominence in public life (Babiak, Sant, 55). Professional athletes have been able to achieve celebrity and influencer status through their success in their sport paired with their accumulated followings on social media platforms. “Professional athletes find themselves in a unique position where their actions and behaviors are of significant interest to the media,” (Babiak, Sant, 55).

For decades, athlete activism has been transforming as it intersects with the age of technology and growing societal issues. According to Williams, “there exists an illustrious history of athletes who have blazed the trail and stood up for the numerous injustices that have taken place in the United States” (2). Sociologist Harry Edwards is widely known for his work in documenting these “waves” of athlete activism since the start of the 20th century to the present day. He charted four major waves and anticipated a fifth on the horizon, which we are seeing come true in real time. Edwards believed that with their high-profile roles and powerful personalities, athletes become key influencers and spokespersons in society at large. This includes their evolving perspectives on long-enduring racism, which is a main fixture of social justice movements throughout history following through to today. The fifth wave of athletic activism is upon us, having been inspired by high-profile players like Colin Kaepernick and LeBron James who specifically speak out against racial injustices in America.

These newer generations of athlete activists have been successful in their execution in large part to the prominence and utilization of social media. “Social media platforms are used by one-in-three people in the world, and more than two-thirds of all internet users. In 2020, over 3.6 billion people were using social media worldwide, a number projected to increase to almost 4.41 billion in 2025,” (Zacharopoulos, Rigou, 1). Colin Kaepernick, former 49ers quarterback, is presently best known for his work as an activist. He was able to use his generated media image to speak out against police brutality on and off the field. Although he had previously worked to promote social change, his most memorable and fierce demonstrations occurred while he was the face of the San Francisco franchise. Although not currently on an NFL roster, Kaepernick began his kneeling demonstrations on NFL sidelines in 2016 in direct response to the deadly execution of Mario Woods in San Francisco’s Bayview neighborhood. This sparked a global trend of kneeling in protest during the national anthem. These demonstrations became connected to the Black Lives Matter movement which pushed his manners of activism into the political space (Williams, 4). Kneeling as a sign of protest for the mistreatment and deaths of innocent black people became a global phenomenon which inspired others to demonstrate their contempt through dialogue and physical actions.

Many athletes have followed the example of Kaepernick, using public platforms to promote and facilitate change when it comes injustices. LeBron James is one figure who is known for giving back to worthy causes and encouraging political participation by using his voice towards the Black Lives Matter movement. “The Los Angeles Lakers superstar has used his platform to speak out on political and social issues and recently helped form “More Than a Vote,” a group dedicated to mobilizing African American voters and fighting voter suppression,” (Bunn, 2).

James has been vocal in numerous causes and a leading public figure in addressing and influencing social change in a divided nation.

Both Kaepernick and James have been viewed as icons in their activist work and leadership on important social issues but also have been highly criticized. Bringing non-sports related material into the professional athletics space has become one of the most controversial topics of the past decade (Agyemang, 953). “Clearly, there remains a price to be paid to be an outspoken athlete, even in an era where the role of athletes as contributors, and even arbiters, of social change, is increasingly accepted,” (Darnell, 4).

Through review of the research and media followed by evaluation of public reaction surrounding athletes using their platform for social justice work, it will become evident how essential professional athletes are in their responsibility beyond their sport. As highly successful, respected, and followed public figures, their work to bring attention to and act on explicitly racially motivated concerns may become expected behavior as a new wave of athlete activists surges forward.

History of Athlete Activism:

Prior to this current era where social media is the primary source for the public to receive information, print and broadcast media outlets were primarily responsible for delivering the news (Abuin-Penas, 226). When athletes were first recognized as speaking up to and acting upon pressing social and political issues, their efforts, along with their success in their sport, were documented and spread through news outlets. The ongoing tradition of activism that stems from unspoken responsibility for athletes of color to step up and speak on behalf of their fellow people

of color who have been historically silenced, referred to as *The Heritage*, is when athlete activism first emerged (Williams, 2). Many athletes of color have previously fought and continue to fight for social justice on behalf of their respective communities. Some notable athletes that are a part of *The Heritage*, the first wave outlined by Edwards, are Jesse Owens, Jack Johnson, and Joe Louis (Williams, 3). Being standout Black athletes in their sport, their accumulated media coverage and fanbases allowed their messages to be heard and problems to be addressed. Heading into post-World War II era, the second wave of athletes served as pioneers for desegregation (Williams, 3). Athletes like Jackie Robinson, the first to break the color barrier in professional baseball, and Larry Doby, the second to do so and the first black player in the American League, are both Hall of Famers remembered for their successful careers and the historic steps they took for all those who followed. Moving towards the next sector of athletes, people like Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown, and Bill Russel embodied the Black Power movement during the Civil Rights era. This third wave came in the 1960s and sought immediate social justice through intentional disruptions and active challenges to dominant institutions and legal discourse (Williams, 3). Athlete activism saw a decrease in participation through the 1980s and 1990s, as athletes like Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, and OJ Simpson chose to ignore the work of *The Heritage* and their social responsibility to represent others and facilitate social change. These players decided to brand themselves as apolitical and focus on personal development (Williams, 3). There was a prolonged period where athletes did not act or use their platform to speak about pressing issues, like racism in America. Colorblind racism proceeded and the realities of an unbalanced racial power structure went unaddressed (Williams, 4).

Fourth Wave of Activism:

The fourth wave of athletes would not take shape until the situation turned fatal. The fight for racial justice and true equality only came back into the limelight when the killings of Black Americans became a frequent occurrence and was met with negligent justice. The fourth wave of activists is the most common and relevant to this generation, as its leaders took shape in the past decade and continue to uphold their responsibilities until real corrective action is taken and the system is successfully adjusted. Perhaps the most prominent name in this fourth wave of athletic activism is Colin Kaepernick. In 2016, he was the quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers. During preseason, he was dealing with an injury and was spotted sitting on the bench before the game while the national anthem played. This generated a lot of media coverage since this was interpreted as a direct attack on our country and an act of anti-patriotism. The following game, in an intentional act of protest, he decided to kneel on the sidelines during the Star-Spangled Banner with his teammate Eric Reid which sparked the movement that athletes, coaches, and followers took part in. Kaepernick is a biracial man who had used his social media to bring attention to police brutality for years before he performed this peaceful demonstration. “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way,” he said to the press back in 2016 (Donahue, 2). Kaepernick has remained committed to this purpose of fighting racial injustices and has sacrificed his career because of it. The fourth wave of athlete activism is the resurgence of professional players recognizing their responsibility and utilizing their influence and generated media image to expedite social change.

LeBron James is another athlete in this fourth wave that ultimately paved the way for the fifth wave of athletes to emerge. James, currently leading the Los Angeles Lakers in the NBA, has been constantly recognized for giving back to his community. As the Black Lives Matter

movement gained traction, James's efforts for racial equality and justice began to be more appropriately recognized. "We know it's bigger than us. It's not about us. I'm going to continue to do what I have to do to play this game I love to play, but this is bigger than me playing the game of basketball," said James in response to why sports and politics should mix (FitzSimons, 2). The Black Lives Matter movement became a global phrase to represent a political statement as well as a plea for basic humanistic treatment which pushed the efforts of *The Heritage* back into the picture, this time backed by millions.

Colin Kaepernick:

This fourth wave of athletes was sparked by the work of people like Kaepernick and James and prove that these professionals are an effective part of social justice efforts. Again, athletes who have reached a high enough status achieve a large following through their media presence. By communicating to their millions of followers across platforms, athletes can marshal and activate fans and followers to adopt similar philanthropic behaviors themselves (Abuin-Penas, 226).

Colin Kaepernick was known for a lot of other personal qualities before he fully dedicated himself to social justice. He was adopted, and his birth parents had lost two children previously to heart disease. People knew Kaepernick for his muscle-flexing and showboat performances on television, but they also knew him for where he came from and the many things he represented. He had been known to support charities focused on heart disease, like Camp Taylor, among others. His social media presence was growing prior to and around the time his kneeling protests in 2016 began. He had made it known through his media posts, retweets, comments, and overall content that racial injustices were happening constantly and that more needs to be done. He was able to spread awareness and encourage others to join the fight in a digital sense, but when he

finally was able to send a message on a national level, people started to finally recognize the gravity behind the movement. The reaction that Kaepernick's work invoked from his fans, followers, and others was powerful and successful in that it encouraged them to address police brutality and consider a different perspective (Towler, 3). For those who originally did not believe in systematic racism or maybe thought his kneeling demonstrations were an act of anti-patriotism were able to see and learn through Kaepernick's voice on social platforms what his actions translate to; what they really represent. On his website, kaepernick7.com, you can view all the results that he has achieved from his activist work during the fourth wave. He established a partnership with Nike and created a famous advertisement where he stated, "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything." He recently announced that all his AF1 shoe profits are going back to the community, allotted to organizations like Critical Resistance which "seeks to build an international movement to end the Prison Industrial Complex by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us feel safe." It fights for basic necessities and freedom for all individuals. Policing and prisons have been main points of attack by Kaepernick and his brand. Additionally, he partnered with Ben & Jerry's to make his own ice cream flavor, "Change The Whirled," which "celebrates Kaepernick's courageous work to confront systematic oppression and to stop police violence against Black and Brown people." He has donated and raised thousands of dollars towards Covid-19 relief funds, announced his own book to be published, and is leading the "Know Your Rights" campaign whose goal is to raise awareness on higher education, self-empowerment, and instructions on how to properly interact with law enforcement in various scenarios. Kaepernick has released his own line of clothing which also supports his brand, himself, his mission to educate people and to work towards creating new systems that elevate the next generation of change leaders, hence the fifth wave of

athletes and those who follow their lead. The vast amount of funds raised, partnerships established, and participants in his mission paired with receiving multiple awards that recognize his life-dedicated efforts confirm that Kaepernick has been successful in facilitating social change through the media and has used his platform and influence to their fullest extent.

LeBron James:

LeBron James is another one of the prominent athletes in this fourth wave that has joined the expanding national movement that mixes community need into the formula for socially responsible projects (Schneider, 1). James began his formal mission to change the world in 2004 when he established the LeBron James Family Foundation, which invests its time, resources, and attention in the kids of his hometown of Akron, Ohio, according to the organization's website. James opened his own school, and through the I PROMISE program, more than 1,400 students are supported through programs and mentors in order to succeed in their education and in their futures. James is a success story for children in Akron to look up to, and he has used his position and success to be a role model and a philanthropist as well as a social justice activist for this population. Recently, a new school, three residential buildings and a sports-and-entertainment complex encompassed the more than \$20 million investment by the LeBron James Family Foundation and its partners. This is another example of James upholding his social responsibility and using his personal prominence to help move important projects like this along, where it will provide training and jobs for students interested in careers in food service, hospitality, management, maintenance, finance, and other professions (Schneider, 1). Furthermore, UNINTERRUPTED is an athlete empowerment brand created by LeBron and Maverick in 2015 to give athletes around the world a platform to tell their stories. This has since evolved into the

“More Than” movement, gaining much traction in recent years, which encourages all people to reach beyond their occupation, correlating directly to the activist work that athletes have started to do, following in the footsteps of James and the fourth wave. At lebronjames.com, his philanthropic work is chronologically outlined to inform and educate his fans about the essential work he does beyond basketball. James has seemingly never been afraid of losing endorsements and fans due to his political concerns intersecting with his career. “Among the list of James’ involvement: He has contributed millions to his hometown of Akron, Ohio, and paid tuition for countless students to attend the University of Akron; he and others on the Cleveland Cavaliers wore ‘I Can’t Breathe’ T-shirts before a game in 2014 to protest the death of Eric Garner by a New York City police officer,” and two years earlier had worn hoodies in honor of Trayvon Martin (Bunn, 6). James has continued to speak about racial injustice and has worn attire that has the names of innocent victims to police brutality as well as progressive messages that came from the BLM movement in 2020.

Athletes Inspired by Fourth Wave:

Many athletes have followed Kaepernick’s and James’s lead when it comes to their demonstrations of support on media and through their clothing. Maya Moore, four-time WNBA champion chose to sit out of the upcoming 2019 season to dedicate her time and efforts to fight for the release of a close friend convicted of crimes by an all-white jury with no evidence tying him to the crime (McClearen, Fischer, 1). She is an example of an athlete believing in something, and therefore sacrificing everything for it. At the US Open in 2020, Naomi Osaka considered pulling out of the tournament due to the recent events in 2020 surrounding the BLM movement. She decided to compete at the last moment and sported a total of seven face masks inscribed with

the names of victims of police brutality. She knew she would be criticized for her decision to do so if she lost, but she preserved through her hamstring injury and fulfilled this act of political activism, ultimately winning the US Open. “As a Black woman, I feel as though there are much more important matters at hand that need immediate attention, rather than watching me play tennis,” Osaka said on Twitter (Briggs, 2). Also following the events of the summer, WNBA’s Washington Mystics each wore t-shirts printed with seven gun wounds to pay respect to Jacob Blake. Both the NBA and WNBA have been very vocal and expressive in bringing attention to racial injustice, wearing names of victims on the back of their jerseys along with various messages like “Black Lives Matter,” “Say Their Names,” “Respect Us,” etc. In the NFL, Tennessee Titans star running back Derrick Henry also has been spotted wearing the names of the seven victims that Osaka wore and using his media to send the message, “It takes all of us” (Morning, 2). Similar messages have been painted onto the end zones for NFL Sundays, on the back of their helmets, and on warm-up gear. And of course, similar efforts have been executed in other professional leagues by other athletes, such as Megan Rapinoe for the USWNT. Teams across America and even across the world have been seen kneeling for the anthem, wearing the names of those who fell victim to racist violence, and using their voice to harness the power behind this movement and push the momentum towards change and overall progress within our country. Michael Jordan, mentioned earlier for his lack of activism during the duration of his career, is a huge admirer of James and recently decided to pledge \$10 million a year for the next 10 years to social justice organizations (Bunn, 2). Jordan is a prime example of the influence that players in this fourth wave had not just on the fifth wave but on past and present athletes as well.

Fifth Wave:

The fifth wave of athlete activists truly began in the summer of 2020. The NBA and WNBA are the first leagues in this next generation to harness the power of dialogical practices and harness a work stoppage until their demands were met. Due to the pandemic, play was stopped in the sports world for the safety of everyone. But it wasn't long until a "bubble" was created so that travel was limited, players health was monitored, and fans were to stay away in order for some variation of competition to resume in the world of basketball. In late July, the players demanded that the season be used as a driving force to address the systematic racism that sparked the summer's protests and demonstrations. The league approved a list of preapproved messages, "Say Their Names," "Black Lives Matter," "How Many More," "Vote," to place on jerseys and painted "Black Lives Matter" on the court inside ESPN's Wide World of Sports Complex. The athletes kneeled during the anthem and banded together to express their frustration with continued unjust killings and police brutality against Black people. Due to the nature of the bubble, activism efforts were easier to facilitate and execute, and this was a unique set of efforts and demonstrations compared to previous waves because in this scenario, the leagues were backing their players. Stoppages of play until the events behind the BLM movement were addressed was a trend that spread across other leagues and some athletes chose to opt out of competition in solidarity (Williams, 5). Since this point, we have seen an increase in displays of unity, messages of protests, and demands for justice across sports gear, equipment, and stadiums as well as throughout professional athlete's social media

Public Opinion:

Although all the reviewed literature and results convey that the activist effort from athletes is always effective and well-received by society, there are plenty of people and organizations that

disagree with the purposeful intersection of political and societal issues with sports. Much of the controversy revolves around the fourth wave of athlete activists, more specifically Colin Kaepernick and LeBron James. Some Americans, especially those of color, understood Kaepernick's protests during his time in the NFL to be an effort to spotlight American racism and police brutality, which is why he received overwhelming support from that population (Towler, 8). However, many Americans, including the president at the time, had a strong distaste for Kaepernick's actions and thoughts towards the flag and our country. President Trump expressed his belief that athletes should not get politics involved in sports. He has been the most prominent critic of players using the national anthem to protest racial injustice and police brutality (Maese, 2). His continued sparring with NFL players and blatant disrespect for their activist work and their personal connection to the protests led to the Superbowl champions, the Philadelphia Eagles, being disinvited from the White House as it was tradition to host the winning team in the past. Kaepernick was ostracized from the NFL when his peaceful demonstrations were performed and ignited the flame back in 2016. Throughout 2016 and 2017, NFL team owners and executives, including the commissioner, Roger Goodell, and even the United States government condemned Kaepernick for his comments and his actions which were recognized as disrespectful to the flag and American service personnel. He became a free agent by 2017 and filed a suit against the NFL "claiming the league owners were colluding to keep him out of the league due to his protest. The two sides eventually settled in 2019 and Kaepernick withdrew his grievance," (Donahue, 2). Flashforward to May 2020, George Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer which gained global attention. There were severe reactions observed such as protests, looting, demand for police reforms and defunding. The Black Lives Matter movement was officially branded back in 2013, which is when Kaepernick began his

activist presence through media, but it was brought back into the light following the death of George Floyd and many others like him. The reaction that this public figure received in 2016 compared to the reaction in 2020 amongst the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement was drastically different. Some NFL personnel were agitated with Kaepernick, as his stance and decision to make a statement against the flag, which represents our country and everything that happens within it, had touched a nerve for many people and their pre-conceived beliefs of what patriotism is. Some of the personnel were quoted saying, “I don’t want him anywhere near my team,” “He has no respect for our country, F*** that guy.” Research was done on the reactions to Kaepernick’s work back in 2016 compared to in 2020, and the data suggested that these comments made in 2016 were solely based on traditional disdain for anyone disrespecting America or the flag, and these individuals actually missed the bigger picture and deeper meaning behind his actions because of this. He was branded as a “traitor” and “not a true patriot” for his demonstrations and relentless commitment to his protests. The data goes on to suggest that Kaepernick went untouched by any NFL organizations going forward because of the attention and controversy that would come with him. Teams were torn because they wanted to side with their players who support his actions but also not alienate the fans by dismissing the major objection to this supposed act of anti-patriotism and disrespect to their country (Donahue, 5). The NFL has very strong ties to the military and our veterans which made the situation all the more difficult to navigate. Looking ahead to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 and the transformed viewpoints from fans and society at large, the NFL gained perspective on the severity and urgency of what Kaepernick had tried to fight for in the years prior. For weeks after the murder of George Floyd, both white people and people of color protested the police brutality and systematic racism that exists in America that was being witnessed in real time. There was a

sense of unity that flowed across people of all backgrounds. Corporations, organizations, and businesses at the local, state, and federal level joined in support of the BLM movement and everything it stands for. Changes and progress were finally on the horizon as policies were being changed that tended to hurt or diminish people of color, and executives in sports leagues began to make their statements of unity and promises to help change the way they do business and listen to their players. The commissioner Roger Goodell put out the following statement, “We, the National Football League, condemn racism and the systematic oppression of black people. We, the National Football League, admit we were wrong for not listening to NFL players earlier and encourage all to speak out and peacefully protest. We, the National Football League, believe black lives matter. I personally protest with you and want to be a part of the much-needed change in this country.” (Donahue, 8). The perspective had seemingly changed from NFL personnel since 2016, as they not just tolerated but now encouraged players to protest; the exact element of Kaepernick’s work that they had disagreed with passionately. It is 2022 and Kaepernick has still not been given the slightest opportunity to play in the NFL again, despite his continued training and publicity about his eagerness to rejoin the league. Public opinion on athlete activists is still very evident in the present time, and the strong disagreement many people share on the topic could be the reason Kaepernick remains a free agent.

LeBron James has experienced similar scrutiny for merging political material and his professional basketball career. Although the NBA had been known to be more receptive to its players due to the nature of their sport, prior to the fifth wave emerging in 2020 James and his choice to bring awareness to societal issues through his sport was highly criticized. Famously known and repeatedly quoted, in February of 2018, Fox News host Laura Ingraham ended her broadcast by responding to the comments James and his teammates made about President Trump

and the issue of race with the statement, “So, keep the political commentary to yourself or, as someone once said, shut up and dribble.” James took to Twitter and created the hashtag #wewillnotshutupanddribble which he also printed onto his warm-up t-shirt for the following game (Scholes, 1). This hashtag rekindled the debate of whether athletes have an obligation to use their celebrity status to bring attention to political and social issues or if they should simply play their sport. Ingraham is an example of how many people with similar beliefs dismissed the work of athletes like James and failed to understand the social responsibility and influence players like him have and need to fulfill.

Conclusion:

By analyzing the history of athlete activism and the social and political issues that each group was faced with addressing, the work of athletes as activists is abundantly clear. This fourth wave of athletes were able to harness the power and influence of their image through social media platforms to bring attention to racial injustices in America and encourage their fans and followers to take part in the fight for change. The exemplary work of Kaepernick and James provided past and future athletes a sense of motivation to continue the work that originated from *The Heritage*. These professionals have dedicated their life to causes that are bigger than themselves and the game they get to play. By continuing to inspire, educate, and assist those who need it, they are continued role models and the ultimate athlete activists. Despite the negative public discourse that surrounds the work of these players, the NBA and WNBA have been the catalysts for the next wave of athletes who will work tirelessly towards progress and justice in this era.

Works Cited

A. Lamont Williams. “The Heritage Strikes Back: Athlete Activism, Black Lives Matter, and the Iconic Fifth Wave of Activism in the (W)NBA Bubble.” *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, Oct. 2021, p. 153270862110497. *EBSCOhost*, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsair&AN=edsair.doi.....f301b026b5135bf4974db42acf5d75a6&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

ABUÍN-PENAS, JAVIER, et al. “Athlete’s Philanthropy and Social Responsibility Communication on Social Media during COVID-19.” *Journal of Human Sport & Exercise*, vol. 17, no. 1, Jan. 2022, pp. 225–34. *EBSCOhost*, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=154730981&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Agyemang, Kwame J. A., et al. “‘Agitate! Agitate! Agitate!’: Sport as a Site for Political Activism and Social Change.” *Organization*, vol. 27, no. 6, Nov. 2020, pp. 952–68. *EBSCOhost*, <https://doi-org.sacredheart.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1350508420928519>.

Babiak, Kathy, and Stacy-Lynn Sant. "All the News That's Fit to Print? How the Media Frames Professional Athlete Philanthropy." *Journal of Sport Management* 35.1 (2020): 55-68. <https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/jsm/35/1/article-p55.xml>

Bunn, Curtis. "How LeBron James has Become a Leading Voice for Social Justice in a Racially Divided Nation." *NBC News* 23 (2020). <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/how-lebron-james-has-become-leading-voice-social-justice-racially-n1231391>

Darnell, Simon C. "Paying the price for speaking out: athletes, politics and social change." *International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education special bulletin*. 63 (2012). <https://dro.dur.ac.uk/9943/>

Donahue Ben. “How the NFL Responded to the Colin Kaepernick Protests in 2016-2017 and How the League Responded to Athlete Protests During the Black Lives Matter Movement of 2020: A Sport Study, Social Phenomenological Approach.” *Sport Journal*, Nov. 2020, p. N.PAG. *EBSCOhost*, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=147264553&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

FitzSimons, Peter. "LeBron Shows Why Sport and Politics Should Mix." *The Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney, Australia)*, 22 Feb. 2018, p. 39. *EBSCOhost*,

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgit&AN=edsgit.A528329273&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

kaepernick7.com, K7, www.kaepernick7.com, 2018, <https://kaepernick7.com/>

lebronjames.com, ETHODE, 2022 www.lebronjames.com

Maese, Rick. "Trump Scolds NFL Players 'Making \$15 Million a Year' for Mixing Politics with Sports." *The Washington Post*, 15 June 2018. *EBSCOhost*,

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsbig&AN=edsbig.A542842191&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

McClearen, Jennifer, and Mia Fischer. "Field Goals-New Directions and Intersections: Maya Moore, Black Lives Matter, and the Visibility of Athlete Activism." *Velvet Light Trap*, vol. 87, Mar. 2021. *EBSCOhost*,

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsbig&AN=edsbig.A658163827&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Morning Jana. "Following the Height of the Black Lives Matter Movement This Summer, Professional Athletes from All Sports Have Been Showing Their Support through the Information They Share, the Words They Speak and Even through the Gear They Compete In." *UWIRE Text*, 24 Sept. 2020, p. 1. *EBSCOhost*,

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.636364451&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Simon Briggs. "Osaka Excels in an Action and Activism; Brilliance on the Tennis Court, Overcoming Injury and Raising Awareness of Police Brutality - the US Open Champion y Champion's Extraordinary 2020 Sees Her Crowned Our Sports Woman of the Year. By Simon Briggs." *Daily Telegraph (London, England)*, 17 Dec. 2020, p. 2. *EBSCOhost*,

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgit&AN=edsgit.A645275285&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Schneider, Keith. "A Hometown Hero Using His Power for Good." *The New York Times*, 10 Mar. 2021. *EBSCOhost*,

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsbig&AN=edsbig.A654405145&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Scholes, Jeffrey. "We Will Not Shut Up and Dribble: LeBron James and the Tripartite Human Being." *Religions* 13.2 (2022): 148. <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/13/2/148/htm>

Towler, Christopher C., Nyron N. Crawford, and Robert A. Bennett. "Shut up and play: Black athletes, protest politics, and Black political action." *Perspectives on Politics* 18.1 (2020): 111-127. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/shut-up-and-play-black-athletes-protest-politics-and-black-political-action/F9266D6D87A357726B19EC51C6266068>

Zacharopoulos, Eleftherios, and Maria Rigou. "Measuring Personal Branding in Social Media: A Tool for Visualizing Influence." *2021 International Conference on Electrical, Computer and Energy Technologies (ICECET), Electrical, Computer and Energy Technologies (ICECET), 2021 International Conference On*, Dec. 2021, pp. 1–6. *EBSCOhost*, <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICECET52533.2021.9698481>.