

Colin Kaepernick Doesn't Have a Clue About What 'Sacrificing Everything' Really Means

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Colin Kaepernick returned to being front and center in the news on Monday – after a quiet hiatus. Ironically, on a holiday honoring the American labor force, Nike chose to use the unemployed former San Francisco 49ers quarterback to make a statement.

A Nike advertisement featuring Kaepernick hit social media and instantly began trending nationwide for its controversial messaging. In it, two sentences lay superimposed on a black and white headshot of Kaepernick: “Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.” Not far away is the famous Nike slogan: “Just do it.”

If the ultimate goal was to make the National Football League one of the most politically divisive topics in America just a week before the start of the season, then sure, Nike did it all right.

Congratulations, Nike. Even the former president of Iran weighed in on the debate, tweeting his support for Nike’s latest spokesman.

In what alternate universe does a privileged athlete who amassed \$39 million in a single contract qualify as having sacrificed “everything?”

To sacrifice everything, you have to be willing to part with life itself, like so many members of our military and law enforcement risk doing every single day.

This year, six American military service members have been killed in Afghanistan – one as recently as this past weekend. Since 2001, more than 2,400 American military members have been killed in Afghanistan and more than 4,500 have been killed in Iraq. These American heroes aren’t famous, and we’ll never see their faces on some glossy sports apparel poster.

My own father gave up his full-time job as a commercial airline pilot in 2002 to deploy for a tour in Iraq. My mother huddled around the living room TV glued to network news every day of that 9-month deployment. As any military family can attest to, that is the epitome of sacrifice.

Kaepernick saying he “sacrificed everything” – simply because he is currently unable to play a game and receive millions of dollars to do so – illustrates the so-called privilege that ardent national anthem protest supporters accuse others of having.

The reality is that Kaepernick, at almost 31, was destined to be nothing more than a second- or third-string quarterback, at best. With the obvious locker room distraction that Kaepernick’s social activism brings, that distraction outweighed his performance.

Furthermore, according to Denver Broncos General Manager John Elway, when Kaepernick had the opportunity to get traded to the Broncos after his benching in San Francisco in 2016, Kaepernick declined.

Why? Kaepernick wanted to make more money on his 49ers contract. That certainly is his prerogative. But claiming he sacrificed his career on a moral high ground is simply inaccurate. Simply put, Kaepernick declined to sacrifice his bank account to play in the Mile High City.

There's another forgotten detail in Nike propping up Kaepernick as the face of its 30th anniversary for the "Just Do It" campaign.

The Baltimore Ravens reportedly had an interest in signing Kaepernick last year. That is, until his girlfriend published a tweet containing a photo of Ray Lewis embracing team owner Steve Biscotti – in comparison to a scene from the movie "Django Unchained," where a character played by Samuel L. Jackson hugs slave-owner Leonardo DiCaprio's character.

Last week, an arbitrator ruled in favor of Kaepernick in his collusion case against the NFL, which means it will go to trial. However, Kaepernick is tasked with proving 14 teams colluded against him. Good luck with that.

Even if Kaepernick wins a nearly insurmountable battle, pass the tissues to someone else. Kaepernick's fame and income, like the \$1 million book deal he inked, has only grown from this second act of martyrdom.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believed in something and made many sacrifices over the course of his life – including giving up his life when he was assassinated – in the fight against racism and for equal rights for all Americans.

Members of the military who died defending our country – or who lost limbs when they stepped on an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan or Iraq – sacrificed everything. Many of those still alive are unable to kneel in disrespect on a football field like Kaepernick – and wouldn't want to even if they could.

Kaepernick – raking in more money with his new Nike endorsement deal or posing for a GQ "Man of the Year" photo shoot – merely sacrificed a little athletic pride for plenty of accolades.

Bottom line: Kaepernick and Nike's campaign are utterly disrespectful to our military and law enforcement officers.

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