



Commentary

Athletes Use Unique Position to Call for Criminal Justice Reform

An ancient Chinese philosopher once opined that he wished to live in interesting times, and we certainly have that opportunity.

By **Angus Love** | June 22, 2018 at 01:54 PM



Angus Love and Malcolm Jenkins at the NLADA conference.

An ancient Chinese philosopher once opined that he wished to live in interesting times, and we certainly have that opportunity. One would think a mature society would look to elder statesmen and women, the professional class, esteemed academicians and leaders of the business community for guidance and wisdom in serious matters impacting our society. Due to a moral vacuum of our leadership, it has been left to athletes to speak up about social unrest. Unfortunately we seem to be an entertainment-driven culture, with a reality children with three different wives, and is a compulsive liar; he seems to lack a true moral compass. Despair seems rampant as suicides are up 25 percent in recent years and opioid deaths were up 21 percent last year. Thus it is left to those in the entertainment sector to respond to the vacuum. Oddly enough athletes have stepped up to challenge—especially those concerning the criminal justice system. In the area of criminal justice, Trump's own problems aside; he urges police to rough up suspects, brands immigrants as criminals as his Attorney General Jeff Sessions calls for a return to the failed drug war, marijuana prohibition and harsher prison sentences. All of these measures fall most heavily on people of color and the poor.

Many years ago, when I was a student, athletes were often looked down upon as dumb jocks by fellow students. As a frustrated athlete wannabe, I felt sorry for them and thought that the amount of time they had to invest in their athletic pursuits deprived them of the time necessary to educate themselves about more worldly affairs. Now we see athletes taking a leadership role in urging civic responsibilities and social change. Racism is often the leading impetus fueling the movement. As many athletes are African-American, it makes sense that they would step to the fore. So much for dumb jocks.

Recently our own Super Bowl champion, the Philadelphia Eagles, have taken on this important leadership role. Countless murders of African-Americans by the hands of police have spurred Black athletes into action. The tragic death of Trayvon Martin began the call for justice. The events of Ferguson, Missouri and more police killings were met with protest from LeBron James, Steph Curry, Serena Williams and many other Afro American superstar athletes. Following in the tradition of Muhammad Ali, Betty Jean King, Olympic protesters John Carlos and Tommy Smith; athletes wore protest messages on their uniforms and spoke out against racial injustice.

The events in Charlottesville, Virginia on Aug. 11 and 12 in 2017, spurred on another round of dissent. The protesters marching in Charlottesville included white supremacists, white nationalists, neo-Confederates, Klansmen, neo-Nazis, and various militias. Some of the marchers chanted racist and anti-Semitic slogans, carried semi-automatic rifles, swastikas, Confederate battle flags, and anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic banners. President Trump, rather than condemn the protesters, said there were very good people on both sides. This touched off a firestorm of criticism with athletes taking the lead. Colin Kaepernick started the protests by refusing to stand for the National Anthem. Once a star quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers playing in the Super Bowl, he was soon out of a job. He is now suing the NFL for collusion. Trump's comments about the protests led to more defiance. He called for the "Sons of Bitches" to be fired and wondered why they were allowed to remain in the country. Players and even the owners of NFL franchises soon joined in the growing Anthem protests.

Malcolm Jenkins, a safety on the Eagles soon became a spokesperson for the Eagles, the NFL Players Association and for the movement. Jenkins did raise a fist in the form of protest during the playing of the National Anthem. He urged criminal justice reforms such as no cash bail, felony disenfranchisement, juvenile housed in the adult system, railed against mass incarceration and its impact on the African-American community. Chris Long, an Eagles defensive end, donated his entire 2017 salary to Charlottesville community groups as he was a graduate of University of Virginia. Despite no Eagles players taking a knee in

BLUME FORTE FRIED
ZERRES & MOLINARI
A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

Your client suffers an injury due to negligence

Learn more >

WOMEN,
& INFLUENCE
POWER IN LAW™

The Original National Forum Facilitating Women-to-Women
Exchange on Current Legal Issues
a CHARNOVITZ GREENGLASS Event

OCTOBER 4-5, 2018
RENAISSANCE WASHINGTON, DC DOWNTOWN HOTEL

Executive
Leadership Forum
OCTOBER 5, 2018
RENAISSANCE WASHINGTON, DC
DOWNTOWN HOTEL

LEARN MORE

protest, Trump canceled the Eagles' planned visit to the White House because of the knee protesters. Jenkins and Long recently appeared at an NLADA event promoting his agenda of criminal justice reform. The Malcolm Jenkins Foundation and the NFL Players Association continue to push for these causes.

Our public interest legal community has been active in many of these areas for years. The Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP) has litigated against overcrowded prisons and the evils of mass incarceration for years. They have partnered with National Prison Project, the law firms of Pepper Hamilton, Schnader Harrison Segal and Lewis, Kairys and Rudovsky and Dechert in these efforts. The PILP combined with the Brennan Center to remove the five-year barrier for ex-felon's voting rights. Former protester attorney and now District Attorney Larry Krassner has reformed the bail system and eliminated cash bail for many low level offenses. Community Legal Services has done excellent work on ex-offender employment issues and reducing the burden of outstanding fines and costs. The Lawyers for Social Equality have done great work getting hundreds of expungements. The Youth Sentencing and Reentry Project has been fighting against adult certification for juveniles and their subsequent placement in adult facilities. The Pennsylvania Innocence Project has been fighting wrongful convictions for years.

We welcome the ability of our athlete heroes to publicize these issues. As Jenkins mentioned in his remarks to the NLADA, he is in a unique position to publicize these views. These are certainly interesting times.

Angus Love is the executive director of the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP). PILP's mission is to ensure equal access to justice for indigent incarcerated and institutionalized people within the state whose constitutional and other rights are being violated.

SHARE ON FACEBOOK SHARE ON TWITTER

Dig Deeper

Civil Appeals Civil Procedure Criminal Appeals Criminal Law Litigators Practice Skills Pro Bono Cases and Courts Federal Government Legal Services State and Local Government

Trending Stories

- 1 **Look Who's the Fat Cat Associate in the Jones Day Gender Bias Suit**
THE AMERICAN LAWYER
- 2 **Why This GC of a \$25B Company Has Migrated Work Away From the Largest, Most Elite Firms**
THE AMERICAN LAWYER
- 3 **'The Person I Knew Had a Conscience': Kirstjen Nielsen's Law School Classmates Call Her Out**
LAW.COM
- 4 **Manhattan Federal Prosecutors Cancel Sit-Down With Stormy Daniels**
NEW YORK LAW JOURNAL
- 5 **Citi Hires Co-Founder of Wells Fargo's Law Firm Banking Group**
THE AMERICAN LAWYER

LEAN ADVISER LEGAL

Think Lean Daily Message

"Buyers of legal services want quality, reliability and value, not cheapness. This is precisely what the sellers of legal services aspire to offer, not cheapness. In the vast majority of cases, the interests of sellers and buyers are complimentary, not competing."

[Learn More](#)

Time to build Your brand, your blog, your way Create your site today > WordPress.com

Recommended Stories

How Smart Is the Proposed Merger Review SMARTER Act?

CARL W. HITTINGER AND TYSON Y. HERROLD | JUNE 22, 2018

On May 9, the Standard Merger and Acquisition Reviews Through Equal Rules (SMARTER) Act passed the House of Representatives by a 230-185 vote.



Public Interest Calendar of Events

THE LEGAL INTELLIGENCER | JUNE 22, 2018

Here's what's happening in the public interest section of the law in late June and July.



Pa. AG Backs Fina in Ex-Prosecutor's Fight Against Disciplinary Charges

MAX MITCHELL | JUNE 18, 2018

The Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office is seeking to file an amicus brief supporting Frank Fina in the ex-prosecutor's fight against disciplinary charges.



Featured Firms

Law Offices of Mark E. Salomone
2 OLIVER ST #608
BOSTON, MA 02109
857-444-6468www.marksalomone.com

Gary Martin Hays & Associates P.C.
235 PEACHTREE ST NE #400
ATLANTA, GA 30303
800-898-4297www.garymartinhays.com

Smith & Hassler
225 N LOOP W #525
HOUSTON, TX 77008
(877) 777-1529www.smithandhassler.com

Presented by BigVoodoo →

More from ALM

CLE Center Legal Compass Events Webcasts Lawjobs Professional Announcements

Premium Subscription

With this subscription you will receive unlimited access to high quality, online, on-demand premium content from well-respected faculty in the legal industry. This is perfect for attorneys licensed in multiple jurisdictions or for attorneys that have fulfilled their CLE requirement but need to access resourceful information for their practice areas.

[View Now](#)

Team Accounts

Our Team Account subscription service are for legal teams of four or more attorneys. Each attorney is granted unlimited access to high quality, on-demand premium content from well-respected faculty in the legal industry along with administrative access to easily manage CLE for the entire team.

[View Now](#)

Bundle Subscriptions

Gain access to some of the most knowledgeable and experienced attorneys with our 2 bundle options! Our Compliance bundles are curated by CLE Counselors and include current legal topics and challenges within the industry. Our second option allows you to build your bundle and strategically select the content that pertains to your needs. Both option are priced the same.

[View Now](#)

[CLE Center →](#)

ALM Legal Publication Newsletters

Sign Up Today and Never Miss Another Story.

As part of your digital membership, you can sign up for an unlimited number of a wide range of complimentary newsletters. Visit your [My Account](#) page to make your selections. Get the timely legal news and critical analysis you cannot afford to miss. Tailored just for you. In your inbox. Every day.

[Subscribe Now](#)

[Privacy Policy - Updated](#)

The Legal Intelligencer

[Publications](#) / [Law Topics](#) / [Surveys & Rankings](#) / [Cases & Verdicts](#) / [People & Community](#) / [Public Notices & Classifieds](#) / [Legal Newswire](#) / [Lean Adviser](#) / [All Sections](#)

[About The Legal Intelligencer](#) / [Place a Classified](#) / [Contact Us](#) / [Site Map](#) / [Advertise With Us](#) / [Customer Care](#) / [Terms of Service](#) / [FAQ](#) / [Privacy Policy - Updated](#)

LAW.COM

FOLLOW US [f](#) [t](#) [G+](#) [in](#) [v](#)

Publications

[The American Lawyer](#)
[Corporate Counsel](#)
[National Law Journal](#)
[New York Law Journal](#)
[New Jersey Law Journal](#)
[The Recorder](#)
[More Publications >](#)

Law Topics

[Litigation](#)
[Transactional Law](#)
[Law Firm Management](#)
[Legal Practice Management](#)
[Cybersecurity](#)
[Intellectual Property](#)
[More Law Topics >](#)

Rankings

[AmLaw 100](#)
[AmLaw 200](#)
[Global 100](#)
[National Law Journal 500](#)
[Pro Bono Scorecard](#)
[The A-List](#)
[More Rankings >](#)

More

[Events](#)
[Legal Compass](#)
[Editorial Calendar](#)
[Briefings](#)
[Legal Dictionary](#)
[Lawjobs.com](#)
[Law Firms](#)
[Law Schools](#)

Law.com

[About Us](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Site Map](#)
[Advertise With Us](#)
[Customer Support](#)
[Terms of Service](#)
[FAQ](#)
[Privacy Policy - Updated](#)