



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®

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CHUCK CANTERBURY
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

JAMES O. PASCO, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mr. DeMaurice F. Smith
Executive Director
National Football League Players' Association
1133 20th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

1 December 2014

Dear Executive Director Smith,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Fraternal Order of Police to express our outrage and deep disappointment for the actions of several of your members playing for the St. Louis Rams. On Sunday, some of these players took the field using the “hands up, don’t shoot” gesture employed by those deluded individuals who believe that Michael Brown was deliberately shot and killed by Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson.

Our two organizations have stood side-by-side on numerous issues over the last several years—from the fight against the anti-labor law in Ohio to our solidarity on a potential strike by the players of the National Football League. To see these players use this inflammatory gesture and express solidarity, not with the men and women who keep the players, their fans and their stadiums safe, but with violent looters is very upsetting to law enforcement officers nationwide.

The “hands up, don’t shoot” gesture is meant to express support for the contention that Michael Brown was attempting to surrender when he was killed. This has been decisively proved false. While his death was tragic, it is clear that Mr. Brown was the aggressor and Officer Wilson used reasonable force to defend himself and his own life that August afternoon. Make no mistake—this misconception is a contributing factor in the violence, looting and widespread destruction of property we have witnessed. For NFL players, especially those who call Missouri their home, to perpetuate this inaccuracy is just adding fuel to the fires. The use of this gesture is not supportive of peace and reconciliation—quite the opposite. The actions of these players is deeply offensive to law enforcement officers, any one of whom might one day be placed in a similar situation.

These players would also do well to remember that our officers provide them and the stadiums in which they play with their protection. Our members gave up their Thanksgiving with their families to work extended shifts on the streets of Ferguson and St. Louis to protect the venue, the fans and the players. In October, local police intervened following the Seahawks-Rams game and made two arrests when demonstrators turned violent and attacked fans as they left the stadium. These officers put themselves in harm’s way, but the players seem to have lost sight of that fact, choosing instead to align themselves with those who believe that Mr. Brown was executed by a racist police officer. That is exactly what this gesture means to us, and I find it repugnant and disrespectful—especially coming from a fellow labor organization.

I would hope that the NFLPA will acknowledge the service and commitment of our nation's law enforcement officers to keep its players, its fans and all of our citizens safe from violence and the fear of violence.

On behalf of the more than 330,000 members of the FOP, I thank for your consideration of this issue and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Canterbury". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "y" at the end.

Chuck Canterbury
National President