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Open Letter to Commissioner Roger Goodell and the NFL



Junior Galette [Follow](#)

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Commissioner Goodell,

Like countless others, I applaud your and the NFL's statement acknowledging systemic racism and the inequitable treatment of Black people and people of color in America. You said you'd listen. I'm here to speak.

As a Haitian immigrant, I always held the ideals of America in high regard. That's why my family brought me to America in 1997 when I was nine years old. Growing up in Haiti, racism and prejudice were foreign concepts to me. These were realities I immediately had to face and have since endured from the time I was in elementary school in New York through my entire career in the NFL.

We are in an extraordinary moment in our nation's history. I hope it ignites the type of systemic change that inspires our country to live up to its foundational principle that all people are created equal. I also hope the NFL seizes this moment not just to express support for its players and our causes but also to follow those words with actions and policies that bring about real change at every level of the league.

I call upon the NFL to adopt policies that reflect our nation's bedrock law that all citizens are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Today in America, a Black man or Black NFL player is seven times more likely to encounter the police than his White counterpart. Far too often, the NFL penalizes players — sometimes severely — for encounters with law enforcement before receiving due process; players are treated as “guilty until proven innocent,” in the eyes of both the NFL and the public who sees only the punitive action. This creates a domino effect, exacerbated by the same systemic racism you referenced.

The phrase “it's time to have a conversation about race” is thrown around too casually in these moments. I was happy to hear you say you are ready to listen and thus end the NFL's practice of blackballing players for saying anything that raises issues of race or the inequitable treatment of Black people and Black players.

I hope we are approaching a new level of tolerance, honesty, and transparency, that allows a player to mention this country's history of slavery or the unjust treatment of Black people without fear of retribution and having his career that took an entire life to build unfairly cut short.

It is well known and documented that my career has been impacted by the types of actions I've mentioned; however, I am not alone. Countless Black NFL players endure unfair treatment and are held to a different standard by the league, teams, and the media. The over-policing of young Black men impacts players' earning potential and, worse, leaves dreams deferred.

Commissioner, I look forward to working with you to realize the type of change we are all seeking throughout the league to create a culture of tolerance and inclusiveness. An environment that allows players to speak freely without fear of retribution. For the league and this country to make meaningful progress, talking about race, history, and equity must be as natural as talking about sports.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Galette'.

Junior Jovais Galette