

# Shouldn't ALL Black Lives Matter?

What we're witnessing now isn't the first time professional athletes have taken a stand on matters of civil rights.

There was Jackie Robinson and Curt Flood; Bill Russell and Jim Brown; John Carlos and Tommy Smith with their black-glove clenched fists at the 1968 Olympics; Arthur Ashe and, of course, there was Muhammad Ali.

But nothing quite like this has ever happened before in the world of sports: Not only individual players, but entire teams protesting what they see as police brutality against African Americans, refusing to play.

There were boycotts in the NBA, in major league baseball, in the pro soccer league, NFL practices were called off and players indicated they might boycott at least one week of the regular season; even the NHL whose league is 97 percent white, stopped playing for a day.

And you couldn't turn on ESPN in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening or at night without hearing about "systemic racism," social justice, and police violence and racism ... and how much black lives matter.

It was a constant theme all day long.

I heard LeBron James say that, "Black people in America are scared."

I saw several players openly weep when talking about Jacob Blake, a black man in Kenosha, Wisconsin who was shot seven times in the back by a white policeman, at close range.

(According to one news reports, police officers attempted to arrest Blake after a woman called police and said her

boyfriend [Blake] was present and not supposed to be on the premises. Two officers used stun guns on Blake to try to stop him. It didn't work. He went to his car and that's when he was shot.

There's an investigation underway about what actually happened, whether Blake was reaching for a weapon when he was shot. But the video of him getting shot seven times, was enough to provoke the boycotts and calls for legislative action.)

And I heard Doc Rivers, the head coach of the Los Angeles Clippers, deliver an emotional message saying, "It's amazing to me why we keep loving this country and this country does not love us back."

But you didn't have to watch for long to figure out that neither the aggrieved athletes or their sympathetic media allies actually meant that *all* black lives matter. The only ones they were concerned about were the black lives that came into contact with white cops.

During the hours and hours of coverage on ESPN I never heard anyone talk about the black lives that are snuffed out on a daily basis in places like Chicago.

As I write this more than 2000 people have been shot in Chicago this year – and more than 400 have been killed, almost all the shooters and victims are black.

During the Memorial Day weekend alone in Chicago 85 people were shot; 25 were killed.

That's something Doc Rivers, who grew up in Chicago, didn't talk about. Neither did LeBron James. I didn't hear any journalist ask the athletes what they thought about those black lives.

And I didn't see any tears for the black children who have

been shot and killed by young black men in Chicago as they played in the street, rode in a car, or even as they slept in their bed.

A few weeks ago in Chicago, a 9-year old boy who was playing outside was shot by a black man who walked up to a group of people, which included the young boy, and opened fire.

In June, a one-year-old boy in Chicago was shot by a stray bullet while riding in a car with his mother.

About 40 black children have been gunned down in Chicago so far this year.

Couldn't the athletes, aggrieved by what they see as racist cops, throw in a word about those children?

I guess talking about them would take attention away from Jacob Blake, and George Floyd and other African Americans who were killed or maimed by white police.

It would also air dirty laundry, which is something no racial or ethnic group is anxious to do.

When cops go rogue they should be punished. And if that means charged, tried and convicted, so be it. To protest genuine racism and police brutality – and to do it peacefully as those athletes have – is not only legitimate, it's understandable and even worthy.

But watching and listening to the athletes, you'd get the impression that white cops are out on the street hunting down black people; that white cops put targets on African Americans and then go after them.

That's simply not true. "There is no epidemic of fatal police shootings against unarmed Black Americans," as a headline over a column in USA Today states.

But let's be clear: Not all cops are good cops. Some are

bullies. Some are racists. They should never have been allowed to become officers of the law in the first place. They're psychologically unfit to wear a badge and carry a gun. But the damage they're doing – serious as it is – is nothing compared to what young black men are doing to other young black men in America.

I wish I had heard something about that from the black athletes fed up with black deaths.

Upon hearing about what happened to Jacob Blake, LeBron James tweeted (in all caps), "FUCK THIS MAN!!!! WE DEMAND CHANGE. SICK OF IT"

If LeBron and the others are sick of the more than 7,000 African Americans who are murdered each year, almost always by other African Americans, I haven't heard it.

Saying "All Lives Matter" is enough to get you branded as insensitive, maybe even a racist, someone who is downplaying black concerns over police misconduct. Turns out, if what I've been hearing on ESPN is any indication, it's bad form to even talk about how "All Black Lives Matter." That too, I guess, is a distraction.

But would it really take anything away from the concerns of athletes about bad cops to acknowledge what's going on in places like Chicago? Those black lives should matter, too.