

NFL Must Get it Right Says Black Women's Roundtable



Members of the Black Women's Roundtable look on as Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever (at podium) shares her experience with domestic abuse during the BWR press conference urging NFL commissioner Roger Goodell to add Black women to his advisory team. The press conference was held during the CBCF Annual Legislative Conference in DC. PHOTO CREDIT: Paulette Singleton.

Washington, DC – Expressing absolute agreement with National Football League (NFL) Commissioner Roger Goodell that he “got it wrong,” the Black Women's Roundtable Public Policy Network (BWR) held a press conference today to urge the commissioner to take swift action to “get it right,” starting by appointing black women experts in domestic violence and sexual assault to the recently established Domestic Violence Advisory Board.

“The fact that not one of the women experts appointed to the advisory board was Black is totally unacceptable,” said Melanie L. Campbell, president and CEO, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation and convener, BWR. “Nearly 70 percent of the NFL players are Black and most of the victims are Black women and children. Clearly, Black women understand the social construct and cultural sensitivities of the victims as well as the young players from our community and can advise the NFL accordingly.”

“Victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse are our daughters, granddaughters and sisters, we are here to support them,” adds Marcia Dyson, CEO and Founder, Women's Global Initiative. “We don't want anyone to believe that Black men are the poster boys for domestic violence. These young men are our sons and brothers. Many of them went through school as star athletes and came out without the proper boundaries.”

The women say the nature of the game of football promotes violence. They believe that since NFL makes millions off a violent sport, they should take more responsibility for some of the violence and commit to funding holistic, family-oriented counseling, training and prevention programs.

Noting that violence in the NFL is a reflection of the broader society, Campbell adds, "It's not just Goodell who needs to get it right. The owners, coaches, and others in management must take the lead in the quest to eradicate violence in the NFL, other sports and, since so many young people look up to athletes, in the broader community. The NFL needs to step up given their role in society."



Members of the Black Women's Roundtable look on as Teresa C. Younger of Ms. Foundation for Women (at podium) expresses her support of the campaign urging NFL commissioner Roger Goodell to get it right by adding Black women to his advisory team. during a press conference held during the CBCF Annual Legislative Conference in DC. PHOTO CREDIT: Paulette Singleton.

"The NFL's advisory team must include Black women with a demonstrated expertise in the development and implementation of culturally specific services, policies, and programs addressing domestic violence and sexual assault in the Black community, said Karma Cottman, executive director, DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "The NFL must also include domestic and sexual violence organizations that are by and for the Black community among the NFL's organizational advisors."

The women provided details about specific actions they will take over the next few weeks to elevate the voices of Black women in the conversation about domestic violence in the NFL, other sports, and the broader issue of domestic violence nationally. Actions include:

- * Creation of an online petition (<http://tinyurl.com/ll6cnw7>) urging Commissioner Roger Goodell to immediately include Black women as external domestic violence experts on the NFL's Domestic Violence Advisory Board.
- * Launch of a social media campaign that will include twitter town hall meetings featuring celebrities. The first twitter town hall will take place Tuesday September 30, 2014 at 2 PM ET. (Hashtag #NFLgetitright).
- * Outreach to BWR partners to write letters to the NFL supporting the BWR initiative.
- * Provide recommendations on Black women experts and Black organizations.
- * BWR and partners will meet with corporations who sponsor the NFL
- * Meet with Ana Isaacson and Troy Vincent to plan a larger meeting to address domestic violence, sexual assault and other diversity issues plaguing the NFL. (Set for October 1st in NY)
- * Meet with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell as requested in the BWR open letter.

On September 16, 2014 BWR sent an open letter to a letter to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell requesting an emergency meeting with him to address the fact that there are no black women included in the recently established advisory group of women appointed to assist in developing new policies to eradicate domestic violence within the NFL. To date, our request to meet with Commissioner Goodell has not been scheduled.

Avis Jones-DeWeever, Ph.D., Incite Unlimited, LLC, shared her personal story of abuse and Pam Meanes of the National Bar Association, spoke of her sister's tragic murder at the hands of her spouse. Other BWR members and allies speaking at the press conference include: Chanelle Hardy, National Urban League; Janaye Ingram, National Action Network; Teresa Younger, Ms. Foundation for Women; Waikinya Clanton,, N.O.B.E.L. Women; and Elsie Scott, PhD, Ronald W. Walters Leadership & Public Policy Center.

“BWR expects that the commissioner and leadership of each of the 32 teams in the NFL will increase their diversity acumen and demonstrate cultural competence,” offers RenÃ© Redwood, CEO, Redwood Enterprise, LLC. “Culturally competent people know how to take advantage of teachable moments, how to ask questions without offending, and how to create an environment that is welcoming to diversity and to change.”

Rev. Barbara Williams-Skinner, PhD, National African American Clergy Network, concludes, “It’s not just a health, criminal, business or human issue, it’s a moral issue.”

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