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# Speak Out Now

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## Nike: Just Do It for the Profit

Nike recently released an ad narrated by former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick. The ad has been viewed over 25 million times on YouTube. After its release, major news companies aired video footage of people burning Nike shoes, exaggerating the opposition to the ad. President Trump chimed in denouncing Nike. But overall many people reacted favorably to the ad, seeing it as supportive of the protest Kaepernick started.

Kaepernick has been blacklisted from the NFL for starting a wave of protests in 2016 against the racism and police brutality rampant in this society. Since then, Kaepernick has not been signed by any NFL team. He is currently involved in a lawsuit against the NFL for colluding to block him from being signed because of his protest. And in May 2018, the NFL issued a rule that fines teams if any players do not stand for the National Anthem while on the field. Kaepernick's protest has been continued by many others, in the sports world and far beyond, as the racism in this society has not diminished.

But in no way is this new ad a support of the protests inspired by Kaepernick. Kaepernick has had a contract with Nike since 2011 but Nike only began to market him after his jersey sales became the top seller. Nike has an extended contract until 2028 to be the number one supplier of uniforms and gear for the NFL, the same institution banning protest and blacklisting Kaepernick.

The new ad doesn't contain one image even resembling Kaepernick's protest. That's because Nike and its owners, are in no way on the same side as Kaepernick and the rest of us. They are on the same side as the billionaires, the NFL owners, the banks and corporations and the politicians that serve to defend this system. For Nike, the purpose of this ad is the same as the purpose of their whole society: to amass profits through exploitation.

Nike products are made by about one million workers around the world who make an average of \$3.50 per day. They work in horrific conditions, are exposed to toxic chemicals, and often faint from the heat and forced overtime. Since the ad's release, Nike's sales have increased 31%. Nike made \$30 billion in 2016. Its CEO, Phil Knight, is worth about \$35 billion.

There is nothing new about Nike making money by pretending to support people struggling. More recently Nike has pretended to stand behind Muslim women's rights, featuring women wearing head scarves in their ads – all while they continue to rely on women workers in their horrible factories. Nike marketed a LeBron James shoe with the word "Equality" on it as a form of protest. When asked about the recent Kaepernick ad, James said, "I stand with Nike...every day, all day."

But there are a group of people whose struggles will never be co-opted for a Nike marketing campaign. Nike will never showcase the struggles of the workers fighting back against the conditions in their factories. These fighters will certainly never be marketed as Nike rebels.

Multi-billion dollar corporations like Nike will never support rebellions. And they won't hesitate to spend millions of dollars to try and extinguish them, and redirect them out of the streets and into the shopping malls for sales. The real message of Nike couldn't be any clearer: "Just Do It" for the profits.

Some have criticized Kaepernick for even participating in this ad. But that's not the point. Most athletes make their money playing their sport and doing commercials – that's no surprise. But some athletes like Kaepernick are willing to risk their careers and use their large platform to stand up against injustice. Because of their celebrity status, they can give voice to the millions who have been silenced by the racist violence of this society. And for that, Kaepernick should be encouraged.

Our struggles against racism, police brutality, inequality and more won't come from what we buy. We too have to stand up for the kind of world we want to live in.

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