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Missouri football team sets new precedent for college athletes

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Missouri football team sets new precedent for college athletes

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Derek Douglass (https://mainecampus.com/author/ddouglass/)

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Recent racial tensions at the University of Missouri have brought the Tigers football team even closer off the field.

Over the course of this year's fall semester at Mizzou, various racial incidents have occurred on campus, most of which have been deemed degrading to black students. This included multiple students being called racial profanities and a recent incident involved the drawing of a swastika in human feces on the wall of a dorm building on campus.

All of these incidents were swept under the rug by university administration. At the center of the scandal was President Tim Wolfe, who was accused of doing nothing to address the racist behavior on his campus.

Students protesting on campus to have Wolfe removed caught the eye of the Mizzou football team. The team also took offense to the university administration's inactivity against these perceived racist acts. In turn, 32 players of the football team went on strike. The players said they would not step onto the field for practice or a game until Wolfe resigned.

The players were even backed up by Head Coach Gary Pinkel. Pinkel tweeted a picture of him with his team, captioning the picture "The Mizzou Family stands as one. We are united. We are behind our players."

Safety Anthony Sherrils also took to social media, using a famous quote from the late Martin Luther King Jr. "Injustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere," Sherrils tweeted.

"We want to find the best way to get everyone around the table and create the safe space for a meaningful conversation that promotes change," Wolfe announced to the college community, the same day the football team went on strike.

The football program at Mizzou is historic. Every home game, thousands of fans pack into the Memorial Stadium to cheer on their team. Football has always been a stabilizer for the school and community surrounded by controversy since racial tensions began in wake of Michael Brown's death in Ferguson, Missouri just two years ago.

It's remarkable that the football players' protest invoked a response from Wolfe. Thirty-two men, who consider each other brothers, stood together in opposition to the status quo on their campus, protesting to ensure the security of every student on campus.

This kind of protest has been needed for decades in this area of the country. Students at every school, whether or not they're athletes, deserve a voice. Standing up to an injustice against their fellow students shows the unity they want to create within the school. The notion of students and athletes being divided at college's around the country should cease to exist.

By standing up for what they believed in, the football team successfully accomplished their goal of getting Wolfe to resign. They paved the way for other teams or organizations in the future to invoke change with proper action. Whether it's a football team, or any other club on a college campus, when students come together to stand up for something they believe in, it's quite powerful. All of these events happened within a few days at the school, finishing with Wolfe's resignation, showing just how quickly and impactful a united entity can be.

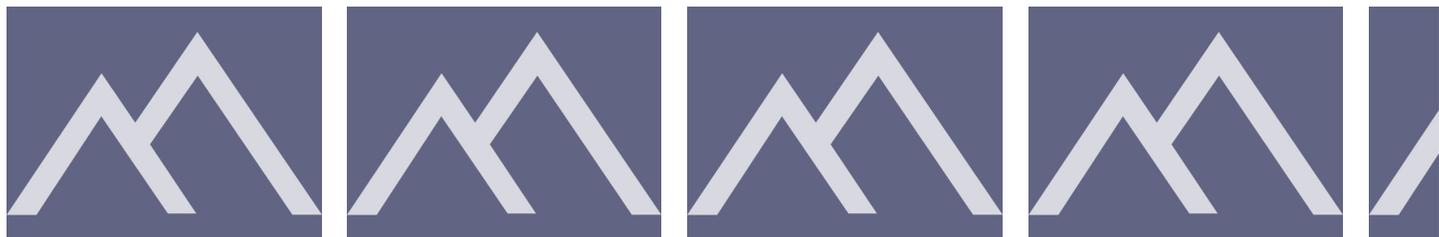
The courage this team showed to stand up to the administration deserves a big round of applause. A lot of players in the past would not have had the courage to fight the power like the Mizzou football team did.

In the future, the whole nation will look back at this point in time as an important moment in history, how the meaning of team became just as important off the field as it did on the field. Most importantly, they showed how it is possible to have your voice heard, no matter who you are.

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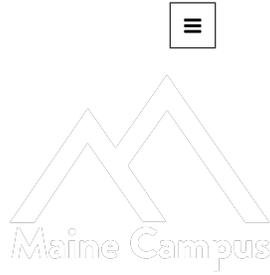
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