

Rob Michaels 5:25 p.m. PDT September 21, 2016

The nation becomes stronger when Americans work together.



(Photo: Mike McCarn, AP)

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Much has been said about NFL players kneeling to protest racial injustice and police brutality during the national anthem. And San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick has been at the forefront of the movement.

To any professional athletes who share Kaepernick's concerns, I say do not protest the police. Partner with them. Work together to find a solution. Coming from a law enforcement background, I can tell you from personal experience that law enforcement would rather be a positive influence in communities than use force to address crime.

Today's climate of anger, acerbic rhetoric and finger-pointing will solve nothing. Neither will the violent protests and rioting that took place Tuesday in Charlotte, and that have happened in many other cities this year. As a father, former detective and American, it also grieves me when I read about the violence in Chicago — young people, parents and the elderly caught in the crossfire of gangs. All part of a growing American tragedy.



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Before athletes speak out about complex law enforcement issues they might not understand, they should spend time with law enforcement officers going through training simulations and experiencing the split-second reality of policing. This would greatly help athletes understand the challenges and dangers confronted by law enforcement. It has been shown that civic leaders who have been through simulated police experiences leave with a different perspective.

Athletes, through their charitable foundations, could create community centers that give kids access to sports, job training, mentoring and parenting classes to help build stronger families.

We can do more side by side than we can screaming at each other and disrespecting our nation. If those who protest want to make a change, let's come together as Americans to build a bridge, serve families and save lives.

I am ready, and my brothers and sisters in blue will join me. Will you?

Rob Michaels is a former police detective who founded Serve & Protect in 2011 to facilitate trauma services for public safety professionals with PTSD symptoms, addictions or thoughts of suicide.

Athletes shouldn't protest cops, they should partner with them: Column