

Cameron Jones

Prompt 1: What I Want The Pope To Know

As humans we tend to conform to what we believe is normal or accepted in society. There are a select few of us who go against the grain and stand up for what we think is right. I can honestly say I've always been that kind of person. Before one of our football games 7 of my teammates and I decided to take a knee during the national anthem. Let me be clear, I do not hate my country nor do I have anything against the US military and these actions were not taken to show disrespect to anyone. I knelt because I won't stand for the racial and social injustices that affect many parts of our country today. I won't stand for the continued police brutality against African-American males. I won't stand for the racial discrimination of blacks and browns in 2017 or any year for that matter. As for myself, I cannot say that I have been harshly persecuted by individuals but I can say that I have been treated differently based on the color of my skin. I have experienced store clerks following me around as if my intent was to steal and I've watched white women clutch their purses as I walk by them. These are a few issues that I've dealt with and they contributed to the reasons why I decided to kneel during the anthem.

Little did I know that taking that knee with my teammates would cause so many problems. After that game, I went home proud of myself for taking a stand for something I felt strongly about. My family members were calling and texting to tell me that they were proud and it made me feel great. That following Monday at school everyone was talking about what I did at the game and how ignorant I was. My friends or at least I thought they were friends, didn't even speak to me. I was ridiculed for my actions and told that I only knelt because many NFL teams had done the same. Later that day I was called into the principal's office along with the

other seven guys to discuss our actions. We were informed that the president of our school was contacted by many angry alumni and that some even pulled their financial support from the program. I was shocked and confused as to why such a loving community would turn their backs on us so quickly. Then I realized the kind of world we live in today. Normalcy means comfortability, so anything that goes against what is considered normal makes many people uncomfortable. As a football player and captain of the team I am aware that I have a greater voice and I knew it while taking a knee. My purpose was to begin a dialogue that was inclusive of all students, regardless of their differences and I would continue kneeling until my voice was heard.

I am proud to announce that our voices were heard and we created a forum which hasn't existed in our schools 70 year history. Today I'm considered a founding member of the Notre Dame Town Hall. This program was sparked by the courageous act that my teammates and I did and it's a program that we hope will remain years after we graduate. Monthly, we discuss different problems throughout our country, anything from racial issues, police brutality, gay rights, and anything that affects the student body. Our motto is "Conversations Not Debates" meaning we want to understand where other people are coming from rather than arguing or trying to prove someone wrong. Throughout this process I have found my passion and I hope to share that passion with the college community.