## The dark racial sentiment in Trump's [NBA and NFL criticism](http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/23/politics/nfl-goodell-trump-response/index.html) Analysis by [Chris Cillizza](http://www.cnn.com/profiles/chris-cillizza), CNN Editor-at-large Updated 5:31 PM ET, Sat September 23, 2017 Directions: Summarize the message of each section. Highlight words that evoke a feeling or evidence of ETHOS, PATHOS OR LOGOS. Identify the author’s purpose for using that language.

**Section 1  
Washington (CNN)**In the last 24 hours, [President Donald Trump has criticized NFL players who refuse to stand for the national anthem and NBA superstar Steph Curry](http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/23/politics/nfl-goodell-trump-response/index.html) for expressing ambivalence about whether or not to attend the traditional White House celebration for champions in professional sports.  
 On Friday night in Alabama, Trump condemned football players who either sit or protest in some other way during the national anthem -- and chastised the NFL owners for not coming down harder on them.  
 "Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now. He is fired. He's fired!" [Trump said to considerable applause from the overwhelmingly white crowd](http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/23/politics/donald-trump-alabama-speech/index.html). "Total disrespect of our heritage, a total disrespect of everything that we stand for. Everything that we stand for."   
 Then, on Saturday morning, Trump tweeted this about Curry: "Going to the White House is considered a great honor for a championship team. Stephen Curry is hesitating, therefore invitation is withdrawn!"

[https://pbs.twimg.com/profile_images/874276197357596672/kUuht00m_normal.jpg](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump)**[Donald J. Trump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump)**

[✔@realDonaldTrump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump)

Going to the White House is considered a great honor for a championship team.Stephen Curry is hesitating,therefore invitation is withdrawn!

[7:45 AM - Sep 23, 2017](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/911572182060453893)

He followed it up with two more tweets -- both focused, again, on the NFL. "If a player wants the privilege of making millions of dollars in the NFL, or other leagues, he or she should not be allowed to disrespect our Great American Flag (or Country) and should stand for the National Anthem. If not, YOU'RE FIRED. Find something else to do!"

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[1:11 PM - Sep 23, 2017](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/911654184918880260)

[https://pbs.twimg.com/profile_images/874276197357596672/kUuht00m_normal.jpg](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump)**[Donald J. Trump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump)**

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[1:18 PM - Sep 23, 2017](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/911655987857281024)

**Section 2**

On one level, this is classic Trump. He feels as though he is being disrespected -- whether by NFL players not standing for the national anthem or by Curry saying if it was up to him, the Golden State Warriors would not visit the White House. (The Warriors, [in a statement Saturday afternoon](https://twitter.com/WarriorsPR/status/911671456928382976" \t "_blank), said they would come to Washington and do events to promote diversity and inclusiveness rather than meet with Trump.)

They hit him, so he hit back.

But, there's something far more pernicious here. Both the NFL and the NBA are sports in which the vast majority of the players are black and the vast majority of owners are white. In the NFL, there are 0 black owners of the 32 teams. In the NBA, Michael Jordan is the lone black owner of a team.

**Section 3**

Consider that in the context of what Trump said both Friday night and Saturday.

In Alabama, Trump called the players who refuse to stand for the anthem "sons of bitches" and insisted that any owner worth his or her salt should fire them immediately.

That got a lot of attention -- and rightly so. But it's what Trump said next that's really telling. "Total disrespect of our heritage, a total disrespect of everything that we stand for," he said --- adding for emphasis: "Everything that we stand for."

Notice the use of "our heritage" and "we" in those two sentences above.

But wait, there's more. In both his Curry tweet and his two NFL tweets, Trump expressed frustration that these lucky athletes felt the need to be ungrateful.

Trump noted the "great honor" of going to the White House and the "privilege of making millions of dollars in the NFL." You should just be thankful for what you have and not be making any trouble, Trump is telling these players.

Here's the thing: Even if we lived in a color-blind society, that would be a dangerous sentiment. After all, freedom of expression is right there in the First Amendment. And our brave soldiers didn't fight and die so that everyone stood during the national anthem. They fought so people could have the right to make a choice about whether or not they wanted to stand. That's the whole damn point of the First Amendment.

**Section 4**

The thing is: We don't live in a color-blind society. Slavery sits at the founding roots of America. The goal of racial equality remains a goal, not an achievement. To pretend otherwise is to willfully blind yourself to hundreds years of history.

Even more context darkens the picture for Trump. He played at racially coded language throughout his presidential campaign. He also displayed a stunningly simplistic view of the black community.

"You're living in poverty, your schools are no good, you have no jobs, 58% of your youth is unemployed -- what the hell do you have to lose?" Trump said of African-Americans in a speech to a largely white audience in Michigan during the campaign. When NBA star Dwyane Wade's cousin was shot in Chicago, [Trump tweeted](https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/769571710924263424?lang=en" \t "_blank): "Dwayne Wade's cousin was just shot and killed walking her baby in Chicago. Just what I have been saying. African-Americans will VOTE TRUMP!"" He took an inordinate amount of time to condemn former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke. And so on.

As President, Trump has done little too ease concerns about his racial views -- and, in fact, has heightened them. His handling of the Charlottesville, Virginia, protests -- in which white supremacists and neo-Nazis marched in protest of the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee -- was particularly alarming.

**Section 5**

Even as the protests turned violent -- one woman was killed -- Trump claimed that there were violent factions "on many sides" to be blamed. Days later, he doubled down on that false premise; "I watched those very closely, much more closely than you people watched it," [Trump said](http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/15/politics/donald-trump-press-conference/index.html). "And you have -- you had a group on one side that was bad, and you had a group on the other side that was also very violent, and nobody wants to say that, but I'll say it right now."

Although his administration tried desperately to move on from his remarks, it was made clear recently that Trump meant exactly what he said. The day after meeting at the White House with South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott -- the lone black Republican in the Senate -- Trump was quick to note that he had been right in his initial comments after Charlottesville.

"I think especially in light of the advent of Antifa, if you look at what's going on there, you have some pretty bad dudes on the other side also, and essentially that's what I said," Trump told reporters.

And now, this.

I've long believed that Trump is simply saying whatever comes to mind, that there is no broader strategy to his comments. But it's impossible to conclude that after Charlottesville, Trump is totally ignorant of the racial context in which his remarks on the NFL and NBA land. No one is that oblivious.

**Section 6**

When, given all the water under the bridge -- both in terms of our country's history and the more narrow history of Trump's campaign -- you make comments about how the athletes in predominantly black pro sports leagues should just be happy with what they have and not complain, you aren't doing it by accident. You really believe it.

Play football or basketball so we can be entertained, Trump seems to be telling these athletes. No one wants to hear your lack of gratitude for what you've been given.

There's so many things wrong with that view.

First of all, no one gave these players anything. They worked for it.

Second, just because you are a professional athlete doesn't mean you don't get to be a citizen, too. We don't tell accountants, for example, that they can't express their opinions on politics and the culture more broadly, right? So why should we be in the business of telling professional athletes? And would Trump feel the same way if the majority of those protesting the anthem were white?

Trump defenders will note that Trump didn't name names -- other than Curry -- when he blasted professional athletes. That "we" are adding color to it, not him.

But that doesn't fly. As I noted above, both the NFL and NBA are majority black. And those refusing to stand during the national anthem are, with one exception, also all black.

Trump knows this. He is an avid consumer of TV and culture. Which means that he is purposely playing at and with racial animus here. That is a dark thing to do as the leader of the United States. And something he deserves to be condemned for.