

Ever since I was in pre-school, I have always played sports, baseball, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, you name it I played it. Despite my love for the aforementioned sports, there is no sport quite like football. Playing on a team with 40 of your peers, giving your blood, sweat, and time everyday for each other forms a bond that can not be matched by any other sport. A bond so strong it does not see social status, economic standing, and it definitely does not see race. In my junior year, our team had that bond in full effect, and as the quarterback I was at the center of the brotherhood. When we suited up for our first game, I knew we were ready to play. Our two running backs had a monster game. They would make huge play after huge play, giving it their all for our cause, but I noticed one thing: the backs never scored the touchdown at the end of each drive. I knew it was not fair that they were doing 95% of the work and receiving none of the credit, but I kept playing. Then next week, the same thing happened again, and by the third week it was becoming a trend. I thought to myself, "*Why does coach keep doing this to our best players?*", and then it hit me. Upon reflection, I saw those two players were always treated differently because of their race or where they came from. In my sophomore year one of the players, who is African American, clearly should have been the MVP of the year; he had two 200 yard rushing games in a season which is an unbelievable feat, but at the end of the year coach had given it to a white player who was not as good. The other player was an immigrant from Iran and he was treated just as poor, if not worse than the other running back. Finally, I had enough of the discrimination and called the wrong play on purpose to give my friend the touchdown. I got a small slap on the wrist, but I sent a message to my coach. Despite my best efforts, the discriminatory play kept happening, so at the end of the year I decided to take action. I went to my Dad and told him everything, and he shared my disgust. It was time for some change; so he helped me take action. I attended board meetings and spoke in front of the principle and the athletic director explaining our cause and why it was so bad. Thankfully our protest was heard and our coach was removed because of his disgraceful actions. This transformed my conception of what an upstander is because I learned that a true upstander will stick his neck out for the team and stand up for what is right even if it means defying a person who is in power. I believe sticking up for the rights and safety of others should always be our first priority as citizens, regardless of the circumstance. I am very glad that I took that leap of faith for my friends because I feel that I inspired others in my community to stand up to injustice.