

To Save Freedom, Defund Pro Sports

In the last few years, the “Defund the Police” cry has reverberated through many of our cities. The police are not serving our communities, we’re told, and they’re wasting taxpayer money on ineffective services and driving racism. “It’s time to get rid of them,” many yell.

They’re barking up the wrong tree. If the public wants to defund something that’s wasting money and not serving the community, then they should look toward pro sports and defund them.

I grew up playing football and idolizing the Steelers. I even played college ball for a year on a small scholarship. During those years, my coaches told stories of Steelers center Mike Webster, holding him up as an example to all of us aspiring athletes.

Webby died like a stray dog in the street in 2002, becoming a cultural symbol of the brain trauma caused by pro football. Years after his death, his family was [still fighting for a settlement from the NFL](#) over the chronic traumatic encephalopathy he incurred while bringing fame and fortune to Steelers owner Art Rooney II.

Indeed, pro sports team owners like Rooney are just some of the robber barons of this age, although their [greed](#) makes Industrial Age billionaires like Andrew Carnegie look kind in comparison. Football barons threaten to take their teams elsewhere, goading local governments into donating millions for their stadiums without guaranteeing their teams will stay in perpetuity. The public is left with no ownership stakes, even though they paid most of the stadium costs for the team.

Teams founded in the early 20th century mimicking the hardworking ethos of their towns now don't reflect the people, nor do they benefit them (many of whom cannot even afford tickets to the games). Instead, they encourage degenerate behavior by holding up [oft-misbehaving players](#) as role models.

Pro sports marketing has concocted a faux religion—the Church of the Gridiron—in an increasingly disbelieving age, replacing true belief and virtues with now oft-praised vices of pride, selfishness, and self-aggrandizement. They inculcate [hero-worship](#) for profit, with vestments worn and rituals performed by fans genuflecting to their gods on game days, even though such [adulation](#) is damaging to those who engage in it.

These teams also tacitly encourage the abuse of legal and illegal drugs, such as amphetamines, painkillers, and [steroids](#). Long in use by pro sports players, most just look the other way these days, shrugging as their heroes shoot up and ruin their lives through substance abuse.

The pro sports industry also encourages gambling—both legal and illegal. [Online gambling has exploded in popularity](#) since the Supreme Court put its stamp of approval on it. Billions are squandered each year by gamblers legally betting for the rush of a momentary win amid a pile of losses, causing many to lose their savings, homes, and families because of their addictions. Illegal gambling, meanwhile, enriches organized crime, and the bookies are laughing all the way to the bank, thanks to taxpayers' obliviousness.

Sports are also now [dividing](#) our people along racial lines, thanks to team owners catering to the views of many of their athletes. Rather than being thankful to live where athletes with an eighth grade reading comprehension can become multimillionaires simply because they can run fast or catch a ball, sports heroes across America turned their backs on the police and the government, blaming all white people for the problems of criminals like George Floyd.

Pro sports also have little room for alternative thought, as evidenced by the Steelers' Rooney, who recently [slapped](#) St. Vincent College for allowing Hillsdale Professor David [Azzerad](#) to give a speech on "Black Privilege." So much for freedom of speech.

Enough of this evil. Before we demand the defunding of police, we should consider defunding pro sports, starting with pro football. And while we're at it, perhaps we should make the team owners (and some players, too) pay reparations to the cities they've bilked.

—

Image Credit: Flickr-Steel City Hobbies, [CC BY 2.0](#)