

Dear World,

On Saturday, August 26, 2017 I was in Las Vegas to attend the Mayweather-McGregor fight on my day off. After the fight while heading back to my hotel several hundred people heard what sounded like gun shots. Like many of the people in the area I ran away from the sound, looking for safety. Las Vegas police officers singled me out and pointed their guns at me for doing nothing more than simply being a black man in the wrong place at the wrong time.

A police officer ordered me to get on the ground. As I laid on the ground, complying with his commands to not move, he placed his gun near my head and warned me that if I moved he would "blow my fucking head off." Terrified and confused by what was taking place, a second Officer came over and forcefully jammed his knee into my back making it difficult for me to breathe. They then cinched the handcuffs on my wrists so tight that my fingers went numb.

The Officers' excessive use of force was unbearable. I felt helpless as I lay there on the ground handcuffed facing the real-life threat of being killed. All I could think of was 'I'm going to die for no other reason than I am black and my skin color is somehow a threat.' My life flashed before my eyes as I thought of my girls. Would I ever play with them again? Or watch them have kids? Or be able to kiss my wife again and tell her I love her?

I kept asking the Officers "What did I do?" and reminding them that I had rights they were duty bound to respect. The Officers ignored my pleas and instead told me to shut up and then took me to the back of a nearby police car where I sat for what felt like an eternity until they apparently realized I was not a thug, common criminal or ordinary black man but Michael Bennett a famous professional football player. After confirming my identity, I was ultimately released without any legitimate justification for the Officers' abusive conduct.

I have always held a strong conviction that protesting or standing up for justice is just simply, the right thing to do. This fact is unequivocally, without question why before every game, I sit during the national anthem--because equality doesn't live in this country and no matter how much money you make, what job title you have, or how much you give, when you are seen as a "Nigger," you will be treated that way.

The system failed me. I can only imagine what Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, and Charleena Lyles felt.

I have retained Oakland Civil Rights Attorney John Burris to investigate and explore all my legal options including filing a civil rights lawsuit for the violation of my constitutional rights.

Sincerely,

Michael Bennett