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### **Statement of Gloria Allred**

I am here today with Kristeena Spivey and Clarence Watley. Kristeena alleges that she reported to NFL Commissioner, Roger Goodell, that an NFL Denver Bronco football player had committed an act of violence against her while she and the player's girlfriend Rasheedha Watley were sitting in Kristeena's mother's car. Kristeena stated that Goodall said that he would investigate the allegation and get back to her. She never heard from him again.

Clarence Watley is the father of Rasheedha Watley. He alleges that he also contacted NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell by sending him a letter on August 22, 2008.

In the letter Mr. Watley alleged that Commissioner Goodell had been aware of numerous allegations including police reports that an NFL player had been abusing his girlfriend. Mr. Watley complained that despite these allegations that Commissioner Goodell had never bothered to conduct an investigation and had not interviewed the alleged victim (Mr. Watley's daughter) or any witness or member of the alleged victim's family. Mr. Watley never received a response to his letter. Instead 6 days later the NFL reduced the suspension it imposed on the NFL player

against whom the allegations were made.

This failure by the NFL and Commissioner Goodell to conduct a full, fair and timely investigation of serious allegations against an NFL player could lead victims, their families and members of the public to conclude that the NFL is only interested in preserving its own image and brand and cares little about violence against women and children.

Commissioner Goodell talks frequently about the NFL family. He appears to suggest that NFL players, wives, children and significant others are part of this family. If that is the case, then it appears that the NFL is treating certain members of that family as though they are more important than others. He seems to give greater support to the person considered the most valuable asset to the NFL. That means that men are considered to be of more value to the NFL than women and children who are also part of the NFL family. This may account for the inadequate investigations and light or non-existent punishments imposed on players as a result of the NFL's "investigations."

The NFL is careful to afford "due process" to its players, but little or no due process to the women and children who are alleged to be victims of violence by those players.

It is time for the sham investigations to end. I propose that the NFL adopt a

new process for its investigation. It could use as a model the hearing process mandated by Title IX for hearings by colleges, when students make allegations of rape or sexual assault on campus.

Under the law and as mandated by the Office of Civil Rights, victims as well as the accused must be afforded due process, and the hearing must be conducted even if there is no arrest or criminal prosecution and even if there is an acquittal in a criminal case.

It is long overdue for the NFL to adopt a fair hearing process.

Unless they do, victims of violence by NFL players will continue to be treated as second class citizens who can be ignored or sidelined.

It is a good first step that the NFL has hired and is paying four women who have experience in the field of sexual assault and domestic violence. However, unless the NFL establishes a fair hearing process that includes and does not exclude witnesses and victims, the public and victims can have no confidence in the NFL and its public relations and face saving efforts to persuade the public that it really cares about victims.

Kristeena and Clarence are very brave to speak out publicly about this issue. They have been disappointed for many years on the NFL, because they felt that the NFL had turned its back on victims.

This is a new day, however. Kristeena and Clarence are now pioneers in the NFL Victim's Rights Movement for Meaningful Change.

Today I am sending a letter to Commissioner Goodell with our suggestions for change. In order for a batterer to change his behavior he must fully acknowledge what he has done wrong, ask for forgiveness from those who he has wronged and then get counseling and support to change his behavior.

Although I don't believe the NFL Commissioner is a batterer I think that the NFL Commissioner should adopt a similar plan. First, he should admit and take responsibility for inadequate NFL investigations in the past. Second, he should apologize to victims. Three, he should ask them for their forgiveness. Four, he should make a plan for meaningful investigations in the future. Fifth, he should execute the plan.

Is the NFL really committed to change and not just committed to damage control of its brand? We look forward to the NFL's response.

Gloria Allred

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