

Student 1: Low Excellence

NZQA Intended for teacher use only

Colin Kaepernick, an NFL player made a stand against something he believed in. “A silent protest that began in 2016, when Kaepernick started kneeling during the national anthem to call attention to police brutality and racial injustice, grew into a social movement that highlighted the nation’s cultural divide, roiled powerful institutions from the NFL to the White House, and forced us all to grapple with difficult questions about protest, patriotism and free speech.” (Time magazine)

He has not been the only person to protest police brutality in America. In Pittsburgh, protesters took to the streets for three days to protest against the killing of Antwon Rose; the Black Lives Matter campaign was started; 100 demonstrators clad in white lab coats lay down on the floor of the Tosteson Medical Education Center’s atrium in silence for a “die-in”... and the list goes on.

Overseas too, protest about police brutality has resulted in more action from the public, including in countries where police are usually not challenged. This example is similar to Kaepernick because social media had a huge part to play in sharing a silent with the world: and alike Kaepernick the India community reacted.

In India SR Sreejith has been sitting in the open air outside Kerala's state secretariat in the city of Trivandrum every day since 22 May 2015. Seated on a mat with little shelter, he has braved scorching summer sun, heavy monsoon rains and even biting cold. He believes that his younger brother was killed by police and he wants an independent inquiry. “I saw my brother tied up to a cot in the government medical college hospital before his death. He wanted to say something. He was wearing an oxygen mask and there were visible bruises on his body. But the police guarding him prevented me from going closer,” Mr Sreejith said. Recently, he started gaining attention on social media. In the past few weeks and months, pictures of him and his protest have been shared widely on Facebook and Twitter along with messages of solidarity, including from some very high profile figures in the state. Well-known south Indian actor Prithviraj Sukumaran wrote about Mr Sreejith on his social media accounts and Tovino Thomas, another prominent actor in Kerala's film industry, joined him at his protest venue. A hashtag campaign, #JusticeForSreejith, has gained popularity and a song with the same name, composed by popular Indian songwriter Gopi Sundar has received more than half a million views since it was uploaded on 17 January. Public figures getting involved in protest can make a huge difference to the message being sent. The Colin Kaepernick protest had supporters like Stevie Wonder and detractors like President Trump.

As a result of mounting public pressure, state lawmakers ordered an internal police investigation into his brother's death, but Mr Sreejith refused, insisting that the case be transferred to India's federal investigation agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). “The politicians and police officers want to make out that everything is fine with them. I don't believe their promises,” he said. “I'll end the protest the moment the CBI begins the investigation.”