

Groveling to China

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By John Stossel

NEW YORK, N.Y.—Companies tell us they support justice.

“Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything,” says former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick in a Nike ad.

“Speak for the people who may not be able to be heard,” says the NBA.

“Corporate-PR hogwash,” says journalist Melissa Chen in my new video.

“Hogwash,” she says, because the NBA clearly does *not* want its employees to criticize injustice—if that injustice is in China.

Daryl Morey, general manager of the Houston Rockets, tweeted, “Fight for freedom, stand with Hong Kong.”

Good for him. China crushed freedom in Hong Kong.

But China didn’t like hearing an NBA executive say that. Chinese TV stopped broadcasting Rockets games. The NBA then apparently told its players and front offices to shut up. Morey deleted his tweet and instead tweeted that he “did not intend to cause any offense.”

The NBA itself also apologized to China, saying that they were “disappointed” by Morey’s “inappropriate” tweet. LeBron James called Morey “misinformed.” James Harden said, “We love China.”

“China is able to strong-arm these companies . . . into actually acquiescing with its ideology,” complains Chen.

That ideology is often grotesque. The U.S. and other countries accuse China of committing genocide against a mostly Muslim minority group, the Uyghurs.

China imprisons them in “reeducation camps.” Leaked satellite footage shows blindfolded men, with their hands tied behind their backs, in what looks like a concentration camp.

“They are forced into slave labor,” says Chen.

A few Uyghurs who escaped say they were tortured.

But, although the NBA runs ads that say, “Speak for the people who may not be able to be heard,” it clearly does not want its players, coaches or executives to say anything about Uyghur genocide.

Chamath Palihapitiya, a part owner of the Golden State Warriors, was unusually honest when he said, "Nobody cares about what's happening to the Uyghurs . . . We have a responsibility to take care of our own backyard first."

I took his comment to Chen.

"Companies like Apple, Nike and Coca-Cola have part of their supply chain sourced from this region," she responds. "In these areas, Uyghurs are forced to participate in slave labor."

Hollywood doesn't care either. The movie *Mulan* was filmed in the same region where Uyghurs are tortured. In the credits, Disney gave "special thanks" to government departments in Xinjiang, where the abuse occurs.

Fast and Furious 9 actor John Cena, promoting his movie to people in Taiwan, said, "Taiwan is the first country that can watch *F9*."

What was wrong with that?

"He had the audacity to allude to the fact that Taiwan was a country," says Chen, "rather than a territory owned by China."

I don't know what China said to Cena or Universal Pictures, but soon Cena was on Chinese social media, groveling to China, saying "sorry" over and over. "I have made a mistake . . . I really love and respect the Chinese people . . . I made a mistake," he pleaded.

Chen calls that pathetic. "I think the Chinese government actually takes a lot of pleasure knowing that they can actually strong-arm individuals and companies into capitulation to its own political ideology."

Only one NBA player is principled enough to point out the NBA's hypocrisy: Boston Celtic Enes Kanter Freedom. He criticizes players who don't speak up because they fear losing Chinese business deals.

"Human rights and basic rights is way more important than any deal you can offer," he says. He loses lucrative shoe contracts because he sometimes displays messages on his shoes, like "Free Tibet" and "Stand With Taiwan." He denounces Chinese Uyghur oppression.

So China won't broadcast Celtics games.

But Freedom keeps speaking up, calling out hypocrites like Nike, which promotes social-justice causes in the United States but is largely silent about human-rights violations in China.

The press rarely points out the hypocrisy, says Chen, because "this exposes the woke edifice of the NBA."

Of course, companies exist to make money. Should we expect them to turn their back on the Chinese market?

"Absolutely," says Chen. "The least we can do is to take stock of their cowardice and recognize that what they're participating in is bald-faced hypocrisy."