This presentation focuses on the way ethical decision making was discussed in KNES 456 – Legal and Ethical Issues in Sport following the civil unrest in Baltimore in response to the death of Freddie Gray. Specifically, I hope to encapsulate how the decision was made to hold a Major League Baseball game at Oriole Park at Camden Yards on April 29th, 2015 without spectators in attendance two days after the most violent demonstrations in the city related to the movement. Then, I hope to discuss how the class used these events to apply the concepts and theories they had learned in relation to ethical decision making in a practical context to deliberate the ethics involved in the decision to play the baseball game in an empty stadium in Downtown Baltimore with the National Guard standing watch over City Hall just a few blocks away.

This presentation examines the challenges often involved in teaching about sport and physical activity in urban environments and in relation to urban social inequality. As the faculty at Towson University teach in a predominately white institution situated just outside of the city limits of Baltimore, Maryland, the events of April 2015 related to the death of Baltimore resident Freddie Gray had particular implications for curriculum and student engagement with local issues related to sport and physical activity. Both these events, and the local and national reaction to them, provided opportunities to engage with issues of urban inequality in the classroom – however, they also evidenced the limitations of teaching about cities as centers of inequality. By considering and explaining one interpretation of what has been referred to as the ‘Dickensian aspect’ of post-industrial cities (Burns 2008), this presentation seeks to create a dialogue regarding the scholarly and pedagogical representations of urban sport and physical activity.

This presentation will focus on the media portrayal of the civil unrest in Baltimore in April 2015 following the death of Freddie Gray while in police custody. More specifically, I hope this presentation will convey how the members of KNES 437 – Sport and the Media, which is a class I have taught for a number of years at Towson University, conducted an informal critical media analysis of the event coverage. To conduct this critical media analysis, students paid special attention to print, broadcast, and social media to follow how different media outlets and government officials classified the movement and its participants both during and following the demonstrations. Lastly, I hope to demonstrate how this unfortunate series of events served as a significant vehicle to teach the importance of classifications and behavioral attributions, in relation to race, as part of media agenda setting.

For several years I have taught a capstone course at Towson University (KNES 460 – Cultural Economy of Sport) whereby the final lecture makes the argument that whether or not my students want to “be politically aware”, events will eventually force them to confront a variety of biases and beliefs. In the Spring 2015 semester I was also teaching KNES 470 Sport Event Management concurrent to teaching KNES 460. In KNES 470 my students were tasked with organizing and implementing the King-White Speaker Series where five leaders in the sport industry were to come to campus, speak, and network, the
2nd Annual Tamburo Cup golf tournament fundraiser, and 2nd Annual Towson University Sport Management Networking Event at Camden Yards. These were all scheduled during the week following the Freddie Gray uprisings. This presentation will outline how the students and I used the unfortunate events as a practical and theoretical moment to utilize critical pedagogy.