

## Just Another Race by Maalek Marshall

Are you aware the NFL currently has seven black starting quarterbacks out of its 32 teams? That's 22 percent, nearly a quarter of the league. Many people -- even diehard fans of the NFL -- may be surprised at this fact. But that's the funny thing about change, it can often seem like the most difficult thing to accept, perceive, or even comprehend initially, but once the change has occurred, its progress and growth often go unnoticed. Why? Because the optics are no longer shocking, the precedent has been set, and normalization has been realized.

On October 13, 2018, a significant "first" for the running community will finally occur with your support. This "first" is quite difficult to perceive at this point in time, but it is something that is long overdue -- and quite frankly, should have always been -- in the running community. This "first" is The Race, which is a true grassroots movement by members of the black running community to put on a world-class national race that supports and takes place in the black community and features black-owned businesses as its vendors.

Will it be the first-ever race to support and take place in the black community? No. Will it be the first-ever race put on by blacks to support and take place in the black community while featuring black-owned businesses as its vendors? Yes. The fact that this is the 21st century and this still has yet to occur is mind boggling. So, it's about time. More importantly ... it's about empowerment.

Support of, and participation in, The Race by no means excludes any race, color, creed or nationality. But the importance of its optics -- being entirely directed, timed and executed by a black staff, with black vendors, in a black community, supporting black businesses and charities -- and its actual occurrence cannot be understated. This is a stepping stone. Just like at one time the first black NFL quarterback was a stepping stone. And so was the first black NFL quarterback to win a Super Bowl (now there are two); and so was the first black NFL head coach to win a Super Bowl (also currently two); and so on ...

By making the choice to support The Race, you will be choosing to create a new reality in the running community. By supporting The Race, you will be effectively expanding the potential of the running community's growth, as it will help introduce the world of running, and in effect new role models, to a

community underrepresented and often unaware of its existence. By supporting The Race, you will truly help move us closer to the day when The Race will be just another race. Hopefully, there will be a steady growth in the amount of these types of races. Hopefully, they will become so much a part of the new normal that their growth will essentially go unnoticed. Hopefully, with your support, the new normal starts now.

12/9/17