

## **NFL's Zach Banner honored for speaking out against antisemitism**

**Pittsburgh Steelers offensive tackle Zach Banner is being honored for speaking out against antisemitism by the Museum of the Courageous.**

Dan Verbin

27.01.22 20:20



Pittsburgh Steelers' Heinz Field iStock

NFL offensive tackle Zach Banner of the Pittsburgh Steelers is being honored for speaking out against antisemitism by the Museum of the Courageous.

The museum has named the football player as one of its “Courageous Class 2022” for publicly denouncing an antisemitic quote that a fellow NFL player posted to social media.

The 2022 Courageous Class celebrates “historical and contemporary courageous acts that have stood up to hate and shifted our country towards justice.”

“When it comes to this fight against hate, this moment against antisemitism and hate is very, very minimal in the overall picture of a fight,” Banner said. “It’s a blessing to be able to get hugged by Jewish families saying thank you. It’s a blessing to get hugged by Black and Brown families, saying thank you and Whites and anybody. That feels great. But the best feeling in the world is to go through a whole year, a whole lifetime of not experiencing hate or racism or any forms of it.”

Banner began to take action after he found out on July 8, 2020 that fellow NFL player DeSean Jackson had promoted a quote about Jews extorting America that was falsely attributed to Adolf Hitler.

In an interview with the museum, Banner explained that while Jackson’s team condemned the post, the NFL and the overall football community failed to do so.

“Zach knew if someone had spoken about the Black community in that way, the backlash from his network would have been instantaneous. Why should this situation be different? Zach’s initial reaction that the post was hurtful became an urgent desire to speak out,” the museum explained. “Zach credited his parents and cross-cultural upbringing with instilling a strong sense of empathy for others.”

Banner was credited with posting a video where he spoke out against Jackson’s antisemitic social media post.

“It’s hard when you talk about race, especially when you’re defending somebody who is not you, who is getting insulted by someone like you. I had to get my facts straight. I had to explain, why is that wrong? And how do we move forward?” Banner said.

The museum noted that Banner’s video was “not universally well-received; some chided him for focusing on other communities.” But Banner was inspired by the experience of making the video to find further opportunities to educate others about antisemitism.

“How many times have you seen that happen in history?” he said. “Just to be able to see change, that is what being human means.”

In the process, he made new connections to the Jewish community.

“Zach Banner’s commitment to speaking out against antisemitism stems from the values his parents instilled in him as a child and his desire to see the best in people,” the museum said. “Zach’s willingness to leverage his influential position helped to usher in new forms of allyship and understanding.”