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By DONALD SPIVEY

The Black Athlete in Big-Time Intercollegiate Sports, 1941-1968*

THE FAILURE of the scholarly community to look seriously at the history of blacks in big-time intercollegiate sports is a missed opportunity to understand an important dimension of African-American intellectual history, the nature and development of the modern civil rights struggle, and the black protest movement. Protest is synonymous with the experience of black people in the United States from slavery to the present. In the immediate years before America's advent into World War II, important challenges were made, from a variety of perspectives against the status quo of racial discrimination. The pre-war years were a period of intellectual vitality and social and political activism among blacks. Sports reflected the protest sentiment in the arts, literature, and politics.

Two blacks were nationally prominent in sports in these years: Jesse Owens and Joe Louis. Their emergence as national symbols and sport heroes involved political and psychological dimensions as well as physical feats. Jesse Owens' four gold medals in the 1936 Olympic Games were a triumph for American democracy over Nazism. They were also Owens' personal protest statement through athletic performance. Much the same can be said of Joe Louis' defeat of Max Schmeling in their second fight in 1938. Owens and Louis were not inert, unthinking objects, as they have often been portrayed. Their way of protesting against the racism that they and other blacks experienced was through proving themselves as black men and as Americans. They offered victory after victory as their statements for racial equality and the rights of full citizenship.¹

Other black sports figures took their own approach to protest. Boxing great Henry Armstrong hammered away at discrimination on numerous occasions. Several times he refused fights in segregated arenas such as the American Legion Hall in Indianapolis. Canada Lee, the former boxer, demonstrated his protest spirit in playing the title role, Bigger Thomas, in the stage production of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. And Paul Robeson, the former Rutgers All-American, continued his assertion of selfhood through acting, singing, and political protest.

Although overlooked by scholars in their examinations of the civil rights movement, big-time intercollegiate sport — as represented by the Big Ten, Big Eight, Pac Ten, Southeast, Southwest, and Ivy League conferences, for example — was an important arena of protest in the pre-war years. Black athletes at predominantly white universities had been both

* The author extends thanks to Frederre Cople Jaher for comments and suggestions.

¹ See Jesse Owens, *Jesse: The Man Who Outran Hitler* (New York 1979), passim; *Black Think: My Life as Black Man and White Man* (New York 1970), pp. 123-35; Joe Louis, *Joe Louis: My Life* (New York 1978), pp. 135-72; Anthony Edmonds, "The Second Louis-Schmeling Fight: Sport, Symbol, and Culture," *Journal of Popular Culture* 37,1 (Summer, 1973): 42-50.

segregated and despised, yet cheered at game time since William H. Lewis and W. T. S. Jackson played football for Amherst in 1890-1891. This dual existence for black athletes in collegiate sports — simultaneously scorned and loved — was a microcosm of the contradictions of a segregated society. Martin Luther King, Jr. would later speak of the dual nature of an American society “that both loves the Negro but is repelled by him.”²

Love for America prevailed in the black community despite America's racism. The civil rights movement in post-World War II America had as its foundation the same premise as the Ghandi Movement in India — *satyagraha*, or truth-force — non-violent direct action. A philosophy of protest steeped in brotherly love, consciously or unconsciously, fosters a penchant for a course of moderate action. The legalistic, moderate approach of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was the reigning strategy in black protest in pre-World War II America, despite the Harlem Jobs for Negroes Campaign, and the near-march on Washington of A. Philip Randolph and followers, and several other organized national protest efforts. Moderation prevailed.³

The pre-World War II protest of black collegiate athletes reflected the prevailing theme of moderation in challenging racism and discrimination. This was a period in collegiate sports dominated by such star black athletes as Jesse Owens of Ohio State University; Ozzie Simmons of Iowa; All-American Brud Holland of Cornell; Johnny Woodruff, world-record miler from the University of Pittsburgh; Horace Bell of Minnesota; Willis Ward of Michigan; Sidat Singh of Syracuse; Bernie Jefferson of North-western; John Borican of Columbia, world record holder in the 1,000 yards and the half mile; William Watson of the University of Michigan; Edward Smith of Wisconsin, holder of three world records in track; Lou Montgomery of Boston College; Leonard Bates of New York University; and the famous trilogy of UCLA football: Kenny Washington, Woody Strode, and Jackie Robinson. They all suffered racial abuses and discrimination at the hands of opponents, teammates, fans, coaches, the student body, and the wider sports establishment of sports writers and bowl committees. Kenny Washington, for example, should have been everyone's All-American in 1939. On a typical Kenny Washington afternoon, this time against the University of Montana in October of 1939, he ran for 163 yards in eleven carries, completed two of three passes, scored three touchdowns, all occurring in a span of only 15 minutes of play.⁴ Despite being the leading ground gainer in collegiate football in 1939 with over 1,000 yards, Washington was not selected to the All-American team, nor was he invited to play in the College All-Star Game. Washington's protest — one

² Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York, 1968), p. 80.

³ For further discussion but from a different perspective, see August Meier, Elliott Rudwick, and Francis L. Broderick, eds., *Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1971), pp. xix-lvi, 77-287.

⁴ *Daily Bruin*, October 14, 1939, p. 2; “Kenny Gets the Business on All-Coast Star Game,” *Daily Worker*, December 18, 1939.

statement: "It's unfair. It's because I am a Negro that they don't want me to play."⁵

Other athletes suffered similar fates of Jim Crowism in collegiate sports, and reacted in a fashion resembling that of Kenny Washington. In November, 1936, tormented by his dual existence of being cheered on Saturday and despised during the other six days of the week, Ozzie Simmons quit the Iowa football team, stating that he could take no more of the racial hatred and discrimination. But his departure was untimely. Iowa faced a crucial game the coming week, and the picture appeared bleak without the athletic talents of Simmons. Hence, coaches and teammates cheered him on to play one last game "for ole Iowa." Simmons consented.⁶ In December 1939, Lou Montgomery, the star running-back for Boston College, received notice from the Cotton Bowl Committee that he would be allowed to travel with the team to Dallas for its slated Cotton Bowl Game against Clemson, but that he could not participate in the game. Boston College, like most colleges and universities of the era, accepted this type of color-line restriction. Montgomery's protest was a dejected demeanor, sullen expression, and a single statement: "I am not going to Dallas if I will have to sit on the sidelines. I think I should be allowed to play."⁷

Sublime individual expressions of discontent usually met little or no results. Such was the case at UCLA and Boston College. Ozzie Simmons' resignation from the University of Iowa athletic program did, however, have a marginal impact. A few weeks later, Homer Harris was elected captain of the Iowa team, the first black to captain a Big Ten Conference football squad.⁸ This gesture on the part of the University of Iowa was symbolic of the racial tokenism of the pre-war years, such as President Roosevelt's appointment of a few blacks to the lower echelons of his New Deal administration, or the establishment of the Fair Employment Practices Committee, a symbolic gesture without the power to make fair employment a reality.

The intercollegiate sports arena, in the years before America's entrance into World War II, offers other parallels with and insights into the civil rights struggle. Civil rights scholars continue to see the founding of the Congress of Racial Equality in 1942 as the birth of the "ins," in particular the use of the sit-in as a protest technique — a strategy widely utilized in the 1960s. The sit-in as a protest strategy had actually been used much earlier. Residents of Harlem launched sit-in demonstrations against area public utilities companies in the 1930s. Striking automobile workers, for example, successfully used the sit-in in 1936-1937. In short, the application

⁵ *Daily Worker*, October 18, 1939, p. 8.

⁶ *Daily Iowan*, November 12, 1936, pp. 1-3; "Negro Star Reveals Unfair Treatment," *Daily Worker*, November 24, 1936, p. 8.

⁷ *Daily Worker*, December 21, 1939, p. 8. For further discussion along this line, see Art Rust, *Get That Nigger Off the Field* (New York, 1976), pp. 1-64; and Edwin B. Henderson, *The Negro in Sport* (Washington, D.C., 1949), pp. 97-147.

⁸ *Daily Iowan*, December 12, 1936, p. 1.

of the sit-in to social struggle occurred long before the advent of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).⁹

The sit-in was also used in the fight to end racial discrimination in New York University's athletic program. In 1940, New York University students launched a massive protest centered around the issue of discrimination against Leonard Bates, a black star of the NYU football team. NYU was scheduled to play the University of Missouri at Missouri on November 2, 1940. The University of Missouri, as did most teams in the South, Southwest, and Southeast, drew a staunch color-line against interracial sporting events. Bates would have to stay behind. In early October, when NYU students found out about this decision, they launched a protest against their university's administration and athletic program. More than 2,000 students and sympathizers joined in the picketing of the NYU administration building on October 18, 1940. The protestors demanded that Bates be allowed to play in the Missouri game. They carried signs with such slogans as: "Bates Must Play" "End Jim Crowism at NYU" and "No Missouri Compromise."¹⁰ William Brooks, one of the black students involved in the demonstration, said:

I feel students are acting right in protesting this discrimination. This is a step toward making NYU adopt a positive policy in future conflicts of this nature. Let NYU take the initiative and it will be of national significance as well as a step forward in the field of education. This is not the case of Bates alone but of all Negro athletes."

The protest brought together all facets of the university community, white and black, fraternities and sororities, Communists and would-be Jesuit missionaries, the Women's Coalition, various Jewish students' organizations, and concerned faculty. They picketed the office of the Athletic Director, Philip O. Badger, who had them forcibly removed from the premises. The demonstration gained momentum but apparently did nothing to change the mind of the administration — a scenario replayed time and again on college campuses across the country during the student movement of the 1960s. Finally, Bates, after vacillating at the beginning, came out in support of the protest. Despite all efforts, at the end of October the football team left without Leonard Bates to play Missouri.¹²

The protest, nevertheless, continued sporadically through 1940 and well into 1941. On March 11, 1941, students launched a sit-down strike in the corridors of the administration building, protesting not only the Bates issue but similar incidents of athletic discrimination at NYU such as the case of George Hagan, captain of the track team, who, because he was black, was forbidden to travel with the team and participate in the meet

⁹ August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Core: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (New York, 1973), pp. 6-15; and Sidney Fine, *Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor, 1969), passim.

¹⁰ *New York University Heights News*, October 18, 1940, pp. 1, 3; *Washington Square Bulletin*, October 21, 1940, p. 1.

¹¹ *Daily Worker*, October 19, 1940, p. 8.

¹² "I Would Like to Play Bates Says in Interview," *New York University Heights News*, October 31, 1940, p. 3.

in Washington, D.C. The NYU administration did not relent from its position. It did, however, expel seven of the student leaders.¹³

The protest did not die; it escalated. The demonstrators received letters and telegrams endorsing their actions. The NAACP praised the dissidents, as did several members of the New York Chapter of the Urban League. Paul Robeson sent the following wire: "All American football stars deplore the reports of the gentlemen's agreement between NYU and Missouri Universities to discriminate against Bates."¹⁴ Student organizations and athletes of the City College of New York endorsed the protest, as did groups at Holy Cross, St. Mary's at Texas, Rutgers, and Harvard. They also demanded that the seven NYU student leaders be reinstated.¹⁵

As symbol, the NYU protest was extremely important. It served notice on the intercollegiate sports world that this form of discrimination would no longer be tolerated. Harvard students launched a demonstration to protest their institution's color-line policies in sports. The Harvard administration wasted no time in correcting the problem. The University sent official notification to all schools on its sports schedule that "Harvard will tolerate no discrimination" and that it would cancel games with institutions that "do not wish to compete against all Harvard athletes."¹⁶ Wishing to avoid similar protest at Boston University over its upcoming game with the University of Maryland in October 1941, the Chancellor of Boston University phoned the Chancellor of the University of Maryland and suggested that Boston's two black athletes, Charlie Thomas and Houie Mitchell, be allowed to accompany their teammates to Maryland and play in the scheduled game. Both presidents agreed that this would be a "wise course of action," and "in the best interests of sportsmanship and good feelings."¹⁷

Although the NYU protest had a profound impact, it was also a missed opportunity. The sanctum of sport is premised on unofficial doctrines of equality of opportunity, sportsmanship, and fair play. Thus, sport (especially, non-professional collegiate sports) is a perfect arena for the exposure of the dual nature of American society, with its paradoxical blending of democracy and inequality. Why, then, did not the NYU demonstrations, rather than the Montgomery Bus Boycott, become the catalyst for the civil rights movement? It might be said that it was an idea whose time had not come. But why had its time not arrived? The answer lies partially in the fragmented nature of the civil rights thrust at this time, the inability or unwillingness of NAACPers, Urban Leaguers, the Council on African Affairs, Communists, and others to seize upon the issue with the full force of their organizations. But, even if they had, there was yet another crucial ingredient missing. That ingredient came on December 7,

¹³ Ibid, March 10, 1941, pp. 1, 2.

¹⁴ Telegram, Paul Robeson to Negro Cultural Association, New York University, October 20, 1940, cited in *Daily Worker*, October 22, 1940, p. 8.

¹⁵ *Washington Square Bulletin*, March 13, 1941, pp. 1, 2; *Boston Globe*, April 12, 1941, p. 7.

¹⁶ *Harvard Crimson*, April 22, 1941, p. 1.

¹⁷ *Boston University News*, October 26, 1941, p. 1; *Daily Worker*, October 27, 1941, p. 8.

1941, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and America's official entrance into World War II.

The diversion of American manpower to the war effort left a vacuum in professional and amateur athletics. President Roosevelt beseeched Americans to "help sports survive this era of crisis."¹⁸ In collegiate athletics, a variety of changes were implemented to help them survive. Coach Fritz Crisler of the University of Michigan initiated the free-substitution rule to compensate for the shortage of football players. Ken Loeffler, basketball coach at Yale, advocated the adoption of the zone defense to shore up the weak spots in the teams' play resulting from the loss of most of the senior athletes to the war effort.¹⁶

The war forced athletic programs to seek talented athletes from sources previously ignored. Black America was virtually an untapped resource of athletic talent, and it is during this era that a substantial shift took place in the athletic establishment's attitude toward interracial sports. In this period, Satchel Paige and his Negro Baseball All-Star Team were given the opportunity to play the major league champions and the black collegiate All-Stars of Football played successive games against the National Football League (NFL) champions. During World War II and its aftermath, the number of black athletes in the predominantly white conferences increased substantially. "Buddy" Young was given the opportunity to demonstrate his athletic prowess at the University of Illinois — and he did, dominating intercollegiate football. Jackie Robinson became the first black player in major league baseball, and Larry Doby the first black to play in the American League. In short, the chaotic athletic situation of World War II was a vital factor in the assault on the color-line in sports.²⁰

At the same time, the war and post-war years muted the civil rights movement, the organizational efforts to end Jim Crowism in sports, and radicalism in general. This was a period of domestic quietude. Black America, like all America, rallied around the flag. Protest was labelled as anti-Americanism. The Communist Party (CP) of America toned down its criticisms of the United States. Through its sports page in the *Daily Worker*, the CP had been one of the most radical and persistent voices against discrimination in professional and collegiate athletics from the mid through late 1930s. But with the German attack on Russia in 1941 and the Soviet-American alliance, the CP became less harsh about segregation in sports. From 1941 through 1945 only an occasional criticism of the American sports establishment appeared in the sports page of the *Daily Worker*.

¹⁸ Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Laurence di Benedetto, January 15, 1942, Avery Brundage Papers, University of Illinois.

¹⁹ Gerald Holland, "The Man Who Changed Football," *Sports Illustrated*, February 3, 1964, pp. 22-7. Also see John Behee, *Hail to the Victors: Black Athletes at the University of Michigan* (Ann Arbor, 1974), pp. 74-82.

²⁰ Practically all major collegiate teams, with the exception of the Southern conferences, had at least one black member by the end of World War II. By 1950, the color-line in the three major professional sports — football, baseball, and basketball — had been pierced.

The economic recession, the Cold War mentality, and the flourishing of McCarthyism in the post-war years forced the Communist Party of America to concentrate chiefly on survival. The *Daily Worker* shrunk in size. Its sports page, for example, became a sports column. Lester Rodney, sports editor for the *Worker*, wrote: "Need I say that without the Daily's sports page and its pioneering in the fight on Jim Crow, and for all that is good in sports, and in the ethics of living, life would be missing a great deal."²¹

During the Cold War period, Paul Robeson's name was omitted from the ranks of great All-American football players listed in Christy Walsh's book on college sports.²² Branch Rickey, general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers and the man credited with bringing Jackie Robinson into the major leagues, took part in the "Red Baiting" in sports. "It's time America woke up to the imminent danger of being completely infiltrated by Communism," he said in 1947. "We should be made aware of the fact that Communist forces intend the overthrow of our democratic government by force."²³ The CP lashed out at both incidents. It called the omission of Robeson's name from the ranks of great All-Americans an "Iron Curtain blanketed around the truth" of collegiate sports.²⁴ The CP was even more explicit in its criticism of Branch Rickey's remarks and challenged his reputation as a liberal altruist:

Branch Rickey is a smart man, the shrewdest in baseball, . . . his signing of qualified Negro talent wasn't done alone with an eye toward becoming a 20th century Lincoln. That's gold in them thar hills, and this very clever cookie knew that some day Negroes in the big leagues would be a common sight and why not cash in on it while its novelty made the cashing good?²⁵

Intercollegiate sports was cashing in on black athletes. The post-war era was the coming of age of big time intercollegiate sports and the final victory in collegiate athletics of the win-at-any-cost mentality. The result was that recruiting abuses and scandals became the order of the day. This is not to say that there had not been similar abuses and scandals in collegiate sports prior to the post-war years. In 1893, for example, seven members of the University of Michigan's football team were not even students at the university, and when Yale lured James Hogan, who later became an All-American tackle, to New Haven in 1902, it was by dint of free tuition, a suite in Vanderbilt Hall, a 10-day trip to Cuba, and a monopoly on the sale of scorecards. In the same period, the University of Indiana and Purdue competed for a talented high school basketball player by offering scholarships to his girlfriends.²⁶

In the big-time intercollegiate sports programs, scandals are common occurrences from the late 1940s on. One of the most famous scandals in the 1950s was at Long Island University in New York, where in 1951 four

²¹ *Daily Worker*, December 9, 1952, p. 9. The *Chicago Bee*, a black newspaper, applauded the *Daily Worker's* fight against discrimination in sports. *Chicago Bee*, June 7, 1942, p. 2.

²² See list of All-Americans in Christy Walsh, *College Football and All American Review* (New York, 1949).

²³ *Sporting News*, October 14, 1947, p. 1.

²⁴ *Daily Worker*, January 22, 1950, p. 8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, November 12, 1947, p. 15.

²⁶ John Underwood, "The True Crisis," *Sports Illustrated*, May 20, 1963, p. 17.

basketball stars were charged with taking bribes in excess of \$40,000 to shave points off games.²⁷ In the 1960s, one of the most widely publicized scandals occurred at the University of Illinois. In 1966, eight athletes, and the head coaches in football and basketball, were banned forever from competing in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) because of the discovery of an illegal "slush fund" for athletes at the university.²⁸

An interesting pattern emerges when one takes an overall view of the numerous scandals in big-time intercollegiate sports: a disproportionately high percentage of black athletes are involved. Of the 29 substantial scandals in collegiate sports during the 1950s and 1960s, 19 occurred on teams with one or more black athletes. Of these 19 teams, 74 percent of the black athletes, as compared to 11 percent of the white athletes, were allegedly involved in the rules violations. For example, three of the four athletes charged in the Long Island University basketball fixes were blacks. Of the eight athletes involved in the Illinois scandal, seven were blacks. Most recently, in the case of the University of New Mexico in 1979, one athlete's education and career ended because the Assistant Coach, Manny Goldstein, forged transcripts to make the player eligible to compete. The athlete, Craig Gilbert, is black.²⁹ There are, in my opinion, three contributing factors that account for the disproportionately high percentage of black athletes involved in the various scandals. First, the vast majority of blacks in big-time intercollegiate sports are from lower-class backgrounds and, hence, most desperately in need of financial assistance. Second, the black athletes recruited are blue-chip players and highly sought after. The third contributing factor is racism.

The Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954, and the death of Joseph McCarthy, appeared to remove the shackles from the civil rights movement. The Montgomery Bus Boycott burst onto the national scene in 1955-1956. The late 1950s and the 1960s were periods of heightened social consciousness for black America and all America. The official birth of the Black Power movement in 1966 symbolized the intensity and the ideological differences within the protest movement. For black America, its dilemma was which side to follow — the non-violent, direct-action course led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or the more militant Black Power course articulated by Malcolm X, of which Stokely Carmichael became the leading proponent; or some other course, or no course? This new consciousness and the schisms within were reflected in the protest mood in intercollegiate sports in the 1960s.

Harry Edwards, a black former athlete at San Jose State University, was the embodiment of the black protest spirit in collegiate sports. Edwards orchestrated the 1968 Olympic Boycott for Human Rights at

²⁷ *United Press International*, February 20, 1951.

²⁸ Donald Spivey and Thomas A. Jones, "Intercollegiate Athletic Servitude: A Case Study of the Black Illini Student-Athletes, 1931-1967," *Social Science Quarterly* 55 (March 1975): 939-47.

²⁹ For further discussion of the problem of rules violations in collegiate athletics, see J. Robert Evans, *Blowing the Whistle on Intercollegiate Sports* (Chicago, 1974), especially pp. 39-82; "How New Mexico Feels the Heat," *Sports Illustrated*, December 10, 1979, pp. 32-41.

Mexico City. The Boycott represented the awakened social consciousness of black collegiate athletes. At the same time, it reflected the differences in protest mood within the black protest movement and within black America in general. The protest by Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the victors' stand at Mexico City, with clenched fists, wearing black gloves was a radical response to American racism. Social psychologists Gordon Allport and George Spindler conclude that most reaction formations fall within a moderate range or middle ground.³⁰ The majority of black athletes at the 1968 Games fall into this category. They were sympathetic, but like Bob Beamon, Ralph Boston, and Wyomia Tyus, they steered a course of moderation. And there was the anti-protest protest of George Foreman who, after winning a gold medal in boxing, paraded around the ring toting a miniature American flag. This ternary posture of the 1968 Olympic demonstration mirrors black political consciousness: the activists, the sympathizers or silent majority, and the anti-activists. The ternary nature of black political consciousness was demonstrated further at the 1968 Olympics when black athletes failed to take unified action against the expulsion of Tommie Smith and John Carlos. Moreover, the ternary postulate provides us with an insight into why the black protest movement at the national level failed to mobilize behind the Olympic Boycott Movement. It may also help to explain why Black America stood mute while "The People's Champ," Muhammad Ali, was illegally stripped of the heavyweight boxing championship because of his refusal to be inducted into the military and participate in the Vietnam war. Ali, as a member of the Nation of Islam, represented the far-left in Black America, whereas blacks in the main are politically centrists.³¹

The impact of the 1968 Olympic Boycott for Human Rights was felt on the campuses of San Jose State University, the University of Texas at El Paso, University of Wisconsin, University of Iowa, San Francisco State University, University of California at Berkeley, University of Kansas, and a few other schools. Black athletes at these institutions complained about a host of problems: about stacking, where a number of blacks are placed in competition for the same position; about racial stereotyping; about the bias of local sports commentators in favor of white athletes; about the athletic association's policing of their social activities (the most severely sanctioned social activity was interracial dating); about the policy of recruiting a limited number of blacks in order not to exceed the "quota." But these protests happened on only a tiny majority of America's college and university campuses.³²

³⁰ Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (New York, 1958); and *The Nature of Personality* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950); George Spindler, *Personality and Social Change* (New York, 1966); and *Education and Culture* (New York, 1963).

³¹ For some discussion of various public reactions to Muhammad Ali, and examination of broader conceptual models, see "The Giant They Love to Hate," *Sports Illustrated*, December 6, 1965, pp. 40-5, 106-09; Ali A. Mazrui, "Boxer Muhammad Ali and Soldier Idi Amin As International Political Symbols: The Bioeconomics of Sport and War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 19 (April 1977): 189-215; Paul Weiss, *Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry* (Carbondale, Ill., 1979), pp. 243-49.

³² Harry Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (New York, 1969), passim; and *Sociology of Sport* (Homewood, Illinois, 1973), pp. 175-82; Spivey and Jones, p. 947.

The 1970s indicate that the black protest movement did not take firm root, and that the spirit of revolt in big-time intercollegiate sports was but a flicker of consciousness. The decade witnessed retrenchment and reversals, as for example in the Bakke and Webber Decisions. For some Americans, affirmative action has now become a euphemism for reverse discrimination, and the country is now retreating from the civil rights commitments of the 1960s. An example in collegiate sports of this regression from racial equality is the universal adoption of the freshman-eligibility rule in big-time intercollegiate sports in the mid-1970s. This rule allows freshmen to play on varsity teams. Hence, they are deprived of the less rigorous demands of a freshman schedule and the time to become acclimated to the academic and athletic environments.

Few black athletes in big-time intercollegiate sports realize that the overwhelming majority of black athletes fail to earn a degree, and that only an infinitesimal number go on to have a career in professional sports. The hundreds of thousands of black youths who pin their hopes for a future on athletics should take note that at the University of Illinois, for example, from 1931 through 1967, two hundred and twenty-seven blacks received athletic scholarships. Sixty-five percent of these athletes failed to graduate and only fourteen went on to play professional sports. Of the fourteen, three achieved what might be termed a successful career in professional ball.³³ As Harry Edwards says: "Statistically, blacks have a better chance of becoming doctors, lawyers, or professors, or of being hit by a meteorite in the next ten years, or shot into outer-space — than they do of becoming a professional athlete."³⁴ Paul Robeson expressed a similar view in 1949 in the aftermath of Jackie Robinson's testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Reflecting on the episode, Robeson stated: "We Negroes must begin to realize that there is more to life than singing, dancing, and playing ball. We have to speak out for our people."³⁵

³³ Spivey and Jones, p. 940.

³⁴ *New York Times*, May 6, 1979; Interview of Harry Edwards on CBS program "60 Minutes," October 19, 1980.

³⁵ *Daily Worker*, July 21, 1949, p. 9.