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# Personal Foul: Exploring the Exploitation of African-American Male Athletes at Predominantly White Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES, AFRICANA WOMEN'S STUDIES, & HISTORY

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B.A. OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY, 2014

### PERSONAL FOUL: EXPLORING THE EXPLOITATION OF AFRICAN - AMERICAN MALE ATHLETES AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

Committee Chair: Daniel Black, Ph.D.

Thesis dated May 2018

Exploitation of African-American male athletes is one of the results of integrating collegiate sports. Predominately White Institutions' infatuation with the athletic prowess of Black men has become a societal norm. Statistically speaking, African-American student-athletes make up a majority of these revenue-generating athletic teams. Universities have shown that they are willing to achieve fame by any means necessary, even at the academic exploitation of their Black student athletes. Since integration there have been multiple cases of academic malfeasance of student athletes. Select universities want to utilize the utility of Black male bodies but are not necessarily interested in expanding their minds. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) will be used as an example in this study. Since the 1960s, scholars have assessed this growing problem within collegiate sports. This study is significant as it exposes the exploitation of Black male collegiate athletes. It also will add to previous research and can assist universities across the country that are committed to solving the dilemma of Black athletic exploitation and reforming this oppressive model.

PERSONAL FOUL: EXPLORING THE EXPLOITATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
MALE ATHLETES AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES, AFRICANA WOMEN  
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I would like to dedicate this thesis to Black athletes. Black athletes should be loved for more than just the uniform. It is necessary to remember that Black athletes are people too. Their experiences are worthy of sharing. It was an honor to bring the plight of Black athletes to the forefront. I hope this work will inspire other scholars to tell the stories of Black athletes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... ii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ..... 1

    Statement of Problem..... 11

    Significance of the Study ..... 12

    Method ..... 13

    Methodology ..... 15

    Research Questions ..... 16

    Limitation of Study ..... 17

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ..... 18

    Cultural Analysis ..... 20

    Educational Reform ..... 23

    Leadership..... 34

    Scandal ..... 36

III. HISTORICAL CONTEXT ..... 39

    African-American College Basketball Pioneers ..... 39

    Atlantic Costal Conference Pioneers ..... 44

    Southeastern Conference Pioneers.....47

    Athletics over Academics ..... 52

CHAPTER

IV.	FINDINGS .....	59
	The Evolution of African American Studies .....	63
	The Evolution of a Scandal.....	68
	Mishandling Black Studies .....	71
	When the Scandal Broke.....	77
	The Truth Revealed.....	83
	The Cover Up.....	87
	Exploitation of Black Bodies .....	93
V.	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	98
	Increased Dialogue.....	101
	Academic Success Plans .....	102
	Quality Academic Support Staff.....	102
	Quality Assurance Checks .....	104
	Improved Academic Resources .....	105
	Cultural Programming .....	106
	Black Student Community .....	107
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	109

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Integration in the United States had a significant impact on collegiate sports. Admission of African-American students at Predominately White Institutions (PWI) led to a mass exodus of Black athletes from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). The intended purpose of Black colleges was to ensure that African-American students were receiving an exceptional education. A premiere athletic program was secondary at an HBCU. *In Race, Sport, and the American Dream* Earl Smith writes, “Up until the mid-1960s, most African Americans went to all African-American colleges and universities located in the South, institutions not considered to be spawning grounds for professional sports teams” (Smith 2013, 10). If a Black student-athlete wanted to pursue professional sports, there was a greater desire to play at one of the premiere predominately white institutions. The allure of a PWI athletic department in comparison to the HBCU athletic departments certainly influenced the uprooting of Black athletes across the country. Black student athletes playing for predominately white institutions were aberrant in the 1960s. Growth of the collegiate sports industry normalized the increase of Black student-athletes at predominately white institutions. William C. Rhoden writes in *40 Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete*:

Over time, inevitably, a growing number of white coaches, like Bryant, and athletic directors began to realize that their segregated teams could no longer compete successfully against integrated schools. The rest of the

nation was using African-American athletes from the South to beat Southern teams. (Rhoden 2007, 139)

Rhoden provides an example of the 1963 National Championship team Loyola University which had a majority of African-American players (Rhoden 2007, 139). As collegiate teams began to integrate, athletic departments would benefit at the expense of Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Infatuation with college sports in the United States explains why it is a billion-dollar industry. This infatuation creates an avenue for athletic departments to do whatever it takes to recruit the best student-athletes to attend and represent their university. Successful athletic departments with prospering teams yield a higher profit for the university. African-American males are highly recruited for revenue-generating sports such as football and basketball. According to the 2009-2010 *NCAA Student –Athlete Race and Ethnicity Report*, 60.9% of Division 1 basketball players are African American (Zgonc 2010, 5). This statistic supports the notion that integration of college sports led to the escalation of recruitment of precociously talented Black males.

Recruitment of these athletes begins early in their athletic career. Colleges spend ample amounts of money and time in recruiting the highest grade of athletes. This competitive process is essential in ensuring that each university can have the best players in the country. This competition leads to the courting of many Black student athletes at any cost. Rhoden describes the recruiting process as “creating a fascinating reversal of fortune: The poor become rich, and those with the least access to higher education receive scholarships to some of the best institutions in America” (Rhoden 2007, 175).

College coaches travel to high schools across the country or even overseas, in an attempt to pique interest of prospective players. There are strict recruiting parameters that are enforced by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). However, when stakes are high as to who will retrieve the next athletic star, recruiters are willing to tread dangerous territories. Inappropriate recruiting practices include false promises, purchasing gifts, providing money, or even inappropriate activities during an official visit to the university (Rhoden 2007, 178).

Furthermore, it is imperative to address what it means to an often-poor African-American high school athlete to be heavily sought after for his skills (Smith 2014, 87). Many African-American athletes use playing college sports as a means of escaping life's misfortunes. These athletes are often fleeing difficult life circumstances. In the article "Athletic Success and NCAA Profit Athletes' Adjusted Graduation Gaps" Richard Southhall, Woodrow Eckard, Mark Nagel, and Morgan Randall describe the sense of urgency that athletes experience: "However, some profit-athletes view their athletic talents as also providing a more immediate opportunity to dramatically improve their families' socioeconomic status" (Southhall et al. 2015, 399). Sports is not only a hobby but a chance to elevate through America's social caste system. At least this is what is what the media portrays. Media does not highlight the successes of Black males in other fields. Yet, the media constantly spotlights news about college and professional sports stars. This perception creates a myth that sports is the only or at least the most lucrative avenue to success.

Notoriety of college sports creates a complex situation. Universities are willing to go to extreme measures to recruit high school athletes. Meanwhile, high school athletes are fixated on the idea of playing collegiate sports. Yet, there is a predicament that plagues many institutions. Many athletes, specifically African-American athletes are not adequately prepared prior to entering college (Smith 2014, 86). Nonetheless, these athletes are groomed to be some of the greatest athletes of modern time.

Scholar Henry Louis Gates declares this:

The blind pursuit of attainment of sports is having a devastating effect on our people. Imbued with a belief that our principal avenue to fame and profit is through sports is seduced by a win-at-any cost system that corrupts even elementary school students, far too many Black kids treat basketball and football fields as if they were classrooms in an alternative school system. Ok, I flunked English, a young athlete will say. But I got an A plus in slam dunking (Smith 2014, 90)

Socialization of athletes into a mindset that athletics supersedes academics is extremely dangerous. This mindset creates a false sense of reality for student athletes. To suggest that one can solely rely on sports without an equal commitment to academic skills perpetuates the utility of the Black body as a Black person's greatest asset—not his or her mind. The NCAA 2016 "Trends in Graduation Success Rates and Federal Graduation Rates at NCAA Division I Institutions Report" provides data for the Comparison of Graduation Success Rates from Entering Classes of 2015 and 2016. In 2015 white male basketball players had a Graduation Success Rate (GSR) of 90 % in comparison to African-American basketball players with a GSR of 72 %. In 2016 both groups increased. White male basketball players had a GSR of 94% and African-American basketball

players had a GSR of 77 % (NCAA 2016, 16). There is a troubling disparity between both groups of student athletes.

This suggestion is a disservice to many African-American male athletes. Many communities place these young athletes on such high pedestals assuming that they do not have the ability to fall. This exaltation implies that sports is enough to sustain Black life in America. Scholar and activist Richard Lapchick argues:

The worst victim is the African-American athlete, and society's promise that sports will lift African-American youth from poverty to riches and fame is a cruel illusion. Yet parents, coaches, and administrators buy into the media package and encourage the illusion; African -American athletes themselves sacrifice educational opportunities to the glittering dream of the sporting arena (Smith 2013, 90).

The minimum commitment to education becomes a major issue when one commits to collegiate sports. When students do not meet necessary academic requirements set forth by the NCAA, it creates an intricate problem for both the student and the university. Scholar Harry Edwards states that, "African-American athletes are the least prepared of all students entering the university system" (Smith 2013, 86). If the student is worth pursuing, this often leads to educational malfeasance.

In some instances, teachers pass students along and give them grades they do not deserve. Or, there are occurrences where high schools are producing mass diplomas for students who did not earn their degrees. Smith writes:

For example, University High School in Miami is nothing but a storefront where students who have failed to graduate from high school can obtain grades for classes they never attended or work they never completed. They then receive a "diploma" that certifies them "high school graduates" enabling them to enroll in FBS Universities. (Smith 2013, 114)

If the student's academic abilities in high school are poor, their entry into a university system automatically places them at a disadvantage. Even for students who have attended a high school that prepares students academically, higher education can still be challenging. This dynamic creates an avenue for academic malfeasance to achieve the ultimate goal of an athletic department which is to win at any cost. Student-athletes are often manipulated into believing that they are attending college to receive an education. In fact, that is valid. Nevertheless, the quality of the education varies from school to school and sport to sport. Not every institution takes what the NCAA claims as "Student first Athlete second" seriously. In "The Myth of the Student-Athlete" the authors write, "From the beginning, more than a half-century ago, the NCAA utilized the term "student-athlete" to cloak the actual relationship between the parties" (McCormick and McCormick 2006, 83). The authors also state "the reality of the university-athlete employment relationship and to avoid universities legal responsibilities as employers... the NCAA, colleges, and universities have profited immensely from the vigorous defense and preservation of this myth" (McCormick and McCormick 2006, 86). Some university's definition of a student-athlete is merely an athlete who also is attending school. Jack Olsen insinuates:

"African-American students aren't given athletic scholarships for the purpose of education. African Americans are brought in to perform. Any education they get is incidental to their main job, which is playing sports. In most cases, their college lives are educational blanks".  
(Smith 2013, 118)

At many institutions the intended purpose of an athlete is to help achieve the university's mission of winning sports championships. One could glean that these Black male athletes who are gifted on the court would not be recruited in the same fashion to attend these schools if it were not for their athletic gift. Since many schools do not prioritize academics, the NCAA has imposed many strict guidelines that force schools to provide quality education to its athletes. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that these students are not always adequately prepared. Athletic teams across the country have tough decisions to make. Since winning is often the number one goal and it must be achieved at any cost, teams are willing to do engage in academic malfeasance.

Athletic eligibility is often threatened because of the lack of academic performance. When an athlete's grades decline, it creates a predicament for athletic academic advisors. If an athlete does not meet academic requirements they are unable to participate in sports activities. When a starter cannot play, this information makes the headlines. When a starter cannot play because of academic performance it often exposes the university's willingness to circumvent academic standards in pursuit of a winning season (Burnett 2001, 5). Earl Smith offers the following definition for exploitation and fraud:

To clarify my main point here, I offer the following definition of exploitation and fraud: the use of African-American student athletes for selfish, explicitly sport purposes by the college and universities that recruit them. The institutions instill in these young men, increasingly, women grand visions of future sporting success as well as social and economic success in later careers, without paying close attention to the students' own personal educational quests. (Smith 2013, 119)

Smith's argument is valid because academic misconduct is an unethical issue that has risen in the sports world. Rarely, is there a candid conversation discussing academics and athletics. These conversations are often short, ambiguous, and colored with lies. The mishandling of African-American male athletes' education has continued for decades. This mishandling is under the radar because it is not a major concern to most. As long as a team is winning and bringing notoriety to a university, concern about transcripts and grade point averages is unnecessary. But, misplaced priority eventually leads to a scandal. And scandals can only remain underground for so long. That is precisely what happened at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill established a charter in 1789 (UNC 2014, np.) UNC takes pride in being the United States' first public institution. This university has a rich academic and athletic history (UNC 2014, np.) For example, Michael Jordan is a UNC alumna. The basketball team is widely supported across the country. During college basketball season, one will see "Carolina Blue" sported by many fans – young and old.

In the spirit of the African tradition, extended family is important (Carson 2009, 328). This reinforces the notion that children belong to the community. With that being said, when the Black community is able to send one of its children off to a well-known predominately white institution that is a major accomplishment to some. Before integration, this was not the intended desire for Black collegiate athletes. Athletes often served as role models prior to integration. Rhoden explains:

Role models for their own families as well as for the entire community... After integration, however, Black athletes began moving across the country in pursuit of their individual athletic destinies... As the profitability of the sports industry – starting at the college level increased, the disconnection imposed by white institutions on Black athletes became more deliberate and pronounced. (Rhoden 2007, 137)

Even so, since collectivism is a major element for people of African descent, the community is still overjoyed when they look at the television and see one of their own excelling athletically. There are some families who were probably overjoyed when their son decided to attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. An abundance of pride and excitement surely channeled through their veins. It is a momentous feeling for one's son to be a part of the same UNC tradition that the great Michael Jordan is a part of. There is a common misconception that because one plays college basketball their likelihood of playing in the National Basketball Association (NBA) is guaranteed. People have become fixated on the notion that a college athlete is automatically qualified to play a professional sport. This notion allows for academics to not be taken seriously. This is why no one questions academics or seldom investigates daily practices occurring at an institution such as UNC.

Since 1936, UNC has won 6 National Championships. UNC is arguably one of the best college basketball teams in the Atlantic Coastal Conference (ACC). ACC schools are comprised of other basketball powerhouses such as Syracuse and Duke. When a school is known for such athletic notoriety, there are certain expectations of its athletes, and excellent performance on the court is one of them. The lives of student-athletes are extremely challenging. Between conditioning, practice, workouts, team meetings, games,

and other tasks where would one find time to study? There is not enough time in a day to do it all. An opportunity to play basketball while working on a degree and receiving a noteworthy education is the dream that is sold to many UNC Tarheels. In 2011 the distorted dream was exposed after it became apparent that the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was going to extreme measures to protect, coddle, and ultimately exploit their college athletes. For over a decade, academic exploitation occurred all over the country, but the gravest academic scandal in college basketball history occurred at UNC between the 1990s and 2011 (Watson 2015, 16).

I selected the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill as my case study because the UNC's men's basketball program is exceptional. UNC ranks number three in the top five winningest teams for men's basketball national championships (NCAA 2017, np.). This university has won six men's basketball national championships since 1957. UNC also has one of the most-well known athletic academic scandals. This study positions UNC as an example of the academic malfeasance that occurs at predominately white institutions. This thesis argues that predominately white institutions such as UNC are willing to compromise the academic standard of African-American male college basketball players in exchange for the economic gain their bodies yield.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the social integration of American society in the 1950s/60s, Black men have been used at white collegiate institutions for the bolstering of sports programs. Indeed, the economic power many white schools have garnered over the years has come from athletic programs disproportionately peopled by African-American men. Yet this labor by Black boys has come at a severe cost. Unfortunately, their academic training, which colleges are supposed to be committed to first, is often compromised or dismissed altogether in exchange for their athletic prowess. In other words, although many Black male athletes attend large white colleges and universities, they do not attain a quality education; rather, they are recruited specifically for the means of monetary exploitation. This endeavor leaves many Black boys uneducated or unable to meet academic standards. Although Black male athletes matriculate, their academic success is maligned by pressure to perform athletically for the university's economic gain. This thesis seeks to expose this crime and hopefully to help end it.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study exposes the exploitation of Black male collegiate athletes. In the 1970s, predominately white institutions realized the success that their revenue generating sports teams would have if African-American athletes were present. This realization led to the strategic recruitment of Black male bodies for the cultural, economic, and athletic gain of an institution. For decades, PWIs have been baiting Black male athletes with the opportunity to receive an education for the exchange of their athletic talent. This recruitment has become a societal norm for revenue generating sports teams. While the college sports fans are consumed with athletic achievement of Black male college athletes, the academic exploitation of these athletes remains hidden within the institution.

The institutions are not concerned with the problems that arise when an athlete is exploited. The high rates of illiteracy, low graduation rates, suicide, depression, and other effects are not what the media or the university would like to discuss. This study forces the conversation of what happens when institutions such as The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill exploits their student athletes. It is imperative to eradicate the systematic exploitation of the Black male athlete's mind to win National Championships. This study adds to the previous research and assists collegiate sports institutions across the country to make progress towards reforming the athletic model with collegiate sports.

## METHOD

The primary research method in this study used was the case study method. John Creswell definition of a case study is, “a problem to be studied, which will reveal an in-depth understanding of a “case” or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell 2002, 61). The materials that were reviewed include books, reports about the investigation, newspaper articles, and charts.

Charles Martin’s *Benching Jim Crow* was my starting point as I researched UNC. This book devotes an entire chapter to exploring the integration of the UNC Men’s Basketball team. This information added to the rationale behind selecting UNC as my case study. Next, I gathered books and articles concerning the UNC academic scandal. I examined these documents for similarities and differences in facts and perspectives. Some documents, especially newspaper articles, were far more committed to the presentation of “immediate facts” – that which happened most recently – than to the interpretation of those facts. Books were most helpful toward the end. So, I catalogued details of the scandal first. Then, I read more thoroughly in order to understand the context and motives behind the facts. This was definitely more complicated to substantiate.

I learned that because a bad thing had occurred didn’t mean that people’s intentions were suspect from the beginning. The scandal included many people and multiple motives. There were countless variables and moving parts to the story. Who did

what and for what became difficult to recall, so I created charts wherein I listed names of key figures, including basketball players, reporters and scholars, who worked hard not to include personal portrayals in this study. Put simply, close reading produced levels of knowing concerning the UNC debacle and allowed me to glean from documents the different perspectives of this scandal.

Historical context meant everything in terms of my ability to understand what happened and why. Also, my knowledge of the utility of Black bodies for white institutional advancement was priceless in helping me understand why some believed this deception possible and even undetectable. I could not simply read about this scandal and transpose details into a thesis project. Rather, I had to learn how to read documents and to discern and decipher the information hidden within them. This is the essence and the power of a case study. In assessing this information, I was able to find parallels among the sources used. I also was able to view opposing arguments. The information reviewed helped to provide a more thorough understanding of issues that Black male collegiate athletes face.

## METHODOLOGY

My orientation as a scholar is an Afrocentrist. As an Afrocentric scholar, I approach and view texts through an African lens. In Dr. Molefi Asante's *Afrocentricity* he states, "The outlines of an Afrocentric base for scholarship are rooted in the social, political, and economic values of our people (Asante 1991, 59). The aim of my research is to help transform people of African descent. The goal of my research is to improve the lives of African-American athletes and to change the trajectory of their lives. As an Afrocentrist, I view the African-American athlete holistically. I do not view them solely for their athletic gift and abilities. Hence why my research strives to help ensure their academic achievement is being fulfilled. An Afrocentrist view to sports can be viewed as radical and problematic. Asante states:

A new criticism emerges to support Afrocentricity which introduces relevant values; denounces non-Afrocentric behavior; and promotes analysis. Furthermore, in every field, in music, art, dance, sports, law, medicine, science, business, sociology, philosophy, communication, and every other aspect of life and society the Afrocentric critical methods start with the primary measure! Does it place Africans in the center ?  
( Asante 1991, 45)

Some may view this work as an attempt to disturb the current sports model at predominately white institutions across the country. Nevertheless, the aim of this research is to fix a system that is no longer effective.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the main variables that led to the UNC scandal and how did they impact Black male athletes?
2. What improvements can be made to enhance African-American athlete's academic experience at predominately white institutions?

### LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill investigation has not yet been closed. This open investigation creates a limitation in this study. The scope of my research is not fully complete because new evidence continues to resurface and the investigation resumes. Additionally, another limitation of this study is the lack of exact figures when calculating the number of students impacted by this scandal. Reports have been able to show estimates, but there is no definite way of knowing the total impact.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

It is necessary to contextualize the integration of college sports during the 1960s as well as provide critical analysis when researching the evolution of Blacks in sports. University of Texas at El Paso Professor and Historian Dr. Charles Martin diligently outline the rich history of southern collegiate sports in *Benching Jim Crow: The Rise and Fall of the Color Line in Southern College Sports 1890 to 1980* published in (2010). I begin with this text because it substantially details stories about integration of collegiate sports. Martin devotes a chapter to discussing the evolution of Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) basketball which includes a section about University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). He details the destruction of the color line at these institutions.

The achievement of this book is inclusion and recognition of the African-American sports pioneers in basketball and football. Martin also includes tragedies and triumphs that occurred during the integration of college sports. For example, Martin includes the saga of Charlie Scott, the first African-American basketball player and student to receive a scholarship from UNC (Martin 2010, 166). A UNC Professor once said, “I think the more Charlie Scotts we have, the easier it will be for the South to change its mind about Negroes” (Martin 2010, 166). Regardless of the number of “Charlie Scotts” that predominately white institutions recruited in the 1960s and 1970s, this did not lead to Black athletes’ exemption from exploitive behaviors.

Martin asserts, “Critics also attacked southern colleges for exploiting Black athletes by not encouraging them to finish up their degrees” (Martin 2010, 303). The opportunity to reflect on the destruction in sports by colleges is enabled while reading this text.

One of the most prominent sports journalists is none other than William C. Rhoden. Rhoden has been contributing to the sports world as a journalist since 1983. In his *New York Times* Best Seller *Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete* published in 2006, Rhoden provides a historical timeline of the transition of athletes from HBCUs to PWIs. In this text, Rhoden unequivocally challenges sports ideologies and practices that have impacted minds of Black athletes at every level in sports. These ideologies and practices include recruiting practices, the lack of Black coaches, and economics as it pertains to athletes. His analysis is a reflection of the past, the present, and the future state of African-American athletes. The title *Forty Million Dollar Slaves* suggests the exploitation of Black bodies in relation to sports for monetary gain. Rhoden explains:

Major intercollegiate sports functions like a plantation. The athletes perform in an economic atmosphere where everyone except them makes money off their labor... In the revenue-producing sports of football and basketball, athletes are the gold, the oil, the natural resource that makes the NCAA engine run and its cash register ring. (Rhoden 2007, 240)

Rhoden is critiquing the functionality of college sports and the treatment of the Black athletes. It appears that the intended purpose of amateur sports evolved into an economic machine. Since athletes are being used to win and produce economic gains it often yields negative and harsh treatment from external forces. For example, Rhoden provides an example of what an angry sports fan yelled during an NBA game, “You’re nothing but a

forty-million-dollar slave” (Rhoden 2007, 245). This fan felt that he possessed ownership over the player. This instance draws a parallel between slavery and sports. These degrading moments that Rhoden provides are relevant as it provides a space in sports literature to tell the stories of athletes. William C. Rhoden is a critical voice in *Africana Sporting Studies* and his words are the echoes of the voiceless athletes.

### CULTURAL ANALYSIS

There was an era in sports studies when Black intellectuals were not addressing sports in their scholarship. As a result of this void of Black scholarly voices in sports research, white scholars began to address the social issues in sports. In 1997, social and cultural historian Dr. John Hoberman published *Darwin's Athletes: How Sport has Damaged Black America and Preserved the Myth of Race*. In the preface of this book Hoberman stresses, “What is more, and for reasons this book explains, it is unlikely that any Black intellectual would choose to write so critically about the impact of athletic achievement on African American life” (Hoberman 1997, xii). Hoberman’s assessment of Black intellectuals is problematic. Black intellectuals are often closely tied to sports as it is ingrained within the Black community. The proximity of sports to sports scholars provides access to primary information as it relates to sports. Although the scholarship produced by Black intellectuals was not abundantly present, it is not fair to argue that it was unlikely to be produced. Nonetheless, Hoberman provides thorough analysis of the subject at a time when scholars were not invested in the study of sports. Hoberman states:

The entrapment of African Americans in the world of athleticism is the result of a long collaboration between blacks seeking respect and expanded opportunity and white seeking entertainment, profit, and forms

of racial reconciliation that do not challenge fundamental assumptions about racial difference. (Hoberman 1997, 4)

This quote addresses the challenging relationship between Blacks and whites regarding sports. Black athletes are yearning for the opportunity to display their athletic talent on every level. And whites have a desire to be entertained or control the sports world. It creates a complex conundrum. Hoberman's text is a starting point for those interested in sports research. This text provides a white perspective to the exploitation of Black athletes. This perspective is relevant because it proves that the exploitation of Black athletes is not only viewed by Black academics.

As mentioned previously, many scholars have pondered on the notion that African- American athletes are being exploited. Dr. Billy Hawkins does not flirt with this notion he directly addresses this exploitation. In *The New Plantation: Black Athletes, College Sports, and Predominantly White NCAA Institutions*, Hawkins clearly presents a scholarly critique of the exploitation of Black college athletes. Hawkins's perspective is two-fold. He provides a perspective as a former athlete complimented with his sociological perspective. *The New Plantation* juxtaposes centuries of enslavement of African people throughout the Diaspora and what is transpiring in big time college athletics today. Big time college athletics relates to commercialization of college sports. This commercialization of sports includes media deals, high athletic department budgets, and constantly demanding the best players (Burnett 2001, 3). Hawkins seeks to tell stories of Black college athletes. He acclaims in his acknowledgements:

I am indebted to the many Black athletes who read a version of this manuscript and thanked me for telling their story. In their silent protest of

balling to get a degree or to make it to the next level, I understand your struggle and dilemma of remaining voiceless. (Hawkins 2010, xiv)

In the spirit of the African oral tradition, Hawkins functions as a Jali in the telling of the stories of Black college athletes. The purpose of the Jali is to make sure the history of the people is told. Without the Jali, the essence of the people fades away. The Jali does not only recall the joyous moments of people but also sorrowful memories. Hawkins ensures the stories of athletes are not erased. He refuses to remain silent about their lived experiences. Hawkins desperately calls for the reformation of college athletics. He writes, “Therefore, reforming college athletics must be about justice and not about merely penalizing the victim. Nor can it be about providing a Band-Aid to mask the deep wounds or about administering an analgesic for temporary relief” (Hawkins 2010, xii). Dr. Hawkin’s *The New Plantation*, boldly adds to the growing conversation and steps towards college athletics reform.

Douglas Hartmann attempts to discuss the complexities of race and sports in his essay “Rethinking the Relationship between Sport and Race in American Culture: Golden Ghettos and Contested Terrain” published in the *Sociology of Sports Journal* in 2007. Hartmann’s goal of the essay is to merge various scholars’ viewpoints when critiquing sports and race. Hartmann ultimately seeks to further discussions about the role of race in sports as it is undeniably a component in collegiate sports. The role African-American athletes play in sports is significant given the percentages of players on the roster. These athletes influence the culture of sports by their mere existence. Hartmann writes:

In many ways the unparalleled athletic prominence and prowess of African-American athletes are one of the most striking and seemingly progressive features of a society otherwise marked by persistent racial

inequalities. Yet, at the same time it is not clear if success in sport contributes to the advancement of racial justice. Even more problematic are the ways in which this sporting success actually seems to reinforce and reproduce images, ideas, and social practices that are thoroughly racialized, if not simply racist. (Hartmann 2000, 230)

African-American athletes' participation in sports influences American culture.

Hartmann's work is important because it assists scholars in understanding the impact of

African-American athletes on culture.

### EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Dr. James Coleman in 1961 in the *Annals of American Academy for Political and Social Science* discusses the impact of athletics on high schools in his article "Athletics in High School". Although Dr. Coleman does not indicate the demographics of the schools where the research is conducted, this work is still significant. Dr. Coleman's early research suggests that high school athletics is more appealing than the academic achievement of students. Coleman writes:

Research based on the visibility of athletic stars on most desired achievement, on the composition of the leading-crowd membership, on popularity – demonstrates conclusively that athletics is far and in a way more important as a value among high school students than intellectual achievement. And the school itself seems to encourage rather than to discourage this relative evaluation. (Coleman 1961, 33)

When student athletes are not receiving the messages about the importance of education, it creates a mindset for athletes that athletic achievement is sufficient. Coleman provides an extended example of a visitor at a local high school (Coleman 1961, 33). He writes, "Altogether, the trophy case would suggest to the innocent visitor that he was entering an athletic club, not an educational institution" (Coleman 1961, 34). Although this observation predates contemporary sports research, it is still prevalent. Upon entering

high schools across the country, a visitor is greeted by athletic trophy displays. The visitor is not greeted by artifacts which suggest the pride the school takes in academics. Coleman's essay in conversation with Hartmann's essay explains the cultural affect sports has had on our society.

Sociologists Dr. Peter Adler and Dr. Patti Adler have contributed vastly to the field of sports research. For decades, this couple has been addressing many of the sociological ills that infect college sports. One of their prominent texts which address the education of athletes is *Backboards and Blackboards: College Athletes and Role Engulfment*. Drs. Adler are pioneers in conducting in-depth studies of college basketball players. An opportunity presented itself in the 1980s for Dr. Peter Adler to consult with a popular Division 1 college basketball team in the Southwestern part of the United States (for research purposes the name of this university is not mentioned) (Adler and Adler 1991, 29) . This consulting opportunity led to an Assistant Coaching position where he served as the team sociologist. Dr. Peter Adler gained national attention for being the team sociologist. In fact, this was unprecedented for a team to have their own sociologist (Adler and Adler 1991, 7). His role as the team sociologist created a pathway into the daily experiences of college basketball players. Drs. Adler were intimately involved and made aware of almost every decision about the team. The research provided by Drs. Adler also provides primary research from college basketball players and personnel.

*Backboards and Blackboards* is significant to sports research as it highlights every role of the student athlete. The Adlers provide insight on the academic, athletic, and social roles of college basketball players. By accessing the various roles of athletes

this provides an opportunity to explore role-engulfment (Adler and Adler 1991, 27). The Adlers conclude, “Many of the individuals we followed entered college hoping to gain wealth and fame through their involvement with sport. They did not anticipate, however, the cost of dedicating themselves to this realm” (Adler and Adler 1991, 27). College athletes rarely understand the commitment of college sports. The media glamorizes college sports which cause a person to believe that life will be facile. The Adlers profess:

In the absence of longitudinal data, we cannot make any prediction about the ultimate meaning of their victimization as student-athletes. Like other members of American society, they have learned the necessity for specialization, focus, and deferred gratification. Perhaps some will be able to use their “credentials” to carve out future careers, while others will not. (Adler and Adler 1991, 231)

One can only speculate the post collegiate path of college athletes. Regardless, only a few transition into becoming a professional athlete. Given that this book was published in 1991 and the study was conducted in the 1980s this assessment appears to be accurate. During the 1980s college sports had changed due to integration and the commercialization of college basketball. In any case, this text provides insight and research on Black male college athletes that can be applicable to the experiences of others.

Secondly, the Adlers published “From Idealism to Pragmatic Detachment: The Academic Performance of College Athletes” in the *Sociology of Education* in 1985. Scholars who address sports often discuss the binaries in ideological beliefs pertaining to this research. The Adlers argue:

In recent years, the relationship between athletic participation and academic performance of college athletes has become a topic of scholarly concern. The sociological literature in this area, however, has been

inconsistent in findings. Some studies have cited a weak positive relationship, claiming that although most college athletes had poor academic records in high school, they have higher GPAs, lower attrition rates, and a greater likelihood of graduating than non-athletes because they receive extra tutoring, more attention, and “special breaks. (Adler and Adler 1985, 241)

These inconsistencies in research create an avenue for universities to claim that their student-athletes are succeeding when they are not. This eliminates guidance and resources that students could be receiving if people engaged their academic needs. It is essential to address these concerns because a vast majority of student athletes are Black. Therefore, many of the athletes are not receiving the academic assistance that is needed. Adler and Adler are instrumental in providing legitimate academic experiences of student-athletes. They conclude:

Given the revenue that athletic programs generate, it may be unrealistic to expect this structure to change dramatically. However, there are several policy implications that can be derived from this research. First, athletes should be sheltered, as much as possible from the enticing whirlwind of celebrity ... second athletic dorms should be abolished and athletes should be integrated into the larger university culture ... third, athletes should be provided with more academic role models and advisors. (Adler and Adler 1985, 249)

This analysis provided by Adler and Adler is crucial to the field. In retrospect, information that the Adlers shared was instrumental in reforming college sports. Universities that have willingly implemented these changes have viewed the success of their athletes. These changes have improved the conditions and experiences of their college athletes. Those who did not take heed have often suffered the consequences i.e. UNC.

Another leading voice in the conversation of sports is sociologist Dr. Earl Smith.

One of his recent publications regarding sports is *Race, Sport, and the American Dream* published in 2007. Similar to Rhoden, Smith is constantly engaged as a catalyst for sports reformation and progress. Dr. Smith discusses the role of education for student athletes in chapter five titled “The Promise of An Education: Truth or a Lie?” As mentioned before, there is a misleading notion that college athletes are students first. This provides a context for first year students and their families to believe that education will be prioritized. The full ride scholarship to attend a university for education is disguised as an opportunity to lure a student to representing the university. Smith asks the question —who is telling the truth and who is telling a lie?

Dr. Smith provides concrete examples of college basketball players who are poster children for educational malfeasance. Examples include University of Connecticut’s Kemba Walker and Creighton University’s Kevin Ross (Smith 2013, 113). The story of Kevin Ross in the 1980s is a systemic problem that still exists with college basketball. Ross after leaving Creighton had to enroll at an elementary school because he could not read (Smith 2013, 113). Not only does Dr. Smith acknowledge the problems, he includes solutions. Dr. Smith believes “student-athletes are first”. He believes that those who work with student athletes should not only commit to their eligibility but intellectual and psychosocial development (Smith 2013, 124). When those who work with athletes are not committed it produces an arena for malfeasance to occur. Dr. Smith’s commitment to change sports is motivation for future scholars in the field.

One of the leading sports researchers Richard Southhall and his colleagues published “Athletic Success and NCAA Profit Athletes’ Adjusted Graduation Gaps” for the 2015 *Sociology of Sport Journal*. This research is current and indicative of the experiences of Division 1 student athletes. These authors provide a fascinating concept that student-athletes are migrant laborers in their quest for playing college sports (Southhall et al. 2015, 397). This team of scholars addresses the graduation rates of student athletes at division 1 institutions. This research is imperative because it closely engages the experiences of Black college athletes. Ultimately, the authors conclude, “Our study offers support for the view that Black profit-athletes, who graduate at significantly lower rates than other full-time male students are in many fundamental ways exploited oscillating migrant laborers” (Southhall et al. 2015, 407). Although the student athletes are praised on the court for their outstanding performance, a majority are in opposition with academics. These struggles lead to low graduation rates from these universities. This problem is worthy of attention. In conversation with Paul Roby’s article about leadership the authors write:

While others ignore the situation, in what Gramsci described as a state of “moral and political” passivity. However, it is clear that many major college university presidents, athletic directors, and coaches view profit athletes as valuable revenue generating commodities. (Southhall et al. 2015, 408)

In other words, since Black male college athletes are essential to winning their academic failures are frequently ignored. Again, this furthers the necessity for effective leadership in order to ensure academic achievement of Black male collegiate athletes.

As an attempt to further the discussion, “Athletes as Students: Ensuring Positive Cognitive and Affective Outcomes” by Joy Gaston Gayles and Shouping Hu addresses the academic problem that impacts college athletes. This article was published in the *New Directions for Higher Education* Journal in 2010. The authors write:

Over the past decade, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has become increasingly concerned about the educational experience of student-athletes, beyond enforcement of eligibility rules and regulations. Perhaps this growing interest in response to public criticism of the poor performance and even misconduct associated with the intercollegiate athletic enterprise, particularly spectator sports. (Gayles and Hu 2010, 101)

It is in the best interest of the NCAA to provide preventative measures to address low academic achievement in college sports especially among Black male college athletes. Slowly, this conversation is moving from the sidelines to the end zone. Despite this, the NCAA still has not had a winning season regarding the academics of Black male athletes. The authors address the limited information regarding the “kinds of activities that foster learning and personal development for this population” (Gayles and Hu 2010, 102). It is necessary to determine the differences in learning between athletes and non-athletes. There are many factors that interrupt the learning process of college athletes such as traveling, pre-planned schedules, workouts, and games. These students are missing classes which ultimately mean a significant amount of instruction is not afforded to them. The research provided by Gayle and Hu adds to the field because it outlines the type of instruction needed to improve an athlete’s performance.

John Gerdy examines college sports in *Air Ball African American Education’s Failed Experiment with Elite Athletes*. This book was published in 2006. Gerdy’s

examination is significant because he brings an athletic administrative perspective with his experience with the NCAA and the SEC. With his experience, Gerdy gained access to private meetings with some of the most influential individuals in college sports. In one such meeting, Gerdy recalls the discussion about the potential NCAA ban on athletic dorms:

In the case of athletic dorms, the SEC was the last of a dying breed. It was inevitable that athletic dorms would be outlawed and Kramer was simply trying to prepare the coaches for that eventuality. Dye did not want to hear it. Leaning out over the table, he turned to Gene Stallings, the University of Alabama's coach, and drawled, "Gene, do you think we could get the state legislature to pass a law that would require all football players at Auburn and Alabama to live in athletic dorms?" (Gerdy 2006, 6)

The story mentioned above explains why Gerdy strongly campaigns for reform of the current model of collegiate athletics. Gerdy states, "Despite how much we love our high school and college sports, we must be honest about their impact on our culture. It is time to acknowledge that American education's experiment with elite athletics has been a failure" (Gerdy 2006, 66). Gerdy's *Air Ball* charges individuals involved with athletics to reevaluate their stance on the current athletic model in order to catapult towards a better future. Gerdy's *Air Ball* imposes accountability and transparency in the assessment of college sports.

Adding to the social commentary about Blacks in sports, veteran sports columnist Shaun Powell provides his commentary in *Souled Out? How Blacks Are Winning And Losing in Sports*. Powell offers an unapologetic critique of all dimensions in sports. He primarily chooses to focus on the impact sports has on the Black community. In the fourth chapter of this book "Academic Divide: Old School, New School, No School",

Powell outlines many of the reasons that lead to the academic failure of Black athletes.

These reasons include lack of preparation in secondary education, educational resources, and the lack of familial support. Powell writes:

This is tragic for Black America, which is perpetually reeling from educational issues that handcuff the race and prevent them from moving up the ladder in society. And it enhances the cliché- ridden tired notion that sports are “the only way out” for many young black men, when in truth, reading a textbook would actually help them find the exit faster than throwing a football. (Powell 2008, 75)

Powell’s criticism is valid because it is common to hear that the only way for Black boys to make it out is to play a sport. The “out” that is mentioned in Powell’s text refers to factors that hold Black men from achieving such as socioeconomic status, zip code, familial status, the prison industrial complex, and drugs. The erasure of this notion is imperative. It is not factual considering the low numbers of athletes that end up playing professional sports.

Powell also asserts that the Black community cannot thrive on this idea. That would imply that Black athletes are similar to white athletes. Powell writes:

Chances are pretty good that if tennis or golf doesn’t work out for the white teenaged player, his family likely has the financial ability to send him to college and give him a soft landing cushion. Or he’ll simply go work for his father in the family business. If basketball doesn’t work out for the poor black teenager, well, you can only imagine what happens next. (Powell 2008, 89)

It is imperative for the longevity of Black athletes to enforce the importance of education in their lives. An education will eliminate the question of what happens to the college athlete after he shoots his last shot in college. If it is challenging for college graduates who worked diligently in school to find employment after college one can only

imagine the difficulty a Black college athlete would have after placing more emphasis on sports than education.

In his conclusion, Powell offers a complex yet simple solution to the issues surrounding Black athletes. Powell writes:

Any examination of the state of blacks in sports, blacks in general, starts with the father. Many of the problems currently faced by black athletes, along with solutions for these problems, can be attached to him. When he is involved in the lives of his children, the result will be mostly positive. When he is a ghost who fades in and out the lives of his children, the result is mostly negative. (Powell 2008, 272)

The correlation between the failures of Black athletes to the lack of consistent Black fathers is worth noting. Although it is not the only factor that leads to the exploitation of Black male college athletes, it is in conversation with other factors. This viewpoint aids in providing solutions to improve the conditions for Black athletes while diminishing the exploitive behaviors that Black athletes endure.

As an attempt to document the Black sporting experience, David K. Wiggins and Patrick B. Miller served as the catalyst for the anthology *The Unlevel Playing Field a Documentary History of the African American Experience in Sport*. This anthology provides a historical look at sports from antebellum years to present day. Some of the most revered Black voices such as Frederick Douglass, W.E.B Du Bois, Nikki Giovanni, Harry Edwards, and Henry Louis Gates are included in this text. In particular, Henry Louis Gates commentates on the issue about athletics and academics in his essay “Delusions of Grandeur”. Gates, similar to many scholars, is passionate about sports. He states, “Let me confess that I love sports. Like most Black people of my generation— I’m 40— I was raised to revere the great Black athlete heroes” (Gates 2003, 382). This quote

explains the mass sentiment of Blacks towards athletes. Sports heroes are a staple in the Black community. Nonetheless, Gates acknowledges the overemphasis that the Black community places on athletic achievement at the expense of academic achievement.

The title suggests that society is becoming delusional at the expectation that every Black child that excels at a sport will be the next LeBron James or Stephen Curry. There are academic shortcomings that are not widely addressed such as illiteracy among Black youth who excel at sports (Gates 2003, 383). Gates also addresses The University of North Carolina having sculptors built of their students. Gates writes, “Guess which ethnic group was selected to represent athletes?” (Gates 2003, 383). It is problematic to suggest that UNC’s sculptures serve as a compliment to Black people. It also emphatically shows the perceived image of African-American students. These sculptures suggest the Black body as superior to the mind. Gates concludes:

Until colleges stop using young blacks as cannon fodder in the big business wards of so called nonprofessional sports, until training young black’s mind becomes as important as training his or her body, we will continue to perpetuate a system akin to that of the Roman gladiators, sacrificing a class of people for the entertainment of the mob. (Gates 2003, 383)

This systematic oppression of the Black mind will continue until the Black community forces a halt and demands change. If not, generations of Black males will be exploited.

### LEADERSHIP

In America, the law is allegedly the rule of the land. Attorney Timothy Davis provides a legal perspective for the educational malfeasance of athletes. In 1991 the *Houston Law Review* published one of Davis’s essays “An Absence of Good Faith: Defining a University’s Educational Obligation to Student Athletes.” Davis aims to

provide the legalities behind the wrongdoing of those responsible for guiding student athletes. Similar to other scholars, Davis mentions the Kevin Ross dilemma. Eventually, Kevin Ross sued Creighton University for their wrongdoing in the treatment of his education. Davis writes, “Kevin Ross’s lawsuit draws attention to important social and legal issues confronting intercollegiate athletics today. These issues include the compromise of academic integrity and the exploitation of student-athletes” (Davis 1991, 746).

These problems continue to resurface which justifies the belief that universities across the country are not adhering to contractual agreements with student athletes (Davis 1991, 747). The lack thereof increases litigation between athletes and universities that could have been prevented. University officials are an instrumental part of the well-being of student athletes. It is important for administrators and faculty to be engaged and aware of various decisions that are made pertaining to student-athletes. Engagement and awareness is not merely enough. One must have ethical leadership.

The Athletic Director at Northwestern University Peter Roby provides a thoughtful article “Ethical Leadership in College Athletics” in the *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport* published in 2014 to the conversation. Roby boldly states:

The Petrino hiring underscores what plagues some of college athletics ... we say one thing and do another. We can’t have values of convenience. We must have values of conviction. When the stakes are highest— we must not blink. That is the truest tests of Values- Driven Leadership. (Roby 2014, 35)

Throughout the duration of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Athletic Academic scandal that question haunted the institution. There was minimal concern

regarding ethics. Rarely was there even a discussion about the students whose lives were jeopardized. The concern for students speaks to another point that Roby articulates, “Collegiate athletics requires the highest level of integrity and ethics because we work with 18-22 year olds who are looking for guidance and advice. These students will be influenced by what their coaches and administrators do on a daily basis” (Roby 2014, 37). People who are not invested with ethical morals should not be engaged with college athletics.

Athletic personnel impact the present and future lives of student athletes.

Ethical leadership is needed to transform the face of college sports. A vast majority of the sole decision makers for student athletes are white males (Hawkins 2010, 143)

Meanwhile, in revenue generating sports, there are a majority of African-American students. Unfortunately, when these leaders can exploit athletes at any cost it confirms Rhoden’s belief about college sports and the plantation. Paul Roby provides hope that there are people who are in college sports for the right reasons and do want to be a part of the change.

## SCANDAL

Since college basketball’s inception, scandals have transpired. Basketball’s transition from a recreational activity to a business created an avenue for scandals to occur. *Winning is The Only Thing* published in 1989 by Randy Roberts and James Olson provide a historical context regarding scandals in sports. The authors write, “The basketball scandals of 1951 brought into the open problems – deep corruption of intercollegiate athletics. It was not a new problem. Forged transcripts, special treatments

for players, illegal payments, slush funds, and the like had been around for half a century” (Roberts and Olson 1989, 76). In the sports world, 1951 is synonymous with the major basketball scandals that occurred particularly in New York. In a like manner that football reigns supreme in the south, basketball reigns supreme up north especially in major cities such as New York City (Roberts and Olson 1989, 80). The authors discuss in great detail the affect that the shaving points system and gambling had in college basketball. The invention of the “shaving point system” led to increased gambling in college basketball. (Roberts and Olson 1989, 81). This gravely affected the players and jeopardized their careers. Even after the scandalous year in college sports and the media frenzy that it caused, the reform in college sports did not salvage the problem. The authors suggest:

Far from building character, big-time college sports impaired the “ethical and moral standards of schoolboys through the commercialization of athletics. The report (Carnegie Report) called for widespread reform. No real reform followed. The abuses remained then and beyond. In fact, during the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century the major change in intercollegiate athletics has been the dollar amounts earned by the schools and paid to the players. (James and Olson 1989, 92)

The powerful call for reform in sports historically has been evident. No matter how risqué the scandal is, the reform call is never explicit enough. The title *Winning is the Only Thing* suggests the attitude towards sports. Winning is the only thing. The priority is to win even at the expense of African-American athletes.

In 2011 when UNC’s scandal surfaced, this began a series of events that placed UNC at the forefront of athletic scandals. The embarrassment and shame that was endured by the Tarheels were avoidable. From administrators to faculty to alumni and

most importantly the students, everyone was involved. This national attention forced the administrators to conduct research into these matters before the NCAA stepped in. This scandal resulted in multiple reports about what transpired at UNC. Two reports that are often viewed in this case were the *Governor Martin Report* presented in December 2012, and the *Wainstein Report* presented October 2014.

The *Martin Report* provided a launching point for identifying the incidents that occurred at UNC. Albeit, it did not fully expose the levels of educational malpractice. Some argue that this was intentional to preserve the integrity of UNC. In 2014 UNC President Thomas Ross and Chancellor Carol Folt requested that an independent investigation take place reviewing the incidents that occurred between 1993 and 2011 at UNC. This report was conducted by Kenneth Wainstein, A. Joseph Jay III, and Colleen Depman Kukowski. This report exposed the habitual educational malpractice that occurred at UNC. This report was not intended to save administrators and faculty. It exposed the academic exploitation of student athletes at UNC.

One of the first books that chronicles the events at UNC is *Cheated: The UNC Scandal, The Education of Athletes, and the Future of Big-Time College Sports*. This book was published in 2015 by former UNC professors Jay Smith and Mary Willingham. Willingham is notorious for being one of the whistleblowers for the educational wrongdoing that occurred at UNC. Willingham and Smith write:

We have grown heartsick from seeing the extent of the moral compromises university leaders were willing to make over the years; we would both very much like to imagine that the whole thing never happened. But a full, unobscured record of what transpired at UNC-Chapel Hill between about 1990 and 2013 needs to be established for the

sake of posterity – and for the sake of the future of college sports. (Smith and Willingham 2015, xiv)

Despite the antagonizing forces and lack of support from UNC, Smith and Willingham were brave to write this book. This book ensures that the story of UNC will not be forgotten in sports history. In spite of the lack of hard sanctions brought forth by the NCAA or society's continued adoration for UNC, Smith and Willingham's exposure of the issues will one day be a reason for contemporary athletic reform. The authors write:

The UNC case is important to the national cause of athletic reform because it exposes the true scandal that lies beneath the headlines that sports fans take in with their breakfast each morning...All of these signs of university priorities gone askew are deserving of attention, but they pale in importance to the fundamental violation of trust for which America's system of higher education has never been held accountable (Smith and Willingham 2015, xiv)

When incidents occur at division 1 schools such as UNC, it is no longer just a college sports issue. It is an issue that impacts African American people because the community has entrusted African American boys to these sports teams. When scandals happen, silence is the last thing that should be heard.

## CHAPTER III

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Basketball was invented in 1801 by Dr. James Naismith (George 1992, 3). Little did Dr. Naismith know that his invention would change the trajectory of sports, especially for African Americans. From 1881 forward, basketball has been a staple in the African-American community. It is important to note that African-American basketball players have not always been received with the same adoration and love as we know it today. The basketball pioneers faced many obstacles. Nevertheless, they were steadfast in breaking color lines (Burnett 2012, 5) and moving from margin to center on the basketball court.

#### AFRICAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE BASKETBALL PIONEERS

In the spirit of the African tradition, it is imperative to pay homage to ancestors. In basketball ancestry, there are many athletes who risked their life and sacrificed abundantly. The diligent work of sports scholars and historians has ensured that these names are not erased from American history. For example, in *A Hard Road to Glory* the late Arthur Ashe Jr. resurrects stories and facts in basketball history. Although it is challenging to identify the first African-American college basketball player at a predominately white institute, one of the pioneering players is Samuel Ransom of Beloit

College (Ashe 1993, 5). Ashe also provides a few other pre-World War I players such as Wilbur Wood, Fenwich Watkins, Cumberland Posey, William Kindle, Cleveland Abbott, and Sol Butler (Ashe 1993, 5). Other players included Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Ralph Bunche from UCLA and Columbia University's captain in 1930 George Gregory (Ashe 1993, 19). It is important that the aforementioned names are repeated as a litany. Without these early pioneers, there would be no LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, or Stephan Curry.

The result of early Black basketball pioneers' participation led to an increased interest in basketball across the country. Regarding the two most popular sports that African Americans participate, basketball has been more popular in the north and football has remained more popular in the south. Geographically speaking, southern states have more room for large football fields. Although football is played in the north, there is not as much access to the abundant land that the south is afforded with. It is important to mention this because this explains why in the early stages of basketball, many of the Black athletes were from northern cities such as New York, Chicago, Washington D.C, and other urban cities (Reynolds et al. 2012, 96). Ashe writes:

With the exception of St. Louis and towns where black colleges were positioned, the sport in southern black communities were almost nonexistent before 1910. Warm weather the year round lessened the impetus for a winter game. There were no gymnasiums, equipment was poor, coaching was out of an A.G Spaulding manual. The YMCAs had too few indoor facilities. Yet the YMCAs had too few indoor facilities. Yet the YMCAs' outdoor play areas offered the only hope for a time. (Ashe 1993, 2)

Eventually, as the popularity of college sports increased, so did the need for talented athletes. As previously mentioned, with the exception of a few athletes, the majority of African-American college athletes were at HBCUs. These institutions were the only option for most Black students before integration. Therefore, HBCUs remained a bastion for Black athletic talent. Despite that, sports were seen as secondary at HBCUs. In *Elevating the Game Black Men and Basketball*, cultural analyst and author Nelson George writes:

B-ball was used as a way to organize African-American higher learning institutions, draw attention to their overall educational mission, and build pride. Moreover, the sport was seen as a tool not to advocate pro athletics but to give the underprivileged but athletically gifted African-Americans a shot at a college education. Building race leaders were more important than promoting stars. (George 1992, xviii)

When the masses of African-American athletes transitioned to PWIs this mission and the support needed did not always follow. The village that these athletes were accustomed to was not intact. This village typically consists of professors, administrators, and coaches while at the university. Coaches have always played an imperative role in the life of Black athletes, “Coaches often become role models and father figures for athletes. The respect and growth begins early and is a growth process for many student athletes which benefits them as youth, adolescents, young adults, and college students” (Reynolds et al. 2012, 108). Furthermore, since their families were often far away, it was hard for them to regularly engage with family members. The mission could not remain the same if those who help enforce it were not in place.

Given the cultural climate in the United States during the Civil Rights Movement, the horrific treatment of Black athletes at PWIs should not be a surprise. Yet, the talent of Black athletes could not be denied. As Arthur Ashe writes:

The racial logjam was finally broken during the five years from 1946 to 1950. Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Althea Gibson, and Jesse Owens left such positive impressions upon their respective sports that the entire American sports establishment felt freer to experiment. (Ashe 1993, 21)

The desire to experiment ultimately piqued the interest of white coaching staffs across the country. It is that same desire to experiment which led to the enslavement of African bodies for centuries across the country. There was a vivid gaze on the Black body during this era. The skill set that these athletes possessed was different from their white counterparts. Big time college sports was evolving which reinforced the idea that “winning is everything”. These Black athletes percolated in one or two at a time to these white schools. Although Black athletes were playing at PWIs, this does not mean that they were always welcome. College administrators, alumni, and others were reluctant to have a “Negro” or a “Colored” student on their team.

Fortunately, Coach Don Haskins was willing to reimagine college sports by including African-American athletes on the team. It is important to note that not every white coach has had malicious intentions when recruiting Black student-athletes for their teams. Some coaches simply wanted the best talent regardless of race. Coach Don Haskins coached at Texas Western (now known as University of Texas El Paso). Coach Haskins heavily recruited Black student-athletes from across the country. The Texas Western community’s dismay about Black basketball players did not prevent Coach

Haskins from recruiting Black athletes. Despite the threats and hate mail that Haskins received, he still was committed to the recruitment of Black athletes (Martin 2010, 116). Coach Haskin's decision to recruit Black athletes changed the narrative for college sports. Charles Martin asserts:

The Texas Western squad reflected a different racial model and embodied what eventually became the new athletic order in Dixie... According to prevailing racial assumptions about sports held privately by many whites, black athletes lacked the intelligence, discipline, poise, and teamwork skills that white athletes possessed. African Americans obviously displayed individual talent, but this natural ability could not be harnessed into a consistent performance under pressure. (Martin 2010, 113)

Many white institutions desired to uphold white supremacy by any means, especially in sports. These thoughts were soon to be null and void during the 1966 NCAA Division 1 Tournament. The 1966 Texas Western Basketball Team was the first team to qualify for a National Championship and win the NCAA Division 1 National Championship game against Kentucky. Texas Western beat Kentucky 72-65 in this historic game. Coach Haskin's starting lineup consisted of only black players (Ashe 1993, 33). This game has been referred to as the "Emancipation Proclamation" in College Basketball (Martin 2010, 116). The collective energy of these Black players on the court that day changed history. Never again would college basketball be the same. This team had achieved a pinnacle of success that is rare. To be a National Champion requires a tremendous effort. It could not be argued that this team did not deserve this. It was not handed to them. Their win came with a price.

The movie *Glory Road* tells the story of the 1966 Texas Western team. In the movie, there are many instances of racist remarks, hate crimes, and injustice that the Black athletes had to endure. Fans from visiting schools would throw items at them as they ran to the court. Moreover, during the introduction of the starting line up the Black players were greeted with silence and not cheers. They were made to feel inferior even in the midst of bringing glory to their school. As a result of winning a national championship in conjunction with the Civil Rights Movement, Black athletes were beginning to utilize their voices. Black college athletes no longer wanted to remain silent about inequalities occurring on and off the court. Sportswriter Jack Olsen details the Texas Western (UTEP) athletic department in the late 1960s and remarks from the athletes included:

“complaints about racial slurs from coaches and administrators, lack of emphasis on academic progress for athletes, limited social opportunities available in the city, alleged prohibitions against interracial dating, exclusion from fraternities, an absence of good jobs for athletes’ wives, and discrimination in housing”. (Martin 2010, 118)

This article exemplifies what was occurring at predominately white institutions across the country. Some of these issues the early pioneers faced are still relevant today.

#### ATLANTIC COSTAL CONFERENCE PIONEERS

In spite of the racist treatments and malicious treatment at predominately white institutions following the emancipation proclamation of college basketball, Black athletes were heavily recruited and attending PWIs. Charles Martin explains:

The dramatic shift from rigidly segregated competition in the 1950s to the fully integrated structure of the 1970s is one of the least-remembered

consequences of the civil rights era, and one of its most permanent accomplishments. The subsequent emergence in the ACC of such black basketball stars as Ralph Sampson, Michael Jordan, Grant Hill, and Tim Duncan in the 1980s and 1990s could not have occurred without this earlier racial transformation. (Martin 2010, 151)

The racist practices of Jim Crow could not negate the skills and strength of Black athletes. Despite the lynchings, murders, violence, and unfair treatment, Blacks were still excelling in the sports realm. Black people were able to feel pride and excitement in sports. The opportunity to compete on what appeared to be an even playing field led many athletes to these schools. In spite of the rich culture at HBCUs, the allure was not the same. Black athletes who had hopes of playing at the professional level were more inclined to want to play at a white school. This is where they could receive the spotlight, recognition, and fame needed to advance their careers.

For example, the 1974 NCAA Division 1 Basketball game was won by African American David Thompson and North Carolina State against Marquette University (Martin 2010, 151). The University of Maryland recruited one of their first Black players Billy Jones and described him as the following, “high class young man and conscientious” (Martin 2010, 156). Billy Jones believed, “I saw no reason why I shouldn’t go there” (Martin 2010, 157). This statement demonstrates the attitude shift of Black athletes. The intimidation of attending a white school was fleeting. Black athletes understood what they had to offer and were not allowing white supremacist beliefs to encompass their thinking. Billy Jones was still aware of his Blackness in spite of his athletic success. Many issues would arise for athletes when they were playing away

games. Martin writes, “Jones avoided potential problems over lingering segregation in local entertainment spots by spending much of his free time socializing with students at nearby black colleges” (Martin 2010, 157). It is problematic that he was accepted on the court but not in social settings. This intentional isolation appears to be a foreign concept considering that athletes today are adored by white fans. But, this was not always the norm.

The color line at basketball powerhouse Duke University was broken in 1965 when Claudius Clairborne became the first African-American player for Duke University (Martin 2010, 159). In a similar fashion of other Black athletes, Clairborne was not included in activities such as attending a team banquet due to segregation laws (Martin 2010, 159). Wake Forrest University followed the growing practice of integration during the 1967-1968 college basketball season. Wake Forrest University recruited Norwood Toddman from New York City (Martin 2010, 161). As mentioned previously, northern cities were gold mines for Black athletic talent. For example, Wake Forrest recruited Charles Davis and Gil McGregor (Martin 2010, 161). In the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement, these collegiate basketball pioneers also participated in protests against injustice. Martin notes that they “specifically exempted the athletic department in their critiques” (Martin 2010, 162). Their lack of critique against the athletic department shows a subtle yet significant shift in the mindset of Black athletes. Indeed, there is a level of reverence and loyalty that athletes want to give to the athletic departments. Regardless, it is naïve to assume that there are no malicious intentions and that the athlete’s best interest

is always at heart. Athletic departments are not exempt from critique. Systematic oppression also lingers in athletic departments across the country. The manifestation of this subtle shift will be seen as the participation of Black athletes increases.

One of the greatest college basketball coaches of all time is none other than The University of North Carolina's Dean Smith. Although Dean Smith is legendary for many things, one of his greatest accomplishments is the integration of the UNC basketball program. Martin writes, "An individual with strong religious convictions, Smith was one of the few southern coaches who viewed athletic integration as an ethical and moral responsibility" (Martin 2010, 164). One of the first Black college basketball players recruited under the Dean Smith Era was Charlie Scott. Charlie Scott was a catalyst for some change at UNC. Martin writes, "Charlie Scott's friendly personality and solid academic performance made him a popular figure on campus and encouraged wider acceptance of integration. The UNC band apparently dropped its use of the song "Dixie" during Scott's sophomore year" (Martin 2010, 166). Southern culture and tradition reigns supreme in the south. It is quite significant that the inclusion of a Black athlete led to the band's dismissal of the "Dixie" song.

#### SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE PIONEERS

Although recruiting efforts were taking place in other southern states, challenges still remained. The Southeastern Conference (SEC) is deeply rooted in southern heritage. SEC fans view sports as a second religion. Despite the successes of other universities

inclusion of African-American athletes, SEC schools were not easily inclined to integrate their athletic teams. Martin writes:

On southern campuses, the basketball court and the football field remained special areas of “white space” protected from the larger racial changes that were sweeping across Dixie. Small wonder then that some critics viewed SEC sports as one of the last strongholds of segregation in the region. (Martin 2010, 218)

Martin’s analysis regarding sports as the “last stronghold of segregation in the South” is accurate. Jim Crow was slowly dying and the southerners needed to have something to still control and that was sports. Southerners were desperate to maintain the image of white athletes reigning supreme in athletics. It was frightening to have these Black men who are deemed inferior in the eyes of southern men actually reigning supreme on the court. A Black man beating a white man at anything disables white supremacy.

In the late 1960s, as the Civil Rights Movement heightened, the call for integration was becoming even more serious. Martin mentions:

Sportswriters around the country, representatives of the U.S Office of Education, and the growing number of black students on southern campuses increasingly pressured Southeastern Conference universities to recruit black athletes. Beginning in 1965 presidents of universities receiving federal funds were required to certify that their institutions adhered to the nondiscrimination provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. (Martin 2010, 218)

Integration was no longer a moral issue but an economic issue for the universities. There was no other choice but to adhere to the call from the federal government regarding integration. Given the political protests and organizations forming it was only a matter of time before the SEC joined the institutions across the country that were slowly

integrating their athletic teams. Integration of SEC basketball occurred between 1966 and 1973 (Martin 2010, 254). The SEC Institution University of Kentucky witnessed the upset to Western Kentucky's all Black starting line up at the NCAA Division 1 Basketball Championship. This victory was a foreshadow that African-American players are capable of competing in SEC basketball. The decision makers in the SEC wanted to believe that they were exempt from cultural advancement as that was seen as challenging their cultural beliefs.

Nonetheless, Perry Wallace broke the color line at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. He was the first African-American college basketball player at an SEC institution. Considering the hostility in the SEC this is a preeminent accomplishment. Wallace was academically astute and similar to many African-American college basketball pioneers which had a successful athletic career at the school. The problem was not sports. The problem was the racist issues that he faced as a pioneer. Martin writes, "While home fans strongly applauded Wallace's performances, he again encountered several exceptionally hostile crowds on the road, especially at Ole Miss and Mississippi State. White fans at Oxford even chanted "We're gonna lynch you" (Martin 2010, 223). This isolation experienced at PWIs were not reflective of African principles of community. Perry Wallace did not have a team of full of athletes who had experienced these problems. He also did not have many other Black athletes to confide in. This isolated path was one he had to endure alone. Early on in his career another Black player, Godfrey Dillard, was on the squad at Vanderbilt but eventually quit the team, "after being

relegated to the Varsity B- team in preseason drills. Dillard viewed his demotion as punishment for political activism as President of the newly formed Afro-American Association (AAA) on campus” (Martin 2010, 223). Even Dillard’s removal from the team exemplifies the hostile and racially charged environment. Although Perry Wallace was a pioneer in SEC College Basketball which should be celebrated, it does not negate the turmoil he experienced while at Vanderbilt. His experiences are proof that even with progress comes pain.

Finally, in 1970, Tom Payne joined the University of Kentucky which desegregated this pristinely white team. Coach Rupp was the Coach for Kentucky for 42 years and had 876 career wins. He is infamous in college basketball in spite of the horrific statements he has made about African Americans. Following the loss to Western Kentucky Coach Rupp at a banquet said, “At least we’re still the best white team in the country” (Martin 2010, 235). This statement demonstrates the mentality of this infamous coach. Fortunate for African Americans, the Coach Rupp era was not meant to last for an eternity. Coach Joe Hall took over as the head coach for Kentucky in the early 1970s following the signing of Kentucky’s first African-American player (Martin 2010, 236). This led to an increase in African-American players at Kentucky and eventually the hire of an African-American Assistant Coach Leonard Hamilton (Martin 2010, 236). The seed was planted at the University of Kentucky that African Americans had a right to participate in athletic competition. In 1997, Tubby Smith became the first African-American head coach at the University of Kentucky (Martin 2010, 237). Kentucky went

from having a racist head coach to one day having an African-American head coach that would lead the team to a NCAA Championship in 1998 (Martin 2010, 237).

The last SEC team to integrate their college basketball program was none other than Mississippi State University (MSU). Integration at MSU was not a seamless task. Deeply rooted in a glorified southern past, MSU was not inclined to play in games where the opponent had African Americans on their team. In one instance while at an away game, the University President Ben Hilbun called the head coach James H. “Babe” McCarthy to inform him that, “It’s been our policy that our teams would not compete against Negroes” (Martin 2010, 249). The administrators’ inherent desire to maintain whiteness almost prevented the institution from participating in the NCAA tournament.

As mentioned previously, playing in the NCAA tournament is an honor and requires much dedication. Not only were the university alumni, the board of trustees, and Mississippians attempting to prevent the team from traveling to the tournament, but state legislators were involved too. People inherently believed that exposing these white athletes to African-American athletes would taint their whiteness. This belief went against the “unwritten law” in Mississippi (Martin 2010, 248). Mississippi was determined for Jim Crow to not die. This way of thinking prevented opportunities for the school and eventually led to the decline of their basketball program. It was not until 1972 when Larry Fry and Jerry Jenkins joined the elite club of African-American collegiate basketball pioneers that MSU was finally integrated (Martin 2010, 253). It is shameful

that integration at this school took as long as it did. The resistance displayed as an act of maintaining tradition is unacceptable.

Stories about African-American pioneers are imperative when reflecting on the place of African Americans in college basketball history. These stories should be a part of the Black collective conscious. When these names are mentioned, people should not appear puzzled. Their strength is honorable and worthy of mention. In the spirit of the African ancestral tradition may these names and stories never be forgotten. College basketball as it is known today would have never been what it is without these pioneers. Despite the challenges that African-American college basketball faced in the 1960s and 1970s, these challenges were only the beginning. Post integrated college basketball came with another range of problems. The plight of the Black college athlete was not over.

#### ATHLETICS OVER ACADEMICS

Eventually, it became a societal norm for college basketball teams to have African-American athletes on their team. According to the 2013 *Black Male Student Athletes Racial and Inequalities in NCAA Division 1 College Sports Report*, based on 77 Division 1 institutions 64.3 percent of Black men were college basketball players. Also, 57.1 percent of Black men were college football players (Harper et al. 2013, 1). These percentages are astronomical when one evaluates the challenges African-American college basketball pioneers faced. It is anomalous to see a basketball team that is majority white. Black athletes are the premiere players across the country. Although, they still experience racism during their time in college (Reynolds et al. 2012, 97). Considering

the high percentages of Black student-athletes on collegiate campuses one would think that it would be in the best interest of the university to keep Black athletes' best interest at heart. For example, being mindful of the academic and cultural development components that are needed in college. But, this notion is not widely accepted. The authors of the aforementioned report stated, "Perhaps more outrage and calls for accountability would ensue if there were greater awareness of the actual extent to which college sports persistently disadvantage Black male student-athletes" (Harper et al. 2013, 1). Society has chosen to ignore the problems that athletes are facing. Still, ignoring a problem does not negate the issue. The premiere issue that African-American athletes are plagued with is Academics.

Academics is not a new issue for African-American student athletes. This conversation is constantly had and although there appear to be some improvements the celebrations should not commence yet. The 2013 *Black Male Student Athletes Racial and Inequalities in NCAA Division I College Sports Report* shows that 96.1 percent of the institutions surveyed are graduating players at a lower rate than the undergraduate population (Harper et al. 2013, 1). It is worth noting that 50.2 percent of the African-American male athletes graduated over the span of six years in comparison to the 66.9 percent of the all athletes (Harper et al. 2013, 1). These numbers are not acceptable considering the vast number of African-American male athletes that are competing in revenue generating sports. There is a major academic problem that is plaguing these universities.

As mentioned previously, this is not a new issue. In order to maintain some type of academic integrity, there have been various policy changes implemented by the NCAA. One of the most well-known policy changes is none other than Proposition 48. In the 1980s following the integration of college basketball teams the percentages of college athletes graduating was low. These low graduation rates were affecting Black athletes more than their white counterparts. In 1983 the infamous Proposition 48 was birthed. The components of Proposition 48 are, “to be eligible for college varsity competition, a player must have a “C average in high school courses that normally lead to graduation, plus either a combined score of 700 on the SAT exam, or 15 on the ACT exam. Once in college, the student-athlete had to maintain a “C” or 2.0 grade average to remain athletically eligible” (Ashe 1993, 35). The policy was implemented during the 1986 school year. To no surprise, there was a lot of resistance with Proposition 48. There were many in the country that felt that this was penalizing African-American student-athletes. This addresses the notion that many feel that Black male athletes are athletically superior and intellectually inferior. This proposition was not meant to penalize African-American athletes. If anything, this proposition protects athletes. Without this proposition, institutions would be able to recruit anyone regardless of their academic abilities.

When students are not adequately prepared in high school, this does not enhance their ability to perform at the collegiate level (Maloney and McCormick 1992, 569). Many Black athletes are coming to school without the necessary preparation. In *Challenges of Being a Black Student Athlete on U.S. College Campuses*, Simiyu asserts,

“This lack of college preparedness among some Black college athletes is situated in the wider socio-political inequalities that characterize access to quality education” (Simiyu 2012, 53). Many Black athletes are summoned from lower socio-economic areas in the country. These are places where the educational playing field is not equal. Despite that, these areas are rich with athletic talent. Given this information, there needs to be more of an emphasis placed on ensuring that these athletes are academically prepared. This conundrum is always discussed and seldom resolved. It is not enough to accept the bare minimum from Black athletes as if that is all they are capable of achieving. As an attempt to reconcile this problem the NCAA implemented the Academic Performance Rating which “requires schools to have a combined score, for all sports, of 925. This score includes graduation, grade point average, and progress towards graduation” (Smith 2013, 114). These attempts to add standards, expectations, and guidelines to college athletics is a sound attempt. Except, it is not addressing the root of the problem. If these students are not academically prepared it is not going to assist them in being a “student first” as the NCAA heavily claims. Dr. Smith believes these attempts will simply lead to academic fraud (Smith 2013, 114).

Despite the steps being made towards the academic achievement of athletes, academic fraud constantly resurfaces. These stories do not make the ESPN’s Top Ten or the evening news. Whether the loyal college basketball and football fans would like to acknowledge it or not, academic fraud is transpiring across the country. The damage has already been done by the time the news flashes across the television screen or is printed

in the press. The recipients of academic wrongdoing have already given their time and talent to these institutions. The championships have already been won, and the revenue has already been generated. McCormick and McCormick elucidate, “College sports is a fabulously profitable commercial enterprise as well as a lucrative component of the sports entertainment industry. Athletes generate great wealth for their university-employers through their skill and effort” (McCormick and McCormick 2006, 131). It is for these problematic reasons that more people are not deeply disturbed by academic fraud.

The late Walter Byers served as the first Executive Director of the NCAA. In 1995 Byers published *Unsportsmanlike Conduct Exploiting College Athletes*. Byers has a different perspective in viewing the academic exploitation of college athletes. Byers writes:

A more balanced view of educational exploitation is that the college admissions office and faculty exploit the athlete by taking on board a poorly prepared student and providing to him or her course work of minimum quality so the athlete can meet minimum eligibility standards. The athlete exploits the college by blaming the college for his or her lack of learning when it is the student who failed to respond because of limited interest. The exploitation is mutual. (Byers 1995, 299)

To suggest that the exploitation of athletes is mutual is problematic. Especially considering the exploitation of college athletes plagues Black athletes more than it does white athletes. It is fair to suggest that college athletes hold a shared responsibility in their education. Athletes should attend class, and they should be engaged in their learning. Athletes should not expect to receive extreme accommodations merely because they are athletes. Yet, suggesting that the athlete and the institution are mutually

exploiting one another is extreme. Athletes have minimum control of their lives during their collegiate years because their schedules are dictated by coaches and other athletic administrators (McCormick and McCormick 2006, 100).

For example, the amount of time that athletes are required to spend with boosters and athletic donors could be added to their studies. In *Backboards and Blackboards*, Adler and Adler provide multiple examples of the relationship between athletes and donors. Adler and Adler assert:

A further problem players incurred from spending so much of their time attending booster dinners, functions, and meetings was a drain on their time for schoolwork. When a booster function was announced, they had no choice but to attend. As a result, their homework assignments, from reading, to writing term papers and take-home exams to studying for in-class exams, were often neglected. (Adler and Adler 1985, 95)

The athletes did not have an option because the boosters are signing checks that aid the athletic departments. If the exploitation was mutual then many athletes would understand exactly the predicament they were getting themselves into on signing day. Yet, this is not true because college recruits are selling a glamorous dream to teenagers and their parents before attending college. Nelson George writes “The white universities and NBA made b-ball glamorous with the promise of millionaire contracts, throwing out of whack the role of basketball in Black America and leading all but the top 2 percent of Black athletes down a road to frustration” (George 1992, xviii). This glamorized image of the Black athlete as the only means to success in the Black community is what keeps young boys striving for athletic success over anything else. They inherently believe that the two percent will make room for all with athletic talent. This claim is not true. Therefore, the

universities need to do a better job explaining and putting at the forefront the need for academic achievement. It is easy for the NCAA to contend that the exploitation is mutual. This removes blame from the NCAA and the various institutions that constantly perpetuate these exploitive behaviors towards African- American athletes.

If the student truly came before the athlete then the horrific scandal at UNC would have never occurred. If there were not a need to generate revenue on the backs of Black athletes for decades, then history would have been different. The Black college basketball pioneers did not endure all that they did for athletes to be passed through a system of academic fraud. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is a prestigious place of higher learning. The decades of fraud at UNC exposed at UNC in 2010 is not an isolated incident. UNC is not the only university that has failed their athletes as a result of academic fraud. An innumerable amount of athletes fell victim to this scandal. Society will never know the full extent of damage that was done. As previously stated, by the time these stories surface it is already too late. The grades have been entered, the degrees have been conferred, and in many cases the students did not have the opportunity to finish their schooling. The UNC scandal proves that increased percentages in revenue are of more value to predominately white institutions than increased percentages in the African-American male athlete graduation rates.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

North Carolina is home to one of the most prestigious universities in the country—The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. To no surprise, those who attend this institution are immediately enamored by its architectural structure. Carolina blue is not only reflective in the décor of the campus but also imprinted in the hearts of UNC students and alumni. According to statistics on the UNC website, 308,000 alumni live in the United States and 150 countries across the globe (UNC 2014, np.). Alumni include celebrity athletes such as Michael Jordan, Vince Carter, and Mia Hamm. Also, in fall 2015 the student enrollment at UNC was 29,120. Even the community in the township of Chapel Hill adores or worships the Tarheels. The Carolina obsession is not limited to those who have a direct connection to the university. UNC fans can be seen across the country. Their paraphernalia ranges from license plates to jerseys to keychains. Collectively, UNC supporters are bonded by their Carolina Blue eternally. They become kin to one another based on the allegiance to the school. In spite of the allure associated with the academic excellence of UNC, most people are familiar with UNC because of its athletic program. As mentioned previously, one of the greatest basketball players of all time Michael Jordan was adorned in the Carolina Tarheels

jersey. By virtue of Michael Jordan having played at UNC, the notoriety of the institution multiplied.

UNC is part of the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC). The ACC is one of the most competitive basketball conferences in the country. Basketball powerhouses in the ACC also include Duke, Louisville, and North Carolina State. The rigor and competition during basketball season are especially intensified in the ACC. Each year these universities compete not only for bragging rights but fame, revenue, recruits, and championships. It is more than just a game of basketball in the ACC. Since the first NCAA National Championship Basketball game played in 1939, UNC has earned 6 National Championship titles. These titles justify UNC's reputation as one of the greatest college basketball powerhouses of all time. In 1957 UNC earned their first NCAA championship title with an all-white male basketball squad. In 1957 it was taboo to include African- American players on a southern collegiate sports team. This would be the last time that UNC would earn a NCAA title without an integrated Men's Basketball team. The next NCAA title that would be earned was the infamous 1982 team. This was the first NCAA Championship title with UNC legendary Coach Dean Smith (NCAA 2017, np.).

The renowned Michael Jordan was on this 1982 championship team. The racial demographics of the team had shifted. A pristinely white team had become integrated with African-American players. Although UNC was not the first to win a championship title with African-American players, it is still important to note the success that came with the inclusion of African American athletes. Since the inclusion of African-American

athletes, UNC has won a NCAA Championship every decade. The next title was won in 1993. The following title came in 2005 as well as in 2009. Although UNC has only six championship titles, they have been to the NCAA Tournament countless times. They have progressed far in the tournament such as the Sweet Sixteen, Elite 8, Final Four, and even the Finals. In the 2016 game, UNC was defeated by the Villanova Wildcats. In spite of the academic scandal, UNC defeated Gonzaga in the 2017 game (NCAA 2017, np.). Winning is not just an option at UNC. It is an expectation.

The events that occurred at UNC between the late 1980s and early 2000s created one of the most complex academic scandals in NCAA history. To help student-athletes maintain their eligibility, inappropriate accommodations were made. The department that housed these accommodations was the African and Afro American Studies Department. The primary facilitators of this scandal were the department chair Dr. Julius Nyang'oro and administrative assistant Debby Crowder (Watson 2015, 16). Collectively, these two ensured that athletes would be accommodated to continue playing their respective sports. These accommodations consisted of inventing fake classes also referred to as paper classes (Wainstein et al. 2014, 1). These paper classes did not adhere to academic standards. The only requirement the students had was to submit a term paper at the end of the semester (Smith and Willingham 2015, 16). Students were not required to attend class because there were no lectures being held. A teacher's name was on the course registration only as a formality. If the papers were graded it was also a formality and it received a marking from Debby Crowder (Wainstein et al. 2014, 3). These papers were not meticulously graded. As a result, the students submitted anything to receive credit.

Another method to accommodate the athletes were independent study courses. Independent study courses offer students an opportunity to conduct research independently with guidance from their professor. It is unusual for a professor to have multiple independent study courses as well as their regular course load. As a means of satisfying the demands from the athletic department, Nyang'oro had as many as 291 independent study students during the 2003-2004 academic year (Smith and Willingham 2015, 24). The academic malpractice at UNC impacted the lives of many students, in particular student athletes. The opportunity for learning was manipulated into an opportunity to cheat the system. The total number of students impacted will never all be accounted for, but about 3,100 students were impacted by this academic malpractice and half of these students were athletes (Solomon 2016, np.). The intricate details of this scandal will further be explained in the subsequent pages. Even in the midst of an academic scandal with athletes, UNC will continue to be revered in the arena of sports. Despite the lack of integrity, the Carolina blue has a way of providing atonement for all wrongs.

As previously mentioned, UNC is one of the most academically acclaimed public institutions in this country. The foundation for the first building was laid in 1773 but the doors for students were not officially open until 1775 (UNC 2014, np.). According to the university website, UNC has a wide variety of academic programs. The University offers 78 Bachelor Degrees, 112 Master's Degrees, 68 Doctoral Degrees, and 7 professional degrees. Students from across the world seek to pursue their academic studies at UNC. In a similar fashion, educators strive to teach at UNC in order to be part of a royal academic

lineage. Educators take pride in being affiliated with this Research One Institution. UNC professors are constantly recognized with national grants, accolades, and research opportunities. The complexities of academia demand educators to venture towards tenure and continuous academic applause. The mere affiliation with UNC allows for these professors to reach their academic goals. Losing the affiliation with institutions such as UNC is a form of academic suicide.

Things do not remain hidden in academia for long. The academic scandal at UNC involving student athletes lasted from the late 1980s through the early 2000s (Smith and Willingham 2015, 11). It is naive to suggest that people with doctoral degrees or high ranking administrative titles were not privy to what was transpiring in the African and Afro-American Studies Department (AFAM) at UNC. Many were aware and willingly chose to ignore the problem, “Telling signs suggest that university leaders, at least some of them, did fully understand the gravity of the academic wrongdoing that had been uncovered, but that their priority was to minimize problems rather than to expose and correct them” (Smith and Willingham 2015, 57). It was easier to ignore the academic misconduct as opposed to jeopardizing one’s career.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Moreover, it is ironic that the scandal took place in the African and Afro American (AFAM) department at UNC. AFAM programs are intended to be transformational and uplifting for the students in these programs. In the anthology *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies* edited by Delores P. Aldridge and

Carlene Young, the purpose for the inception of AFAM programs was to teach self-knowledge. The authors offer this:

For African Americans, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and rebellion of the 1960s provided the historical moment when a statement had to be made. This statement was, in fact, a declaration that white America could no longer feel comfortable with its assertions of superiority and expectations of acquiescence by blacks, regardless of the power of an oppressive system. The people, in their collectivity, responded very much as one who, pushed to the limits of endurance, responds to attempts to drive one mad by striking out at the symbols of abuse and the pathology of the experience. (Aldridge and Young 2003, 4)

It was during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and early 1970s that African Americans had reached their boiling point. A change had to come and there was no waiting for it. The collectivity and sense of community that the Black people experienced during the Civil Rights Movement are part of the reason the oppression and the cries of the people were heard by the nation. As mentioned in previous chapters, African-American athletes were heavily involved during the Civil Rights Movement. Many athletes were integrating athletic teams and participating in civic engagement on their college campuses.

One of the greatest acts of athletic courage came during the 1968 Olympics Ceremony when Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their hands in a Black power fist. This action shocked the nation, but it also energized Black people. The paradigm shift in thinking and the actions of Black people set the foundation for the need for an academic study that centralizes people of African descent. Black people were not included in mainstream American academic discourse. African-American voices and experiences were marginalized. Even if they were discussed, it was seldom with a Black voice.

History is most often told through victor. In order to avoid the erasure of the Black experience, something had to take place. The formation of African American studies programs ensured that this erasure would not happen. The notion of creating an academic discourse meant that a field of scholars would be cultivated. Each scholar was a seed. They would take their research interests, gifts, and wisdom to various colleges and universities. Every seed would bloom where it was planted and develop the next generation of Black studies scholars. Some of the early African-American scholars and pioneers included Sonia Sanchez, Molefi Asante, Delores Aldridge, Carlene Young, Haki Madhubuti, and Vincent Harding. The lineage of African-American elders who made strides is endless and may their names never be forgotten. Without their works this discipline would be not exist.

Moreover, these programs were never intended to be seamless. Aldridge and Young write:

African-American/Black Studies holds the potential to expand the dimensions of knowledge, explore uncharted areas of research, attract and reach an untapped pool of students, and provide the society with trained professionals who contribute to the positive growth and development of their communities. (Aldridge and Young 2003, 5)

This statement affirms the challenges behind pursuing a degree in AFAM or even taking a course. This work requires dedication at every level. From the person who is curious about Black people to the doctoral scholar, the effort is required regardless of the level. The origins of the AFAM department at UNC align with the statement above. UNC knew that times were changing and that the needs of the students had to be met. Smith and Willingham write:

Like many universities around the country, UNC had established a curriculum in African and Afro- American studies amid the tumult of the civil rights era. Designed to redress regrettable intellectual imbalances in the standard curriculum, to help attract more African-American students to Chapel Hill, and to create a more welcoming and affirming environment for all students, the curriculum and had been created in 1969. (Smith and Willingham 2015, 2)

This institution knew that to remain prestigious and continue to draw students of color there would have to be a discipline such as this. The first chair of the program was historian Colin Palmer. During his tenure as chair, the program grew from 251 students in 1979 to 2,200 students in 1987 (Smith and Willingham 2015, 2). When Colin Palmer left the AFAM department, this led to the decline of the program. Despite complaints from faculty about the direction of the program, the university was not adamant about advancing this department. In 1990, the co-chairs of the program, Thadious David, and Robert Gallman expressed in their annual report:

An academic program the vast majority of whose students are taught by graduate students and temporary faculty would never be ranked the best in the nation. Our program lacks prestige and strength because the university had failed to make African and Afro-American studies an institutional priority. (Smith and Willingham 2015, 4)

It is imperative for this discipline to be made a priority of the university if not it cannot survive. It is to no surprise that UNC did not treat this program in high regard. African American studies programs were new and foreign to most. Chair of the Department of Afro-American Studies at Howard University states, “Most people don’t understand Africana and Black studies, including many faculty who teach in the department but have terminal degrees in other disciplines” (Watson 2015, 17). and African-America Studies was an area of study about which most university administrators lacked experience. The

program was there to satisfy the request of the students, to draw more students of color to UNC, and to keep up with other universities. Nevertheless, the success of the program was a separate issue. The success of this program did not matter because it did not have the investment of the UNC administrators.

Nonetheless, the university was in a desperate position. There was a vacancy in the seat of department chair for the AFAM department in 1992 (Smith and Willingham 2015, 6). The only possible candidate would be the individual who would be responsible for the UNC Scandal. In 1993 Julius Nyang'oro became the chair of the AFAM department. Smith and Willingham assert, "By the summer of 1993, in less than three years' time. Nyang'oro had gone from the insecurity of "visiting" faculty status to become the tenured chair of one of the most visible and politically sensitive academic units in the college" (Smith and Willingham 2015, 7). The appointment of Nyang'oro was problematic. It is not realistic that a visiting juvenile faculty member can transcend to the role of department chair. To fill the vacancy, the university gave it to the only possible candidate. UNC also did not want to lose Nyang'oro after the knowledge of a possible tenured position at another institution (Smith and Willingham 2015, 6). If the university would have been truly invested in building a strong department a proper search committee would have been assembled regardless of what had transpired in the past (Smith and Willingham 2015, 6). The University's actions were inappropriate and unethical. If only UNC would have been able to project their fate.

## THE EVOLUTION OF A SCANDAL

The administrative assistant for the AFAM department was Debby Crowder. She was an accomplice in the UNC athletics scandal. Debby was a white woman who is a proud UNC alum. Crowder was deeply involved in the activities that took place in the department. Quite often, individuals involved in administrative roles such as administrative assistant, executive assistant, secretary, etc. are quite knowledgeable of everything involving an organization. They work closely with those in charge and manage most paperwork. This paperwork would become critical in tracking the evolution of the scandal. This scandal dates back to the late 1980s before Nyang'oro's role as department chair. Two basketball players were enrolled in independent study courses with Nyang'oro (Smith and Willingham 2015, 11). It is difficult to navigate how this encounter occurred. Smith and Willingham explain:

One of two things appears to have happened with this course. Either Debby Crowder assigned the student to an independent study section linked to the name of a graduate student or other part-time instructor (unfamiliar names show up in other course records as "instructors of record" in the early 1990s), or Nyang'oro handled the course himself. (Smith and Willingham 2015, 11)

Either way, the action that took place was wrong. Independent study courses are typically designed for upper-level students who are very interested in a discipline. These are not courses taken for leisure. Once this cycle began, it would not be reversed. In fact, it only got worst.

What initially started as a favor for a few basketball players evolved into a system of maintaining players eligibility. Smith and Willingham explain:

From the tiny acorn of 1988, when two struggling basketball players took Nyang'oro's AFRI 190 in the fall semester, a mighty oak soon grew... From a handful of students enrolled in independent study sections in a typical semester or summer session in 1990 or 1991, the enrollment grew to fifteen in the fall term of 1993 as well as fifteen in the following spring. (Smith and Willingham 2015, 23)

These classes were used to boost students' grade point averages. Although there were other students who benefited from these classes, this research will only focus on student athletes. Student athletes have eligibility requirements that must be maintained for them to compete. The very stringent life of a student athlete often consists of school, practice, games, travel, booster events, community service, and a very limited social life.

Sociologist Adler and Adler provide one student athlete's thoughts about his schedule:

“It's unbelievably hard. You try to do two-a-days, get up as early as regular students, go to school, then go to practice for two and a half hours like nothing you have ever strained. When you go back to the dorms, you're so tired. The first few days is all right. But then after you've been doing it for weeks and weeks ... it's brutal...Fatigue is what makes a lot of those guys say, “Fuck it, I'm goin' to sleep”. (Adler and Adler 1991, 73)

What was described in the previous passage is not specific to one student-athlete. This reflects what occurs with student-athletes all over the country. Their schedule is unbelievably loaded. Regardless of how much emphasis a university and the NCAA place on the notion “the student comes before the athlete” that statement is simply not true. This statement is used to reaffirm the amateur nature of college athletes. Yet, when a student athlete is drained and cannot focus on grades, this becomes problematic. Division 1 schools are often not willing to sacrifice the amount of practice and training time needed to produce a championship team. Even at the expense of the students' grades.

This scenario explains why systems such as the paper classes at UNC benefited the student athletes. When an athlete was not doing well, the adults responsible for guiding their academic success had a solution. This solution involved Debby Crowder and Julius Nyang'oro. Members of the athletic department such as coaches and academic support staff cultivated relationships with Crowder and Nyago'oro. These relationships ensured that if student athletes were slipping in their grades they would be enrolled in paper classes. Instead of seeking long-term academic plans to help these students succeed, it was deemed appropriate to cheat the system.

Not only were relationships established with staff members but also with student athletes. A former AFAM faculty member Michael West states, "Crowder took in hand and assumed a motherly relationship with more than a few athletes" (Smith and Willingham 2015, 8). Crowder maintained a very close relationship with these players. She was mentioned in their speeches, friends on Facebook, and often seen at the games. One of the seniors Mike Copeland on the 2009 UNC Men's Basketball NCAA Championship team said in his parting speech, "I know Miss Debby's here... Thank you for everything, Miss Debby, I love you" (Smith and Willingham 2015, 9).

Instead of providing positive support and resources, she registered students for the paper classes. Crowder believed the athletes were in need of additional academic support. Smith and Willingham write, "Crowder had long thought that African-American students at UNC had been handed a "raw deal" and that they deserved more help, and a more welcoming environment than they typically encountered" (Smith and Willingham 2015, 8). The athletes who were not achieving academically at UNC were more than

likely not adequately prepared when they arrived at UNC. Nevertheless, they were athletically equipped to compete in Division 1 sports. Since winning is everything academics becomes second to athletics. This notion causes Crowder to come up with a plan to help these athletes who were handed a “raw deal”. Her determination to help resulted in a system for these athletes to easily navigate without putting in the effort.

Similarly, Julius Nyang’oro had received many perks by his role in the starting lineup of the cheating scandal. Nyang’oro attended games, served as a guest coach, and was a favorite among athletic teams at UNC, particularly basketball and football (Smith and Willingham 2015, 9). Together, Nyang’oro and Crowder had the opportunity to save the day, but they didn’t. Their joint efforts would eternally taint UNC. More importantly, their efforts aided in preventing athletes from receiving a quality college education for decades.

Julius Nyang’oro and Debby Crowder’s intent to help a few students evolved into a mass system which became a scandal. The use of paper classes and independent study courses abused the intended purpose of the African American Studies discipline. Instead of providing liberation and knowledge, the discipline was used to preserve the eligibility of student athletes.

## MISHANDLING BLACK STUDIES

African Americans comprise a majority of the athletes on revenue-generating sports teams i.e. NCAA Football and NCAA Men's Basketball. These athletes are recruited from across the country and sometimes the world to come and represent their institution. Universities spend an incredible amount of time doing whatever it takes to recruit the best athletes to their school. Hawkins states:

Black male athletes are the “bread-winners” or “workhorses” for PWIs athletic departments across this nation. The level of competition, the commercial appeal, and economic growth of intercollegiate athletics would drastically be different without Black athletic talent. (Hawkins 2010, 116)

If there weren't any African-American athletes competing at the collegiate level, college sports would not be what it is today. The intensity and style that African- American athletes bring to the court and field make college sports the billion-dollar industry that it is.

As mentioned several times, Black male collegiate athletes are often recruited out of high school without the adequate preparation to excel in college (Reynolds et al. 2012, 97). This creates a conundrum for the university. In order to utilize the athletic talents of these athletes, rules are bent before the student- athlete arrives. Dr. Hawkins writes:

Regardless of the academic rules instituted for entrance and eligibility, the cases of universities manipulating these rules to acquire that blue-chip athletes are well documented in the popular press. It is also of little surprise that Black athletes are heavily recruited or mainly recruited, because of their athletic abilities, and token interest, if any, is given to their academic abilities or capabilities. (Hawkins 2010, 66)

If students are struggling before they arrive, more than likely they will not be able to reach the required collegiate benchmarks. The lack of academic preparation forces the manipulation of academics to continue. Without the paper classes, independent study classes, and bogus classes that evolved from the AFAM department at UNC, many athletes would not have been able to compete athletically. UNC would not have had the same level of success it had. One has to wonder why African and Afro-American Studies was the perfect hub for this scandal.

When this scandal first started, it was soon after the inception of Black Studies programs across the country. There was a growing need for students of African descent to be exposed to their roots and take classes that were reflective of their history. When Black students do not attend historically Black colleges and/or universities (HBCUs) they are not as inundated with the Black cultural experience. PWIs are not always equipped or feel the need to provide Black students with these resources and courses. At UNC it took protests and the advocacy of Black faculty such as the late Professor Sonja Haynes Stone to fight for these rights. Smith and Willingham recall:

Ever since 1968, when UNC's Black Student Movement had formed out of the protests of the civil rights era, some had called for the construction of a campus building dedicated to the study and celebration of black culture. Leaders of the BSM began championing a "freestanding" center in the late 1980s, about the same time that the curriculum in AFRI/AFAM began to press its case more urgently with college deans (Smith and Willingham 2015, 4).

All of these factors were congruently fostering a need at UNC to place more emphasis on Black culture. The Black students at UNC demanded change. Even the Black student athletes were involved in these requests such as football player Tim Smith. As a result of

these protests, the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center was completed in 2001.

(Smith and Willingham 2015, 5).

The late 1980s and early 1990s was an era when Black culture prevailed. It made sense that Black students were interested in majoring in or taking classes in the African and Afro-American Studies department. It would be more of a challenge to understand why they would not be interested in this new academic discipline. It could possibly even be deemed ignorant or inappropriate to question the validity of Black student-athletes interest in studying Blackness. It was quite practical. It started with two students and it did not stop growing. Smith and Willingham interject:

By 1997 AFRI/AFAM had become the go-to-place for all athletes and for anyone else who presented a story of need. The forms of need presented, and the sorts of help offered, are perhaps best revealed by the academic experiences of some noted athletic success stories. Those experiences show shameless manipulation of established curricular procedures; they show a fraud in full. (Smith and Willingham 2015, 33)

Once the fraud started it was hard to stop. The athletic teams had become dependent upon the saving grace that AFAM could provide. Professors in other departments were not willing to bend the rules as far as the AFAM department did. The grace most college professors offer from time to time such as an extension on a paper or dropping the lowest grade would not suffice. These athletes were desperate as were their athletic academic advisors. A Hail Mary pass would be needed to fix transcripts and maintain eligibility. The salvation for grades came from AFAM. Crowder and Nyang'oro were able to provide the salvation for the student athletes. It was in Crowder and Nyang'oro's hands. They had the power to change the trajectory of these athletes' careers.

One could insinuate that the NCAA 2005 and 2009 championships may have been harder to achieve without the assistance of the AFAM department. Smith and Willingham assert that, “Men’s basketball’s magical run through the 2005 NCAA Tournament was assisted, in ways both direct and indirect, by the fruitful partnership between the ASPSA and the leadership of AFRI/AFAM” (Smith and Willingham 2010, 44). The partnership was more than fruitful. The opportunity to “go dancing” which refers to participation in an athletic tournament, would have been diminished if the athletes would have been deemed ineligible. It requires extreme dedication and discipline to be able to focus on academics during the athletic season. The student athlete’s schedule is chaotic.

One also has to factor in the emotional stress that comes with playing a sport. If a team loses, there is a sense of guilt or disappointment that follows the team collectively and individually from the players to the coaching staff. This emotional stress tends to follow a person until the next opportunity to compete. Thinking about a paper or a book is not often top priority. During the March Madness NCAA Tournament, everything becomes secondary.

March Madness transforms the country for an entire month. People find ways to get out of work or watch the games during work. People work diligently to construct a basketball bracket which predicts the outcome of the tournament. Fans travel with the team to watch them compete for the opportunity to advance to the next round. March Madness is truly a month full of chaos. You either win or you go home. The 2004-2005 UNC Men’s Basketball Team competed in the entire regular season and then advanced all the way to the finals in 2005. They did exactly what they were set to do. They won it

all under the direction of Coach Roy Williams. The team had ample time to focus on shooting free throws and three point shots. Smith and Willingham state, “A single statistic underlines the enormity of the fraud from which the 2005 team benefited. A handful of players from the team took a total of thirty-one paper classes over a few semesters and summer sessions. All 31 grades awarded for these papers, without exception, were A or A-” (Smith and Willingham 2015, 45). This aids in boosting their grade point averages.

Not only could UNC boast about how talented their student athletes were on the court but they could take pride in these athletes’ academic success too. This created a façade at UNC. To the outside world it appeared that the Black athletes at UNC were achieving athletically and academically. These athletes were receiving degrees and credit for degrees that made them subject matter experts on Black people. The work was not done but the credit was still earned.

Rashad McCants was on the 2005 UNC Championship team. He shared in an interview that, “Tutors did help some athletes with grammar and sentence structure on their paper class assignments but for some of premier players we didn’t write our papers” (Smith and Willingham 2015, 45). No effort was required. By nature of being a premiere Black athlete one could transcend academia. There were exemptions made for the athletes because they were playing in the March Madness Tournament. In fact, “Many basketball players on the 2005 championship team were able to abandon all worries about their grade point averages” (Smith and Willingham 2015, 45). These athletes were able to be benefactors of the paper class system in order to cheat the purpose of college which is

to receive a degree. And no one questioned the system. Why would they? It appears perfect on paper. Black student-athletes were studying Black culture as a means of uplifting the community as well as excelling on the court. Not only Black athletes were benefactors of the paper class system. The University could also spin it that white student athletes were interested in being culturally aware and diverse. Either way UNC won.

Although many administrators denied their knowledge of what was going on in AFAM it is impossible that no one was privy to the discrepancies (Smith and Willingham 2015, 57). UNC did not follow the necessary academic procedures such as academic audits or even reviewing syllabi. It did not matter if credit was given and degrees were conferred for AFAM studies classes. The university did not truly value this discipline. UNC would never think to provide fake credit for English, Biology, Business, or any other “mainstream” and socially acceptable field of study. UNC athletic teams would continue to exploit AFAM until the system had run its course. Eventually the careless ways of people would catch up to the university. The scandal would explode and there would be no way of undoing the damage.

The increased pursuit of Black Studies creates the ideal major to cluster athletes in. Not only were Black athletes in these courses but white athletes too. This works to the university’s advantage that students were interested in being aware of other cultures. For decades, the clustering of athletes in Black studies courses would remain unnoticed. The exposure of this scandal would thrust the decades of academic wrongdoing forward.

## WHEN THE SCANDAL BROKE

One of the results of the digital age was the creation of social media. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and more have provided an avenue to share anything with anyone anywhere. Social media has impacted sports tremendously. Sports fans are able to keep up with sporting events via social media. Or even being able to keep up with popular athletes by following them on social media. The ability to follow athletes on social media provides a more intimate way of learning more about an athlete. People are invited to learn about their family, hobbies, style, or thoughts on current events. Social media provides athletes an opportunity to connect with their fans. It also allows athletes to have freedom of expression and voice. In team sports, most often everything is about the team. Minimal attention is given to the individual player. By having one's social media accounts, it creates access to show personal identity.

Except, not all components of social media are solely positive. Social media has provided people with freedom to do whatever they want even if the consequences are negative. For example, hours before the 2016 National Football League (NFL) Draft a video surfaced on Twitter of Laremy Tunsil smoking weed. Tunsil was projected as the number one draft pick that year. As a result of this video appearing all over social media, it decreased Tunsil's NFL stock and he was selected later in the draft. There was a possibility that his opportunity of being drafted would have vanished. Fortunately for Tunsil, the Miami Dolphins drafted Tunsil as the 13<sup>th</sup> overall pick in the Draft (Bieler 2016, np.). Initially, Tunsil attempted to deny that it was him and the video. Eventually,

he confessed that he was in the video recorded years ago. Nonetheless, this video appeared for the world to see on one of the most important days of Tunsil's life.

This next social media mistake will forever be a part of the sports social media canon. On May 29<sup>th</sup> 2010 one of The University of North Carolina's star football players, Marvin Austin, was enjoying a weekend of leisure in Miami, Florida. College students frequent Miami on many occasions such as Spring Break or Summer vacations. It was not strange that Austin was in Miami at the conclusion of the semester. If Marvin Austin had merely posted regular photos or regular tweets about being in Miami, red flags would not have been thrown. Instead Austin tweeted, "I live in Club LIV so I get the tenant rate. Bottles comin (sic) like it's a giveaway" (Smith and Willingham 2015, 251). LIV is a famous club in Miami which hosts celebrities, athletes, and other people who enjoy partying. Austin's reference to "bottles comin (sic) like it's a giveaway" suggests a source of income that can pay for this extravagant lifestyle. Smith and Willingham refer to this tweet as "The tweet heard 'round the world" (Smith and Willingham 2015, xiii). The average college student has a limited source of income. Student athletes are in this same category. Most student athletes are not able to have a job while in school. Therefore, money is not readily accessible to be able to vacation in Miami and "live at Club LIV".

As mentioned previously, many people follow athletes on social media. Fans are not the only ones who keep up with the lives of athletes. Many athletic departments monitor social media behavior of their athletes. This is often to avoid situations such as what occurred with Marvin Austin. The NCAA also watches what is occurring with

athletes. Marvin Austin's tweet is the beginning of uncovering the scandalous behavior within the UNC athletic department. Austin's tweet may have appeared meaningless to some who viewed it on their timeline that day. Nevertheless, it was problematic which led to questions. Where did Marvin Austin receive the funds to go to Miami and celebrate as if he just won a Superbowl? There must have been a person financing his trip and it was not Marvin Austin. The NCAA has very strict rules about the contact between student-athletes and professional agents and sports teams.

When Austin was partying in Miami it appeared to be at a party hosted by an NFL agent (Anderson 2014, 27). This interaction is in violation of the NCAA rules. A NCAA investigation followed the tweet. Most universities are not delighted to see NCAA officials unless it involves a championship, a tournament, recognition, or something else that may benefit a university. When the NCAA came to Chapel Hill in June 2010 it was not a visit filled with pomp and circumstance. This visit opened up room for speculation and attempts to find out what other secrets UNC was hiding. The NCAA found that student-athletes were receiving impermissible benefits. The probing done by the NCAA increased the local media's desire to know what was transpiring at UNC. A shocking discovery was the number of parking tickets that football players had accumulated. For example, less than 12 football players had accumulated 395 tickets with the fines totaling to be \$13,125.00 (Anderson 2014, 50). It was not tickets that were fascinating. The information revealed on the tickets indicates that football players were receiving these cars from car dealers in North Carolina. This is classified as an impermissible benefit. To make matters more complicated Rob Anderson writes, "It would eventually be revealed

that Jennifer Wiley, a UNC tutor paid \$1,789.00 in August 2010 for some of Greg Little's aforementioned parking tickets" (Anderson 2014, 51). This was just the beginning of Jennifer Wiley's transgressions. Wiley was involved in providing excessive help to student-athletes during her time as a tutor. She eventually left the university and worked as a tutor at the home of Head Football Coach Butch Davis for his family. The problem is that she was continuing to provide assistance to UNC football players (Anderson 2014, 54).

This dramatic series of events surrounding the UNC Football team led to resignations of many football personnel. Assistant Football coach John Blake stepped down in September 2010. Blake was heavily involved in Marvin Austin's fiasco (Anderson 2014, 19). Blake was an African-American man who was still aiding in exploitive behaviors taking place. Blake is an example of not assuming that just because a coach is Black that they will have the needs and the success of the athletes in their best interest. The University of South Carolina Head Coach Steve Spurrier when asked about Coach Blake stated, "When you've been in coaching as long as I have, we know the reputation of almost all the coaches that have been around a long time. We all have a reputation, especially guys who've coached 20 years or so. It's hard to hide whatever your reputation is" (Anderson 2014, 19). Coach Spurrier's comments eloquently imply that this was not Coach Blake's first experience with unprofessional coaching conduct. Therefore, Coach Blake must have known that he was running a risk by connecting Marvin Austin with people who could help him in a professional career.

The next resignation came from beloved Head Football Coach Butch Davis. The drama with the UNC Football Team only got worst following Marvin Austin's tweet. Although Coach Davis resigned, it is apparent that UNC was not pleased and wanted to get rid of him. The resignation or "firing" of Coach Davis shows an attempt from the University to cover up its wrongdoings. This resignation was done in the spirit of "what is best for the university" (Anderson 2014, 68). The next person to resign or go into an early retirement was athletic director Dick Baddour. He had been with the university for 45 years (Anderson 2014, 67). Although the scandal seemed unbearable at this point, the scandal would continue to expand. Anderson explains:

With the firing of Butch Davis and the announced retirement/resignation of Dick Baddour, and adding to the previous resignation of John Blake, the number of jobs directly affected by the scandal – which included firings, resignations, retirements, and transfers within the university – now stood at three. The number would continue to rise. (Anderson 2014, 68)

UNC would continue to get rid of people and cover up malpractice that was plaguing its university. The Carolina Way would soon be discovered. It is imperative to note that so far this revelation of this scandal to the public has only involved football. Although football has a place at UNC, it will never compare to that of basketball. Still, football and basketball are both revenue generating sports. Both feature prominent African-American student athletes. There are going to be similar patterns that follow the treatment of both groups of players. It is without question that if the football team was able to receive impermissible benefits that basketball players would be receiving impermissible benefits too from unauthorized academic assistance to benefits deemed illegal by the NCAA. The

Chapel Hill community was not aware that the beloved and perfect Carolina blue would soon be tainted by a scandal that would trail behind UNC for eternity.

Marvin Austin's tweet created the inquiry into UNC athletics. This inquiry exposed the inconsistencies regarding athletes' education. For example, the premature enrollment of freshmen in upper level African American studies courses. In addition to Michael McAdoo's case against UNC is an example of academic misconduct. This case resulted in McAdoo leaving the university without a college degree. Finally, Nyango'oro's commitment to Black Studies is to be questioned due to his participation in the academic malfeasance in the African American studies department.

#### THE TRUTH REVEALED

Before the firing of Coach Butch Davis, one of UNC's football players Michael McAdoo sued UNC. McAdoo's case was another component to the growing scandal at UNC. McAdoo wanted to lift the injunction which disabled him from playing college football (Anderson 2014, 59). This injunction came in 2010. Anderson writes, "The previous year's NCAA investigation had found McAdoo guilty of accepting \$110.00 in improper benefits, and that he also committed three instances of academic fraud related to parts of a paper actually written by tutor Jennifer Wiley" (Anderson 2014, 59). The McAdoo case eventually was dismissed, and he was still ineligible to play college football (Anderson 2014, 64). Similar to many African-American athletes, McAdoo left college without a degree. He had a short run in the NFL and eventually played for a Canadian Football League. Nonetheless, he still did not receive a college degree. This is important to note because it is the opportunity to attend college for free which lures many

African Americans from across the country to attend universities. If the student-athlete leaves the university with athletic memories and without a degree conferred one has to question this system. Dr. Earl Smith writes:

Once he or she has used up his or her eligibility or is injured, the athlete is discarded his or her scholarship rescinded, and without the opportunity to complete his or her education and graduate, appropriately credentialed, and poised to seek success in the professional labor market. Once exploited, the athletes return, in the case of many African-American men, to the ghetto or to rural poverty, virtual wastelands as far as the market economy is concerned. The promise of an education, of a credential, remains unfulfilled. (Smith 2013, 122)

Smith's quote describes what occurred with McAdoo. Although he was not physically injured, he was emotionally injured by what happened at UNC. At the conclusion of the case the university discarded McAdoo. He was another Black male without a college degree after devoting his life to representing the university in football. Smith points out that the national graduation rate for African-American male student athletes is below 50 percent at 35 percent of all institutions (Smith 2013, 109). This further emphasizes the lack of attention placed on the academic success of African-American males. Despite his negative experience at UNC, McAdoo stated, "I would still like to get a college degree someday, but not at the University of North Carolina. They just wasted my time" (Anderson 2014, 64). It is disheartening that in this McAdoo case it is apparent that McAdoo was nothing but an athlete. His academic goals and dreams were not taken into account.

Despite the unfortunate outcome for McAdoo, there was a benefit to this case. This case began to illuminate the secrets that remained at UNC. When McAdoo's paper

that was plagiarized was addressed in court it was traced back to previously mentioned AFAM chair Julius Nyang'oro (Anderson 2014,71). Academics are fairly accurate when predicting plagiarism. Why was the paper submitted by Michael McAdoo any different? It was different because the paper did not have to be accurate. The intended purpose of the paper classes at UNC was to provide a meaningless paper trail that work was taking place. The students only had to submit one paper at the end of the semester. The classes did not have to meet throughout the duration of the semester. A professor's name was associated with the registration of the course for record keeping purposes. As the pieces to this scandal were unraveling Nyang'oro's name kept surfacing.

In August 2011, information about Marvin Austin had appeared. As mentioned earlier, Austin was involved in receiving impermissible benefits as a student-athlete. The information about Austin's academic career shows that he was enrolled in a 400 level AFAM class as a freshman (Anderson 2014, 72). It is very elementary to know that there are sequences and rules when taking college classes. A college freshman would not be prepared academically to take an upper- level course on any subject. There usually are prerequisites that are needed to retain that information. This scenario raised many red flags. The Drake Group is an organization that seeks to advance college sports through reform. The founder of the Drake Group Jon Ericson stated, "You don't start at the senior level seminar and then work your way down to remedial writing" (Anderson 2014, 73). Even a very precocious freshmen would not be permitted to take an upper level course during the beginning of their college career. Austin's transcript reveals that he was doing well in many AFAM courses. Despite that, he was doing poorly in his other classes at the

university. It is important to note that this did not arbitrarily happen. Marvin Austin was not mistakenly enrolled in these courses. It was intentional. Athletes, especially low academic performing ones, are placed into classes that will provide an easy opportunity to pass.

Once the media started to gain access to what was happening at UNC, the university had to take action. One of the first steps following revelation of Marvin Austin's transcript was Julius Nyang'oro stepping down as AFAM Chair in September 2011. However, he still remained a professor at the university (Anderson 2014, 78). As the chair of the AFAM department, Nyang'oro was making \$171,000.00 a year (Anderson 2014, 78). This salary was quite generous given he was chairing the AFAM department. It makes sense for Nyang'oro to be making that salary. Without Nyang'oro, UNC would have to determine a way to keep athletes eligible. As an Africana scholar, Nyang'oro navigated far from his moral compass. The purpose of Black Studies is not to be a safety net for struggling athletes. In the essay "Public Education and African American Studies" the late Dr. Hugh J Scott stated:

The living descendants of Africans – African Americans – were stripped of their cultural heritage and forced to use languages that were not conducive to maintaining links with Africa. African- American Studies is committed to rewriting American history, reconceptualizing the essential features of American society, and establishing intellectual and academic space for black people to tell their own story. (Scott 2003, 477)

The work of Black Studies is too vast to coddle students who are concerned about maintaining eligibility.

The opportunity to learn about one's history was completely missed when utilizing Black studies as a revolving door to receive a passing grade. The hardships that Black people endured such as the Middle Passage, Slavery, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, Mass Incarceration, Police Brutality, and more were not learned in these paper classes. These athletes were cheated out of an opportunity to participate in the transformation that Black studies brings. Dr. Scott makes another relevant point in this essay. He writes:

Every discipline has its false prophets and zealots. As long as scholars in African-American Studies teach in schools, colleges, or universities, they are in contract with their students and colleagues, are bound by the premise that legitimate goals do not justify improper means. Scholars in African American Studies should be held to the same standards of academic integrity and conduct and the same checks and balances that are applied to their colleagues in the traditional disciplines. (Scott 2003, 484)

Dr. Nyang'oro was bound by this contract to do his job as a scholar. He was responsible as the chair for ensuring that the integrity of the AFAM department was upheld. He failed his duty as the chair and as an Africana scholar.

At least 3,100 students were impacted by this scandal close to over two decades — from the enrollment in paper classes, independent study classes, or fake classes.

Nyang'oro allowed for the glamor of UNC athletics to reign supreme over his academic duty. This department was operating in chaos, and the university allowed it to continue. If the AFAM department was dismantled, it would not matter to the university.

## THE COVER UP

Once the chair of the department was removed, the university had to continue a plan of action to free the university from guilt or fault. From the hiring of lawyers, to focus groups, to press statements, to requesting reports that investigated into this manner, UNC did it all. It did not matter how many people were fired or resigned. The university was not invested in fixing wrongs done to student athletes. The university was invested in keeping the athletic department safe. What would UNC be without Tarheels Basketball?

The university took many proactive measures to keep the everyday student or faculty member unaware of what was going on. The university did not want to cause a frenzy and wanted to eliminate as many parties as possible from becoming engaged in the scandal. Smith and Willingham write, “In October 2010, though, all of this was unknown to casual observers. Outsiders could not see the opportunities already missed; the institutional instinct to cover up problems and tamp down concerns went undetected” (Smith and Willingham 2015, 62). This attempted cover up shows the lack of transparency at UNC. Everyone from the top to the bottom of the university hierarchy was invested in their agenda. It is believable that if the media had not been involved that most people would have never known the cancerous scandal was spreading at The University of North Carolina.

The lack of transparency at UNC is quite dangerous. UNC was lying and covering up the real academic endeavors of their students. Education is the foundation of any university. Not athletics. The university officials appeared to think otherwise. There was

more fear in what the NCAA would do to punish UNC than any moral internal dilemma.

Smith and Willingham state:

The words and actions of administrative leaders in fall of 2011, made one thing abundantly clear. They wanted no internal turbulence as they hunkered down for the NCAA storm. They would be focusing their energies on mitigating the forthcoming sanctions and returning to athletics business as usual as soon as possible. (Smith and Willingham 2015, 81)

The university had no commitment to being reprimanded or admission of guilt. Hence why during this process anyone who had anything to say was silenced. Faculty members such as Mary Willingham who came forward to speak with administrators were ignored. UNC wanted to preserve their great legacy even if it meant silencing their faculty members.

When UNC decided to put together a working group of “highly placed insiders” in the Summer of 2011, they were surprised when the working group found some discrepancies within the AFAM department. The discovery of the discrepancies in the AFAM department led to the Dean of Arts and Sciences Karen Gill to request for an investigation to be conducted. This investigation was conducted by senior associate Dean Jonathan Hartlyn and another senior associate dean William Andrews (Smith and Willingham 2015, 83). The *Hartlyn Andrews Report* provided more clarity into the wrongdoings of the AFAM department. This report states:

The Department of African and Afro-American Studies had in fact been host to more than fifty “anomalous” courses in the period of 2007 and 2011 (the years Gil had asked them to review)... Scheduled either by the department chair, Julius Nyang’oro, or by his administrative assistant, Debby Crowder, the courses fell into one of two categories, Aberrant courses featured no faculty involvement at all. (Smith and Willingham 2015, 86)

In other words, students were not receiving adequate instruction yet receiving course credit toward their degrees. The university's attempt to mask the truth creates, even more, reason to question the leadership at UNC. This report only covered 2007 to 2011.

However, as previously mentioned, this scandal had occurred since the late 1980s with the two UNC Basketball Players. Although this report was detailed and provided more insight into the scandal it still does not paint the entire picture. For example, there is no revelation about the percentages of athletes that were involved in these classes. About two-thirds of student-athletes were involved in these classes (Smith and Willingham 2015, 87). This scandal at UNC could have possibly gone unnoticed but because athletics is an important part of UNC culture once the report was released it spread. The "public circulation of the Hartlyn- Andrews report ignited a new firestorm" (Smith and Willingham). It was important for the public to be made aware of the report. This report was conveniently released in May at the end of the semester and after basketball season had concluded for the year. Nonetheless, outrage was building internally and externally towards UNC. People were baffled at the nonchalant care of the educating of athletes. Faculty members were also outraged and angry. Their anger was warranted. After the information was made public, it led to constant probing from faculty members. Smith and Willingham write:

But Thorp and the other powers that be in the UNC system understandably regarded this faculty inquiry with a certain degree of trepidation. The Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) group might fault previous actions (or inaction) by campus leaders. Its findings could complicate the university's defense of the integrity of the UNC curriculum in the event

that the accrediting agency SACs paid the university a visit (which it soon did). (Smith and Willingham 2015, 93)

The university was well aware of serious transgressions that they were being accused of. Professors were able to navigate through the levels of misinformation that the university was providing. These professors were the ones who were educating athletes. They knew their strengths and weaknesses and what they were capable of. This is why the university was worried. The Average UNC fan would not be heavily invested in uncovering the truth. As long as UNC continued to put points on the board and advance in national rankings it did not matter.

The professors were heavily invested because if the UNC brand was tainted indirectly they were too. This could prohibit possible academic and research opportunities. The university wanted to prevent the arousal of the faculty out of fear that it would ignite a fire that could not be extinguished. If the professors continued to inquire, then it could lead to another NCAA investigation. The university was not interested in the truth. The university was interested in keeping the UNC brand sacred. The opinions of anyone who felt otherwise were null and void. When faculty members finally had an opportunity to provide a report on this matter it was not completely factual. Anything that was put out regarding this case was still filtered by university officials. Smith and Willingham insert, “Even the findings of the FEC subcommittee were rigged. Not by the authors, who struggled mightily to be honest umpires, callings things as they saw them. No, the rigging was done by athletics personnel and those who had a vested interest in protecting them” (Smith and Willingham 2015, 94). Protecting UNC athletics

was the number one outcome in scandal management. It did not matter if along the way people became outraged, lost their jobs, or faith in the university. As long as UNC athletics could continue in excellence nothing else mattered. The scandal continued to grow, and the university continued to cover things up.

Finally, in the Spring of 2014 the university finally launched an external investigation conducted by federal prosecutor Kenneth Wainstein. What was the delay in this investigation? UNC attempted to fix a problem internally without the inclusion of outside forces. They had too much trust in their faulty system. The NCAA eventually had to come back to Chapel Hill to investigate “academic irregularities it had previously determined to be a nonathletic problem” (Smith and Willingham 2015, 249). UNC had the opportunity to lead by example. Instead of embracing this harsh truth UNC administrators chose to do the opposite and lie repeatedly. The university was far from exemplary in this scandal. Their actions added minimal value as a way to handle academic scandals surrounding student athletes. Smith and Willingham write:

The great value of the UNC scandal is not its ability to galvanize faculty outrage but rather its demonstration of the sheer perversity of the current system. The flood of money, the pressure to win, the creation of a university brand that identified the institution with a tradition of athletic success, the customary disregard for the educational experiences of black athletes: all of these forces led sensible people to accept or overlook irrational behavior at UNC, to “normalize deviance” in the words of sociologist Diane Vaughan. (Smith and Willingham 2015, 247)

The University made several attempts to contain the scandal in order to preserve the legacy of UNC. The limitations of the internal investigation (*Hartlyn Andrews Report*) led to distrust and further inquiry of the miseducation of athletes at UNC. The *Wainstein*

*Report* provided additional details which provided many unanswered questions following the internal investigation on this matter. The risk of losing millions of dollars was worth exploiting Black athletes. It was worth every penny and the glory that UNC received on the backs of Black bodies. The academic principles that this university stood for were nothing in comparison to the revenue produced by the athletic teams. The university was not concerned since being illiterate did not impact one's ability to score a touchdown or shoot a layup shot. The system of college athletics is deeply flawed.

#### EXPLOITATION OF BLACK BODIES

The actions of UNC are in alignment with the forming of the university. UNC was built on the oppression of Black bodies and continues to do so today. As a university that prides itself in tradition, there is an article titled "Southern Roots" on the university website. This article describes the relationship with UNC and African Americans from the founding of the university:

As a Southern university, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has roots that extend to the movement toward public education before to the Revolutionary War and the antebellum era. During this time, slaves played important roles in constructing the University's first buildings. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, skilled craftsmen and other black workers helped transform Carolina into a national treasure known for its beauty and the value of its instruction. (UNC 2014, np.)

The enslaved Africans by nature of their oppression were forced to build the early buildings of UNC. Not only were they helping to build up the campus, many of the founding fathers of UNC owned slaves (UNC). The University of North Carolina marvels in the architecture of its campus. Without the assistance of Black people, this campus would not have been what it is today.

In a similar fashion, UNC would not be what it is today without its revenue generating sports football and basketball. Year in and year out UNC spends money recruiting these Black bodies from across the country. Selling dreams of a promising education and a chance to go to the professional leagues. The African-American community for decades has been entrusting PWIs to educate our sons and provide them with the best education possible. This is in return for their athletic gift. This gift which is worth millions. At the end of the 2007-2008 basketball year, UNC generated \$17,215,199.00 in revenue just in Men's Basketball. The total revenue generated in sports revenue was \$58,188.501. The schools that were polled were based on the Associated Press College Basketball Top 25 Poll (Hawkins 2010, 91). The stadium capacity at the Dean Smith Center is 21,750 which is one of the largest basketball arenas (Hawkins 2013, 92). The university is bringing in millions of dollars each year merely because of the athletic prowess of these Black brothers. In "An Examination of the Role that Intercollegiate Athletic Participation plays in Academic Achievement Athletes' Feat in the Classroom" the authors write:

Unlike athletes in the revenue sports, participants in nonrevenue sports show no grading differential between the on and off season. Our interpretation of this is that coaches and university administrators do not put as much pressure on nonrevenue athletes to perform. Those athletes are able to put more emphasis on their studies and less on their sport relative to the tradeoff faced by revenue-sports participants when their sport is in season. (Maloney and McCormick 1992, 567)

It is unfortunate that the same level of effort that is given by these brothers to generate revenue is not given when attempting to educate these student athletes.

Another way the university generates income is by sponsorships and partnership agreements. For example, Nike and the University of North Carolina have a deal. UNC and Nike have a 28.34 million dollar contract for eight years (Hawkins 2010, 93). This deal means that all of the UNC athletic apparel has to be made by Nike. Just for simply wearing Nike the university is bringing in almost 30 million dollars over the next eight years.

During the 2008 NCAA March Madness tournament, the NCAA generated \$548 million from TV rights as well as \$40 million from tickets and sponsorships (Hawkins 2010, 94). Dr. Hawkins also points out that this is 96% of the NCAA revenue. He goes on to also break down how one cannot argue that this money is being made on the backs of Black bodies. For example, if we take a look at the 2005-2006 NCAA Tournament:

Overall, Blacks represented 59 percent of the total athletes playing in the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament during the 2005-2006 season, 67 percent of all the games started, 68 percent of all the minutes played and scored an astonishing 69% of all the points may have to pursue semiprofessional or professional basketball as opposed to staying in school to receive their fair dues. (Hawkins 2010, 98)

Without African-American athletes what would March Madness be? Would it bring in as much money? Would people be as invested? It is sad because those who are benefiting off of this revenue are not the athletes (McCormick and McCormick 2006, 75). It goes back to the university and while the salaries of those at the university are growing, the athletes are being stripped from an education that the revenue funds. The current college sports system is robbing athletes. Dr. Hawkins writes, "Once again, the Black body proves to be necessary for the capitalist exploitation and expansion of various American

industries. The intercollegiate athletic industrial complex proves to be one of these industries that are thriving on the backs of Black male athletes” (Hawkins 2010, 103). Everything comes down to the bottom line. How many more millions can the university receive based on the talent of these Black athletes? The intercollegiate system will continue to work until those who are being exploited find their voices. It is time for Black athletes to demand more for their services.

UNC was built on the backs on enslaved Africans. Centuries later it continues to benefit at the expense of Black bodies. Furthermore, the NCAA March Madness tournament produces millions of dollars in revenue also at expense of Black Bodies. Finally, the lack of academic preparedness creates a vulnerability for African-American athletes. These athletes are inclined to utilize their athletic talents without enhancing their academic abilities during their university tenure.

In the case of UNC who lost the most? Was it the administrators, the faculty, the athletes, or the university as a whole. Indubitably, the athletes lost the most. When senior night comes for these athletes and their time at UNC is complete what happens next? When they continue to age and cannot exercise their athletic gift what happens? It is in those moments that having a college degree would have been their saving grace. Less than 1 percent of college basketball players play professional basketball after college. What happens to the other 99 percent? And even for the 1% that do play it is not a lifetime guaranteed of playing. Sports is a very inconsistent arena for the individual athlete. For the collective, there are no issues. Black athletes are everywhere. There is always going to be a little boy who can run fast or can shoot a three point shot. But how

long does this gift last. Predominately White Institutions do not have the same investment levels in Black athletes as do Historically Black Colleges and Universities. After the athlete has served their purpose at PWI that is it. That is a part of the exploitation. To use Black athletes while they attend the university and afterwards they are saluted during the alumni games, but that is it. Meanwhile, these athletes gave their heart and soul to the university. It is time for a paradigm shift to eliminate the exploitation of Black college athletes.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Across the country one will find Black boys habitually playing basketball at the gym, recreation center, outside court, park, or in a neighborhood. The observer will be able to sense the euphoria the boys are experiencing. For some of these boys, the pastime of playing basketball will become more than just a pickup game. It will become their life hence the expression “Ball is Life”. Basketball will become their primary source of joy. Much of their time will be spent playing in youth leagues, on Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) teams, the high school team, and eventually hoping to be offered a scholarship at a Division 1 school. People will know who the elite rising basketball stars are in the community.

Once these protégés are identified, they will be treated differently. The accolades will lead to more praise which will heighten the boy’s ego. His ego will be similar to thousands of other boys in the country. Each of these boys will share the belief that they are the next superstar. People will be obsessed with the possibility that the next big star could come from their community. There is pride in being able to say that they knew the next Michael Jordan or LeBron James from when he was a youth. It will mean the world to be able to share barbershop stories about his high school and college games. The community shares a sentiment of pride because he came from that town or city.

The possibility of not receiving a scholarship or not going to the pros is not an idea they can conceive. In fact anyone who suggests an alternative is labeled as a pessimist or a non-believer. Sometimes these dreams do go as planned. But, more

frequently they do not. What happens to the athlete whose pro dreams were constantly deferred?

The culpability of the exploitation of African-American male athletes is not only the exploiters. The African-American community must take ownership in this societal dilemma. People tend to be more engaged with watching a Black boy shoot a jump shot than discussing the books he reads. There is an assumption that this little boy will be the next Most Valuable Player (MVP). There is never an assumption that he will decide to be a doctor or an engineer. When people show more excitement for a three point shot than winning the science fair it is problematic. It creates a perception for children that the community takes the most pride in the athlete. The other areas of excellence are deemed lackluster and seldom produce the same levels of excitement. If a ball is more important than a book why would anyone ever want to spend their Saturday at the library? Would anyone even notice and would anyone even care?

Furthermore, those who educate Black boys from an early age must accept responsibility too. When educators continue to pass along Black boy athletes or provide extreme favors to them it is hindering their ability to learn. This suggests to the athlete that your only achievement will come from the court and that your mind is not capable of excelling in scholarship. Dr. Billy Hawkins asserts:

Social passing because of athletic abilities and potential, is an unfortunate privilege afforded to many athletes, in general, by junior high and high school teachers and administrators across this country. The temporary glory and short term benefits of this practice have been proven to be detrimental to many Black athletes, specifically. (Hawkins 2010, 67)

The further along the athlete is passed the harder it will be to correct any academic problems. It is not acceptable to continuously receive excuses such as “I had a game last night” as reasons for not turning in assignments. Teachers are one of the main lines of defense for saving these athletes. Not all of them will make it to the pros and even if they do a quality education is worth defending. The 2012 NCAA tournament commercial suggests that only 10% of student athletes ever go pro (Reynolds et al. 2012, 95). There is a significant disparity between the percentage of student athletes that play professionally and those that do not. It is imperative to fight for a sound education for student athletes.

Subsequently, high school coaches have to be tougher on student athletes.

Education has to be discussed and made a priority from the beginning of the season. If athletes do not see coaches prioritizing academics it will be hard for them to take college academics seriously. This can be challenging when your star player cannot play in the finals because his grades are low. However, someone does not just fail off of one grade. Academics needs to be discussed continuously not once a semester. Coaches and educators should partner together to discuss the academic progress of these student-athletes regardless of if they are achieving or performing poorly in the classroom. It is important to celebrate the student-athletes who are going above and beyond on the field and in the classroom. Students will be more engaged when they see the adults in their lives engagement increase.

Eventually, some of these high school athletes will transition to become college student- athletes. The student athlete experience is a continuous journey. Training is a word that is not foreign to athletes. The same way one must train their body to be a

college athlete is the same way one must train their mind to be a college student. If the previously mentioned practices are enforced in high school, it will make the transition easier to becoming a college athlete. If academics remain the priority, it will be easy to understand when one gets to college. If college sports is going to change for the better, there must be people in place who are invested in these changes. If not academic scandals will become normalized in the college sports community. This will result in the academic exploitation of many Black males for years to come.

Fortunately, there are changes that can be enforced that will improve the experience of the college student-athlete. I would like to offer seven recommendations.

#### INCREASED DIALOGUE

The first recommendation is increased dialogue about athletics and academics with student athletes. From the time a university begins the recruiting process of an athlete, there needs to be a dialogue about academics. Universities should be able to show families what an academic plan looks like for student athletes. This is another instance where the African-American community holds power. The opportunity to play a college sport provides a means to attain an education for many African-American students (Reynolds et al. 2012, 97). This is significant considering the lack of positive affirmation some of these athletes receive during their lives (Reynolds et al. 2012, 107). When recruiters speak with the family, it is imperative for parents and guardians to ask questions about academics. It is not acceptable to only discuss the athletic future of this potential college athlete.

### ACADEMIC SUCCESS PLANS

If the universities are seriously interested in the students, they will be committed to providing the necessary answers about academic success plans. These plans should be detailed and have the ability to lead to academic triumph. Academic plans that are contemporary and innovative will demonstrate the university's allegiance to the student's success. It is not sufficient enough to state that there are academic advisors and mandatory study hours. Those are outdated and at times ineffective methods of academic success for student athletes. Athletes should be engaged in dialogue about what they would like to major in. Athletes should not be given a one size fits all major because it works better with their sports schedule (McCormick and McCormick 2006, 100). Dr. Billy Hawkins has found in his research that academic clustering occurs as a means of ensuring that the athletes have "less stringent requirements" (Powell 2008, 89). It is important that these athletes have the opportunity, like regular students, to be engaged in their academic process. They should have a choice to decide what their academic paths will be.

### QUALITY ACADEMIC SUPPORT STAFF

Moreover, athletic departments should have personnel who are committed to the success of the students. The personnel should not be committed to pledging an allegiance to an athletic department that is not primarily committed to the Black student athletes. One of the reasons that scandals take place at these universities is because the personnel is not invested in the students. Dr. Hawkins states:

Athletic departments are in the business of making money. The educational mission doesn't fall on their radar scope. When you think about the amount of money generated and the amount of money needed to keep these sports programs going, the goal is to put the best athletes on the field. Some of those athletes are at great academic risk. As long as there is this drive to accumulate capital, they're going to be tempted to bring these athletes in. (Powell 2008, 90)

When athletes are underprepared academically this places academic personnel in a predicament. The personnel continue to go along with the history of exploitation that takes place behind closed doors. McCormick and McCormick state:

In favoring commercial success over academic standards, colleges and universities have minimized academic entrance requirements for athletes, weakened academic standards, diluted curricula, assigned responsibilities to athletes that would conflict with any meaningful academic program, and stood by as wave after wave fails to graduate or even to learn. (McCormick and McCormick 2006, 136)

They are afraid of losing their job so it is easier to do something which is ethically wrong. The personnel should not merely be responsible for registering athletes for classes, monitoring study hall hours, writing papers, and making negotiations with teachers to change grades. These actions do not benefit the student-athlete. It does not benefit anyone. The academic support staff in athletic departments should strive to help the student succeed academically.

Part of the problem is the academic support staff often view the students as athletes first. If there is anyone in the athletic department that should take the academic needs of students as a priority it should be the academic support staff. Their job is to help the student achieve academically. Their job is not to make sure the student knows how to

shoot a layup. In her article “Examining Academic and Athletic Motivation Among Student Athletes at a Division 1 University” Joy Gaston-Gayles suggests:

Programs and services should be designed to include ways to increase academic motivation, with the goal of improving academic performance. Programs can and should focus on building confidence in, spending more time on, and placing effort on academic related tasks, as well as how to take responsibility for academic failures. Such programs are especially important for minority student athletes who often enter college with less academic preparation than their White peers. (Gaston-Gayles 2004, 82)

### QUALITY ASSURANCE CHECKS

To ensure that the academic support staff for athletes is functioning effectively quality assurance checks should be put into practice. These quality assurance checks will help create transparency among the athletic department. When people are expecting for someone to monitor their work they are adamant about doing the right thing. University administrators often have too much trust in the athletic department to make ethically correct decisions. This results in the university leaving the athletic department to function in a silo. But, if the athletic department is bringing in millions of dollars why would administrators disturb what is going on? This affirms the belief of only viewing student athletes as athletes. Their function is to work at the pleasure of the university. The university needs to understand that the athletic department is a necessary component to university life.

Nonetheless, it still requires checks and balances. Anyone working with athletes needs to be held accountable for their actions. How ironic is it that if a basketball or football coach does not perform to the university’s liking, they are fired at the end of the season. But if a professor or academic support personnel member is not assisting the

student-athlete to the best of their ability it is overlooked. In the same manner that a college coach is held to a high standard should be the same way those responsible for helping athletes achieve academically should be viewed. The lack of quality assurance checks is the reason why UNC's athletic department was plagued with academic fraud. No one decided to take a look at what was going on until it was absolutely too late and the damage was already done.

### IMPROVED ACADEMIC RESOURCES

In addition to personnel that is committed to academic success, there need to be more academic resources that fit the needs of student athletes. The needs of student athletes differ from the standard college student. There are academic resources that meet the needs of standard students. The university should strive to provide specific resources that tailor to the needs of their athletes. For example, these resources could include a library specialist that works specifically with student athletes. Or writing workshops that help enhance student-athletes writing abilities. It is not enough to simply take a paper to the writing services for help. It is more proactive to have workshops that address the areas that need conditioning.

Additional resources could also include supplementary books that help with the subjects that students are struggling with. Having a resource center in the academic support staff section of the athletic department would help. Also, making sure that the location where student athletes have study hall is suitable for studying. Most college libraries make sure that the students feel comfortable. There are comfortable chairs, large tables, small tables, eateries, etc. If universities have no issue investing in multi-million

dollar stadiums there shouldn't be an issue in providing the resources needed for academic achievement. When the student-athletes see the athletic departments making these strides, it will result in the athletes increased willingness to want to succeed.

### INCREASED CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

Incrementally, increasing cultural programming for student-athletes is a change that athletic departments should make. One could easily ask what does cultural programming have to do with academics? Often time student athletes are in isolation from the remainder of the student body. This forces the athlete to adopt a foreclosed identity where their athletic self becomes supreme. As mentioned previously, a majority of these student athletes are often Black. It is imperative for the students to be able to connect with people who resemble similar cultural components that they do (Harper and Quaye 2007, 141). Cultural programming for African-American students typically speaks to the holistic self (Harper and Quaye 2007, 130). Therefore, discussing academics is a key component.

Some of the athletes are often first-generation college students. Attending these programs provides the opportunity to connect and engage. These programs will also help the athlete to see themselves as more than just a number on a roster. They will be able to meet other people, establish other hobbies, and be a part of the greater campus community. It also will provide networking opportunities for the students. Not all of these athletes will go and play a professional sport. It is unfortunate when a majority of the athletes lack opportunities post college because they did not have the time to network. It is not sufficient enough to only network with million dollar donors. Those donors are

mainly invested in the athlete, not the student. Unless the athlete does something remarkable after college his name will likely be forgotten by the donor and replaced by a new member from the incoming freshmen class.

### BLACK STUDENT COMMUNITY

Finally, there are other issues that Black athletes will face on a college campus and in life that they are not exempt from just because they played a sport. It is necessary for them to feel connected and a part of the Black community. Historically, it has become an issue when athletes are engaging heavily with their fellow Black students on campus. This collectivism leads to Black student athletes utilizing their voice and taking authority over situations. For example, the University of Missouri (Mizzou) football boycott after the racially charged incidents on campus. This led to the University President stepping down instead of the football team not playing in a game which would have cost the university millions of dollars. It works better for the university when the Black athletes remain powerless and the athletic department has sole propriety over their decisions and actions. This is not what college is about. The exposure to cultural programs that benefit the Black student would enhance the Black athlete to be not only a better student but a better person.

The role of the Black student-athlete on college campuses is quite complex. This role has changed dramatically since the early Black athletes entered the predominately white universities. These athletes went from being the most hated athletes on the team to the most loved. The early pioneers were given zero favors and chances, and now the Black athletes are presented with a red carpet to walk on. The experiences of the early

pioneers and contemporary athletes are polar opposites. What does the trajectory for the Black athlete look like?

It is imperative for Black athletes to understand the path that was paved for them. This will provide the humility that some contemporary athletes do not have. This will also allow for athletes to want to strive for their best academically. The early pioneering Black athletes believed in excelling academically. The notion that one did not have to write their papers was unheard of. As a result of their academic pursuits, many early pioneering athletes were able to achieve in other endeavors. They were not eternally limited to the basketball court or football field. And finally, the pioneering athletes understood that those in control of their athletic pursuits did not always have their best interests in mind. Therefore, they were not willing to compromise their morals just to play a sport.

Contemporary athletes are willing to jeopardize their morals to remain on the team. Whether it is violating the NCAA rules as a means of thriving prematurely with professional recruiting or breaking the university code of conduct academically, athletes are continuously getting caught for their actions. A renaissance is needed for Black athletes. The moment these athletes understand the totality of their worth is the moment universities will stop abusing and exploit these beloved Black brothers.

The scandal at the University of North Carolina serves as a premiere example of the impact exploitation can have on Black athletes. One of the problems is that we will never know the full impact of the destruction that took place with the athletes. The decades of low academic expectations did not allow these students a chance to grow

cognitively. They may have received an opportunity to play in the league, but that was not guaranteed to last forever or even a year. This incident shows an example of the extent to which a university is willing to go for a win. It shows how the desire to win allows people's worst intentions to surface. One of the questions that sports researchers must ask themselves is, "How many other University of North Carolinas are there?" It would be naïve to believe that UNC is the only school to exploit their athletes academically for economic gain. There have been other universities who have had athletic scandals. There often is no serious repercussion for these universities. The standard punishment tends to be a few minor repercussions and the shame that follows some of the people at the institution. These universities need to be held accountable for the lives they have damaged. To tamper with a person's academic endeavors is ruthless behavior. Especially, Black athletes who are physically sacrificing their bodies to bring fame to a university that does not prioritize their academics. It is time to revise the role of the Black student-athlete at predominately white institutions in order to ensure the end to the exploitation of the Black student athlete. If this revision does not occur, universities will continue to thrive financially at the expense of the Black bodies and brains.

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