

Public Talk

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American Institutions and Public Behavior

Professional Sports and Public Behavior

RICHARD LAPCHICK

Director, Center for the Study of Sports in Society



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When I was asked to be a member of this commission, after seeing who was on the commission, I was honored just to be part of it, but to be asked to address you this morning, even as a pinch-hitter, is a humbling experience for me, and I hope that our discussion this morning of how professional sports fits into the larger theme of public behavior and the responsibilities of institutions will be helpful to us as we go forth.

Last week, I could barely say the name 'Latrell Sprewell.' After doing more than 30 interviews on Sprewell in the past week, his name now, unfortunately, rolls off my tongue with great ease. Sports has clearly become one of society's broadest cultural common denominators. We see more in our newspapers about sports than we see about world or national news, the arts, culture; we turn on the local television at night and see more TV sports news than the similar things; when we turn on the television on the weekend, the tube is glutted with sports entertainment, not to mention all-sports networks.

Politicians and ministers use sports jargon to explain the world and morality. College coaches are paid more and, in some cases, much more than college presidents. I'm co-authoring, at the moment, the autobiography of Eddie Robinson of Grambling State, and we titled the book "Never Before, Never Again," because I truly believe that there will never be another figure in college or professional sport such as Eddie Robinson. We see coaches now moving to the next level to whoever the highest bidder is, and the thought of a college student staying on our campus in the Division I sports more than four years almost seems like a quaint idea.

Emerge magazine publishes a bottom-50 list of the 50 worst colleges with basketball, football and track-and-field programs for graduating black student athletes. To avoid being on EmERGE's list in basketball, you only had to graduate 16 percent of your black students, 20 percent in football, 22 percent in track and field. I want to say it was a list of 50, meaning 50 of our schools did not meet even that very, very minimal standard. Furthermore, in the last three years, there were 20 schools on the list in basketball who had not graduated a single black student in a six-year period of time.



I want you to think about what that means for the future of those young men who came, perhaps, with a different kind of dream. The cynical view is that many of them don't care whether they get an education or not, because they're there simply as a way-station to the pros.

Male professional athletes make what seems to all of us to be preposterous salaries; fans can't count on those professional athletes being on the same team for the next year because of free agency. Fans of a hometown team can't even count on the hometown team being in the hometown the next year because of all the stadium issues that are out there.

Owners aren't necessarily role models for the players. Only last week, businessman John Spano went again before the public view with five years in jail in front of him for--in connection with his purchase of the NHL's New York Islanders. Edward DeBartolo Jr., the chairman of the San Francisco 49ers, resigned that position on December 2nd when it was disclosed that a federal grand jury was about to indict him; among the charges were money laundering, mail and wire fraud and extortion.

On average, we read about two athletes a week who have had some problem with the law, whether it be drugs, alcohol, violence or gender violence. In many of those stories, we read about how the institutions of professional sport and college sport--and I'm not gonna just talk about professional sports today, because I think our pro athletes, many of them, come through the universities not necessarily represented at this table, but certainly representative of American higher education. Many say that that these institutions are breeding a group of lawless men who have no regard for the society that they come from and only care about themselves.

Just as we convened the commission last year, the Roberto Alomar incident of spitting at an umpire had taken place, and I'll remember that it was a frequently discussed topic in that first meeting. Last month, two National Hockey League players, both of them playing on this team, both of them being Native Americans from Canada, made racial slurs against two of the only 25 black players in the history of the NHL, in just one week. Just last week we read about, of course, Latrell Sprewell hitting his coach and being banned for a



year. Boxer Edwin Rosario recently--lightweight champion from Puerto Rico--died in his San Juan home of drug- and alcohol-related causes.

We read about point shaving at Arizona State University just last week. During the course of the year, for those of you who think that women's sports are immune from this, we read about the Colorado Silver Bullets having a bench-clearing brawl during the game and proudly talking about how this took them to the next level of being able to compete against men more widely.

It's easy to understand how a sports press and the fans who read that press and the public at large become cynical about our games and the people who play them. It's equally easy to understand the cry that so many people make that athletes should not be role models for our young people because they may lead them down a negative path. Some of America's finest sportswriters are sounding the cry that the apocalypse is here and that sports is bringing it to our doorsteps.

I get the request for maybe three interviews from the media a week to talk about athletes as bad role models; one or two a month about about coaches who are evil leaders for their young people. I personally write and speak about issues of race and gender, so I'm frequently asked about that, but I can honestly tell you that I have never been called to make a comment about a good-news story about athletes. When I suggest good-news stories to writers who've called me to talk about bad news, the conversation quickly becomes silent. When I say, 'Why won't you write it,' they say that 'Good news won't sell.' How do they know? It's so rare that they put it in our papers.

I want to spend a significant amount of time this morning talking about what I consider to be the biggest problem in sports today, and if you heard Judith's introduction, clearly, I think, you would guess that I think it is about race. I think the danger of a Latrell Sprewell is that when we read about him, the public begins to think that Latrell Sprewell somehow represents volleyball players at the University of Pennsylvania, basketball players at Northeastern University or even other pro athletes on our teams. Latrell Sprewell is a tragic story, for sure; a man who crossed the line that none of us wanted to see



crossed, but I hope I can make a case this morning for you that he is not representative of athletes in America.

After dealing with that, I'm going to propose some solutions to the problems of these institutions so that they can better serve the public, and perhaps create a vision for our children that they cannot see now in front of them.

A painful part of our history has been race. Sometimes we don't want to talk about it; that's no different in the world of sports. In September the National Basketball Association became the first league to publicly address the issue of racism in their leaguewide meetings in Orlando, and they have now committed, under David Stern's leadership--I just wanted to let you know that I'm actually the third choice; they tried to get David Stern in between, and I'm honored to be following David Stern as well, because I think David Stern has created a kind of moral sense in the public view of professional sport that has not existed before.

This presentation is gonna focus on the issue of race. There are lots more that I could talk about, lots more that I'm concerned about, but I think the issue of race has the potential to affect our teams, our colleges, our organizations, as much or more than anything else.

And I want to take a few minutes, if you will indulge me, to set the stage and tell you a little bit about myself. I had stopped doing this for many years. Judith mentioned Arthur Ashe; I was a very close friend of Arthur Ashe. We had done a lot of speaking engagements together around the country. And toward the end of his life he said that he noticed that I no longer talk about this personal part of my life. He said, 'You really have to say it so that people understand why you do some of the things you do.'

So if you will indulge me; when I was growing up, everybody told me I was gonna be in the NBA myself. My dad was; man called Joe Lapchick. He was the first great big man in professional sport. I was this tall in the eighth grade; something got confused in the genes and I stopped growing, but my mind still focused on the NBA. In 1960, I was asked by my father to go with my mother to Europe, and I didn't want to do that. I just wanted--I was 14 years old; I just



wanted to stay home and work on my game. I was convinced that if I went to Europe--that my father could get me tickets for the basketball Olympics, so I went.

My sister lived in Germany, and on the drive from Germany to Rome, we stopped in Dachau, and after that day I was never the same person. I had a whole different understanding about the human potential and what some people could do to other people in the name of ideology. But I did get to Rome, and I saw what happened there, which was a festival of men and women playing together with no regard, at that moment, toward race, toward geography, toward ideology, toward anything but a shared vision of what sports could do. And I think those two things, in many ways, set my life's course on task, although I never would have predicted that I would have spent my adult life working in the world of sport.

They also helped me understand what I misunderstood as a child. My father, when he played for the original Celtics, was on the team with no other--the--where there were no integrated teams. This is the 1920s and '30s. They played a team called the Renaissance Five, which was the great black team of the era, and in five of the games they played there were race riots that took place during the games because people weren't willing to watch what was happening during those games with blacks and whites playing together.

In 1950 my father brought Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton up to the New York Knickerbockers, becoming one of the first black players in the league. I was five years old. We lived in a town called Yonkers, New York, and I looked outside my bedroom window to see my father's image hanging from a tree, to see people picketing outside of our house, to answer phones for the next three years, my father not knowing I was on the other line, and very frequently it was 'Nigger lover, nigger lover, nigger lover.' I didn't know what it meant; I didn't know what the picketers meant, I didn't know what his image hanging from a tree meant, till many years later, but obviously it was about him bringing a black player into the NBA.

When I was teaching at a college in Virginia in 1978, my son Joey, who was five years old, came to me in my office and said, 'Daddy, are you a nigger



lover?' And I was stunned and stepped back for a minute and asked Joey what he meant, and he said, 'I don't know, but some mean man just called me on the phone and told me you were one.' And it was as if the circle had closed around the three generations of Lapchicks. The call was because I was the national chairperson of the coalition of groups that had come together to boycott South African sport. It was the first South African team coming to the United States, for those of you who remember; Nelson Mandela coming to the United States and seeing hundreds of thousands of people follow him around. In 1978, if we got 75 people to come to a demonstration, we considered it to be a highly successful day. It was not a big issue at the time among too many people in this country.

I went to Nashville, where the matches were gonna take place, to help build the protest and also to announce, on behalf of the African governments, that they would boycott Los Angeles if this team was allowed to come. When I flew back to Virginia that night, I felt maybe for the first time in my life I had done something worthwhile. The next night I was working late in my office. The office was in the college's library, which closed at 10:30. At 10:45 there was a knock on the door. I assumed it was the campus security police, but instead it was two men wearing stocking masks who proceeded to cause liver damage, kidney damage, a hernia, a concussion, and carved 'nigger' in my stomach with a pair of office scissors.

As an activist in the area of race relations, I knew that some type of violence was always a possible consequence, but I never expected at that time what followed. The police accused me of self-inflicting the wounds for either personal publicity or to try and enhance the image of the anti-apartheid movement, and asked me to take a polygraph test. I consulted with the various civil-rights leaders around the country who were in the coalition, and they unanimously said I should not take the test. When I publicly said that, I knew that there would be a large number of people who, from that point on, would doubt my genuineness or sincerity, and I also received when I did that, however, more than 100 letters and phone calls from women around the country who had been raped, who said, 'Perhaps now you can feel like--what it's like



to be raped and asked to prove that you were raped.' And that, I think, ultimately led to some of the programming that we do at the center now.

But when I went back to Nashville, I realized that I was the issue and South Africa wasn't. Everybody was wondering, 'Did Lapchick do it? Didn't he do it?' They didn't really care if this team was coming. So I flew to Washington, took a polygraph, flew to New York where I was examined by the medical examiner. But before we released the information, South Africa's minister of information, Connie Mulder, came through New York and held a press conference at the United Nations. The scandal that became known as Muldergate, that toppled Mulder and his prime minister, was just beginning to break. He was being grilled on it. And he said, 'No, the ministry is continues to be successful. We're gonna go ahead.'

And when he was asked, 'What do you consider the successes that you've had this year,' he said two things, that the Davis Cup matches were gonna be held and the second thing, the destruction of Richard Lapchick, which brought the American Justice Department in to investigate a triangular relationship between the Virginia police, the Virginia Klan, whose grand wizard was welcomed as a guest of state in South Africa five weeks after the attack, and the South African security forces.

After we released the results of the polygraph, I received a kidnap threat on Joey, who was missing for the most terrifying two and a half hours of my life.

I finally went to South Africa in 1993, bringing a group of NBA players to launch a program that we have in the United States called Project Teamwork. The group included Patrick Ewing, Dikembe Mutombo, Alonzo Mourning; the coaches were Lenny Wilkens and Wes Unsel. David Stern and Charlie Grantham were also in the entourage, and me. And needless to say, I was the least descript or interesting-looking of this group of people. As we walked into the American Embassy, the American ambassador walked directly by all these gentlemen and came up to me, and he said, 'I want you to know I was the deputy ambassador here in 1978, and half of us'--I want to underline where I was standing at this moment--in the American Embassy in South Af-



rica--`half of us wanted you killed; the other half considered you a hero. I was in the latter group.'

And he took me upstairs to the secure area of the embassy and pulled out a file with my name on it and showed it to me, documenting my daily movements between 1968 and 1981, and said that the American Embassy in South Africa routinely shared that information with the South African security forces.

I shared this with you so that you will know that, with the rest of what I speak about this morning, I'm talking as a passionate academic, somebody whose father taught him that, armed with information, you can bring about change. When we talk about the issue of race and sport, we look at player opportunities; we look at front-office hiring practices, whether they be in top management, senior administrators and other professional categories; we look at who coaches the team; and we look at opportunities for minority contractors and vendors.

I will be happy to distribute to the commission, if you want, something called the Racial Report Card, which we issue every year, which analyzes that across the professional and college ranks.

For years, sport was frequently looked at as the ideal playing field by both blacks and whites. If you talk to people my age in the black community, you will ta--hear our--an open issue of discussion. You'll hear hours of discussions of people like Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Arthur Ashe and Muhammad Ali. They're real-life heroes. They're pioneers, and that--in the black community and in many segments of the white community. I think that whites generally still think that sports is a level playing field for people of color, but African-Americans know that opportunities to become sports executives are extremely limited, and that s--in the 50 years that Jack--since Jackie Robinson broke that color barrier, not very much has changed in the executive positions.

Sport's most visible positions are obviously players, coaches and general managers at the pro level; at the college level, it would be student athletes,



coaches and athletic directors. It may be hard for you to believe, reading the newspapers and watching television, for those of you who follow the games, that the percentage of African-Americans playing basketball, football and baseball are actually declining in professional and college sport and have been since 1991. The NBA has sub--however, there is a significant number of players still playing the game, obviously: 17 percent in major-league baseball, 79 percent in the NBA, 66 percent in the National Football League; at the college level in Division I, 61 percent of basketball players, 52 percent of football players and 6 percent of baseball players are black.

Jackie Robinson had two dreams; one, that the increased opportunities would be there as players, but also to run the games. The second part of his dream is overwhelmingly unfulfilled. At the beginning of the 1997 seasons, major-league baseball had four managers out of 30, or 13 percent; the NFL had three out of 30, or 10 percent; the NBA had seven out of 29, or 24 percent--by far, the best. The worst is college sport, where only 4.2 percent of head coaches at America's colleges and universities are African-American.

At the college level, the top management positions would be athletic director. Colleges, once again, have a much worse record than professional sport in this regard, where less than 6.9 percent of our athletic directors are black men or women. There's only two Latino men or women directing any athletic program anywhere in the United States today.

The one factor that's hardest to measure when we talk about race is attitude, and attitudes can help create or perpetuate stereotypes, and I want to focus my remarks very much on that issue of attitudes, because most of the calls I got about Latrell Sprewell were trying to paint him as a poster child for professional athletes in the 1990s, and it just is not true. I believe that athletes are being unfairly stereotyped all across America, that as America has become, quote, unquote, "politically correct," some white people who used to express their stereotypical images of black people openly with issues such as intelligence worth ethic, drugs, violence and gender violence no longer say them, but our sportswriters are saying them about our athletes consistently and regularly in the press, and when America thinks about athletes in the 1990s we generally think about black athletes.



I spoke at an elite Ivy League university last year to 25 career diplomats, all ambassadorial rank or higher. I asked them before I started to write down five words that they would use to describe American athletes. They all had attributes that we would read in the sports pages every day about their athletic ability, but every one of the 25 had one of the following words: 'dumb,' 'violent,' 'rapist' or 'drug user.' That came from reading America's sports pages in a single year of being in this country and the images that they had created for them.

When something goes wrong with a player, watch out for the national consequences. Here's the equation we're dealing with. There are a fan base in the United States which is obviously mostly white. They read about our athletes through a media filter which is clearly people who look like me, white men. There are two African-American sports editors on any major newspapers in the country. There are 11 African-American columnists, period, on major newspapers in America. Ninety percent of our daily newspapers don't have a single African-American sportswriter on their staff. So those athletes are being interpreted by people who may not quite get it.

The result can be a reinforcement of white stereotypes of athletes, because so many of those athletes in those games are African-American. And I don't want to suggest or even hint at--that I think all those white writers are racist, but they've been raised in a country where those stereotypes, study after study show, prevail—that many white people thinks blacks are more violent, less hardworking, live more off welfare, are less intelligent and more inclined to use drugs. In sports the less hardworking part also translates into African-American athletes being called 'natural athletes,' as if they didn't have to work hard to attain the skill levels that they display for us on our televisions.

Assumptions are made that such athletes come from poor families, in spite of the fact that 67 percent of America's poor are white. Our athletes are coming from a generation of youth cut adrift from the American Dream. When the center started in 1984, we would talk about balancing athletics and academics, telling young people to--if they have a dream of becoming a professional athlete, to make sure that they get the academic preparation as well, in case they're among the 9,999 out of 10,000 who won't make it to the pros. Now the



issue for young people today has nothing to do with balancing academics and athletics; it's about balancing life and death.

We are recruiting athletes to our campuses and later to pro teams, if they are among the best of them, who have increasingly witnessed a violent death. If a child in America is killed every two hours by a handgun, chances are we're gonna recruit players who have seen it or know people who it's happened to. We're gonna--we are increasingly recruiting fathers and mothers to our college campuses and our athletic departments, people who have one to two children by the time they get there. If they stay four years, they're leaving with children who are four and five and six years old, who have seen families or friends or read about in their neighborhood people who have been devastated by drugs, been battered; they've been victims of overt acts of racism in their schools. It's a different group of people that are coming to our college campuses today. And are we ready to help them to adjust to the life that we hope that they'll have on our campuses, or later as pros?

We're gonna get athletes who commit acts of gender violence. I believe that the single greatest stereotype that's out there about athletes today is that athletes, especially basketball and football players, because they're athletes, are more inclined to be gender-violent. There have been, of course, too many cases of athletes who have committed acts of gender violence, but there's never been a study done anywhere in the United States that has proven in any kind of way statistically that athletes are more inclined than non-athletes.

The only study that you consistently get--see before--every time a story appears on an individual athlete, they refer to this Northeastern University story—and that is a study that originated at our center that we did not allow to be published in our name, because they we came up with so few cases and the researchers didn't control the three main factors that are predictors in cases of gender violence, which are alcohol, tobacco and the males' attitude toward women. They came up with 65 cases, using campus police reports, on 10 Division I campuses over a three-year period of time--13 were athletes; seven were basketball and football players.



Now we didn't publish it because I knew exactly what would happen; did--that the press says not `13 out of 65 over three years on 10 Division I campuses'; the press always says, `We don't know whether Lawrence Phillips at Nebraska is representative of other athletes, but 20 percent of all campus acts of violence against women are committed by athletes,' based on 13 cases. Most are committed by basketball and football players, equals African-American, based on seven cases. I cannot even begin to tell you how many times that story has appeared in America's press.

Let me give you some data about some of the stories we're talking about. In 1994 1,400 men killed their significant other, spouse or wife. One athlete was accused. In 1995, the Los Angeles Times came up with a computer-generated survey and an 11-page supplement called Athletes and Crime--11 pages on athletes and crime, you can guess where the slant was coming from--72 athletes, seven coaches. In 1995, three million American women were the victims of battering. Between January 1st 1989, and November of '94 a Washington Post survey of all football players, college and pros, came up with 141 cases of football players--85 college, 56 pros--who had been reported for violent behavior toward women. The headline, the banner headline of the Post that day, page one: 141 football players reported to have hit women.

Big story, carried all over the country; break it out, came out to 9.3 incidents in the pros, or .05 percent of the 1,900 roster players in the National Football League over that period of time. 14.2 incidents in college came out to .002 percent of the 50,000 college football players in America. The FBI estimates that one in five acts of gender violence is reported. If we multiply the football cases by 50--not by 5 but by 50--we come up with less than 3 percent of American men were estimated to have hit women or hit a woman during their lifetime.

This summer Will Cordero and Jose Canseco were both accused of violence against their wives. In each case I received dozens of media calls. Most asked why athletes were so inclined; the radio talk show host took it further and talked about whether their being Latino had some kind of influence because of their cultural background. I said to them in response that--and, of course, they quickly became silent--that if the day that Cordero hit his wife was typi-



cal, that another 8,200 women were battered in America on that day, or if the day that Canseco was arrested was typical, then 2,345 American women were raped on that day.

What did those two cases tell us about America? Or do those numbers that aren't reported in those stories tell us more about our sportswriters and what we're trying to say here at this point in our history?

The Boston Globe reported last spring extensively about the Astra corporation, where 16 formal legal complaints were brought against this chemical company for issues from sexual harassment to rape. Similar publicity about the Mitsubishi company, with 29 women in its suit, was widely publicized around the country. None of the stories that I read, and I tried to read them very carefully, talked about the atmosphere created in the chemical plant leading to this climate where men felt somehow entitled to abuse these women, or at Mitsubishi that whatever activities--professional activities were going on at Mitsubishi created such a climate, but every time I read a story about an athlete, the story ends somewhere or has somewhere buried in its text why are athletes more inclined, why does this athletic culture--I would maintain for you that we're talking mostly about African-American and Latino men, and such speculation, from my point of view, is fueled by stereotypes.

Writers say that athletes are trained to be violent; we can expect that to carry over into our homes. If that's true, why don't we expect the police, the Army, the Navy, Air Force, the National Guard, who are trained to use lethal force, to come home and kill? It's a preposterous idea. It's also a preposterous idea that a football player who's aggressive on a Saturday is gonna come home and be aggressive in his home. It might happen, but it wasn't necessarily because he was one of the 50,000 college football players playing the sport.

Academically, we're gonna get athletes who have literacy problems. The press will discuss this extensively. Once a year and never in our sports pages I'll see the story about how many college freshmen coming to our campuses have to take remedial English and math today, having nothing to do with sports. At the National Education Summit in March of last year IBM CEO Louis



Gerstner said that one of his biggest problems at IBM is the college students he's recruiting after graduation--he said, 'What is killing us is having to teach them to read, to compute and to think'--college graduates.

We're gonna have low graduation rates, in some cases, for our student athletes, including for our black student athletes. However, the press rarely reports that the reality is that black student athletes, men and women—doesn't matter what sport they play—graduate at a higher rate than black students on our college campuses, that the problem isn't athletics and we don't own the problem in college athletics. It's a problem of higher education in general and a problem of our secondary education.

Black athletes come to our predominantly white campuses and find overwhelmingly white student bodies, faculties and administrations. With the exception of a rare Martin Luther King Center or Martin Luther King Boulevard, all the buildings and all the streets are named after people who look like me. These black student athletes often express alienation in quiet conversations about their university, and it's possible, if they're gonna make an NBA team and look at a front office and see all people who look like me, that they're gonna feel the same sense of alienation and not a loyalty to the team that the team might have otherwise wanted.

We're gonna have athletes who use drugs. Last year CNN Headline News ran footage all day long, all week long, about Michael Irvin. This summer, Allen Iverson was frequently mentioned. As I said earlier, Edwin Rosario died just last week in Puerto Rico of drug- and alcohol-related causes. According to that same LA Times story on athletes and crime, in 1995 there were 20 athletes--22 athletes and three coaches who were arrested for a drug- or alcohol-related crime in that year. That's once every two weeks. If we keep reading about that, it's creating an image in our mind of who is playing our games.

None of those stories talked about the fact that there are 1.9 million cocaine users every month in the United States, 2.1 million heroin users, that 6 percent of the American adult population consumes an illegal drug once every month, or that if you look at the 18-to-24 male age group--that the figure jumps to 13 percent, but we do want and continue to zero in on our athletes.



Handguns are another growing issue. When Allen Iverson was arrested last summer, there was a big wave of media attention to that fact. I want you to think about the fact that if Allen Iverson had stayed at Georgetown he would have been a college senior and would have been one of the estimated—according to the Chronicle of Higher Education--one of the million college and high-school students who carry a weapon to school every day. This should be a huge problem of concern in the NBA and the NFL and major-league baseball, but much more so in our homes and schools.

All of these reinforce these stereotypes that we're talking about. I believe, however, that athletes can be positive role models in affecting the lives of our youth. Children have chosen them to be that. Whether or not they want to be it, children have said, 'We like--we want athletes to help us.' And our society is clearly unraveling at a breakneck pace. That's why--one of the reasons why this commission was formed, to address some of those issues.

When the center opened in 1984, we thought that we could train athletes to be spokespeople on various issues for young people. In 1984 we thought we only had to talk about balancing academics and athletics. It's become much more complex, and I want to share a little bit about what we do, because I think that has something to do with the recommendations I would make.

We spent 12 years trying to move the public debate to have sports live up to its ideals. Many people have this lofty view of what sports is or what sports can do, but it frequently hasn't met those ideals. We want to use them--sports and our athletes--to reach children. They're children in deep, deep crisis. And we can help them believe in what they can't see. Children see what's in front of them on the edges of despair, and see no source of hope.

We see these young people every day, and I want to give you a feeling of how they act with each other. We hired Lou Harris in 1990 to do a study on youth attitudes toward racism, and his documentation showed us what we thought we already knew, that our children--not just parents, our children--have learned to hate each other on the basis of how they look and what they believe in. But it also showed their desire to participate in changing those feelings. They weren't comfortable or happy that they felt that way. And when



asked who they want to reach out to them, the group that most--was most frequently mentioned was athletes, professional and college and even high-school athletes--not because of their fame, not because of their athletic accomplishments, but because they thought that they were caring individuals for whatever series of reasons.

We hired Harris to do an update in June of 1993, and he told us that the incidence of racial, religious and gender confrontations had, in fact, increased; that 75 percent of the high-school students that they surveyed said that they had witnessed an overt act of racism with violent overtones in their school often or somewhat often during the previous 12 months.

We have a major program called Project Teamwork, which I'll mention later, that goes into schools and works with kids on issues of race relations, using trained athletes to do it. We were in a school in Lynn, Massachusetts, three years ago, and this phenomenon has now spread across the country. And I asked the principal, 'What do you think about the racial problems here? You have any racial tensions?' And he said no, as most principals are wont to say, and he said, 'But, you know, I got concerned a couple of years ago when our white students started wearing Notre Dame hats to school.' And he said, 'We have a large Irish population in the school and the city of Boston; I just thought it was an expression of Irish pride, the fans of the Fighting Irish, until all the black kids started to wear UNLV hats.'

This was in an era that Jerry Tarkanian's Runnin' Rebels were national champions and had played a--an exciting brand of basketball, if not education, and he didn't think much of it until he started asking the kids. And the 'ND' didn't stand for Notre Dame, but 'Niggers, Die.' And the UNLV was the black kids' response, that 'If you come after us, we're gonna defend ourselves. "Us Niggers Love Violence." We will protect ourselves. Don't mess with us.' That's how our sports symbols have been used, and that phenomenon has spread across the country.

Children tell--told Harris that they don't feel safe going to school, they don't feel safe in school, that they are, in fact, not only learning how to hate each other, but they're waging war on one another.



Metal detectors are in most urban schools today. A lot of urban schools have burial funds and grieving rooms for children that these children know who are killed during the course of the year. I'm also writing a book about a group of Bosnian children who were smuggled out of Sarajevo under the guise of being the junior Olympic basketball team. When I (and they're all now safely in the United States and going to American colleges and universities) but when they were 13 years old, when this process started, they hadn't played basketball in two years. There was no reason to think these kids were gonna play ball; they were simply trying to save the lives of these young people.

When I interviewed them and I said, 'And what made you want to leave,' almost all of them said they fled because they saw other children being killed in the streets--15,000 Bosnian children were killed, 600,000 made homeless, in a very small country--and they left because of the ethnic hatred that they saw. They saw people learning how to hate each other on the basis of their religions.

When I ask them how they feel about the United States, they're very happy to be here. They feel safe. But the most disappointing thing that they've found is that they've seen children being killed in the streets, and they've seen children learning how to hate one another on the basis of race and what they believe in.

How do teen-agers feel about it themselves? Is it simply a matter of race? Not at all. It's not North-South; it's not urban or rural. Young people are angry; they're confused; they feel powerless. How else do we explain that such a large proportion of the drugs used in America are consumed by American teen-agers? Why do you use a drug? You want to change how you feel at that moment. The largest percentage of steroids used in the United States are not used by athletes. They're used by teen-age boys under the age of 16 who are not athletes, who feel so frail in their self-image that they use these drugs to make themselves stronger or faster for the perception of other people.

When survey--researchers ask some of the million teen-age girls who become pregnant every year why they would risk their future and become pregnant,



the most common response is, 'Because I wanted somebody to love me.'
'Because I wanted somebody to love me.'

We're getting student athletes who come from this generation. We are reading about in the press all the time sports agents and how athletes get in debt. Well, I want to tell you that this is not the only problem with high-school students in the country. If they come from gang-infested areas, they are very likely to have become protected by the gangs in those communities. I have participated in the NBA's and NFL's rookie transition programs, and these young people tell us that they owe--they feel that they owe their lives to gang leaders in the communities that they came from because they were protected when other children were dying, and the payoff is that the gang leaders made deals with them that if they make it they will reimburse them some monetary response, because the gang leaders not only saved their lives, but they provided them with clothing and goods during that period of time.

Our consortium of universities that Judith referred to is a group of 140 universities around the country that if they join, they agree that any athlete who went to their school on a scholarship who did not graduate can come back at the expense of the university to finish their education. In exchange for the tuition and fees, the athletes have to give us 10 hours a week of community service on the issues that I've been talking about. Since the consortium started we've had more than 13,000 athletes return to complete their educations in this program. They've worked with over five million children in the community service and outreach program, having donated 4.7 million hours of their time, and the schools have put up over \$85 million in tuition assistance, and it's because sports captures people's imaginations, their loves, their hates, their passions.

We saw our programs evolve since we started. We were calling--America was calling cocaine a recreational drug until an athlete died of a cocaine overdose, and suddenly we had to address this deadly form of drug that was out there in our communities.

As we looked more closely at what Lou Harris told us about our children learning how to hate, we've developed this Project Teamwork that I referred



to, our Ambassadors Against Prejudice, we were--where we trained, systematically, athletes with conflict-resolution skills and diversity-training skills. We hired Lou Harris and his team to evaluate the program, and he called it America's most successful violence-prevention program. It won the Peter Drucker Award as the nation's most innovative program leading to social change and was named by the Clinton administration as one of its models for conflict resolution, and is now part of AmeriCorps. We offer gender-violence training services that we've done on 32 campuses. When we first started the program, schools didn't even want us near their campuses, because they were afraid that if this program came there that they would be self-indicting themselves, that 'We have a problem; therefore, we are bringing this program called MVP.' It's become successful enough that the US Marine Corps contracted with us last year, and in the last nine months we trained non-commissioned officers on 12 worldwide facilities.

The sports message, for whatever reason, if you put it in the context of sport, using athletes as the deliverers of the message, puts people at ease when you're talking about difficult subjects. When you're talking about racism, doing diversity training and when you're talking about these things, athletes as the deliverers, as the trained deliverers of the message--don't confuse me—I don't think that because someone could nail a 30-foot jump shot or smash a ball across a volleyball net that they are competent to talk about these deep, penetrating issues troubling our youth—We have to train them and give them those skills.

As far as the professional areas of sport, the proposals I want to make to you now are based on the fact that I believe that the responsibilities of professional sports organizations and the unique place that they hold in our community are very profound, but that professional sports organizations to this point have hardly lived up to them. I think we have to imbue them with an expanded sense of responsibility, and the beneficiaries are gonna go right from the owners to the administrators to the players to the fans, and most importantly, to our children.

They would place sports organizations at the grass roots of our cities rather than being moved into the suburbs of our cities, as so many professional



sports franchises have been made. I also--because athletes are role models--I'm gonna propose that we hold athletes to a higher standard than we hold other people, and I'll explain that in a minute. Among the recommendations is that we hire in our franchises leaders and decision-makers who are the right people, that they have to have a sense of ethical and moral responsibility, that they have to be a diverse group of people, that they have to understand the times that their players are coming from and some of the things I've talked about.

I don't think our pro teams should hire the the coaches that our college teams have fired because they were doing problematic jobs. How else can we explain--or I shouldn't say it that way, but, was anybody surprised that Barry Switzer was arrested trying to carry a handgun in his baggage through an airport security system, after many of the years that he had demonstrated perhaps not the highest level of ethical behavior at his university, or that Jimmy Johnson became the only NFL coach who signed the former Nebraska player who had had so many problems and who had just been dismissed by his other professional team?

I think we have to create ongoing programs for the personal development of the players and the front-office staff. We can't expect the players, if we don't know what they've gotten in their college or high-school educations, to be model citizens. We have to create rookie orientation programs, which the NBA has a very systematic one; the NFL a kind of miniversion of it that needs to be developed more. The NBA brings all their rookies together for five days with experts who talk about, among other things, drugs, alcohol, HIV, relationships, sexual harassment, gender violence, financial planning, continuing ed and career development.

I think all pro sports leagues need to adopt a life-readiness plan for those athletes. They're only gonna play an average of three to four years in professional sport. What are they gonna do afterwards? To offer them continuing education--and the center does do the continuing education programs for the NFL and the NBA--to have career planning so players can decide that there is gonna be a life after this professional sport, to give them internships that will be real and meaningful for them, and to give them counseling for their fami-



lies. They're gonna have problems just like all of us have in our homes, but because of that public spotlight might not be the best at handling it.

I will propose very emphatically a cultural transition program for Latino ball players coming into major-league baseball. So many of the players now, 23 percent of the players in major-league baseball were Latino last year, many of them coming in without being able to express themselves in the English language that they're asked questions in, not understanding the culture they're in. Their teammates don't understand them. If an English-as-a-second-language program was put in place by major-league baseball, I think it would be incredibly helpful. Each league and the team offices need to adopt programs on diversity, not only for their players but for the front offices and coaching staffs, to get them out there as leaders so they can speak effectively to young people about issues of race. Same is true about gender violence, and I think one of the things that I picked up very clearly in the early discussion this morning before we gathered in our working groups, from people who had read about Latrell Sprewell, is we need a whole different sense of discipline in professional sports.

The national consortium of universities that we referred to adopted a year ago last October at its annual meeting a zero-tolerance position on gender violence. And if an athlete is convicted of an act of gender violence at one of the 140 universities in the consortium, they will be immediately banned for a year. After a year of counseling and going through other things, they can apply for reinstatement. If they're convicted twice, they would be banned for the rest of their college careers. I think we have to do that about violence against other people, about things--about acts that harm other people, not necessarily the athletes.

We have to let our athletes know that they have choices to make, that the actions they take bear consequences, and I think that David Stern promised that he would do this in September at the league meetings, and in his first opportunity did this with Latrell Sprewell. It's sometimes not gonna have what would seem like a fair impact on an individual player, 'cause Latrell Sprewell is, in some ways, paying for all of the things that went before him with negative behavior of other athletes.



I think that the leagues need to strengthen their drug policies to include both help for their current athletes, but also to include other drugs on the list. As you may know, marijuana is not on the NBA's list right now, and there are a lot of kids who are using marijuana, saying publicly that one of the reasons they feel they can do this is because, hey, if it's legal for NBA players to do it and there are no sanctions, then it must be OK.

The players associations--when I talked to my son about Latrell Sprewell the other day and what David Stern said, he said, 'Well, the Players Association will get the penalty removed.' And that is kind of the view that's out there, that the players associations are gonna act always very quickly to remove whatever action has been taken. I think they have to look at the circumstances before they act. And the leagues and teams and players associations, most importantly, have to get more directly involved in the communities where our teams play in, to expand the outreach efforts of their players and to train them to talk about issues, to promote and support urban youth sports programs--we read a lot about urban--about youth sports. Kids who live in cities, males, are one-third less likely than suburban kids to have youth sport opportunities; females are one-eighth as likely in urban areas to have sports opportunities.

The pro teams can produce public-service announcements, they can do ticket give-aways. They need to work more closely with the media to get those positive images of athletes out there when there are so many athletes doing good things. Most professional athletes have private foundations that work in communities; more than 80 percent of pro athletes have their own foundations. Most are deeply religious, family-centered people. If you read the sports pages, you're gonna go away with the same opinion as those 25 career diplomats at that elite institution that I mentioned before.

I think the Washington Wizards did an incredible service by building their new arena in Washington. It bucked the trend of all the previous new stadiums being built in suburban areas where it's inaccessible for people to go and can help lead to capital development within the cities.



What's the power of sport? President Clinton invited us two years ago for the first time and last year again to bring our National Student Athlete Day award winners to the White House. The day was April 5th; this is 1996. On April 3rd, Ron Brown was killed. We fully expected that the event was gonna be canceled. All the events on April 4th were canceled; we called the White House and we said, you know, 'Please don't feel like you have to go ahead with this.' They said, 'Come anyway.' When we got there we found out that he was leaving from the White House to Oklahoma City to commemorate the first anniversary of the bombing, and the way it was set up was he was being brought to me and I was gonna introduce him to the award winners and other people in the room.

I said, 'Mr. President, the fact that you would honor these people on this particular day with your personal and--and national tragedies before you brings even added honor to these award winners.' And what he said to me--he looked me directly in the eye and he said, 'Richard, I needed this today. I needed this today.'

Even for a president in the worst of times, sports can bring good news that can lift the weight of the world. It's a powerful gift to possess, because if we use it in the most noble way, to work to help lift the spiritual poverty that hovers over so many of our children, then we're giving gifts wherever they are. That spirit is the antidote to the loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted that so many young people live with today, and we can give them that richness of spirit that is being part of a team, counting on somebody else to deliver the goods for you. Doesn't matter what race they are; sometimes it doesn't even matter what gender they are. If they're your teammate, you can expect them to do something good for you.

I believe that sport, from youth sport through the pros, has a role to play. I'm not saying it has the only role. I think it has a small but vital role to play in having a positive impact on public behavior, because if our children have learned how to hate, we can teach them how to love again. And if they're waging war on one another, we can certainly give them the tools to make peace.