

# Face Time

Unpublished essay written in 2009  
dealing with the exploitation of the Black athlete and academic integrity of college sports.  
Now, years later, the piece seems quaint.

Jon Ericson  
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## *Abstract*

When Auburn University professor James Gundlach called out colleague Thomas Petee for granting excessive credit to athletes, little did he know that Petee would end up with a nice job at \$90,000 a year for the rest of his life, and Gundlach would end up with early retirement. Such is life behind the closed door of the university, home to the academic corruption in college sports. At the center of the corruption is the exploitation of the black athlete, a shameful story repeatedly told but with effort to face it studiously avoided. My essay, *Face Time* argues that forty years of exploitation is more than enough; that it is time to come clean.

Drawing on my 35 years from life inside the university, I describe how the system is fixed; who fixes it; how the race card is played to intimidate those who seek to expose the exploitation; and how faculty and administrator conduct is covered up with an unseemly appeal to a student's right to privacy. I argue that transparency is a necessary condition for academic integrity and a friend to those who want the corruption to end. Finally, I suggest reformers draw on the heroes of the civil rights movement—such as the Little Rock Nine—to find the courage to get in the face of those who protect the exploitation.

## *About the author*

Jon Ericson, Ellis & Nelle Levitt Professor Emeritus and former Provost at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, is a founding member and former Director of *The Drake Group*, a national organization working to restore academic integrity in college athletics. On October 18, 2000, he presented the case for disclosure in *Remarks Before the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics*. His publications on the corruption in college athletics include [with Matthew Salzwedel] "Cleaning Up Buckley: How The Family Educational Rights And Privacy Act Shields Academic Corruption In College Athletics," *Wisconsin Law Review*, Volume 2003, Number 6, 1053-1113, and *While Faculty Sleep*, Lulu Publishing. For how the story ended, see Daniel Libit & Luke Cyphers, "Silencing the Spoilsports: How 'Pay the Players' Drowned Out College Sports' Fiercest Critics," December 17, 2020.

Note: This essay, whether of merit or lack thereof, will demonstrate that commentary on college athletics can occur free from use of the degrading, insulting "S-A" term.

The 20-foot statue consisting of fiberglass, steel supports, and ceramic tiles located on the San Jose University campus portrays two shoeless black men each wearing a single black glove. The two men are former Olympic track stars John Carlos and Tommie Smith. The statue is not there to honor them as athletes.

Sports columnist and commentator Shaun Powell begins his book, *Souled Out? How Blacks Are Winning and Losing in Sports* by reliving his and his family's reaction to seeing Carlos and Smith stand on the medal podium at the 1968 Olympics and—during the playing of the national anthem no less—get in the face of Uncle Sam. For Powell, who makes repeated references to their protest, Carlos and Smith are heroes, not because they were star athletes but because they had the courage to give “a four-knuckle salute to the white oppressors back home.”<sup>1</sup>

Earlier that summer, *Sports Illustrated* began a series “The Black Athlete—A Shameful Story,” and in 1991—in “The Black Athlete Revisited”—*SI* assessed what progress had been made. Progress was made: From the obvious—southern college sports programs were integrated—to the subtle—African-Americans now have the opportunity to play the “thinking” positions. About academic exploitation? “It's worse than ever,” said Professor Harry Edwards.<sup>2</sup>

Worse than ever? Twenty-three years later? Surely not. Yet in sports commentary, the theme of exploitation is omnipresent. From Steve James' 1994 documentary “Hoop Dreams” to Billy Hawkins 2000 portrait of college athletics as *The New Plantation*<sup>3</sup> to Richard Lapchick's annual lament about the low graduation rates and substandard education provided for black athletes to Howard University professor Doris Corbett's 2007 assertion that “African-American athletes are in a state of academic crisis. They are exploited for economic gain. The value of the African-American athlete as a student is of little academic importance”<sup>4</sup> to Earl Smith in his book, *Race, Sport and the American Dream* arguing “that for African American football and men's basketball players at the Division I level their experience is nothing short of exploitation,”<sup>5</sup> to Powell's “disturbing story”<sup>6</sup> suggests that forty years later, the exploitation of the black athlete is shameful still.

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<sup>1</sup> Shane Powell, *Souled Out? How Blacks Are Winning and Losing in Sports* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2008), ix.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Olsen, “The Black Athlete—A Shameful Story,” *Sports Illustrated*, July 1, 1968, 12-27, and William Oscar Johnson, “The Black Athlete Revisited,” August 5, 1991, 40.

<sup>3</sup> Billy Hawkins, *The New Plantation: The internal colonization of black student-athletes* (Sadie Publications, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Doris R. Corbett, “Faculty, Academic Integrity, And Athletics,” *Remarks at The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics Faculty Summit on Intercollegiate Athletics*, October 15, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Earl Smith, *Race, Sport and the American Dream* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007), 113.

<sup>6</sup> Powell, *Souled Out?*, 73.

From Edwards to Corbett, Powell, and Smith the charge of exploitation rings true to what, as a professor and Provost, I saw and, in 1994, wrote *The Man, He Fix It*. It is included in *While Faculty Sleep*, pages 35-41. It's worth a read.

### *The Man, He Fix It*

Marc is a fine little boy as he enters elementary school. Although he is a good kid, he neglects to learn what he needs to learn to do well in high school, but he does learn how to put a basketball in a hoop. He reaches high school without basic skills to read and write.

It looks as though he won't be able to play basketball because of his academic deficiencies. But wait, an understanding, caring person comes along and enrolls him in classes that do not require basic academic skills, or in other courses where the teacher is understanding and caring. The man, he fix it, and Marc plays high school basketball.

Marc's academic deficiencies finally catch up with him and he cannot enroll in a university to play basketball. But wait, a caring, understanding person finds a junior college that will enroll him and Marc gets to play basketball again. The man, he fix it.

Two years later, Marc wants to enroll in a university so he can play basketball. But his academic deficiencies are now greater, not less. So what to do? But wait, a caring, understanding person finds a caring university that has a special program to help students with academic deficiencies. This university prides itself on being so good that it can take a person whose reading is poor and writing is worse, who often has little or no motivation to do either, allow the person to work outside the classroom thirty hours a week, miss a large number of classes and still provide the student with a university education. So Marc enrolls at that university. At the end of the semester he is placed on academic probation. But wait, a caring, understanding coach talks to the caring, understanding teacher, and Marc receives an Incomplete rather than an F. The academic adviser for athletes calls the caring, understanding teacher to see what Marc needs to do to remove the Incomplete. The man, he fix it, and Marc is allowed to register for one more semester. Marc joins several of his teammates as they are led through registration by a caring, understanding assistant coach or academic advisor of athletes. Faculty at registration look away in embarrassment.

At the end of the year Marc is on final probation—or suspended—and is ineligible to play basketball his senior year. But wait, some caring, understanding people search diligently and systematically through the curriculum to find courses taught by caring, understanding faculty. Marc deserves every chance to succeed. So we give him one more chance—because we care. The man, he fix it.

One year later, Marc's collegiate basketball career is over. Marc is suspended because we gave him every chance to succeed, but he just didn't have the motivation. This time, the man does not fix it.

### *Who fixes it?*

Coaches, assistant coaches, academic advisers for athletes, athletics directors can attempt to fix it for athletes. But they can only try. The ones who fix it are presidents, academic administrators, and faculty. And they are the only ones who can stop fixing it.

At the end of the year an administrator noticed that an athlete received grades of Incomplete in three out of four courses. In response to the administrator's inquiry, a department chair wrote:

[Professor A] gave [the athlete] an incomplete after [an assistant coach] requested it. According to [Professor A]'s account, he resisted this initially but finally relented because of the coach's special pleading and [the athlete]'s promise to do all the class work. . .

[Professor A] also said he finally gave in because he became convinced that this was a case where [the athlete] had been exploited. . . .

Professor A's reason for granting the Incomplete captures precisely the problem. A faculty member complains that athletes are exploited (notice how outraged I am), and then uses the exploitation as an excuse to participate in the very exploitation that the faculty member denounces. Professor A's behavior reinforces the message—from kindergarten through eligibility—to the athlete: "Not to worry, the man will fix it. I do not have to be responsible for my behavior (until my eligibility runs out, and then I can cry 'exploitation,' and others can write articles about how universities exploit athletes)." And everyone feels so good: the caring, understanding, sensitive faculty and university officials feel good because they tried so hard to help the student. The athlete feels good because he got to do what he loves—play sports. "Reformers" feel good because they get to be on the side of the angels and scream about exploitation. Then each fall the process begins anew. All are players in *the man, he fix it*.

### *How is it fixed?*

Here is how it works:

A. Those in charge of keeping the athlete eligible (under the banner of providing academic support and services for the athlete) locate the names of those professors who are understanding, caring, and sensitive to the needs of the athlete (translate: the good old boys and the powerless [part-time, non-tenured, or academic support staff—often women]).

B. Academic advisers for athletes and assistant coaches go over (if not prepare) the athletes' course list to ensure that they are making satisfactory progress according to NCAA rules (translate: are taking the "right" courses and have not stumbled into real courses).

C. The academic advisers and/or assistant coaches check periodically with the instructors to ensure that each athlete is passing the courses.

D. When the athlete is in trouble, the academic adviser and/or assistant coach engage in special pleading. The instructor is asked what the athlete can do to make up the work, is told everyone hopes the teacher will be sensitive, caring and understanding of the athlete's difficult situation.

E. The instructor complains to friends, family members, and colleagues of the pressure the athletic department is putting on her to pass the athlete.

F. At the end of the semester, the F is an Incomplete or a D-, the D is a C-, or the athlete is granted special permission to withdraw after the date when a student may withdraw from courses.

G. Innocent or angry comments by friends, family members, and colleagues about the pressure the instructor experienced become public.

H. The administration appoints a committee to investigate this serious charge.

I. The instructor denies she was pressured. ("What? She *told* me she was pressured." Relax. The instructor can't admit it. First, to admit it is to admit that she was unprofessional, that she was weak, that she did not stand up to the intimidation. Second, she would be out of a job.)

J. The president announces that the athletic department and the university are vindicated in a "glowing" report and lashes out at "efforts to embarrass" the university.

K. Back to business as usual.<sup>7</sup>

Is this a forty-year story of people who care so much or a story of educators who care so little?

### *Why?*

One cannot today read the *Sports Illustrated* series without recognizing that significant progress has occurred in the life of the black athlete. Why then, in the important area of education does the exploitation continue? After all, the two solutions are obvious: Transparency necessary for accountability and admission standards necessary for academic success. We have neither. Why? We hide behind the Buckley amendment and the race card. Privacy prevents accountability and "denying opportunity" prevents academic standards.

### *Hiding*

Athletes and coaches perform in public and are held accountable by the public. Fumbles, interceptions, fouls, missed free throws, wins and losses are there for all to see. Faculty perform behind the closed door of the university and their conduct is covered up by administrators, presidents, and governing boards. Grade changes, grade inflation, extra credit, excessive directed independent study, waiver of deadlines for adding or dropping courses are hidden in a phony appeal to the student's right to privacy. Cover is blown only when a whistleblower—someone who takes seriously his charge as guardian of the curriculum—calls out and puts a face on the caring, understanding, sensitive professor: Auburn University professor James Gundlach calling out Thomas Petee; University of Arizona professor David Christenson and seven of his colleagues in the Department of Classics calling out Alexander Nava. The whistleblower's effort to expose faculty conduct becomes a personal feud. Jim

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<sup>7</sup> Jon Ericson, "To Search for the Truth Wherever It Might Lead, Except if It Leads to Me," 70 *International Social Science Review*, 1995, 3-14.

[Gundlach] versus Tom [Petee]. *Ad hominem* fly. This is no way to run a university.

Forty years of academic exploitation is an institutional problem, and an institutional problem calls for an institutional solution. That solution is transparency: Making public aggregate academic records without names of students; but with names of professors. Transparency is not directed at athletes, it is directed to the academic integrity *of the institution*. Make no mistake about it, concern over transparency is not a concern for a student's privacy; it is that behavior by faculty, administrators, and presidents will be exposed.

Problem Solving 101 begins with describing the problem. However, when it comes to athletics, it is Cover-up 101: Avoid and Evade. Take, for example, Auburn professor Alan Hauser, chairman of the NCAA subcommittee on academics that rejected a proposal for academic disclosure: "It looked to us like something that would be inclined toward an unnecessary witch hunt of professors rather than something that would reveal useful information about favoritism." Notice how quickly "witch-hunt" trips from his tongue. For faculty, transparency is what you apply to other institutions. For a university, transparency is witch-hunting.

Take one more example. [This will take some time, but forty years of exploitation should be worth it.] Diversity is good; coaches recruit from all walks of life, nationally and even internationally. Good for the coaches. For the black athlete, does diversity end with his arrival at the university? In 1985, as a result of program review, Drake University terminated several academic majors, among them Recreation and Health Science. Of the 40 black players in the period immediately following termination of programs, eight did not declare a major, one player completed a major that was being terminated (Health & PE), and one, in his fifth year, selected an individualized major. Of the 30 black players who declared a major, 20 majored in Sociology. 28 of the 38 black players were either "Open" or in Sociology. Of the first 20 black players to graduate following termination of programs, 15 graduated in Sociology. Of the 17 white players during this period, 14 players declared a major. They reflected the diversity of 14 different academic majors. Do we have diversity for the white players and clustering—dare we say segregation—for the black players?

The contrast between the clustering of black athletes and the diversity of white athletes in the selection of academic majors is, in itself, revealing, but how faculty, administrators, and presidents account for the pattern is most revealing of all. Within a second of a glance at the report on clustering of black athletes, our faculty rep said the clustering meant that black players wanted to gain an understanding of their community, their culture. As shocking as the statement was, even more shocking was that other faculty members agreed with it. No reflection, no hypotheses; just immediate explaining away. Could no one see how incredibly demeaning the comment was? What about all those white students from the small towns and rural areas of the Midwest who major in accounting, history, management, pharmacy, journalism, public administration? Do they not

care about their culture, their background? Don't they want to understand? Could not black players return to their communities as accountants, managers, pharmacists, administrators? Would this not enrich both the player and his community? And what about the black players during the period before the termination of programs? Of the 27 black players who declared a major; 21 of the 27 majored in either Recreation, Health & PE, Education, or Human Services [13 majored in Recreation]. Of the 13 players who graduated, nine graduated in Recreation, Health & PE, or Human Services [related majors]. Why were these black players not interested in understanding their culture, their community?

That was 1985-95. Surely we are not like that anymore. Maybe not, but Mark Alesia's *Indianapolis Star* report in October 2007 makes clear that clustering was still front and center in the education of the athlete, and that the degrading exercise in explaining away the clustering majors by athletes is not limited to my experience at Drake. The explanation can even come in the form of bravado:

Sharon Kraebber, an academic adviser in Purdue's organizational leadership and supervision program, said the major, in the College of Technology, has a high placement rate into jobs such as human resources and retail management. Her office is filled with decorations related to Purdue sports, including a license plate that says "#1 FAN." To those who might sneer at a "jock major," she had a challenge.

"Bring over 10 people from the College of Engineering and have them take two or three courses in our curriculum," she said. "It would scare them to death, because we have a lot of presentations, group work, just getting up and talking off the cuff, public speaking. It's a whole different learning style. People-oriented."<sup>8</sup>

If Purdue has an academic program attracting athletes that is strong enough to scare engineering students to death, the university has, to borrow a phrase, a story that deserves to be told.

More, if the academic records of black athletes are representative of the records of the student body, a school has a competitive advantage that money couldn't buy. That too would be a story that deserves to be told. Because federal law permits disclosure of academic records sufficient in number to protect the privacy of individual students, because athletes are required to sign a waiver of the Buckley amendment to participate in athletics, and because athletes are asked to sign a release form such as "STUDENT-ATHLETE CONSENT TO USE PHOTOGRAPHS AND TO RELEASE INFORMATION," which concludes: "This consent permits release of information which may be protected by Public Law 93-380, Section 513, commonly called the Buckley Amendment,"<sup>9</sup> the stories can be told.

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Alesia, "Purdue, IU athletes gravitate to certain majors: Some say players looking for an easy ride: not so, schools say," *The Indianapolis Star*. October 14, 2007, 1A.

<sup>9</sup> University of Iowa form: "STUDENT-ATHLETE CONSENT TO USE PHOTOGRAPHS AND TO RELEASE INFORMATION."



### *The card*

Surely those who cry exploitation would support efforts to expose that exploitation. It is what scholars do. It is what those who want to solve a problem do, yet voices charging exploitation turn silent when it comes to exposing that exploitation. We do hear that calling for disclosure is racist. When *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reporter Jay Weiner reported on the call for truth-telling, Kenneth Shropshire alleged: “There's a nasty undercurrent. It's like, 'There didn't used to be these bad black kids on campus. So the way we can fix things is to be like the good old days.’”<sup>10</sup>

Not all voices are silent. In his book, Earl Smith calls for oversight committees “independent of the athletic departments and their friends who have for so long created the mess that now engulfs intercollegiate sport.”<sup>11</sup> At a Knight Commission Faculty Summit, Doris Corbett, Professor of Sport Studies, & Department Chairperson at Howard University, proposed:

Transparency and academic disclosure of student’s academic major, academic advisor, courses listed by academic major, general education requirements, electives, course GPA and instructors will facilitate and result in accountability, establish a public social conscious by Board of Trustees members, Faculty Senates, and University Administrators. This strategy would not involve revealing individual student grades. Academic abuses such as clustering can be significantly diminished when information on how students are educated is available. Information about institutional behavior will enable universities to more effectively monitor grade inflation, educational practices and the quality of the degree.<sup>12</sup>

Is Professor Shropshire speaking for those who cry exploitation but are silent about confronting it? Does he suggest that Professor Corbett’s position comes with nasty undercurrent? If exploitation is racist but *facing* the exploitation is racist, what to do? Best practices suggest that requiring admission standards sufficient to handle university-level academics would replace a pretend education with a real one.

Of course, to ensure the opportunity for a real education, standards too must be real, not pretend. Two recent attempts at academic reform were Proposition 48 and Proposition 16 which set minimum academic requirements for athletes. The continuing exploitation reveals them to be inadequate, or, as Smith argues: “these reform measures are merely window dressing in what they actually accomplished is the opening of new and different avenues for academic fraud.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Jay Seiner, “Plan to curb academic fraud debated,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 28, 2001, 1C.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *Race*, 115.

<sup>12</sup> Corbett, *Remarks*.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, *Race*, 105.

### *Standards*

When coaches recruit, they recruit only the best athletes, and their speeches are filled with "excellence," "high standards," "discipline." Divisions II, III, and lower are available for those who do not meet the coach's high standards. Nothing personal, the coach will say, but I can't coach a Division III player to be a Division I player. I'm a coach, not a magician. Good for the coach.

Not unlike athletic divisions for various athletic levels, higher education has a range of institutions to serve various academic levels, from community colleges to Harvard. But when the coach talks about admitting the athlete, we hear nothing of high standards and excellence. We hear of being sensitive, understanding, caring, providing opportunity for all. To apply even minimal—let alone the same—standards in academics that coaches apply to their athletes, is to be insensitive, not understanding, denying opportunity, and, if the athlete is a minority, racist.

The embarrassment is not that coaches and boosters use this inconsistent and self-serving pleading, but that administrators and faculty accept it. Sensitivity masks surrender.

If a professor says the athlete needs to attend every class, the professor is told to be sensitive and understanding; if a professor tells the coach that the student needs to miss several practices to make up for his lack of academic preparation, the coach will ask the professor to be sensitive and understanding.

If I take a student who has little athletic ability to Coach and ask him to play the kid—just a few minutes a game—because it would be great for the young man's self-concept, Coach will tell me to get a life. The coach has standards, the professor has sensitivity.

The speed at which coaches and boosters shift from standards in athletics to sensitivity in academics is equaled only by the swiftness with which administrators shift from evidence to anecdote to avoid accountability.

When an athlete does well academically, administrators make the information public as evidence of the success of athletes. Any example of corruption is dismissed as an anecdote, accompanied by a lecture that conclusions should be based on evidence, not anecdotes. Then the school hides behind the shield of privacy—the Buckley amendment of 1974—so that the public can never see the evidence. As sensitivity masks surrender, privacy shields complicity.

Now comes the question: But wouldn't transparency or higher academic standards mean fewer African-American athletes in college? Think, for a second what assumptions reside within the question. One assumption is that transparency will work, that it will expose the exploitation and that universities will change what is exposed. The second assumption is the truly nasty undercurrent: that African-American children, especially those who wish to be athletes, cannot be expected to acquire academic skills sufficient to be prepared for higher education. There is no question: African-American children can learn academic skills to be prepared for higher education, and replacing athletic

scholarships with need-based financial aid would be the single most significant step we could take to give our elementary and secondary math, English, and history teachers a fighting chance *to teach*. The question is not race but commitment. The question is whether big-time college athletics serves or gives lip-service to that commitment.

### *Opportunity*

Denying opportunity is a terrible thing to do. Ask Tripp Smith:

At six feet even and a shade under 200 pounds, Tripp Smith is somewhat undersized for a big-time college linebacker. While some Division I colleges were interested in the native of Suwanee, Ga., outside Atlanta, they did not have room for him in their recruiting classes.

"I started talking to Georgia Tech, and they said, basically, 'We think you're a good player, and if you can get one year of conditioning, we might be interested,'" he says. "I talked to Duke and Liberty, and they said the same thing." . . .

Mr. Smith earned a 3.0 grade-point average and scored nearly 1200 on the SAT.<sup>14</sup>

Who denied opportunity to Tripp Smith? Coaches. Coach after coach after coach. That is a major part of their job. Accompany the coach on a recruiting trip. What does the coach do? He denies opportunity. Hundreds of times. Can't run? Can't jump? "I deny you." I deny you." The coach has standards. Everyone applauds and supports our coach's demand for excellence. Youngster after youngster is heartbroken that his dream of playing for good old State U is shattered. Tough. The young man didn't meet the standards of excellence so the coach denied him opportunity. Then the coach finds a young man who can run and jump like no other. Unfortunately, his academic record is weaker than those hundreds of young men to whom he denied an opportunity to get an education. Do we now hear of excellence, of standards? Nope. Now we hear we should provide opportunity for this fine young man. We switch from standards to sensitivity. What is sad is how supposedly intelligent people fall for this insulting self-serving appeal.

In other words, the coach conducts his business exactly the way universities do. How do we determine the best among us? How do we determine excellence in higher education? By denying opportunity. How do we know Northwestern is better than Drake? Northwestern denies opportunity to far more applicants than does Drake. And why is Harvard the best among us? Harvard denies opportunity to most of those who apply. The question is not denying opportunity to a black athlete; the question is whether that opportunity should go to a young black man who has accomplished in academics what he must do in athletics—earned it, or whether the opportunity will be given to a young man who did not earn it but

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<sup>14</sup> Welch Suggs, "Where Athletes Wait for a Shot at the Big Time," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 29, 2000, A52.

who will provide us pleasure. And they hold up their end of the bargain. They become heroes of our popular culture.

They are not, however, my heroes. Nor are Randy Moss, Tim Duncan, Kevin Garnett, LaBron James, Shaquille O'Neill my heroes. They are my entertainers. On Sunday afternoons and many evenings, I sit in awe of their athletic skills. I applaud their performances.

My heroes are the black children who integrated Central High School in Little Rock and the children who marched in Birmingham. Jim Zwerg and the other Freedom Riders who walked off that bus in Montgomery, Alabama are my heroes. Diane Nash, Fannie Lou Hamer, Vernon Dahmer, Bob Moses and Moses Wright, and Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney are my heroes. Maxine and Chris McNair are my heroes.

### *Reality*

Reading Shaun Powell's and his family's reaction to the courage of Carlos and Smith triggered my memory of being in the presence of The Little Rock Nine when they were honored last July at the National Education Association Representative Assembly. As a parliamentarian, I exit the stage when speakers are announced or awards or given. [No one attends a convention to see the parliamentarian.] Not this time. Slumped in my chair so I wouldn't block the view of any of the 13,000 delegates and others in the hall, I sat not four feet from Ernest Green and the other honorees standing to his right. I kept muttering, "I am in the presence of courage," and, as I did in the 1950s with Bud Wilkinson's Oklahoma football players, I found myself staring at the honorees, looking for signs that set them apart from the rest of us. Alas, no signs. They looked just like me and any of the others on stage or in the hall. It was what was inside them that made them special.

As soon as the ceremony ended, lightning fast, I went to Mr. Green and asked for his autograph. Such temptation to jump in front of everyone to ask the other honorees, but this was not my show. But I had Ernest Green's autograph.

This dear reader is not a driveling descent into sentimentality. On the contrary, this is the hard-nosed, no-nonsense moment of truth for reformers. Reformers have tried everything and appealed to everyone to address the academic corruption in college sports: Endless articles, columns, books, commissions, studies, over-sight committees, petitioning of Congress, appeals to Faculty Senates and university presidents. Endless exploitation.

### *"Free Mary Sue!"*

Carlos and Smith and my heroes teach me that change requires getting in someone's face. Take, for example, Michigan. Charging exploitation means getting in Mary Sue Coleman's face. It would take some courage, but Mary Sue Coleman is no Orval Faubus. And there is a good chance discomfort accompanies President Coleman. She is not alone. After all, there has to be something

unseemly about hiding faculty and administrator conduct behind a student's right to privacy. Drake University president David Maxwell let slip what every president fears. When several professors brought a recommendation for transparency to the Faculty Senate, President Maxwell "offered his concern as to how the posting of a student's course schedule and its process will be viewed by the outside world, including prospective students."<sup>15</sup> In other words, it is way too risky to let prospective students and their parents see what goes on behind the closed doors for a university that depends on student enrollment.

It doesn't have to be that way. Presidents with the support of the faculty will not face prospective students and their parents, will not face the press, will not face their colleagues with the academic records that now are accepted behind closed doors. In the final analysis, transparency becomes the ally of presidents who want to end the exploitation yet face athletics supporters who place sports above academic integrity and put pressure on them to admit unqualified students in order to provide the supporters with pleasure. Disclosure gives presidents a powerful weapon to say "No!" Reformers should feel the presidents' pain: Set them free.

There we have it. Some say college sports is too big to control, that it has evolved into a life of its own, that forces are at work making it too difficult to reform. My heroes teach me that the exploitation continues not because college athletics is so big, but because we are so small. That is the rock-hard reality of reform. What does it mean to honor Ernest Green's courage if I have so little of my own?

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<sup>15</sup> Drake University, Minutes of the Faculty Senate minutes, October 17, 2001.