A Review of Black Student-Athletes' College Experiences, Athlete Activism, & Activism in Summer 2020

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ABSTRACT

Black student-athletes have been highly stereotyped on college campuses for many years and have faced much racism and discrimination. In the summer of 2020, many of these athletes began sharing their negative experiences on social media as part of the wave of social activism that spread across the country after the death of George Floyd. Many also called for change both at their respective universities and at the societal level. This review first discusses Black student-athletes, including literature examining their experiences at Predominantly White institutions (PWIs). It will also share the history of athlete activism for professional and student-athletes, examples of Black athletes using their positions as agents of change in relation to social justice movements, and how student-athletes view activism. It concludes with a section discussing why it is necessary to provide student-athletes with a platform to speak out.

Introduction

The summer of 2020 was a time of racial justice movements and social activism in the United States after the video of a White police officer with his knee on Black man's neck, which ended in the man's death, was released to the public. The Black man was George Floyd, and after his death, people of all races, ages, and backgrounds joined in anti-racism and social justice protests and marches demanding change in many areas of American life. As a Black male college volleyball coach explained in a recent book titled *Facing Social Justice in Sports,* "In the aftermath of the death of George Floyd, I knew what was going on in America: a racial reckoning for justice and life" (Kuban, 2022, p. 49). In a news article discussing the protests for change in the summer of 2020, Millis (2020) explained that a group at the forefront of the movement was Black athletes, especially professional basketball players in the NBA and WNBA. However, professional athletes were not the only ones who became involved in the activism calling for change; many Black college athletes also took part in the movement and made their voices heard.

During the summer, many Black college athletes across the country sent tweets and made verbal requests for change at not only their respective universities, but also at the community and state levels, while also getting involved in various movements and protests. Many newspapers and news sites reported on the incidents and events and outlined some of the athletes' actions and requests. For example, in a news article titled *In summer of college athlete empowerment, what was gained?,* Russo (2020) reported that the athletes "called out coaches and administrators, backed causes both social (Black Lives Matter) and political (changing the Mississippi state flag)" and "organized campus marches, threatened boycotts, and trended on social media" (para. 1).

Literature Review

Black College Student-Athletes' Experiences at PWIs

According to Harper et al. (2013), Black male student-athletes are still "one of the most stereotyped populations on college campuses" (p. 7). In a study exploring the experiences of Black male student-athletes in regard to racism and stereotyping on campus, Beamon (2014) found that these student-athletes also must deal with racism and racial stereotypes. Hawkins (2010) also explained that many Black student-athletes are also academically unprepared for college and graduate at much lower rates than their White counterparts. Black student-athletes are also seen as more athlete-than-student. Many Black athletes still see college sports as a way to make it to the professional level and, therefore, professors, non-athlete students, both Black and White, and others on college campuses still think that athletes, especially Black athletes, are only in school because they see it as a steppingstone to a professional athletic career (Lawrence et al., 2016).

In addition, Cooper and Dougherty (2015) conducted a study analyzing both Black and non-Black student-athletes at both a Division I HBCU and a PWI to examine factors contributing to their academic performance and any differences in their overall experiences and educational goals. The researchers found that Black student-athletes attending the PWI had more negative "athletic relationships, academic and athletic engagement, and academic, athletic, and social satisfaction" in relation to their "non-Black counterparts at the same school" (p. 85). These examples demonstrate that "race continues to be a thorn in the side of NCAA member institutions" (Hawkins, 2010, p. xii), and race still matters for Black student athletes in all sports, not just in the revenue-generating sports. Likewise, race matters in all areas of Black athletes' campus lives including their academic, athletic, and social experiences, especially at Division I PWIs, as a result of the emphasis on winning over academics and socialization at these institutions (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015).

Black Student-Athletes Face Negative Perceptions and Beliefs

Since Black athletes are so highly stereotyped at PWIs, they deal with many negative perceptions and beliefs about them from faculty, staff, and peers, both Black and White. In a study exploring African American male athletes' experiences in several Pac-Ten universities, Martin et al. (2010) found that many non-athlete students, including other Black students, believe that Black student athletes are only there because of their athletic abilities and don't really belong. A Black male athlete who attended UCLA explained that Black, non-athlete students feel that Black athletes "haven't struggled like they did to get to UCLA," and that student-athletes are not real students because they only got in because of their athletic abilities (p. 139). Melendez (2008) also said that some Black athletes felt that their Black, non-athlete peers believed that their academic scholarships meant more than athletic scholarships.

Negative perceptions of Black student-athletes have caused other Black, non-student athletes to feel the need to "disassociate themselves from the 'Black male athletic identity,' especially in the academic context, because of stereotypical beliefs from faculty members and fellow students" (Hawkins, 2010, p. 115). A Black athlete in Melendez's (2008) study supported this statement when he explained a situation in which a Black, non-athlete student became angry when he was mistaken for an athlete. The athlete said the Black, non-athlete student was mad at professors, fellow students, and even Black athletes because "'everyone thinks he plays football…'cause he's big and Black'" (p. 439). This frustrated the Black athlete because he said there was nothing he could do about it, and it made him feel like no one, even fellow Black students, liked Black athletes. Melendez (2008) also reported that attitudes like this from other Black students started to make some Black athletes feel that they did not belong at the PWI they were attending, and the athletes also felt that being rejected by fellow Black students was more painful than being rejected by the majority group.

Other studies have found that some professors and White students at PWIs also believe that Black male athletes don't belong. In a study conducted by Porter (2019) to understand the experiences of Black college football

players who graduated from a Division I institution, a Black male athlete explained that he felt that some professors don't like them "because they don't feel like you were qualified in order to get into school; it is just your athletic prowess" (p. 90). Many White, non-athlete students also believe that Black student-athletes were only accepted to the institution because of their athletic talent. Hawkins (2010) described a White, female student who made a comment in class that she believed that "the only way many Black males were at this PWI was because of their athletic abilities" (p. 116). Another Black athlete also said that a White student had automatically assumed he was an athlete and said to him that if he didn't play a sport, then he probably wouldn't have been able to get into the school (Melendez, 2008). Yet another Black student-athlete in Porter's (2019) study said that he also felt that certain students didn't think he was qualified to be at his respective university. So, many professors and peers felt that Black athletes didn't deserve to be at their universities and got in because of their athletic abilities alone. While student-athletes, Black and White, are typically recruited for their athletic abilities rather than their academic achievements, this automatic assumption of academic incompetence and exclusive attitude indicate a deep-seated prejudice against Black students at PWI schools. These attitudes toward Black student-athletes have even led many of them to believe they don't belong. Kimball and Freysinger (2003) said many Black athletes even doubted that they would be attending their respective universities if not for athletics.

Bimper (2015) conducted a study exploring Black student-athletes' perceptions of racism based on their college experiences. One of the findings was that since some professors and non-athlete peers think that Black athletes don't belong or aren't qualified to be at the PWI they attend, there is also the idea that Black athletes are dumb and don't care about academics. Hawkins (2010) said that one of the reasons this stereotype is so prevalent is because the media portrays these athletes as intellectually inferior but athletically superior. From the time many Black student-athletes commit to a particular university, the public, student body, and university officials among others discuss their athletic prowess at length and, if anything is said about their academics, it's usually about their academic deficiencies. Therefore, many professors and fellow students have preconceived ideas of Black student-athletes' academic abilities before they ever set foot on campus.

Sato et al. (2017) conducted a study to "investigate and explain the academic, social, and athletic experiences of Black student-athletes attending a predominantly White degree-granting institution of higher education" (p. 104). Participants in this study expressed the belief that some of their professors held "negative sport (i.e. dumb jock) and race-based views of Black student-athletes" (p. 113). Clark et al. (2015) interviewed two generations of Black men, a father and his two sons, who had played basketball at the same university in the South. The purpose of the study was to explore the insights and experiences of multiple generations of African American student-athletes. One of the participant's experiences supported the dumb jock stereotype because he explained that the first impression of African American athletes from some professors was that "he's probably not going to participate much in this class; he might get a 'C' and pass" (p. 287). These perceptions led other Black student-athletes to feel that professors had a negative attitude about them even being in their classes. A Black football player in Sato et al.'s (2017) study expressed that teachers didn't like student-athletes "because they think we take the courses we can get easy A level grades," so they become offended when a group of athletes takes the same classes (p. 113).

Professors, however, aren't the only group at PWIs who believe many Black student-athletes are not smart and don't care about school. Many fellow students share similar thoughts. A White student expressed a similar belief that "many African Americans use sports as a central and only source of success and couldn't care less about education" (Lawrence et al., 2016, p. 339). A Black athlete also expressed that he felt that many of the students at his university thought Black athletes were stupid and needed all the help they could get (Porter, 2019).

Racist Remarks and Incidents

While many of these situations reflect racism because of the beliefs and viewpoints of some at the Black athletes' respective universities, some Black student-athletes reported that they encountered direct acts of racism in college. Incidents occurred both on and off campus. One Black athlete said a teammate joked about his parents telling him to

never bring a Black teammate home with him "because neighbors will 'freak out'" (Sato et al., 2017, p. 115). Another student-athlete discussed a racist incident that happened off campus his first summer in the city where his university was located. He said he was walking down the street and someone in a car driving down the street yelled a racist epithet out the window at him. He said he was shocked because he had never been called that name before (Melendez, 2008). Another Black student-athlete said he experienced a racist incident with another student-athlete. At a football game, he was sitting with a group of Black students, and a White baseball player who was sitting nearby couldn't find his wallet. The baseball player looked at the group of Black students and used a racial epithet when accusing one of the Black students of taking his wallet (Clark et al., 2015).

While all these incidents happened to Black male student-athletes, Black female-student athletes have also been the target of racist comments and incidents. A Black softball player attending a PWI said one of her White teammates "kept using the 'N-word' in her everyday vocabulary," and when she discussed it with her coach, her coach tried to downplay the situation and defend the White teammate (Kuban, 2022, p. 82). Kuban (2022) also shared that this same Black softball player endured a person yelling a racial slur out of his truck window as she was walking down the side of the road to softball practice. Again, when she told her coach about the incident, the coach downplayed the situation and simply said, "You're tough; it'll be okay" (p. 83). Some Black female athletes have also had racist and derogatory comments made about them on a national level. In 2007, Don Imus, a national radio host, called the University of Rutgers women's basketball players "'nappy headed hos'" (Hawkins, 2010, p. 33). While this incident didn't happen on a college campus, Hawkins (2010) said it still represents the racist/sexist viewpoints some have of Black, female athletes.

Withycombe (2011) examined the experiences of Black female student-athletes and found that the participants also faced similar discriminatory and racist stereotypes as Black male athletes. The participants said they were seen as "natural athletes as well as aggressive and dominating" (p. 487). A biracial female college volleyball player said she felt that many thought she got an athletic scholarship not because she worked as hard as others, but instead "because I'm part black, I guess I am apparently supposed to jump higher, move faster, hit harder, and never run out of energy" (Kuban, 2022, p. 26). In addition, another Black female athlete also said she felt that many believed, similarly to Black male athletes, that Black female athletes were also unintelligent and were only in college because of their athletic abilities (Withycombe, 2011).

Despite these examples, many of the Black athletes in Melendez's (2008) study did say that incidents like these were not common occurrences on campus. This supports Steele's (2007) discussion in which he said that when he is speaking with college students and asks for specific examples of racism or discrimination, he either gets "nothing at all or references to some small slight that requires the most labored interpretation to be seen as racist" (p. 39). Therefore, many of the Black student-athletes racist encounters were with strangers outside of campus which they said didn't bother them much. However, difficult relationships with their teammates and coaches, which many of them expressed were an issue, did affect them (Melendez, 2008).

Relationships with Coaches and White Teammates

Black athletes in several studies reported that their relationships with their coaches and White teammates were problematic. The Black football players in Melendez's (2008) study said that they felt misunderstood and at times resented by both their coaches and White teammates because they "couldn't understand [the Black players'] perspectives" (p. 441). Shawn, one of the athletes interviewed, said that they also felt judged by their coaches and White teammates because of the "unfair way that the Black players felt their coaches and non-Black teammates viewed many aspects of their culture, attitude, music, and appearance" (p. 434). They also had the perception that White coaches wanted them to change to "fit into the coaches' world" (p. 434), and they were not viewed the same way as their White counterparts, which led to them feeling like their coaches' played favorites. The Black football players believed that White teammates would receive more playing time even if they weren't as good because the White athletes would act

how the coaches wanted them to and buy into the system, which was felt to be selling out by many of the Black athletes (Melendez, 2008).

Other Black athletes had more direct negative experiences with their teammates and coaches. Sato et al. (2017) shared the story of Antonio, another Black student-athlete, who said his teammates would tease him in the locker room, and they thought since he was Black and from an inner-city school, that he was stupid. Another Black athlete who attended college on a track scholarship said his teammates were not very welcoming and tended to ignore him because "they had not seen Black people in their towns" and "did not know how to interact with" him, so they didn't welcome him" (p. 115). Hawkins (2010) found that coaches pressured another Black student-athlete to miss class to attend practice or team meetings because "his physical well-being was of little concern and his education was of less concern to these coaches" (p. 72). Again, Black student-athletes reported their beliefs that their bodies and performing well for the university was most important to coaches. This student-athlete decided to quit his sport because he was more concerned about his academics (Hawkins, 2010).

Overcoming Obstacles

Despite all these negative experiences, many Black athletes have found ways to be successful at PWIs. As discussed earlier, one of the negative experiences many Black students face at PWIs is academically related. Both the father and his sons in Clark et al.'s (2015) study had the issue of being, or potentially being, placed in an academic program that was not particularly challenging because of low academic expectations. However, the father helped his sons avoid this because it happened to him, and as a result his sons were able to take control of their academics and change the narrative and "reverse the impact of a system designed to negate their academic prowess" (p. 286). The father and sons also believed that for other Black athletes to be successful, they had to take control of their own success and use all the resources available to them in college. The youngest son felt that "the onus for academic success should be placed squarely on the shoulders of African American athletes" (p. 286). Porter (2019) also found that Black athletes who were able to take more control of their academic responsibilities were more successful and less stressed in college. Black scholars have also shared the idea of Black people taking responsibility for their own futures. For example, Shelby Steele, an African-American scholar, believes that Black people must take responsibility for their own development and not rely on others, especially White people and those in academia, to help them succeed (Steele, 2007).

Black student athletes in Martin et al.'s (2010) study also explained that they took responsibility for their own academic success. They were aware of the negative perceptions and stereotypes towards them, so they felt that they had a point to prove to their professors and fellow non-athlete classmates that they were worthy of being students at prestigious PWIs such as Stanford and UCLA. Therefore, they employed several strategies and tactics to show they could be successful students and athletes. The athletes believed education was the way for them to overcome many of society's stereotypes and prove many people wrong, and they did this by "discovering new ways to compete against the top students in their classes, furthering their leadership pursuits, remaining equipped with new skills and knowledge, and sustaining a relentless determination to succeed" (p. 139). Athletes in Sato et al.'s (2017) study also expressed that to overcome negative academic stereotypes, they would work hard to meet all their class requirements. Their motivation was to work hard in the class to "reduce the professor's negative stereotypes about student-athletes" (p. 113).

Black student-athletes in Thompson's (2010), Porter's (2019), and Sato et al. 's (2017) studies expressed that support from a variety of resources helped them navigate the challenges of attending a PWI. According to Thompson (2010), some of these resources included emotional support from their families when they faced adversity both as students and as athletes. Their families helped explain to them how to fit in with White teammates and students, but they were also there for them emotionally during moments of defeat in their sport. However, the athletes also expressed that it helped them to have their families physically at games as well. Porter (2019) found that Black football players were able to be more successful in college if they could develop a network of people early in their college years to help them adjust and transition to college. Black student-athletes in some studies also reported that it was helpful to

have a mentor, such as an older teammate, to learn from. One of the participants in Sato et al.'s (2017) study said that he regretted not having a mentor from the football team to help him navigate the challenges of college. Finally, Porter (2019) also found that developing good relationships with their professors was another strategy some athletes used to help them succeed in college.

Opportunities and Rewards

While many studies have found that many Black student-athletes have negative experiences at PWIs, several shared positives about their time in college. For example, one Black football player said playing a sport gave him the chance to attend college that he might not have had if he hadn't received an athletic scholarship. He further explained, "Without this opportunity, I would not be able to attend other colleges or universities because my family could not afford to pay my tuition. That is why I work hard to contribute to team victories as much as possible. This university is my life saver for me" (Sato et al., 2017, p. 116).

Academic resources provided by the university were also seen as positives for some Black student-athletes. Diane, a Black student-athlete from Jamaica, struggled with formal academic writing and said her university's writing centers and academic counseling support were helpful. She said the resources helped her have more academic success in college, especially since she was not from the United States (Sato et al., 2017).

While many Black student-athletes feel that professors have negative perceptions of them, Sato et al. (2017) reported that some of the athletes' professors were supportive and helpful. Antonio, a Black football player, was struggling with his writing, so one of his professors proofread his papers and provided feedback before the deadline. He said he was appreciative of his professor putting in extra time and effort to help him learn. A participant in Porter's (2019) study said that he learned in his last couple of years of college that having good relationships with faculty was important, and he was able to find some he "could just go and talk to and get some good, interesting insights" (p. 92). Seeking help and support from professors is important for student-athletes because as Comeaux and Harrison (2011) found, "relationships that student–athletes establish with faculty and peers other than their teammates are directly related to academic success" (p. 240). So, since not all professors view Black student-athletes negatively, some athletes are able to build positive relationships with their professors, which in turn helps them be more successful in college.

Some Black student athletes have also cited participation in their sport as a positive at a PWI. Some athletes said their sport helped them relieve stress and better survive the challenges attending a PWI can cause. A Black male student-athlete explained that his sport is something he loved doing and being a part of it in college was a great feeling. He said when he was in the game and was successful, it helped relieve a lot of his stress (Kimball & Freysinger, 2003). Another Black male student-athlete said that being on the field competing with 80,000 people cheering him on "gave him meaning, a sense of worth"; therefore, "his athletic identity gave him these privileged experiences that enabled him to survive" on a campus where many valued him as an athlete but not as a person (Hawkins, 2010, p. 118).

As a result of these positive experiences, many Black athletes do achieve another positive accomplishment that is the ultimate goal of those who go to college: graduation. The father and both of his sons in Clark et al. 's (2015) study overcame many obstacles at the PWI they attended and all three graduated. They took control of their academics and futures to beat the challenges and stereotypes that many Black student-athletes face. Hawkins (2010) also reported that many Black athletes have been able to turn their negative experiences into positive ones and have successful careers in occupations such as "professors, lawyers, doctors, political leaders, managers, accountants" and others (p. 18). College has provided an opportunity for upward social mobility for many Black student-athletes who might not have had this chance had it not been for sports. Although many success stories exist, according to Hawkins (2010), they are not sufficiently highlighted.

Athletes and Social and Political Activism

Although participating in athletics can have various positive aspects, in many situations the negatives still outweigh the positives. Sport and society have been connected throughout history (Kuban, 2022), so when there are injustices, both political and social, in society, many times they are mirrored in sport. Thus, the struggle for equality and justice in society carries over into sport (Cooper et al., 2019; Edwards, 2016b; Kaufman & Wolff, 2010). Black athletes have faced discrimination, racism, and other injustices since they first had opportunities to compete against White athletes in various athletic events. This includes athletes at both the professional and collegiate levels. Thus, Black athlete activism began early in the 20th century and has continued into the 21st century as athletes have fought for social justice and racial equality at not only the broader societal level, but also at the collegiate level, and especially at PWIs (Gilmore, 1995; Edwards, 2016b).

According to Kluch (2020) in a study that focused specifically on recent college student-athletes and their definitions of activism, sport gives athletes, especially Black athletes, a platform and the recognition needed to overcome the stereotypes they face while working to create positive social change, especially since sport is popular worldwide. Kaufman and Wolff (2010) discussed other aspects of sport that also make it a good platform for activism and the fight for political and social justice. The researchers conducted a qualitative study with 21 in-depth interviews of student-athletes who engaged in social or political activism, and they identified four dimensions of sport that can be connected to efforts for societal change. These include social consciousness, meritocracy, responsible citizenship, and interdependence. As the researchers further elaborated, "sport can, and should, be a vehicle for progressive social change" (p. 156) because "sport and the struggle for social and political justice are not mutually exclusive" (p. 171).

Because of the interconnectedness of sport and activism, many Black athletes and activists at all participation levels have "critically reflected upon this arrangement and courageously engaged in actions to promote social justice within and beyond sporting spaces" (Cooper et al., 2019, p. 151). As Kuban (2022) summarized, "athletes are in a unique situation to be a catalyst for change" (p. xvi). Athletes can succeed as activists because the traits to be successful as an athlete can help make athletes successful in activism as well (Kaufmann & Wolff, 2010). The next section will provide examples of athlete activism throughout the 20th and 21st centuries to better show how sport, society, and activism are intertwined and how athletes have used activism as a platform to speak out against areas in society that they see as unjust, discriminatory, and racist among others.

Activism Defined

Many scholars provide definitions of activism which vary across context and historical periods. In many cases, the definition of activism is dependent on the context in which people are using it and who is defining it. In an exploratory study of Black male college athletes' perceptions on race and athlete activism, Agyemang et al. (2010) defined various forms of activism as "organized and collective forms of protest and conflict" (p. 420). Cooper et al. (2019) said activism is "engagement in intentional actions that disrupt oppressive hegemonic systems by challenging a clearly defined opposition while simultaneously empowering individuals and groups disadvantaged by inequitable arrangements" (pp. 154-155). Part of activism also includes fighting for social change and being active at times of larger movements in society (Cooper et al., 2019).

Scholars, athletes, and organizations connected to sport have also provided definitions of activism. In a study examining the consequences athletes face as a result of activism, Kaufman (2008) provided a specific definition of activist athletes and described them as those who "used sport or their role as athletes to promote social and political change" (p. 220). Kaufman and Wolff (2010) gave several definitions of activism provided directly by athletes. To some of the athletes in their study, activism was "starting advocacy organizations, engaging in symbolic protests during competitions, and resigning from a team as a form of protest" (p. 158). The NCAA (2022b) also provided a definition of activism. It defined activism as "the practice of taking intentional action to bring about social, political, economic or environmental change." Further, it can take many forms but "often relies on a strategic, organized and

action-oriented approach to address persistent systemic issues in society" (para. 1). Kuban (2022) said that activism from an athletes' perspective is "fighting for causes they are passionate about" (p. xvii).

Kluch (2020) also provided several definitions of activism that came directly from the athlete participants in the study. Their definitions were more closely related to student athlete activism, and change was a common aspect in several of their definitions. For most participants, activism "meant actively working towards a change they perceived as needed in society," and more specifically, athlete activism "meant actively seeking opportunities to promote social justice on campus and beyond" (p. 577). However, other participants also provided separate and more specific definitions. One participant said an activist is someone who is clearly trying to make a change for the better, and another said activism was about truly believing in an issue and doing something to improve the situation. Others gave more tangible aspects of activism as being involved, active, and engaged on campus in various activities and organizations that are all working to promote change. For others, activism was about fighting for the oppressed and marginalized groups in society who don't have a voice or a strong representation in society and fighting for the equality of all. Finally, for others, activism was being the first to take a stand against injustices and being at the forefront of promoting positive change. These athletes also thought it was important to use their position as athletes to get involved in activism (Kluch, 2020).

History of Athlete Activism: Four Waves

To better understand and apply these definitions of activism, it is necessary to understand the history of Black athlete activism. Cooper et al. (2019) reviewed different forms and periods of athlete activism and explained that "it is important to contextualize these actions within a broader sociohistorical, socio-political, and socio-cultural framework" (p. 155). In 2016, at the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport's (NASSS) annual conference, sport sociologist Dr. Harry Edwards discussed these aspects of athlete activism more in detail in his keynote speech titled "The Fourth Wave: Black Athlete Protests in the Second Decade of the 21st Century."

Edwards himself was a former Black student-athlete at San Jose State University (SJSU) in the 1960s. In 1967, he led a protest on campus to fight many policies, practices and the overall culture at SJSU because the policies, practices and culture were racist and discriminatory towards Black students (Edwards, 2016a). After Edwards earned his doctorate, he became an expert in the field of athlete activism. In the keynote speech at the 2016 NASSS conference, Edwards (2016a) explained the four waves of athlete activism throughout history, and each new wave comes as a response to a racist experience or experiences Black athletes endured at either the professional or collegiate level.

The First Wave (1900-1945)

According to Edwards (2016a), the first wave occurred from the early 1900s to the end of World War II and focused on "gaining legitimacy" (Cooper et al., 2019, p. 155). It was during this time that Black athletes such as boxer Jack Johnson and Olympian Jesse Owens were at the top of their respective sports (Edwards, 2016b; Gilmore, 1995). However, despite being at the top of their sports and revered as athletes, they struggled to be seen as anything more than an athlete. They had to constantly fight to be respected and treated with basic human dignity since they were Black men living in a time of extreme racism and segregation (Clark et al., 2015; Edwards, 2016b; Gilmore, 1995).

Cooper et al. (2019) explained that White people at the time didn't like it when Black athletes had significant athletic success that challenged White superiority, but White people even felt this way in areas not related to athletics, such as academic success. For example, another Black athlete and activist at that time, Paul Robeson, was highly successful in both athletics and academics. However, he was also very outspoken about social injustices and, therefore, faced severe pushback from White people when he spoke out and fought for equality. White racists preferred athletes who were less outspoken on these issues because they felt it was in the best interest of the country if Black athletes kept quiet and didn't cause trouble. Therefore, Black athletes during this wave had to fight to be seen as "legitimate" both in and out of sports and to have the right to speak out against injustices.

The Second Wave (1946-early 1960s)

The second wave of athlete activism began right after World War II and lasted through the early 1960s (Edwards, 2016a). This was the time of athletes such as Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in professional sports. By the early 1950s, all professional sports teams were fully integrated, and by the early 1960s, all major intercollegiate athletic conferences had started integrating as well (Cooper et al., 2019; Gilmore, 1995). Cooper et al. (2019) explained that by Black athletes finally breaking the color barrier in historically White sporting events and institutions, it "signified increased positional diversity that had been previously limited and, in many cases, denied" (p. 157).

Despite integration, many of the Black athletes at this time weren't only concerned with racial progress and integration in sporting events and institutions. For example, Jackie Robinson was also a political activist who supported human rights movements and protests against other social injustices such as apartheid in South Africa (Cooper et al., 2019). However, according to Yan et al. (2018), many Black athletes at this time did not participate in much social activism because mainstream recognition and acceptance for athletes required avoiding publicly discussing racial inequalities embedded in society. The media would not address racism and inequalities because they wanted to keep politics and sports separate. As a result, it was more difficult for Black athletes during this time to organize and fight the racism and inequalities they faced since it was not made as public (Edwards, 2016b), and as previously discussed, those who did faced backlash and criticism from the public.

The Third Wave (mid 1960s-1970s)

The third wave of athlete activism accompanied the Civil Rights Movement that began in the mid-to-late 1960s (Edwards, 2016a) and "focused on demanding dignity and respect" (Cooper at al., 2019, p. 158). Until this time, Jackie Robinson had been the main representation of the political and social justice movement for Black athletes (Edwards, 2016b), but during this wave many other Black professional athletes began using their platform to speak out against continued racism and discrimination in the United States (NCAA, 2022b), and Black college student-athletes also started taking more of a stance against discrimination and other injustices at their respective universities (Edwards, 2016b). As Cooper et al. (2019) further explained, "Despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965, African Americans were discontent with the pervasive discrimination and oppression they faced in the U.S." (p. 158). Many Black athletes also continued to feel frustrated with how slowly change was occurring in regard to socioeconomic inequalities and other issues of racism and discrimination that continued to impact African Americans in the United States (Hartmann, 1996).

During the third wave, popular Black professional and Olympic athletes such as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown, Tommie Smith, and John Carlos played significant roles in athlete activism (Cooper et al., 2019; Edwards, 2016b; NCAA, 2022b). These athletes protested publicly at sporting events such as the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games, fought major league associations on issues such as free agency, and voiced their opinions in many other areas of societal injustices. Also during this time, many Black college student-athletes at universities across the country began challenging racism and discrimination at the PWIs they attended (Edwards, 2016b).

One of the most outspoken professional Black athletes at the time was boxer Muhammad Ali (Edwards, 2016b). He protested the Vietnam War, refused to be drafted, and strongly "denounced White supremacy and economic oppression in all its forms" (Cooper et al., 2019, p. 158). Olympians Tommie Smith and John Carlos also made significant statements on an international stage. After placing 1st and 3rd respectively in the 200 meters at the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, the Olympians raised their fists and bowed their heads during the medal ceremony and the playing of the national anthem (Agyemang et al., 2010; Kaufman & Wolff, 2010).

In 1998, 30 years after Smith and Carlos participated in this activism, Carlos spoke to the UCLA football team who participated in its own protest. Carlos explained his actions at the 1968 Olympics. He said that being an athlete with the world watching gave him a position to do something. One of the student-athletes in attendance summarized one of Carlos' statements and said he explained that "it was more of an empowerment; it was a sign to show

that the status quo wasn't good enough, and that all people of all races and all ethnicities and backgrounds and classes should be treated as equal" (Kaufmann & Wolff, 2010, p. 160).

Cooper et al. (2019) said that actions and beliefs by professional Black athletes and Black college student-athletes during the Civil Rights Movement reflected the actions and beliefs of many of their Black, non-athlete peers, such as the great U.S. Civil Rights Leader Martin Luther King Jr. The non-athlete Black activists at the time also supported the protests and activism of the athletes. Protests to cause disruption were commonplace at the time, but some scholars believe that 1968 was the height of Black athlete engagement in activism (Bass, 2002; Wiggins, 1992). Following this period, Black athlete activism significantly declined (Edwards, 2016a; Hartmann, 1996) to the point of stagnation.

Stagnation (1970s-2005)

There are a few examples of Black athlete activism during this time period. For example, Agyemang et al. (2010) said a few NBA players spoke out on societal injustices during the 90s. In addition, some Black college student-athletes protested potential bills and other parts of society with which they didn't agree. In 1990, a track athlete at the University of Texas organized a rally to protest a series of racist incidents on campus. More than 100 student-athletes marched through campus and called for racial justice (NCAA, 2022b). Kaufman and Wolff (2010) also provided an example. In 1998, the UCLA football team wore Black armbands during a nationally televised game to protest a California state proposal that, if passed, would have ended affirmative action in higher education in California. Members of the team wanted to use their positions to reach a large audience to bring awareness to the proposal because they believed it was unfair for Black students who wanted to go to college, and, therefore, should not pass. They decided a nationally televised football game was a good time to bring awareness to their protest.

In addition, Kaufman and Wolff (2010) told the story of two female basketball players who participated in activism in 2003. Toni Smith, who is biracial, was a senior at Manhattanville College in New York, and she turned her back on the American flag during the national anthem at her games as a protest to a potential war with Iraq. Deidra Chatman, who is Black, was a freshman at the University of Virginia. Smith turned her back first, and Chatman decided in solidarity to turn her back to the flag as well. Chatman said she received mixed reactions to her activism. She explained that some "people said that it's not the place to be doing that, but other people were glad that athletes actually took the time to think about these things" (p. 167).

However, despite these examples of Black athlete protests and activism, according to Edwards (2016a), the period following the Civil Rights Movement, from the early 1970s through the mid-2000s, was considered a stagnant period of Black athlete activism. Agyemang et al. (2010) elaborated on this statement and explained that as of 2008, there were not many recent examples of Black athletes at any level, collegiate or professional, participating in activism. For the most part, since Harry Edwards organized athletes in the late 1960s, there were "very few instances of Black male athlete activism" through the mid-2000s (p. 421). More specifically, there were few, if any, Black male college athletes who took a stance against injustices and inequalities in society during this time period (Agyemang et al., 2010).

Scholars have provided many reasons why athletes were less likely to protest and speak out about societal injustices during this time period. For one, African Americans gained more representation in society in areas such as politics, mass media, sport leadership, and education during the years following the Civil Rights Movement and during the period of stagnation from 1970 to 2005. This increase in representation in addition to the legislation and policies passed during this era led many Black Americans to believe that true racial equality had been achieved (Wiggins & Miller, 2003). Consequently, many, including Black athletes, believed there wasn't as much need for activism (Cooper et al., 2019). Athletes in Bimper's (2015) study reinforced this idea in statements such as "race is kind of less of an issue to a lot of people because of breakthroughs of people like Ali," and "We got a Black man running things in the White house now. That sure wouldn't have happened years ago, but we've changed 180 degrees" (p. 236). Finally, Bimper (2015) and Brown (2003), who conducted a study to see if White and Black athletes still saw racism and

discrimination in their respective sports, found that some athletes, including both Black and White athletes, don't believe that racism exists on the playing field.

According to Cooper et al. (2019), another cause of stagnation was that some of the more famous professional athletes who emerged during this time period such as Michael Jordan, O.J. Simpson, Tiger Woods, and Carl Lewis felt that sport, politics, and activism should not mix. Many of these athletes were also concerned that if they brought politics into sport and offended someone with a different viewpoint, the activism would hurt their profits on items such as signature Nike shoes and other endorsements. As a result, these beliefs from several well-known and influential professional athletes helped to "temper African American activism in and through sport" (Cooper et al., 2019, p. 161).

Yet some argue that another reason professional athletes were more hesitant to speak out during this time is because they could be seen as agitators or a form of traitor to the country. They could also face discipline from their teams, and all of this could lead to the end of their athletic careers (Cooper et al., 2019). Many White and Black people during this time also believed that Black citizens had much more equality in society due to the passing of legislation and policies like affirmative action and more access to "White-owned capitalist spaces" (Cooper et al., 2019, p. 161). Therefore, many Black athletes didn't see the need to participate in activism because they thought it would cause problems for their image and their teams (Cooper et al., 2019). A combination of these issues and concerns among other reasons also led to Black student athletes being hesitant to speak out and participate in activism during this time period (Agyemang et al., 2010).

Agyemang et al. (2010) interviewed Black student athletes to gain a better understanding of how they felt about race and athlete activism in sport in America. Many of the student-athletes interviewed were aware of several Black athletes who had come before them who helped pave the way for their opportunities as Black college athletes. Several of the participants said they were appreciative of their predecessors and all they had fought for because they believed it gave them opportunities they might not have had without their sacrifices. As one participant said, it was "'a lot of people, a lot of blood, sweat, and tears . . . anguish, family pain'" (p. 427).

However, despite knowing some of the history of many athletes who had fought racism, discrimination, and inequalities before them and being grateful for them, the athletes expressed hesitation to speak out. They admitted that racism was still an issue in American society but cited many reasons why there had been a lull in activism, and athletes didn't fight it like many in the past. One participant said that many Black athletes today just don't care as much as those in the past and don't want to get involved in "political stands and stuff like that" (Agyemang et al., 2010, p. 427). Two respondents also said that athletes got caught up in their sport and were more focused on "'tryin' to make it to the league…tryin' to get money'" (pp. 427-428). This respondent also said that the athletes didn't want to speak out for fear of criticism that could also hurt their chances at professional contracts. Finally, another respondent said many athletes didn't seem to understand the opportunities they'd been given and took it for granted, so they didn't feel the need to take a stand like their predecessors did (Agyemang et al., 2010).

In a study exploring Black college student-athletes' viewpoints of racism and how this racism could affect their experiences and development in college, Singer (2005) identified additional reasons athletes were hesitant to speak out against racism. A quote from one of the participants suggested that "African-American males find it difficult to challenge the infrastructure of college sport from within," and they feel that if they spoke out against racism, it would hurt their status with the team (p. 377). While they were members of the team, they didn't feel comfortable calling out racism and injustices.

The Fourth Wave (2005-present)

In more recent years, athletes have left some of these hesitations behind as a new wave of activism arrived. According to Edwards (2016a), the fourth wave really began with the rise of social media as it has played a significant role in supporting and contributing to current Black athletes' activism. After a long period of stagnation in athlete activism, social media helped in reviving the social justice movement by raising awareness and casting a light on racial injustice

and police brutality in everyday life in America. Technology and social media have helped more athletes find their voices (Kuban, 2022). Both professional and college athletes have used social media to share comments, put out information, and connect when they see a societal injustice or issue (Cooper et al., 2019). As Yan et al. (2018) further explained, the rise and increased widespread use of social media has helped student-athletes in different sports and activist situations to "assert narratives and positionalities" that were more difficult in the past (p. 27). Social media has made it easier for student-athletes to share their thoughts and ideas while also finding others to connect with who feel similarly which can also help them accomplish their activism goals. A participant in one study discussed, sport, political activism, and social change and said social media has provided a space for Black athletes to speak directly to their fans about issues, while also forcing many to see issues in Black communities, such as police brutality, that they had previously been able to ignore (Agyemang et al., 2010).

One of the most outspoken professional athletes on social media in the last decade is NBA player Lebron James (Galily, 2019). There aren't many scholarly articles providing examples of professional athletes' social media activism, but a 2016 *Sports Illustrated* article outlined the history of James' activism. He has used a variety of platforms including Twitter to speak out on many societal injustices Galily, 2019). According to Srinivasan (2017), the NBA has used social media more than any other professional organization to speak out against injustices and has "shown that social media can be a great tool in shaping social and political causes" (para. 6). In addition to Lebron James, some other high-profile Black professional athletes who have emerged recently as activists and have used social media as a tool to share their views and speak out against injustices include Colin Kaepernick and Venus Williams. These athletes used their platforms to support the ideologies of movements such as Black Lives Matter and other social justice causes they believed in and supported (Edwards, 2016a). When athletes work together on similar causes and use tools at their disposal such as social media, their activism can have more impact especially when "those causes are adopted by a strong and engaged organization with a broad reach" (Srinivasan, 2017, para. 6). Sport organizations such as the NBA can help empower athletes even more because of their reach,-power, and commitment to supporting activism.

This organizational power of social media has also led to college athletes, especially Black college athletes, becoming more involved in activism. With social media they can advocate for themselves and organize and connect with others more easily to participate in activism and get their message out (Yan et al., 2018). One of the most recognized examples of Black student athletes using social media for activism occurred in 2015. In a study researching the power of Twitter to help student-athletes mobilize, Yan et al. (2018) explored a protest that started when a group of Black students at the University of Missouri organized to protest the racism and discrimination they were experiencing at the university. The group created a Twitter hashtag called #ConcernedStudent1950 to document their experiences and to bring awareness to the racism they continued to face. The hashtag, however, gained much more widespread attention when African American members of the university's football team also decided to start using the hashtag to bring awareness to the racist events and to support their fellow Black students. By using the hashtag on their own social media accounts, the African American football players helped take the hashtag "'Concerned Student 1950' to greater heights" (p. 25). The hashtag became known not only nationally but internationally as well. The football team also used Twitter to announce that they would not practice or play in any games until other racial issues were resolved. Social media contributed to this successful example of athlete activism that occurred during the fourth wave (Yan et al., 2018).

There are several other examples of Black student-athletes using social media to promote change during the fourth wave, however, few have been discussed in scholarly articles. In an article published in *The New York Times* discussing some of these examples, Tracy (2016) wrote about Nigel Hayes, a Black athlete at the University of Wisconsin. Hayes used Twitter to speak out on many injustices both within society and at his university. Hayes, who had 80,000 Twitter followers, posted about topics such as BLM and called his university to act on issues of racism within the university. His social media posts garnered national attention, and he was asked to speak on ESPN.

In addition to a reemergence of activism fueled by technology and social media, the fourth wave is also different because it shows the power student athletes have. As the example of athletes at the University of Missouri

showed, when they come together as a group to advocate and push for change as a united front, they are much more likely to accomplish their goals (McCoy et al., 2017). Social media plays an important role in this wave because it made it easier for student-athletes to organize (Yan et al., 2018) and "wield more power" while also showing that they "understand the legitimacy of their athleticism and how they can be used to cultivate change" (McCoy et al., 2017, p. 156). In a study examining the role of social workers regarding student-athlete social justice, activism, and change, McCoy et al. (2017) further explained that college athletes bring in a lot of money for their respective universities, and through threatening boycotts and taking other similar actions, they can get university administration to listen to them. Actions such as this in the fourth wave are "largely a social call to action to promote change for themselves and others" (p. 156).

Despite the provided examples and spike in activism among Black student-athletes during the fourth wave, many discussed that they were still hesitant to speak out. The possibility of facing backlash and criticism from other areas of campus and society continues to prevent some Black college athletes from speaking out, especially when it concerns larger social justice issues (Intosh et al., 2020; McCoy et al., 2017). In fact, as McCoy et al. (2017) stated, while the actions of some athletes in the past were enough to create some change, the backlash some faced was enough to prevent others from speaking out. In some cases, former athletes at the universities where athletes did protest did not support the activism and instead publicly defended the university. For example, two White former football players at the University of Missouri publicly defended the university and the football program but harshly criticized the Black football players who protested (Crawford, 2015; Miller, 2015). Some adverse reactions even continued long after the activism. For example, in the fall semester the year after the protests and boycotts by members of the University of Missouri football team, the university saw declining enrollment. Many blamed the athletes for the decline in enrollment since they brought attention to racist and discriminatory practices at the universities (Anderson, 2013; McCoy et al., 2017).

Another reason student athletes do not speak out against injustices and racism or get more involved in activism is because they may not be allowed to. Yan et al. (2018) reported that because social media made it easier for athletes to speak out with powerful and far-reaching impact, some universities have taken action to limit student-athletes' ability to do so. These policies can include "tightened policies and regulations developed by college athletic departments to monitor athletes' social media accounts, preventing them from speaking, particularly when facing events that involve racial controversies" (Yan et al., 2018, p. 35). For example, participants in Beamon's (2014) study discussed a racial incident in which members of a White fraternity posted "'Blackface pictures'" on the Internet. Many Black, non-athlete students organized protests because they were frustrated with how the university handled the situation. However, some Black athletes explained that participating in the protests would go against their coach, and they knew they had "to represent in a certain way" and "do what the coach says" (pp. 128-129).

Finally, Bimper (2015) said athletes expressed that people were uncomfortable bringing up race in athletic departments. This could include athletes, coaches, and other athletic administration who don't want to talk about race and racism because they're not easy conversations or topics. Consequently, other athletes said it wasn't worth engaging in these discussions at the college level because coaches and athletic departments and their feelings on these issues have a lot of influence over athletes (Bimper, 2015). In a study assessing how college athletes viewed their athletic departments' roles in social activism, Bunch and Cianfrone (2022) noted that some people feel athletes' roles are on the field, and they are there to entertain, not speak out. Additionally, a White female athlete felt that her athletic department was "trying to walk a fine line of supporting Black athletes enough that they feel better while not upsetting their season ticket holders" (Bunch & Cianfrone, 2022, p. 1042). For these reasons, many student-athletes still have to determine if speaking out is worth it for the potential criticism and backsplash they could face from a variety of sources (Intosh et al., 2020). However, many athletes became less hesitant to speak out in the summer of 2020.

Athlete Activism in the Summer of 2020

In the fall of 2020, the NCAA conducted a survey of more than 24,000 student athletes to learn more about their viewpoints on a variety of societal issues at the time, especially activism related to the BLM movement and racial protests that resulted from the death of George Floyd. The results showed that more than half of the 24,000 surveyed had used social media to post content about race or racial justice and more than a quarter had participated in a racial justice rally or protest. Student athletes in general were found to have a positive view of activism, but Black student-athletes had stronger positive attitudes and intentions to engage in activism (Intosh et al., 2020; NCAA 2022b) .

A common occurrence in the summer of 2020 was athletes at many levels calling for change. Bunch and Cianfrone (2022) said that recent events, such as the racial injustices and subsequent social activism that occurred in the summer of 2020, caused student-athletes to "utilize their public images and social media platforms to influence change" (p. 1024). As previously discussed, many Black college athletes wanted to see change not only at their respective universities, but also at the community and state levels (Russo, 2020). In a study looking at student-athletes' engagement in activism and their perceptions of social justice and support in these areas, Martin et al. (2022) found that part of the reason student-athletes began participating in more activism in the summer of 2020 is that "athletes in the contemporary cultural climate view activism as a valuable undertaking in driving systemic change" (p. 177). In addition, the athletes in Kluch's (2020) study viewed activism as "using the social power they have as an athlete to promote strategic change in everyday situations" (p. 566). Thus, many athletes engaged in various forms of activism both in person and through social media. The athletes believed they needed to participate in activism and felt they had the power and position to help create change in society.

In support of these findings, many news and website articles written during the summer of 2020 provided examples of student-athletes participating in various forms of activism, both in person and through social media. In an article about student-athlete protests and the use of social media in these protests, Blinder and Witz (2020) reported that athletes at several universities participated in rallies and protests and used Twitter to report racism that had occurred within their programs. The writers also reported that football players at Florida State University used Twitter to call out their head coach after he lied about speaking to each of them individually in person about the death of George Floyd. In an article discussing Kansas State University athletes speaking out against a controversial tweet, Haynes (2020) reported that athletes used Twitter to take a stand against a racial incident on campus. After a White student at the university sent a tweet making racial comments regarding the death of George Floyd, members of the university's men's and women's basketball team and football team responded on Twitter that they would not represent the university if it didn't take action against the student.

Another prominent example was when Chuba Hubbard, a star running back at Oklahoma State University, used Twitter to call out his coach for wearing a T-shirt supporting OAN, a conservative news outlet that had a reputation for being insensitive to topics such as the BLM movement. His tweet came shortly after the murder of George Floyd, and he said he wouldn't participate in football at OSU until changes were made. Later that summer, he also used his platform to call for the resignation of the Oklahoma County District Attorney after he cleared two police officers who shot and killed a Black teenager (Bailey, 2020).

Although student-athletes like Hubbard felt more empowered and increasingly spoke out during the summer of 2020, many student-athletes still faced backlash and criticism, especially from others on social media. This led to Hubbard (2020) deciding to get off Twitter and some of his other social media accounts later in the summer because he said social media had become a "playground for hate" (Bailey, 2020, para. 4). This supports Sappington et al.'s (2019) study exploring attitudes towards athlete activism that found that when athletes engage in activism, it might upset and anger fans because the fans feel it could create tension for the team they support, or they don't believe athletes have the right or qualifications to speak on such topics.

Despite the periods of stagnation in athlete activism and continued hesitation from many athletes to speak out, researchers have explained that student-athletes should be encouraged to speak out. Singer (2005) said that people need to be challenged and empowered to "engage in the change process that is so crucial to helping African American

student-athletes understand and deal with racism" (p. 383). Martin et al. (2010) said one way to do this is to "allow student-athletes to have 'voice'-opportunities to express challenges, fears, and goals" (p. 147).

Many student-athletes, especially many Black student-athletes, view activism as a necessary action to drive change (Martin et al., 2022), so, many researchers have concluded that universities should help them have opportunities to engage in activism because a lack of support can lead to a lack of activism. Therefore, Martin et al. (2022) said university staff and administrators among others should support student-athletes' engagement in activism, and those with power at a university should help create an environment where athletes feel comfortable to engage. As Bunch and Cianfrone (2022) further elaborated, social activism should be discussed and supported by athletic departments so that student-athletes feel comfortable speaking out. More specifically, Intosh et al. (2020) said administrators, coaches, and other campus leaders should encourage athletes to participate in social justice activism "to create lasting, progressive social change both on their campus and beyond" (p. 7). For many Black and other historically marginalized student-athletes, this can be as simple as letting them share their stories, so others know where they stand on certain issues and what they're fighting for (Kluch, 2020). As one Black female student-athlete explained, when it comes to discussing some of the recent racial injustices, she learned that she has a "voice in all of this" and feels that she should share her experiences and stories (Kuban, 2022, p. 27). She can let her voice "ring out" and "educate others to the reality" in which she lives, while also hoping to "change the hearts and minds of others" (Kuban, 2022, pp.. 27-28).

Conclusions

The studies and articles reviewed and discussed in this literature review provide an understanding of the scholarship and concepts concerning Black athletes and their experiences in American society and higher education institutions, Black athlete activism, and recent examples of student-athlete activism, including Black and non-Black student-athletes. Although scholarship shows that many Black student-athletes have been, and still are, somewhat hesitant to speak out on social justice issues, there has been a recent reemergence of activism. The scholarship also provides reasons it is important to continue to provide opportunities for student-athletes to speak out and use their voices for social change.

From the literature review, it is also clear that since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and since the third wave of student activism, there has not been sufficient sharing of student-athletes experiences at PWIs related to racial discrimination and injustice. The emphasis has been on the demand for change and racial justice. As a result, there is a lack of understanding of Black student-athletes' daily struggle against racial discrimination and injustice, how their demand for change has emerged from their lived experiences, and the meaning of "change" they envision, especially based on recent racial injustices and social activism.

As a result of these issues, it is necessary to provide some of these opportunities for student-athletes, both Black and non-Black, male and female, to share their stories, experiences, and perspectives on various contemporary issues and topics. This will include their perspectives on racial issues and recent examples of activism, and their meanings of change in student-athlete activism and what change looks like at their respective university. It is important to provide student-athletes from multiple sports, of different genders and various backgrounds, and of different races, a platform to share their stories and meanings. Allowing student-athletes to speak out and share their stories, experiences, and perspectives is important because, as Intosh et al. (2020) explained:

> Ultimately, sport must serve to prepare and develop our society's future leaders – and what better way to do that than allowing student-athletes to use their platforms to promote social justice efforts, call attention to discriminatory practices, eliminate structural barriers to inclusion, and improve the lives of those groups who have historically been kept on the margins of society. (p. 7)

As a Black female student athlete said, the only way to teach others is to have conversations and speak out about what is going on in society (Kuban, 2022). To learn, it is important to have conversations with people who are different from you, and sometimes "you have to have uncomfortable conversations" (Kuban, 2022, p. 55) and be willing to listen. Finally, another Black male athlete said he believes that unless Black athletes use their platforms and stand up and fight for what they believe in, "change will not and cannot be made" (Kuban, 2022, p. 86).

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