



BlackEconomics.org®

“Headline Thoughts No. 7: Frogs in a Pot, Sports’ Realness, and Media Atonement”

Introduction

“Headline Thoughts” (HLT) reflect our contemplations of, and conclusions about, recent and important media headlines from a Black American economic perspective. HLT No. 7 expands on current and widespread media coverage by focusing on the “terror” being wreaked on unsuspecting Americans by demands from the “People’s House” in the nation’s capital. It is followed by revelations about a “reality” with which you may be unfamiliar. The third component of this HLT, is a “teaser” about what’s to come on the economics of the media.

Frogs in a Pot

Forget the history of Jews in Germany as WWII approached. Forget the Black Panther Party’s, Stockley Carmichael’s (aka Kwame Ture’s), and H. Rap Brown’s call for a Black American Revolution and Gill Scott-Heron proclaiming that it would not be televised during the 1960s and early 1970s. Ignore our not-too-distant-past dream that has not been conveyed about coming upon Chinese soldiers on a US backroad, who seem to be in full control of the territory. Forget that there are numerous sources claiming that the US’s role as a global Superpower is over. But take note that one of the *New York Times*’s (*NYT*’s) most popular opinion writers, David Brooks, wrote on yesterday about the Trump Administration’s stepwise challenges to important institutions and sources of power in the nation and the urgent need to oppose these challenges with a widespread and unified response.¹ In our view, Brooks equated “response” with “uprising” and “demonstration,” but only because the *NYT* would never permit him to write “revolution.”

“Domino Toppling” teaches us that wholesale destruction can be initiated by a single act. The act itself can appear trivial/insignificant. However, one act can trigger a series of falling dominoes that can culminate in conditions only intended by the initiator.

Consider that the initiator, Pres. Trump, toppled his first domino on November 5, 2024. Unfortunately, while well-placed dominoes kept falling thereafter, and *inter alia*, Black Americans proceeded to acknowledge or celebrate *Kwanzaa*, MLK Day, the NCAA Football Playoffs, Black History Month, the Super Bowl, Our Black Shining Prince’s (Malcolm X, aka El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) 60th Death Anniversary, Saviours’ Day, A Big-Box Store Buycott, March Madness, Baseball Spring Training and Opening Day, and in two days there will be a celebration of Easter Sunday.

It is amazing that Black American leadership appears to have adopted a position akin to mythical frogs in a pot of water with a slowly rising temperature. With each Trump Administration action, with each program cut, and with each direct or indirect assault on Black Americans' respect, human integrity, and lives, our leadership opens the door to our demise by not taking dramatic action to remove us from the trimming block, from the line of fire, and from the edge of the Black American socioeconomic precipice.

Examples of how our leadership has responded to this crisis include: (i) Running to the initiator and begging for more financial support when financial support is generally being taken away at all levels; (ii) organizing a boycott of Big-Box stores, but failing to broadcast an official report on the efficacy of the boycott making the boycott to appear as inconsequential; and (iii) failing to call a network of community leaders together to begin planning food production and or access and physical security measures in case the worst-case-scenario unfolds and MAGA adherents come out to challenge all other residents of the nation.

We did not use peaceful times to prepare for war times. Now war is upon us—if only in a trade war form. But this leadership failure is made-less problematic because the *Long-Term Strategic Plan for Black America (LTSPFBA)*, www.ltspfba.org Implementation Team is using available resources to: Formulate and help implement strategies that increase our probability of survival and ultimately thriving as we pursue our short-, medium-, and long-term goals.

Sports' Realness

Traditional sports games include ideal ingredients that induce endearment by young boys and girls alike, potentially making them lifelong fans. This love and enjoyment of sports intensifies during teenage years and early adulthood because play is linked to another object of endearment—educational institutions for which we form deep loyalties. These factors have combined to produce massive revenues with all parties vying for maximal shares. In addition, the video sports gaming and sports gambling (gaming) industries have become very important players on the college sports scene.

BlackEconomics.org has expressed concerns about Black American youth participation in postsecondary school sports for nearly a score years. We believe that our youth overinvest in sports because of the very low probability of capturing extended and highly compensated professional sports playing opportunities. This sentiment is amplified by the dearth of Black Americans in so many important and relatively well-compensated fields; by the vagaries of injuries incurred during sports play that may become lifelong concerns; and by the wasted lives of athletes, who are competitive at the secondary school level, capture an athletic scholarship, but fail to excel at the college or professional sports levels and then disappear into social oblivion. Youth investment in sports can be so demanding and the drug of fan praise and media exposure can be so addictive that they can carry serious physical and mental implications when a player's run ends.

Three concerns are noteworthy.

1. It is common knowledge that the video sports game industry pursues college football players to obtain the rights to their NILs (names, images, and likenesses). Given artificial

intelligence (AI) and sufficient NILs, the sports game industry is uniquely positioned to develop new gaming models of great interest to sports enthusiasts, who will be able enjoy almost limitless competitions that can be generated at will. In time, it could turn out that the video sports game version of college football could replace real fall Saturday afternoon competitions.

2. The college sports gambling industry is formidable, and given urban legend, the sordid history of sports betting at all levels, careful and historical observations, and logical analysis of sports outcomes, there is a growing sentiment among college sports enthusiasts that there are good reasons for the sports gambling industry to “fix” outcomes and for college athletic programs to be complicit in such “fixing.” Purposely not identifying any sports gambling operation or any sports program, we have observed both college football and basketball games where “upsets” seem contrived, but there were excellent reasons why participating teams would have opted to help produce the outcomes. Presenters of the two most important college sports—football and basketball—have come to highlight persistently the idea of “parity.” This term signals that any team can defeat any other team at any given time. The use of “parity” is a way of normalizing the unexpected and the believability of an unexpected outcome. But there are other tools for creating such believability: Sports concussion protocols and game ejections due to targeting in college football, and flagrant fouls in college basketball. We move now to the final concern of this section that focuses on sports concussion protocols.
3. Sports enthusiasts will have observed outcomes that resemble the following hypothetical scenario at some point during the last few years. A college football Team (X) that is a conference member is performing at a high level, has a few “difference maker” players, and appears to be winning at will. However, in the week before a “big game” (e.g., an important and supercharged intra- or inter-conference rivalry), imagine that those desiring to determine a game outcome (e.g., a sports gambling firm and/or an athletic program official(s)) decide that it will be beneficial for Team X to lose the “big game.” Therefore, during a game the week before the “big game,” a Team X “difference maker” player experiences a contrived concussion, must undergo a concussion protocol, and is announced as being unavailable for the “big game.” And as “fate” would have it, Team X experiences a “shocking” defeat. Hence, sports concussions constitute a “believability factor” that can aid a sports gambling firm and other parties in configuring sports outcomes that are believable and lucrative. It is important to add, that in the interest of statistical normality and believability, the scenario may be reversed from time-to-time so that a team that is absent a “difference maker” due to a concussion defeats the opposition. We conclude this hypothetical second section of HLT No. 7 by noting that, while we identified two believability factors for college football, college basketball reflects only one such factor to our knowledge—flagrant fouls that can draw player ejections.

The next shoe to drop for college basketball is concussion protocols. Check your memory banks and replay the play in the Duke vs. Houston “Elite Eight” matchup during this year’s March Madness. A Duke player (number 14) performs some highwire acrobatics, then experiences a horrific fall with his head reverberating off the court floor. In our view, it was a miracle that he was able to stand up after the play. Yet, he left the court under his

own power and made his way to the bench. Surprisingly, he returned to play shortly thereafter. We are motivated to ask whether such a dramatic and painful-looking fall on the head has ever been witnessed during a college football game, yet college football has concussion protocols, while college basketball does not—at least to our knowledge. Now consider how many such head-landing falls you observed during this past college basketball season. We present this concern not only to raise awareness about potential fan/audience manipulation by sports gambling operators, but to also raise awareness about a critical health concern for young athletes (especially Black American athletes because of their unique ability to take flight) that has seemingly been ignored. As in the case of football, we urge that studies be performed concerning basketball players’ potential head (brain) injury plays, and the related long-term health outcomes.

Media Atonement

We conclude this HLT with a “teaser.” Our intention was to feature the economics of a seven-step media atonement process from which Black Americans stand to benefit greatly as the BlackEconomics.org release this week. However, given the lengthy nature of this HLT submission, we reserve the right to present the just-mentioned process next week—if all goes well.

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ⁱ David Brooks (2025). “What’s Happening Is Not Normal. America Needs an Uprising That is Not Normal.” *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/17/opinion/trump-harvard-law-firms.html> (Ret. 041725).