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Special Headline Thoughts No. 6: “Racism, MM, and IBMs”

Introduction

This “Headline Thoughts” (HLTs) is unique because it only covers one media headline rather than multiple headlines. It places Racism, March Madness (MM), and the Irrelevance of Black Males (IBMs) under a microscope and may require more willingness to change than readers can summon. It speaks to the hypocrisy of the nation after so many **voiced** efforts to produce change. It signals to Black Americans that our failure to see the reality discussed herein is evidence that some of us may have a blindness too severe to be healed; that blindness will place us in a ditch. At the same time, those who are sufficiently awake to reality should be motivated to act because we can read warning messages filled with undeniable truths. These “truths” can set us **free** indeed.

A path to truth

The NCAA’s Men’s College Basketball Tournament, MM, is a spectacle that is chock full of evidence before our very eyes about America’s true nature. But the glitter and gold are blinding so we have not seen the truth of it. While we were not able to readily identify a comprehensive estimate of the total impact of MM on the US economy, there is no doubt that the tournament involves positive and negative impacts that sum into the billions of dollars in absolute value terms. The point is that it is a BIG event for the nation—some say even bigger than the Super Bowl.

What is so attractive about MM? It is the sport itself and the carnival-like atmosphere in which it is presented. Basketball may be the most complex and beautiful sport ever invented. Not by Dr. Naismith, but by Black Americans who took it and reshaped in ways that Naismith could never imagine. The basketball sport embodies many sports. Gymnastics because of its precision and timing. Track and field because of its speed and high-jumping requirements. Baseball because long shots to the outfield that outfielders climb the wall to corral are like spectacular catches of long inbounds passes that lead to winning shots. Volleyball because meeting the opposition at the rim to block a shot is the equivalent of blockers at the volleyball net preventing a spike. Football because of its occasional brute force nature as those who have the strength power through their opponents and find the rim for a dunk. It is like dance because there have always been shimmy shakers like Archie Clark and Earl “the pearl” Monroe of old, who could manipulate their opponents like a dance partner on a string, and the spinning and whirling dervishes of today; but there are also the exceptional basketball players, who exhibit highflying ballet of a Baryshnikov kind. They engage in gravity defying walking on air miracles that supersede Jesus’s walk on the

water (he had water to support his weight). Those who know, know that is why Dr. J (Julius Erving) was called Black (better than a White) Jesus. Wrestling because there is an occasional need to dive on the floor and wrestle opponents for loose balls. Finally, basketball is like archery because today's players, who shoot and score from great distances, are akin to those skilled in archery who hit the bullseye with unbelievable range.

There is the music of "Pep Bands." Occasionally you may become enthralled with a new or revised composition that is aligned with the tone/mood of a game particularly well.

If anything, MM is drama. Forget baseball, Broadway Plays, and Action or Thriller Movies. The fact that the top 68 college teams in the nation engage in the competition, that there is a possibility that any team may perform surprisingly excellently or surprisingly poorly in any game, that there are no second chances, and that players' and coaches' lives are on the line, and it just does not get more intense and exciting than MM. Importantly, MM is the greatest teacher of the important life lesson that: "It ain't over until it's over."

Finally, there is the subtle but powerful and ever-present sexual innuendo. Of course, there are the scantily clad cheer leaders. However, all eyes are glued to orange/reddish colored rims/whoops and white colored nylon nets (symbolic of the orifice and covering of females' reproductive anatomy), and the largest ball of any popular sport that is round and brown (symbolic of part of the male's reproductive anatomy). If you believe that we are way off base with these analogies, then consider the analysis of psychologist Dr. Francis Cress Welsing.ⁱ

Statistical truths

The following statistics are well known and are transparently on display as teams compete during the season and during MM.ⁱⁱ

- For 2023, the NCAA reports that Black players represented 44% percent of men college basketball players (probably a higher percentage of players appearing in MM). This compares with Black Americans representing 13.7% of the US population. Also, the 44% compares interestingly with 11.4%, which is total Black American male student enrollees as a percent of all enrollees in degree-granting post-secondary institutions.
- White coaches constitute 75% of all head coaches (21% are Black) and 55% of all assistant coaches (38% are Black).

Other related truths

During MM, trained and guided media personalities, coaches, and players make every effort to convince fans that Black and White players reflect the greatest qualities: Self-direction and self-motivation; endurance; an ability to sublimate their personalities for the group (unselfishness); high-quality skills; a great "work ethic;" a joyous personality; an all-around nice person; and a wonderful associate in the brotherhood.

Painful truths

It is both saddening and disheartening that Black Americans revel along with White Americans during MM given the following transparent truths:

- The kill (win) or be killed (lose) nature of MM games with mostly Black players and mostly White fans in the stands, is reminiscent of Sunday afternoon Southern picnics in Jim Crow America when the main attraction was a “necktie party” portion of the picnic.
- Given the way Black college athletes (Whites too) are thoroughly used and abused by academic institutions, athletic programs, coaches, and fans (all mainly White), one might surmise that White fans have an almost unconscious mindset that causes them to only cherish Black players superficially when the latter contribute to victories. Otherwise, White fans may have the attitude that our “N...s” are better than the other team’s “N...s.” This is consistent with what we recall one Black American religious leader saying about one of Muhammad Ali’s sentiments, his reality, and his truth about Whites and Blacks in America. The leader said that Muhammad Ali reminded an audience once that: (paraphrasing) “No matter the circumstances of a Black American (elevated intellect, wealth, fame, etc.), to certain White Americans, Blacks will always just be another ‘N...r.’”
- There are at least two crude and rude realities for Black players. First, if players have not paved a successful road for themselves (professional sports or some other profession), when their eligibility to play is fully expended, the institution, athletic program, coaches, and student body view these players as “has beens,” who should move on into oblivion. If, on the other hand, players are successful and find their way to wealth and fame, then the institution, athletic program, coaches, and every student that has—or ever will—attend the school all reserve the right to have a claim on the players’ time, money, or both. This wreaks of a special ownership arrangement that has played out in America since 1619. The nature of this ownership has changed over time, but only at the margin. Up until now, if a Black person wants to do anything of significance in America, they have always had to answer the following question: “Which important White person will back you in this endeavor?” This is ownership. Another word for ownership of one human by another human is that the former is a “slave” to the latter.

MM’s racism

In the end, when the clock reaches 00:00:00 at the conclusion of the MM championship game, the players and coaches will cut down the nets, the players and coaches will assemble on a dais, and a sports network announcer will introduce an NCAA official who will present a trophy to the head coach, his staff, and team members. But once the coach accepts the trophy, offers his spiel about how the championship was claimed and backs away to permit the announcer to shift to obtaining soundbites from star players, there will be an occasional panning of cameras away from players’ interviews to a scene of the coach congratulating his staff, but most importantly enjoying great elation with his family.

The just described scene tells the entire story of racism in America. It is a story of mainly White male triumphs. They win the game of life by exploiting others (in this case young, mainly Black men), and they persist in this exploitation to maintain an order that permits them to reproduce

themselves through their families. This scene is relevant and applicable every day all around the world.

An expected reader inquiry is: “Where is the racism in that? The players want to play, and they receive related benefits. Coaches just do their jobs. They work hard for their money too!”

The obvious racism is evident in coaches’ families. Being frank, a father desires the absolute best for his sons. However, the father knows that his nature is in his son. He knows that, if his son fights to make his way in life and the world, and with the support of the father and those known by the father (including his many players), the son will fare well. However, the father’s priority concern is with his daughters. It is commonplace in the world—more so in the past, but still today—for fathers to receive requests for their daughters’ hands in marriage from suitors and to help reach agreement on this life changing decision. Therefore, like corporate moguls, coaches are expected to engage in wise decision-making to ensure the success of their families just as corporate moguls ensure the success and longevity of their corporations through wise decision making.

White coaches who identify, recruit, and train Black basketball players, spend more time with their players than any other persons on college campuses—during and outside of the sporting season. They should have a completely transparent view of their players. We have already reported on the general sentiments expressed by coaches concerning their players. Essentially, players are nearly perfect individuals who embody the great and highly prized characteristics of great Americans. Players’ only failing is that they have “areas for improvement,” which will disappear in time. Given this players’ profile, could there be any other young male suitors better prepared or suited to make an excellent mate for coaches’ daughters?

If not, then why do we never (maybe almost never) see top White men’s head basketball coaches’ families with Black American members (sons-in-law (either the coaches’ former players, players from other schools, or Black nonplayers) and grandchildren)? Also, it could be that the genuine respect of White head coaches for their Black players could bring them to a high level of respect for Black Americans such that their sons come to a similar view and join in marriage with Black wives. The truth is that we never (maybe almost never) see Black females as the daughters-in-law of top White coaches.

Maybe our perspective is a little over the top. We do not have data on the race or ethnicity of all White NCAA men’s basketball coaches’ immediate families. Our only evidence is a lifetime of playing and watching basketball games and many editions of MM. Unfortunately, over the course of life, we do not recall White coaches revealing evidence that they are not racists because their immediate families include Black Americans. But for purposes of this analytical essay, we obtained a list of the NCAA’s top 15 winningest men’s head basketball coaches, googled for family photos for confirmation, and observed no evidence that countervails our statement about the nature of top White head coaches’ immediate families and attitudes about their Black male player athletes. Consider that the top winningest head coaches are all White and their careers span from the 1930s to the third decade of the 21st century. Much has changed over this period—we are told especially that racial sentiments have changed. But the facts defy the words. Therefore, as you continue your enjoyment of MM 2025, you are invited to keep all the foregoing in mind.

Conclusion

Arguably, the well-known historical chewing up and spitting out of Black musicians is mirrored by Black college basketball players. When scrutinized, the entire nature of life for Black college basketball players seldom seems favorable. Even the fame and fortune of most players who achieve it are fleeting. In other words, the life canvass of many Black male basketball players reveals an image of a mostly irrelevant human beings except for fleeting moments of their lives.

Today, certain Black American spokespersons are highlighting evidence concerning the feminization, destruction, and increasing marginalization of Black males. We simply say that the US is producing an increasing number of IBMs. These IBMs are dehumanized and exhibit weakness. If this pattern continues, then these IBMs will draw the ire of Americans—both White and Black. The step following ire formation is extermination.

Yet, Black American leadership spent most of February 2025 hurriedly organizing a marginally successful one-day economic boycott of mainly White-owned commercial establishments because of their alignment with the forced disappearance of DEI programs as ordered by the new US Presidential Administration. The boycott was only marginally successful because it was ill-conceived and promulgated. Is this leadership blind to the need for urgent action to halt growth in IBMs? DEI programs are irrelevant if there are no Black males to participate in them.

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Endnotes

ⁱ Francis Cress Welsing (1991). *The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors*. Third World Press; Chicago.

ⁱⁱ Statistics on the percentages of coaches and players by race are available from the NCAA's Demographics Database, which is available at <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2018/12/13/ncaa-demographics-database.aspx?id=172c9> (Ret. 031925). The Black Alone population percentage is for 2024 and is from the Census Bureau's QuickFacts at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045224> (Ret. 032025). The Black male college student enrollment statistic is for 2022 and is from the US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2023), "Table 306.10. Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level of enrollment, sex, attendance status, and race/ethnicity or nonresident status of student: Selected years, 1976 through 2022," *Digest of Education Statistics*. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_306.10.asp?current=yes (032125).