

THE CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF PRIVILEGED SPEECH: HOW HARRY
EDWARDS, ARTHUR ASHE, AND LEBRON JAMES ESTABLISHED THE
STANDARD OF COMMUNICATION FOR THE
AMERICAN BLACK MALE ATHLETE

by

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my wife Shelly, whose passion for learning fuels my passion for learning. This is also dedicated to my daughters, Ava, Ella, and Lola, who on occasion have asked me about past accomplishments. On those occasions, I've shown them photographs and told them stories to describe the things I've done. But when I started this project, when I had conversations with them about what I was doing I realized we were doing this together. This achievement does not require photographs or stories. Because of that it is my greatest achievement. As such I dedicate it to Shelly, Ava, Ella, and Lola. My family.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an analysis of the rhetoric used by three black male athletes in three distinct periods of American history. Using representative anecdote as a frame while applying metaphorical, synecdochal, and depictive rhetorical analysis, this thesis will demonstrate how Harry Edwards, Arthur Ashe, and LeBron James use figurative language and specific means of representation to speak on behalf of the black community. By doing this, these three black male athletes reframe privilege as the right to speak. As such, this thesis will deem these black male athletes' means of communication "privileged speech," while demonstrating how Los Angeles Lakers basketball player LeBron James has come to represent its standard. By reframing privilege as the right to speak, the black male athlete rejects his prescribed role as a one-dimensional, cognitively limited entity, making the act of speaking both a form of protest, but also a privilege.

I. THE CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF PRIVILEGED SPEECH

Introduction

“What America demands in her black champions is a brilliant, powerful body, and a dull bestial mind.”

-Eldridge Cleaver

This thesis is an analysis of the rhetoric used by three black male athletes in three distinct periods of American history. Using representative anecdote as a frame while applying metaphorical, synecdochal, and depictive rhetorical analysis, this thesis demonstrates how Harry Edwards, Arthur Ashe, and LeBron James use figurative language and specific means of representation to speak on behalf of the black community. By doing this, these three black male athletes reframe privilege as the right to speak. As such, this thesis deems these black male athletes’ means of communication “privileged speech,” while demonstrating how Los Angeles Lakers basketball player LeBron James has come to represent its standard.

The specter of speaking on behalf of an entire race of people requires a unique and implied connection between speaker and audience. This particular connection lends itself to synecdoche, which Burke (1969) calls a “relationship or connectedness between the two sides of an equation” (p. 509). The African American man, particularly the dark-skinned, physically imposing African American man, has been, historically viewed as a “menacing other.” According to Hoberman (1997) “the classic view of the black man’s dual nature was that he was docile and amicable when enslaved, ferocious and murderous when free” (p. 164). Social relations, like the black community’s often contentious

relationship with law enforcement, reflect white society's fear of the muscular black man and its need to be protected from them. It is for this reason that my study is limited to and focused upon black male athletes.

Osborn (1964) states the "metaphor gives us the most promising lines of thought" (p. 111). By using metaphorical analysis to examine the vocabulary constructed by celebrity black male athletes in different eras, this thesis illustrates how Harry Edwards, Arthur Ashe and LeBron James construct and articulate their positionalities, which are founded on visibility, blackness and privilege. Each of these rhetors has achieved their particular status because, "we tend to accept membership in certain demographic categories as indicators of privilege and membership in other categories as indicators of marginalization or oppression" (Dow, 1997, p. 246). This dual association allows these three black male athletes to use their "social location" (Dow, 1997) to speak on behalf of those members of the black community who are disenfranchised and whose voices would otherwise remain muted.

The term privilege shall be defined as a "special advantage, immunity, permission, right, or benefit granted to or enjoyed by an individual, class, or caste" (Wildman & Davis, 1995, p. 13). As they pertain to black male athletes' expression of privilege within society writ large, this work will place special focus on the terms "permission" and "immunity." One of the permissions afforded a member of a privileged society is the permission to ignore the social oppression of less privileged groups or individuals. With privilege comes detachment from the ills of social reality. Thus, one of the most effective ways to exercise one's privilege is to remain silent (Wildman & Davis, 1995). The black male athlete's celebrity affords him the option of silence in the face of

the oppression of the black community and other marginalized groups. However, when the celebrity black male athlete waives the option of silence and chooses instead to speak on behalf of those who are oppressed, he reframes privilege as the right to possess a voice. The possession of voice is a whole-hearted rebellion against the structure of American sport, particularly at the collegiate level which Renford (2017) says “socializes black athletes to be politically unconscious, inactive, and docile” (p. 123). Furthermore, by reframing privilege, the black male athlete forcefully rejects the stereotype long associated with black male athletes; a dilemma that Van Sterkenberg, Knoppers, & De Leeuw, (2010) refer to as “a mind-body dualism that explicitly venerates elite bodies with implicit assumptions about unstable minds” (p. 822). Therefore, in reframing privilege as the right to speak, the black male athlete also wholly rejects his prescribed role as a one-dimensional, cognitively-limited entity, making the act of speaking a confirmation of his humanity or a form of protest, but most importantly a privilege.

The concept of immunity, within the context of privilege, consists of two opposing paradigms. The first one, as it relates to the black male athlete, refers to immunity from economic and limited social mobility—the basic tenets of oppression. His wealth shields him from economic disenfranchisement and his celebrity status provides immunity from the hazards of anonymity. The second concept refers to the immunity from subordination (Wildman & Davis, 1995). In this case subordination is defined by statements that will render the black male athlete less “threatening” and more appealing to the collective audience. Subordination, for the black male athlete, consists of detaching himself from causes that pertain to black people. An example is O.J. Simpson’s response to criticism of his failure to join the civil rights efforts in the 1960’s. Said Simpson, “I’m

not black, I'm O.J.” (Walton & Chau, 2018). In making such statements, the black male athlete inserts himself into a mythical “color blind” sphere which strips him of “ethnic other” status and rewards him with the most visible form of privilege—commercial viability. However, the black male athlete who refuses subordination is one who purposely and aggressively chooses to identify with the black community and the social causes associated with the black community. Like his subordinating counterpart, he too desires wealth, commercial viability, and preferred social status, but unlike his subordinating counterpart, he is not willing to detach himself from the black community or the characteristics that define the black community. Unlike his subordinating counterpart, he crafts public statements in order to demonstrate solidarity with the black collective. The black male athlete who galvanizes the black community by making public statements which challenge the integrity of the hegemonic structure while he simultaneously accrues wealth and social status is the black male athlete who has achieved immunity from subordination. To that end, this thesis demonstrates how Los Angeles Lakers basketball player LeBron James, by crafting an intergenerational narrative comprised of resistance and autonomy, has established the standard of communication for the American black male athlete.

This thesis demonstrates how LeBron James reached this status through a discursive analysis of black male athlete-led protest. This work examines three distinct periods of black male athlete-led protest. I will designate the 1960s as the Period of Insurrection; the 1970's until 2016 as the period of “Rhetorical Silence,” and the current era of athletes engaged in social consciousness is the Black Male Athlete Renaissance. However, the primary focus of Chapter I is the review of literature and justification.

Justification

In the days and weeks following Colin Kaepernick's decision to kneel during the national anthem, sports fans and the mass American audience created a national narrative founded upon incredulity: "Why would a well-paid athlete risk his professional standing and his career by making such a provocative statement?" The most succinct response was proffered by Herman Edwards, a former professional football player and coach who had taken a job as an analyst for ESPN. On the set of the show, *First Take*, Edwards spoke for Kaepernick, who, amid the fallout from his gesture, had gone silent. "He's speaking for people of color," said Edwards. "He's a voice for the voiceless. He's speaking up for all those who cannot speak" (ESPN, 2016). The "voiceless" refers to Philando Castille, Eric Garner, Alton Sterling, and other previously anonymous black men who, in recent years, have been killed by law enforcement, or sentenced to jail or prison terms for minor offenses (Alexander, 2012). Kaepernick, like black athletes in the past, while compelled to speak on behalf of the black community, failed to wholly articulate his reasons for doing so. While Kaepernick's gesture generated national discourse encompassing issues like race, law enforcement, free speech and the nuances of patriotism, his silence created a void. From that void, opposing voices, like Fox News host Laura Ingraham, claimed that Kaepernick had "divided the country" (Ingraham, 2017). That particular claim was bolstered by football fans' response to the athletes' protest. In 2016, amid the national conversation about why NFL ratings had dropped 10 percent (Platt, 2018) a study conducted by Rasmussen Reports showed that 32% of Americans said they were less likely to watch an NFL game because of the player protests (Evans, 2016).

In the wake of such data, surrogates like Herman Edwards have seized the narrative in an effort to clarify Kaepernick's intent. Therein lies the difference between black-athlete-led activism of the past and athlete-led activism today. Muhammad Ali refusing to be inducted to the Army and Smith and Carlos' protest on the medal stand were isolated events. Not coincidentally, as a result of their actions, Ali, Smith, and Carlos were shunned and isolated from their respective sports (Edwards, 1969). But the current generation of black male athletes who speak on behalf of the black community have demonstrated unwavering resolution—even in the face of public backlash. Social expression is for them, a natural extension of their place in larger society. Hartmann (2016) is correct when he says that athletes, throughout history, have engaged in social protest, but “now it's a movement.”

The movement was most evident in Malcolm Jenkins of the Philadelphia Eagles. Throughout the 2017 season, Jenkins, invoking Jon Carlos and Tommie Smith, stood with one gloved fist raised during the playing of the national anthem. But the most salient proof that this is a sustained movement has come from Kaepernick's former teammate, Eric Reid, who regularly knelt right next to Kaepernick during the silent protest. In a 2017 *New York Times* editorial, Reid pleaded with sports fans to embrace the players gestures, which called for racial equality. Reid used communal qualifiers, like Bible verses—specifically James 2:17, which states: “Faith, by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (New International Version). In an overt attempt to make his missive accessible to a “commercial” audience, and to move away from a narrow, black-centered national narrative, Reid deftly used this archetypal qualifier: “we seek equality for all Americans” (Reid, 2017). The national narrative is extending beyond professional sovereignty and

into the very language that has forever framed organized sport. One NBA player, Draymond Green, reflecting on the social and financial dynamics of professional basketball (where 74% of the players are black) said he felt the word team “owner” was outdated and offensive (Paras, 2019). Such a statement reflects the current state of empowerment that pervades professional sport. As black male professional athletes assume controlling interest of what they deem *their* industry, black male athlete like Colin Kaepernick, Malcolm Jenkins, Eric Reid, Draymond Green, and LeBron James are unencumbered in their decision-making. More than that, they need not seek permission to speak.

Representative Anecdote and Three Eras of Black Male Athlete Expression

In describing dramatism, Burke, in *A Grammar of Motives*, says it “involves the search for a representative anecdote to be used as a form in conformity with which the vocabulary is constructed” (Burke, p. 59). By framing *Revolt of the Black Athlete*, *Days of Grace*, and LeBron James’ monologues as representative anecdotes, this thesis will use metaphorical analysis to illustrate the “vocabulary” that represents each of these eras and how the rhetors use that vocabulary to address a specific audience. Burke (1962) says “to represent something is to sum up its essence” (p. 162). The Period of Insurrection is known for social confrontation and the metaphorical language that Edwards (1969) uses in *Revolt of the Black Athlete* captures the essence of that confrontational tone. For instance, Edwards (1969) addresses his militant black audience by using communal qualifiers as chapter titles. “Mounting the Revolt” and “Feeding the Flame,” speak to the black community’s collective angst during the Civil Rights movement.

The Period of Rhetorical Silence is one in which the black male athlete while enjoying commercial success, strategically distances himself from the black community. The black athlete of this period is as, Artur Ashe says, “politically-neutered” (Swift, 1991). The text that represents the Period of Rhetorical Silence is Arthur Ashe’s memoir, *Days of Grace*. Like Edwards (1969) Ashe (1993) uses figurative language that reflects that particular time in history. Ashe (1993) also uses provocatively worded chapter titles to create an effective narrative. For instance, the opening chapter is titled “My Outing” (Ashe, 1993). The significance is that Ashe (1993) who died from AIDS, uses the archetypal qualifier “outing” because it speaks to the gay community, whose marginalized status was significantly intensified by the AIDS crisis. The term “coming out of the closet” is language that accurately represents this particular era in that invisibility is synonymous with silence.

The Black Male Athlete Renaissance is the current period in which the black male athlete enjoys both commercial success and unfettered opportunity to lend his voice to social issues; particularly those issues that involve the extended black community. The texts which represent this period are James’ address on May 31, 2017, a response to his home having the word “nigger” painted on its walls, and James’ press conference on September 25, 2017, in which he vehemently denounces President Trump, and proclaims organized sport as a unifying force. The remaining texts are examples of the twenty first century’s most common form of depictive rhetoric. The first is James’ tattoo of the Chosen 1, which is inked across his back. The other two images are James’ tweet of him and his Miami Heat teammates covering their faces with “hoodies” in the wake of the Trayvon Martin’s death, and a photo of James wearing an “I can’t Breathe” t-shirt to

protest the death of Eric Garner. Both photos are rhetorically depictive examples of James' demonstrating his simultaneous membership in both a privileged demographic and a marginalized one.

The Case Studies

Novelist Stanley Crouch has surmised that white people's fear and fascination with dark-skinned black men stems from the idea that they "might be in the presence of something aboriginal" (Kurtz, 1998). During the Insurrection Period, those black male athletes who choose to speak on social issues animate traditionally black male physical traits as well as the black male's existence within American society. That specific sensibility creates an unspoken connection among the members of this particular demographic. Within the context of Burke's principles of synecdoche, Harry Edwards who is 6 foot 8 and weighs 250 pounds, speaking on behalf of those black male athletes who fight for the common black man, is himself an iteration of "part for the whole" (Burke, 1941). In short, Edwards (1969) animates and identifies with the specter of being perceived as "other." Because of this, Edwards (1969) is seen by white authority as an extension of the Black Panthers, the most militant iteration of "black otherness." In the first chapter of *Revolt of the Black Athlete*, Edwards (1969) uses a statement from an athletic director who addresses the brewing discontent within the ranks of black athletes: "It's beyond me why these people would allow themselves to be misled by fanatics like Harry Edwards and H. Rap Brown... why our niggers right here at the University have never had it so good" (Edwards, 1969, p. 5).

By not identifying the athletic director, Edwards (1969) designates his/her sentiments as commensurate with the innately racist hegemonic ideology of the time. The

speaker does not require a specific identity because he/she is not expressing beliefs that were considered unique or extraordinary. This was the basic doctrine against which Edwards (1969) placed his focus.

In Chapter III, this thesis examines the Period of Rhetorical Silence. In it the black male athlete's ubiquitous commercial presence shapes his relationship with the white audience. The best example of this is Michael Jordan, who, in the years 1989 until 1996, appeared in commercials for Nike and Hanes, and who starred in a movie called *Space Jam*, where he interacted with computer-generated cartoon figures (Rovell, 2009). For the predominantly white viewing audience, the black male athlete like Jordan serves a specific purpose—entertainment. In that vein, while he does have privileged status, the black male athlete who speaks outside the context of sport may generate one of two responses. Either the audience accepts the black male athlete's efforts to speak on behalf of a demographic, or it rejects it. Michael Jordan, in choosing not to speak, denied the audience the opportunity to reject him. In so doing, Jordan sustained his commercial success, and maintained his societal privilege.

However, Arthur Ashe, the most celebrated black male tennis player in American history, articulates his societal privilege through his memoir, *Days of Grace*. Ashe (1993) goes to great lengths to demonstrate his willingness to address a wide variety of people, including a great number of personal anecdotes that involve white tennis players, coaches, and public officials. Because of this I classify Ashe's (1993) audience as more "commercial" than Edwards' (1969) intended audience. By releasing his memoir 24 years after *Revolt of the Black Athlete*; during the Period of Rhetorical Silence, Ashe (1993) assumes a tone that is far more "measured" than that taken by Edwards in 1969.

However, Ashe (1993) effectively interrupts that silence by invoking the discourse of the Insurrection, primarily in the form of Stokely Carmichael. Ashe (1993) refers to Carmichael's "brilliant harangue" in Greenwood Mississippi in 1965—which promulgated the infamous Black Power movement—as the “end of the dominance of morality in African American culture” (p. 145).

Ashe (1993), like Edwards (1969) uses metaphorical qualifiers to address the complexities of race in America, which lends *Days of Grace* to a metaphorical analysis. For instance, in referring to the “burden of race” as a metaphorical “shadow,” Ashe (1993) says that any African American of the slightest sensitivity and intelligence is aware of how he is perceived” (p. 130). That introspection shapes Ashe's (1993) statements about the plight of the black community—his own life juxtaposed with professional tennis, which, despite the iconic achievements of Venus and Serena Williams, is an elitist pursuit that “remains available to select groups, as evidenced by its enduring associations with resorts, country clubs, and tennis academies” (Douglass, 2012, p. 130). Ashe's (1993) use of the word “burden” in relation to race is especially significant because as the first (and only) black man to win the prestigious Wimbledon men's singles title, he immediately garnered the ethos (from both white and black audiences) to speak on behalf of the black community's status within larger society. However, Ashe (1993) is also compelled to unequivocally hold the black community accountable for its shortcomings. Ashe's (1993) critique of Carmichael validates Osborn's (2019) theory about one inadequacy of synecdoche. Said Osborn in *On Metaphor and Style*: “...synecdoche might focus upon or enlarge some part of the subject while disguising perhaps its moral entirety” (p. 143). Edwards (1969) in his justifiable

rage “enlarges” the role of the oppressor, who is defined as that individual or entity who thwarts the development of black people. Despite that Ashe (1993) still informs his audience that he is not immune from the “burden” of racial oppression. He illustrates that point when states that he lost his Davis Cup captaincy because of his commitment to what the U.S.T.A. deemed “radical politics” (p. 103). To that end, *Days of Grace* lends itself to both synecdochal and metaphorical analysis. This thesis reveals that Arthur Ashe, while a citizen of the elitist structure of tennis does not subordinate himself to the hegemonic discourse of the Period of Rhetorical Silence. Nor does Ashe (1993) distance himself from the black community. When he was asked if having AIDS was his greatest challenge, Ashe (1993) replied “no, being black in America is my greatest burden” (Ashe, *Days of Grace*, p. 126).

In Chapter IV, the Black Male Athlete Renaissance, this thesis employs the use of depictive rhetoric to demonstrate how the black male athlete uses his physical image to speak for the black community at large. This analysis of the visual image differs from that which was described in the previous section. The black male athlete’s commercially mediated image places him in a hierarchy where he clearly enjoys the advantages of an elevated status. However, depictive rhetoric pertains to the black male athlete’s physical appearance as an *extension* of black culture. The nuances of basketball in particular—creativity, improvisation, and originality—are the same qualities one may experience while listening to a superior jazz musician. In this paradigm the black male athlete creates a visual depiction of himself through his flamboyant style of play and that style wholly reflects the cultural significance of those black artisans who thrive within and across a

variety of genres and mediums. Music critic Nelson George views the “black athletic aesthetic as our music put into physical motion” (George, 1999, p. 240).

The connection between sport and cultural expression, particularly in the game of basketball, affords the black male athlete credibility within the black community. The definitive characteristic of depictive rhetoric is when an individual’s perceived character traits allow him to forge an image-ethos connection with his audience (Osborn, 2018). Thus, when LeBron James takes the court while wearing an “I Can’t Breathe” t-shirt, (in order to call attention to the death of Eric Garner at the hands of the New York Police Department) he creates what Nerlich and Clarke (2013) call an “ethos mosaic” (p. 183). James further reinforces that ethos through his use of social media. He first did this by sharing a tweet of himself and his Miami Heat teammates wearing hoodies in response to the death of Trayvon Martin. Identification through social media is the most immediate “vocabulary” for the black male athlete in the Black Male Athlete Renaissance. James did not seek permission from authority before willfully identifying himself with a young, black teenager. After doing so, James also proved himself to be immune to any negative response. He was not punished nor fined, nor told by authority to remain silent. James repeated this action on September 25, 2017 when he referred to President Donald Trump as a “bum” (Lauletta, 2017). The most significant aspect of James’ proclamations lay in the fact he has not lost any of the \$55 million which he earns from his various endorsement deals (Badenhausen, 2019).

Review of Literature

There are times when the celebrity black male athlete, or any upwardly mobile black male professional, is compelled to look past his own interests in order to represent the “best interests of the group.” This is because his “social location” (Dow, 1997) while privileged, is perpetually affixed to blackness. He knows the word “black,” as a descriptor, will never be eradicated from his person, regardless of the spectator’s gaze. Nerlich and Clarke (2013), in “Synecdoche as a cognitive and communicative strategy,” argue: “we must be able to use a special language for a special purpose, and we must be able to show solidarity with a group...” (p. 208). The black male professional has historically applied this “special language” in two ways. First, by self-identifying as “black,” and specifically using the word “black,” he articulates the inherent obstacles that accompany *being* black. Second, he constructs what Lieber (1972) calls metaphors of “innate or inherent invisibility,” which black writers like Ralph Ellison, author of *Invisible Man*, have used as a means of speaking to “a society which has refused to recognize his humanity” (p. 86).

The professional black male’s obligation to introduce black humanity to a white audience is the nucleus of Ellis Cose’s (1993) work, “Rage of the Privileged.” Cose’s (1993) theory orbits around the “price of privilege.” He interviews several (mostly unidentified) highly successful black executives from various companies and industries. Anonymity, (defined by a lack of celebrity) puts the “common” black man in danger in potentially dangerous scenarios—especially those involving law enforcement. However, in in the context of discussing business practices, anonymity shields the “common” black man from corporate reprisal. Cose (1993) defines this as the absence of voice. In silence

the black professional can both nix the perception that he is party to some “racial agenda,” while making himself more amenable to the capitalist structure. This particular cultural conundrum is the one that guided black male athletes during the Period of Rhetorical Silence.

The specter of remaining silent, particularly in the presence of other black people, is widely examined by Cole and Omari (2003) in *Race, Class, and the Dilemmas of Upward Mobility*. Cole and Omari (2003) frame much of their argument around the concept of “uplift” ideology which urged black people in the 19th century to completely distance themselves from any and all vestiges of African heritage in order to fully adopt the values and culture of the white middle class. Through the pursuit of proper etiquette, vocational training, and most notably education, Gaines (1996) believed that privileged black people could “uplift” the black working class. But Cole and Omari (2003) place an emphasis on education, particularly black students at elite white prep schools, where the designation “acting white” does not pertain to black students who excel academically, but to those black students who reject all social activity that includes their black classmates. Black students revealed that their status was framed by “how you act in the hallway...whether you acknowledge the fact you’re a black person” (Cole & Omari, 2003, p. 792). The intersection of race, class, and education is particularly germane to LeBron James. Unlike other influential black male athletes who are afforded privileged status because of their affiliations with elite universities (like O.J. Simpson with U.S.C.) James did not attend college. In fact, James subversively makes this point by punctuating many of his public address with the phrase, “I’m just a kid from Akron” (Simmons, 2016). The significance is that part of the James “myth” is that his education was

compromised because there was no bus in his district and his mother had no means of transportation to take him to school. As a result, he missed 83 days of school while in the fourth grade (Jordan, 2019). This aspect of James' life reflects Watts' (2001) assertion that James' voice is "a phenomenological effect of marginalization" (p. 181). It is this identification with desperation and abject poverty that keeps James tethered to the disenfranchised youth of Ohio.

Cole and Omari (2003) conclude that this kind of "cultural obligation" often works as an obstacle for upward mobility. Demands for economic assistance from siblings and extended family members, and the obligation that accompanies those demands, creates not just an impediment to financial freedom, which is a precursor for economic vulnerability, but fosters a sense of guilt. Arthur Ashe articulated that guilt in an interview for the *New York Times*. "There were times when I felt a burning sense of shame that I was not with other blacks —and whites —standing up to the fire hoses and the police dogs, the truncheons, bullets and bombs." Ashe added: "As my fame increased, so did my anguish" (Arsenault, 2018). Cose (1993) in summarizing what he calls the "dozen demons"—twelve conceptual obstacles common to upwardly mobile black professionals—lends his gaze to that collective guilt experienced by both those who remain silent and those who are moved to speak and/or take societal action on behalf of an entire race of people. One of the most "pernicious" demons, according to Cose (1993), is blacks who feel responsible for the criminal actions of other blacks. Says Cose (1993) "this is not very different from defining the entire race by the behavior of its criminal class" (p. 148).

While Cose (1993) confronts the vision of the black collective, Hoberman (1997) addresses the (white) sports audience and how its flawed view of the black male athlete adds to the black male athlete's urgency to present himself as a complete entity. In *Darwin's Athletes*, Hoberman (1997) claims American culture's fascination with the muscular black male has its origins in slavery. The black male's athletic prowess conjures images of the "noble savage" whose silent labor served the needs of the southern white society. Any resentment harbored by the white audience towards the privileged black entertainer is assuaged by the overtly patriarchal sports culture. According to Hoberman (1997) the white audience is comforted by the fact that this "idealized black muscularity that was once controlled by whips and chains is now financially controlled by the white businessmen who own and operate the professional sports leagues" (p. 164). This concept speaks directly to Young (2008) whose book chapter, *Black Monsters, Dead Metaphors*, examines the conflicted relationship between this country and the African American man. Young (2008) examines Crane's work *The Monster* (1898) and how Crane (1898) used Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1818) to elucidate the latent fear/fascination in which the white society beholds the American black man. Young (2008) examines Crane's work through the lens of the late 19th century, a period of history that was defined by widespread lynching and inhuman medical research on black men. Young (2008) calls these "discourses of monstrosity," and concludes that this was Crane's (1898) way of demonstrating how profound acts of racism turned black men into monsters. As a result, these monsters had to be destroyed, or at the very least controlled. This sentiment holds true in contemporary society where the prodigious skill of the compensated black male athlete is at once the white audience's great pleasure and its greatest source of angst. But

Hoberman (1997) asserts that the white audience and white corporate ownership compartmentalizes its problematic view of the black male performer by ensuring that the black male athlete “exists for most whites primarily as a vehicle for advertising that exploits crossover appeal...” (p. 31). Though this was most evident during the Period of Rhetorical Silence, it is still evident in black male celebrities like former NBA basketball player Shaquille O’Neal, who uses his ability to break dance and make comical faces as a means of countering his 7-foot-4 frame, mahogany skin, and baritone voice. O’Neal is the face for several companies and his countenance regularly appears on air during various television programs and networks. Since retiring from basketball in 2011, O’Neal claims to have quadrupled his \$300 million career earnings (Hernbroth, 2019). His financial success reflects his willingness to subordinate any social instincts to proffer a stance on a social issue. To date, O’Neal has never offered his voice to any social cause. Those who lend themselves to causes and who seek to disrupt societal and/or state-led status quo do so with the knowledge that they are risking not just financial opportunity, but in some cases, “particular cultural status.” This is a concept illuminated by Foss and Domenici in “Haunting Argentina: Synecdoche in the Protests of the Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo.” In detailing the protests led by the mothers of children who have gone missing, Foss and Domenici (2001) reveal how the mothers have reframed marianismo—“the feminine spiritual superiority and self-sacrifice that makes them ideal wives and mothers” (Foss & Domenici, p. 240)—by using it as a means of justification for their protest. They protest the lack of compassion and effort shown by the Argentinian government to return the missing children not because they are simply looking to cause trouble, but because this is the kind of behavior that *should* be expected from wives and mothers who have been

entrusted to uphold societal ideals and standards. Thus, they are not protesting as much as they are fulfilling their cultural obligations. By meeting these obligations in the public sphere, the mothers construct a haunting metaphor. Foss and Domenici (2001) describe haunting as “the presence of a disembodied spirit in a form that transcends boundaries of space and time” (p. 240). The mothers engage the spirits of the missing children while simultaneously and persistently engaging the Argentinian government, which attempts to dismiss the mothers, their protest, and the entire matter. The mothers’ use of symbols like diapers for headscarves is the essence of depictive rhetoric as these are the most substantial symbols associated with motherhood and the most effective means of haunting the collective consciousness of those who are responsible for the missing children. This thesis maintains that LeBron James, by covering his face and obscuring his celebrity creates a space that haunts the collective consciousness of the sports fan. In this haunted space, LeBron James affixes his own image to that of a murdered black teenager.

A Brief Description of Concentric Circles Theory

Brummett (1984) says that in the process of identifying a representative anecdote, a single discourse is synecdochal. He also points out that an audience needs more than a single discourse in order to make sense of the world, or what Burke (1969) calls “equipment for living.” Thus, Brummett (1984) asserts that a group of representative anecdotes is bound by a single characteristic, making it metaphorical.

That single characteristic, represented in each rhetorical era, is black male athletes who offer proof of their humanity by speaking on behalf of marginalized black people who share the need to assert *their* humanity. This connection makes each representative anecdote a metaphor for the other anecdotes (Brummett, 1984). To that end, in order to

fully and accurately examine the narratives constructed by Harry Edwards, Arthur Ashe, and LeBron James, this thesis analyzes their statements as performances of blackness and privilege. While these performances take place in different eras and reflect distinct and even divergent sensibilities, I treat them not as disparate occurrences, but as “overlapping performances” (Tiffie, 2005). These overlapping performances are contained in a circle comprised of three rings, one ring for each rhetorical era. I use the circle because for two reasons: 1) circle is also an archetypal metaphor, and thus easily recognized by the variety of audiences; and 2) it is, as Foss and Domenici (2001) state: “a symbol of atemporality that unites the past, present and future as well as serving as the root metaphor of existence” (p. 247).

Beginning with the second chapter this thesis utilizes the concentric circle as a means of illustrating the metaphorical relationship between the phrase “black male athlete” and the word “privilege.” To do this I use Richards’ (1952) formulation of metaphor which states: “we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction” (Richards, p. 93). This circle is comprised of three rings and this thesis, using metaphor and synecdoche as a means of analysis, will move concentrically from the outermost part of the circle to the center, along the way demonstrating how the terms “privilege” and “black male athlete,” through representative anecdote, are morphed into the term “privileged black male athlete.”

The outermost ring of the circle, the periphery, is occupied by those athletes who find their voices during the Insurrection Period. Harry Edwards (1969) begins his treatise on race relations by stating that sport is harmful to the black male athlete, that the black

male athlete is being exploited for his athletic skill and receiving meager compensation; academically, professionally, and humanely. Edwards (1969) uses his voice to maintain that organized sport marginalizes the black male athlete in the same way it marginalizes all members of the black community; rendering both entities as perpetual “other.” This sensibility ensures that Edwards (1969) will remain on the periphery and thus removed from the brand of privilege afforded white men who possess academic credentials identical to Edwards’ (1969).

In Chapter III this thesis moves towards the center of the circle, where the rules of hegemonic discourse dictate that the black male athlete should refrain from political expression of any kind. The center is significant because it represents the “centrist” position. The most representative anecdote for the Period of Rhetorical Silence is Arthur Ashe’s memoir, *Days of Grace*. In this work, Ashe (1993) uses his social location to carefully, thoughtfully, and *cautiously* reconcile the black male athlete’s role in the Insurrection with his role at the end of the twentieth century. However, as Ashe (1993) speaks during a time of silence, the conservative directorate of the tennis community still perceives him as “radical” and treat him as such.

In Chapter IV this thesis descends from the period of Rhetorical Silence and into the innermost circle, which is reserved for those black male athletes who, because of their refusal to subordinate their narratives to the hegemonic discourse, and because of their immunity to hegemonic retribution, possess unlimited privilege. As one who makes \$92 million per year in both salary and endorsements (Badenhausen, 2019), not only is LeBron James the sole occupant of this particular space, his sense of self only reinforces that position. For instance, in response to Fox News host Laura Ingraham’s statement that

he “shut up and dribble,” (Galily, 2019) James replied: “I will not shut up. I mean too much to society” (Chaitin, 2018).

In another statement, James joins the discussion began by Edwards in 1969 when he declared that sport was harmful to society, particularly as it pertains to black men. James, in referring to President Trump’s criticism of black athlete led protest,” refuses to say his name, referring to him as “that guy.” Says James:

He’s using sports to divide us. As I have this platform and I have a way to inspire and a way for my word to be bond. I will lend my voice, I will lend my passion, I will lend my money. I will lend my resources to my youth in my inner city and outside my inner city to let these kids know that there is hope (ABC News, 2017).

These two statements reflect the essence of Burke’s (1941) dramatism wherein the origin of the narrative contains its conclusion and the conclusion is a summation of the origin. James won’t call Trump by name, much like Edwards (1969) would not the identify that athletic director who disparaged socially conscious black athletes in 1968. In this sense, the voice of hegemonic discourse is a disembodied one and both Edwards (1969) and James summarily dismiss that voice even as it continues to dismiss the black male athlete. But LeBron James dismisses President Trump, the ultimate symbol of hegemony, without subordinating any part of his personal or professional life. This makes him the embodiment of black male athlete privilege.

II. THE BLACK MALE ATHLETE INSURRECTION

Introduction

The first text, which represents the Insurrection Period, is Harry Edwards' book *Revolt of the Black Athlete*. He wrote this book while a lecturer at San Jose State College, and the work is equal parts deliberative and epideictic. This thesis posits that Edwards (1969) addresses two "implied audiences" (Black, 1970). The first audience is comprised of his fellow black male athletes. This work is structurally a "textbook" for the black male athlete who wishes to express his views on society. The second implied audience is comprised of Edwards' academic peers with whom he seeks to establish his ethos. Edwards (1969) accomplishes this through carefully constructed metaphors, each intended for a specific audience. The calculated line of association between the tenor and vehicle is what Osborn and Ehninger (1962) in *The Metaphor in Public Address*, call a "qualifier." The qualifier determines how the reader or listener will understand the metaphor. The qualifier limits the ways an audience can understand a metaphor." (Osborn & Ehninger, p. 228). This thesis employs Osborn and Ehninger's (1962) four distinct types of qualifiers: 1) Contextual: this pertains to a specific linguistic or situational context 2) Communal: this pertains to the common experiences and traditions to whom the metaphor is intended; 3) Archetypal: this pertains to those metaphors that transcend race, age, geographic location, and life experience; 4) Private: this pertains to those metaphors intended for a unique audience, and which assert an unusual or unexpected relationship between the tenor and vehicle.

Edwards (1969) penned *Revolt of the Black Athlete* in 1968, one of the most turbulent years in American history. That year included the assassinations of Martin

Luther King and Bobby Kennedy, the student rebellion at Columbia University, and the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. Each of these events “was a momentous occasion that played out with an unusually high degree of intensity” (Wiggins, 1992). The intensity with which Edwards (1969) constructs his prose makes *Revolt of the Black Athlete* an ideal representation of the 1960’s. This was a time when the most visible leaders of the black community framed their pronouncements in urgent consciousness. Edwards (1969) says his own awareness was borne of the lynching of Emmett Till and the gruesome portrait for which it was known. In 1955, Edwards was a year younger than Till and he craved affirmation that the barbaric murder of someone who was “just like me” would not go unpunished (Edwards, 1969). That indignation and thirst for resolution, which also applies to Edwards’ aspirations in higher education, are what Burke (1969) calls the dramatic essence of Edwards’ (1969) discourse.

The Black Male Athlete Metaphorically Untethers Himself From the Slave

The book’s title reflects Edwards’ (1969) intensity as he applies the word “revolt” in blunt and strategic ways. For him revolution is not defined simply by the act of rejecting authority. In referencing the deaths of Malcolm X and the horror of the church bombings in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963, Edwards (1969) says “...the reason for the black athlete’s revolution is inspired by a disgust and dissatisfaction with the racist germ that infected the warped minds responsible for those events” (p. 6). Specifically directing a message to an audience of his academic peers, Edwards (1969) uses a contextual qualifier in order to cast white authority as the oppressor and the black community as the oppressed. The speaker who most effectively applies metaphor, according to Osborn (1964), is the one who “considers the most promising lines of thought” (p. 111). In

selecting words like “germ” and “infected,” Edwards (1969) directly addresses his peers in the academic community by referencing terms that linguistic scholars had applied to the examination of the Holocaust and specifically to *Mein Kampf* (Musolff, 2007). These terms that Hitler uses to conjure images of disease give Edwards (1969) the most promising lines of thought in terms of urging his (white) academic audience to consider how the structural racism that abounded in Nazi Germany is just as pervasive in twentieth century America.

In order to demonstrate structural racism in the most explicit fashion, Edwards (1969) seeks to debunk the widely held belief that organized sport benefits the black athlete by giving him a role and a purpose within higher education. He presents a statement from an unnamed Director of Intercollegiate Athletics at a major university made to a newspaper reporter:

It’s beyond me why these people would allow themselves to be misled by fanatics like Harry Edwards and H. Rap Brown. These athletes are seen by millions of people on nation-wide and world-wide television, they have first-string starting assignments at white schools, and they are invited to all the big athletic events. Why our Niggers right here at the University have never had it so good (p. 5).

As the speaker’s name is omitted from the passage, this statement is itself a singular representative anecdote. Brummett (1984) in “Burke’s Representative Anecdote as a Method in Media Criticism,” says the representative anecdote “taps what a culture most deeply fears and hopes, and how that culture confronts those concerns symbolically” (p. 166). Brummett (1984) also says the singular anecdote is synecdochal. Thus, the faceless director is one part of the hegemonic ideology governing sport, which as a whole is innately racist and dismissive of the black athlete as a complete human being. In discussing the black athlete, this director labels Edwards and H. Rap Brown “fanatics,”

which implies a level of intellectual instability. His/her summation that black athletes have been “invited” to athletic events (in which they are the primary performers and means of entertainment) implies that the black athlete should be “grateful” for the opportunities afforded them by these “white schools.” He/she concludes their remarks by applying the single most racist label to black athletes, thus confirming that black male athletes at “white schools” are separate entities and not viable members of the matriculating student body.

Edwards (1969) then mounts his refutation of sport as a social unifier in order to cast it as yet another means by which white hegemony classifies black men as other. He says, “As for eliminating prejudice, whites may grudgingly admit a black man’s prowess as an athlete but will not acknowledge his equality as a human being” (Edwards, *Revolt of the Black Athlete*, p. 6).

The representative significance of this passage lay in the fact Edwards (1969) readily identifies the traits of two divergent cultures and the ideological tension that divides them in 1968 (Wiggins, 1992). While white culture reluctantly acknowledges that black men may indeed have a “place” in society, the preferred role of athletic performer is at best marginalized, and at worst something less than human. Also contained in that sentiment is the white culture’s *fear* that the black male athlete harbors ambitions that transcend sport and that those ambitions could ultimately threaten the established hierarchy not just within the university system, but in society at large. Edwards (1969) identifies that fear by juxtaposing athletic prowess with “equality.” He illustrates this concept through a communal qualifier which he frames as an extended slave metaphor that he calls the “Bitter Pill of Accommodation” (p. 28).

In this section, Edwards (1969) addresses the plight of the black male professional athlete in order to reveal that his societal privilege is just as constrained as that of his amateur counterpart. As a means of demonstrating the black male athlete's societal inhibitions, Edwards (1969) uses the generic act of consuming medication as an archetypal qualifier. This particular qualifier functions on two levels. The first is a literal interpretation: while unpleasant, the physical act of taking medication is necessary for one's health and survival, which is a familiar concept to any and all of Edwards' (1969) intended audiences; and this particular qualifier also functions as a linguistic idiom that is common in American language. A "bitter pill" is analogous to an uncomfortable truth or unpleasant set of facts, which is also familiar to any and all of Edwards' (1969) intended audiences. After he has established an archetypal connection with his collective audience, Edwards (1969) applies a communal qualifier in order to link the black male athlete directly to the African slave: "Like the black slave who sang songs and hummed tunes as he toils in the fields, the black professional athlete has, too, traditionally accommodated himself to the discrimination and racism he has encountered in professional sports" (p. 28).

In this passage Edwards (1969) accomplishes two things. First, by using terms like "sang songs, hummed tunes, and toiled in the fields," he blends intense physical labor with muted personal expression. Second, Edwards (1969) shows that for both the slave and the black male athlete his physical performance is a means of survival and in order to maintain those means, each subordinate himself to the white spectator. The only personal expression for the slave is a song he sings to himself, while the black male athlete remains completely silent. The black male athlete, while compensated for his

services, is not immune from being punished for expressing himself as human, thus he has limited privilege.

On the very next page, Edwards (1969) uses Jackie Robinson to illustrate how Robinson's silence was just as significant as his presence *in the field* (italics, mine). He discusses how when a white pitcher threw at his head or a white fan spit on him, he could not retaliate for fear of the consequences: "For had he lost control of himself, he also would have lost his job and Mr. Rickey's experiment would have failed" (p. 29).

In this context, Jackie Robinson himself is an archetypal qualifier in that such qualifiers "grow out of situations that move men deeply and which consequently exert a strong control over how they think and feel" (Osborn, p. 229). Robinson's silence in the face of concentrated oppression made him, for a white audience, the ideal representation for the black male athlete. Robinson's saga was a great American tale of triumph and the maintenance of a preferred racial hierarchy. Simply put, Robinson put angst-ridden white people at ease. The African American man, particularly the dark-skinned, physically imposing African American man, has been historically viewed as a "menacing other." According to Hoberman (1997) "the classic view of the black man's dual nature was that he was docile and amicable when enslaved, ferocious and murderous when free" (p. 164). The underlying message is that the African American man, as less than human, should be "controlled" by those in authority. However, Robinson's athletic prowess, coupled with his willingness to remain silent, offers the white spectator a version of the black male athlete who does not need to be "controlled," as his willingness to subordinate the basic human desire to defend himself is Robinson's most acclaimed asset.

By presenting Robinson as the archetypal qualifier for the white academic audience, Edwards (1969) effectively recasts Jackie Robinson not as iconic hero, but as cautionary tale for his other audience—the black male athlete who aspires to assert his complete humanity. This point is exacerbated by Edwards' (1969) eagerness to cast Branch Rickey in a role that was commensurate with the 1960's, one that diverged from the self-congratulatory sentiment of the post-World War II era. Edwards (1969) cast Rickey not as a champion of integration, but as an “experimenter” who uses a black male subject for his own gain. In so doing, Edwards (1969) addresses his academic peers by referencing the late 19th century, a period of history that was defined by widespread lynching and inhuman medical research on black men. Young (2008) calls experiments like the Tuskegee Syphilis Study “discourses of monstrosity.” Thus, in this Period of Insurrection, Jackie Robinson as the silent “accommodator” and Branch Rickey as the “experimenter,” signify the new vocabulary by which Edwards (1969) asks each of his audiences to address the concerns of the black male athlete.

Mounting the Revolt

The most definitive aspect of *Revolt of the Black Athlete* is Edwards' (1969) earnest approach to framing his work as equal parts historical retrospective and strategic plan. As Edwards (1969) is a professor his work functions an actual textbook for those black male athletes who seek their personhood. Brummett (1984) says that a representative anecdote must be able to incorporate those terms that are most germane to its plot, or “dramatis personae.” Very early in the work, Edwards (1969) associates the societal function of the black male athlete with that of the plantation slave. In the book's third chapter, titled “Mounting the Revolt,” Edwards (1969) revisits the slave imagery in

order to establish a plan of action. “The movement for black liberation dates from the first moment that a black captive chose suicide rather than slavery” (p. 38). Using this private qualifier, Edwards (1969) invokes the atrocities of the Middle Passage, wherein captive African slaves, rather than acquiesce to lives of servitude, chose to take their own lives. This is an example of a private qualifier in that it creates a radical metaphor which Osborn and Ehninger (1962) say leads to unforeseen or hard to fathom associations. In this case neither the white spectator nor the black male athlete has drawn such a direct comparison from competitive sport to indentured servitude. However, Edwards (1969), speaking from the social location of academia, compares the black male athlete’s pursuit of his manifest destiny as a continuation of that which was once envisioned by the most desperate slave. In directly addressing the black male athlete Edwards (1969) informs him that he has no choice but to risk his limited privilege in pursuit of a higher form of privilege that does not require him to subordinate his means of expression. And Edwards (1969) himself, by making such a statement, ensures his place on the periphery of the circle of privilege, while those black male athletes who only break their silence in order to oppose other black men, are shown favor by the establishment.

Edwards (1969) references Jesse Owens, the hero of the 1936 Olympics, who in 1965 was charged with tax evasion. While Edwards was urging black athletes to boycott the 1968 Olympic Games, Owens was one of many former black male athletes to publicly oppose his efforts. After Owens narrated a documentary about the 1936 Olympic Games, which overtly espoused the social virtues of organized sport (Hartmann, 2003), Owens’ income tax case was settled by a judge who fined him just \$3,000 (“Owens Gets fine for Tax Evasion,” 1966). As Owens is a frequent foil for Edwards, he applies the

most representative language of the day to rhetorically distinguish Owens and his ilk from the more socially conscious black male athletes who comprise a large portion of his target audience. Edwards (1969) concludes that Owens is “a prime example of how the establishment uses Negroes to hinder the liberation of black people” (p. 54). He uses the word “Negro” synonymously with the word “Nigger,” a purposely pejorative term conceived by white racists. In 1968, the term “black,” regarding its place within general American lexicon, and specifically among black people, was still evolving. But Edwards (1969) saw fit to use Owens as a means of expediting that evolution while definitively labeling the most significant “dramatis personae” within the black male athlete movement.

While applying language that purposely excludes Jesse Owens from the revolution, Edwards (1969) just as purposely crafts inclusive language to describe those black male athletes whose values are aligned with his own, but who count themselves as representatives of the extended black community. “And now at long last the black athlete has entered the arena as a warrior in the struggle for black dignity and freedom” (p. 38).

Osborn & Ehninger (1962) characterize the private qualifier as “risky.” The rhetor, in publicly addressing those members of his audience whose sensibility matches his own, risks alienating every other member of the audience. At the time, organized sport provided a means for the black male athlete to compete against the white male athlete in a symbolic gesture; a contest that was little more than spectacle. But when Edwards (1969) uses the words “arena” and “warrior,” he purposely removes the black male athlete from the realm of entertainment and places him into the realm of militancy. The lines of association between the competitive athlete and the warrior, when applied as contextual

or communal qualifiers, are meant to merely present that association in a figurative way. But when applied as a private qualifier, the intent is to provoke “profound emotional and intellectual experiences” (Osborn & Ehninger, 1962).

Through this statement Edwards (1969) clearly defines the black athlete’s place in the maintenance of social order. His role is not to merely amuse the spectator, but to use his prowess in pursuit of a greater good. The black male athlete’s relationship to the black community is that he represents that part of the black community that is most visible and accessible to the white spectator. His proximity to the white spectator (which the non-athletic black person does not have) affords him an opportunity to recast himself, and thus all black people, as human beings with a capacity for intellectual expression and achievement. This makes Edwards, who is 6-foot-8 and weighs 260 pounds, the ideal black male representative of the Insurrection Period, and thus the ideal person to address the black community, the (white) academic community, and current and former black male athletes. This is reflected by Edwards’ (1969) summation of the moment at the 1968 Olympic Games when John Carlos and Tommie Smith famously held gloved fists in protest of America’s mistreatment of minorities. Edwards writes:

...nor do these recent athletic protests mark the first instances of black athletes speaking out. The difference in this instance is that they are speaking out not only on their own behalf, but on behalf of their downtrodden race, and the world and nation are listening (p. 8).

Edwards intimates that black male athletes have always struggled to be seen as complete human beings, but the athletic protests at San Jose State and later at Mexico City, were the first to extend to the entire black community. In order to affect societal change, the black male collegiate athlete should offer proof of *his* intellect as an extension of *all* black people’s intellect. Edwards (1969) asserts that organized sport provides the only

means of exposure the white spectator, who is synonymous with white establishment, has to black intelligentsia when he asks, "...how many black doctors, sociologists, chemists, dentists, or biologist does the average white coach (or average white man) know? Not many if any at all" (p. 17).

However, the exigencies for the black male athlete exist within the basic structure of organized sport. The prescribed curriculum for the black collegiate athlete is designed to keep him eligible for competition, not to educate him. Edwards (1969) says courses in music and physical education are over-represented in collegiate athletics while subjects dealing with "abstract use of intellectual skills are singularly scarce" (p. 13). The black male athlete's social location, while prominent, cannot be characterized as "privileged" as it is limited to physical expression, of which Edwards, the black male athletes, and the fans are well-aware: "... black college athletes begin to realize that his white employers, teammates, even his fellow students, in spite of the cheers and adulations they shower upon him, regard him as something akin to a super animal..." (p. 22.).

Edwards' (1969) use of the word "animal" speaks to those traits traditionally associated with black men—physically imposing, menacing, threatening, aggressive, powerful, and scary (Hoberman, 1997). The act of speaking is antithetical to the bestial characterization of black male athletes which was common at the time, so when a black male athlete articulated his thoughts, using the confrontational language that defined the Insurrection Period, his audience was made uncomfortable. Such was the case when Tommie Smith, a sprinter at San Jose State, wrote a statement voicing his support for the Olympic Project for Human Rights: "I therefore feel that it is my obligation as a black

man to do whatever is necessary, by any means necessary, to aid my people in obtaining the freedom that we all seek” (p. 56).

The phrase “by any means necessary,” is perhaps the most representative anecdote of the Civil Rights Movement, and certainly the most representative anecdote for the Insurrection Period. It was first uttered by Malcolm X at the founding rally of the Organization of Afro-American Unity on March 26, 1964 (Blackpast, 2007). Standing in the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, Malcolm X, who had officially changed his name to El Haj Malik El-Shabazz, shared the tenets of this new organization that he had founded after an acrimonious split from the Nation of Islam. In the iconography of American oratory, Malcolm X is one of this country’s most looming figures. Because of that the phrase, “by any means necessary,” has equal historical and rhetorical significance. Burke (1962) says the “dramatic form” of the representative anecdote encourages the audience to “participate in its rhythms” (p. 58). Burke (1968) defines form as that which “creates an appetite in the mind of the auditor and the adequate satisfying of that appetite” (p. 143). During his address in the Audubon ballroom, Malcolm X repeats the phrase “by any means necessary” five times. In the first utterance, he identifies it as the O.A.A.U.’s official motto. With each repetition, Malcolm X appeals to an appetite that, at the time, was in its most urgent state; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would be signed just one month after this address.

In the years preceding and including Civil Rights movement and Malcolm X’s address in 1964, the black American citizen had little means, especially in the south. The south’s entire economy was dependent upon cheap black manual labor, which the local government sought to maintain by limiting the black workers’ educational opportunities.

In the 1920's one county in Mississippi had just three teachers for 350 black students. Around the same time, in Dawson County, Georgia, the academic term for black children was just six weeks (Anderson, 2016). By using the term “means,” Malcolm X proclaimed that every available agency, including education, was essential to black people’s realization of freedom. Tommie Smith’s invocation of “by any means necessary” demonstrates how that phrase is part of a larger discourse. Brummett (1984) says that a single anecdote is synecdochal. But widely shared anecdotes like “by any means necessary” are metaphorical. That means this phrase can be used in reference to every anecdote that pertains to the Civil Rights movement, making several anecdotes metaphors for each other (Brummett, 1984). When Smith uses this phrase to describe his vision and motives, we have proof that the phrase “by any means necessary” represents the efforts of the black male athlete during the Insurrection Period, not to mention the Civil Rights Movement as a whole.

Feeding the Flame

That one of the most turbulent years in American history corresponded with an Olympic year, is by all accounts, a coincidence. However, Edwards (1969) seizes every rhetorical opportunity to frame the collective efforts of the black community within a resistance to the corporate structure of the Olympic Games, which he deems hypocritical, especially as it pertains to the black male athlete. Edwards (1968) designates chapter four of his work “Feeding the Flame.”

While the ancient Greeks believed Prometheus had stolen fire from the gods and was justly punished for his deed, they retained fire as the central element in the Olympic ritual. In Olympia, site of the first Olympic Games, a flame was lit before the altar of the

goddess Hestia and burned through the entirety of the Games (Skiadas, 1997). This narrative, which includes the Olympic torch relay and the ceremonial lighting of the cauldron, has historically whet the public's collective appetite for the imminent athletic competition. For Edwards (1969), the combination of myth, history, and spectacle lends itself to metaphor. "Feeding the flame" is Edwards' (1969) most subversive use of figurative language. The word "flame," used in relation to the Olympics, is an archetypal qualifier because any audience readily associates it with the ritual of the Games. However, flame also refers to fervor, which Edwards (1969) clearly intends to stoke. By "feeding the flame," Edwards is clearly alluding to his efforts to grow his movement: urging other black male athletes to use their power of speech. By urging a boycott of the 1968 Olympic Games, Edwards (1969) suggests the black male athlete possesses an urgency that leaders of organized sport, not to mention leaders of larger society, should respect. Edwards's use of fire has extended rhetorical value in the communication realm. Robespierre (2007) speaks of a historical correlation between revolution and fire. However, after comparing the French Revolution to an erupting volcano, Robespierre (2007) asserts the true power of the fire metaphor lay in its suggestive capacity to alter society. "But if social catastrophes (revolution) were historically likened to natural catastrophes (volcanic eruption), the fear of revolution, too, expressed itself by making intensive use of fire as a metaphor for the ultimate threat: the dissolution of the social" (p. 99).

The Olympic Games are a transcendent global event. Even the five rings, symbolically entwined and representing the five continents, reflect a sincere commitment to an inimitable social network. When Edwards (1969) criticizes the Olympic Games, he

does so in a manner than allows him to connect with the “commercial” audience that comprises the common viewer. Osborn & Ehninger (1962) contend that communal events like the Olympic Games “extend beyond the limits of a given time or culture and depend upon experiences common to men of many races and ages” (p. 229). Edwards (1969) draws upon that common experience to propose his argument for a boycott of the 1968 Games in Mexico City. His most immediate vehicle for framing this argument is an extremely long and detailed article he penned for the *Saturday Evening Post*. A significant portion of the article is comprised of a letter he had written to John Carlos. In that letter, Edwards (1969) chides the American Olympic Committee for its failure to appoint any black people to its governing board. More significantly, Edwards (1969) muses about the integrity of organized sport, and the spirit of the Olympic Games in particular, by addressing the Olympic Creed in the form of a question: “Wasn’t it Baron Pierce de Coubertin, the French scholar and humanist who inspired the revival of the Olympic Games in 1896, who wrote, ‘the important thing in the Games is not winning, but taking part?’” (p. 68).

Edwards (1969) is speaking to Smith, but his implied audience includes the American Olympic Committee. He continues this address by conjugating the word “know” in order to show the A.O.C. that no one in its executive ranks seems to “know” any black people as the only black people associated with the Games are those who participate in the one-dimensional realm of competitive athlete. This is of course the same racially exclusive model upon which *every* American sport was founded and against which Edwards (1969) was railing. Edwards (1969) compounds this implication of the A.O.C. by claiming that its vision is more characteristic of America’s most notorious

segregationists than that espoused by Baron Pierre de Coubertin. Edwards (1969) states: “When we demand a place, back comes the disguised echo—of Maddox, Barnett, Wallace, Bull Connor” (p. 68). This is a reference to Lester Maddox, the segregationist Governor of Georgia, Ross Barnett, the segregationist Governor of Mississippi, George Wallace, the segregationist Governor of Alabama, and Bull Connor, the segregationist Commissioner of Public Safety for the city of Birmingham, Alabama. Edwards’ (1969) use of the word “echo” functions as a “cultural intertexture” (Robbins, 1996) in that it reminds the audience of a specific cultural tradition. In this case that tradition is the Jim Crow doctrine that had once pervaded the segregated South. The term echo also functions as a communal qualifier in that only those members of his audience who are familiar with the laws of Jim Crow, and are sensitive to the destructive roles those men played in the civil rights movement will allow themselves to associate those names with the Olympic vision. Those particular auditors are predisposed to abhor anyone or anything that can be associated with segregation.

Having made his case for how the Olympic Creed had failed to transcend the racist structure of organized sport in America, Edwards (1969) resumes his use of fire as metaphor. He does so provocatively as he cites James Baldwin, one of the most well-known and influential writers of the Civil Rights era:

At stake no longer are the profits to be made by the white controllers of sports, but the very survival of the industry itself. For should conditions deteriorate further, the time will have passed for demonstrations, rallies, pickets, and boycotts. As James Baldwin predicted years before Watts in the broad society, in the realm of athletics, it will be the fire next time (p. 97).

James Baldwin’s novel, *The Fire Next Time*, which was published in 1964, is a reference to the second book of Peter, Chapter 3, verses 5-7. In it, Peter reminds the Christians in

Galatia that God had once destroyed the earth by a flood (New International Version). However, the next time He destroyed the earth, it would be by fire (Biblegateway.com). Baldwin (1964), whose prose was shaped by his experience as a youth minister, took license with those verses to construct the phrase, “God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time” (Baldwin, 1964). For Edwards (1969) Baldwin’s (1964) ethos transcends his writing ability and extends to his capacity to forecast societal happenings. Within this biblical context, Baldwin (1963) assumes the role of a prophet as Edwards (1969) informs the audience that Baldwin (1963) foresaw the Watts riots, a six-day insurrection in 1965 that led to the deaths of 34 people in Los Angeles (Edy, 2007). Edwards (1969) co-opts Baldwin’s phrase to warn the athletic establishment that if they failed to recognize the black male athlete as a human being, the athletic industry would befall the fate afforded those who inhabited the earth prior to the flood.

Conclusions

In this chapter, this thesis has demonstrated how Harry Edwards use of metaphor allows him to present his work, *Revolt of the Black Athlete* as the archetypal representative anecdote for the Insurrection Period. Edwards (1969) established his voice as representative of the ambitious, socially conscious black male athlete of this era. However, his rhetoric conflated with his role in orchestrating John Carlos and Tommie Smith’s demonstration on the medal stand in Mexico City, did not give Edwards immunity. The actions taken against Edwards support this. In the days leading up to the 1968 Olympic Games and afterwards, Edwards was surveilled by the F.B.I., his house was broken into, his two pet dogs were killed, and most significantly he was fired from his job as a lecturer at San Jose State College (Lipsyte, 1988). During his quest for

credibility in higher learning Edwards lay bare the latent racist ideology that subtly pervaded the American college campus. Later in his academic career, despite being widely published in the sociology of sport; a field of study that *he created*, Edwards' was denied tenure at the University of California, Berkeley.

The Insurrection Period reached its zenith in Mexico City, and concluded as the 1970's began. Harry Edwards' (1969) voice, though easily recognized and even respected by many of his peers, was not a voice of privilege. However, as the black male athlete quietly toiled in the Period of Rhetorical Silence, Edwards' voice remained viable in some athletic and academic circles, reverberating like an echo. While successfully forging a place for the black male athlete in the academic community, Edwards' most indelible legacy lay in his capacity to guide the black male athlete into realms of social consciousness that transcended, and in some cases, even dwarfed his athletic prowess. As a consultant for the San Francisco Forty Niners, Edwards' guidance led quarterback Colin Kaepernick to mount a revolt that in terms of rhetorical urgency, scope, and narrative, rivaled the insurrection of 1968.

III. The Period Of Rhetorical Silence

Introduction

From 1970 until 2016 the black male athlete flourished as an entertainer and parlayed his earnings from sport into commercial ventures outside of sport. In an ideological departure from the 1960's, he did this while refraining from protest or political statement, making these years the Period of Rhetorical Silence. The most significant happenings of the Period of Rhetorical Silence were in many ways identical to those that defined the Insurrection.

From 1990 until 1992, media focus and public attention vacillated between the political reasoning behind Operation Desert Storm and the ongoing racial tension that culminated in the Los Angeles riots. During this time, the most well-known and thus most representative black male athlete of the period was Chicago Bulls basketball player Michael Jordan. In 1992, as Arthur Ashe was writing his memoir, Jordan and his teammates were celebrating their second consecutive N.B.A championship. Two years earlier Jordan crafted what has become the archetypal statement of the politically neutered black male athlete. During a 1990 U.S. Senate race, when Jordan was asked why he wasn't backing Harvey Gantt, the black candidate who was running against Strom Thurmond, a known segregationist, Jordan quipped: "Republicans buy sneakers too" (Galily, 2019). In that statement, Jordan subordinated his voice in order to reinforce his role as a corporate commodity who is completely removed from any and all issues that may be construed as "racial," or of particular interest to black people. While Ashe (1993) chastised Jordan for his lack of societal agency (p. 161), this chapter demonstrates how *Days of Grace* is actually an argument for silence. Ashe (1993) actually makes an

argument for remaining silent in two specific ways: 1) he draws a parallel between the LGBTQ community and the black community and how both “protect” themselves through silence, and 2) he shares a personal anecdote in which he chooses silence over a public statement. By doing this Ashe (1993) shows how the black male athlete, for fear of disrupting the status quo, and the risk of incurring the wrath of the extended community he represents, is better served to remain silent.

In June of 1992, Arthur Ashe began working on his memoir, *Days of Grace*, which is the representative text for the Period of Rhetorical Silence. Brummett (1984) says the representative anecdote should “link the discourse embodying the formal anecdote to an audience’s problems, showing how the anecdote equips a culture for living in that situation” (p. 164). Whereas Edwards’ (1969) work was primarily an epideictic view of organized sport, which appealed to both academic and militant audiences, Ashe’s (1993) work is primarily an introspective view of *his place* within the tennis culture, which he describes as a “wealth-oriented conservatism of the kind associated with staunch Republicanism and exclusive country clubs” (Ashe, *Days of Grace*, p. 103). From 1963 until 1980, Ashe was the most prominent black individual in professional tennis. During those years, he became the first black man to win singles titles at Wimbledon, the U.S. Open, and the Australian Open. In 1963, he became the first black player ever named to the United States Davis Cup team and later the first ever black Captain (Ashe, 1993).

While the bulk of Ashe’s athletic achievements occurred during the Insurrection Period, he did not fully disclose his thoughts about that era until 24 years after the Period of Insurrection had concluded with *Revolt of the Black Athlete*. Brummett (1984) says

that one way to link discourse to an “audience’s problems is by showing who attends to the discourses” (p.164). In that vein, Ashe’s implied audience is a “commercial” one—a mass audience comprised of both white and black sports fans who may recognize Ashe’s achievements within the sport but who may have been unaware of his thoughts, feelings, and experiences with political events and racial discourse. That *Days of Grace* was published during a time when the black male athlete had removed himself from protest, this particular work, which is more reflective than confrontational, does provide the audience with the requisite intellectual “equipment” to examine overtly racial subject matter in the 1990’s. This chapter shows how Ashe (1993) provides this equipment in the form of three metaphoric constructs—the “outing,” the “middle passage,” and “the burden of race.” This thesis maintains that *Days of Grace* is a representative anecdote for the Period of Rhetorical Silence and that this anecdote functions in two distinct ways: 1) Ashe (1993) uses these specific constructs to show how his status as a privileged citizen of the tennis society does not encumber his connection to the extended black community and 2) Ashe (1993) uses those same metaphoric constructs to show how the exigencies of the retired black male athlete are not dissimilar from those of the common American citizen.

The Outing

In the spring of 1992, *USA Today* tennis writer Doug Smith told Arthur Ashe that the paper heard Ashe had contracted AIDS (Ashe, 1993). The next day Ashe held a press conference to confirm the rumor. Ashe (1993) recalled the event thusly:

Several writers who defended my position used a special term—“outed”—to describe what had been done to me. The term refers to the growing practice among militant gays of deliberately publicizing the names of well-known individuals who are homosexual but “live in the closet” (p. 22).

By labeling the first chapter of his work “My Outing,” Ashe (1993) introduces himself to his audience by purposely assuming the role of media critic. He informs his audience that he is aware of his role in the public spectacle. As a celebrity athlete who worked as a tennis analyst Ashe’s (1993) dual perspective affords him a critical voice of the medium. In a column for the *Washington Post* he wrote, “I understand that the press has a watchdog role in the maintenance of our freedoms and to expose corruption. But the process whereby news organizations make distinctions seems more art than science” (p. 25). To punctuate his belief that media’s narrow interpretation of art is sensationalism, Ashe (1993) references Oliver Sipple, the man who, in 1975, helped thwart an assassination attempt on President Gerald Ford (Rangle, 1989). Ashe (1993) laments how the *San Francisco Chronicle* “outed” Sipple, identifying him as gay when Sipple’s own family was unaware of his sexuality. However, in recalling that account Ashe (1993) himself omits Sipple’s name, referring to him as “the young man who sued the *San Francisco Chronicle*” (p. 23).

In “Burke’s Representative Anecdote as a Method in Media Criticism,” Brummett (1984) says: “...because audiences expect dramatic structure in media content, critical analysis of the media ought to be sensitive to form and drama” (p. 165). By referring to the term “in the closet,” Ashe (1993) applies the most dramatic designations of the time—terms that are used in specific reference to the gay community—to demonstrate how the black male athletes’ social location could be analogous to that of another marginalized group. Ashe’s (1993) use of the term “in the closet,” demonstrates how that term had evolved from a contextual metaphor, to a communal metaphor to an archetypal metaphor. While “coming out of the closet” was an expression that was not widely used

before the 1960's (Waxman, 2017), by 1992, that phrase "extended beyond the limits of a given time or culture" (Osborn & Ehninger, 1962) and could be applied to any marginalized group that aspired to break its silence but had yet to do so.

By applying the term "militant" to certain members of the gay community, Ashe (1993) demonstrates how metaphor can be "culturally appropriated." During the Insurrection period of the 1960's, "militant" was a term used pejoratively by white conservatives to describe those black citizens who defiantly questioned, challenged, or openly disregarded hegemonic structural design. However, in this instance Ashe (1993) refers to those gay individuals who hold members of their community accountable for the emotional and ideological well-being of the group. By "outing" those who refuse to join the collective efforts of those who publicly fight oppression, the militant gay citizens in the 1990's, much like the militant black citizens in the 1960's, are expressing a willingness to sacrifice the privilege that accompanies silence in exchange for visibility.

The Middle Passage

The overlapping narrative that links the Insurrection to the Period of Rhetorical Silence and Harry Edwards (1969) to Arthur Ashe (1993) is most evident in the authors' use of the Middle Passage as a metaphor. The Middle Passage refers to the area of the Atlantic Ocean where slave ships transported human cargo from West Africa to the West Indies. Over the course of three centuries, millions of Africans died of disease or dehydration, their corpses tossed overboard (Kiple & Higgins, 1989). Such accounts make the atrocities of the Middle Passage one of the most sacrosanct parts of African American history. Edwards (1969) applies it as a radical qualifier, overtly comparing the black male athlete's social status to the African slave, which reflects the rebellious era in

which he penned his work. However, Ashe (1993) uses the term in a much more sanguine way. It is the title for the second chapter of his work, yet he never mentions the actual slave trade, nor does he imply its usage in reference to that part of history. Instead, Ashe (1993) uses the term “middle passage” to frame his transition from his athletic career to his life as private citizen: “I had to negotiate the middle passage between the old and the new” (p. 39). These radically divergent usages speak to what Osborn (1964) calls “the classical theory of Invention, where style was focused on the art of language: how one might effectively “clothe one’s thoughts in words” (p.126). Osborn (1964) refers to the “places” or “topics” which would direct a speaker to “promising lines of thought.”

For Ashe (1993), in regard to the black community, the most promising lines of thought lay not in comparing himself to the enslaved savage (the old) but to the contemporary version of the black male athlete whose occupational choices reflected his “evolved” status (the new) and how he was received by the white audience. To that end, Edwards (1969) and Ashe (1993) perform “black maleness” in diametrically opposed ways. Where Edwards embraced his physicality, Ashe deflected his. For public appearances, Edwards (1969) punctuated his 6-foot-6, 250-pound frame with a dashiki, black beret, and dark sunglasses. Ashe, a wiry diminutive 150 pounds, often competed in tennis matches while wearing horn-rimmed glasses, which on a superficial level, gave him a scholarly appearance that made him more “accessible” to a variety of audiences. In the last part of the twentieth century, the black male athlete’s “accessibility” afforded him professional and commercial opportunity outside of sport. Ashe (1993), as is his wont, concludes the chapter in elegiac fashion, leaving the audience with a hopeful message:

“Meanwhile, I keep sailing on in this middle passage. I am sailing into the wind and the dark. But I am doing my best to keep my boat steady and my sails full” (p. 59).

Ashe (1993) uses archetypal qualifiers like “sailing into the wind” to depict the uncertainty of his life after having been diagnosed with a terminal disease. He uses the phrase remaining “steady” as a vehicle to represent his reserved disposition and progressive message, all of which reflect the underlying tone of the Period of Rhetorical Silence when the black male athlete made himself amenable to the capitalist structure. However, in the first part of the chapter, Ashe (1993) uses the phrase “middle passage” as an implied communal qualifier to show how his vision as a black male athlete is aligned with the common experiences and funded knowledge (Osborn & Ehninger, 1962) of the black community, for whom the Middle Passage is a sacred phrase. He confesses his admiration for Muhammad Ali, Jon Carlos, and Harry Edwards and how their social obligations were identical to his own. However, Ashe (1993) also confesses that his place within the tennis culture shaped his subordinated status during a time when the aforementioned black male athletes spoke for the black community. While it was Ashe (1993) who coined the phrase “politically neutered” to describe the black athlete (Swift, 1991), he confesses that this term once applied to him: “From the social and racial remove of the almost entirely white, upper-class stratum that is the tennis world,” writes Ashe (1993), “I had looked with fascination on athletes who had stood up defiantly and protested against social injustice” (p. 40).

Ashe (1993) is “fascinated” by men like Ali, Carlos, and Edwards because his affiliation with the tennis world strains his voice as it pertains to the extended black community. In short, he is seen, but not heard. Ashe (1993) invokes an iconic name and

image to explain his vocal restraint: “We all know what happened to Emmett Till, whose death in 1955 cast a shadow over my youth and that of virtually all black kids in Richmond and no doubt across America” (p. 116). In this instance, Emmett Till, while a proper name, is also a “stylistic token” (Black, 1970) which a speaker uses to identify his or her audience. Till’s disfigured face, displayed in an open coffin, is the definitive image that many scholars consider the catalyst for the Civil Rights movement (Hudson-Weems, 1998); its significance transcends racial identification. By invoking Till and using the word “cloud” as an archetypal qualifier, Ashe (1993) provides an historical reference for his mass audience, while using Till’s name to invoke a communal response to his black audience.

Dow (1997) says that “we tend to accept membership in certain demographic categories as indicators of privilege and membership in other demographic categories as indicators of marginalization” (p. 246). In 1968, the seminal year for the Black Power movement, when the black male athlete found his voice, Arthur Ashe became the first and only black man to ever win the U.S. Open, the most prestigious Grand Slam tennis tournament played on American soil. At the time of his victory, Ashe’s membership within that “white, upper-class stratum” made his physical blackness a visible totem of achievement, which in 1968 was significant. But by using the phrase “racial remove,” Ashe (1993) reminds his audience that in 1968, his membership in tennis culture was founded on his transcendent athletic skills, *not* his narrowly defined ethnicity. Ashe (1993) is “fascinated” by the societal efforts mounted by other black male athletes because he, like the other members of the tennis community, is relegated to the role of spectator on issues of race. At the time of his most notable athletic achievement, Ashe’s

(1993) membership within that demographic affords him the opportunity to ignore those who are oppressed, which is one of the tenets of privilege. Moreover, on the very same page, in the very next paragraph, Ashe (1993) confesses to subordinating himself to hegemonic rule. Ashe says: “.... I had guiltily nursed the suspicion that I had not done as much as I should have in the arena of protest and politics, civil rights, and social reform” (p. 40). This confession, punctuated by Ashe’s (1993) self-awareness and his acknowledgement of the climate, thoroughly reflects the muted vocabulary that framed the Period of Rhetorical Silence. However, Ashe’s (1993) status as representative anecdote of the text is strikingly illustrated by his account of the speech he gave at the Church of the Redeemer, a black Presbyterian church in Washington, D.C. He contextualizes this event by revealing his status as a second lieutenant and systems analyst in the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Ashe (1993) makes this event even more substantial when he admits to being “very much under Army control and limited by what he could say and do” (Ashe, p. 114). In his address to the black congregation, Ashe (1993) applies a uniquely specific term: “There is a lot we can do, and we don’t do because we are lazy, I insisted. This may be brutal, but poverty is half laziness” (p. 114). The use of the word “lazy,” in reference to black people is among the most enduring legacies of the Jim Crow era (Davis, 2003) and Ashe’s (1993) use of it to explain the black community’s state of perpetual disenfranchisement is one of the most unusually provocative statements of this work. When used in public speech, the word “lazy” is a stylistic token which identifies the speaker’s audience. In this instance, Ashe’s original audience is a black congregation in 1968. However, by retelling this story in 1993, in a text aimed at a mass audience, his use of the word lazy implies Ashe’s willingness to let a

mass audience contemplate one of the most corrosive ideologies ever applied to the black community. (NOTE: there is no available transcript for the speech Ashe gave at the Church of the Redeemer). When *Days of Grace* was published, Ashe was known as one of this country's most respected black male athletes, but he promulgates one of the most destructive ideologies ever affixed to black people.

Even more significantly, *Days of Grace* was published during the Persian Gulf War, when support for "the troops" was *the* standard edict for patriotism. Throughout the country, local news outlets elevated the American soldier to hero status (Reese & Buckalew, 1995). Therefore, in 1993, when Ashe frames that church lecture in the context of a "soldier" who is limited in what he can say, he speaks directly to a mass audience that is receptive to such restraint. This restraint is wholly reflective of the black male athlete in the Period of Rhetorical Silence. Ashe famously would commit himself to fighting South African apartheid, advocating for the rights of Haitian refugees, and AIDS awareness, but at the height of his athletic prowess, Ashe (1993) purposely and carefully edits his voice on matters relating to the black American community. I use the term "voice" in Huspek's terms, where voice is "a phenomenological effect of marginalization; when the subject speaks one announces one's idiosyncratic presence in the world" (Watts, Voice and Voicelessness in Rhetorical Studies, p. 181). In revisiting the decision to edit himself, Ashe (1993) reestablishes *Days of Grace* as commensurate with the muted tenor of this particular era.

The Burden of Race

The chapter titled “the Burden of Race” is the most dramatic entry in *Days of Grace* and is the most poignant illustration of the Period of Rhetorical Silence. In an interview with a reporter for *People Magazine*, Ashe (1993), when asked if AIDS is the heaviest burden he’s had to bear, answers thusly: “You’re not going to believe this, but being black is the greatest burden I’ve had to bear...even now it feels like an extra weight tied around me” (p. 126). Ashe’s (1993) use of the word “burden” as the vehicle for race is itself quite jarring. His career as a tennis player and his public image reflected the unfettered privilege of one who had transcended blackness. This is Ashe’s (1993) one and only use of a private qualifier, which Osborn & Ehninger (1962) also call a “radical” qualifier. Osborn & Ehninger (1962) define private qualifiers as “stimuli which assert unusual or unexpected relationships” (p. 230). Given Ashe’s (1993) willful misappropriation of the term Middle Passage, his willingness to equate blackness with a terminal illness is at the very least unexpected, and at most shocking. Ashe (1993) admits that one of his closest white friends called him to inquire if he had been misquoted. This reaction is logical because the words “burden” and “weight,” in the context of race, allude to the most dehumanizing aspects of the slave trade. Those African slaves who survived the transatlantic voyage were brought to auction with yokes around their necks and shackles affixed to their wrists and ankles (Hagopian, 1997). The visual depiction of subdued black people is the most personal and subjective association anyone can have within the black community, and by using these terms, Ashe (1993) thoroughly confirms his membership in that community. He clarifies his distinction between racial identity

and AIDS by explaining that his disease is the culmination of biological factors, while racism is a societal plague that “hurts and inconveniences infinitely more” (p. 127).

Ashe (1993) declares himself a staunch member of the black community with a clear understanding of racial disparity and oppression. However, when he invokes the Black Power movement in the pejorative, Ashe (1993) demonstrates his belief the burden for the black community is not one levied by outside forces, but a debilitating agent that resides *within* the black community. While Martin Luther King is the sacred cow of the Civil Rights Movement, Stokely Carmichael holds the same distinction in regard to the Black Power doctrine. To that end, when Ashe (1993) states, in dramatic form, that Black Power did more harm to the black community and the nation as a whole, he articulates an ideology that his implied (commercial) audience considers essential equipment for living.

In promulgating Black Power, Carmichael wittingly or unwittingly (the former is much more likely) turned his back on the moral emphasis and genuine nonviolence of King’s leadership and moved toward a radically secular philosophy of racial emancipation. In retrospect, 1965 was the beginning of the end of the dominance of morality in African American culture (p. 145).

Stokely Carmichael’s rhetorical skill is not only renowned, but comparable to Martin Luther King’s. While King was assassinated in 1968, Carmichael was still living at the time of Ashe’s (1993) writing. As the disseminator of Black Power, Carmichael’s voice echoed as a historical touchstone of the Civil Rights movement. When Ashe (1993) characterizes Carmichael’s confrontational rhetoric as “immoral,” he classifies Carmichael’s entire legacy as immoral and thus antithetical to the uplifting of the black community. Brummett (1984) says an anecdote “taps what a culture *most* deeply fears and hopes and how that culture confronts those concerns symbolically” (p. 166). An accomplished black male athlete publicly disparaging the legacy of one of the most

radical black leaders of America's past satisfies pop culture's hope; more accurately its *need* in the 1990's, to expunge the unsettled past while embracing the seemingly limitless present. In 1993, Ashe's (1993) rebuttal of Black Power, buttressed by Michael Jordan's ubiquitous image and muted political expression, symbolically muffles the voices of orators like Carmichael and just as importantly, black male athletes like Harry Edwards.

However, in the most salient part of the text, Ashe (1993) uses a personal confession to demonstrate how, like the other black male athletes of this era, he suppresses his own voice while he suffers in silence. He expresses this through the use of a private qualifier which, for both his black and white audience, forms his most radical metaphor. He recalls an incident at a charity tennis tournament a few days before the U.S. Open, held in a stadium that would be renamed Arthur Ashe Stadium. In recalling a story about how his seven-year old daughter, Camera, holding a white doll in public made him anxious, Ashe (1993) likens being black to having a "shadow" that envelops one's entire identity. He describes how that shadow alters the way his audience perceives him, how he perceives himself, and the actions he takes to mitigate the damage caused by those perceptions. He admits that this angst is something he shares with all black people, stating that the shadow is an omnipresent pall from which he, and the extended black community, could only escape through death (p. 128).

A speaker or writer may use a metaphor to either demonstrate a point, or move an audience (Osborn & Ehninger, 1962). By once again comparing blackness to a shadow that shrouds every part of his existence, Ashe (1993) uses a communal qualifier to dramatically tether himself to the extended black community while momentarily distancing himself from his mass audience. By doing this he reconnects with those black

members of the audience for whom Stokely Carmichael's legacy is sacred, thereby *moving* that audience in such a way that it may reconsider Ashe's previous declaration about Carmichael's role in the demise of the black community. However, once he has reestablished his ethos with his black audience, Ashe (1993) shares his story about how that same black audience might react to the sight of his daughter Camera holding a white doll: "Is that brother sick or what? Somebody ought to teach that poor child about her true black self" (p. 129). Ashe (1993) describes this anxiety as a chorus of "angry voices in his head." While "voices in one's head" is an archetypal qualifier that denotes irrational behavior as the line of association that is familiar to any and all audiences, his use of the word "angry" is communal qualifier that specifically addresses his black audience. Anger is part of the "common experience" for black people on all issues of race and racial disparity.

In this passage, Ashe (1993) demonstrates how his membership in the restricted tennis community does not make him immune to the guilt and social obligation that accompany blackness. After taking the doll away from his daughter, Ashe (1993) admits to being angry with himself for choosing practicality over morality. In this anecdote he articulates how the black male athlete's equipment for living in the early 1990's is defined by appearance, not words. How he *appears* in a public setting supersedes how he might think, feel, or react to a stimulus.

Conclusions

This chapter demonstrated how Arthur Ashe's use of metaphor makes *Days of Grace* the representative anecdote for the Period of Rhetorical Silence. While Ashe's (1993) use of figurative language to create slave imagery is reminiscent of language used

by Harry Edwards, Ashe (1993) strategically misappropriates those terms to create a text that makes his voice acceptable for a mass audience, an audience that includes the LGBTQ community. As *Days of Grace* was published during the AIDS crisis, Ashe (1993) uses the word “outing” to forge a communicative parallel between the gay community and the extended black community; demonstrating how both groups use silence as a means of self-preservation. When he constructs a metaphor for race and uses the word “burden” as a vehicle, Ashe (1993) invokes images of slavery in order to demonstrate how he, as a prominent representative of the black community, has been compelled to restrain himself and refrain from public statement for sake of decorum. He uses the term “middle passage,” in a way that removes it from its historic origin and transforms it into an elegant metaphor that represents a person’s life’s journey. By doing this, Ashe (1993) rhetorically blunts the intercultural echo the reader associates with the term “middle passage.” He delegitimizes the term, strips it of its innate rhetorical power, and makes it a commercial metaphor that speaks to the drudgery of life. However, Ashe (1993) vehemently sustains his connection to the black community in one significant fashion. When he invokes Emmet Till, he promulgates a specific narrative the prominent black male athlete is compelled to construct and to reconstruct. It is a narrative in which the black male athlete reminds his audience that, despite his social location, he is never removed from the common black man and the societal restraints that dominate him. Just as Harry Edwards entreats Emmet Till as a touchstone for his own social conscience, Ashe (1993) references Till in a similar way, reminding his mass audience that as a black man, he always has a tangible reason to remain vigilant, yet cautious, and even silent.

While Ashe's (1993) discursive tactics afford him credibility with the mass audience, he is not immune to the repercussions of using his voice for social causes, even global ones. Ashe was the first ever black man to serve as Davis Cup Captain, an immeasurable honor in terms of both sport and culture. However, when Ashe publicly protested apartheid, the United States Tennis Association asked him to resign his position (Ashe, 1993). That response personifies the definitive bounds of Arthur Ashe's privilege. Despite his status as the most prominent African American citizen of the tennis community, structural and cultural hegemony do not afford Ashe immunity from the unspoken rules prohibiting personal expression.

However, three years after Ashe's death, an inconspicuous basketball player challenged those rules through a silent, yet seismic gesture. In 1996, Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, then a member of the NBA's Denver Nuggets stood in silence during the playing of the national anthem. His eyes were closed, and his hands cupped toward his face while he recited a Muslim prayer (Washington, 2016). This non-verbal gesture, and more significantly, the vitriolic response it engendered, was a rhetorical bridge to the Black Male Athlete Renaissance.

IV. The Black Male Athlete Renaissance

Introduction

In August of 2016, San Francisco Forty Niners quarterback Colin Kaepernick knelt during the playing of the national anthem, a gesture which generated a prolonged and impassioned response from a variety of audiences. In the days preceding that infamous gesture, Kaepernick sought the guidance of the Forty Niners long-time consultant, Dr. Harry Edwards. Edwards' primary role as a consultant was mediating the concerns of its black players, helping them navigate the contours of wealth, fame, and public accountability. In defending Kaepernick's actions, Edwards attributed Kaepernick's social agency to "that of a man suddenly becoming aware his house is on fire" (Edwards, 2016). While it may be happenstance that the years-long public discussion around Kaepernick coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the release of *Revolt of the Black Athlete* in 1969, those two events capture the concentric arc of the black male athlete's narrative. Over the course of a fifty-year span, the black male athlete has used his voice to construct a narrative that speaks to the concerns of the extended black community. These are not disparate narratives sprung forth from disparate personalities, but messages that are constructed upon one another, in order to enlighten and empower the African American community. In 2016, Colin Kaepernick, an accomplished football player, was not among the elite in his sport. Despite his sincerity, the urgency of his cause, and the notoriety it commanded, Kaepernick's social conscience did not afford him the ethos necessary to provide him immunity from consequence. When Kaepernick opted out of his contract at the end of the 2016 season, he became a free

agent with the option to sign with any team (Brady, 2017). However, after no team showed any interest Kaepernick's football career effectively ended.

During this time, LeBron James ascended to the pinnacle of his game. After leading the Cavaliers to a championship that season, James said he could "do more with his voice than with his knee" (Aschburner, 2017). In 2016, James' self-actualization of his voice reflected the extended black community's most public ideology. The pervading vocabulary of the time was one that directly addressed hegemonic brutality (law enforcement and otherwise) against the black body. So, when James references his own his voice, he does so in a way that "announces the body's presence; it utters the body's sensory experience of its environment and of others" (Watts, 2001, p. 180). Within this context of empowered self-awareness, a group of community organizers named Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi created an organization called Black Lives Matter. Garza stated the organization's vision in a powerfully worded mission statement, calling Black Lives Matter "an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression" (Garza, 2014: para.2). In the specific context of voice as "the resistance to oppression" (Huspek, 1997) LeBron James made himself the most prominent figure in the burgeoning movement by and for black people to achieve social justice. Like many successful black athletes, James' childhood was shaped by the disenfranchised status that defines many black communities. In the fourth grade, James once missed 100 days of school because his mother had no means of transportation (Griffin, & Phillips, 2013). These facets of racial and situational representation have

allowed James to construct the most complex ethos within the intersection of race, sport, and popular culture. James' willingness to publicly cajole, insult, and rebuke the President of the United States—which has not affected his professional status as professional athlete.

In this chapter, I examine how LeBron James has ascended into the innermost circle of privilege, which is reserved for those black male athletes who because of their refusal to subordinate their narratives to the hegemonic discourse, and because of their immunity to hegemonic retribution, possess unlimited privilege. This period, called the Black Male Athlete Renaissance, is the current period in which the black male athlete enjoys both commercial success and unprecedented opportunity to lend his voice to those issues that implicate the black community. The texts which represent this period are LeBron James' speech during a press conference on September 25, 2017, in which he vehemently denounces President Trump, and proclaims organized sport as a unifying force, and his statement on May 31, 2017, as a response to his home being vandalized. As I employ the use of depictive rhetoric to demonstrate how the black male athlete uses his physical image to represent the black community at large, the remaining texts are examples of the twenty first century's most common form of depictive rhetoric. This is fitting because as Osborn (2018) asserts in *On Metaphor and Style*, "conditions and technology of our time have combined to project depiction into even greater prominence in the workaday rhetoric of our world" (p. 156). The first of these depictive texts is James' tattoo of the words "Chosen 1," which is inked across his back. The other two images are James' tweet of him and his Miami Heat teammates covering their faces with "hoodies" in the wake of the Trayvon Martin's death, and a photo of James wearing an "I

can't Breathe" t-shirt to protest the death of Eric Garner. James' willingness to depict himself along with famously murdered black men is the foundation of his ethos and is not without precedent. Brummett (1984) maintains that the "anecdotal motives offered in a single discourse is synecdotal...but people rarely rely on a single discourse as equipment for living" (p. 6). The effective equipment for living lay within a group of discourses that are linked by a particular trait or characteristic. To that end, the final part of this chapter addresses how James' reference to Emmett Till is more than a stylistic token. As this country's most famously murdered young black man, Emmett Till is a unifying characteristic that links James' narrative about the at-risk black man to the preceding discourses in this work.

The Chosen One

In the same way Ashe (1993) assumes the role of media critic by co-opting the term "outing," LeBron James uses a phrase from a magazine article to designate himself the "Chosen One." The moniker was bestowed upon him by the editorial staff at *Sports Illustrated* for a cover story on James when he was a junior in high school (Wahl, 2002). James' prodigious talent and public following around the areas neighboring Akron, Ohio, led to James being dubbed with the cumbersome title, a title the story's author feared might "ruin James's life." However, James was undeterred by the hyperbolic prism through which observers saw his future. After the magazine had been released, James had an image reading "CHOSEN1" inked onto his body (nikelebron.net). This image is significant because of 1) the tattoo's implied message and how the observer interprets that message, and 2) the tattoo's placement.

The term “chosen one” is a biblical reference in the New Testament. In it, John the Baptist describes Jesus’ role as savior and his own role as the person whose job is to baptize the savior. John uses these words to confirm that he is in the presence of Jesus Christ and he is prepared to perform his duty as the Baptist: “I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One” (John 1: 34, New International Version). As the Chosen One, Jesus has a singular mission: to save the world from itself. In contemporary terms, the expression “Chosen 1” is figurative language that describes a person who has been created for a special purpose. When LeBron James affixes this provocative moniker to himself, he embraces his role as an archetypal savior. The collective editorial staffs in the sports industry designated James the “Chosen 1” as it related to his ability to succeed Michael Jordan as basketball’s greatest player as one who would lead his teams to multiple championships while simultaneously accruing unlimited wealth and commercial opportunity. But by seizing that moniker for himself James extended the substance of his title to include what Modesti (2008) calls “identity construction through the process of embodiment” (p. 209). Already an accomplished athlete at 17 -years-old, James was fully aware that, like Michael Jordan or Kobe Bryant and other black athletes who preceded him, his physical skill was his means to success. By tattooing the words “Chosen 1” on his body, James took the initial steps to create a singular identity that definitively personifies the twenty-first century black male athlete and his place in American culture. He chooses to perform his identity through the medium of body art, which gives James agency in societal expectations. Kosut (2000), in “Tattoo Narratives: the intersection of the body, self-identity, and society,” says: “for some the act of tattooing allows the possibility of owning the body, in addition to living within it” (p. 96). Self-possessed at

17-years-old, James uses the tattoo to articulate ownership of his body, his talent, and the requisite fame, opportunities, and societal responsibilities that accompany it. Because of that James' placement of the tattoo has substantial rhetorical implication.

James had the tattoo placed on his upper back, extending from one shoulder blade to the other. This is significant because the area in between a person's shoulder blades is designated to bear the weight of a specific burden. James said he got the tattoo because he welcomed the enormous expectations associated with it (Washington, 2017). This placement lends itself to Forceville's (1996) claims about pictorial metaphor. Forceville (1996) says "an object is metaphorized because of the visual context in which it is placed" (p. 464). The same applies to the words "Chosen 1" artistically branded across the back of a dark skinned, physically imposing black man. While Harry Edwards and Arthur Ashe purposely constructed narratives to lead audiences away from their athletic traits, James instructs his audience to consider his physicality. James' willingness to "shoulder the burden" of expectation transcends commercial expectations like world championships, Most Valuable Player Awards, or even a coveted place in the NBA's Hall of Fame. To that end, this image also lends itself to Osborn's (2018) analysis of the implications of rhetorical depiction. In comparing rhetorical depiction to enthymeme, Osborn (2018) says one does not need a constructed or completed narrative to resonate with an audience. An audience needs only an implied premise or conclusion to stoke its collective curiosity (p. 157). As a young, athletically dynamic black man, LeBron James is the object of a constant gaze. For those casual fans of basketball and not devoted fans of James, when glimpsed, the words "Chosen 1" inked onto his broad shoulders are open to interpretation. Those who do not understand the basketball specific implications that

accompany that phrase, could be given to another translation. For instance, the visual context of this particular image subtly entreats images of slavery and the heavy wooden yokes that slave traders used to transport their chattel. The line of association that connects LeBron James to an African slave is a jarring one. It is that unexpected and jarring kind of association that James consistently uses to articulate any public message to a mass audience. This was certainly the case in 2012 when James, then a member of the Miami Heat, offered what is perhaps the most impactful statement of his career.

Visual Metaphoric Substitution and “The Hoodie” Tweet

On February 26, 2012, George Zimmerman murdered Trayvon Martin, a 17-year old black teenager in Sanford, Fla. Martin walked through Zimmerman’s neighborhood wearing a hooded sweatshirt which partially obscured his face. Because of this Zimmerman described Martin as looking “suspicious” (Demby, 2012). Zimmerman pursued Martin, which culminated in an altercation which led to Martin’s death. This became a national news story, the narrative founded on the casual white spectator’s willingness to view the young black man as a menace to society. On March 23, 2012, LeBron James both disrupted and extended this conversation when he tweeted a photo of him and his eleven Miami Heat teammates wearing hooded sweatshirts. The players were posed suggestively, hands in pockets, with heads bowed and looking downward. The photo reflected a national reaction, and followed a Million Hoodie March, held in New York City (Demby, 2012).

James’ use of twitter is the most prevalent manifestation of visual vocabulary in the twenty-first century. The contemporary requisite “equipment for living” consists of individuals sharing their most immediate thoughts with an audience comprised of either

close friends or a national following. In this case, James' willingness to substitute himself his image for an anonymous black teenager speaks to Foss' (2017) analysis of visual or pictorial metaphors. While most analysis of visual metaphor is most likely to occur in response to product advertising, campaign rhetoric, or political cartoons (Foss, 2017) James' provocative response to the social and racial implications of Trayvon Martin's murder lends itself to the same scrutiny, albeit in slightly altered form. In *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, Foss discusses a type of visual metaphor called substitution, in which "one of the objects—either the tenor or the vehicle—is present" (p. 291). In this construction, the tenor may replace the vehicle for effect. In the "hoodie tweet," LeBron James replaces Trayvon Martin as a human tenor, allowing the hoodie to work as the vehicle that effectively "moves" the viewer towards an unlikely association between the celebrity and the deceased, black teenager. The tweet is the most cogent application of what Osborn and Ehninger (1962) call a private, or "radical" qualifier. That's because the "hoodie tweet" was the most significant statement James had made since producing an event called the "Decision."

In 2008, James, in a televised special for ESPN, announced his decision to leave the Cleveland Cavaliers to sign a contract with the Miami Heat (ESPN, 2010). In so doing he and teammates Dwayne Wade and Chris Bosch conceived, negotiated, and executed their own business interests. By executing this transaction James demonstrated an immunity to the NBA's traditional conventions regarding player movement. While disappointed fans in Cleveland showed their disfavor by burning James' jersey (ESPN 2010), James excelled in Miami, winning two world championships, earning 92 million dollars (Badenhausen, 2019), and maintaining his endorsements. James' success, along

with his ambivalence for the national response to his decision to leave Cleveland, proved that his social location was unaltered. To that end, a few years later, James used another racially energized national event to speak on behalf of the extended black community.

In July of 2014, a nearly 400-pound black man named Eric Garner was killed by several members of the New York police department. Placed under arrest for selling “loosie” cigarettes, Garner was taken to the ground and choked until he could no longer breathe, dying from asphyxiation. While face down in the sidewalk, Garner reportedly told the officers, “I can’t breathe” (Goldstein & Schweber, 2014). Prior to a game against the Brooklyn Nets, James, who had rejoined the Cleveland Cavaliers, wore a t-shirt emblazoned with the words “I can’t breathe” to commemorate the conditions that framed Garner’s death (Strauss & Scott, 2014). This time James constructed what Foss (2017) calls a metaphor based on “fusion,” in which the tenor and vehicle are integrated (p. 291). By appropriating Garner’s words and affixing the meaning of those words to himself, James constructed a visual image of two physically imposing black men rhetorically fused into one sentient being. It remains one of the most impactful statements of his career. However, the concept upon which that image is founded; the pronouncement that the physically imposing black man possesses an intellect and a conscience; continues to frame James’ representation of, and communication with both the black community and his extended mass audience.

Uninterrupted: The Sovereignty of Monologue

In 2015, James launched his own media company called “Uninterrupted,” in which he produces documentaries, podcasts, and varied original programming (Kiernan, 2015). The title is James’ rebuke of the traditional media format in which a reporter,

representing a news outlet, conducts interviews with celebrity athletes. The line of questions is formulaic, revolving around particular details of the athlete's performance, leaving little possibility for discussion outside of sport. James offer the following mission statement on the Uninterrupted website:

UNINTERRUPTED is not journalism. Producing a wide range of unique, creative, and captivating content, UNINTERRUPTED empowers athletes to let the world see what they see, develop their most creative ideas, and tell the stories most important to them. As sports media and cultural influence continues to expand, UNINTERRUPTED is committed to the voice of athletes and the audience that wants to go deeper (James and Carter, 2015).

Williams (2009) defines a monologue as “a long, uninterrupted speech.” In that vein, James formed his company as a metaphoric response to, and reframing of, the existing order of the sports industry. This is why in the first line of the statement James declares that his company is a creative outlet that is *not* in any way to be confused with the fourth estate. In his desire to address social issues, James preferred method of communication is the monologue. Cowan and Arsenault (2008) in their discussion of public diplomacy, assert that monologue may complement dialogue, especially in the pursuit of social justice. According to Cowan and Arsenault: “Thus, monologue should not be considered in opposition to dialogue; rather, greater consideration should be given to when and how to best formulate and utilize one-way or self-contained modes of communication” (p. 13). Throughout his career LeBron James has effectively used “one-way” communication to commandeer the obligatory post-game press conference, dramatically transforming an obligatory custom into his consistent articulation of social justice. After allowing a reporter to ask the first question, James typically uses that first question to craft a long statement that addresses multiple issues. James uses that space to revive the narrative techniques of those black male athletes who have preceded him. An example of this

occurred on September 25, 2017, after President Trump referred to N.F.L. players as “sons of bitches who should be fired by the owners” (Moran, 2017). The following Sunday, multiple N.F.L. players from multiple N.F.L teams either knelt or locked arms during the playing of the national anthem.

When asked his thoughts James spoke about the innate power of sport to unify disparate individuals and groups. He also praised the players and owners for their solidarity in the face of Trump’s criticism: “There was no divide—even from *that guy* who continues to try to divide us” (ABC News, 2017). James denies his adversary a name, a rhetorical tactic Harry Edwards had used 50 years earlier. Just like Edwards (1969) considers a racist intercollegiate director of sports as unworthy of a unique identity (p. 3), James renders the president just another faceless part of a hegemonic ideology that has summarily dismissed the black male athlete’s humanity. This is not the only anecdote that connects James’ vision and sensibility to the Insurrection Period. There is one specific anecdote that is most representative of the Black Male Athlete Renaissance and LeBron James’ prominence within this period.

Emmett Till as a Stylistic Token and Metaphor

After an incident in May of 2017, in which someone wrote the word “nigger” on his home, James used a pre-game press conference to frame America’s history of racism. Like Harry Edwards and Arthur Ashe before him, James invoked a hallowed figure of the civil rights movement:

I think back to Emmett Till’s mom, actually. It’s kind of one of the first things I thought of. The reason that she had an open casket is because she wanted to show the world what her son went through as far as a hate crime and being black in America (quoted in Greene, 2017).

Like Ashe (1993) James uses the saga of Emmett Till as a stylistic token (Black, 1970) to connect with the black members of his audience. James also constructs a metaphor to teach his mass audience about the historical significance of the hate crime, especially in relation to the black community. In the narrow definition of metaphor, the hate crime is the tenor and the vehicle is Till's open casket, which gave the public an unobscured view of his horrifically swollen and disfigured face. However, in a broad application of metaphor, Emmett Till has even greater import. Till's story carries with it the awful legacy of lynching in America, among the most shameful aspects in this country's history. Colin Kaepernick, in defense of his public gesture, deftly laced that part of history as a plea to hold law enforcement accountable. Said Kaepernick: "Racialized oppression and dehumanization is woven into the very fabric of our nation...by the police, and the mass incarceration of black and brown lives in the prison industrial complex" (quoted in Gleeson, 2018).

Between 1882 to and 1940, there were nearly 4,000 lynchings in America (Garland, 2005). After someone was lynched by a mob, their broken and charred black bodies were left to swing from trees, both as public spectacle and as admonishment to the black observer. In the summer of 2014, when Michael Brown was shot and killed by officer Darren Wilson, and his body left in the street for four hours (Bosman and Goldstein, 2014), Ferguson, Missouri conjured images from 1955 Mississippi. The dehumanization of the black body as a cross generational narrative, links the discourses constructed by Edwards (1969), Ashe (1993), and LeBron James.

Conclusions

The connection between sport and cultural expression, particularly in the game of basketball, affords the black male athlete credibility within the black community. The definitive characteristic of depictive rhetoric is when an individual's perceived character traits allow him to forge an image-ethos connection with his audience (Osborn, 2018). Thus, when LeBron James takes the court while wearing an "I Can't Breathe" t-shirt, (in order to call attention to the death of Eric Garner at the hands of the New York Police Department) he creates what Nerlich and Clarke (2013) call an "ethos mosaic" (p. 183). James further reinforces that ethos through his use of social media. He first did this by sharing a tweet of himself and his Miami Heat teammates wearing hoodies in response to the death of Trayvon Martin. Identification through social media is the most immediate "vocabulary" for the black male athlete in the Black Male Athlete Renaissance. James did not seek permission from authority before willfully identifying himself with a young, black teenager. After doing so, James also proved himself to be immune to any negative response. He was not punished nor fined, nor told by authority to remain silent. James repeated this action on September 25, 2017 when he referred to President Donald Trump as a "bum" (Lauletta, 2017). One of the most significant aspects of James' proclamations lay in the fact he has not lost any of the \$55 million which he earns from his various endorsement deals (Badenhausen, 2019). Perhaps the most significant aspect of James' presence is his impact on the business model of sport. While the current black male athlete movement is grounded in and driven by social justice initiatives for black citizens, the Black Male Athlete Renaissance is also reflected in an unprecedented professional sovereignty. In 2010, LeBron James was in his final year of his contract with the

Cleveland Cavaliers. But rather than renegotiate a new contract with Cleveland, James, along with Chris Bosh of the Toronto Raptors, decided to join Dwayne Wade with the Miami Heat (ESPN 2010). No other superstar of James' caliber had ever eschewed the use of an agent, coach, or general manager to decide for which team he would play. But James' role in constructing his own "super team" in Miami initiated another form of rebellion against the patriarchal structure of organized sport. James' self-orchestrated exodus from Cleveland is a refutation of what Hoberman (1997) refers to as "black muscularity being financially controlled by white businessmen" (p. 164). More than that, James' vision of self-containment reflects that which has long been articulated by black icons like Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, and Martin Luther King, who all maintained that black owned businesses would empower the black community (Marshall, 2019). Recent events suggest that this business model is a movement. This past July, after two more well-known players, Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving, decided to leave their respective teams in order to play with one another for the Brooklyn Nets, a *New York Times* article openly posed the question of whether NBA players were getting "too powerful" (Stein 2018). That question is also a part of the national narrative as that notion of black male athletes' power extends beyond professional sovereignty and into the very language that has forever framed organized sport. One NBA player, Draymond Green, reflecting on the social and financial dynamics of professional basketball (where 74% of the players are black), said he felt the word team "owner" was outdated and offensive (Paras, 2019). Such a statement reflects the current state of enablement that pervades professional sport. As black male professional athletes assume controlling interest of what they deem *their* industry, players like LeBron James and Draymond Green are

unencumbered in their decision-making. More than that, they need not seek permission to speak.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

As he approached the end of his tennis career and began to reconstruct his public persona, Arthur Ashe said he'd always feared that few people respected professional athletes, that athletes were seen as "the modern counterpart to minstrels or jongleurs in the Middle Ages" (*Days of Grace*, p. 40). While Harry Edwards had passionately used his social station to prove that the black male athlete could function on an intellectual level, Ashe (1993) clearly articulates the black male athletes' collective mission—to be taken seriously. Edwards (1969), Ashe (1993) and LeBron James achieve this aim by employing metaphoric constructs. Foss (2017) in *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, says metaphors "organize attitudes toward whatever they describe and provide motives for acting in certain ways" (p. 287). Edwards (1969), Ashe (1993) and James actively organize their thoughts about the black male athlete's role as the most prominent representative of the extended black community. To that end, this thesis has shown how the narratives constructed by Harry Edwards, Arthur Ashe, and LeBron James as performances of blackness and privilege. While these performances take place in different eras and reflect distinct and even divergent sensibilities, they are not disparate occurrences, but "overlapping performances" (Tiffee, 2005) that are linked by the speakers' use of metaphor. These three rhetors support Brummet's (1984) assertion that an audience needs more than a single discourse in order to make sense of the world. When Edwards (1969) uses the term "feeding the flame," he is not using figurative language to merely accentuate his prose, he is purposely constructing an emotional appeal to an emotionally charged black audience. When Ashe (1993) describes blackness as a "burden," he alludes to the existential angst that accompanies the self-possessed

athletically gifted black man who is compelled to act and speak on behalf of his community. When LeBron James constructs an image of himself that is visually representative of Trayvon Martin, he implores a mass audience to view both the physically imposing black male athlete and the “suspicious” black teenager as sentient beings who possess the capacity for unlimited human performance. In fact, all three rhetors present themselves as prominent versions of the racialized American black male, each of whom is compelled to speak on behalf of individuals like Trayvon Martin. While Edwards, (1969), Ashe (1993), and James construct narratives from different eras, they share a formal link in Emmett Till.

Brummett (1984), says that a group of discourses with a shared link lend themselves to metaphoric analysis. To that end, *Revolt of the Black Athlete*, *Days of Grace*, and LeBron James’ monologue are metaphors for each other because the saga of Emmett Till is a shared characteristic. While all three rhetors employ Emmett Till as a stylistic token in order to connect with their black audience, Till is also a private qualifier in the construction of a radical metaphor. The radical metaphor is one that is founded on “unusual or unexpected relationships” (Osborn & Ehninger, 1962). Three extraordinary black men who overtly liken themselves an ordinary black youth may certainly appear radical and unusual to a mass audience. However, there is a reason for such an association.

Edwards (1969) and Ashe (1993) invoke the story of Emmett Till as a cautionary tale, stressing to their younger black audience members how black people, regardless of social location, have limited privilege. Harry Edwards’ voice was never distorted by ambiguity. Edwards eventually achieved ethos in academia, but it was not without trial.

Edwards' path to credibility differed from Ashe's in the sense Edwards' physicality made him a "threatening" corporeal presence. While articulating the concerns of the black community, Edwards embodied the traits of the most complex black male athlete, onto which the white audience projected its latent fears and biases. That physicality, along with his most provocative metaphoric flourish, "feeding the flame," negatively influenced Edwards' implied academic audience, while stoking the fears of a mass audience comprised of the federal government. After orchestrating the infamous protest at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, Edwards personified all of the fears against which he campaigned. In addition to being fired from his job as a lecturer at San Jose State College he was surveilled by the F.B.I. (Lipsyte, 1988). He discovered years later that his dissertation from Cornell University was part of the F.B.I. files. Moreover, Edwards had been labeled by J. Edgar Hoover as "anti-American and a revolutionary" (Leonard, 2019). In 1977 Edwards, despite having made the sociology of sport his own genre and publishing more than anyone else in the sociology department at the University of California, Berkeley, was still denied tenure. In a special to the *New York Times*, one of Edwards' colleagues said anonymously that Edwards was hindered by an exigency common to academics with mass appeal: "The department wants him to address his work to professional sociologists, and they don't like it when he writes for a larger audience."

Edwards had once used the word "echo" as a "cultural intertexture" (Robbins, 1996) to remind his academic audience of a specific cultural tradition, specifically the evils of Jim Crow. However, Edwards' voice echoed beyond faculty members and into the collective conscious of black athletes to effectively create a new culture in which the black male athlete was not merely a simple performer, but a legitimate member of the

academic community. After thousands of Berkeley students signed petitions, and all 13 tenured black faculty members condemned the university's decision, Edwards received tenure. However, Berkeley Chancellor Al Bowker offered a caveat. He said that Edwards was "useful to keeping black athletes in line" (Hardman, 2008). That sentiment, one that mandates black athletes know their place within the academic structure and in larger society, extends to the current sports culture. However, because of Harry Edwards' benevolent approach to the black male athlete, and his desire to protect him from societal ills, every university athletic department, and every N.F.L team "keeps the black athlete in line" by employing a "player development" officer. That officer's primary role is to provide guidance and direction and in cases of dispute, to serve as a liaison between the athlete and the administration. Fittingly, and perhaps ironically, Edwards' guidance inspired Colin Kaepernick's singular role in the Black Male Athlete Renaissance.

Exhibiting his open desire "to be taken seriously," Arthur Ashe used his considerable notoriety to fight apartheid in South Africa. While it was a noble cause, and seemingly a "safe" cause because it was a global effort, and not an undertaking that directly implicated the white American establishment, Ashe was still not immune to the consequences of being black and possessing a voice. Ashe's social activism led to him having to resign his position as Davis Cup Captain, one of the most prestigious appointments within the tennis establishment (p. 14). That response personifies the definitive bounds of Arthur Ashe's privilege. Despite his status as the most prominent African American citizen of the tennis community, structural and cultural hegemony do not afford Ashe immunity from the unspoken rules prohibiting personal expression. Despite his accomplishments at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open, and his transcendent

work as a social activist, when Ashe spoke, he “announced his idiosyncratic presence” (Watts, 2001) in the tennis community. The governing body of that community proffered a hegemonic response that was the equivalent of telling him to “know his place.”

Ashe did achieve his quest to be taken seriously, as evidenced by the main court at the U.S. Open being named in his honor. However, while Venus and Serena Williams have become the most decorated African American tennis players in the history of the game, no black American male tennis player has duplicated Ashe’s success, either within the realm of competitive tennis or in the context of social justice. Ashe’s (1993) legacy as a social activist is distinguished and complicated, and this thesis attributes that to Ashe’s (1993) use of language. When Ashe (1993) uses the term “middle passage” as an archetypal reference to life’s obstacles, he rhetorically diminishes the intercultural echo the audience historically associates with slavery. While Edwards’ (1969) use of metaphors like “feeding the flame” urged his audience to take immediate, unambiguous revolutionary action, Ashe’s (1993) use of metaphors like “the burden of race,” was his way of urging his black audience to contemplate its societal obligations in lieu of outright revolt. This was not lost on Ashe’s contemporaries, Harry Edwards among them. While Edwards was initially wary of Ashe and his refusal to participate in Edwards’ proposed boycott of the 1968 Olympic Games, he grew to admire him. Edwards framed that admiration in a metaphor: “I tried to learn from Arthur as I got older. His feet moved in the same direction as his words. His legacy of reasoned compassion is what I cherish the most” (quoted in Garber, 2002). Urging his audience to think before acting is the discursive tactic that frames Ashe’s legacy and makes this work representative of the Period of Rhetorical Silence.

As the most privileged black male athlete in American history, LeBron James, unlike Edwards and Ashe has never struggled with his “place” in society. James’ privilege is most evident in his effective use of monologue, his immense influence on the restructuring of the NBA business model with regard to players contracts, and his intrepid rebuke of President Donald Trump. Like Edwards (1969) and Ashe (1993) James constructs language grounded in his association with the extended black community. Moreover, as the sole occupant of the inner circle of privilege, James sense of self reinforces the way he articulates his position. That was evident in his response to Fox News conservative host Laura Ingraham’s recommendation that James cease his public criticism of President Trump and “shut up and dribble” (Galily, 2019). James replied simply: “I will not shut up. I mean too much to society” (Chaitin, 2018). It is James’ societal value, combined with his popular culture appeals that separates him from Edwards and Ashe.

Like his predecessors, James invokes Emmet Till as a cultural marker, specifically to inform his audience about the origins and significance of the hate crime. But unlike Edwards (1969) and Ashe (1993), when speaking to a mass audience, and on behalf of the black community, James uses depictive rhetoric to connect himself to one particular demographic of the black community: the young, at-risk black male. In linking himself to Trayvon Martin James uses a “hoodie,” to construct a fusion metaphor. This speaks to a Burkean concept which alludes to the application of metaphor as a means of design. Burke (1969) insisted that the metaphor, as it was applied to narrative, should not be applied *after* the realization of an idea or concept, but it could and should at times actually *create* that idea or concept. By comparing himself to famously slain young black

men, James adds ideological heft to the personal slogan he evokes at many of his public addresses: “I’m just a kid from Akron.” By blending celebrity blackness (power and awareness) with common blackness (vulnerability and awareness) James creates his own brand of privilege whereby he can address provocative topics without subordinating himself to hegemonic norms. He wields that privilege by referencing Emmett Till, but he also does this in a 2015 national television commercial for Samsung.

This commercial most illustrates how LeBron James’ use of visual rhetoric is the representative anecdote for the Black Male Athlete Renaissance. In it LeBron James and various citizens representing various neighborhoods in Cleveland, Ohio, craft a deeply nuanced synecdochal image that both incorporates and transcends racial identity. James and his fellow Cleveland residents lip sync lyrics from the song “Welcome to the Terrordome.” The song is a track from the album, *Fear of a Black Planet*, written by Public Enemy’s leader, Chuck D., whose polemicist approach to social issues in the 1990’s relegated his music to “underground” status. This album is the most contentious of all Public Enemy’s work because “The underlying concept driving the album is the ominous encounter between Blackness and whiteness” (Carrington, 2015). During the song “Fear of a Black Planet,” a musical interlude allows the narrator to invoke the “one drop rule” while he constructs the mathematical properties of interracial comingling, concluding that any encounter involving one black participant will result in a black child. But this commercial is significant because it features a neighborhood of people commuting to work in the morning. The opening scene takes place on a crowded subway and subsequent scenes include a mosaic of people—black, white, Hispanic, blue collar, secretaries, news anchors, etc. It presents James as part of the entire whole—black men,

Cleveland, and the working class. The close up of James catches him before he enters the basketball gym. James pauses in the doorway and spews a very particular couplet:

Known as fair and square throughout my years
So I growl at the livin' foul
Black to the bone, my home is your home
But welcome to the Terrordome. (Chuck D., 1990, Track 5)

The significance lay in the fact that James 1) pointedly identifies himself as black, 2) reminds the audience that he has been “fair and square,” meaning he has never run afoul of the law, and 3) takes exception to those black men who “live foul,” or fail to represent blackness in a positive way. The final point is the most salient because LeBron James chooses this paradigm to rhetorically and commercially fuse the privileged black athlete with the common black man. Furthermore, he is the only black male athlete who could effectively speak *for* the black community *to* a white audience in the singular language of hip hop artistry. James’ unblemished public persona, transcendent athletic skill, willingness to challenge authority—affixed to his undisputed blackness—make him a pop culture amalgam. Completely self-possessed and corporately savvy, James is immune to the societal and professional consequence that once befell Harry Edwards and the debilitating guilt that hounded Arthur Ashe. LeBron James is not merely the sole occupant of the innermost circle of privilege, he independently defines it.

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