

McGrory, B. (1998, April 15). Clinton's Panel Decries a Racial Barrier in Sports. The Boston Globe, pp. A1, A17.

OVERVIEW

In 1997-98, blacks comprised more than 79% of the players in the National Basketball Association, but less than 25% of its head coaches. In the National Football League, similarly, blacks made up one third of the National Football Association, but less than ten percent of its coaches. This lack of minority leadership in sports was one of the issues discussed during President Clinton's second presidential forum in the "yearlong national conversation on race." Among the myriad issues discussed by several minority sports figures and the President included racial stereotypes, sports agents, and recruiting efforts in the inner cities. The forum was broadcast prime-time on ESPN, in an effort to spark interest in more white men.

The participants stated, first of all, that black athletes have been able to "thrive on the playing fields but questioned why more are not hired as coaches and managers when their playing days draw to an end." Such practices cause stereotypes claiming that "minorities are less able than whites to lead and make decisions..." George Thompson and Joe Morgan shared similar complaints that there are too few opportunities for minorities after their playing days. Olympic medalist Jim Brown urged minority athletes to spend their money in such a way as to help the situation; for example, by hiring black sports agents. Clinton played little part in the forum, except agreeing with points made by the participants and giving optimistic sentiments.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What stereotypes exist about athletics?
2. What can be done to provide minorities with more opportunities in the upper levels of sports?
3. What can be done to spark interest in racism among white Americans?

IMPLICATIONS

1. Stereotypes of all kinds must be dispelled. Society must understand that people should not be deemed capable or incapable of a particular job because of their skin color. We must also act accordingly. Minorities must be hired for jobs that they have previously been unable to hold because of racism.
2. The application of affirmative action in the private realm should be investigated thoroughly. The only way to prove that stereotypes are false is to give minorities a chance. As George Thompson said in the forum, "All we want is an opportunity and a right to fail."

Robert C. Wolfe cCYS