

Dealing With Racial Prejudice— Personal Experiences

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As the nation enters the 1990s, the last decade of the twentieth century, (the threshold to the twenty-first century), many communities are beginning to reflect patterns and characteristics similar to conditions before the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* on May 17, 1954.

Desegregation affected every element on campus and there is a great deal of documentation of its impact on intercollegiate athletics in traditional white institutions in southern states. In the southern region, the Federal legislation for integration triggered overt by white response to racism—racial prejudice. Whereas there may not be a proliferation of literature about overt responses by whites against the government, institutions, and minorities in other regions of the United States, it can be validated that the white populace reacted negatively to the Federal pronouncement to desegregate.

This abstract is consistent with a previous presentation made at (NAASH) North American Society For Sport History (Baniff, Canada, 1990) "Racism (Again) Reared It's Ugly Head In The Midwest" (Jan Beran, Iowa State University).

This writer related some personal experiences encountered at an intercollegiate athletic team in the Midwest. The period which this presentation covered is a short time before, during, and after Chief Justice Earl Warren, writing for a unanimous court on May 17, 1954, held in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* that “separate education facilities are inherently unequal.” The backgrounds of this writer (athletic, social, education, socio-economic) are significant. Equally significant are the characteristics of the era, and the prevailing intercollegiate athletic practices.

A brief background of the individual was presented. The characteristic of the era was *segregation*—segregation in nearly every aspect of public life; flagrant unequal treatment in voting and publicly owned or operated facilities; unemployment; housing; and access to hotels, restaurants, hospitals, gasoline stations, amusement areas; and even churches. The prevailing intercollegiate athletic practices were becoming more inconsistent with the rules of the governing body, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NACC).

Money, cans; women; high paying no-show jobs; altering transcripts; bribing professors; offering families ex-coaches and/or friends high paying jobs; agent-coach cartels; not being required to attend classes; substitute test takers for athletes; clothes; expensive apartments; airline tickets; and alumni who offered the use of their personal acquisitions were only a few of the enticements.

Recently, the NCAA suspended the intercollegiate athletic program of one of the largest and most successful universities in the history of American Sports. The university was placed on probation by the NCAA. Upon making the decision to resign, the coach recanted “I didn’t create this monster, it’s just my job to keep it fed.” And the monster is fed human flesh—live human flesh. Often times, little consideration is given to human feelings; positive personal outcomes, a future open door, and job opportunities for the athlete; obtaining a college degree; and most important, self-esteem, self-respect, and dignity. There are many degrading things to which athletes can be subjected but nothing so humiliating as racial prejudice.