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Beautiful Black Beasts: Schooling Marginalized and Cornmodified Bodies in Slavery, Sport and Society

The purpose of this paper is to address the structural barriers that persist in the American educational system and their connection to the exploitation of young black male student-athletes. Films such as *Hoop Dreams*, and *Hardwood Dreams* depict themes of “channeling,” poverty, institutionalized racism, and individual hopes and dreams of escaping the inner-city to make it in professional basketball. It will be argued from this perspective that academic expectations at institutions of learning from K-12 to higher education are low in relation to black boys while athletic expectations are high. The systematic shuffling of these black bodies through the system exposes a post-colonial model of slavery that manifests itself in the focus that is placed on physical prowess versus academic achievement. This system, made possible by integration, encourages disadvantaged youth to dream only of sports as a way to the Promised Land of upward mobility, to focus only on physical prowess and not academic achievement.