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**“Ethnic Consideration in Athletics”: California State University, Sacramento’s Response to Racial Protests Of Black Athletes, 1969-1975**

In October 1968, California State University hosted a symposium on “Racism in America.” The symposium addressed the role of higher education in shaping and reflecting the values of a democratic society. To promote a more tolerant student body and create an atmosphere of understanding, Sacramento State housed an Inter-racial Project, hosted an Interracial Week, as well as sponsoring the symposium with nationally known speakers. Among the speakers was Eldridge Cleaver, a member of the Black Panther party and author of *Soul On Ice*. The Ethnic Studies department was introduced and developed the next school year. The capital city campus was alive with politics and protests of the day, typical for many campuses nationwide during the last years of the 1960s.

In 1969, three African American basketball players quit the men’s basketball team citing racial discrimination from the coaching staff. Earlier that year, the football team was sanctioned for playing four ineligible players during the season. The coordinator of the Afro-American Studies program charged the athletic department as “guilty of destroying people’s lives,” and noted that Mike Carter, one of the suspended athletes, had made no progress towards his degree. The Black athletes stated that the department’s greatest failure was its lack of sensitivity to the needs of Black athletes. They sought a greater role in the decision making process of the athletic program and asked for the immediate removal of “racist members” of the athletic department staff. As a result, an appointed committee was charged to assess the racial climate for athletes and offer solutions. The report triggered more protests when the committee concluded that the athletic department had indeed committed acts that could be interpreted as racial discrimination. The committee’s report

recommended the removal of the head coaches of the football and basketball teams. The public outcry was tremendous and the university president decided to reject the committee's recommendations and appointed another committee to assess the racial climate within the athletic department and teams. Ultimately, the coaches were forced to attend a racial sensitivity course entitled, "Ethnic Considerations in Athletics."

Historian David Wiggins cites thirty-seven different protests on college campuses during 1968 involving athletics and Black athletes. Using archival materials, newspaper accounts, and interviews, this paper seeks to explore the racial protests at Sacramento State and to understand these events within the broader context of the increasingly large number of protests occurring on college campuses. I argue that the events, which occurred at Sacramento State, help to illuminate race relations within sport during the end of a decade when the color of one's skin often determined their field position and treatment on an athletic team and college campus. Moreover, the involvement of other Black students and faculty on campus as support for Black athletes will be explored. This research seeks to add another chapter to the lengthy story of racial protests by Black college athletes across the country in the late 1960s.

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