

## COMMENTARY

## Racism pervasive in college sports 'industry'

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

I intentionally chose the headline for this column to include the words "college sports industry" because clearly college sports, particularly basketball and football in the largest, most sports-competitive universities in the nation, is an industry.

It is also an entertainment industry, just like the professional sports are just as much about entertainment as they are about athletics.

Many of the young people playing college basketball or football are African-American. Unfortunately, all too often the adults who work with them the coaches, the trainers, the scouts do not seem to mirror that.

It seems that while college sports do provide an avenue for young African-Americans to get an education, it may not provide a venue for employment afterwards.

Now, one young college

coach is brave enough to raise the issue of employment of African-Americans by college sports departments. His name is Sean Sheppard and he's a strength and conditioning coach at Ohio State University and he's written an open letter calling Ohio State, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and the broadcasting industry into accountability.

Sean Sheppard has more than 14 years of experience as a college athlete himself and as a coach in Division I athletics. He has worked in small private colleges, in state universities and in huge athletic departments. He has coached elite football and basketball players and those who are below average.

I've never looked Sean Sheppard in the eye, but I have talked with him on the telephone and I have talked with those who have known him since childhood and I would say that I have never

## Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



talked with a more sincere, more respectful, more caring young man.

But he is one who must tell the truth as he sees it something all too many of us are afraid to do too much of the time. So when he sent me a copy of a statement he recently made, I paid attention.

In it, he calls attention to the fact that of the 342 employees within the Ohio State University athletic department, there are only 19 African-Americans (5 percent), despite the fact that most of the football and men's basketball teams are African-Americans. There are only

four black assistant coaches of the 70 assistant coaches. There is only 1 black female coach. There are only two head coaches in a department of 30 coaches. Indeed, in the 100 years of history of Ohio State basketball, there has been only one black head coach and there has never been an African-American head football coach.

Sheppard raises the question of whether the message, conscious or unconscious, that is being delivered to the African-American community is that while universities have no trouble awarding scholarships to black athletes

because of the money these athletes will generate, they have a problem sharing that money with the African-American community by hiring black coaches.

It's a message, he says, that the African-American community is getting loud and clear and they are talking about it in barbershops, black-owned restaurants and other places where informal conversation is held.

The need for more African-Americans in college coaching is not just about sharing the wealth of college athletics either. It is about providing the role models, the counseling and the much-needed mentoring which African American athletes so desperately need.

Who better understands a young athlete from the inner city than an adult who's been there himself or herself? Who can better recognize the signs of trouble which these young people often show?

Now, it is important to say that Ohio State probably is not the only university with such hiring records.

We do have significantly more African-American quarterbacks and more black head coaches now than 20 years ago. But, he asks, how far have we really come. And I would add, how far are we willing to go?

Sheppard's solution to this inequity is for the NCAA and its member schools to actively recruit and market themselves at job fairs on college campuses across the country with the sole purpose of recruiting talented teen-agers has responded that Sheppard is right and that he appreciates his taking the leadership on this.

He calls for a reduction in the rhetoric and an increase in results. Let's hope he really means that and that he will not only take up the challenge himself, but invite his colleagues around the country to do the same.

## Black teens graduating, but are they ready for life?

NNPA Editorial

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

The good news is that young African Americans are graduating high school this year in strong numbers.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 80 percent of all Black high school students who committed themselves to the 12-year education journey will proudly walk down the aisle and receive their diplomas over the next few weeks.

It's good to know that during the past seven years, the numbers of Black youth who successfully completing high school careers have not declined and, in fact, seem to have increased slightly. During the past 12 years, the national drop out rate for all 16 to 24-year-olds has fallen from 14.1 percent to 11 percent.

Unfortunately, the story only begins there.

Are young African-Americans prepared for the national and global economies within which they will have to compete? Beyond the basic skills, do they have the critical thinking training? Are they prepared for the technology-based work environments they will inherit? Are they economically prepared to go to college?

Sure, many of these concerns are being addressed. Through, the Department of Education's initiatives toward school renovation and repair, for example, schools in 22 states are able to save up to 50 percent of the costs of school improvement projects.

So many public schools are in decay, students, in many cases, are forced to hold classes in outdoor trailer units. Faced with this reality, the Department of Education's program is critical to solving the problem

of school D. Another good thing is the \$8 billion in Title I to improve education this year to more than 13 million children in over 46,000 schools in high-poverty areas.

At the battlefront to combat the digital divide, President Clinton announced a series of three-year grants — totaling \$44 million — to establish over 200 Community Technology Centers in economically challenged areas. Just last week, the president issued an executive order aimed at improving identified low-performance schools across the nation. Clinton has also called for \$1 billion to be allocated to teacher's salaries.

While we recognize and applaud the efforts of these initiatives, we are concerned that they may not be enough.

The U.S. Department of Education's renovation effort only applies to schools located within empowerment zones, enterprise communities or areas wherein 35 percent of the students are eligible for free lunches.

Although the president's initiatives toward funding education and teachers are admirable, these allocations still come nowhere near other budgets such as defense (\$258 billion this year according to the Department of Defense) and corporate development — where the consistent rationale for those allotments continues to be preparation for the future.

There is no greater investment in the future that this nation can make than in that of its youth.

We are also concerned about the lack of a national standard of performance for high school completion. In the final analysis, (See *Graduates*, Page 14)

## A racial profiling bill cops can love

Earl Ofari Hutchinson

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

It was a bizarre scene recently in front of California's State Capitol building in Sacramento. Hundreds of student, Black and Latino community activists, and police reform advocates were holding a spirited rally to support a bill by Kevin Murray, a Black Democrat state senator from Los Angeles, to compel the state to compile figures on the race, age and gender of motorists stopped by the California Highway Patrol.

The CHP makes more traffic stops than any other police agency in the nation.

The bill also would've required the CHP to tell why motorists were stopped, and whether a search and arrest was made as a result of the stop.

But midway through the rally, the mood of the crowd changed from exuberance to shock and then anger. Their fury was not directed at Gov. Gray Davis, who vetoed an identical bill Murray introduced last fall, but at Murray himself.

The crowd turned on him when they got word that he had gutted the bill of the data collection provision to get Davis' signature. The amended bill required only that police hand a business card to drivers and undergo more diversity training.

The toothless bill was immediately hailed by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's office and LAPD Chief Bernard Parks. They have waged a personal crusade to torpedo legislation requiring their departments to keep racial stats on traffic stops.

But if Murray's original bill requiring data collection had become law it would've been a big step toward proving or disproving whether police departments use racial profiles to harass and intimidate Blacks and Latinos on the highways. Since laws passed in California are closely watched and frequently emulated by officials in other states,

Murray's bill might have spurred reluctant and timid officials in those states to pass a similar law.

This would have been a crucial breakthrough for another reason. Many Blacks and Latinos have long screamed that police target them for shakedowns on the highways and streets. According to a Justice Department study, Blacks comprise about 14 percent of the population, yet account for more than 70 percent of all routine traffic stops.

Murray himself took up the fight against racial profiling because of a scrape he had with police. On election night in June 1998, he and his wife were returning home from his campaign headquarters when they were pulled over by a police officer in Beverly Hills. Murray was not speeding, or driving unsafely.

He immediately identified himself to the officer as a state official and explained where he was coming from and going. This meant nothing to the officer who ran a complete check on him.

Murray's title, position, and prestige as an incumbent state senator counted for nothing.

He publicly protested that he was a victim of "driving while Black and brown," filed a lawsuit against the police, and introduced his bill.

Beverly Hills police officials responded to Murray's complaint the same way most police agencies do to thousands of others who say they are victims of racial profiling. They say that it's illegal and they don't do it. But that's easy for them to say since other than anecdotal horror tales by Black and Latino motorists of police mistreatment on the highways, there is no real smoking-gun proof that the practice exists. To get that kind of proof requires state law enforcement agencies to keep hard numbers on the race of all motorists they stop on the roads.

A few police departments and at last count

(See *Profiling*, Page 14)