

OUR VIEW

Not Making The Grade

It's time to refocus on what the term student-athlete means, especially the student part. According to a study conducted by USA Today, 10 teams in the upcoming men's NCAA basketball tournament (March Madness) were cited by the National Collegiate Athletic Association for posting sub-par academic progress rates, or APRs, which measure how well schools keep players on pace to graduate. Those 10 schools include perennial national championship contenders—and recent title winners—Connecticut and Kentucky. (The others are Iowa state, Louisville, Louisiana-Lafayette, LSU, New Mexico, North Carolina State, Texas and Texas-El Paso. Only one women's NCAA tournament team was cited: 14th-seeded Oral Roberts. As late as 2003, the graduation rates for UNLV athletes—33 percent—lagged both the school's average of 35 percent and the national average of 62 percent for student athletes). This is a travesty, a disservice to the concept of the student-athlete and robbery of grand-theft proportions for the young men and women who are supposed to come to college for an education, not to become cash cows.

Here's how the APR system works: The NCAA tracks whether Div. I scholarship athletes remain enrolled, academically eligible and ultimately graduate. Points are awarded per player. Teams are expected to score 92.5 percent of their total, for an APR of 925; this approximates a 50 percent graduation rate. Rates are combined for a two-year period, with the resulting average weighed against the 925 barometer. An additional 32 teams (20 in the men's tournament and 12 in women's tournament) fell beneath the 925 benchmark but weren't cited because they were close to the mark. The NCAA will begin snatching scholarships as early as next fall; by 2008, chronically underperforming schools could be shut out from March Madness altogether.

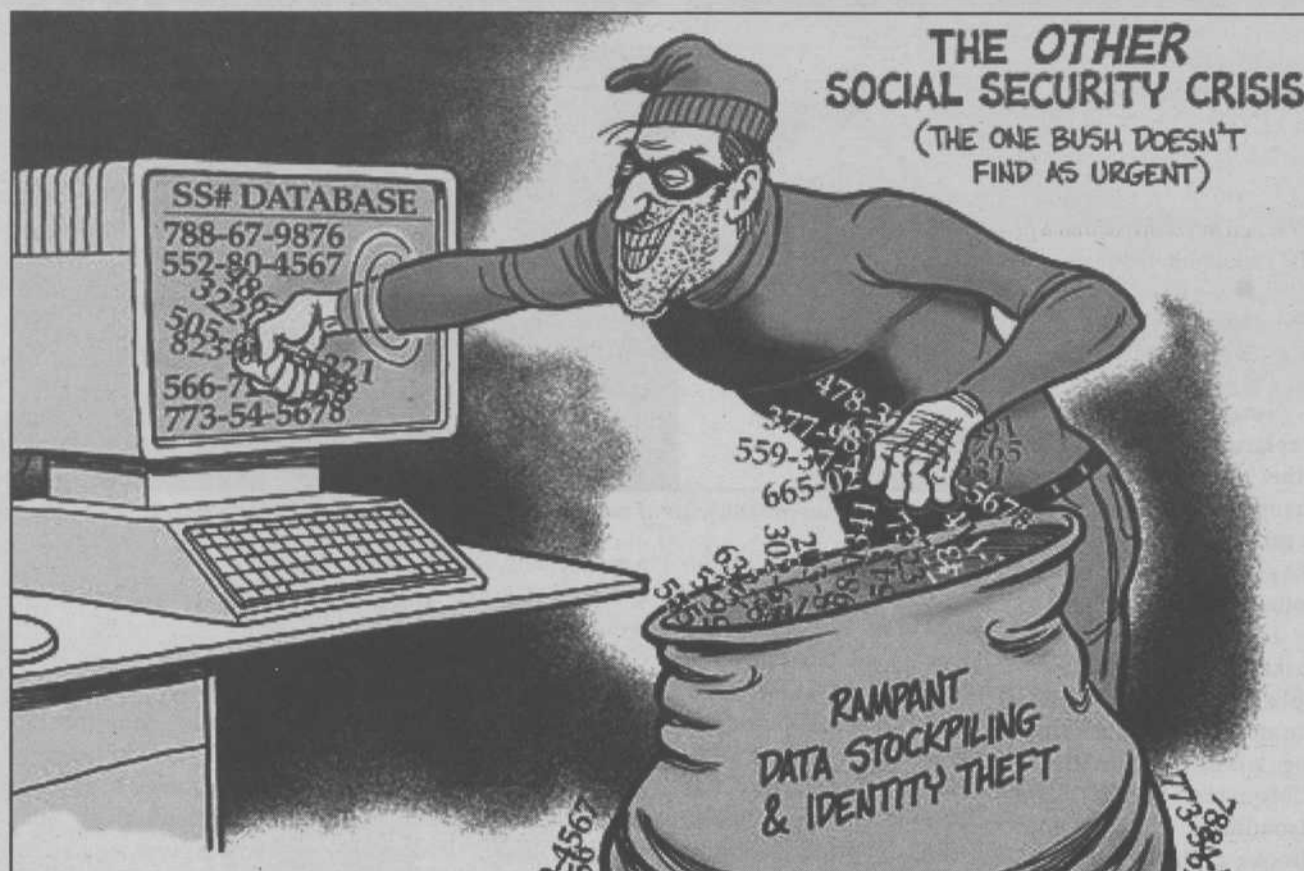
Hey NCAA, why not start with the penalties now?

The state of the student-athlete is in such disarray that something needs to be done immediately to shock the system. Our nation's universities and colleges are churning out hordes of athletes who aren't good enough to go professional but not educated enough to build prosperous non-athletic lives. At every level, from junior college to the largest institutions, athletes are having tests taken for them, being put in remedial classes, getting helped by grade inflation, taking money and jobs from boosters, having their criminal conduct downplayed or, in some cases, ignored—all in the name of filling seats. Collegiate athletics has become a billion-dollar business whose main objective is wringing ever-higher profits from the athletic exploits of students.

It's bad enough that everyone but the student-athlete is getting paid from the largesse—college coaches command million-dollar salaries, athletic directors get bonuses tied to winning; the common refrain is that the athletes are getting paid... they get the opportunity to get an education—but it's patently unfair that the education student-athletes are getting isn't worth a damn. Sure, they have all "A" grades, but how applicable is "Introduction to Sports Theory" in the workaday world? And where will a general studies degree take you in corporate America? And how valuable is a communications degree not backed by internships or work experience in the broadcast, print, public relations or marketing fields?

And while recent NCAA figures showing that Black student-athletes graduate at a nine percent higher rate than the Black student body as a whole, Black sports intelligentsia lament the number of African-American student-athletes who don't get the opportunity to even attend college on an athletic scholarship because of low scores on standardized tests. Top to bottom, collegiate athletics needs a revamp, the emphasis placed back on the students and preparing their minds for the future and not using their bodies to generate present-day wealth.

POINT OF VIEW



Are local Black leaders afraid to lead?

By Dora La Grande
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Where are African-Americans in the State of Nevada going to get true Black leadership? Are our leaders afraid of White folks or are they still ingrained with an innate desire to please White folks? Who is going to stand up and go against the grain when an injustice is committed against Blacks? Who is going to implement policies and laws that will help Blacks attain economic empowerment and self-sufficiency? Who is going to see that the current laws on the books are enforced so that the playing field is leveled in Nevada and Blacks can get their piece of the economic pie? Who?

The Black community cannot be compared to any other community. The needs are unrelenting and highly vulnerable to capital penetration and manipulation. However, the corruption of Black intellectual thought has impeded African-American progress.

One of the hallmarks of good leadership is that the leaders' ideological mindsets expand to the era. Maybe our leaders' ideologies don't line up with ours. Maybe their ideologies center on acquiring what they can acquire for themselves and the chosen few leaving the masses to fend for themselves. What happened? Where is the uplift ideology? Where is the "by any means necessary" mentality?

Did we lose good leader-



ON THE RECORD

By Dora La Grande

ship here in the State of Nevada?—with the exodus of men like:

Joe Neal, who, as a long-time senator, fought for the expansion of the Las Vegas City Council to ensure that there was minority representation; who authored a reapportionment bill that created a senatorial seat, two assembly seats, a state board of education seat, a board of regents seat, a school board trustee seat, a seat on the hospital board, and one on the Clark County Commission so that his minority district could have representation.

Frank Hawkins Jr., who, as a councilman, implemented the "25 Plus 5" provision that required every contractor who did business with the City of Las Vegas purchasing department use 25 percent minorities and 5 percent women on the jobs they were awarded; who brought homeownership to West Las Vegas, which hadn't seen any new homes in thirty years; and who ensured that the City of Las Vegas hired and promoted Blacks in government jobs. What's most impressive is that he was responsible for these empowerment initiatives, as well as many others, in only four years (elected and served on the City Council from 1991-

1995).

Wendell Williams, who, as a state assemblyman, authored a law that required for everyone who does business in the redevelopment area to submit an employment plan showing how they're going to employ people from the community; who enacted a law that school textbooks be representative of all ethnic groups, not just a few; and who authored legislation that required that old schools (primarily in West Las Vegas) be rebuilt instead of rehabbed. His contention was that schools were built from bond money that comes from taxpayer dollars. Older neighborhoods paid taxes longer than newer neighborhoods, however, new schools were always being built, and the old ones were only being

rehabbed, which wasn't fair.

Reverend Jesse Scott who, during his tenure as NAACP President, got in people's faces and made them deal with issues that were pertinent to Black folks.

Currently, we are in a sad state of affairs. Economic development is taking place all over the City of Las Vegas, and we are being left out. High-rises and condominiums are going up everywhere, businesses are coming to town in record numbers, and Blacks are being left out of the loop. For every development in Las Vegas, the 25-plus-5 rule should be required, and the redevelopment employment plan law, that's already on the books, should be enforced. The city manager's office had a few people at a meeting a few weeks ago, myself included, and said that they want to do more business with minorities because they realize that their numbers are dismal and want to improve. The first place they could have started (See La Grande, Page 11)

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