



# Race, Sport and the American Dream

*Earl Smith*

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## **Race, Sport and the American Dream** Earl Smith

Race, Sport and the American Dream reports the main findings of a long term research project investigating the scope and consequences of the deepening relationship between African American males and the institution of sport. While there is some scholarly literature on the topic, author Earl Smith tries to understand through this project how sport has changed the nature of African American Civil Society and has come to be a major influence on economic opportunities, schooling and the shaping of African American family life. In this 2nd edition of the book, Smith continues several of the core arguments introduced in the first edition but each is developed with the most up to date and cutting edge research. The reader will note particular changes to the analysis of the increasing expansion of the Athletic Industrial Complex and the decline in the number of African Americans in key leadership positions. Pursuing this line of inquiry was important in 2007 and it is even more important now, in 2009, as the United States grapples with race - the election and inauguration of the first African American president - and faces the worst economic crisis most living Americans have ever experienced. Lastly, Smith compiled a unique dataset that captures data on African American college and professional athletes who are arrested for and often charged with acts of violence against women. The analysis of this data allows for Smith to offer a significantly more sophisticated discussion of this pressing social issue. This book is intended to provide social scientists and others interested in sports with an understanding of carefully selected issues related to the African American athlete. Smith examines the world of amateur sports (Olympic and intercollegiate sport) using Immanuel Wallerstein's "World-Systems Paradigm" which provides a lens with which to examine the colonizing and exploitative nature of intercollegiate sports and the special arrangements that universities have with SportsWorld. All of the topics in this book are addressed within the context of the history of racial oppression that has dominated race relations in the United States since its inception as a nation-state in the 1620s. Across a variety of topics including sport as big business which Smith terms the Athletic Industrial Complex to criminal behavior by athletes, to the lack of leadership opportunities for African American athletes, to the question of the biological superiority of African American athletes, Smith argues that any discussion of race and sport must be understood within this context of power and domination. Otherwise the importance of the question itself will always be (a) misunderstood or (b) underestimated.

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