9B Alaina DiGiorgio, University of Tennessee at Knoxville
“Black Activism in Sport: Past, Present, and Future”

The protests performed by the University of Missouri football team attracted much media attention, but it stands as a reminder of how much time has elapsed since the discussion surrounded the “Black 14” at the University of Wyoming in 1969. Both of these incidents are significant in that they perpetuate the dialog surrounding social justice and activism in sport. This paper will outline the significance of black activism in sport, highlighting historical campaigning attempts to keep the conversation alive, as well looking at future social justice efforts.

9B Demetrius Pearson, University of Houston
“Crusaders for Social Justice: Pioneers for African American Sport Inclusion”

This archival sociocultural and historical analysis highlights the social advocacy of arguably the two most significant figures in the evolution and development of amateur basketball in the African American community. Referred to in this work as “Crusaders for Social Justice,” E. B. Henderson has been deemed the “Grandfather of Black Basketball” and the architect of the sport in the Washington, D.C.-Baltimore metroplex (Spencer, 2011); whereas John McLendon, known as the “Father of Black Basketball” (Klores, 2008), changed the game of basketball at every level. Henderson’s societal contribution may be best summed up as follows: “Nearly every article, book chapter, and survey text written over the last half-century that includes information on the history of African American athletes has seemingly been influenced by Henderson’s work in one way or another” (Wiggins, 1997, p. 222). McLendon, the innovative and cerebral coach, revolutionized basketball with his up-tempo style of play (“fast break offense”), press defense, and platoon substitution system. Like Henderson, McLendon’s basketball contributions were intertwined with his social conscience (McLendon & Bryant, 2000). Their social advocacy for the inclusion of African Americans in sport and society at-large, during the period of federally sanctioned segregation, has contributed immeasurably to the black diaspora.

9B Douglas Hartmann, University of Minnesota
“Contemporary Athlete Activism in the Light of 1968”

Activism among Black athletes in the United States has entered a new era, highlighted by the University of Missouri’s threatened football boycott and subsequent resignation of the President and Chancellor. In this paper I review research and analysis on the iconic 1968 Olympic demonstration of Tommie Smith and John Carlos—frequently referenced in contemporary media coverage and cultural commentary—as a means of contextualizing and sharpening our understanding of contemporary African American athletic activism. I focus on (1) the consciousness, commitment, and social positioning of Black athletes; (2) the relationship of athletic activism to external movements (the Civil Rights/Black Power movement in the case of 1968, and Black Lives Matter today); (3) strategic goals and actual accomplishments; and (4) mainstream responses, including backlash. This exercise highlights the complex relationships between athletic and non-athletic race-based activism, as well as the power and leverage—both symbolic and material—that Black athletes possess today. The paper concludes by suggesting that research on current athlete-activists and their respective movements—including backlash against them—can deepen our understanding of sport’s role in American race relations and mainstream culture.
9B Anthony Weems, Texas A&M University, Kiyadh Burt, Texas A&M University & John N. Singer, Texas A&M University
“Exploring Political Relationships between Black Athlete-Activists and Black Activist Leaders”

The purpose of this presentation is to explore the political relationships between Black athlete activists and Black (non-athlete) activist leaders (particularly Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Dubois, Jackie Robinson and Martin Luther King, Jr., Muhammad Ali and Malcom X). Throughout the struggle for Black liberation in the United States (U.S.) these dyadic relationships proved to be fruitful communions because they served as a successful mechanism for distributing Black political knowledge and values to the broader U.S. population. Through an exploration of the historical development and the significance of these friendships, this presentation will pose questions and suggestions moving forward in an effort to revitalize the important political and social roles bestowed upon and/or taken up by Black athlete activists, past, present, and future. Additionally, this presentation will briefly shed light on other raced political relationships between athletes and non-athletes (e.g., Tom Brady and Donald Trump) and discuss the White backlash that has historically followed the Black progress born from the relationships between Black athlete activists and their Black (non-athlete) activist peers.

9B Alvin Logan, University of Texas at Austin & Louis Harrison, Jr., University of Texas at Austin
“BlackAthletesMatter: Media, Crime, Athletes, and Representation”

Historically, the media and Black males have a complicated relationship in the U.S. The reverence and portrayal of the iconic athletes collegiately and professionally have provided a platform for the media to shape the narrative that politically influences the interpretation of Black bodies domestically and internationally. The media’s one-way communication serves to convey information to corroborate a White hegemonic understanding of Black males, especially Black male athletes. This presentation seeks to provide a comparative analysis of media portrayals of Black male collegiate athletes and their White counterparts. The inequitably violent language towards and portrayals of Black males in comparison to their White counterparts suggests an association with the pervasive forces of White supremacy and negative scripting of Black bodies throughout the history of the U.S. The case studies of two male collegiate athletes both convicted of rape will be examined to elucidate the underlying racism that breeds negative portrayals of Black male collegiate athletes while seemingly softening and dismissing similar crimes of their White counterparts. This presentation also seeks to provide informative analysis to aid practitioners, journalists and all other constituents surrounding collegiate sports and media in understanding the impact and implicit bias associated with portrayals of Black and White collegiate athlete criminal activity.