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The State of Intercollegiate Athletics at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): Past, Present, & Persistence

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The purpose of this paper is to provide a historical overview of intercollegiate athletic programs at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), highlight the current challenges facing these programs, and offer a plan for self-sustainability and collective progress. Prior to the 1960s, the sustainability of HBCU athletic programs was rooted in their unifying missions and interdependent relationships. However, following widespread assimilation efforts in the post-Civil Rights era, HBCU athletic programs suffered from the pillaging of Black athletic talent from the Black community to major Division I Historically White Colleges and Universities (HWCUs). Previous historical assessments of HBCUs athletic programs have confined their analysis to major historical events, the evolution of conference affiliations, and the attendance at various HBCU classic games (Armstrong, 2001; Cavil, 2013a; Hodge, Bennett, & Collins, 2013; Wiggins, 2000). In the current manuscript, critical race theory (CRT) was incorporated as an analytic tool to outline the multi-level challenges facing HBCU athletic programs within the structural arrangements of the United States (U.S.) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). In an effort to improve the plight of HBCU athletic programs, the authors offer Ten Pillars for Active Engagement for Sport Leadership & Administration in Creating Athletic Organizational Success & Sustainability for autonomy governance as well as a secession plan as a pathway for success.

Today in the United States (U.S.), Black college athletes participate in nearly every intercollegiate sport and constitute a majority of participants in the two most popular and highest profit-generating sports of football and men's basketball (Wiggins, 2000). Despite these current trends, the prevalence of opportunities for Black¹ athletes has not always been commonplace in the U.S. particularly at Historically White Colleges and Universities (HWCUs)². In order to understand the current racial, athletic, and economic inequities between intercollegiate athletic programs at HWCUs and historically Black colleges/universities (HBCUs), it is imperative to examine the origins and evolution of these programs. More specifically, the practice of systemic racism within the U.S. (Feagin, 2006) is particularly important to acknowledge and unpack in an effort to engage in a comprehensive examination of the current plight of HBCUs and their athletic programs. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to provide a historical overview of intercollegiate athletic programs at HBCUs, highlight the current challenges facing these programs utilizing a critical race theory (CRT) framework, and offer a plan for self-sustainability and collective progress.

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, Black student enrollment and athletic participation at HWCUs was nearly non-existent (Fleming, 1984; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). In response to this widespread exclusion, HBCUs were established to provide Black Americans with educational opportunities to acquire and to develop skills for survival and upward mobility (Allen & Jewel, 2002; Fleming, 1984; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Henderson & Kritsonis, 2007; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Coupled with offering quality educational opportunities, many of HBCUs also sponsored athletic programs to cultivate the holistic development of its students as well as to provide entertainment and economic uplift for the predominantly Black communities where these schools were located (Miller, 1995; Wiggins, 2000; Wiggins & Miller, 2003). Similar to all intercollegiate athletic programs during late nineteenth and early twentieth century, these programs were highly informal and unstructured (Wiggins, 2000). For example, with no formal oversight, participants in these contests included traditional college students, talented athletes who were non-students, and even professional athletes (Miller, 1995). The lack of formalization and governance resulted in numerous issues including widespread injuries and imbalanced athletic competitions.

As a result, schools transitioned these programs from being informal student-led activities to highly organized and institutionally controlled operations (Borican, 1963; Hunt, 1996; Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013). Along with this evolution came the establishment of HBCU athletic conferences. In 1906, a group of HBCU leaders led by Edwin B. (E.B.) Henderson, also known as the Father of Black Basketball, congregated in Washington, District of Columbia (D.C.) to exchange ideas about how to better structure their athletic programs (Borican, 1963; Henderson, 1939). The result of this meeting was the creation of the first Black athletic conference, the Inter-Scholastic Athletic Association of the Middle Atlantic State (ISSA) (Borican, 1963). It is important to note the ISSA was formed during the same year (1906) the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was founded by a group of leaders from Ivy League HWCUs (Byers, 1995). During that period, the NCAA not only excluded Black athletes, but also HBCUs from participation (Wiggins, 2000). Despite operating with significantly fewer resources (e.g., financial, human, and physical), HBCU athletic programs banded together to ensure both academic and athletic opportunities were provided to aspiring Black students and athletes since these opportunities were non-existent at HWCUs as well as within the NCAA at that time.

Furthermore, the fact that the ISSA and subsequent HBCU athletic conferences were operated by Black leaders from HBCUs meant the interests and values of Blacks were going to be recognized and upheld. In other words, the concurrent exclusion of HBCUs and Black athletes from the NCAA and its member institutions and the formation of the ISSA and subsequent HBCU athletic conferences symbolized the unique role HBCUs served as sites of resistance against the prevailing White dominant culture in the U.S. (Cooper, Cavil, & Cheeks, 2014; Wiggins, 2000).

Moreover, following the establishment of the ISSA, several HBCU athletic conferences emerged throughout the U.S. such as the Georgia-Carolina Athletic Association in 1910, Colored (now Central) Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) in 1912, Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA) in 1913, Southwestern Athletic Association (SWAA) in 1920, South Central Athletic Association (SCAA) in 1923, Middle Atlantic Athletic Association (MAAA) in 1931, and Midwestern Athletic Association (MWAA) in 1932 (Chalk, 1976; Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013). The founding fathers of these conferences were Charles H. Williams of Hampton (CIAA), E. M. Walker of Haven Teachers College (MS) (SCAA), J. C. Williams of Cheyney (Pennsylvania (PA)) Teachers College (MAAA), R. B. Atwood of Kentucky State College (MWAA), W. B. Metcalf of Talladega College (Alabama (AL)) (SIAA), E.C. Silsby of Talladega College (AL) (SIAA), B.T. Harvey of Morehouse (SIAA), D. C. Fowler of Texas College (SWAA). Football, basketball, track and field, baseball, volleyball, and tennis were among the major team sports sponsored by these conferences (Hunt, 1996; Wiggins, 1991, 2000; Wiggins & Miller, 2003).

During these formative years, football was the most popular sport and generated widespread attention towards the abundance of talent at HBCUs (Borican, 1963; Chalk, 1976; Wiggins, 1991, 2000; Wiggins & Miller, 2003). For example, on November 29, 1894, six thousand fans watched Lincoln University (PA) defeat Howard University (6-5) in the first annual Thanksgiving Day classic in Nashville, Tennessee (Chalk, 1976). Every year since, thousands of spectators (e.g., students, faculty, alumni, fans, community members, etc.) attend these HBCU athletic contests to show support for their respective institutions and to celebrate racial and cultural pride (Armstrong, 2001; Lillig, 2009; Moore, 2012). Local support from Black media also historically played and continues to play a critical role in increasing awareness and enhancing the popularity of these HBCU athletic programs (Borican, 1963; Chalk, 1976; Hunt, 1996). Given the fact that a majority of the mainstream media outlets were White-controlled, Black media outlets provided HBCUs with local, regional, and national media coverage, which directly correlated with the increased popularity of the legendary coaches, exceptional athletes, and famous HBCU rivalries and classic events (Borican, 1963; Cooper, et al., 2014; Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013; Hunt, 1996; Klores, 2008; Wiggins, 2000). The early success of these HBCU athletic programs underscored the power of collectivism in the face of systemic racism in the U.S. namely within the NCAA (Chalk, 1976; Cooper et al., 2014; Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013; Hunt, 1996; Wiggins, 2000).

Prior to assimilation³ in the 1960s, a majority of Black athletes emerged from HBCUs (Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013; Hunt, 1996; Klores, 2008; Wiggins, 2000). These culturally empowering institutions provided Black athletes with not only a place to acquire a meaningful education, but also a space to develop their athletic talents. The talent-laden athletic teams at HBCUs were arguably better than their counterparts at HWCUs (Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013; Klores, 2008). Legendary teams such the dominant Tuskegee football teams of the 1920s who won 46 consecutive games, the undefeated Morgan State men's basketball teams of the 1930s, and the famous Tennessee State Tiger Belles women's track and field teams of the late

1950s and early 1960s reflected the wealth of Black athletic talent at HBCUs (Wiggins & Miller, 2003). Another historic example of Black athletic dominance at HBCUs occurred on March 12, 1944. In a secret game, the unheralded North Carolina College for Negroes (now known as North Carolina Central University) basketball team led by legendary Coach John B. McLendon, also known as the Father of the Fast Break Offense, defeated the all-White Duke University medical school basketball team 88 to 44. This victory was symbolic of the potential for Black excellence when granted an opportunity to compete on a leveled playing field (Klores, 2008; Wiggins & Miller, 2003).

Despite the rich history of athletic success at HBCUs, the assimilation efforts that followed the Civil Rights movement in 1960s provided progress for the U.S. society in a multitude of ways, but also had a significantly negative impact on HBCUs as a whole and their athletic programs more specifically. In addition, recent economic trends and federal and state government actions have also contributed to the significant challenges facing HBCUs. In an effort to describe the consequences HBCUs encountered as a result of these assimilation efforts, the authors introduce critical race theory (CRT) (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1994; Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) as an analytic tool to conceptualize how assimilation served to benefit the dominant White class in the U.S. at the expense of Black-operated institutions such as HBCUs.

Critical Race Theory (CRT): An Analytic Tool for Examining the Current State of HBCU Athletic Programs

Throughout the history of the U.S., a majority of the social institutions (e.g., educational, economic, political, religious, and judicial) were established for and maintained by Whites (DuBois, 1993; Woodson, 1933). Therefore, these institutions were (and continue to be) governed by White normative values and all non-White groups such as Blacks encountered to various forms of discrimination including enslavement, lynching, incarceration, disenfranchisement, marginalization, and exclusion (DuBois, 1993; Bell, 1994; Franklin & Moss, 1988; Woodson, 1933). Within the context of postsecondary institutions and intercollegiate athletic programs, the ideology of White supremacy has been embedded and promulgated in numerous ways ranging from the initial exclusion of Blacks from enrollment at HWCUs and/or participation in the NCAA to the historical and contemporary disparity in access to financial rewards from both the government (federal and state level) as well as within the current structure of the NCAA and the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) corporate sport business model (Harris, 2000; Hodge, Bennett, & Collins, 2013; Hodge et al., 2008; Lillig, 2009; Miller, 1995; Wiggins, 2000; Wiggins & Miller, 2003).

As mentioned earlier, the NCAA was established by a group of leaders from Ivy League HWCUs in 1906 with the exclusion of HBCUs and Black representatives (e.g., Black college/university presidents, athletic directors, coaches, and athletes) (Byers, 1995; Hodge, Bennett, & Collins, 2013). Consequently, structural arrangements such as post-season tournament formats, bowl games, and multi-million dollar television contracts (see Byers (1995) for a comprehensive historical overview of NCAA's evolution) primarily benefitted HWCUs and either excluded and/or significantly disadvantaged limited-resource institutions (LRIs) such as HBCUs (Wiggins, 2000). Even today, the NCAA March Madness Tournament and BCS post-season bowl game formats privilege larger well-funded HWCUs who can allocate significant

sums of money to their recruiting budgets, coaches' salaries, and state-of-the-art facilities, which greatly contribute to the success of their athletic teams and subsequent bids for revenue-generating slots in these lucrative post-season games (Lillig, 2009). Furthermore, both the NCAA March Madness Tournament and the BCS structure provide more opportunities for historically White athletic conferences (e.g., Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten, Big 12, Pacific Athletic Conference (PAC) 12, Southeastern Conference (SEC), Big East, Conference USA, etc.) largely due to their strength of schedules whereas LRIs such as HBCUs are often limited to a single slot (in the case of the NCAA March Madness Tournament) or none at all (in the case of the BCS bowl game structure) (Lillig, 2009). This inequitable arrangement (discussed in greater detail in the meso-level challenges section of this paper) underscores the prevailing ideology of White supremacy whereby larger well-funded HWCUs that have benefitted from unjust enrichment continue to reap the benefits of societal and institutional structures that disregard and exacerbate the systemic racism and unjust impoverishment facing HBCUs and their athletic programs (Feagin, 2006; Wiggins, 2000; Wiggins & Miller, 2003).

Thus, in order to engage a comprehensive analysis of this inequitable relationship between HBCUs and the NCAA, it is useful to incorporate CRT as an analytic tool (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1994; Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Originating from the field of critical legal studies, pioneer CRT scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado created a framework that challenged and magnified the pervasiveness of racism within the U.S. legal system (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). A core premise of CRT is race and racism are deeply embedded in U.S. history and contemporary social institutions, arrangements, and practices. Hence, the U.S. and its social institutions were established in and continue to perpetuate the ideology of White supremacy (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1995).

Decuir and Dixson (2004) outlined the core tenets of CRT: a) (counter) storytelling, b) the permanence of racism, c) Whiteness as property norm, d) interest convergence, and e) the critique of liberalism. (Counter) storytelling is a methodological approach designed to highlight and empower the voices of individuals who have been historically ignored or marginalized within discussions or narratives associated with race (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). This method is also designed to counter and deconstruct dominant narratives that privilege White normative values, ideas, and beliefs (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Bell (1992) outlined the permanence of racism tenet when he explained how racism has been and will continue to be a mitigating factor in the structure of social relations within the U.S. The author argued in order to attain racial equity, stakeholders must first embrace the reality that race and racism are permanent aspects of U.S. society and culture.

The Whiteness as property norm refers to the structural arrangements of property interests in the U.S. and focuses on who controls access to various forms of property such as land, political positions, economic resources, intellectual property, educational opportunities, etc. (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Harris, 1995). The Whiteness as property norm is evident in the fact that Whites constitute a majority of the leadership positions in the U.S. ranging from congressional positions to postsecondary administrative positions to athletic director positions in U.S. intercollegiate athletics (Cooper, 2012). Interest convergence posits that dominant groups do not provide benefits or gains to marginalized groups without having their needs or wants met within the arrangement (Bell, 1992). In other words, any advancement of minority groups in the U.S. such as Blacks was only made when the interests of dominant Whites converged with these gains. The integration of talented Black athletes into large HWCUs in the mid-twentieth century

is a prime example of interest convergence whereby talented Black athletes' interest in receiving increased exposure and prospects of attaining a professional sport career converged with large HWCUs' interests with exploiting them for athletic revenue generation and institutional prestige (Cooper, 2012; Donnor, 2005; Edwards, 2000; Harris, 2000; Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013; Hodge et al., 2008). CRT also challenges notions of colorblindness, neutrality, and objectivity within the critique of liberalism tenet (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). Consistent with its basic premise that race and racism are deeply embedded in the U.S. society, CRT theorists reject any notions of a post-racial society. Within the current analysis, the authors will use the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property norm, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism tenets as analytic tools to examine the relationship the macro, meso, and micro level challenges facing HBCU athletic programs.

Multi-Level Challenges facing HBCUs

The challenges facing HBCU athletic programs in the 21st century are complex and multilayered including macro-level/societal (e.g., systemic racism, unjust impoverishment, and economic deprivation) (Feagin, 2006; Gasman, 2009; Hayes, 2013; Lee & Keys, 2013), meso-level/structural inequalities within the current NCAA and BCS structure (e.g., limited power, influence, financial support) (Gaither, 2013; Hodge, Bennett, & Collins, 2013; Hodge, et al., 2008; Hosick, 2011; Johnson, 2013; Lillig, 2009; McClelland, 2012; Reynolds, Fisher, & Cavil, 2012; Wiggins, 2000), and micro-level/intra-institutional (e.g., high administrative turnover, poor financial management, limited human resources, and low academic progress rates (APRs)) (Gaither, 2013; Hosick, 2011; Johnson, 2013). Within this section, each level of challenges will be outlined and explained.

Macro-Level Challenges

The Permanence of Racism. Since 1619 when the first Black Africans were brought to the U.S. and enslaved, racism has been an integral part of the fabric and interworking of the U.S. culture and structures (DuBois, 1994; Feagin, 2006; Woodson, 1933). Feagin (2006) described the historical context and evolution of racial-ethnic relations in the U.S. when he said:

...the reality of this whole society being founded on and firmly grounded in, oppression targeting African Americans (and other Americans of color) now for several centuries. Given that deep underlying reality of this society, all racial-ethnic relationships and events, past and present, must be placed within that racial oppression context in order to be well understood (p. 7).

Hence, Feagin (2006) argues that systemic racism is at the root of racial inequalities throughout the U.S., whereby the culture is shaped by the Eurocentric worldviews and superior status at the expense of African Americans and all people of color. Feagin (2006) also explained how White-controlled institutions in the U.S. society acquired their wealth and sustainability through unjust acts of "oppression, genocide, and slavery" (p. 9). Given the fact that Blacks were viewed as three-fifths of a human when the U.S. constitution was drafted, it is clear to see the founding fathers of the U.S. viewed Blacks as forms of property rather than humans and thus not deserving of having access to vital resources such as citizenship, ownership of land, political

representation, or economic freedom (Dubois, 1994; Woodson, 1993). Feagin (2006) explained how this process manifests itself in the form of unjust enrichment:

The social inheritance mechanisms are disguised to make the intertemporal inheritance of resources, power, and privilege appear to be fair, when in fact the white resources, power, and privilege typically represent the long-term transmission of unjust enrichment across numerous generations of oppressors and oppressed (p. 37).

As a result, White-controlled institutions such as postsecondary HWCUs have been unjustly enriched and Black institutions such as HBCUs have been unjustly impoverished since their inceptions due to the prevailing racialized hierarchy in the U.S. and the social reproduction of inequitable social, economic, educational, and political relationships (Feagin, 2006). Lee and Jones (2013) further articulated this point of unjust impoverishment and the continual challenges facing HBCUs in the 21st century:

Institutions that have been underfunded and underresourced for over 100 years do not just wake up overnight and have what they need in facilities, infrastructure, and capital to catch up with institutions that have had a 100-year head start. It would be like running the 100 yard dash with one competitor starting in the locker room while the other starts right at the finish line (p. 29).

Currently, there are 105 HBCUs in the U.S. and Virgin Islands (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Between 1998 and 2013, 29 HBCUs have been placed on warning, 20 placed on probation, and four have lost their accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Despite only constituting 13 percent of SACS membership, HBCUs accounted for 25 percent of SACS sanctions. Loss of accreditation means students cannot receive federal financial aid, which in turn negatively impacts HBCU enrollment numbers and total operating budget. In other words, accreditation has become a tool in which the White normative standards of success are utilized to measure HBCUs and thereby perpetuate systemic oppression in higher education. Hence, the financial challenges facing HBCUs are intricately connected to the practice of systemic racism in the U.S. dating back to the early 17th century and continue to manifest in their perpetual unjust impoverishment.

The Whiteness as Property Norm. Even today, HBCUs continue to face a host of challenges related to their unjust impoverishments such as “disproportionate budget cuts, anemic enrollment figures, a financial aid crisis, inequitable federal research appropriations and the mere fact that gifted African-American students have many university options...” (Hayes, 2013, p. 1). Using a CRT approach, the relationship between the predominantly White government (congressional representatives and governmental officials) and the disparate impact of federal government cuts on HBCUs reflects the Whiteness as property norm in action (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Harris, 1995). More specifically, consistent with the historical racial hierarchy in the U.S., the White-controlled government continues to hold the power to determine which institutions have the right to federal support.

Even though, these budget cuts affect limited resource HWCUs as well, the lack of representation or regard for HBCU stakeholders in the decision making process of these cuts reflects how Whites continue to perpetuate the Whiteness as property norm. For example, the stricter standards on credit history for securing Parent Plus Loans has contributed to over 16,000

students at HBCUs having to leave school or seek other sources of funding, which in turn negatively impacts HBCUs bottom line (Lee & Keys, 2013). The financial loss from these changes in PLUS loan standards resulted in an estimated \$168 million in reduced funds to HBCUs (Lee & Keys, 2013). These changes coupled with decreasing support for Title III funding exacerbates the financial challenges for HBCUs and also contributes to their high presidential and administrative turnover at HBCUs (Gasman, 2009; Hayes, 2013; Lee & Keys, 2013).

Along the same lines, alumni giving at HBCUs has been lower than HWCUs, but this trend can also be attributed to systemic racism whereby Blacks have had and continue to have limited access to wealth acquisition (land, home ownership, upward career mobility, etc.) compared to Whites (Feagin, 2006). Only three of out of the 105 HBCUs in the U.S. (Howard University, Spelman College, and Hampton University) have endowments that rank among the top 300 among U.S. postsecondary institutions (Gasman, 2009). Benjamin Jealous, former president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), explained how the closing of St. Paul's College was a result of the fact that like many HBCUs they lacked the wealthy donor based and extensive endowments (Hayes, 2013). The collective impact of systemic racism in the U.S. has had a significant impact on the historical and current financial state of HBCUs.

Critique of Liberalism. HBCUs were established with the unique mission of providing quality educational opportunities to Black Americans and those who have been historically disadvantaged and excluded from access to larger well-funded HWCUs (Allen & Jewel, 2002; Gallien & Peterson, 2005). Despite claims that the U.S. is in a post-racial society, the current status of HBCUs highlights how race and racism continue to stagnate the progress of non-Whites in the U.S. (Lee & Keyes, 2013). For example, Gasman (2009) described the economic challenges facing HBCUs as a byproduct of their "commitment to serving disadvantaged students and from the history of underfunding and discrimination that disadvantages HBCUs themselves" (p. 1). Using data from the U.S. Department of Education's Postsecondary Education Data System, Gasman (2009) found that 90 percent of students who attended HBCUs received financial aid in 2006-2007. Given their unique mission to provide quality educational opportunities for underserved populations, they receive less tuition dollars compared to their more well-funded HWCU peers, which translates into less operating funds. Gasman (2009) also pointed out HBCUs "have received less funding than other colleges and universities from state and federal governments, foundations, and corporations," which challenges any notions of colorblindness or neutrality within the U.S. society in terms of equitable resources for postsecondary institutions irrespective of race (p. 1).

Meso-Level Challenges

The Whiteness as Property Norm. From a historical context, it is important to recall that the same year the NCAA was founded in 1906, the first Black athletic conference called the Inter-Scholastic Athletic Association of the Middle Atlantic States (ISSA) was established (Borican, 1963). Hence, in concert with arguments from previous race scholars (DuBois, 1993; Feagin, 2006; Woodson, 1933), it is clear the NCAA like many White-controlled institutions in the U.S. was not created nor currently structured to benefit Black athletes or HBCUs, but rather designed to disregard, subjugate, and exploit them. Dr. Dennis Thomas, MEAC Commissioner, captured the sentiment shared among many HBCU athletic program stakeholders about the

current state of HBCU athletic programs when he said: “I don’t think if Alabama or Texas or LSU had been under-funded for a century, they would be in the position that they are,” (Gaither, 2013, p. 1). The history of unjust enrichment for HWCUs and the unjust impoverishment of HBCUs in a U.S. society that privileges Whiteness has greatly contributed to the current inequities that exist today between the institutional types and their athletic programs (Feagin, 2006).

Within the current NCAA March Madness Tournament and BCS bowl game structure, there is an inherent inequitable structural arrangement that situates HBCUs among other non-BCS conference schools and LRIs as dependent on larger well-funded Division I HWCUs for funding sources (Johnson, 2013; Lillig, 2009). Due to the lack of revenue, several members of the Division I HBCU conferences have subjected themselves to “guarantee games” with the top Division I BCS schools (Lillig, 2009, p. 46). Lillig (2009) defined guarantee games as “nonconference matches, usually between high-profile, high-ranking Division I schools from BCS conferences and low-profile, low-ranking schools from non-BCS conferences” (p. 46). The structure of these guarantee games allows Division I BCS schools to guarantee home victories for both football and men’s basketball teams by defeating lower tier Division I teams such as HBCUs. These games are usually extremely lopsided and an embarrassment for HBCUs while also serving as a form of entertainment for audiences at the HWCU venues through the performances of the famous HBCU bands. In exchange, the HBCU athletic programs are guaranteed a sum of money, which these schools rely on to support the operation of their athletic programs (Lillig, 2009).

Despite the conspicuous financial upside of these arrangements, these guarantee games also create a host of negative outcomes for HBCUs. For one, this inequitable relationship creates a level of dependency among HBCUs and ensures that these programs remain disadvantaged compared to larger and better-funded Division I HWCUs (Lillig, 2009). For example, these big-margin losses lower the Rating Percentage Index (RPI) of the participating HBCUs, which further contributes to their struggles in terms of competing for profitable post-season tournaments. For example, the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) and the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) (the only two HBCU Division I conferences) are consistently among the conferences with the lowest RPIs in the NCAA’s Division I level (Lillig, 2009). In fact, the SWAC had the lowest RPI among all Division I schools for three consecutive seasons during the mid-2000s. This low RPI decreases the chances of multiple MEAC and SWAC teams earning higher than a sixteenth seed for the multi-billion dollar NCAA March Madness Tournament and thus reduces the chances of the one or two teams that do secure a birth of advancing in the tournament, which ultimately minimizes the revenue generating potential for these schools. Even worse, the RPIs are so low for HBCU football teams due to their lack of strength of schedule (SOS) that even if a HBCU football team went undefeated they would still not be considered for one of the lucrative BCS bowl games (Lillig, 2009).

Another consequence of these guarantee games is the psychological impact on the players and coaches (O’Neill, 2008). Former Alcorn State University basketball player Troy Jackson described in an interview with ESPN’s Dana O’Neill (2008) the team’s psyche after a blowout loss: “You just get beat up mentally . . . You start believing, ‘Man, we can’t win. We’re never going to win a game,’ and it carries over into the conference season. The losing, it just eats at you” (p. 1). These embarrassing losses not only affect the players temporarily, but also can have a lingering effect on their performance the remainder of the season as well as the public perception of the institution (Lillig, 2009). The troubling arrangement surrounding these games

along with the discouraging outcomes represent a stark contrast from the success and vitality of HBCU athletic programs pre-assimilation efforts (Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013; Klores, 2008; Wiggins & Miller, 2003).

Thus, the structure of the NCAA and BCS is designed to benefit the top Division I HWCUs, which have benefitted from years of unjust enrichment compared to the unjust impoverishment experience by HBCUs (Feagin, 2006). From a CRT perspective, the leaders of the NCAA (Presidents and Athletic Directors at Division I HWCUs) and the BCS (corporate stakeholders) as a group of dominant Whites in the racial hierarchy in the U.S. have a vested interest in persevering their property (also known as the multi-billion dollar college sport industry, which has largely been funded on the backs of Black athletes (Hawkins, 2010)), limiting the rights of economic profitability to a select number of Division I HWCUs' athletic departments and corporate stakeholders, and denying access to various smaller LRIs such as HBCUs.

Interest convergence. As stated earlier, prior to the 1960s, a majority of Black athletes attended HBCUs (Miller, 1995; Wiggins, 2000). Bill Hayes, former Athletics Director at NCCU, described the trend when he said: "There was no such thing as a top black student-athlete going to North Carolina, South Carolina or Clemson or Virginia Tech" (Jones, 2007, p. 1). The decline in athletic prowess at HBCUs can be attributed to what CRT theorists describe as interest convergence (Bell, 1992). Rather than fully integrating or collaborating with Black-operated sport organizations such as the famous Negro Leagues and HBCU athletics programs, larger well-funded predominantly White organizations like U.S. professional sport organizations and the NCAA began to extract talented Black athletes away from these Black-operated entities (Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013; Hodge, et al., 2008; Wiggins, 2000). Instead of true integration taking place, forced assimilation and athletic exploitation was established as the normative protocol for Blacks and Black-operated institutions (Hawkins, 2010). In fact, a predominantly White intercollegiate athletic governing body, the National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) did not begin admitting HBCUs until 1953 (Hodge, Bennett, & Collins, 2013; Saylor, 2000). It took over a decade after this effort for the NCAA to follow suit in 1965 (Hodge, Bennett, & Collins, 2013). Thus, reflecting the notion that these organizations primarily sought the talent of Black athletes and were less interested in creating a more equitable and symbiotic relationship with HBCUs (both economically and athletically).

Moreover, the primary interest for assimilating talented Black athletes to HWCUs and away from HBCUs had little to do with the betterment of Black athletes' educational opportunities or personal development. Rather, these recruitment efforts were primarily driven by HWCUs' interest in producing successful athletic teams, increasing athletic revenue, and enhancing institutional prestige (Donnor, 2005; Edwards, 2000; Hodge et al., 2008). It is suggested without the standout accomplishments of Black athletes such as the all-Black starting five for the University of Texas-El Paso 1966 national championship team that defeated Adolph Rupp's University of Kentucky Wildcats and Sam "Bam" Cunningham's (Black running back for the University of Southern California (USC)) miraculous three touchdowns in the team's win against Bear Bryant's formidable all-White University of Alabama football team in 1970, many HWCUs would have continued to overlook talented Black athletes (Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013). Furthermore, the impetus of recruiting Black athletes was primarily focused on exploiting their athletic abilities with no regard for the impact these efforts would have on HBCUs. Since HWCUs began recruiting and successfully retaining talented Black athletes, HBCUs have struggled to compete with their new competitors who possess more facilities,

scholarship dollars, recruiting budgets, and television exposure (Gaither, 2013; Jones, 2007; Lillig, 2009; Wiggins, 2000).

The Permanence of Racism. The fact that the NCAA is largely managed by White males who have ties to large Division I HWCUs and the seemingly “colorblind” or neutral academic standards have had a disparate impact on HBCUs reflects the permanence of racism with the NCAA structure and organizational practices. For example, HBCU athletic programs persistently post the lowest academic progress rates (APRs) and graduation success rates (GSRs) among Division I institutions (McClelland, 2012; Reynolds et al., 2012). In 2009-2010, HBCUs accounted for nearly one-third (33 of the 103) of the Division I institutions penalized for low APRs (Hosick, 2011). In 2012, HBCUs accounted for nearly 50 percent (13 out of 27) of the institutions that received level one and level three APR penalties (NCAA, 2012). Mississippi Valley State University (men’s basketball), University of Arkansas Pine Bluff (men’s basketball), Hampton University (football), North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (football), and Texas Southern University (football) were all banned from postseason play for the 2012-2013 season due to low APRs (NCAA, 2012). In addition, the fact that the NCAA’s academic standards do not take into account the unique educational missions of institutions such as HBCUs or fully take into consideration the reasons why some student athletes leave an institution⁴ is problematic and reveals the lack of awareness of the perpetual impacts of systemic racism, seemingly colorblind policies, and widespread inequities among U.S. institutions of higher education.

Micro-Level Challenges

The Permanence of Racism. Within the NCAA, HBCUs constitute a disproportionate number of LRIs (Gaither, 2013; Hosick, 2011; Johnson, 2013). For example, citing data from a *USA Today* report, Gaither (2013) highlighted how seven of the 10 Division I public schools ranked at the bottom of total operating dollars for athletic department rankings were HBCUs. An example of this disparity is the difference between the revenue generated over a five-year period by Coppin State University (Division I HBCU) and the University of Texas (Division I PWI), \$3.5 million and \$150 million, respectively (Gaither, 2013). In fact, for the 2006 fiscal year, Delaware State was the only HBCU that ranked in the top 200 (out of 331) for Division I athletic budgets and the median ranks for athletic and recruiting budgets for Division I HBCUs was 278 and 282, respectively (Jones, 2007). As mentioned earlier, the structural arrangement and revenue allocation process with the NCAA exacerbates the persistent economic disparity between larger Division I HWCUs and smaller Division I HBCUs in the NCAA reflects the permanence of racism tenet.

The limited financial resources and inadequate support for athletic facilities and programs has forced college athletes and institutional leaders to take drastic steps to bring about change. For example, the poor athletic facilities at many HBCUs were brought to the national forefront in October 2013 when members of the Grambling State University football team decided not to attend practice or participate in the team’s next scheduled game versus Jackson State University in an effort to bring attention to the school’s dilapidated athletic facilities, poor traveling conditions, as well as the team’s discontent with the firing of their previous head coach (Coach Doug Williams) (Isabella & Uthman, 2013). In other instances, some HBCUs have decided to cut their entire athletic programs to improve their financial status. For example, Paul Quinn College (TX) discontinued their football program in September 2007 to cut expenses. After the

football program was dissolved, the school transformed the football field into an agricultural farm, which over a two-year period converted a \$600,000 football expense into a six figure plus revenue generator for school due in large part to major food clients such as the Legends Hospitality group at the Dallas Cowboys Stadium (Adelson, 2013). The revenue generated from the “WE over Me Farm,” contributes to academic scholarships for Paul Quinn students (Adelson, 2013, p. 1). Spelman College is another example of an HBCU that chose to dissolve its athletic program due to financial pressures (The Associated Press, 2013). Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, Spelman College President, decided to use the \$1 million spent on their athletics program that served roughly 4 percent of their student body (80 students) for a campus wide health and fitness facilities and program. Since HBCUs only make three percent of U.S. institutions of higher education and less than 10 percent of NCAA member institutions, it is alarming that the few HBCUs that do offer athletic programs (which have been found to benefit Black college athletes’ academic outcomes – see Cooper & Hawkins (2012), Cooper (2013), Hodge, Collins, & Bennett (2013) and Klores, 2008) are struggling to keep their programs afloat largely due to the disparate racial inequities within the U.S. and the NCAA (Gaither, 2013; Jones, 2007).

Interest Convergence. Along the same lines, several HBCU leaders including presidents and athletic directors cite a lack of resources (fiscal, financial, and human) and high administrative turnover at their institutions among the primary reasons for their persistently low APRs (Hosick, 2011). Duer Sharp, SWAC Commissioner, described the unique challenges facing HBCUs in regards to the high administrative turnover when he said:

To effect change, there has to be a directive from the president or chancellor. But with the turnover, you never get that directive...It really makes it difficult when you don't have that constant voice from the top asking, 'Where are we on APR?' When you get a new president coming in, they've got 800 things on their plate (Hosick, 2011, p. 1).

In response to these challenges, the NCAA's Committee on Academic Performance (CAP) has instituted two large academic support initiatives for limited-resource institutions (LRIs) such as HBCUs (Johnson, 2013). One of these initiatives is the NCAA Division Academic Performance Program (APP) Supplemental Support Fund (SSF). The SSF is a competitive grant proposal program that awards funds to LRIs that present innovative solutions to enhancing the student athlete retention rate and progress towards degree rates at their institutions. Eligible LRIs must be in the lowest 10% of resources as measured by per capita institutional expenditures, per capita athletics department funding, and per capita Pell Grant Aid for the student body. The SSF allows funds to be used for professional development opportunities for academic support staff, student athlete financial aid support for summer bridge and summer school programs, among a host of other student athlete academic support related causes.

Another NCAA issued program is the LRI Pilot Program. This program offers up to \$300,000 of funding for schools that present a comprehensive APR improvement plan and meet benchmarks over a three year period. Similar to the SSF, awarded LRIs can use these funds for various student athlete academic support efforts ranging from hiring academic support staff to purchasing academic support equipment. Awarded LRIs for the pilot program must also fulfill a list of requirements including attendance to the annual NCAA convention, provide routine programmatic audits, present annual financial reports, participate in monthly conference calls, receive regular campus visits by NCAA, among other similar tasks to ensure funds are being spent appropriately and benchmarks are being met (Johnson, 2013).

The creation of both the SSF and the LRI Pilot Program illustrate the interest convergence tenet whereby the NCAA's interest of enhancing their public perception, in wake of increasing scrutiny over their educational purpose and athletic commercialization practices (Byers, 1995; Hawkins, 2010), intersect with HBCUs' desire to receive financial support to meet their academic and athletic goals. Despite the benefits associated with these efforts, the funds allocated through the SSF and LRI Pilot program pale in comparison to the multi-billion dollar profits generated and awarded to larger HWCUs for their participation in the NCAA March Madness Tournament and BCS bowl games (Hawkins, 2010; Lillig, 2009). As a result, the well-intentioned efforts associated with the SSF and LRI Pilot programs fall significantly short of leveling the playing field for HBCUs and HWCUs and disrupting the economic inequalities between the two institutional types as produced by years of unjust enrichment and unjust impoverishment (Feagin, 2006).

In light of these multi-level challenges, the authors posit the best way to address these issues is to learn from the rich history and legacy of HBCU athletic programs, which provides a guide for a way forward for HBCUs to retain their vitality and prominence as successful self-sustaining intercollegiate athletic programs. More specifically, the subsequent section provides a detailed overview of the unique role of HBCU athletic programs as sites of Black cultural empowerment. Following the aforementioned section, the authors will introduce Dr. J. Kenyatta Cavil's *Ten Pillars for Active Engagement for Sport Leadership & Administration in creating Athletic Organizational Success & Sustainability* and a proposed secession plan for HBCUs to be liberated from the current oppressive structure of the NCAA.

Foundations for Success: HBCU Athletic Events as Sites for Black Cultural Empowerment⁵

Similar to other forms of Black cultural expression (e.g., the popularity of jazz during the early twentieth century), HBCU athletic events are culturally liberating activities for Blacks in a predominantly White Anglo-Saxon U.S. society that largely excluded them from mainstream opportunities (Hodge, Harrison, Burden, & Dixson, 2008; Wiggins & Miller, 2003). This liberation of HBCUs is reflected in the fact that Blacks own, manage, and support these institutions and athletic-social events. Moreover, Blacks fill nearly every leadership position at HBCUs including the roles of university/college presidents, faculty, administrators, athletic directors, coaches, athletes, and community business owners (Armstrong, 2001, 2008; Klores, 2008). The critical mass of Black solidarity symbolizes the promise Blacks in the U.S. possess when committed to a common cause of collective racial uplift (Archer & Watson, 2005; Klores, 2008; Lillig, 2009; Wiggins & Miller, 2003). As such, cornerstone HBCU athletic events that illustrate Black cultural empowerment are the HBCU bowls, classics, and basketball tournaments.

HBCU Bowls

Since the late nineteenth century, annual Black football games have been an integral part of the traditions of HBCUs. The first HBCU intercollegiate football game was held between Biddle College (now Johnson C. Smith University) and Livingstone College on December 27, 1892 (Chalk, 1976). Biddle College won 4-0. This inaugural game represented the birth of HBCU football. HBCU postseason bowls were games that were not on the teams' original

schedules and these games were played on an irregular basis prior to World War II except for two notable exceptions (Saylor, 2000). *The Prairie View Bowl*, created by administrators at Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical (A&M)⁶ University, served as the second oldest bowl game in the U.S. behind the Rose Bowl (Fink, 2003). *The Prairie View Bowl* was first established in 1928 lasted until 1962 (Saylor, 2000). A unique feature of the annual bowl was the fact that the bowl was scheduled each year on New Year's Day to coincide with the State Fair in Dallas, Texas and this day became known as "Negro Day." This intentional scheduling of this major athletic contest on this special day of the year and the affectionate title of "Negro Day" reflected the unique role HBCU football in terms of cultivating racial pride among African Americans (Chalk, 1976; Fink, 2003).

Beginning in 1933, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) served as the host team in the annual Orange Blossom Bowl (Saylor, 2000; Fink, 2003). Opponents were selected from the four major HBCU conferences based on their team records. Both Prairie View A&M and FAMU had long runs of excellent teams during the early and mid-twentieth century (Saylor, 2000; Fink, 2003). Another short lived bowl was the Chocolate Bowl played in Tyler, Texas in 1935 between SWAC member, Texas College, and SIAC member, Alabama State University (Fink, 2003). Like many of the bowl games between HBCUs, the Chocolate Bowl served as a national championship for HBCUs since they were not allowed to participate in post-season bowls against HWCUs. As one thousand fans sat through the wind and freezing rain, Texas College led by head coach Arnett "Ace" Mumford defeated Alabama State University in a nine to zero victory for the championship (Fink, 2003).

In 1936, the HBCU football season was unique because of the recent success of Jessie Owens winning four gold medals and other African American athletes' performances at the Olympics in Berlin, Germany (Fink, 2003). These performances generated a great sense of racial pride among African Americans who were still struggling to overcome the visceral effects of the Jim Crow era. This year was especially a season of pride for African American Texans. In 1936, the Texas College Steers won their third consecutive SWAC football championship. In the same year, Prairie View A&M's football team emerged victorious in both the Orange Blossom Bowl where they defeated FAMU six to zero and their own Prairie View Bowl where they defeated Tuskegee by the same score (Fink, 2003). After War World II, several new HBCU bowl games were established with a format of two invited teams with winning records, but most were short-lived such as the Vulcan Bowl played in Birmingham, Alabama (1940-1948) (Saylor, 2000). The success of these earlier bowl games led to the creation of modern HBCU classics.

HBCU Classics

In 1924, the first official HBCU classic between Alabama State College (now University) and Tuskegee Institute (now University) in the Turkey Day Classic in Montgomery, Alabama. HBCU classic games are unique from typical regular season games because these games include the coordination of special cultural events surrounding the game. The coordinated culturally empowering events include step shows, beauty pageants, parades, battle of the band performances, music concerts, golf tournaments, professional development workshops, health awareness events, community service outreach, and tailgating (Moore, 2012). As of 2011, there were over 50 official HBCU classics held throughout the U.S. (Ubuntu, 2011). Similar to Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) or BCS bowl games, HBCU classics provide significant revenues and serve as effective recruitment opportunities for participating institutions

(Lillig, 2009). For example, one of the most popular and lucrative HBCU classics is the Bayou Classic in New Orleans, Louisiana (Armstrong, 2001). This annual event features a football game between Grambling State University (GSU) and Southern University (SU). It has been estimated the average 64,000 plus attendance at the collective events associated with the Bayou Classic contributes to Black consumer spending of over \$55 million annually. Over a 20-year span, the Bayou Classic generated an estimated \$230 million in accumulated revenues (Armstrong, 2001; Spanberg, 1999). More importantly, the funds generated from these popular classics support student scholarships, support programs, travel, and facility renovations for participating HBCUs (Armstrong, 2001; Brodie, 1991).

The most popular HBCU classic is the annual Atlanta Football Classic, which originally featured a game between FAMU and Tennessee State University (TSU). Established in 1989, the classic is known as the “Super Bowl of Black College Football” has produced some of the highest attendance records in HBCU athletic history (Pitts et al., 2007, p. 1). Between 2003 and 2006, an estimated 250,000 attendees participated in the events surrounding the classic. In addition, the Atlanta Football Classic has been cited as the third largest event in the state of Georgia and accounted for \$30 million in annual economic impact. The weeklong event consists of various cultural events such as professional workshops, seminars, social activities, and the famous battle of the bands. Pitts et al. (2007) found in a study of the event’s attendees that watching a HBCU football, the halftime show, and the overall atmosphere were their primary reasons for attending the classic. Like all HBCU athletic events, classics serve as sites of cultural empowerment where Black excellence is celebrated on multiple levels (socially, economically, athletically, and intellectually) (Pitts et al., 2007).

Among the HBCU classics, there are three distinct types: 1) traditional rivalries, 2) host schools playing a different opponent each year, and 3) events that have their own identity (Ubuntu, 2011). Traditional rivalries are annual games involving the same two schools and usually held around Labor Day or Thanksgiving (e.g., the Aggie-Eagle Classic in Raleigh, North Carolina on Labor Day weekend between North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T) and North Carolina Central University (NCCU)). A host school playing a different team every year is the second type of HBCU classic. These games are usually held at a large venue off campus (e.g., Gateway Classic in Jacksonville, Florida with Bethune-Cookman University as the host team). The third type of classic is an event that has a separate identity from the participating institutions and different schools play each other each year (e.g., the HBCU Classic game held in Greenville, South Carolina). These classics are usually organized by organizations not directly affiliated with the participating schools, but share a common mission of cultural empowerment and racial uplift (e.g., National Urban League (NUL)) (Ubuntu, 2011).

CIAA Basketball Tournament

Aside from the HBCU football classics, the most successful HBCU athletic event is the annual CIAA basketball tournament. In 1946, the first CIAA tournament was held in Washington, D.C. with a 2,000-attendee sellout (Hunt, 1996). By 2003, the event had relocated to Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) Center (now the Pittsburgh National Corporation (PNC) Center) in Raleigh, North Carolina and annually sells out the 20,000 capacity for the arena (CIAA, 2014). The CIAA Tournament is the third most popular conference basketball tournament in the U.S. only behind the ACC and former Big East tournaments (the NCAA March Madness is the

most popular and lucrative overall, but regarding separate conference tournaments the CIAA was the third largest during the early to mid-1990s) (Hunt, 1996). Starting in 2006, the annual event was moved to the Time Warner Cable (TWC) Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, which was a larger venue than the RBC Center. In 2011, for example, over 190,000 attendees participated in the weeklong event and the event generated over \$44.3 million in economic impact. From 2000-2011, the CIAA generated over \$266.06 million in economic impact for the state of North Carolina and over \$16.5 million in overall scholarship monies for CIAA schools (CIAA, 2014).

In addition, the CIAA reported generating \$10.5 million in scholarship funds from corporate sponsorships and an additional \$23 million from championships and television (CIAA, 2014). The CIAA tournament has contracts with the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) and TV One, which both provide national coverage of the tournament to more than 57 million U.S. homes (CIAA, 2014). This is quite an accomplishment for a tournament that started with a \$500 budget in 1946 (Hunt, 1996). The popularity and economic vitality of the CIAA tournament exemplifies the potential of HBCU athletic programs. Thus, the collective success of these HBCU bowls, classics, and basketball tournaments demonstrate the consumer valuation and ticket price efficiency and significant economic impact of these events (Cavil, 2013b; Drayer, Irwin, & Martin, 2011; Armstrong, 2001, 2008; Jackson, Lyons, & Gooden, 2001).

A Plan for the Future and Self-Sustainability

An analysis of the literature revealed HBCUs face a confluence of challenges related to various societal (macro) factors such as systemic racism and economic deprivation (Feagin, 2006; Gasman, 2009; Hayes, 2013; Lee & Keys, 2013), structural inequalities (meso) within the NCAA that economically deprives HBCUs and disparately penalizes them for low APRs (Gaither, 2013; Hodge, Bennett, & Collins, 2013; Hodge, et al., 2008; Johnson, 2013; Lillig, 2009; McClelland, 2012; Reynolds, Fisher, & Cavil, 2012; Wiggins, 2000), and institutional factors (micro) such as administrative turnover and poor financial management (Gaither, 2013; Hosick, 2011; Johnson, 2013). In order for HBCU athletic programs to redress these challenges, they must stay true to the values and practices that have served as their foundation since their inception while taking advantage of effective business strategies including collective branding, a globalized approach to marketing, and increasing alumni giving. The recent decline in state and federal support for higher education and increased competition for existing dollars has created a heightened level of urgency for HBCUs to engage in entrepreneurial and innovative approaches (Lee & Keys, 2013). Some of the keys to success offered by HBCU leaders include engaging in more entrepreneurial business practices (e.g., expanding property ownership, creative fundraising, etc.) and strengthening collaborative relationships with board of trustees, alumni, faculty, business leaders, and the federal government around the school's mission and vision (Hayes, 2013).

Related to athletics, the proposed plan addresses the call for change expressed by former head men's basketball coach at Grambling State University, Larry Wright, when he described his feelings about HBCUs playing in guaranteed blowout games in order to generate revenue for their athletic programs:

I hate it. I wish we didn't have to play those games...I think somewhere down the line, our conference, our institutions have to come up with some type of way so we don't have to play those games and take that money...I don't care what you say, I don't think you get better by getting beat by 30 points (Glockner, 2007, p. 1).

The proposed secession plan is a response to this call for change because it refocuses HBCUs efforts and resources on the collective strength that these institutions were founded upon. The plan calls for all HBCU stakeholders including university/college presidents, administrators, conference commissioners, athletic directors, coaches, alumni, Black businesses, corporate sponsors, Pan Hellenic fraternities and sororities, national/regional/state/local Black associations/organizations to galvanize in an collective effort to revitalize our institutions and attain self-sustainability so HBCUs no longer have to participate in the oppressive NCAA structure. Additionally, secession is a valid response in the midst of the imminent changes related to the resounding support for NCAA reform. More specifically, support in the push for autonomy of the "Big Five" conferences (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, PAC 12, and SEC) within the NCAA's Division I level would inevitably widen the resource disparities in the U.S. intercollegiate landscape (see Russo, 2014; Schlabach, 2013; ESPN News, 2014a; ESPN News, 2014b)), which would place HBCU athletic programs at further disadvantage to their HBCU counterparts. HBCU athletics must invest in their empowerment as a collective unit for the future to combat an oppressive structure in which they have been, and continue to be, neglected. Before providing a detailed overview of the secession plan, the authors will introduce Dr. J. Kenyatta Cavil's *Ten Pillars for Active Engagement for Sport Leadership & Administration in creating Athletic Organizational Success & Sustainability*, which undergirds the secession plan.

Dr. Cavil's Ten Pillars

Dr. J. Kenyatta Cavil's *Ten Pillars for Active Engagement for Sport Leadership & Administration in Creating Athletic Organizational Success & Sustainability* is based on ten years of academic research, empirical studies, and practical application (McClelland, 2012; Cavil, 2013a; Cavil & McClelland, 2013). The *Ten Pillars* are strategies for organizational transformation with a specific analysis of HBCU athletic programs. The *Ten Pillars* are aligned with Charles McClelland's study on identifying variables athletic directors perceived as determinants for an HBCU athletic program's potential for effectiveness in the current NCAA Division I FCS structure through their leadership (McClelland, 2012). The instruments used in the aforementioned study to assess learning, leadership, and perception of the effectiveness may assist in the identification of relationships in active engagement for sports leadership and administration relative to athletic organizational strengths and weaknesses for success and sustainability (McClelland, 2012; Cavil, 2013a; Cavil & McClelland, 2013).

Although, many studies of organizational leadership have been conducted, the organizational leadership being analyzed is so complex that it is necessary to explore perceptions of effectiveness, success, and sustainability beyond the work that has been done to this point. Cavil and McClelland's (2012) work on predictive cognitive scores and leadership perception of variables determining the effectiveness of administering HBCU athletic programs in leaders and organizations furthers understanding of success and sustainability building. The authors emphasize the importance of revenue generating leaders who, because of their leadership perception, develop relationships inside and outside their organizations. The *Ten Pillars* are

strategies that may be useful to athletic directors and others engaged in planning for the success and sustainability of athletics at HBCUs (Cavil & McClelland, 2013). Dr. Cavil consolidates his work on the *Ten Pillars* into two primary domains—five under internal pillars of engagement and five under external pillars of engagement:

Internal Pillars of Engagement

- Academic alignment
- Athletic compliance
- Corporate fundraising / Capital campaigns
- Media solutions / Event management
- Alumni activation / Community engagement

External Pillars of Engagement

- Critical evaluation / Continuous improvement
- Strategic planning / Tactical analytics
- Shared vision / Shared governance
- System thinking / Operational practices
- Personal mastery / Team building

The internal and external pillars of engagements are current business concepts amalgamated into strategies for sport business leaders in an extremely competitive, resource deprived, and highly regulated organizations such as HBCU athletic programs. In this model the first of five internal pillars of engagements is academic alignment, which is the matching of educational and athletic components that strengthens the goals of the overall organization's mission, vision, values, goals, and indicators for leadership brand opportunity. Athletic compliance is a component of rules and bylaws for operating procedures with the organization based on athletic competition governance. Corporate fundraising and capital campaign are the connection between organizational current operational costs and forecasting needs for athletic goals. Media solutions and event management are the partnership between production services to maximize exposure and the process of creating, planning, and orchestrating the direction of athletic events. The final internal pillar of engagement is the alumni activation and community engagement components that are defined as the establishing the relationship between the process of validating relationships between alumni constituents and the process of consistently working with community groups for athletic initiative.

The *Ten Pillars* model also includes the five external pillars of engagements. The critical evaluation and continuous improvement components are defined as the development of tools that provide the ability to continuously improve on key athletic process indicators with critical evaluation of the enterprise and individuals within the organization. Another component involves strategic planning and tactical analytics which are concepts that involve understanding the long range objectives and the actions needed to make progress in an athletic department as well as the ability to analyze data to discover meaningful patterns to create decision criteria. Shared vision is discipline along with shared governance which is the partnership between individuals within the athletic organization of envisioning possibilities of future opportunities for all stakeholders. The concepts of system thinking and operational practices are additional platforms that provide alignment of interrelated components and the ability to conform to processes in the athletic organization. The final external pillar of engagement is personal

mastery and team building discipline components that are the partnership between individual and teams that includes the ability of an individual to maintain their internal stability while understanding the current athletic organizational climate regarding members operating in interdependent teams for athletic success and sustainability. The pillars are not designed to be followed in any particular order. In a sporting organization, the framework can be thought of as similar to the foundation of a building. It is necessary for all the areas of support to be established and reinforced to make the building strong and not collapse when internal or external forces are involved. Therefore, the goal of Dr. Cavil's *Ten Pillars* framework is to focus the organization's attention on the areas that are key components to success and sustainability after analyzing the current status of HBCU athletics programs.

HBCU Secession as a Pathway to Success

Building on Dr. Cavil's *Ten Pillars* framework, the aim of the proposed secession plan seeks to address what Floyd Kerr, legendary coach and current Athletic Director at Morgan State University, suggested as the need for smart business models that allow HBCU athletic programs to fund themselves rather than depend on donors or state legislatures (Jones, 2007). Kerr has credibility given his track record of increasing sponsorship dollars and building a \$2.4 million video system at A.W. Mumford Stadium at Southern University (Jones, 2007). Given the dismal financial trends experienced by Division I HBCUs, many HBCU stakeholders have argued HBCU athletic programs are better suited for Division II, which does not require schools to sponsor as many sports as Division I as well as they can operate with smaller budgets rather than competing in the seemingly endless arms race found at the Division I level (Gaither, 2013). In other words, the authors share the sentiments of the previous Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical (A&M) University Men's Basketball Coach, Vann Pettaway, when he described his feelings about SWAC teams participating in embarrassing guarantee games: "If all of us need money that bad, then maybe we shouldn't be Division I" (Glockner, 2007, p. 1).

Building on this idea as a starting point, the authors propose a two-step secession plan for enhancing the sustainability, collectivism, and vitality of HBCU athletic programs. The first step of the secession plan would involve the MEAC and the SWAC relinquishing their current Division I status and moving to the NCAA's Division II level. Once this transition occurs, the 49 schools and 62 athletic teams that make up the MEAC, SWAC, SIAC, and CIAA should coalesce to increase the number of inter-HBCU athletic contests. For example, each of these conferences already hosts a plethora of classics (e.g., Bayou Classic, Atlanta Classic, Aggie-Eagle Classic, etc.) and basketball tournaments (e.g., CIAA, MEAC, SIAC, and SWAC tournaments) that generate significant revenues for their programs (Armstrong 2001; 2008). These contests could be held at current HBCU classic locations such as Houston (TX), Atlanta (GA), Charlotte (NC), Memphis (TN), New Orleans, (LA), Orlando (FL), and Washington (DC). Additional locations such as St. Louis (MO), Chicago (IL), New York (NY), Richmond (VA), and various cities throughout the U.S. could be considered as host sites. These events could also be coordinated and/or dually promoted with other major African Diaspora events such as annual Pan-Hellenic anniversary celebrations, the famous Essence Festival in New Orleans (LA), the New Orleans Jazz Festival, etc. Armstrong (2008) identified the following five themes associated with Blacks' attendance to HBCU athletic events: 1) Black cultural symbolism, 2) family appeal, 3) social interactions, 4) promotions, and 5) entertainment. HBCU athletic events today are filled with various social activities connected to the event such as pageants, step shows,

music concerts, and band competitions (Moore, 2012). Collectively, these events reflect the unique connection between “school pride, cultural celebration, and athletic tradition” (Lillig, 2009, p. 45).

Moreover, the goal would be to build a collective brand associated with these HBCU athletic events to enhance the revenue generation for all participating institutions through ticket sales, sponsorships, business-to-business transactions, multi-media rights, merchandise sales, and television contracts. Lillig (2009) offered a series of ideas such as the hosting of an annual pre-season HBCU Invitational Basketball Tournament in November and December, increasing the number of third party HBCU sporting events (e.g., classics, tournaments, etc.), and expanding contract strategies associated with these events. Regarding the HBCU Invitational Basketball Tournament, Lillig (2009) suggested this tournament could be held in the beginning of basketball season November and December similar to the current pre-season National Invitation Tournament (NIT) held in Madison Square Garden in New York City. However, the HBCU Invitational Tournament could be held in a traditional HBCU classic location such as Atlanta (GA), New Orleans (LA), or Houston (TX). The author recommended this event be coordinated on the same weekends as the HBCU football classics that take place during the month of November. These games would replace the current guarantee games HBCU basketball teams participate in to secure funds for their athletic programs. These events could also have their own identities such as “The HBCU National Championship” or “The HBCU Final Four” (p. 68).

In addition, Lillig (2009) cited the Big Apple Classic (basketball) in New York City and the Circle City Classics (football) in Indianapolis, Indiana as contract models for HBCU athletic programs to build upon. Within this contract, third party promoters assist with the organization, promotion, and hosting of the event. Additional stipulations on the contract for these athletic contests include the third party’s support of the traditional HBCU homecoming/classic events or cultural programming (e.g., cultural empowering workshops, step shows, battle of bands events, community outreach, etc.) as well as monies earmarked for specific programs (e.g., athletic teams, scholarships, academic support programs, general university funds, etc.). In contrast to the disparaging outcomes of guarantee games, these HBCU controlled events would return these programs back to their rich legacy of pride and success as well as enhance their “image, educational missions, and goodwill” (Lillig, 2009, p. 71). Another major component of these arrangements could include mandatory pre-event, during the event, and post-event meetings among participating institutions, conference leaders, sponsors, and organizers to ensure maximum collaboration, communication, and consistency. Pre-event meetings could consist of discussions regarding the order of events and logistical plans. During the event, meetings could focus on short-term evaluations and managing any emerging issues. Post-evaluation meetings could focus on maintaining, strengthening, and expanding partnerships to ensure the longevity and expansion of these annual events.

Along with the increased revenue streams, improved facilities and resources could lead to more successful recruiting. Attracting the elite level athletes was a formula for success prior to the 1960s for HBCUs. It currently serves as the life line for large HWCUs in the BCS era, and could also serve as a foundation for revitalization and sustainability for HBCU athletic programs in the 21st century (Jones, 2007). Furthermore, with the four major HBCU conferences competing at the same level, they could arrange their own post-season tournaments such as the legendary *Prairie View Bowl* and *Orange Blossom Bowls* of the early and mid-twentieth century (Saylor, 2000). If non-HBCU conferences wanted to compete, then they would be able to compete since segregation is not the aim of this plan. However, the organizing body of this

structure would be HBCU presidents and athletic directors rather than Division I HBCU presidents and athletic directors who are content with maintaining and exacerbating the NCAA status quo, which disadvantages LRIs like current Division I HBCU member schools (Johnson, 2013).

The second and final step of the secession plan would involve HBCU athletic programs breaking off to form their own governing body. Similar to the NAIA or even the idea of the BCS schools breaking off to form their own association, the authors believe HBCUs and other LRIs with similar missions should form their governing body with a structure and policies that cater to their unique educational missions and institutional needs. We argue that there is enough strength among the number of HBCU athletic programs between the four major HBCU athletic conferences as well as the host of HBCUs who are not affiliated with the current HBCU athletic conferences (see Hodge Bennett, & Collins, 2013 for an extensive list) to attain self-sustainability. Although, the authors recognize comprehensive economic feasibility studies would need to be conducted prior to carrying out this plan such as the one outlined in Cavil's (2013a) study, the proposed idea is a starting point for HBCU leaders to consider moving forward. The significant challenges facing HBCUs are as pressing in the 21st century as ever and the threat to dissolve athletic programs is increasing within the current economic climate (e.g., Paul Quinn and Spelman College examples provided earlier). Hence, HBCU leaders including presidents, athletic directors, and conference commissioners must engage in creative and innovative business strategies to improve the financial plight of their athletic programs. It is our hope the proposed secession plan generates even more meaningful and substantive dialogue on this important issue and serves as a blueprint to the path of liberation from the oppressive structure of the NCAA and the place of self-sustainability, uplift, and collective interdependence among HBCU athletic programs.

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Notes

¹The term Black and African American will be used interchangeably throughout the paper to refer to both the racial and ethnic group in the U.S.

² The authors will use the phrase Historically White Colleges and Universities (HWCUs) to describe the widespread historical context of segregation under the auspices of Jim Crow laws that birth the need to establish Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and provide a non-subservient context between the two classifications of institutions of higher education.

³The authors will use the term “assimilation” to describe the widespread societal changes post-Civil Rights era that involved the movement of Blacks in White-controlled spaces, institutions, and norms. The authors intentionally do not use the term “integration” to underscore the notion that the changes post-Civil Rights era were largely unilateral whereby Blacks migrated to White-controlled institutions and spaces, but Whites primarily remain in their pre-Civil Rights spaces.

⁴It has been well documented as a primary reason why students do not finish at HBCUs is due to a lack of financial resources (Gasman, 2009; Hayes, 2013; Johnson, 2013; Lee & Keys, 2013) as opposed to a lack of interest in graduating or experiences with a negative campus climates as identified with Black college athletes at HWCUs (Cooper, 2012; Donnor, 2005; Hawkins, 2010).

⁵For the purposes of this paper, Black cultural empowerment is characterized as institutions and social events that recognize and celebrate the uniqueness of Black history, culture, and traditions. More specifically, Black cultural empowerment is reflected in HBCUs’ educational curricula and athletic events, which place an emphasis of Black cultural values, norms, and practices. Examples of Black cultural empowerment at HBCUs include the inclusion of curricula that focuses on the experiences of African Americans and Black Africans throughout the world, the critical mass of Black faculty, administrators, staff, and students, the naming of buildings after famous African Americans, HBCU classics, famous of battle of the band competitions, Black Greek organization step shows, and widespread Black centered initiatives.

⁶Starting in this section, institutional acronyms will be used to be consistent with cited references as well as to introduce the reader to the abbreviated names of the listed HBCUs.