

Miller - "Scientific Racism"

**SPORT
AND THE
COLOR
LINE**

**Black Athletes and Race Relations
in Twentieth-Century America**

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THE ANATOMY OF SCIENTIFIC RACISM

Racist Responses to Black Athletic Achievement

Patrick B. Miller

IN THE LATE 1940s, a highly regarded critic for the *New York Times* wrote that the modern dance revolution had opened the way for black Americans to find themselves as “creative artists.” The widespread embrace of new choreographic styles had enabled them, John Martin asserted, to “release in communicative essence the uninhibited qualities of the racial heritage, no matter what the immediate subject of any specific dance might be.” Martin’s survey text (republished in 1963 and in 1970) ranged over a large number of themes. But what stood out, from first version to last, was the chapter “The Negro Dance,” with its persistent references to the “intrinsic” and the “innate.” One feature of the Negro dancer, Martin insisted, “is his uniquely racial rhythm”:

Far more than just a beat, it includes a characteristic phrase, manifested throughout the entire body and originating sometimes so far from its eventual point of outlet as to have won the description of “lazy. . . . Closely allied to this pervasive rhythm is the wide dynamic range of his movement itself, with, at one extreme, vigor and an apparently inexhaustible energy (though, be it noted, a minimum of tension), and at the other extreme, a rich command of relaxation.¹

For all their contributions to jazz and modern dance, Martin declared, African Americans had been “wise” not to take up academic ballet, “for its wholly European outlook, history and technical theory are alien to [them] culturally, temperamentally and anatomically.” He went on:

In practice there is a racial constant, so to speak, in the proportions of the limbs and torso and the conformation of the feet, all of which affect body placement; in addition, the deliberately maintained erectness of the European dancer’s spine is in marked contrast to the fluidity of the Negro dancer’s, and the latter’s natural concentration of movement in the pelvic region is similarly at odds with European usage.²

If other commentators have advanced less meticulous formulations than Martin’s, they have unselfconsciously—but no less emphatically—stacked value judgments upon matters

of "scientific" measurement without addressing either the segregation and racial prejudice that largely contributed to the development of distinctive social customs and expressive cultural practices or the hard work, discipline, and creativity that distinguish artistic innovations irrespective of color or culture.

Indeed, by underscoring "a minimum of tension" or "a rich command of relaxation" among black performers, many white intellectuals like Martin have surveyed an enormous distance between what has been studied, which those image makers exalted for a particular conciseness, cleverness, and formality, and what they believed to inhere and thus could disparage as free or flowing or loose. At one level, references to the "pelvic region" derive from an expansive European and U.S. literature that has reduced racial and cultural difference to matters of sexuality. At another, the insistent contrast between mind and body within the Western tradition renders black physicality as a kind of compensation for the absence of cerebral qualities and the traits of a purportedly advanced, or advancing, culture.³

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, the distinctions that eventually found their way into Martin's appraisals were becoming central elements of what was considered pioneering scholarship in anthropology as well as the "scientific" study of history, helping to define Western notions of civilization. Critically, an observation concerning the "natural concentration of movement" of African Americans, when contrasted to the ideal of "European usage," was meant to reinforce a longstanding hierarchy of values and standards, with the cultural achievements of the Continent at its head. Long before Martin measured the "uniquely racial rhythm" of jazz dancers against the accomplishments of ballerinas, to differentiate was for many European-American commentators to denigrate. When African-American artists and athletes pursued excellence within the boundaries of Western aesthetic and agonistic traditions, they encountered more than customary biases and myriad discriminatory acts. They confronted a discourse of difference, which, inscribed as a set of "racial constants," effectively discounted the efforts of black Americans or denied the cultural significance of their achievements.

Ultimately, this particular dimension of the politics of culture has engaged a vast scholarship that ranges far beyond the history of racial relations in the United States. Within one frame of analysis, the origins and development of the discourse of difference have been examined specifically with regard to the Nazi eugenic theories that finally marked Jews and gypsies, as well as homosexuals, for extermination. Such cultural boundary marking has also been assessed with consideration of the linkages between gender and race in the construction of hierarchies of privilege and subordination over time. As scholars of postcolonial ideology and experience have demonstrated, furthermore, the ranking of racial traits—especially as it has elaborated the dichotomy between mind and body—continues to serve as a means of suppressing the claims of people of color around the world. What remains is the relationship between the pseudoscience of racial difference and the pernicious social policies it both inspires and informs.⁴

It is significant, then, that even those who endeavor to expose and thus dispose of the cultural hierarchies predicated on the tired old versions of ethnicity and race have lately become involved in earnest and extensive debates over Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve*, an elaborate ranking of so-called racial and ethnic groups in terms of IQ—with African Americans at the bottom of the list. Scholars have also felt compelled to address the claims made by Dinesh D'Souza, who in *The End of Racism*, has gone so far as to describe the civilizing and Christianizing effects of slavery on the majority of

blacks in the United States.⁵ In such instances, progressive writers and educators must still regularly engage the persistent stereotypes concerning the "natural" physical abilities of blacks, which are said to explain the "dominance" of African Americans in sports such as basketball and football.

To account for achievement in biologically essentialist terms effectively discounts the traits identified with "character": discipline, courage, sacrifice. And therein lies the significance of inquiries into racial science when they have been applied to athletics.⁶ Ultimately, the questions of who can run faster or jump higher are simplistic, but they are pernicious as well as foolish if conceived as measures of innate racial difference. In light of this ongoing cultural dynamic, John Martin's observations not only help us understand the anatomy of racist thinking in historical terms. Their similarity to more recent comments reminds us of the persistence of "academic" racism in contemporary American society.

Since "race matters," as the title of one of Cornel West's recent books avows, we need to discuss not only why it should but when it should not—in judgments of individual abilities and accomplishments. With regard to the historical construction of racial categories, we ought to consider that the *body* continues to loom large in many people's thinking about difference. TV sports reports often provide the most obvious marker of distinctions associated with race and ethnicity. In basketball, the trope of the white point guard—court savvy, disciplined, and controlled—has stood in striking contrast to prevailing images of black male athletes, able and all too willing to shatter backboards with their slam dunks. And if that juxtaposition appears too stark and simple—in light of the widespread recognition of what was Michael Jordan's mastery, not just of the mechanics of his game, but also of modern media techniques—we can turn to the lecture hall. "I don't know whether or not most white men can jump," the historian of science Stephen Jay Gould wrote during *The Bell Curve* controversy:

And I don't much care, although I suppose that the subject bears some interest and marginal legitimacy in an alternate framing that avoids such biologically meaningless categories as white and black. Yet I can never give a speech on the subject of human diversity without attracting some variant of this inquiry in the subsequent question period. I hear the 'sports version,' I suppose, as an acceptable surrogate for what really troubles people of good will (and bad, although for other reasons).⁷

The "sports version" of human diversity, still placing population groups up and down a vertical axis of accomplishment, suggests another significant topic. Without discussing the economic and educational practices that mark "racial" distinctions in the United States, without examining the concepts of whiteness and blackness in cultural terms, and without recognizing the facts of mixed heritage, most racist formulations have had as their objective the demonstration of African-American inferiority, for example, on intelligence tests. But judgments about culture or ideologies of success also come in response to *black achievement*. Frequently, in reaction to triumphs by African Americans, we hear explanations that qualify excellence fashioned out of the notion of "natural ability."

When African Americans began to register an increasing number of victories on the playing fields during the first decades of the twentieth century, mainstream commentators abandoned the athletic creed that linked physical prowess, manly character, and the best

features of American civilization. Although many African Americans had subscribed to the ideal that achievement in sport constituted a proof of equality, a mechanism of assimilation, and a platform for social mobility, the recognition successful black athletes actually received from many educators and journalists explained away their prowess by stressing black anatomical and physiological advantages or legacies from a primitive African past.⁸

Many academicians, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, thus turned away from the discourse of culture when interpreting the physical talents of blacks—and other Others. As they became engrossed in the “scientific” analysis of racial difference, various anthropologists and anthropometrists reached for their calipers and tape measures in search of a gastrocnemius muscle with a certain diameter or of an elongated heel bone in order to explain the success of certain sprinters or jumpers. In the dominant discourse, an individual’s performance was bound to attributes ascribed to the group of his or her origin. Such a racialized view of excellence defined the physical accomplishments of Europeans in terms of diligence and forethought, the application of the mind to the movements of the body, while it framed the achievements of people of color with words such as “natural” and “innate.” Ultimately, then, racialized responses to the athletic as well as the artistic accomplishments of blacks have served both to shape and reinforce prevailing stereotypes. In so doing, they have also served to rationalize exclusionary social practices and discriminatory public policies.

THE HISTORY OF RACIAL RANKING

The construction of racial typologies can be traced in general terms to Aristotle’s attempt to justify slavery. Pictorial representations of Africans dating back to Greek antiquity, as well as the patterns of thought that shaped the characterization of Caliban and Othello, for instance, undergird modern European racism. Such images speak to a lengthy history of racial boundary marking and the color coding of culture. Yet it is in the mid nineteenth-century writings of Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau, that many scholars perceive the racist ideologies that first alluded to measurable distinctions and pretended to scientific objectivity. In *The Inequality of Human Races* (1853–1855), Gobineau asked: “Is there an inequality in physical strength?” His answer, according to the intellectual historian Elazar Barkan “mixed aristocratic pessimism, romanticism, theology together with biology, all of which became part of a shared European value system based on racial differentiation.”⁹ “The American savages, like the Hindus, are certainly our inferiors in this respect, as are also the Australians. The Negroes, too, have less muscle power; and all these people are infinitely less able to bear fatigue.”¹⁰

Gobineau’s observations, which extended to three printed volumes, leapt from individual display to the characteristics defining a group, thus exposing powerful exceptions to exceedingly flimsy generalizations. The anthropology devoted to the ranking of peoples nevertheless had enormous influence, not despite but because of the inconsistencies in the criteria it used to render innate and immutable distinctions between population groups. What Gobineau implicitly promulgated was a bipartite notion of culture: the Western tradition involved social developments and creativity; the accomplishments of non-Western peoples derived from natural selection and genetics. If, for those who succeeded Gobineau as taxonomists of culture, Shakespeare and Beethoven illustrated European civilization,

then Darwin and Galton explained all the rest. Ultimately, the African or the African American could not win within such a framework, not even on the playing fields.¹¹

Such assertions about European superiority, as strained as they were, also constituted arguments for white supremacy. The ideology of empire thus incorporated the so-called feeble races into elaborate systems of hard labor: the institution of slavery in the United States and colonial workforces elsewhere around the world. Stamina, therefore—as a kind of brutish endurance, the ability to “bear fatigue”—would ultimately be conceived as a trait characterizing subject peoples who would work on the plantations and in the mines that fed, clothed, and enriched imperialism. Yet, at the same time, persistence—the exaltation of hard work and steady accumulation—also stood as a key feature of nineteenth-century interpretations of the rise of modern civilization; bourgeois values and the doctrine of possessive individualism extolled toil over time above the heroic acts conventionally associated with generals and kings. To render this cruel paradox in somewhat different terms: the supposed hardihood characterizing people of color was used to justify the exploitation of their labor. Simultaneously, the cultivation of hardihood, as suggested by exhortations to the strenuous life from Theodore Roosevelt in the United States and his counterparts across the North Atlantic, was intended to (re)invigorate various imperial elites. Neither the ideologues like Gobineau nor the imperialists they informed ever addressed the illogic of these patterns of thought, which only begins to suggest the contingency and opportunism of such putatively “scientific” formulations.¹²

At the turn of the century, standard reference books continued to include broad generalizations about racial difference based on observations and measurements. Under the subject heading “Negro,” the canonical *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1895 distinguished between cranial capacities (an average European, 45 ounces; Negro, 35; highest gorilla, 20) and underscored a differential development of the cranial sutures wherein the “premature ossification of the skull” was said to account for the intellectual limitations of blacks. Significantly, such prematurity was said to result in “the inherent mental inferiority of the blacks, an inferiority which is even more marked than their physical differences.”¹³ Later versions of these notations would accentuate the so-called primitive features of the Negro physiognomy in order to explain the relative failure of African Americans—in the aggregate—on intelligence tests. Such references would also inform the doctrine of racial eugenics as it was elaborated on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁴

By 1900, however, another dimension of scientific racism could be discerned. Rather than simply reinforce prevailing notions of Negro inferiority, experts felt compelled to account for the extraordinary achievements of some black athletes. In the face of an increasing number of victories posted by African Americans, the mainstream culture began to *qualify* the meanings of excellence in sport. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* had described “the abnormal length of the arm, which in the erect position sometimes reaches the knee-pan, and which on an average exceeds that of the Caucasian by about two inches,” and “the low instep, divergent and somewhat prehensile great toe, and heel projection backwards (‘lark heel’).” Increasingly, these specifications would be advanced as reasons for black success in sports. Thus, in 1901 the champion sprint cyclist Marshall “Major” Taylor was X-rayed, as well as measured up and down by a number of French medical anthropologists, in an effort to reveal the source of his triumphs in the velodrome. In similar terms, comment on the speed of the black Olympian John Taylor, and on the prepossessing

strength of the heavyweight champion boxer Jack Johnson a few years later, included "scientific" speculation.

Throughout the twentieth century, it would often be the accomplishments of people of color in the realm of sport that particularly vexed and intimidated those who endeavored to defend a long-standing racial hierarchy. The response would not be subtle. Indeed, the Western discourse of racial difference carefully juxtaposed black athletic achievement—assessed in terms of compensation—to the supposed intellectual disabilities or cultural shortcomings of African Americans.

Critically, the initial forays into the anthropometry of athletic difference were expounded against the backdrop of increasing segregation in the United States, which involved—beyond the enforcement of Jim Crow in housing, transportation, and education—the exclusion of the vast majority of African-American ballplayers, jockeys, and boxers from mainstream sporting competitions. The cyclist Major Taylor, for instance, competed when he could in Europe and Australia because of the hostility he encountered at home. Hypocrisy was piled upon paradox when those who spoke for the dominant culture began to contrast the alarming vitality of African Americans (as well as immigrant newcomers to the United States) to the alleged degeneration of Anglo-America. Such works as Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* and Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy* reflected nearly hysterical feelings about the links between demography and democracy. Vaguely informed by statistical data, such discussions of the relative birthrates among the Mayflower descendants, the sons and daughters of the shtetl, and those who were moving from southern farms to northern cities revealed a deep fear about the claims black Americans and "hyphenated" Americans might well make against hallowed ideals such as equality and opportunity.¹⁵

Black leaders like W. E. B. Du Bois—alongside the guiding lights of the new immigrant groups—did indeed seek full participation in the social, economic, and political mainstream, though they demanded fairness not merely as a measure of their numbers but on the basis of their contributions to American culture. And according to the "muscular assimilationists" among them, there was no better argument for inclusion than success in the "national" pastimes. Major Taylor and Jack Johnson were not the first African Americans to make their mark in sports, and it was clear to racial reformers that they would not be the last to tread "the hard road to glory." Well before the appearance of Joe Louis and Jesse Owens in the 1930s, and a decade later, of Jackie Robinson, black leaders saw in athletics a platform for social change.¹⁶

Resistance to such assertions was formidable, however. Those who would maintain Jim Crow guarded the portals of the stadium just as they stood at the schoolhouse door. Other reinforced racial hierarchy by constructing elaborate frameworks to distinguish between the laurels won by whites and blacks in sport. During the interwar period, anatomy and physiology were frequently invoked to explain the athletic success of African Americans, circumscribing declarations that prowess in contests of speed, strength, and stamina bespoke fitness for other realms of endeavor. In the idiom of sports, to deny the correspondence between athletics and other accomplishments (more profound and long-standing numerous mainstream commentators "moved the goal posts.")

By the 1930s, generalizations from individual performances to group characteristics dominated many descriptions of black prizefighters, such as the heavyweight champ

Joe Louis. Likewise, to account for the medals won by the sprinters Eddie Tolan and Ralph Metcalfe during the 1932 Olympics and by Jesse Owens, Metcalfe, and many other African-American champions at the Berlin Games of 1936, white commentators insisted that black success derived from innate biological advantages. Early in the decade, E. Albert Kinley—whose claim to expertise was that he was an X-ray specialist—repeated the canard about the elongated heel bone, then predicted more world records for African Americans in events that depended on a certain kind of anatomical leverage. Working from a similar premise, Eleanor Metheny, a well-known physical educator, conducted a number of studies on body proportions. Though somewhat guarded in her conclusions, she asserted that kinesiological differences—in the movements generated by individuals with longer legs and narrower hips, for instance—could account for black dominance in sport. Significantly, and ultimately ironically, Metheny would declare that a different, somehow deficient chest construction, as well as lower breathing capacity among blacks, handicapped them in endurance events such as distance running. In David Wiggins's apt phrase, "great speed but little stamina" became the watchword for many white commentators on black athletics. In formulations repeated both in scholarly journals and the popular press, the science of sport further insinuated itself into the broader history of racism in the United States.¹⁷

If experiments like those conducted by Metheny were as flawed in their conception as in their conclusions, other writers appeared just as intent on defending myths of Anglo-Saxon or Aryan superiority. "It was not long ago," wrote the track-and-field coach Dean Cromwell in 1941, "that his [the black athlete's] ability to sprint and jump was a life-and-death matter to him in the jungle. His muscles are pliable, and his easygoing disposition is a valuable aid to the mental and physical relaxation that a runner and jumper must have." The attempt thus to "historicize" racial difference in sport revealed a significant strand of popular thought. To invoke an African past, the primitive Other, a state-of-being predicated solely on physical prowess, was literally to denigrate what flowed from it. By extension, it was also to exalt its presumed obverse—civilization and the attributes of the dominant order.¹⁸

Cromwell's interpretation was a curious notion of nature and culture at odds. It imagined that when blacks in Africa had been off running and hunting, the ancestors of white athletes were composing symphonies and building cathedrals, which placed their descendants at a substantial disadvantage at the modern-day Olympics. If the black athlete's "easy-going disposition" lay at or near the center of his success, then again by contrast, white competitors may have been thwarted from starting blocks to finish line by their particular worries about the fate of Western civilization.

Such luridly imagined observations as Cromwell's never stood alone or without amplification. In the ensuing years, black athleticism fell prey to the Harvard anthropologist Carleton S. Coon, who began his commentary on the inherited advantages of African Americans in sport with a depiction of their slender calves and loose jointedness. But what started with anatomy ended with a striking analogy, as was so often the case with racial scientists. The biological features that suited African Americans for certain sports, Coon declared, were characteristic of "living things (cheetahs, for instance) known for their speed and leaping ability." Two later chroniclers of the history of college football continued to rely on gross stereotype, though they had relocated their analogies from the African jungle to the American palladium. "Because of their tap-dancer sense of rhythm and distinctive

leg conformation, blacks excel as sprinters," John McCallum and Charles Pearson averred. "It follows naturally that on the football field they stand out as broken field runners."¹⁹ The links between these comments and the discriminations advanced by the dance critic John Martin are unmistakable.

After midcentury, racial science often focused on the triumph of black athletes in the track-and-field events of the Olympic Games. The stopwatch and the tape measure seemed to offer a certain validation to the claims of the hereditarians that significant and fixed anatomical and physiological differences accounted for the medals won by black Americans in the sprints and jumps. But then, rather suddenly, racial commentators were confronted by the stellar efforts and world records of African distance runners. On the heels of successive gold medal performances in the marathon, steeplechase, and 10,000-meter race by competitors from Ethiopia and Kenya during the 1960s, the notion of fast-twitch and slow-twitch muscle fibers—which had for a time been used to distinguish between the speed of blacks and the stamina of whites—was displaced as a frame of analysis. Substituted for it were assertions that strove to mark differences between East-African and West-African physiques, long and lithe versus compact and muscular. From the vantage not so much of a later era but of a different ideological stance, this swift shift in explanations suggests that the persistence of scientific racism lay not so much in the consistency of the science but in the constancy of its racism.

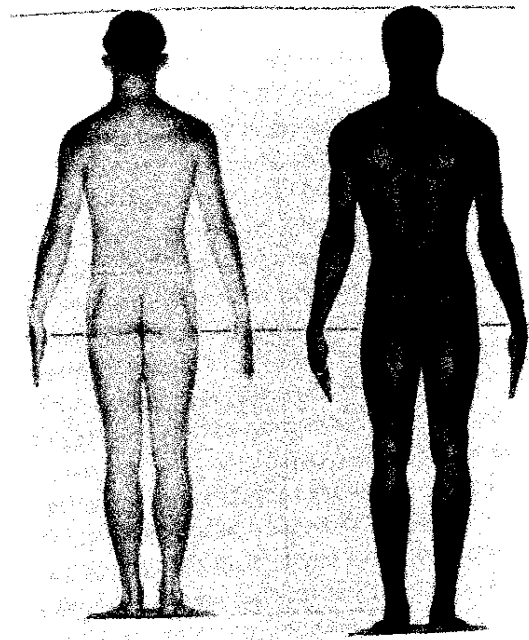


Figure 17-1
 "Comparison of White and Negro competitors in the same event [400-meters], with the photographs enlarged so both have the same sitting height (actually head-to-buttock distance)." J. M. Tanner, *The Physique of the Olympic Athlete*. This study of 137 track and field athletes at the 1960 Rome Olympic not formally assert a correlation between physique and performance, but it dwelled on racial differences in limb structure, proportion, and size.

At odds with such racially essentialist notions, an increasing emphasis on cultural interpretations of African-American success in sports characterized the social science of sport as well as mainstream journalism. A five-part series by Charles Maher in the *Los Angeles Times*, March 24–29, 1968, that surveyed current biological studies of black athletic performance concluded that hard training and motivational factors accounted for the increasing success of African-American athletes. Mainstream sociological opinion had begun to yield the same conclusions.²⁰ These were noteworthy developments whose stress on black struggle and triumph within the boundaries marked by the athletic establishment reflected the growing influence of the civil rights movement and its integrationist appeal.

Still, the (bio)logic of athletic taxonomy remained largely in place. Indeed, it received its most thorough exposition in 1971 when *Sports Illustrated* published Martin Kane's "An Assessment of 'Black is Best,'" a survey of expert commentary on racial difference and athletic achievement intended to be impressive in its range. In fact, the findings of assorted anatomists and the observations of a number of successful athletes overwhelmed other perspectives. The article ignored historical and sociological considerations of discrimination on the playing fields and beyond. Conversely, it failed to discuss the notion that athletics offered a platform for social mobility or a move from margins to mainstream for many who were acutely aware of their outsider or minority status. Despite a slight qualification here and there, Kane's main point was ultimately that "physical differences in the races might well have enhanced the athletic potential of the Negro in certain events."²¹

RESPONSES TO THE RACIAL "SCIENTISTS"

References to innate athletic differences between population groups persisted well beyond the era of desegregation in sport. But such ways of thinking have also provoked a variety of reactions, often passionate and profound, from black Americans. From Du Bois at the turn of the century to educators and athletes such as Harry Edwards and Arthur Ashe in our own time, most African-American commentators have objected to the use of stereotype and the misuse of science to distinguish the accomplishments of black and white athletes. Urgently and insistently, many intellectuals and activists in the civil rights movement have asserted that the claims made by excellent black athletes against the mainstream rhetoric of equality and opportunity have stood for the larger aspirations of Afro-America. They have also drawn upon the findings of numerous physical scientists and social scientists, who have disproved the allegations of biodeterminism and dismissed the idea of legacies from a primitive past.

During the early years of the century Du Bois enlisted a new generation of anthropologists led by Franz Boas to refute the tenets of scientific racism. In 1906, at the invitation of Du Bois, Boas delivered a paper titled "The Health and Physique of the Negro American" at the eleventh annual Atlanta University Conference. Emphasizing the significance of culture in perceived racial differences, he was instrumental in prompting young African-American scholars, such as Zora Neale Hurston, to undertake research in black folklore and culture. Through the first half of the century, Boasians were popular speakers on the campuses of historically black colleges. The environmentalism embraced by an increasing number of social scientists in the ensuing years seemed to remove black athletic accomplishment from the shaky anthropometrical foundations first advanced by ideologues like

Gobineau and to place excellence in sport, for instance, within the sturdier frames of analysis that address social circumstance and cultural innovation.²²

At the same time, biological scientists also challenged the generalizations based on anthropometry. Few if any offered findings more emphatic or timely than the African-American scholar W. Montague Cobb. Drawing on his experiments in physiology and anatomy, particularly his biopsies of the muscle tissue of Jesse Owens during the late 1930s, Cobb assailed the proposition that specific biological determinants could account for black athletic success. With reference to the prevailing classification systems, the Howard University professor declared without equivocation that the "Negroid type of calf, foot, and heel bone" could not be found in the Olympic champion; if anything, Cobb asserted, the diameter of Owens's gastrocnemius conformed to "the caucasoid type rather than the negroid."²³

In professional as well as popular journals, Cobb extended his analysis in important ways. He was neither the first scientist, nor the last, to underscore the salience of physical variations *within* population groups as well as between them. Nevertheless, he discussed that notion within the context of sporting accomplishment and thus engaged, at an early date, the athletic typologies then in place. What is more, Cobb indicated his clear sense that racial mixing subverted any assertion about fixed and isolated genetic determinants of muscular or mental prowess. Howard Drew had been a co-record holder in the 100-yard-dash and the first black sprinter to be acclaimed "the world's fastest human," Cobb noted



Figure 17-2

Responding to myriad assertions about racial differences in calf size and the formation of the heel bone, W. Montague Cobb—noted Howard University anatomist and physical anthropologist—undertook anthropometric measurements of the great black sprinter Jesse Owens. In the words of historian David Wiggins, Cobb sought to determine "if racially linked physical characteristics accounted for differences in sport performance." Cobb, shown here in his lab with Owens, "ultimately concluded that proper training and [the] motivation to succeed were the most important factors in determining athletic success." Courtesy of the *Chicago Defender*.

in 1936. But Drew was also light-skinned and "usually taken for a white man by those not in the know." Edward Gourdin, the Harvard sprinter and former world-record holder in the broad jump, was similarly light skinned. "There is not one single physical feature, including skin color, which all our Negro champions have in common which would identify them as Negroes," Cobb asserted. A mixed heritage, he concluded, obviously removed such stellar athletes from consideration when rigid racial dichotomies were being cast, thus exposing as arbitrary and contrived the very principles of racial taxonomy.²⁴

Cobb's scientific investigations stood among a host of scholarly articles and books that debunked biodeterminist assertions regarding athletic performance. Yet they have ultimately not been sufficient to counter prevailing speculation on black success in sport. Neither, for the most part, have been the arguments of the sociologist Harry Edwards, whose stinging responses to the Kane article, in addition to his other writings and position statements, have both inspired and informed numerous critics of racism in sport and society. Nor have the appeals of such popular figures as Arthur Ashe, Jr., whose three-volume text, *A Hard Road to Glory*, documented a history of white hostility to black effort and accomplishment in the realm of athletics. These commentaries might well have sent the innatists to the sidelines for good. Sadly, however, the muscular assimilationists—whether they positioned themselves as moderate or militant in the civil rights movement—have been largely unsuccessful in altering the terms of discourse from the natural to the cultural and social.²⁵

The massive resistance to the efforts of the integrationists might begin to explain why other African-American commentators have come to subscribe to essentialist considerations of physical hardihood and athletic prowess. The attempt to strategically appropriate the notion of racial difference—to turn it on its head, as it were—may have been born of frustration. It was clearly sustained by considerations of cultural nationalism and Black Power during the late 1960s and 1970s. But today such racialism is not only manifest in African-centered assertions regarding distinctive patterns of cultural development; it also makes its appeal through the notions of melanin theory, no less weird or pernicious than the pronouncements of coach Cromwell or the journalist Kane. Although the various tenets of Afrocentrism certainly speak to racial pride, it is important not to confuse such a sociological phenomenon with a solidly grounded school of critical analysis; while Afrocentrism may be good therapy, as one prominent scholar has noted, it is not good history.²⁶

Like cultural nationalism, black racial essentialism serves many purposes, though its separatist assertions and implications do much more than reinforce the notion of a fixed social identity and a consolidated political stance. They also divide persistent racial reformers from those who have attenuated their commitment to the civil rights crusade. The distinctions between integrationist appeals and essentialist formulations have not always been sharply drawn, however, just as the hazards of perpetuating athletic taxonomies have not always been apparent to some black athletes and African-American commentators. Edwin Bancroft Henderson, for example, for more than fifty years one of the leading chroniclers of black sport and perhaps the foremost promoter of the ideal of "muscular assimilationism," devoted his career to civil rights activism. Yet in what seems a striking departure from his campaign to establish a level playing field of athletic competition, he embraced, at least in some measure, the prevailing discourse of difference. Specifically, in a 1936 article in *Opportunity*, the journal of the National Urban League, he alleged that it might have been the rigors of the Middle Passage that had winnowed the slave population, allowing only the fittest to survive. It was from this group, he suggested, that the great athletes descended.

When one recalls that it is estimated that only one Negro slave in five was able to live through the rigors of the Middle Passage, and that the horrible conditions of slavery took a toll of many slaves who could not make biological adjustments in a hostile environment, one finds the Darwinian theory of survival of the fit operating among Negroes as rigorously as any selective process ever operated among human beings. There is just a likelihood that some very vital elements persist in the histological tissues of the glands or muscles of Negro athletes.²⁷

Thirty-five years later, the Yale graduate and NFL star Calvin Hill echoed Henderson's peculiar notion. Black athletes were "the offspring of those who [were] physically and mentally tough enough to survive," Hill asserted. "We were simply bred for physical qualities." This explanation resonated for a number of African-American commentators and athletes who had embraced certain elements of the Black Power movement.²⁸ Recast in a more positive way, such thinking drew attention to an African past and pride in physical accomplishment, which would eventually be manifest in many achievements by black athletes. In telling counterpoint, the basketball player Isiah Thomas argued in 1987 against "the perpetuation of stereotypes about blacks": "When [Larry] Bird makes a great play, it's due to his thinking and his work habits. It's all planned out by him. It's not the case for blacks. All we do is run and jump. We never practice or give a thought to how we play. It's like I came dribbling out of my mother's womb."²⁹

The most solid reaction to notions of white supremacy at the time, the construction of an idealized black superhero in sports, has also played into a cultural taxonomy that ranks athletes as performers (with the line between the symbolic and substantive importance of their accomplishments still firmly drawn). Paradoxically, such assertions of a "strategic essentialism" have served to tighten the boundaries around the athletic ghetto. As the cultural historian and social critic John Hoberman argues passionately, when the foremost black cultural heroes are the celebrities of the football field and basketball arena, and when they are held in esteem mainly for their innate abilities, the effect is to diminish the significance of other African-American leaders as well as the years of dedication that lie behind their accomplishments.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

If racial essentialism was ever in retreat during the era of civil rights and national liberation, as some scholars maintain, its resurgence has been dramatically illustrated in recent years. Indeed, the emergence of melanism seems but a sidelight to other renderings of difference and dominance that reflect traditional patterns of thought within the mainstream culture. One of the most notorious episodes of "typing" occurred in the late 1980s when a major-league baseball official, Al Campanis, stated that blacks performed well on the field but lacked "the necessities" to occupy managerial positions or places of responsibility and authority in the front offices of sports organizations. Another involved Jimmy "the Greek" Snyder, a bookmaker turned loose on television, who linked the heritage of slavery to the modern playing field. "The slave owner would breed his big black with his big woman so that he could have a big black kid," Snyder maintained. The consternation evinced by their respective interviewers and the summary firing of both men indicated a shift of values and standards toward such public declarations and their racist underpinnings. Yet many Americans continue to mark racial differences in the athletic arena in terms both calculated and crude. Toward the end of the 1996-1997 basketball season, a sportscaster was fined by the

NBA for his retrograde appraisal of black athletic ability. Commenting on a stellar play by one athlete, David Halberstam, who announced the games for the Miami Heat, remarked that "Thomas Jefferson would have been proud of that pass. When Thomas Jefferson was around basketball was not invented yet, but those slaves working at Thomas Jefferson's farm, I'm sure they would have made good basketball players."³⁰

Clearly, such instances draw attention to the prevalence of racist thinking about athletic accomplishment. Other commentary has been less forthright in addressing the meaning of the success of blacks in sport. In the aftermath of the firing of Jimmy the Greek, the syndicated columnist Richard Cohen vaguely suggested that civil rights activists would want to steer clear of any assessment of the racial dimension of physical attributes for fear of having to engage intellectual and psychological distinctions. Raising the issue of "political correctness," Cohen then shied away from further speculation about racial difference in sport or other endeavors.³¹

Cohen's comments nevertheless made their way into the much more purposive arguments of Dinesh D'Souza in *The End of Racism*, a book that deals with scientific racism principally by repeating its most atrocious pronouncements and ignoring its critics. Thus in a short section concerning athletics, intended to set up his selective digest of IQ statistics, D'Souza not only recapitulated the "categorical imperative" that has long prevailed among racial scientists, he also reiterated the notion of compensation. "It stands to reason that groups that are unlike each other in some respects may also differ in other respects," D'Souza contends offhandedly. "Why should groups with different skin color, head shape, and other visible characteristics prove identical in reasoning ability or the ability to construct an advanced civilization? If blacks have certain inherited abilities, such as improvisational decision making, that could explain why they predominate in certain fields such as jazz, rap, and basketball, and not in other fields, such as classical music, chess, and astronomy." The end of racism indeed.³²

The racial essentialism that continues to shadow much of the commentary on sport is confined neither to American culture nor to considerations of the achievements of African Americans. A 1993 article from a popular New Zealand magazine, for example, titled "White Men Can't Jump"—how ironically it is hard to tell—documented the increasing prominence of native peoples in rugby, a sport long identified with British colonialism as a means of toughening those who administered the Empire. Amid a wide-ranging discussion of changing demographics in New Zealand as well as an analysis otherwise sensitive to Maori and Samoan cultural patterns, several white sports figures speculate, first, on the innate abilities vis-a-vis the acquired skills of Polynesian squads. "Polynesian players were naturally superior to us in talent," one former player declared, "but a lot of them aren't there now because they didn't have the discipline for physical conditioning. They lacked the right kind of mental attitude. They'd just turn up and play." Said another, it was once the case that "your typical Polynesian rugby team would have just lost their head in a pressure situation. It was almost as if it was the Polynesian way to do something really stupid that gave the game away." Another passage indicates the malleability of such typologies, however. Polynesians have come to excel at the sport because they are bigger now and play a "more physical and confrontational" brand of the game. Inevitably size will win out in such appraisals: "The Polynesian is basically mesomorphic, tending to be big-boned, muscular, of average height, wide shoulders, thin waist," one trainer asserts. "They have a higher proportion of fast twitch muscle fibre which is the source of their explosive style

and the reason they are fast over short distances." Contrasting feats of character to mere physicality, the article offers yet another instance where innatist constructs can be placed in comparative perspective, encouraging us to generalize somewhat about the phenomenon of racial essentialism. In New Zealand as in the United States, athletic competition has offered a way for people of color to fashion significant emblems of identity and pride as well as to challenge the discriminatory practices of old. It is a critical commentary on both social systems that those initiatives are still contested, that racist thinking continues to qualify such hallowed notions as sportsmanship and fair play, equality and opportunity.³³

Significantly, taxonomic conventions in the representation of population groups have long stood as the predicate of social authority. That the dominant culture can employ them—and modify them when necessary—to maintain hierarchies of privilege and subordination means that minority cultures cannot use such typologies in the same ways. If the strategy of "muscular assimilationism"—a prominent element of the civil rights campaigns of the twentieth century—has not been entirely successful in creating a level playing field, it is more certain still that the separatism manifest in Afrocentrism and melanin theory is patently self-defeating in the long run. Moreover, to the extent that many African-American youth exalt athletic heroes over other role models—spending their formative years in "hoop dreams"—the emphasis on athletic striving has been overplayed. What remains is yet another troubling fact. Even as sociological surveys and a new generation of biographies and



Figure 17-3

The 40-yard dash, timed as a part of the NFL draft process each spring. The image depicts the black athletic as performer, while an array of coaches determines the standard of measurement and judges the skill and fitness of the athlete. Although in this photograph, taken in 1995, two of the coaches are African American, the percentage of black players in the NFL still greatly exceeds the percentage of black coaches and officials. Courtesy of the *Arizona Daily Star*.

memoirs tell us about the increasingly *multiracial* character of U.S. society, the discourse of innate and immutable racial difference still looms large in the popular consciousness. A recent addition to the long shelf of pseudoscientific racism, Jon Entine's *Taboo: Why Black Athletes Dominate Sports and Why We're Afraid to Talk About It* promises that future genetic research will provide the evidence he begs for—mainly concerning the success of Kenyan runners in the marathon and Steeplechase. Though historians, anthropologists, and sociologists shredded the book, it received a mild reception by most sports columnists, which may reveal the deep-rootedness of racial lore in America.³⁴

Ultimately, for intellectual historians, cultural theorists, social scientists, as well as journalists who hope to engage entrenched modes of racist thought and to create a more expansive conception of culture, it may be well as a first step to adopt a new perspective regarding the texts devoted to innatist thinking. Central to this undertaking would be the compilation of a roster of phrases and pronouncements that clearly links academic racism, past and present. To be sure, as we strive to move beyond category, the idea of an index of racist literature involves a troubling dimension. Yet it is nevertheless crucial that progressive, or expansive, thinkers on the subject—rather than institute- and foundation-based conservative ideologues—become the cartographers of the contemporary discussion of race. Better still, though from a different interpretive position, we might start erasing racial boundaries altogether.

With notions of history and collective memory in mind, perhaps it would be wise to evaluate such books as *The Bell Curve*, *The End of Racism*, and *Taboo*, deftly written as they might seem to some reviewers,³⁵ through the same lens that we would use to assess the essentialist observations of the dance critic John Martin, as contrived as they were and remain. From there we could examine the arguments still insisting on a broad-based anatomy of racial difference with an eye toward the ideological stance they share with those who spoke before, with the sportswriter Martin Kane, for instance, with the anthropologist Carleton Coon, and with Coach Cromwell. We could allude, then, to the polemics on white supremacy by Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard as well as to the pronouncements on European superiority by the Count de Gobineau. For, "essentially," de Gobineau and D'Souza are of a kind. To read such works together, indeed to draw the significant connections between nineteenth-century social theories and the most recent versions, would ultimately reveal the shared racism of their premises as well as of their prescriptions.

NOTES

1. John Martin's *Book of the Dance* (*The Dance*, 1947; reprint, New York: Tudor, 1963), 177–89.

2. *Ibid.*, 178–9.

3. See, for example, Joyce Aschenbrenner, *Katherine Dunham: Reflections on the Social and Political Contexts of Afro-American Dance* (New York: Congress on Research in Dance, 1981), which quotes Martin on pp. 35–36.

4. See, for example, Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981); Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great*

Britain, 1800–1860 (London: MacMillan, 1982); Nancy Leys Stepan and Sander Gilman, "Appropriating the Idioms of Science: The Rejection of Scientific Racism," in Dominick LaCapra, ed., *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 72–103; Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); *idem.*, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991); *idem.*, *Picturing Health and Illness: Images of Identity and Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995);

idem., *Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); William H. Tucker, *The Science and Politics of Racial Research* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). See also George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (New York: Harper, 1980) and Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Laura Nader, ed., *Naked Science: Anthropological Inquiries into Boundaries, Power, and Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). See also William R. Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815-1859* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Thomas Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Schocken, 1965); John S. Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971); and George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

5. See Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1994); idem., "Race and I.Q.," *The New Republic* (October 31, 1994): 10-37; Russell Jacoby and Naomi Glauberman, eds., *The Bell Curve Debate: History, Documents, Opinions* (New York: Times Books, 1995); Steven Fraser, *The Bell Curve Wars: Race, Intelligence, and the Future of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Ashley Montagu, *Race and IQ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Robert Newby, ed., *The Bell Curve: Laying Bare the Resurgence of Scientific Racism*, special issue of *American Behavioral Scientist* 39 (October 1995); John L. Rury, "IQ Redux," *History of Education Quarterly* 35 (Winter 1995): 423-38; Leon J. Kamen, "Behind the Curve," *Scientific American* 272 (February 1, 1995): 99-103; Claude S. Fischer, Michael Hour, Martin S. Anchez Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swidler, and Kim Voss, *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also Marek Kohn, *The Race Gallery: The Return of Racial Science* (London: Jonathan Cope, 1995) and Dinesh D'Souza, *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multiracial Society* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

6. See, for example, "The Black Athlete Revisited," *Sports Illustrated* August 5, 12-19, 1991, pp.

38-77, 26-73, 40-51. The prevailing representation of black and white athletes had not changed significantly, the authors discovered, since 1968, when the magazine published its first exposé of racism in the realm of U.S. sport.

7. Gould, "Ghosts of Bell Curves Past," *Natural History* (February 1995): 12.

8. See, for example, Patrick B. Miller, "To Bring the Race along Rapidly": Sport, Student Culture, and Educational Mission at Historically Black Colleges during the Interwar Years," *History of Education Quarterly* 35 (Summer 1995): 111-33.

9. Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 16. See Michael D. Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970).

10. Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races* (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 151-3. I am indebted to Scott Haine for bringing this passage to my attention.

11. Gobineau also addressed racial mixing, referring to "tertiary" and "quaternary" races. In the paintbox formulation he advanced, Polynesians had "sprung from the mixture of black and yellow." *Ibid.*, 148-9.

12. See, for example, Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979); Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).

13. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, American edition, vol. 17 (New York, 1895): 316-20.

14. See, for instance, Thurman B. Rice, *Racial Hygiene: A Practical Discussion of Eugenics and Race Culture* (New York: MacMillan, 1929). For historical assessments of eugenics, see Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963); Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*; Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985); Troy Duster, *Backdoor to Eugenics* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Tucker, *The Science and Politics of Racial Research*, 54-137; Joseph Graves, Jr., *The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

15. Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race; or The Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Scribner, 1916); Lothrop Stoddard, *The Ris-*

ing Tide of Color against White World Supremacy (New York: Scribner, 1920).

16. The "contributionist" writings of George Washington Williams and Carter G. Woodson, for example, closely parallel those of immigrant American authors. With respect to sport, see Edwin Bancroft Henderson, the foremost chronicler of black achievements: *The Negro in Sports* (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1939) and *The Black Athlete: Emergence and Arrival* (New York: Publishers Co., 1968).

17. On Kinley, see the *New York World*, March 14, 1931. Eleanor Metheny, "Some Differences in Bodily Proportions between American Negro and White Male College Students as Related to Athletic Performance," *Research Quarterly* 10 (December 1939): 41-53; David K. Wiggins, "'Great Speed but Little Stamina': The Historical Debate over Black Athletic Superiority," *Journal of Sport History* 16 (Summer 1989): 162-4.

18. Dean Cromwell and Al Wesson, *Championship Technique in Track and Field* (New York, London: McGraw-Hill, 1941), 6; Wiggins, "Great Speed But Little Stamina," 161.

19. Coon quoted in Marshall Smith, "Giving the Olympics an Anthropological Once-Over," *Life*, October 23, 1964, p. 83; John McCallum and Charles H. Pearson, *College Football, USA, 1869-1973* (New York: Hall of Fame Publishers, 1973), 231.

20. See D. Stanley Eitzen and George Sage, *Sociology of American Sport* (Dubuque, IA: W. C. Brown, 1978), 300; Jay Coakley, *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies* (St. Louis: Times Mirror/Mosby College, 1986), 146-50.

21. Kane, "An Assessment of 'Black is Best,'" *Sports Illustrated*, January 18, 1971, 74.

22. See David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Holt, 1993), 351-52. See Boas, *The Real Race Problem from the Point of View of Anthropology* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1912) and *Race and Nationality* (New York: American Association for International Conciliation, 1915).

23. W. Montague Cobb, "Race and Runners," *Journal of Health and Physical Education* 7 (January 1936): 3-7, 52-56.

24. *Ibid.* See also W. Montague Cobb, "The Physical Constitution of the American Negro," *Journal of Negro Education* 3 (1934): 340-88, and "Does Science Favor Negro Athletes?" *Negro Digest* 5 (May 1947): 74-7.

25. On his responses to the Kane article, see Harry Edwards, "The Sources of Black Athletic

Superiority," *Black Scholar* 3 (November 1971): 32-41, "The Myth of the Racially Superior Athlete" *Intellectual Digest* 2 (March 1972), 58-60, and "20th Century Gladiators for White America," *Psychology Today*, November 1973, 43-52. Edwards's survey works include *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (New York: Free Press, 1969) and *Sociology of Sport* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey, 1973). in the mode of Edwards's cultural critique, see Gary Sailes, "The Myth of Black Sports Supremacy," *Journal of Black Studies* 21 (June 1991): 480-7. See also Arthur Ashe, Jr., *A Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African-American Athlete* (New York: Warner Books, 1988).

26. On African-centered social commentary, see Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (Buffalo, NY: Amulefi, 1980) and *The Afrocentric Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987; rev. ed., 1997). See also Cheikh Anta Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology* (Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991); Bernal, *Black Athena*. An impressive introduction to the mode of thought can be found in Carl Pedersen, "Between Racial Fundamentalism and Ultimate Reality: The Debate over Afrocentrism," *Odense American Studies International Series*, Working, Paper no. 4 (1993). And, concerning its appeal, see Gerald Early, "Understanding Afrocentrism: Why Blacks Dream of a World Without Whites," *Civilization* (July/August 1995): 31-39. See also Clarence E. Walker, "You Can't Go Home Again: The Problem with Afrocentrism," *Prospects* 18 (1993), 535-43; on "therapy" and "history," see Leon Litwack, "The Two-Edged Suspicion," *American Historical Association Perspectives* 31 (September 1993), 13-14. For a somewhat different view of this strand of black nationalism, see bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 30.

27. Edwin B. Henderson, "The Negro Athlete and Race Prejudice," *Opportunity* 14 (March 1936): 77-79. To read the large body of Henderson's works (as well as those of W. Montague Cobb) would be to understand their primary concerns as assimilationist or integrationist; the stray passages that speak to essentialist notions of black excellence need to be read within this broader context. See David K. Wiggins, "Edwin Bancroft Henderson, African American Athletes, and the Writing of Sport History," in *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in White America* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

28. Hill quoted in Kane, "An Assessment of 'Black is Best,'" 76, 79. See also David W. Zang,

"Calvin Hill Interview," *Journal of Sport History* 15 (Winter 1988): 334-55. In a *Time* article, "Black Dominance," O. J. Simpson argued that blacks "were built a little differently . . . built for speed—skinny calves, long legs, high asses are all characteristics of blacks," (May 9, 1977): 57-60; Wiggins, "Great Speed But Little Stamina," 172-4.

29. Thomas quoted in David K. Wiggins, "The Notion of Double-Consciousness and the Involvement of Black Athletes in American Sport," in *Ethnicity and Sport in North American History and Culture*, ed. Wiggins and George Eisen (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994), 151.

30. On these episodes, see Wiggins, "Great Speed but Little Stamina," 179-81; Phillip M. Hoose, *Necessities: Racial Barriers in American Sports* (New York: Random House, 1989); *New York Times*, March 27, 1997.

31. See Richard Cohen, "The Greek's Defense," *Washington Post*, January 19, 1988.

32. D'Souza, *The End of Racism*, 440-1.

33. Tom Hyde, "White Men Can't Jump," *Metro: Essentially Auckland*, September 1993, 63-9. I am indebted to Charles Martin for pointing this work out to me. More recently still, the New Zealand anthropologist Phillip Houghton has spoken of the ways Polynesians, such as the great rugby player Jonah Lomu, have finally reached their "genetic potential." Houghton, *People of the Ocean: Aspects of Human Biology of the Early Pacific* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996). See also Julia Leilua, "Lomu and the Polynesian Power-

packs," *New Zealand Fitness* (February/March 1996), 24-7. I am grateful to Douglas Booth for sharing this article with me. In broader terms, Marek Kohn discusses the "race science system" directed at the control of the Romani (gypsy) population that has in recent years been established in parts of Southern and Eastern Europe; see Kohn, *The Race Gallery*, 178-252. On issues of classification and discrimination, see also Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

34. Entine, *Taboo* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000); Paul Spickard (review), *Journal of Sport History* 27 (Summer 2000), 338-400; Mark Dyreson, "American Ideas About Race and Olympic Races from the 1890s to the 1950s: Shattering Myths or Reinforcing Scientific Racism?" *Journal of Sport History* 28 (Summer 2001), 173-215. The historians of science who have made the most telling rebuttals to the new scientific racists include Jonathan Marks, *Human Biodiversity: Genes, Race, and History* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1995); idem, *What It Means To be 98% Chimpanzee: Apes, People, and Their Genes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), esp. ch. 6. See also Graves, *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

35. See, for example, Malcolm Browne, "What Is Intelligence, and Who Has It?" *New York Times Book Review*, October 16, 1994; George M. Fredrickson on D'Souza, "Demonizing the American Dilemma," *The New York Review of Books* 42 (October 19, 1995), 10-16.