

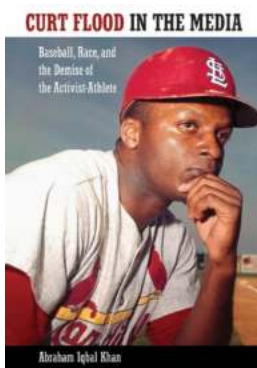
# Baseball Race And The Demise Of The Activist Athlete Race Rhetoric And Media

The intersection of sports and activism has a long and storied history, with athletes using their platforms to raise awareness about social and political issues. Through their actions on and off the field, these activist athletes have become genuine voices for change, challenging the status quo and using their influence to push for progress.

However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in the prevalence of activist athletes in professional sports, particularly in the baseball world. Once a hotbed for activism, the sport now seems devoid of the vibrant and impactful advocacy that once characterized it. This article explores the reasons behind the demise of the activist athlete race rhetoric, and the role of media in shaping athletes' public image.

## The Rise and Fall of Activist Athletes in Baseball

Baseball has a rich history of activism, with prominent players like Jackie Robinson, Roberto Clemente, and Hank Aaron using their careers to fight against racial and social injustices. These trailblazers took a stand against segregation, racism, and inequality, using their talent and fame to amplify their message.



### **Curt Flood in the Media: Baseball, Race, and the Demise of the Activist Athlete (Race, Rhetoric, and Media Series)** by Abraham Iqbal Khan (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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However, the increase in endorsements, corporate partnerships, and the pressure to maintain a positive public image have led many professional athletes, including baseball players, to shy away from activism. Their activism has been replaced by a focus on personal brand building and protecting lucrative endorsement deals.

Moreover, the pervasive influence of social media has played a significant role in changing the dynamics of athlete activism. While social platforms have provided athletes with a wider reach and amplified their messages, they have also made them more vulnerable to criticism, backlash, and potential career repercussions.

The fear of alienating fans and sponsors has forced athletes to tread carefully when expressing their opinions on controversial topics. The cancel culture, prevalent in social media today, has created an environment where any misstep can result in severe consequences for an athlete's reputation and livelihood.

## **The Impact of Media on Activist Athlete Discourse**

Media plays a significant role in shaping public perception of athletes. In the past, news outlets often provided a platform for activist athletes to voice their opinions and share their stories. The coverage of their activism generated dialogue, encouraged discussions, and forced the public to confront uncomfortable truths.

However, the media landscape has changed dramatically over the years. With the rise of 24-hour news cycles, the demand for sensationalism and controversy has

intensified. The focus on sports has shifted from the field to the personal lives of athletes, diminishing their ability to engage in meaningful activism.

News networks and sports media have become more interested in controversies, scandals, and personal drama surrounding athletes rather than their activism. This shift in focus has resulted in a decline in media coverage of athletes' social and political initiatives, discouraging others from following suit.

Additionally, the hyper-partisan nature of media coverage has further polarized discussions around athlete activism. They are often painted as divisive figures, and their messages are either co-opted or overshadowed by the prevailing political narratives.

## **The Need for Change and Renewed Activism**

The absence of activist athletes in baseball and other sports is a cause for concern. Their influence goes beyond the game; they serve as role models for many aspiring athletes and fans. By speaking out against social injustices, they can inspire change and pave the way for a more equitable society.

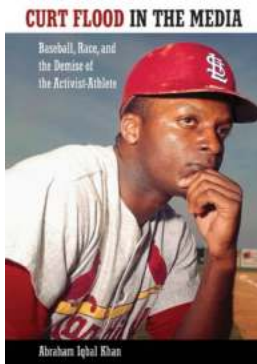
To reignite the activist athlete race rhetoric, several changes need to occur. First and foremost, the media must shift its focus away from sensationalism and prioritize meaningful stories that highlight athletes' positive contributions to society.

Furthermore, sports organizations and sponsors should actively encourage athletes to use their platforms for activism. By providing support and reassurance, athletes can feel more empowered to take a stand on important issues, free from the fear of backlash.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of fans and consumers to demand more from their favorite athletes. By supporting those who do engage in activism and standing up against attempts to silence them, fans can help create an environment where athletes feel comfortable using their platforms for good.

Baseball, once a prominent arena for activist athletes, has seen a decline in recent years. The fear of backlash and the need to maintain a positive public image have silenced many players, resulting in a lack of progressive advocacy within the sport.

The media, with its shift in focus and sensationalism, has played a significant role in discouraging athlete activism. However, by demanding change, supporting activist athletes, and prioritizing meaningful stories, we can reignite the spirit of activism in sports and pave the way for a brighter future.



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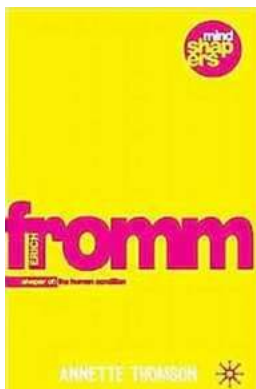


Curt Flood in the Media examines the public discourse surrounding Curt Flood (1938-1997), the star center fielder for the St. Louis Cardinals throughout the

sixties. In 1969, Flood was traded to the Philadelphia Phillies. At the time, all Major League Baseball players were subject to the reserve clause, which essentially bound a player to work in perpetuity for his original team, unless traded for another player or sold for cash, in which case he worked under the same reserve conditions for the next team.

Flood refused the trade on a matter of principle, arguing that Major League Baseball had violated both U.S. antitrust laws and the 13th Amendment's prohibition of involuntary servitude. In a defiant letter to Commissioner Bowie Kuhn asking for his contractual release, Flood infamously wrote, "after twelve years in the major leagues, I do not feel that I am a piece of property to be bought and sold irrespective of my wishes." Most significantly, Flood appeared on national television with Howard Cosell and described himself as a "well-paid slave." Explosive controversy ensued.

Khan examines the ways in which the media constructed the case and Flood's persona. By examining the mainstream press, the black press, and primary sources including Flood's autobiography, Khan exposes the complexities of what it means to be a prominent black American athlete-in 1969 and today.



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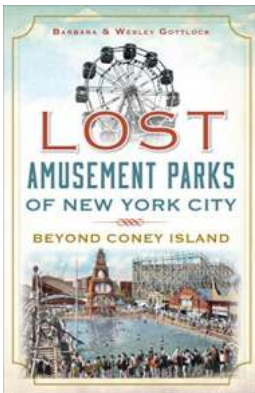
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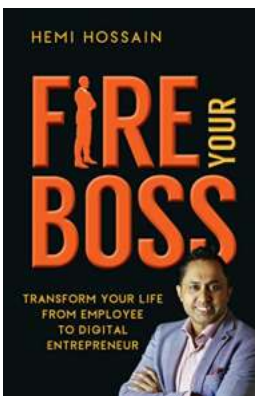
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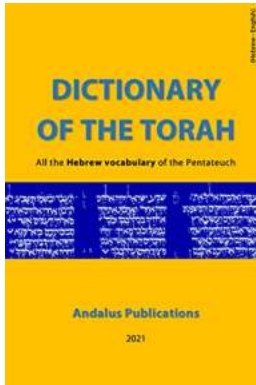
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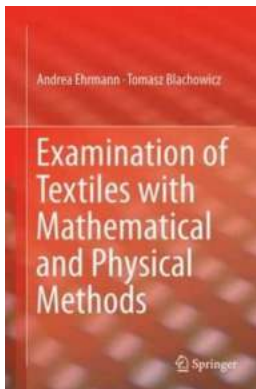
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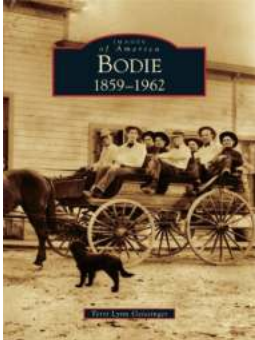
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