

San José State University Institute for the Study of Sport, Society and Social Change Launched

San José State University (SJSU) and renowned athlete activist held a dialogue titled “Sport, Activism and Social Change: From Words to Action” (<http://www.sjsu.edu/wordstoaction/>), January 24, 2017 at the Hammer Theatre Center in downtown San José, California for a dialogue about the intersection of sport and social change, and officially launched of the SJSU Institute for the Study of Sport, Society and Social Change.

The Institute for the Study of Sport, Society and Social Change will be dedicated to research, analysis and education focused on developments at the intersection of sport and society. While its principal activities and interests will be substantially defined by the theoretical, methodological, and applied research perspectives and traditions of the sociology of sport, the goals of the institute include encouraging, creating, and facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration in illuminating the substance, dynamics and significance of sport as a factor in social change.

The (scheduled) speakers for the event included: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, a six-time NBA champion and the league’s all-time leading scorer, as well as the author of *Writings on the Wall: Searching for a New Equality Beyond Black and White*. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama in recognition of his commitment to equality and justice; Jocelyn Benson is CEO of RISE and director of the Levin Center at Wayne State University Law School; Anquan Boldin, wide receiver for the Detroit Lions, was named the Walter Payton Man of the Year in 2016 and the NFL Man of the Year in 2015; Jim Brown, running back for the Cleveland Browns from 1957-1965 and Pro Football Hall of Famer, helped create the Black Economic Union in the 1960s to promote economic development in African-American communities; Harry Edwards, professor emeritus of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley, founder of the Olympic Project for Human Rights, author of *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (Edwards is considered to be the father of the sociology of sport); Ann Killion, a *New York Times* best-selling author and an award-winning sports columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*; Kevin Merida, ESPN senior vice president and editor-in-chief of *The Undeclared*, and an award-winning journalist and the first African-American to hold a managing editor position at *The Washington Post*; Danielle Slaton, sideline reporter for the San José Earthquakes and former soccer analyst for Fox Sports and the Big Ten Network, she played for the Women’s United Soccer Association and the U.S. Women’s National Team, earning a silver medal at the 2000 Olympics and bronze in the 2003 FIFA Women’s World Cup;

Tommie Smith, he set seven individual world records as a student-athlete at San José State University, in addition to taking Olympic gold in the 200-meter sprint at the 1968 games in Mexico City; Marc Spears, a senior writer for ESPN's *The Undefeated* and chair of the National Association of Black Journalists Sports Task Force; Takeo Spikes, former NFL All-Pro linebacker, is an analyst at NBC's Pro Football Talk; and Chris Webber, a five-time NBA All-Star, NBA analyst for Turner Sports, and host of "Fearless or Insane with Chris Webber," a podcast that discusses sports and athletes, and their impact on culture, politics and society.

Why the Institute for the Study of Sport, Society and Social Change at SJSU?

San José State is the logical place to house an institute whose principal mission involves the disciplined exploration, analyses and explanation of current developments germane to sport, society and social change, and to frame those developments in relationship to the broader contexts of both history and more current trajectories of events.

SJSU has a long and storied history as an institution at the center of sport and social change. Alumnus Peter Ueberroth, in his role as head of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, fundamentally re-conceived and changed the processes of financing the modern Olympics. Following an era of locker room desegregation led by Jackie Robinson, SJSU alumnus Bill Walsh collaborated with me in expanding front office and coaching opportunities for minorities and women in the National Football League.



Alumni Tommie Smith and John Carlos staged a protest against racial injustice and inequality at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics that resulted in what is judged by many today to be the most iconic sports image of the 20th century. The Smith-Carlos protest was only one enduring legacy of the Olympic Project for Human Rights, which I organized during my time as a second-year instructor at San José State. The OPHR also brought attention to broader institutionalized racial injustices and inequalities, and not only contributed to changing the way we perceive and understand sports, but America as a society and a nation. All of this and more was spawned by an SJSU climate conducive to fostering intellectual curiosity bonded with courage, an academic environment that encouraged the exploration of change while nurturing a regard for past legacies of achievement and contribution. In retrospect, it is abundantly

clear that much of the history of American and world sport over the last 50 years—collegiate, professional or Olympic—is grounded in and generated by people, developments and events inextricably associated with San José State.

Athlete Activism Today

We're in an era now substantially dominated by the impact and pervasive influence of social media and the Internet, where instantaneous communication has put a premium on clarity and validity of perspectives and analysis. Sport is particularly significant in this environment because of the stature and status of the athlete, owing principally to their ability to express themselves over social media.

Colin Kaepernick's activist journey did not begin when he first sat or knelt on the sideline during the playing of the national anthem; it came when he began posting Twitter messages to his one million Twitter followers and explaining his actions to those who responded to what he ultimately did. All of that came out over social media.



The same is true with the players from the University of Missouri announced that they were supporting the Black student protests on campus and demands that the university president step down, they posted a photo they took with their statement over social media. The same is true with the Miami Heat hoodie demonstration in the wake of the killing of Trayvon Martin and the St. Louis Rams, the football players who ran out on the field with a “don't shoot” gesture. All of these gestures went viral on social media. The statement [about gun violence and racial profiling] that was presented at the 2016 ESPYs by Carmelo Anthony, LeBron James, Chris Paul and Dwayne Wade was elaborated on social media.



Harry Edwards at San José State University

From student-athlete to activist-scholar, Harry Edwards' life and work demonstrate that sport is a window to society, revealing a broad range of social and political concerns that affect us all. Housed in SJSU Special Collections and Archives is the Dr. Harry Edwards Collection which includes historic photos, autographed books, Olympic Project for Human Rights memorabilia, and correspondence from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and President Barack Obama. SJSU is also home of the Olympic Project for Human Rights organized in October 1967 by Edwards and others to protest racism in the U.S. and elsewhere (e.g., South Africa).

The above was gathered January 27, 2017 from:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/wordstoaction/legacy/>

Marc Spears on Athlete Activism by Julia Halprin Jackson

<http://blogs.sjsu.edu/wsqa/2017/01/23/marc-spears-on-athlete-activism/>

SJSU: Home to the Sociology of Sport by Julia H. Jackson

<http://blogs.sjsu.edu/wsqa/2017/01/20/sjsu-home-to-the-sociology-of-sport/>

Dr. Harry Edwards' Return to San José State

<http://blogs.sjsu.edu/wsqa/2016/06/20/dr-harry-edwards-return-to-san-josé-state/>