

We Can Learn A Lot From Sports

Written by Jeffrey L. Boney

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How many of you are sports fans? I know I am!

I can hardly wait for the seasons. You know, football season (college and NFL), basketball season (college and if they have actually have one this year, the NBA), and baseball season. Every sport has winners and losers, but they all have one thing in common.....TEAM.

Each of these sports have a team concept, whereby each player on the team is expected to make a contribution for the overall goal of the team....win a championship.

We have seen stories where a player has overcome an injury or orchestrated a comeback when their team was losing or willed their team to victory because of their personal heroics.

We have also seen the stories of dysfunction on a team or the selfishness and pride of an individual player or the “give-up” attitude that caused a team to be humiliated.

Whatever the scenario, it all happened as a part of the team. You don't have to like everyone on your team, but if you win the championship, you did it as a team and those individuals are your teammates and will always share that experience with you.

I remember when black people functioned as a team. From Rosewood, Florida to Black Wall Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma, you can find countless stories of black people coming together as a team to support one another and build one another up as a community of people.

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Many African slaves were taken from their native land and separated from their families and had to work collaboratively with one another to overcome the vicious results of slavery. You did, however, have those individual slaves that felt it best to alienate themselves from their fellow black slaves and have a “I’m better than the field Negro” mentality.

The black churches worked together to tackle the injustices that plagued black people and sought to put their doctrinal differences to the side to win the game against injustices of black people. Now, we have churches on every corner in the black community and they would rather fight for each other’s parishioners and talk about each other in the community.

On a team, you have an owner, and that owner has employees that execute his will, which is to make money and win championships. Jerry Jones, Mark Cuban and George Steinbrenner (R.I.P.), are considered some of the most aggressive owners of all time, but they are also considered to be owners that were shrewd businessmen that wanted to win at all costs.

The owner hires a general manager that runs the team and the coach or manager (depending on the sport), manages the players and other coaches. Everyone has to know their role and stay in their lane if they want to win. When an owner tries to be a general manager, it could ruin the growth of the team, especially if they have no experience in being a general manager. When a general manager tries to be a coach, but has no knowledge of calling plays or managing players, it will cause dysfunction. When players try to be the coach or manager, it causes problems as well.

All in all, we can learn a lot from sports.

We need to not only know our role, but find a role to play to better ourselves and our community. When I say community, I mean the black community as a whole. Whether you agree or not, when one black person struggles and isn’t challenged, all black people are affected. We can try to be an individual player all we want, but when you neglect your fellow teammates, the whole team struggles and potentially loses.

We must get rid of the “Us against Them” or the “Light-Skinned vs. Dark-Skinned” or the “Suburban vs. Inner-City” stereotypes.

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You haven't arrived just because you are a star player that makes a lot of money and has a fancy title or top-tier position. It is amazing how people reach a certain status and then all of a sudden, being black becomes irrelevant and no one else matters. I made it and so can you. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps and be like me.

All you need to do is look at the divas of sports and see how they are viewed, such as Terrell Owens berating his teammates and coaches on the sidelines and now no one wants to give him a chance anymore.

Jeffrey L. Boney is a dynamic, international speaker and a Next Generation Project Fellow. Jeffrey is the Founder and CEO of the Texas Business Alliance and is an experienced entrepreneur and adjunct professor in Houston, Texas. If you would like to request Jeffrey as a speaker, you can reach him at jboney1@texasbusinessalliance.org.

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