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**The American Basketball portrayed in various
film adaptations with the main focus of depicting
the chief obstacles for African-American players**

Bachelor Thesis

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I declare that I worked independently on my Bachelor Thesis “The American Basketball portrayed in various film adaptations with the main focus of depicting the chief obstacles for African-American players” and that I included the complete list of used and cited literature, and other sources.

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1. Introduction

Long before there were names like LeBron James, Kobe Bryant or Stephen Curry who are nowadays basketball super stars and one of the highest-paid athletes in the world, the African Americans had not always enjoyed many privileges. At the end of the 19th century, the Canadian P.E. professor created a new kind of game which became dominated by African Americans almost over a century. Today, basketball is almost exclusively associated with successful black athletes, a reality that nobody tends to question. Nevertheless, the situation regarding African American athletes was very different in the past. It took a great effort and lots of courage to get on the top and become an icon.

The aim of this thesis is to examine various historically determined obstacles that black players of basketball had to overcome in order to experience an equal treatment in the game. To provide concrete examples, there are 3 different film adaptations about to be analysed as they all share the same topic - the portrayal of African Americans in basketball.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is an introduction where the general purpose of the work is stated. The second chapter focuses mainly on the invention of the original game of basketball and also provides the historical background with regard to the position of African Americans in society from the times of American Civil War to the times of establishment of the integrated black basketball leagues.

The following section is concerned with the presentation of the film adaptations as each of the movies covers the topic of black American athletes playing the basketball. The film titles are following: *Glory Road*, *Above the Rim* and *Sunset Park*.

The main body of this thesis focuses on the analyses of many social barriers that Black people have to deal with on a daily basis as those are mostly connected with the issue of race. The parallels are going to be made between the history of African Americans in the United States and the way a similar topic is demonstrated throughout the movies. The section diversely

describes the determination of black players of basketball to overcome the disadvantages and thus change the point of view on the black athlete.

The last chapter contains an overall summary of the thesis and provides the concluding findings at the end of the section.

2. History of the American Basketball

2.1 The invention of the game

Nowadays people consider basketball as a world-wide known form of sport. The game is not only played professionally at the indoor fancy courts of National Basketball League, but it still is a common outdoor activity. The game can be played in the city park, at the school playground or even at the abandoned African plains near some local village.

Moreover, what makes basketball quite special in comparison to many other sports is the fact it does not require much of equipment. If a group of individuals want to play, all they need is a ball and a wall-mounted hoop.

As for its history, they speculate that game similar to basketball could have been played as far back as 500 years ago at the area of ancient Mexico by the Olmec people or maybe by other ancient cultures. “The Aztec, and Mayan cultures also had a game similar to basketball, only instead of a rubber ball they used the decapitated skulls of their conquered foes.”¹

Nevertheless, basketball as we know it today was invented by the Canadian P.E. professor Doctor James Naismith for the International Young Men's Christian Association Training School (today's Springfield College) in Springfield, Massachusetts around December 1891. Naismith was trying to think of a physical activity that could be played inside the gymnasium, because of the bad weather outside and coming winter. The goal was to keep his students physically active during the long winters in New England.

After some of his previous “unsuitable-for-the-gym” ideas he finally established the basic rules for the game. It all started with nailing two peach baskets 10 feet off the ground creating hoops. Those baskets gave a name to the new sport – basketball. Originally the peach baskets retain its bottom

¹ Bran Faurischou, “NBA Hoops Online,” *nbahoopsonline.com*, Accessed January 29, 2016, <http://nbahoopsonline.com/Articles/History1.html>.

and every time somebody scored the ball had to be taken out of them manually. Later, this impracticality was solve out by removing its bottom so the ball could just fall out through the hoop.

There was not a special kind of ball created for the game back then, so they used an ordinary soccer ball. The first balls created specifically for this sport were the colour brown, but in the course of time it was only appropriate to change the colour to orange as it is more visible not only to players but also to the audience. The orange colour ball is in common use to present day.

What may be slightly surprising is the fact that most of the professor Naismith's original rules, maybe more importantly its principles and the spirit, are still in use today.

“Unlike many other popular sports, basketball was not conceived by changing the principles or rules of an existing game. It was a deliberate and original invention created out of necessity to provide a challenging, vigorous activity that could be played indoor.”²

Of the original set of thirteen, 9 rules were upgraded or modified to serve the purpose of the modern game, four were intentionally eliminated. Also, some new rules were added, for example one allowing a player to dribble the ball (which was initially not possible because of the former shape of the ball which was later changed in 1950's). As many may not know: “The original rules of basketball, were first published in 1892 in "The Triangle," the newspaper for Springfield College.”³ In present, there are over 100 basketball rules.

Regarding the team, its size was actually determined by the number of students that were present in the Naismith's P.E. class. In total, there were 18 youngsters divided into two teams, having 9 players in each team.

² Bran Faurschou, “NBA Hoops Online,” *nbahoopsonline.com*, Accessed January 29, 2016, <http://nbahoopsonline.com/Articles/History1.html>.

³ Bran Faurschou, “NBA Hoops Online,” *nbahoopsonline.com*, Accessed January 29, 2016, <http://nbahoopsonline.com/Articles/History1.html>.

“Although there was no scorebook, the score of the first game was said to be 1-0 with William Chase credited in making the first basket in the history of basketball. It was reported to be approximately 25’ (a half court shot in the small Springfield gymnasium) midway through the 30 minute game.”⁴

This size of the team, however, was not mandatory. The chief idea was that this game can be played by as many players as wanted. Nevertheless, after a few experiments such as fifty players on one team, most of the games were primarily played “nine on nine”. In 1897, the number of players had been reduced to just five on court for each team. In addition, let’s mention some of the most significant changes that are now integral to the play.

As back as in 1892 the woven wire rims replaced the peach baskets and finally, a year later, they come up with the idea to use the iron rims. The nylon nets with open ends were in use not earlier than 1912. Those changes definitely increased the tempo of the whole game. As for another alteration, the blackboards were introduced in 1895. The reason for putting those into practise was to prevent the spectators from interfering with the shots from their balconies. Also, blackboards unintentionally provide an additional advantage of rebounding shots. The last important change concerns the substitutions. Originally, the players could not re-entered the game, but the rule from 1945 improved the situation, so nowadays the players can re-enter the game an unlimited number of times.

The game was an unexpected success, quickly grew in popularity and started spreading to other YMCA’s centres, particularly to northern and eastern parts of the U.S. and also to the South of Canada. The local colleges provided the required facilities and basketball gradually gained more and more adherents. However, in the course of the first 10 years of its existence, the style of the game became to be very rough and therefore most YMCA centres banned the game. Nevertheless, it did not take long and other amateur colleges and sports clubs decided to fill this gap as new

⁴ “Heritage of the Game, Hooptactics: the World’s Most In-Depth Look into Proven Basketball Strategies!,” *hooptactics.com*, Accessed January 31, 2016, http://hooptactics.com/Basketball_Basics_Original_Basketball_Rules.

basketball leagues progressively formed, for instance the Amateur Athletic Union and the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (later NCAA). They started to control the basketball rules.

2.2 The political situation for African Americans in the U.S. during and after the Civil War

After Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln won presidential elections in 1860, the seven slave states on the deep South declared the secession from the United States and created the new Confederate states of America. The reason to do so was stated as following:

“(...) because of uncompromising differences between the free and slave states over the power of the national government to prohibit slavery in the territories that had not yet become states.”⁵

The Lincoln’s politics was in favour of prohibition, but the Southern states supposed the move like that would be momentous violation of their constitutional powers, moreover, it would seriously weaken their economy. The two opposite parties could not reach a compromise, which lead to the war.

Nevertheless, in 1863, when the Civil War was already in progress, Abraham Lincoln issued an executive order, known as the Emancipation Proclamation, which guaranteed the freedom of all slaves from ten Southern states fighting against the Union. Unfortunately, this legislative act did not, in any way, adjust the ownership rights of the slave states or did not put slavery completely out of law or even did not proclaimed the former slaves free citizens.

⁵ James McPherson, “A Brief Overview of the American Civil War, A Defining Time in Our Nation’s History,” *civilwar.org*, Accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/civil-war-overview/overview.html?referrer=https://www.google.cz/>.

2.3 The political situation for African Americans in the U.S. during and after the Reconstruction Period and Jim Crow Laws

During the time of Reconstruction Period (1865 – 1877) the institution of slavery was finally legally outlawed in the whole U.S. territory in 1865 by the Thirteenth Commandment. Former slave states were obliged to accept the abolition of slavery which they did to some extent, but at the same time African Americans had to face another social obstacles and injustice during this period. In the same year, post-war South issued so called “black codes”⁶ with the intention to keep at least some control over the freed slaves.

“(...) “black codes,” were designed to restrict freed blacks’ activity and ensure their availability as a labor force now that slavery had been abolished. For instance, many states required blacks to sign yearly labor contracts; if they refused, they risked being arrested as vagrants and fined or forced into unpaid labor.”⁷

The reaction to “black codes” was the creation of the Civil Rights Act. This particular act from 1866 granting the citizenship to every former slave, proclaiming the equal rights for all people in the U.S. The Civil Rights Act banned the “black codes” and shortly after was followed by The Reconstruction Act of 1867. This legal regulation made the deep South states ratify the 14th Amendment (1868). Its fulfilment promised following:

“(...) “equal protection” of the Constitution to former slaves—and enact universal male suffrage before they could rejoin the Union. The 15th Amendment, adopted in 1870, guaranteed that a citizen’s right to vote would not be denied “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”⁸

Nonetheless, the issuing of those laws still did not guarantee a prohibition or at least a reduction of racial discrimination. The Southern states needed to show their actual superiority over the African Americans

⁶ Black codes – a code of law adopted by some southern states of the U.S. shortly after the Civil War which especially limited the rights of former slaves.

⁷ “Black Codes,” *history.com*, Accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-codes>.

⁸ “Black Codes,” *history.com*, Accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-codes>.

so they started to put into practise rigid segregational laws, commonly known as the Jim Crow laws⁹. Besides, the paramilitary organizations like Ku-Klux-Klan¹⁰ practiced social and physical violence towards the blacks, proclaiming the supremacy of the white race over the black one.

From the late 1870's the social separation of African-Americans began on a large scale. Especially from the end of 19th century to the second half of 20th century the racial segregation of black Americans was at its extreme, primarily but not exclusively operated in southern states. This era of Jim Crow is characterized by the legal discrimination, lynching, practising violence and growing aversion towards blacks, limiting them in their constitutionally enshrined rights and liberties. Regrettably, all disadvantage imposed on black people resulted in life-threatening situations. It affected their educational opportunities, their housing options, also economic possibilities, leading to unceasing poverty and persistent unemployment.

“Jim Crow laws segregated not only public venues but also restaurants, restrooms, hospitals, churches, libraries, schoolbooks, waiting rooms, housing, prisons, cemeteries, and asylums.”¹¹

In the course of time, even elevators, balconies or phone boxes were separated on the basis of race. Daily, people faced the signs dividing the population as following - “colored” versus “white” or possibly “white only”.

Laws regulated social relations between blacks and whites, as well. People of different races could not marry, they could not compete against each other, not even at the college while playing sports. It is necessary to state that the institutions for African Americans were of a very poor quality, nobody followed the “separate but equal”¹² doctrine. “Discrimination against

⁹ Jim Crow laws - were racial segregation laws in the southern United States that were in effect until 1965.

¹⁰ Ku-Klux-Klan - a secret organization in the southern U. S., active after the Civil War, which advocated supremacy of whites and suppressed the black population.

¹¹ “Jim Crow: International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,” *Encyclopedia.com*, Accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3045301216.html>.

¹² Separate but equal – was a legal constitutional law practise some states of the U.S. according to which racial segregation did not violate the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution.

African Americans was manifold and showed as much in official neglect of their needs as in everyday open hostilities.”¹³

For the further purposes of the following parts of my thesis is important to keep in mind what kind of social conditions black people had to face in the past. It also contributes to a better comprehension of the period in which the game of basketball was created. Those were the times of unconcealed, open discrimination.

2.4 The examples of racial segregation in American sports

At the beginning of the 20th century almost every sport played in America was racially segregated as well as the American society itself. Besides basketball, also baseball, football or box excluded black athletes from the game.

On the contrary, there was one sport in which black athletes dominated. Towards the end of the 19th century when horse racing¹⁴ became an organized sport, there was an outstanding number of jockeys of the African American origin who not only participated in derbies but became winners multiple times.

Nonetheless, the nationwide application of restricting Jim Crow laws in 1880's determined the end of success for the black sportsmen. Thus, horse racing joined the row of sports desolate of black representatives.

Moreover, one of the deep-rooted stereotypes regarding African Americans was that they are physically superior, but intellectually inferior to whites. Later, when black athletes started dominating various sports fields, e.g. basketball, baseball or football people tended to explain their success in a way to support the idea about their lower IQ and better physique.

¹³ Martin Domke, "Into the Vertical: Basketball, Urbanization, and African American Culture in Early Twentieth-Century-America," *Aspeers* 4 (2011): 131-150, <http://www.aspeers.com/sites/default/files/pdf/domke.pdf>.

¹⁴ Horse racing - Kentucky Derby began in 1875, 13 out of 15 jockeys were Afro-Americans, and there were 15 black winners of the first 28 Kentucky Derbies.

“(…) physical prowess, especially in such sports as basketball, has become a defining characteristic of the African-American community, and that beliefs about physical superiority are closely yoked to an anti-intellectualism that permeates black male culture.”¹⁵

The hypothesis about lower intelligence described above is just one of many examples of making up numerous myths about black people in order to anchor the white skin privilege. Unfortunately, there were plenty others regarding African Americans such as their predisposition for criminal activities or tendencies to laziness or lack of determination and ambition. Statements like those were just attempts to defend a pure and present racism. And, of course, to mask the real fear of losing in a game to a “Negro” competition.

However, there were no valid arguments, no well-founded proves about differences in physical quality or quality of character. People were influenced by stereotypes rather than taking into considering factors such as discipline, hard work, motivation and intellect which would justify the success of black athletes in a more realistic way than an alleged physical advantage determined by race.

For a long time black athletes were not allowed to compete with whites athletes, especially not on the professional level. Thus, the institutions like Negro leagues¹⁶ in baseball (for players of African American or Latin origin) were established. The Jim Crow period was many times compared to Nazi policies which are characterized by racial hatred and oppression.

Some consequences of segregation are still present to this point, as there is a negligible number of black referees, officials, coaches, or managers compared to rich white men, who we can find occupy those posts more frequently, as the following paragraph argues:

“Coaching and administrative positions show a similar racial asymmetry. Indeed, in spite of their importance as players, African Americans do not hold

¹⁵ “Race and Sport,” *SMITH.edu*, Accessed March 28, 2016, http://www.science.smith.edu/exer_sci/ESS200/Raceh/Raceh.htm.

¹⁶ Negro leagues – the term refers to the professional baseball leagues in the U.S. with mostly African American players (also included Latin Americans).

positions of authority.” (...) “10.6 percent of head coaches in men’s basketball (7.8 percent for women’s basketball) were African American (Suggs, 1999, p. A50). Even fewer athletic directors are African American; only 1 percent of assistant, associate, or chief athletic directors are black.”¹⁷

2.5 The contribution of sports for African Americans

Despite the racially biased society African American population had to deal with, the basketball never stop growing on popularity. Thus, what needs to be primarily point out is the importance of sports in general.

Firstly, playing sports such as basketball significantly contributed to the process of Americanization. With time, not only immigrants from overseas countries, but also African Americans from the southern rural states began to come to the industrial cities in the North. Those who moved from South usually planned on seeking better economic opportunities. Also, they came in search for a life different from Jim Crow laws. Thus, people of colour gathered together and created the urban ghetto communities.

Particularly sports served as one of the “means” that help them socialized. The communities regarded it as something that connected them, at least, on the internal level with the rest of the nation, with their values and traditions. It took the focus off of daily struggles for the immigrants and possibly provided some sort of a mind escape as well.

“One way in which the urban lower classes of African American, Irish, Jewish, or German ethnicity displayed a common identity was through sports activities, which served recreational purposes, evoked group consciousness, and helped lift their selfesteem”¹⁸.

The other important role of sports was that it gave black people kind of a platform to prove they are not subordinate to Whites. “In the cities, this often meant the formation of ethnic basketball teams which quickly became the pride of the whole community.” In the course of time, especially the

¹⁷ C. Richard King, Charles Fruehling Springwood, *Beyond the Cheers: Race as Spectacle in College Sport*, (State University of New York Press: 2001) chap. 1 para 11, Adobe Digital Edition.

¹⁸ Martin Domke, “Into the Vertical: Basketball, Urbanization, and African American Culture in Early Twentieth-Century-America,” *Aspeers* 4 (2011): 131-150, <http://www.aspeers.com/sites/default/files/pdf/domke.pdf>.

game of basketball became a sport played predominantly by black players on the professional level.

Over all, sports contributed to the definition of the American identity, making it unique and special.

2.6 From college to professional basketball

However, before black representatives became the well-paid stars of the game, basketball started its growth at the YMCA institutions where the first games were played. Specifically, the YMCA's are believed to be the main propagators of basketball, spreading the game not only throughout the U.S. territory, but also to Canada and progressively to the rest of the world.

In the year 1893, the game moved from YMCA's to the American colleges. The first known college match was played in February, 1893. Vanderbilt University challenged the local YMCA in Nashville, Tennessee. 1895 is the year of the first game between two collage teams.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the sport started to spread out mostly locally covering the area of American East coast, creating the first competitive leagues in larger cities like Boston or New York – there were local basketball teams usually playing against each other. In 1898, the National Basketball League (NBL) was created. Unfortunately, it lasted just for 5 seasons, as some other early leagues lasted even shorter time. Nevertheless, the radical change for the better came with the help from colleges which began sponsoring the game. But, the problem that inevitably needed a solution quite quickly arose:

“These early games always had problems with injuries, as fouling rules were in place but a shortage of trained referees made it impossible to have good refs at every game. In the time from 1905-1910 many American activist groups were calling for the government to step in and place restrictions on the sport.”¹⁹

So the Intercollegiate Athletic Association (IAA) was created, after the president Roosevelt, in 1910, insisted on forming a governing body for the

¹⁹ Bran Faurschou, “NBA Hoops Online,” *nbahoopsonline.com*, Accessed January 29, 2016, <http://nbahoopsonline.com/Articles/History1.html>.

American colleges to properly rule and regulate the game. Thus, it makes the college basketball the stepping stone towards the professional basketball.

As already suggested, at the beginning of 20th century, the situation considerably changed for black athletes and the African American communities. Because of the previous limitations regarding black Americans it was only appropriate to start changing the unenviable situation, “the focus was on improving existing black school sports structures”²⁰ as well as to focus on the black athletic clubs. Luckily, the African American population developed a new self-confidence and got involved in genuine activism in relation to black athletics. With time, the cultural movement termed the Harlem Renaissance²¹ developed around the 1920’s and its purpose was to mainly emphasize and elevate the pride of black Americans.

Undoubtedly, the most ground-breaking figures were “Edwin Bancroft Henderson, who established the first black High School Athletic Association in Washington, and Cumberland Posey, who was the most influential black basketball player and manager of the 1910s and early 1920s.”²² For instance, Henderson believed that on court everybody has to follow the same rules - level playing field - and therefore this is a best way of achieving the racial equality. He thought that talented black players will be able to outperform the whites, and so crush the Jim Crow laws for good.²³

Early on, Washington was a self-proclaimed capitol of black school sports (and facilities) shortly followed by New York which became a centre of the professional black basketball. The game’s popularity in general notably increased, mainly in the 1920’s. It was also due to the contribution

²⁰ Martin Domke, “Into the Vertical: Basketball, Urbanization, and African American Culture in Early Twentieth-Century-America,” *Aspeers* 4 (2011): 131-150, <http://www.aspeers.com/sites/default/files/pdf/domke.pdf>.

²¹ Harlem Renaissance – usual term for the cultural, social and artistic movement from 1920’s that took place in Harlem, New York.

²² Martin Domke, “Into the Vertical: Basketball, Urbanization, and African American Culture in Early Twentieth-Century-America,” *Aspeers* 4 (2011): 131-150, <http://www.aspeers.com/sites/default/files/pdf/domke.pdf>.

²³ In 1908, an eight-team all-black basketball league was formed, in the 1910 the ISAA trained about 40 teams and about 1000 players so the Henderson’s dedication paid off

of Cumberland Posey, the creator of Loendi Big Five²⁴ and Bob Douglas - nicknamed “the father of black basketball” who established the New York Renaissance (The Rens) in 1922. Another very popular all-black team, which is still in existence today, and that started playing in the 1920’s, are the Harlem Globetrotters.

As to finish the chapter about history, especially throughout the 20th century, there were several attempts to create the stable professional basketball leagues. At the same time from 30’s to 40’s there were 3 professional leagues competing against each other before the formation of today’s world-known National Basketball Association (NBA) in 1946. The American Basketball League (ABL) existed from 1925 to its official end in 1955. In 1937, the National Basketball League (NBL) was established and, nine years later, also the Basketball Association of America (BAA). The last two mentioned merged together and created the NBA. What is important to keep in mind is that despite formation of all the professional leagues mentioned, majority of basketball clubs still stayed racially segregated. During the 1940’s a few black players joined previously all-white teams, but those were just baby steps towards the end of segregation. The reports about the integrations did not touched the general public life as much. What actually significantly changed the exclusion of black race in the professional basketball was the NBA draft of an African American player, Charles Cooper, in 1950. It finally broke the colour line.

²⁴ Loend Big Five – was a basketball team originally created by Cumberland Posey.

3. Presenting the film adaptations

3.1 Glory Road

First of all is important to state that *Glory Road* is a movie based on a true narrative by Don Haskins, the head coach of Texas Western Miners who lead this team to the unforgettable victory in 1966 NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Championship²⁵. The autobiographical book entitled "*Glory Road: My Story of the 1966 NCAA Basketball Championship and How One Team Triumphed Against the Odds and Changed America Forever*" is full of his own recollections.

At the beginning of the book, Haskins describes his early childhood, growing up in Oklahoma, playing basketball as a young man and polishing up his experience as a player. However, the main focus of the narration is the highest point of his career as a head coach of Texas Western men's basketball team and the aftermath of the victory in the championship. Hall of Fame coach Don Haskins is to these days remembered as a living legend and one of the most respected coaches of all time. He, for the first time in the NCAA history, decided to give a chance to an all-black line-up to start on the court. In addition, he even use two other black players of the team in the rotation.

As for the sports drama film adaptation from 2006 *Glory Road* directed by James Gartner, the story line is following. In the opening scene, there is Don Haskins coaching all girls' basketball team at the high-school. The following scene shows Haskins at home, coaching his two older sons how to play basketball. When he was at college himself, he had a knee injury and therefore was not able to continue to play anymore. Becoming a coach make it possible for him to stay in touch with the game he adored. Nevertheless, Don is later offered a position of the head coach at Texas Western College in El Paso. He is happy about receiving such offer,

²⁵ NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Championship - is a single-elimination tournament played in the United States by college basketball teams for the title of the national championship.

because it allows him to finally coach a Division I team, advocating the opportunity: “No matter what it takes, I wanna play against the best.”²⁶

There occurs the first difficulty to put together a team of 12 players. Since Haskins lacks the financial resources, because the college money goes primarily to football, he cannot afford to recruit the best white players. One day he watches a match at the College Summer League in Kansas City and tries to get somebody on his team. After being rejected by some very talented white boys he notices one black player, Bobby Joe Hill, who seems to be equally talented. Haskins suddenly realizes that the skill needed at the court is not determined by race. Stating: “I don’t see colour, I see quick, I see skill and that’s what I’m putting on the court.”²⁷ Despite the mocking and major discouragement he quickly sets up his mind to go north and look for some African American players who would be happy to receive a scholarship and will not lack the desire to do what they love the most. Haskins manages to form a team, consisting of 7 black and 5 white players. And of course, having a mostly black team in the mostly white South occurs as the biggest controversy.

Another challenge for coach Don is to teach his boys three most important things. Discipline, defensive basketball and how to work together as a team: “You’d play basketball my way. My way is hard.”²⁸ All of them possess skill and they do have a talent, but their play can be described as a very raw in style, unorganized and way too risky. In the start, some boys rebel against the coach’s tough training programme to realize soon enough that they gradually developed into a unified team with a common goal.

The more they win, the more racial hatred is felt and even act upon. One of the players is beaten up in the restroom, then team's motel is horribly

²⁶ *Glory Road*, directed by James Gartner, United States: co-production of The motion picture studios of Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Texas Western Productions, and Glory Road Productions, 2006.

²⁷ *Glory Road*, directed by James Gartner, United States: co-production of The motion picture studios of Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Texas Western Productions, and Glory Road Productions, 2006.

²⁸ *Glory Road*, directed by James Gartner, United States: co-production of The motion picture studios of Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Texas Western Productions, and Glory Road Productions, 2006.

destroyed by racist and somebody threatens Haskins's family. This results in a huge discouragement for the Miners and as they are paralysed with fear, unfortunately, they start to lose their game.

At the moment when white players start to show their support to the black teammates who are targets of all racial attacks their true bond finally comes to an existence. Miners enters the 1966 NCAA tournament and the team fights their way to the finals. The evening before the determining match, coach Haskins decided upon the ground-breaking tactic to send all-black line-up on the court. The most significant match of the history begins. Their opponent, in contrast to Miners, is all-white squad from a highly-praised University of Kentucky. They are under the leadership of much better experienced coach Adolph Rupp who assumes that Miners has no chance to win. Throughout the first half of the game Haskins's boys have to face multiple difficulties like an injury of the team's captain Nevertheless, the second half of the match is more in their lead and finally, they manage to beat Kentucky's Wildcats and therefore to win this entire Championship.

3.2 Above the Rim

Above the Rim is a crime drama sports film from 1994 directed and co-written by Jeff Pollack. The movie tells a story of a black basketball player Kyle Watson who is about to graduate from a high school. As his biggest dream is to play in the NBA, he waits with eager anticipation for a letter from Georgetown University hoping that they will offer him a sports scholarship.

In the opening scene, there is Kyle playing a school match. Since he is playing very individually and does not co-work with his team, they loses the game. Right afterwards, Kyle becomes very upset and then even angry with himself realizing that he has just ruined his chances. Too late he became aware of the fact that all the time he was being watched by the recruiter from Georgetown. Although, Kyle decides to corner the scout and tries to speak with him about the scholarship. While rudely approaching Mr Redd and questing him, the scout has to remind Kyle that giving any information away is absolutely against the NCAA rules.

Moreover, the coach and boy's teammates are very annoyed with him and his selfish and arrogant attitude. The young man finds himself in a very difficult place and more trouble is yet to come.

There is a basketball tournament in the local neighbourhood commonly called Shoot-Out. Tournaments like this are known for being sponsored by untrustworthy benefactors who are very likely involved in the drug business. Kyle's high school basketball team plans to participate and the boy primarily promises to play for his coach.

The twist to the plot comes when Kyle's best friend Bugaloo introduces him to a wicked club owner Birdie. This man is suspiciously wealthy and Kyle is, unfortunately, seduced by the appealing profusion of the surroundings as well as the illusion of having lots of women and respect. Birdie, who always strikes while the iron is hot, gives Kyle some money and promises the boy his support in the time of need. In return for all the favours, he expects that the boy will play for him in the Shoot-Out. Kyle do not decides immediately, he takes some time to consider the offer. However, after an argument between him and his coach Mike, Kyle is determined to switch the teams and play for criminal Birdie in the Shoot-Out.

Another important character in the movie is Thomas "Shep" Sheppard, a former star basketball player who once moved out of the town, but came back and presently works at the high school as a security guard. His past hangs over his head like a cloud. The weight of his burden affects his personality, makes him silent, mysterious and over all disagreeable person. As Shep and Kyle's mother Mallika grow closer, the more it makes Kyle uncomfortable. In addition, coach Mike offers Tom Sheppard to coach the high school basketball team with him.

The boy is still under the influence of sinister Birdie, who talks only badly about Shep. Therefore, the young man decides to seek out a local homeless weirdo named Flip who can give him some more information about the strange man who dates his mum. Flip gives away the secret. Shep and gangster Birdie are actually brothers. Kyle seems to be confused, but Birdie strongly proclaims that he and Shep are not relatives in a true sense,

because his brother has never cared about anybody in the family but himself.

One afternoon, Kyle is playing a match at his school gym. He notices his mum with Shep in the audience, gets furious, and ruins the game by doing a technical fault (attacking another player) due to which is immediately replaced. He is bursting with anger and makes obvious that he cannot stand Tom Sheppard, while arguing with his mother that he is just trying to protect her from harm. At this point, Kyle feels a lack of understanding from her side. He is convinced that his actions are not being appreciated the way they should be.

After the gym incident, the boy walks to the Birdie's party just to experience another drama. Kyle's best friend Bugaloo was just kicked out of a Bird's basketball line-up. Kyle wants to stand up for his friend, but Bug rather stops him. He says, that the gangster cut the homeless boy Flip up to pieces for revealing the secret, so there is no point in making a bad blood with this criminal and eventually ending up dead like the poor Flip.

Kyle tries to find the homeless boy at night, hardly believing that what was said to him is actually true. Instead of finding Flip, he is confronted face to face with Shep at an abandoned playground. They play a one-on-one basketball match. Kyle loses not only the game but also a bet they made before. Nevertheless, Shep just lets the boy freely go home, explaining to him: "You don't owe me nothin. You owe yourself and ones who cared to get you here. Believe me. I know."²⁹ Kyle slowly starts to see that the whole time he was wrong about Tom Sheppard. This man just tried to stay close to the boy to protect him from the dangerous Birdie and his wicked plans.

In addition, the unclear past tormenting Shep is finally entirely revealed. When Tom was Kyle's age his friend named Nutso accidentally died, because of Tom's teasing - Nutso tried to jump as high as Shep to touch the basketball backboard and he fell out of a window. Shep felt entirely responsible for what happened that night, mainly because of the fact that

²⁹ *Above the Rim*, directed by Jeff Pollack, Unites States: produced by James D. Brubaker, Benny Medina and Jeff Pollack, 1994.

drugs were involved too, he went to jail. The boyish imprudence caused the end of Sheppard's basketball career. The papers says: "*Pure talent, fatal flaw.*" He has never tried to restart playing, he has never tried to continue chasing his dream.

The Shoot-Out day comes and Kyle refuses to play for Birdie. At that moment, he finally believes in himself. He has realized that no one else's money or connections are needed in order to achieve his dream. Unfortunately soon enough, his new found confidence is being shattered by the gangster. Birdie is threatening the boy, saying that he makes sure that Kyle will not go to the University or anywhere else, unless Birdie's squad wins this tournament.

The boy's team is losing, so in the second half of the match, Tom Sheppard joins the game to help out, also because nearly half of the high-school team players were fouled by their merciless opponents. Luckily, with his help coach's Mike team closely wins the match.

Thereafter, criminal Birdie cannot handle the loss and orders Motaw, his star player and gang member, to shoot Kyle. Shep notices the gun soon enough and jumps in front of the boy, taking the bullet himself. As for another dramatic element, Birdie is later killed by Bugaloo who shot the drug dealer out of revenge.

At the very end of the movie, there is a recovered Shep who, together with Kyle's mother, is watching the boy playing basketball in television, as Kyle got the scholarship to Georgetown University.

The main focus of the movie is not, whatsoever, the entire final drama mentioned. *Above the Rim* was primarily created to show how difficult it can be for a poor black kid, living in a very unpromising neighbourhood to accomplish his dream. Despite knowing how low the chances to play for the university team or even NBA are, boys like Kyle never stop hoping. They see the scholarship as almost the only opportunity to get out of such an environment where basketball is played in a very physical style and where everybody tries to put you down, because the more you win, the more respect you get.

3.3 Sunset Park

Another basketball film, I am going to present is titled *Sunset Park*. It was released in 1996, directed by Steve Gomer and produced by Danny DeVito. The storyline of this movie is revolving around the main character Phyllis Saroka. The woman is a middle-age P.E. teacher at NYC high school, going through some hard time in her personal as well as professional life. She wishes to retire soon and she is already saving some money to open a brand new restaurant on St. Croix. Since she still needs to have more of the saving, the teacher reacts to a flier which offers a position of a boys' varsity basketball coach and thus she applies for the job. Probably because no one else was interested in it but her, she is given the post despite knowing absolutely nothing about the game of basketball. Her plan is simple - to finish this school year, then quit and moved to St. Croix.

The next day, Phyllis is confronted with the team she has inherited. The boys are not lacking the talent for the game, but they are not properly skilled and they also miss a great deal of discipline. When they see their new coach for the first time, the team is disappointed and sceptical of her. "I know we gon' lose every game"³⁰is heard from one of the players. Almost instantly they find out, that the woman has no experience with coaching. They feel like everybody has just given up on them and there is no future for their team.

The following moments of the movie show the boys playing a few matches in the gym. As every proper team with a goal of winning over a competition, they need some leadership and authority advice. However, because Phyllis is unable to coach them, she let the players decide about their shots and fouls, basically they run the game themselves.

There is only one passionate player familiarly nicknamed Shorty who seems to be willing to help her. He tries to introduce the players, giving some brief characteristics about each of them. The fact is, he does not

³⁰ *Sunset Park*, directed by Steve Gomer, United States: produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Dan Paulson, 1996.

believe that each of those individuals have some potential to work with, evaluating them like: “See Busy-bee, he don’t belong to this team, (...) he got the same glasses since third grade, his mother comes to every game even though he don’t play (...) him is Spaceman, the psychopath over here in the bench, he should never ever play. Look at Drano, he got a sweet shot, but he is just scare to shoot.”³¹

When they are playing an outdoor match, the team ask the coach for a kind of strategy they should use, and then for multiple advice, but the woman knows little, makes a lot of bad decisions and completely fails at giving directions. Especially Shorty gets frustrated: “Look, if you don’t know how to coach, you’ve shouldn’t took this job. Why just gonna got damn pay check?”³²

Later on, when Phyllis finally decides to study, gradually learning more and more about the basketball, she wants to start practicing her game-tips with the boys. Nevertheless, the team do not trust her at all, they do not see or believe her determination.

Moreover, the personal problem of some of the boys start to come to the surface and affect their performance on a court in a negative way. For instance, Shorty spoiled one game because he was smoking marihuana. However, the team seems to do not care about such thing, while blaming Phyllis for their lack of commitment. The boy’s overall attitude is super alarming to her thus she realizes that now is the right time for a change, stating: “I’m not a coach, but I’m very smart and I’m very capable (...) and I’m committed to winning.”³³ She literary asks her team to teach her basketball. Their first success comes short after - the coach opts for a bold move and lets Spaceman play which definitely pays off. The team wins their first match.

³¹ *Sunset Park*, directed by Steve Gomer, United States: produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Dan Paulson, 1996.

³² *Sunset Park*, directed by Steve Gomer, United States: produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Dan Paulson, 1996.

³³ *Sunset Park*, directed by Steve Gomer, United States: produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Dan Paulson, 1996.

Nevertheless, the more she assumes her duties as a coach, the more she is concerned with the boys' trouble. For example, Busy-bee gets shot in a park, because somebody wanted to steal his new coat. One day, Spaceman shows up in her office saying that he is about to kill his teacher. Phyllis hears him out, then goes to talk to Mr Bernstein who is verbally bullying the kid and she makes peace between the two men. Another example of Phyllis being now more involved is her growing relationship with Shorty who is in love and asks her for advice. At this point, he trusts her so much that he even allows her to read his love letter for his sweetheart. Their relationship starts to be more of like a mother and son.

In addition, the coach kind of forces the boys to regularly go to classes and also made them to help each other with their homework.

The crucial conflict comes to pass when Phyllis shares her plans for the future with Shorty. She tells him about her dream of having a restaurant and quitting as a teacher after the basketball season is over. The boy gets the impression that the team means nothing to her while questioning her moral, "So this all thing is a big joke to you, right?"³⁴ feeling abandoned and hopeless. He sees this unexpected choice of hers as a complete betrayal.

The next day Phyllis finds out, that Shorty ended up in jail last night. She comes to visit him and promises to help him, but the boy does not care. He even lies to her about what really happened. Still, the coach, together with Shorty's counsel, verbally fights with the court judge, advocates Shorty's good behaviour especially in the school. At the end of the trial, they let the boy go home restoring his probation.

Instead of being grateful, Shorty is still angry with the coach. He gets even more pissed when she does not allow him to finish playing one game, because of his constant fouling. Shorty's love interest was in the audience and he did not have a chance to show himself off, so after the match is over, he spills the beans and tells his teammates about coach's future plans with the restaurant. They are all rather disappointed.

³⁴ *Sunset Park*, directed by Steve Gomer, United States: produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Dan Paulson, 1996.

At this point, Phyllis feels kind of played by the boy who she likes so much. It is her girl-friend, who tries to talk some sense to her, emphasizing: “God damn it, Phyllis, Shorty is not an adult. You broke the rule, you got involved in his life.”³⁵

In the next scene, the coach and Shorty finally make piece, realizing that they both are to be blamed for their mistakes. She lets the boy to get back on the team saying that the only thing they have to focus on is the championship. Before the game starts, Shorty feels like to apologize to his teammates, too, for what he has said before.

They play a very close game against Washington Heights in Madison Square Garden, but unfortunately, they lose about just two points. The atmosphere after the match is pretty gloomy, the boys are in low spirits, until Phyllis makes a speech. She promises her team to postpone her plans with restaurant. She promises to continue coaching and to make them champions the next year. “You are all expected to go to college. Not for basketball, for life.”³⁶ In addition, she reminds them that they are as good as anybody and that they deserve to have as a good life as anybody else.

The very last scene shows Shorty talking with Phyllis. The boy is now hoping to get a BA degree someday.

³⁵ *Sunset Park*, directed by Steve Gomer, United States: produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Dan Paulson, 1996.

³⁶ *Sunset Park*, directed by Steve Gomer, United States: produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Dan Paulson, 1996.

4. Demonstrating racism, discrimination and violence

4.1 Racism and Discrimination

The whole plot of the *Glory Road*, from beginning to end, best presents the racial barriers that black players had to face. Even after the time the colour line has been already broken by three black Americans³⁷ who were drafted to the NBA in 1950, it precisely shows how difficult it was to overcome the deep rooted stereotypes, especially in 1960's in the South.

First, I am going to focus on the time and place covered in the movie. This film takes place in Texas (El Paso), 1966 - one of the Deep South states. This geographical area is historically known for possessing slaves and practising severe racial segregation as well as the Jim Crow laws which remain firmly in practise for nearly a whole century. In 1960's the era of Jim Crow was unfortunately not over, yet. Southern states like Texas were still racially biased and therefore the blacks decided to fight for their rights even harder than before. The protests became widespread and grow on intensity.

"In 1960, black and white college students organized the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The SNCC sponsored protest marches, boycotts, sit-ins, and other confrontational action against Jim Crow laws and policies. These actions served to increase national public awareness about the social barriers black Americans faced."³⁸

Social activist like Martin Luther King Jr. fought for the black rights and inspired the Civil Rights Movement making the racial equality the ultimate goal. However, the non-violent variant of resistance preached by King was reversed to the aggressive one. After brutal fighting, bombing, protesting and even involvement of the KKK organization the discrimination began slowly receding in some areas, but on the other hand, grew in the others. The only way out was to firmly encourage further federal action. Thus, on August 28, 1963, the protest march was organized on the Washington, D.C.:

³⁷ Namely Charles "Chuck" Cooper, Earl "Big Cat" Loyd and Nathaniel "Sweetwater" Clifton became the first three African Americans NBA players in 1950.

³⁸ "Racial Segregation in the American South: Jim Crow Laws," *Gale Global Issues in Context*, *Galegroup.com*, Last modified May 3, 2016, Accessed April 14, 2016, <http://find.galegroup.com/gic/infomark.do?&idigest=fb720fd31d9036c1ed2d1f3a0500fcc2&type=retrieve&tabID=T001&prodId=GIC&docId=CX2831400031&source=gale&userGroupName=itsbtrial&version=1.0>.

“(...) over two hundred thousand blacks and whites descended on the nation's capital. The highlight of the March on Washington was a series of speeches given from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Most notable was King's appeal for racial equality in America, in which he stated that he had a dream that one day all Americans would enjoy equality and justice.”³⁹

After all, the Civil Rights Act⁴⁰ from 1964 was accepted into the legislative despite the fact that southern members of Congress were strongly against. It was shortly followed by the Voting Rights Act⁴¹ of 1965 so the African Americans could finally cast their ballots. Nonetheless, law was just one thing, prejudices that still stayed in place, the other. The unfavourable conditions for black people together with abusive policing took much longer time to eliminate. The end of Jim Crow era is not believe to be earlier than after 1960's.

The first time a racial comment occurs in the movie is in the scene that serves as a classical example of racial prejudice: “Son, you can't win playing nigger ball. Sure, they can jump, but they can't lead. Can't handle the pressure. Don't have enough intelligence.”⁴² This quotation proves the stereotypical thinking about the race, as it was believed that black people are born with a better physical structure, but lower intelligence than whites. Yet, there are no valid arguments from scientists that would confirm a race being a conclusive factor when it comes to terms with intelligence or physique, argued as following:

“In essence, people with darker skins come in all shapes and sizes with a cross section of abilities and capabilities that overlap with those of people having lighter skin pigmentation. This is not to say that a genetic predisposition to excel in specific sports does not exist, but rather that no one has yet shown such to be related to skin color. The same argument is equally compelling for intellectual capacity. If

³⁹ "Racial Segregation in the American South: Jim Crow Laws," *Gale Global Issues in Context*, *Galegroup.com* Last modified May 3, 2016, Accessed April 14, 2016, <http://find.galegroup.com/gic/infomark.do?&idigest=fb720fd31d9036c1ed2d1f3a0500fcc2&type=retrieve&tabID=T001&prodId=GIC&docId=CX2831400031&source=gale&userGroupName=itsbtrial&version=1.0>.

⁴⁰ Civil Right Act 1964 was federal law that ended racial segregation in the public accommodation and banned the discrimination based on colour, sex, religion and nationality.

⁴¹ Voting Right Act 1965 - banned discrimination in voting.

⁴² *Glory Road*, directed by James Gartner, United States: co-production of The motion picture studios of Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Texas Western Productions, and Glory Road Productions, 2006.

race as a biological concept is invalid, then too are claims that people with lighter skins are intellectually superior to those with darker skins.”⁴³

The whole concept is more about so called self-fulfilling prophesy. If blacks believe that they do not fit such positions of control as managers or coaches they are unlikely to appear there. On the other hand, if they are believed to be superior in positions which require speed and quick reactions, they will be put in those more often than white people, resulting in having higher self-confidence thus beating the competition. Once an assumption like this begins to be generally followed, essentially, it is hard to break it.

As another example of racial discrimination serves the following monologue reflecting the social conditions of black Americans regarding their involvement in sport.

“There are no coloreds playing Division One basketball in the South. But you go and put seven of 'em on our team. You carrying on like Negroes gonna be the future of basketball. There are rules. Unwritten rules. You play one at home, two on the road and three if you're losing. Loadin' up on Negroes that just ain't done. You gonna put your career at risk (...)”⁴⁴

Colour line in basketball was already broken, however, as expressed in the monologue above, there were unwritten rules. The southern colleges did involved black players in their teams, of course, they have just never set up a team where majority of players would be black. Despite the 1964 Civil Rights Acts the governing authorities on South in general were still under the influence of racial prejudices thus many affirmative actions had to take place to change the conditions.

“Despite the major political gains, the lasting effects of Jim Crow remained strong. Many black Americans resided in inner-city slums and faced abusive policing. They enjoyed little change from the earlier decades in terms of prejudice

⁴³ “Race and Sport,” *SMITH.edu*, Accessed April 12, 2016, http://www.science.smith.edu/exer_sci/ESS200/Raceh/Raceh.htm.

⁴⁴ *Glory Road*, directed by James Gartner, United States: co-production of The motion picture studios of Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Texas Western Productions, and Glory Road Productions, 2006.

and discrimination. (...) Laws banning discrimination aided by affirmative action programs ended the Jim Crow era in the late 1960s.”⁴⁵

So after teaching his team hard discipline and strength of will to never give up Don Hastings was the first coach who started an all-black line-up in the history of NCAA Division I Championship.

Besides the racial issue on one side, there was another reason to avoid having mostly black teams. Simply nobody believed that they can win a championship with a “negro” basketball. Team managers, directors and coaches in charge feared losing their jobs if the teams would not bring money and success for their school. Also, they did not want to be embarrassed in case of not winning the games, because of too much black players in their teams. This issue is also explored in the *Glory Road*: “You’ve signed some black players, Don? I’m not sure that all the boosters are gonna like it. All right?”⁴⁶ said the school director.

Another examples of racial prejudices involve a scene when local boys in the school cafeteria ask if all new black players are from Harlem. One of them even admits that he have never seen a “coloured” person before. When boys finally start politely introducing themselves, a black player says his name and calls himself a forward. Immediately, the white boy stands up, also says his name, and calls himself a starting forward. He indicates that black person is unlikely to start in a game, when a certain game position is already occupied by a white guy.

4.2 Violence

The film culminates in the moment when it comes to a physical attack. The team is often on a road as they are playing against other college teams from different southern states. One time, when they stop in a random motors

⁴⁵ “Racial Segregation in the American South: Jim Crow Laws,” *Gale Global Issues in Context*, *Galegroup.com*, Last modified May 3, 2016, Accessed April 14, 2016, <http://find.galegroup.com/gic/infomark.do?&idigest=fb720fd31d9036c1ed2d1f3a0500fcc2&type=retrieve&tabID=T001&prodId=GIC&docId=CX2831400031&source=gale&userGroupName=itsbtrial&version=1.0>.

⁴⁶ *Glory Road*, directed by James Gartner, United States: co-production of The motion picture studios of Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Texas Western Productions, and Glory Road Productions, 2006.

restaurant after travelling in their bus, one of the black players is beaten up in the bathrooms by two local white men. The rest of the teammates tries to catch the two rogues, but other white people in the restaurant just sit there and pretends that nothing happened. Scenes like this just proves that especially in the South it took much longer time to recover from Jim Crow.

With time, the black guys get more and more afraid as they have almost forgotten about the fact that they are not in the hospitable environment. The suggestion about carrying a knife with them is proposed, but it is quickly brushed aside: "You show a blade, they gonna pull a shotgun."⁴⁷ Another common stereotype regarding African Americans is believed to be their predisposition to criminal actions in general.

"In describing evolving perceptions of Blacks throughout our nation's history, Marc Mauer (1999) explains that Whites have long viewed criminal behavior as an inherent characteristic of Blacks. Randall Kennedy (1997) explains that the reputation of Blacks has been "besieged" by beliefs about predispositions toward criminality that can be traced back to the enslavement of Africans in the United States. Throughout American history, Blacks have been consistently stereotyped as criminals (Drummond, 1990; Russell, 2002)."⁴⁸

Another film scene when black players experience the open hostility is while playing against East Texas State University. The violent audience calls the boys "losers" or "stupid" and use racial phrases like that they do not want "their kind" on the court. Even the referees are biased and call the foul on an innocent black player.

When the team goes to their motel to finally have a rest, they find all of the rooms coved in graffiti. The writings on the wall are paint in red and say "couns go home", "KKK" or even "niggers die". All their stuff are disarranged and covered in blood. The more they win the harder it is for them out on the court. Many may think that the situation regarding violence towards black

⁴⁷ *Glory Road*, directed by James Gartner, United States: co-production of The motion picture studios of Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Texas Western Productions, and Glory Road Productions, 2006.

⁴⁸ Kelly Welch, "Black Criminal Stereotypes and Racial Profiling," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 23, no. 3 (August 2007): 276-288, doi: 10.1177/1043986207306870.

basketball players stopped after the 1960's, but the opposite is actually true. The reason for further violence will be discussed in the next chapter.

In addition, Don Haskins receives a threatening letter which says "You nigger lover, you need to stop messin around with the way things suppose to be (...) White folks here don't like what you doing."⁴⁹ But Don Haskins knew that he cannot surrender now. He bet everything on what he believed in, even risking the safety of his own family. Unintentionally, he helped future generations of black Americans as he unlocked the door leading to college basketball in the South.

"Overall, between 1966 and 1985, the average number of African Americans on college sports teams jumped from 2.9 to 5.7. The southern conferences were finally catching on that integration was not just a moral issue that divided their constituencies."⁵⁰

For his brave actions and outstanding commitment was introduced into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1997.

This chapter depicted the crucial moments from the movie *Glory Road* as seven black players come to El Paso, Texas and experienced racism, violence and discrimination in order to achieve their dream.

⁴⁹ *Glory Road*, directed by James Gartner, United States: co-production of The motion picture studios of Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Texas Western Productions, and Glory Road Productions, 2006.

⁵⁰ George R. La Noue, Mark Bennett, "The Impact of Desegregation on College Choices of Elite Black Athletes," *International Journal of Higher Education* 3, no. 3 (2014), doi:10.5430/ijhe.v3n3p142.

5. Student athletics at various educational institutions, disadvantage of being amateur

5.1 Student athletics at various educational institutions

What all of the three movies have in common besides the theme of basketball is a demonstration of the school environment. Even though in each movie it is presented quite differently.

Texas Western College in El Paso plays a role of an official southern authority. The director and the school sponsor are more than unhappy with the coach Haskin's actions to the extent that Don even mysteriously receives a threatening letter which urges him to follow the embedded rules and to quit on his innovative approaches regarding the local basketball team.

The Monarch High School in *Above the Rim* simply provides a kind of a platform for the main character as he can show off his basketball skill in the school gym and hoped for a recruitment from Georgetown University. Kyle wishes to one day play in the NBA.

"(...) the university has become a staging ground for many aspiring athletes to showcase their talents in hopes of getting a professional sports contract, revealing the entanglements of the distribution of financial resources, recruitment, stereotypes, post-secondary educational goals, and the exploitation of students."⁵¹

However, the main focus of this movie is more on the New York City environment and how it can strongly influence the young men's choices in a pursuit of their happiness.

The High school gymnasium in the *Sunset Park* is the place where all characters are introduced. The fundamentality of this movie is to highlight the importance of an education in general regardless the sport itself. The film presents basketball as one's motivation to succeed in their future life, and also not taking the initial misfortune as an unchangeable destiny.

⁵¹ C. Richard King, Charles Fruehling Springwood, *Beyond the Cheers: Race as Spectacle in College Sport*, (State University of New York Press: 2001) chap. 1 para 11, Adobe Digital Edition.

At the end of the *Sunset Park* movie Shorty, who is the most talented player of the team, reveals his commitment to continue in his studies and he hopes that one day he receives a BA degree. Nevertheless, black people in general were historically not expected to go to the universities. The situation finally changed with the Civil Rights Act from 1964. Unfortunately, the prejudices have still persisted. Black athletes at universities has been often accused of being there just for the sport and not for an education. For example, according to study by Shaun Harper, Collin Williams Jr., and Horatio Blackman on the black male student-athletes and racial inequities in NCAA Division I college sports the situation is viewed as following:

“Several scholars (e.g., Edwards, 1984; Hodge et al., 2008; Hughes, Satterfield, & Giles, 2007; Oseguera, 2010) have noted that Black male student-athletes are often stereotyped as dumb jocks. “One could easily summarize their status as Niggers with balls who enroll to advance their sports careers and generate considerable revenue for the institution without learning much or seriously endeavoring to earn their college degrees” (Harper, 2009b, p. 701).”⁵²

The deep-rooted stereotypes (like the one mentioned above) manipulate convictions not only of white population, but also of blacks. Low expectations with regard to black athletes can be found in the films covering a high school environment as well. For instance in one of the scenes from *Sunset Park* there is a science teacher who verbally bullies one of the black players. He makes fun of the boy’s low intelligence and even his new haircut. The paradox is that the boy’s favourite subject is definitely the science. The constant humiliation then affects boy’s behaviour as he gets probation for smoking weed. Not only he, but also many others like him, feel useless therefore go astray by selling or smoking marijuana, ignoring their homework or skipping classes. The coach has to remind them: “You’re as good as anybody and you deserve to have as good a life as anybody.” In *Above the Rim* the main character Kyle does not believe in himself enough

⁵² Shaun R. Harper, Collin D. Williams Jr., Horatio W. Blackman, “Black Male Student-Athletes and Racial Inequities in NCAA Division I College Sports,” *Graduate School of Education, PENN GSE, Center for the Study of Race and Equity and Education*, (2013), https://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/sites/gse.upenn.edu/equity/files/publications/Harper_Williams_and_Blackman_%282013%29.pdf.

thus agree to help out a local drug dealer in case that he helps him (in reverse) to get to the university.

On the other hand, can it be true that black athletes are not as well suited for the academic life as are the whites? In order to answer this question a connection to racial discrimination can be made. The facilities at the educational institutions for black people were on a rather different - generally worse - level as compared to those for whites. The research on the black male student-athletes and racial inequities in NCAA Division I college sports speaks about the issue as shown below:

“Considerable effort has also been devoted to exploring racial differences between Black men and their White male teammates. For example, Harrison, Comeaux, and Plecha (2006) found disparities in the academic preparation of Black and White student-athletes. Specifically, Blacks were recruited from less prestigious high schools with insufficient resources, which likely underprepared them for the rigors of college-level academic work.”⁵³

Over all can be stated that student athletics at the educational institutions primarily copies the history of the racial struggles. One of the milestones that helped to change the view on black athletics and educational institutions in general is considered to be the victory of Don Hoskins’s Miners as the entire nation was destined to see this particular event and so begin to follow its example.

“According to ESPN Classic, Don Haskin’s win “accelerated the advancement of black athletes in the South...All-white leagues like the Atlantic Coast Conference, Southwestern Conference and Southeastern Conference became integrated within the next two years”⁵⁴

⁵³ Shaun R. Harper, Collin D. Williams Jr., Horatio W. Blackman, “Black Male Student-Athletes and Racial Inequities in NCAA Division I College Sports,” *Graduate School of Education, PENN GSE, Center for the Study of Race and Equity and Education*, (2013), https://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/sites/gse.upenn.edu/equity/files/publications/Harper_Williams_and_Blackman_%282013%29.pdf.

⁵⁴ George R. La Noue, Mark Bennett, “The Impact of Desegregation on College Choices of Elite Black Athletes,” *International Journal of Higher Education* 3, no. 3 (2014), doi:10.5430/ijhe.v3n3p142.

5.2 Disadvantage of being amateur

In the early years of basketball around the beginning of the 20th century it was not an exception that professional players could compete against the amateurs. Probably the biggest disadvantage for those who played just for a college and not a league was the irregularity of any form of financial support. On the other hand, the professionals received the money on a regular basis. This kind of problem was solved with the creation of The Colored Intercollegiate Athlete Association (CIAA) in 1912. The new rules were introduced as they forbade professional players to compete against the amateurs.

To shortly speak about the money situation, in all three movies that are being analysed the black players want to be part of a basketball universe not because they expect a pay check, but primarily because they are very passionate about the game itself. It is their hope that one day they might become professionals and connect their future occupation with what they generally love to do.

6. Urban ghettos and the domestic environment the players experience

6.1 Urban ghettos

As many other themes which has been already examined (violence, school environment, black athletics, etc.) also urban ghettos are closely related to the history of racism in the United States.

At the time between the two wars, many African American moved from the South to the northern cities trying to escape the Jim Crow. Nevertheless, the “negro” communities gathered in several neighbourhoods once again became a target of open discrimination. The situation at the beginning of 20th century could be described as following:

“Although New York City—in contrast to Washington—offered parks, playgrounds, and baths to whites as well as blacks, many African American families would not make use of these facilities because of “the rude treatment awaiting them from other visitors”⁵⁵

With regard to the sport and its accessibility to blacks only very few universities in the north had an integrated basketball teams. But times were about to change. In 1920’s the propagation of an African American self-pride and corresponding actions connected with their independence finally took place. For instance, cities like New York started establishing various black athletic clubs, as they offered basketball, too.

“Quickly, these clubs, which resembled fraternities, developed into community centers where people could meet, relax from everyday stress, and, above all, keep themselves fit.”⁵⁶

Actions for spreading the self-awareness significantly helped in upward social mobility of black Americans and influenced their mental building of a stronger identity. On the other hand, the conditions of local ghettos were still awfully poor. The main reason was due to a very limited number of job

⁵⁵ Martin Domke, “Into the Vertical: Basketball, Urbanization, and African American Culture in Early Twentieth-Century-America,” *Aspeers* 4 (2011): 131-150, <http://www.aspeers.com/sites/default/files/pdf/domke.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Martin Domke, “Into the Vertical: Basketball, Urbanization, and African American Culture in Early Twentieth-Century-America,” *Aspeers* 4 (2011): 131-150, <http://www.aspeers.com/sites/default/files/pdf/domke.pdf>.

opportunities or even its denial to the black people in general. Thus, African Americans were not able to provide an economic well-being of their families. As proves the research:

“(…) between 1970 and 1980, Peterson and Harrell (1992:5) state that the total number of people living in the poorest urban census tracts increased by 230 percent. Part of this rise in urban poverty was due to declines in employment opportunities and rises in unemployment.”⁵⁷

As another example of the real ghettos conditions can serve Reuben May’s narrative in his book *Living Through the Hoop* as he vividly describes the struggles of living in a northeast communities.

“Flat Shoals, Hillside, and Eastridge were built in the early 1940s as affordable housing developments for low- and moderate-income families. Today, these housing developments continue to be homes for low-income families, primarily blacks in Northeast, but because of concentrated poverty and other structural factors, there has been an increase since the 1970s in crime, drug use, and social disorganization in these residential areas. The social conditions of these housing developments offer a formidable barrier to enjoying the innocence of youth.”⁵⁸

Above the Rim, *Glory Road* and *Sunset Park* serve as perfect examples of such life in ghetto communities, especially in NYC, showing how profoundly it affected one’s choices and dreams connected with so unenviable type of living.

In the movie *Sunset Park* the character nicknamed Shorty asks his coach: “What’s like to be white? Is any black people where you live? In the building?”⁵⁹ The answer is kind of obvious – there are no black people in the place where coach Phyllis lives. Shorty then goes on and describes his housing situation to further detail as he also speaks about his neighbours. The housing block is called Urbany Projects and there are types of people

⁵⁷ Tony L. Whitehead, “The Formation of the U.S. Racialized Urban Ghetto,” *The Cultural Systems Analysis Group (CuSAG), CuSAG Special Problems Working Paper Series in Urban Anthropology*, (September 15, 2000), <http://www.culturalsystemsanalysisgroup.umd.edu/documents/WorkingPapers/RUGOne.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Reuben A. Buford May, *Living Through the Hoop: High School Basketball, Race, and the American Dream*, (New York University Press: 2008) chap. 1 para. 35, Adobe Digital Edition.

⁵⁹ *Sunset Park*, directed by Steve Gomer, United States: produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Dan Paulson, 1996.

like Mr Collins who drinks liquor all day and never had a job in his life. Shorty complains about the lack of motivation those people give him. “Makes you think, why even work.” He believes that basketball as well as school or job mean nothing, because he will never make it out of the Projects anyway.

“(…) the power of the environmental pull (…) seeks to draw the boys away from visions of what their lives could be like, to realities of what many peoples’ lives are like around them. Each day, the young men witness friends and family members who succumb to the withering pressure and temptation of drugs and violence.”⁶⁰

Other example can be found in the *Glory Road*. One black player reveals his past to the coach Haskins complaining about never having a chance to play basketball at high school - the thing he loves most - because he had to work to support his mother and his sisters.

The scenes in *Above the Rim* connected with the issue discussed are very severe. While having a reunion with his elder brother, the drug dealer Birdie who is not afraid to kill to ensure a certain standards in his life, defends the choices he had made, explaining why he got involved in a criminal activities. When his brother left the town somebody had to take care of the family. “Shit got bad, real bad. We had no lights, no electricity, no food. We all were wrapped up in our coats in front of the stove over the winter time.”⁶¹ The kind of paradox is that Birdie is proud of himself, especially for bringing the wealth back his life as they now live in a duplex house, have big screen TV, marble floor, and their mother could stop working. In the *Living Through the Hoop*, narrator describes quite similar experience, making a connection with basketball players. He talks about the effect that drug business brought to the communities:

“Many of the players live near drug houses—neighborhood homes in which the sale of crack cocaine is the primary function—or on blocks where gunplay and violence occur often. In fact, during the 1990s, four of the Knights’ former players from these neighborhoods were murdered after they were no longer playing

⁶⁰ Reuben A. Buford May, *Living Through the Hoop: High School Basketball, Race, and the American Dream*, (New York University Press: 2008) chap. 3 para. 43, Adobe Digital Edition.

⁶¹ *Above the Rim*, directed by Jeff Pollack, Unites States: produced by James D. Brubaker, Benny Medina and Jeff Pollack, 1994.

basketball for the team. Two were shot, and two were stabbed to death. One player, Thomas Thurmon, was murdered while he was an active member of the team. During the 1997 basketball season, Thurmon, at that time a junior, was shot to death while riding in a friend's car."⁶²

The main purpose of each of the films I have chosen can be summaries as following. Playing basketball or even dreaming about becoming a professional player served as a one gigantic life motivation for many African American. They could express their identity through the game, their determination and their talent. It gave them the courage needed to make the right choices and smart decisions, courage not to give up on their lives, it make them realised how important education is and how everyone should learn from previous mistakes in a gradual pursuit of happiness.

6.2 Domestic environment

The domestic environment is also associated with the previously discussed topic. The African American families suffered for many decades back and often time the differences between individual families have been determined by their ability to climb up a social ladder.

What I would like to focus on in this section are the relationships between the players and their families (usually just their mothers) as they are portrayed in the films. It is shown how strong the family ties usually are, mainly because of the unfavourable conditions that brought them much closer.

As a first example there is coach Haskins who tries to recruit players for his team. He is so determinate to find talented boys that he even visits a mother of one of his future players. Despite the fact the coach wants her black child to play in the state of Texas, she is delighted at the idea of her son having a scholarship as he will receive a further education as well. Later on, the boy, Harry, has some trouble with school and keeps refusing to study for his classes. Coach Haskins bring his mom over to El Paso to

⁶² Reuben A. Buford May, *Living Through the Hoop: High School Basketball, Race, and the American Dream*, (New York University Press: 2008) chap. 1 para. 36, Adobe Digital Edition.

keep an eye on Harry. Rather a radical measure serves one's purpose and the boy is forced to find the time for his studies as he do not want to, by any means, disappoint his beloved mom.

When coach Haskins makes a decision to kick Nevil out of the team due to boy's lack of determination on his side, Nevil begs the coach not to do so and says: "I'll never be able to look my daddy in the eye again!"⁶³ which implies, again, that he want his family to be proud of him. The opportunities like receiving a sports scholarship were very rare, especially for black athletes in the South.

Other scene shows a strong bond between one player who suffers from hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and his mother. Of course like any mother she worries for her son, but at the same time she knows how much basketball means to him. So she decides to persuade coach Haskins to let her son play the game despite his heart condition, arguing: "These are the last games he'll ever play."⁶⁴

In *Above the Rim* main character Kyle lives just with his mom Mallika. He certainly dislikes the idea of her dating as he cannot imagine she would be able to care about someone else than him. Without any particular reason Kyle keeps talking badly about the new suitor named Thomas. Later, the boy physically attacks this man and reveals to Mallika that he did it to protect her. She finds out that a long time ago Tom abandoned his family after being involved in a case regarding a homicide and drug dealing. The everyday situation many black athletes had to face can be sum up similarly as Reuben May experienced:

"Open-air drug markets, single-parent families, poverty, and criminal violence are realities for the players. Thus, these young men grow up in environments that are rarely conducive to visualizing broader opportunities for success beyond the

⁶³ *Glory Road*, directed by James Gartner, United States: co-production of The motion picture studios of Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Texas Western Productions, and Glory Road Productions, 2006.

⁶⁴ *Glory Road*, directed by James Gartner, United States: co-production of The motion picture studios of Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Texas Western Productions, and Glory Road Productions, 2006.

typical icons of “hood rich” drug dealers and criminals who loom “large” in poor, urban areas.”⁶⁵

Throughout the movies the domestic environment provides the background story of the basketball players which allows the viewer to better understand the individual characters and the way they react or response to the events happening in their lives.

⁶⁵ Reuben A. Buford May, *Living Through the Hoop: High School Basketball, Race, and the American Dream*, (New York University Press: 2008) chap. 3 para. 42, Adobe Digital Edition.

7. Conclusion

The final chapter of my thesis is supposed to summarize and evaluate all the individual analyses and to provide the final general conclusion. The aim of this thesis was to examine various historically determined obstacles that African American athletes had to overcome in order to experience an equal treatment in the game of basketball. For this purpose, the three film adaptations covering the theme of black basketball have been chosen for a subsequent demonstration of the assigned topic.

First, the thesis describes the invention of the game in the late 19th century. The professor Doctor Naismith who worked as a P.E. teacher in YMCA Trinity School in Springfield came up with the original idea out of necessity. Even though the game with peach baskets was just an experiment, nowadays, the basketball is considered as one of the greatest indoor sports ever invented. Moreover, the most general rules as created by Naismith are still in use today or just slightly modified. Thus, the basketball is often referred to as the only major sport of pure American origin.

In the course of time, the connection was made between the game and the African American players. It was due to the undeniable contribution of black athletes that the game gained such popularity. However, the general view on the African Americans is more connected with their racial struggles than the sport achievements. For this particular reason, the thesis further examines the history of slavery on the American territory and focuses on depicting the fights of blacks for their independence. During the period of segregation and practice of Jim Crow laws the lives of African Americans were radically affected. The unfavourable social situation regarding black people was evident in many aspects of their lives. Every public institution such as hospitals, libraries, restaurants, etc. were separated by colour. The main goal of this part of my thesis was not only to describe such conditions, but most importantly to emphasize the limited opportunities for black Americans in American sports.

The thesis further acquaints the reader with the kind of stereotypes that initially prevented the integration of African Americans to the wide range of previously white sports. The myths about their lower intelligence, but better

physique compared to white athletes were not something unusual. At the beginning of 20th century the situation considerably changed. The 1920's were about the emphasizing and elevating the pride of black Americans therefore the establishment of the first all-black basketball leagues such as New York Renaissance or Harlem Globetrotters shortly followed. From the general point of view, the ultimate break of the colour line is consider to be the drafting of three African American players to the NBA.

In the following section of the thesis the film adaptations entitled *Glory Road*, *Above the Rim* and *Sunset Park* are introduced. The main characters are described as well at the overall story and the thesis prepares the reader for a more detailed examination of the chosen scenes in the next chapters.

The aim of the following sections is to specifically focus on the chief obstacles that African American players had to face on daily basis as the individual movies depict them. The subchapter 4.1 is concerned with the issue of race. The *Glory Road* takes place in Texas, one of the deep South states, during the 1960's. The movie reflects the actual political situation in the South as people who lived there were still under the influence of Jim Crow. A lot of racial hatred can be seen in this movie as the all black basketball team makes its way to the top.

The thesis is concerned not only with the racism as such, but also provides the insight into the various aspect of lives of the black players. The chapter 5. describes the educational institutions and shows the reader what kind of a role they play with respect to the social integration of black athletes. All the three film adaptations shows the importance of education to some extent.

In the final section the focus was on the portrayal of domestic environment and the housing conditions for the black players. Each movie includes the scenes that are relevant to this topic. The natural desire to be part of the working relationships is a fundamentality represented in the adaptations quite prominently. The boys need be assured that everyone's future is in their own hands as this message is convey by the movies.

To conclude my thesis, it was proven that African Americans do not see their skin colour as a kind of obstacle. They wish for the equal treatment in society, the equal educational opportunities and the unlimited possibility to dream their dreams about being the professional athletes. However, the racial discrimination lasted long enough to make the coloured people feel inferior when it comes to a white competition. All the three movies presents the race, not as a cause of the problems, but more as something deeply connected with stereotypes as it is then difficult to completely break out of them.

Resumé

Dříve, než se na přední sportovní scénu dostala jména jako například Kobe Bryan či LeBron James, Afroameričtí basketbalisté si museli svoji cestu na vrchol těžce vydobýt. V dnešní době jsou hráči Národní basketbalové ligy uváděni jako jedni z nejlépe placených sportovců, taková situace tu však nebyla vždy a zdaleka neplatila v začátcích vývoje tohoto sportu.

Cílem mé bakalářské práce bylo zaměřit se právě na omezení, často historicky podmíněná, která se naskýkala především basketbalistům Afroamerického původu, a která jim zabraňovala či naopak dále motivovala splnit si svůj sen.

Úvodem, tato práce popisuje vznik basketbalu i důvody, které k jeho vzniku vedly. Krátce jsou zmíněna pravidla hry a významné inovace. Značná část je pak zaměřena na uvedení doby, do které vznik sportu spadá. Na jihu Ameriky vládlo otroctví a Spojené státy byly připraveny na občanskou válku. Občanská práva, které měla garantovat zrušení otroctví byla spíše formální záležitostí. V další sekci mé práce je popsáno období Rekonstrukce, které se vyznačovalo krutou rasovou segregací a tzv. diskriminačními zákony Jima Crowa. Afroameričané se v této době setkávali se zanedbáváním ze strany úřadů i s otevřeným nepřátelstvím ze strany široké veřejnosti. V následující podkapitole jsou uvedeny konkrétní případy diskriminace Afroameričanů obecně ve sportech. Veřejnost byla ovlivněna různými typy předsudků, které se vztahovali buď k inteligenci a fyzičnosti nebo k charakteru černého obyvatelstva. A tak v žádném sportu nebylo dostatečné zastoupení hráčů černé pleti.

Zásadní změny se dostavily až začátkem 20. století. Spousta Afroameričanů z jižní části Států se stěhovala na severovýchod a věnování se kolektivnímu sportu, jako je například basketbal, byl jeden ze způsobů, jak se lépe začlenit a dát o sobě vědět. Podkapitoly 2.5 a 2.6 popisují situaci, která nastala ve větších městech, jako například New York. Zde se postupně začaly zakládat první sportovní kluby pro černé hráče.

Dvacátá léta dvacátého století byla zásadním krokem k emancipaci černého obyvatelstva. Tato doba vedla k uvědomění jejich kolektivní identity a zanedlouho vznikly první zcela „černé“ profesionální basketbalové ligy. Mezi nejvýznamnější patří *New York Renaissance* či *Harlem Globetrotters*. Rok 1950 je významným rokem z hlediska prolomení rasových předsudků - v tomto roce do svých řad draftovala NBA první tři hráče Afroamerického původu.

Kapitola třetí představuje filmové adaptace, které byly vybrány k demonstraci různých příkladů k zadanému tématu. Každá část třetí kapitoly zvláště se dopodrobna věnuje jednomu filmu, představuje jeho obsah, hlavní postavy a vyzdvihuje myšlenku filmu. Filmy jsou probírány v následujícím pořadí *Glory Road*, *Above the Rim* a *Sunset Park*.

V hlavní části je cílem zaměřit se na analýzu těch obtíží, co existovaly pro černé hráče, se kterými se ve filmech, ať už primárně či sekundárně, shledáváme. První ze subkapitol se zabývá představením tématu rasové diskriminace. Tento problém je nejlépe demonstrován výhradně na prvním z uvedených filmů, jehož děj se odehrává během roku 1966 ve státě Texas, na jihu Spojených států. Film poukazuje na skutečnou politickou situaci, která na jihu v 60. letech panovala a rovněž se zaměřuje na místní správní orgány, jež vedou lidi stále do značné míry rasově předpojatí. V momentě, kdy se černému basketbalovému týmu začne dařit, je trnem v oku těm, kterým se úspěchy „negrů“ nehodí. Film ukazuje, jak lehce se rasové nesnášenlivost dokázala podnítit.

Další analyzovanou sekcí v mé práci je téma zaměřené na vzdělávací instituce. Na příkladech z filmů jde vidět, jakou váhu basketbalisté přikládají svému vzdělání a také to, jakou motivaci jim ono samo působí. Ve všech třech filmových adaptacích je potřeba pevné autority - hlavního trenéra - aby dodal hráčům sebevědomí a do jisté míry i odvahu nevzdávat své sny, nýbrž za ně bojovat.

Předposlední kapitola se soustředí na zobrazení domácího prostředí a městských ghett. Ve všech filmech je vyzdvížena potřeba jedinců být součástí fungujících společenských vztahů, ať už to osobních či veřejných.

Jako příklad je uvedena scéna z filmu *Sunset Park*. Hráči jménem Shorty chybí jakákoliv motivace dostat se pryč z drogové čtvrti, kde doposud žije. Nemá žádný vzor a je zbaven všech ideálů. Jako on, tak i ostatní hráči musí být ujištěni, že každého budoucnost závidí jenom na tobě samotném, a ne na místě, odkud pocházíš.

Finální kapitola pak nese shrnutí a závěr celé práce.

Během psaní této práce jsem došla k závěru, že lidé černé pleti nevnímají svou barvu kůže jako překážku. Ba naopak, snaží se žít život jako Američané, ne pod nálepkou „barevný“. Přejí si mít stejná práva jako bílý, stejné možnosti a přístup k vzdělání a navíc si přejí dostat stanovených cílů a dosáhnout svých snů. V případě hráčů basketbalu se potvrdilo, že o to víc platí poslední zmiňované přání. Ovšem rasová diskriminace na území Spojených států trvala dostatečně dlouho na to, aby ve sportovcích zakořenila strach bojovat proti „bílé“ konkurenci. Všechny tři filmy prezentují rasu, ne jako příčinu problémů, nýbrž jako věc hluboce spjatou s předsudky a stereotypy. Pak je za potřebí vyvinout nemalé úsilí, aby se tyto dokázaly prolomit.

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Annotation

Thesis: The American Basketball portrayed in various film adaptations with the main focus of depicting the chief obstacles for African-American players

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The aim of my thesis is to focus on the African American players of basketball and analyse their daily struggles portrayed in the various film adaptations. First, the creation of basketball is described as well as the social situation regarding African Americans. The historical context is given as the thesis deals with the topic of slavery, official segregation and racism on the U.S. territory. The overview includes the establishment of the first all-black basketball leagues and mentions the breaking of colour line in the National Basketball League. The next part of my thesis is concerned with the introduction of film adaptations. Each film presents a basketball team or an individual of Afro American origin as they all try to overcome the issue of race in the pursuit of their happiness. The last part specifically focus on the chief obstacles that players have to face on daily basis as the individual movies depict them. The topic of discrimination, violence, living in a ghetto or education are further analysed in full detail.

Key words: African Americans, basketball, education, domestic environment, racial discrimination, racial segregation, student athletics, urban ghettos, violence

Anotace

Název práce: Americký basketbal představen ve vybraných filmových adaptacích s hlavním cílem na omezení pro Afro-Americké hráče

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Cílem mé bakalářské práce je zaměření na Afro-americké basketbalové hráče a analýzu jejich denních obtíží, tak jak jsou představeny v konkrétních filmových adaptacích. Jako první je popsán vznik basketbalu a zároveň je i probrána společenská situace Afroameričanů z hlediska historie. Dále se práce věnuje otroctví a rasové segregaci na území Spojených Států Amerických. Historický přehled je uveden do doby vzniku prvních „černých“ basketbalových týmů a prolomení rasových předsudků draftováním černých hráčů do NBA. V následující části jsou představeny filmové adaptace. V každé z nich hlavní roli představuje basketbalový tým nebo jedinec Afroamerického původu. Zdůrazněny jsou snahy hráčů překonávat jisté rasové problémy, aby dosáhli svých snů. Závěrečná část probírá do detailů právě taková témata, jako jsou diskriminace, násilí, život v ghettu či dosažení vzdělání, která jsou obsahem uvedených filmů.

Klíčová slova: Afro Američané, basketball, vzdělávání, domácí prostředí, rasová diskriminace, rasová segregace, studentský sport, (městská) ghetta, násilí