

Transforming the image of black masculinity in the NBA: A rhetorical analysis of the NBA Cares Program

TRANSFORMING THE IMAGE OF BLACK MASCULINITY IN THE NBA: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NBA CARES PROGRAM

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Abstract

This thesis examines the NBA Cares Week 2013 video as a rhetorical artifact that represents the transformation of the narrative of black masculinity in the NBA. I argue that the images in the NBA Cares Week 2013 video supplant the probability and fidelity of the narrative of black masculinity as presented in the Malice in the Palace brawl between the Detroit Pistons and the Indiana Pacers in 2004. The brawl violated the social contract between fans and players, necessitating the league to find a way to reestablish organizational legitimacy and redefine and preserve the brand of the NBA. Using Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm as a framework, I detail the NBA's shift to social responsibility as a productive strategy to recreate the league's narrative of black masculinity.

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[Black Masculinity](#)
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Basketball is seen as a predominant black sport, which has western ideologies that surround it. In the NBA world we see advertisements day and night about the big time players of the game, and the so-called "MVP". Also, how the NBA creates a militarization culture around the sport. The fan culture that surrounds basketball is extremely fascinating because so many people become emotionally invested in a sport that they are not physically participating in. These two concepts are a part of the overall image that a country wants to succeed others through sports, but when looking at a smaller scale of basketball we can also say that within the sport there are actions of militarization and nationalism. The NBA will celebrate NBA CARES in November and December, with teams and players hosting coat drives, turkey giveaways and serving food at soup kitchens. During NBA All-Star, NBA CARES will feature a weeklong caravan of community events including the entire NBA Family and one of the first of 100 youth sites for children to learn and play will be unveiled in Houston. "This new program, which will meet a critical need in our communities, continues the long standing policy of the league and its players giving back," said Kurt Aschermann, SVP, Chief Marketing & Development Officer of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

"They should be congratulated on a bold vision and we look forward to being a partner with them on NBA CARES." One image came to be central to all attempts to recuperate the lost manhood of self and nation: the invincible body, represented in our own age of extremes by steroid-juiced, knobbly musculature. Actually, size matters today much less than it ever did; not many muscles are required for increasingly sedentary work habits and lifestyles. The most lethal consequences of this mimic machismo unfolded in the first decades of the 20th century. "Never before and never afterwards", as historian George Mosse, the pioneering historian of masculinity, wrote, "has masculinity been elevated to such heights as during fascism". Mussolini, like Roosevelt, transformed himself from a sissy into a fire-breathing imperialist.