



Basketball Jones: America Above the Rim (Fast Track)

By Todd Boyd, Kenneth Shropshire



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It began with Magic, Bird, and Dr. J. Then came Michael. The Dream Team. The WNBA. And, most recently, "Spree" Latrell Sprewell—American Dream or American Nightmare?—the embodiment of everything many believe is wrong—and others believe is exciting—about the game.

Today, despite the NBA strike, despite home run derbies, despite football's headlock on network television ratings, despite the much-heralded return of baseball, basketball has assumed a role in American culture and consciousness impossible to imagine 20 years ago, when arenas were empty and the NBA finals were broadcast via tape delay in the wee hours.

So what happened? How did a "black sport," plagued by drug scandal and decimated by white flight, come to achieve such prominence? What are the subtle and not-so-subtle racial codes that define how the game is played and perceived, and the reception of its high-profile stars? What does the shift in popularity from the predominantly white, working-class ethos of baseball to the black, urban ethos of basketball suggest about contemporary life in America? What linkages exist between basketball and hip-hop culture and how did these develop? How has the arrival of women on the scene changed the equation?

Bringing together journalists, cultural critics, and academics, this wide-ranging anthology has something for everyone, from hard-core fan to casual observer.

Contributors: Todd Boyd, Kenneth L. Shropshire, Gerald Early, James Peterson, Susan J. Rayl, Davis W. Houck, Mark Conrad, Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., Earl Smith, Sohail Daulatzi, Larry Platt, Tina Sloan Green, Alpha Alexander, Tara McPherson, Aaron Baker.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Scholarly but never stuffy, a compendium of wisdom on a game which helped define the late 20th century and will no doubt define the 21st. Basketball is the top aspiration—a veritable lifestyle—for generations of black boys, the source of massive wealth and empty hoop dreams, and now the inspiration for a very fine book. Be sure and satisfy this Jones."

-Farai Chideya, author of *The Color of Our Future*

"A brilliant work of cultural criticism. Boyd and Shropshire bring together an impressive array of fresh voices who shed new light on the central metaphor of black popular culture: basketball. Basketball Jones is a thrilling and edifying read."

-Michael Eric Dyson, author of *I May Not Get There with You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.*

"No scrubs here. Basketball Jones is an All-Star extravaganza on the page, featuring the nation's best hoopologists. From dunking to Larry Bird to the WNBA, these writers cover Bball America coast to coast, in black and white and shades of gray. If you talk the game, this book will give you plenty to talk about."

-Royce Webb, SportsJones.com

"Contrary to what one might suspect, Basketball Jones is about much more than just the game of basketball. Using basketball as the central metaphor, the book is about America—its success stories, its failures, and its lingering possibilities. When you finish reading this landmark book, you will, like me, have a Basketball Jones—if you don't already!"

-Arianna Huffington, author of *How to Overthrow the Government*

About the Author

Todd Boyd is Professor of Critical Studies in the USC School of Cinema-Television. His books include *Am I Black Enough for You? Popular Culture from the 'Hood and Beyond* and, as co-editor, *Basketball Jones: America above the Rim*, available from NYU Press. He produced and co-wrote the Paramount Pictures film *The Wood*.

Kenneth L. Shropshire, the author of several books, is Professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. He has written for *USA Today*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Daily News*, *Emerge Magazine*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

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William Pare:

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Kristy Moore:

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