

OPINION

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Achievement Clouded by Race

Barry Bonds treatment unfair

BY WALLACE RYAN KUROIWA

Okay, I'll admit it: I am a San Francisco Giants baseball fan. Always have been, always will be.

Maybe it's because living in Hawaii, I used to get the Giants games on the radio. Maybe it's because in my first year of seminary in the Bay Area, I watched Juan Marichal pitch and the two Willies — Mays and McCovey — homer in my first live Major League game! So I will admit to a bias in my following rumination:

I have watched with some dismay as slugger Barry Bonds has been vilified in the media and by fans as he nears the home run milestone of 714 home runs, the record the immortal Babe Ruth held until Hank Aaron eclipsed it.

Most of the discussion has centered on the purported use of steroids by Bonds. Although there has not been any substantiation of steroid use in the legal arena, Bonds has been tried and convicted in the media. Television commentary will show pictures of Bonds as a younger player and then pictures of his present manifestation, and then conclude: now who can say he hasn't used ste-

roids? Huh? What would happen if we put pictures of all of us in our 20s and then put them side-by-side with our pictures in our 40s and jump to the same con-

clusion? Or (Rafael) Palmeiro? Whenever I go home I hear people say all the time, 'Baseball just doesn't like black people. Here's the greatest hitter in the game and they're scrutinizing him like crazy.' It's killing me because it's about race."

It may not be all about race, but race certainly is a rain cloud

Globally speaking, sports serves as a microcosm of American society. The insidious reach of racism is always near the surface of the dynamics of human interaction, if it is not overtly present. Whether it is in the New Orleans debacle or the immigration debate, economic globalization or whatever, you don't have to look far to find race lurking.



Barry Bonds

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I believe Minnesota Twins outfielder Tori Hunter hit on a reality when he observed: "They can say what they want, but there's no way they would launch an investigation if Barry Bonds was not about to break Babe Ruth's record. It is so obvious what's going on. He has never failed a drug test and said he never took steroids, but everybody keeps trying to disgrace him. How come nobody even talks about Mark McGwire

over the whole issue. Race has been a specter over sports for as long as I have been alive and much longer. Remember Jesse Owens in Germany? Jack Johnson? Jackie Robinson? Even Hank Aaron received death threats as he approached the beloved Babe's record.

Those who would claim that sports is a level playing field, that anyone with talent can make it in sports, need to take their heads out of the sand. Race matters, as Cornel West simply put it.

We will never make progress toward a more just society until we own up to that and move forward.

So my defense of Barry is more than just being a Giants fan, much more. It's about need to name the sin. When we do that, we can start to do better. And we do need to do better as a society, much better.

Wallace Ryan Kuroiwa writes for Justice and Witness Ministries in the United Church of Christ.

Letters to the Editor

Double Standard at Play

The overt reason for Chief Foxworth's sudden ouster does not make sense; however, the covert one does.

Is this not a vicious retaliation for a perceived threat to a job? Foxworth began to replace clerical positions in the department with disabled police officers. Add in an illicit affair, and there is plenty of fuel for the fire.

What about race? Although one white paper's editorial clearly stated — this is not about race, get rid of him — it was the white newspapers that gleefully dragged Foxworth's name through the mud by printing in great detail salacious — and remember heretofore private — emails between "two consenting adults." They showed no restraint, no dignity, and jeopardized his possible return by such shaming of his character.

The black newspapers showed respect and dignity, only printing the needed information about the accusations and his departure via a leave of absence.

Foxworth, it appears is being held to a much sterner standard, a double standard here at play, and he's being asked to pay a very high price. His retirement threatened, his reputation degraded — the Police union, still white dominated shows him no support and the black community is very quiet — perhaps due to his bureaucratic public response to high-voltage cases such as Kendra James and James Perez.

Still, talk of how he has 'violated the public trust' is hypocritical. Lots of people, including politicians and even former police chiefs have been known to be philanderers. Do they stand to lose as much as Foxworth already has?

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