

Sports

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my aunt who was a bit distraught. Previously he had been an honor student, but his grades had slipped. He'd decided that sport was going to be his route to a profession. So I wrote this letter for him and for all the other young people of all backgrounds. And I should also say that right now, today, he is finishing his last semester of his Masters degree in Engineering.

The Skanner News: What do you want to tell Black teens?

Lewis: I want to tell them that I understand the pressures they are under. That they are grappling with what it means to be an African American male, to be a male in America and dealing with the fact that it is not that cool to be smart, but it is really cool to be a jock. There's so much coming at you. So I'm just saying: Don't forget you can be involved in this in what I call 'the sweat free zone' – which is administrative, management, ownership, sales or writing about sports.

So what does it mean to be male, but also a "baller" someone who's living life in a certain way and they're in control. And to really be a baller, is to be a person who has political consciousness, who is intelligent and is a Renaissance person. Those people are really positioned to have really have their voice heard and to make an



impact.

The Skanner News: Your book is taking a hard look at how race and masculinity and sports impact African American men and women.

Lewis: The book is about race and sports in American culture, so it is a vehicle to engage in a conversation about the nature of race progress. It explores what is valued in American culture, and looks at our notions of masculinity, particularly Black masculinity as reflected in sports. I look at some true and false ideas we have: the notion of sport and that upward mobility narrative that too many young folks see as their best opportunity. I pull the covers off that.

I'm saying, let's realize that's a long shot. I'm also saying you have a better chance of becoming an English professor, a physician, a nurse or a lawyer than you do of becoming a professional athlete because it's such a minute pool of individuals who make it to that level.

The Skanner News: 'Ballers' questions a lot of what we accept without much thought?

Lewis: Yes. How are people of color represented in sports culture? How are women represented? What does that say? Are they in positions of leadership, power? What does that show us? So that's what I try

and do.

I try to offer solutions as well. Because there is a movement to change these things – to change these images, to change how intellectuals are seen. 'Ballers of the New School' is really about a movement to address these things.

So what I'm also doing in the book is examining how racial images can be good and how they are cast in negative ways in contemporary society. And we have do some control over this. We can change that by spinning different narratives. My projection is optimistic. How can we use sport to really take us toward the post-racial society that we would like to see? To do that we have to get past – we have to get post-racism and here's how we do that. And then we can be post-racial

The Skanner News: Where did you grow up and how did you begin thinking about how our culture views Black men?

Lewis: I'm from St. Louis Missouri. I was writing a column there while I was at university, but once I finished my doctorate I began to think about putting the things I'd been writing about into the book. I'm lucky. I was a good athlete, so I was socially accepted and it was permissible for me to be a pretty good student and show my intellectual ability. So I have been there. I went to a high school that had the worst football team so I refused to play because I had standards. I am very honest about my own experience in the book. The only way to look forward is to be honest.



Thabiti Lewis

The Skanner News: You have two daughters, so you are having to practice on other people's sons. You are welcome to work with mine.

Lewis: I'm trying to clear the social landscape so that they are dealing with young men who are confident and unwed to notions of patriarchy. How about that? (Laughs.) Can't raise them to be different sorts of women, and face men who aren't prepared or ready for such women.

If you miss Dr Lewis at Reflections, you can also see him speak at noon in the library at Washington State University, Vancouver.

Exclusion

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garage one block down on Fourth Avenue, something he's been doing since the late '90s.

On Dec. 28, when he went for his regular exercise session after work, he decided to park on the street.

"Regardless, I was in the midst of my workout and decided I needed some cardio so I went to run the stairs," he said.

Crenshaw says he was running the stairs when he noticed two Clean and Safe officers on one of the levels. He continued to the top, crossed the garage and returned down the other side.

"About one story from the bottom, I heard 'Excuse me sir, can we talk to you?'" he said.

Crenshaw stopped, they asked what he was doing, and he told them he was working out.

"I said 'Is there a problem?'" he said.

They asked if his car was parked in the garage. Because it wasn't, they accused him of trespassing.

"I said 'Well I park here all the time, just not tonight. I'm already checked in at the gym, if you want to walk over to the gym, we can do that,'" he said.

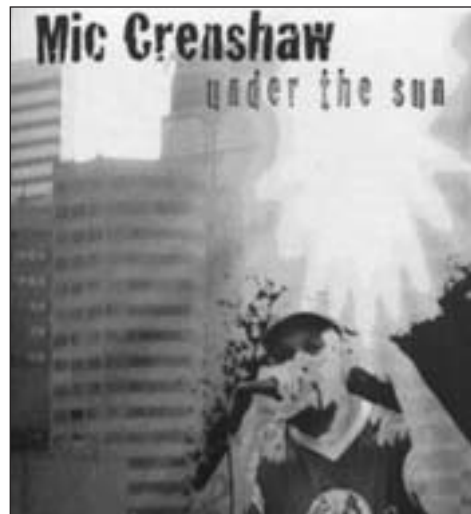
They asked for identification, to check to see if Crenshaw had already been "excluded."

"In my mind, if I didn't give them my ID, they'd escalate the situation and call the cops, and accuse me of being uncooperative," he said.

They proceeded to write him an exclusion notice. But they told him not to worry, "This is no big deal."

At that point, Crenshaw demanded his ID back. They had already recorded his name and Crenshaw wanted to remove himself from the situation. But they wouldn't let him, he said, until a senior Clean and Safe officer arrived 15 to 20 minutes later.

"As I'm waiting near the stairwell, hella White people are walking up the stairs, but



Mic Crenshaw's latest album "Under the Sun" released in 2010. Visit his website at www.miccrenshaw.com.

they're not f*cking with them," he said.

According to Crenshaw, after the senior officer showed up, one of the officers said, "We saw this subject walking in the stairwell and the stairwell smelled like marijuana and then he ran from us."

"I said 'This is bullshit, you just lied to him to justify this harassment,'" Crenshaw said.

A Mixed Bag

The Clean and Safe officers you see walking around downtown are contracted by the Portland Business Alliance through Portland Patrol Inc., a private security firm.

According to Shane Abma, vice president of downtown services for the Portland Business Alliance, Clean and Safe officers are allowed to write anyone a trespassing exclusion for breaking any of the SmartPark garage's rules —and being in a SmartPark while not being parked there or a passenger

of a vehicle is breaking rule number 2.

In 2010, Clean and Safe officers wrote 1,176 exclusions for SmartPark Garages in the Clean and Safe District.

Abma says these officers only have the authority to issue trespassing exclusions – to parks and SmartParks in the downtown Clean and Safe business district. Other than that, they are like any other private security – observe and report. They are not allowed to detain or arrest suspects. They are allowed to ask for ID, but ...

"If they (a private citizen) asks for it back," he said. "I would suspect they would hand it back."

But they do differ from other security services.

Their uniforms are very similar to Portland Police Bureau uniforms, something that does cause concern from the ACLU. Those officers that patrol downtown carry firearms – although the officers that only patrol the parking garages do not. And the trespassing exclusions are sent directly to the Portland Police.

Abma says exclusions can range from 30 to 180 days. There is no record kept of how many were issued to people by race, gender, age or reason for the exclusion, says Abma.

Cheryl Kuck, of the Portland Bureau of Transportation, told The Skanner News that "Standard operating procedure is to issue an exclusion to anyone violating the rules of conduct, which are clearly posted in the garages. We have no reason to believe that the individual about whom you inquired was unfairly targeted for the exclusion issued to him."

Appeals

While the officers told Crenshaw he would be able to appeal the exclusion within five days of receiving it, he says he didn't have the time.

"Between getting up at 6 in the morning and get home around 5, and I'm a father and a husband and have a music career and freelance education career to maintain, so the fact that I get harassed for walking downtown in a parking garage because I fit a profile, that they lie and say where I was smelled like marijuana when I don't smoke marijuana, and that I ran from them when I didn't run from them," he said.

"You could even say I waited for them and walked to them ... that I would take

The whole time I was sitting there watching all these White folk walk up and down the stairs and not be bothered, I was aware, that to some of those people I had look like the same criminal that these security guards profiled me to be.

more time out of my schedule is an insult after they already harassed me. The whole time I was sitting there watching all these White folk walk up and down the stairs and not be bothered, I was aware, that to some of those people I had look like the same criminal that these security guards profiled me to be. And they probably assumed because of the way the situation looked, I was up to no good, but in actuality, they (the security guards) were up to no good."