

# Equal Play, Unequal Pay: Race-Conscious Admissions and the Systemic Exploitation of Black Male Athletes

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## Abstract

The ban on race-conscious admissions practices limits pathways for Black men to access an affordable postsecondary education. One remaining option is through college athletics, which economically exploit the physical labor primarily performed by Black men who are unable to be legally recognized as employees. This lack of legal status prevents athletes from collectively bargaining and advocating for improved working conditions and compensation. College athletes are not only expected to perform free labor but are often not provided with the necessary academic and student support, which runs contrary to their schools' stated desire to have them prioritize studies over athletics.

This report uses publicly available data from the NCAA and its member institutions to demonstrate how college athletics have disproportionately been used by selective institutions to enroll Black men, and how allowing such trends to continue in the wake of the Supreme Court's 2023 rulings will only continue to harm this population regardless of their participation in athletics. The report also outlines potential strategies for policymakers and educational leaders that may assist postsecondary institutions in better enrolling and serving Black male undergraduates going forward.