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Tim 00:00 Hi, this is Tim Lightfoot, the director of the Huffines Institute for sports medicine and human performance, and we're really excited to tell you about an event coming up. We hope that you're close enough, or you're near one of our satellite sites to see it. And that's the Huffines discussion 2013. And this is the one where we bring in guest speakers from all over the world, that are gonna tell us their big ideas about the role and the future of sports medicine and human performance, and so join us, November 15, 2013, from one to four PM, here on site at Texas A&M at the Edinburg presidential conference center. You can also go on our website at HuffinesInstitute.org. Go over to the news and pull down to where it says Huffines discussions, and you can find a list of all of our satellite sites around the country that will be simulcasting the event at the same time. So join us on November 15, 2013, for the Extraordinary Huffines Discussion 3.

Akilah 01:29 Hello and welcome to the weekly edition of the Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance podcast. I'm your host, Tim Lightfoot. I want to thank you all for taking the time to download us and listening. Welcome to the program today. We have another interesting individual on the world of sports medicine and general health. We have Dr. Akila Carter-Francique with us today. Welcome to the podcast, Akila.

Akilah 01:50 Thank you. How you doing?

Tim 01:51 I'm doing great.

Akilah 01:52 Great.

Tim 01:52 Are you doing well so far?

Akilah 01:53 I'm doing good. [laughter]

Tim 01:56 Let me tell the audience a little bit about you so they'll know why you're here.

Akilah 01:58 Okay.

Tim 01:59 And we'll just jump into the the conversation. The doctor Carter-Francique has a Ph.D in sports studies from the University of Georgia. She has an extensive background in track and field and was on the track team at the University of Houston, right?

Akilah 02:12 Yes.

Tim 02:12 Yeah. She is currently an assistant professor in the division of sports management at Texas A&M University. Before coming here, she was an assistant director for strength and conditioning at special events in the Department of Recreational Sports at the University of Georgia. She has coached cross country, as well as track and field at the high school level. She is a certified track and field official. She is here at Texas A&M now, and her research area is diversity management and sports and recreation organizations. So again, welcome to the podcast. What is diversity management?

Akilah 02:42 Diversity management, I would sum it up as being able to address issues as it relates to diversity or with diverse populations, and sport organizations, or even outside of sport organizations, but dealing with those persons in and around sport and some of the issues as it relates to race, gender, social class, sexuality,

religion, etc.

Tim 03:08

So, what are the things that are being done to increase diversity management?

Akilah 03:14

Oh, I think there's a number of things going on out there from that practical side of the field. One thing that I find interesting is, yes, we do that scholarship aspect, but I came from the practical world. I came from being a coach. I came from working with students and campus rec. A lot of what I try to do as a trained sociologist, if you will, is to provide those practical implications for those that are doing the work. I think with individuals having programs specifically to focus on women in sport, for example. We see a lot of that work through the Women's Sports Foundation, through the Black Women in Sports Foundation, in particular, and then, you have others that want to address a range of diversity issues and the things that are happening. I work with George Cunningham, he has his diversity lab, so a number of things that are going on there as it relates to gender orientation and sexuality come out of that, as well.

Tim 04:18

Yeah, and regular listeners of the podcast will know that we had Dr. Cunningham on several weeks ago, so you can pull up his podcast and re-listen to it again. Is it getting better?

Akilah 04:27

I don't know. I think it's really trying to get all the issues in hand. I would say, initially-- Well, I want to say first of all, I'm currently the chair of the diversity community for NASSM, the North American Society for Sport Management. But with that, one of the things that we're doing right now is we sat down as a committee and we were like, well, what does diversity mean today? I think it initially addressed issues of race and gender, and that's what people know about diversity. But over time, the definition has grown to include what I spoke of a little bit before was religion, sexual orientation, yes, social class as well, but ability, the persons with disabilities. When we talk about is it getting better, I think we're still trying to pinpoint all of the different diverse areas that even need to be addressed.

Tim 05:23

So it depends on how you define it, almost.

Akilah 05:24

It depends on how you define it. It depends on what area you work in and I think issues also come in cycles and waves. So, when we talk about diversity in general, we see different segments, whether it be the business world that may be addressing certain aspects on diversity quite well, or we have other areas, in other fields, be it education, be it sport, that are addressing other areas better and others not as much.

Tim 05:52

Is there a need to address religious diversity in sports?

Akilah 05:56

Oh, definitely.

Tim 05:57

Is there?

Akilah 05:58

Definitely. I actually just finished working on a book chapter with a colleague, Jacqueline McDowell, who's actually one of Dr. Cunningham's students, who's now at the University of Illinois.

Tim 06:06

We have now name checked.

Akilah 06:07

Yeah, I know. [laughs] But in working with her - because I've focused a little bit more on the individual people, where she looks a lot more at organizations - when we talk about religion and being able to participate, particularly looking at how religion may impact how women are able to participate or not able to participate in sport based on religious beliefs. So if we look at Muslim religion for example, because of religious practices and how we talk about patriarchy, what women are able to do, what they're not able to do, and at the same time, understanding the clothing that must be worn to even have an opportunity to participate in some of the sports. If you go back and think of The London Games

and the uniforms, and I think, there was a large controversy over women's beach volleyball. As you can look and see, there's very little clothing that is worn and from a religious standpoint, you're not necessarily going to see Muslim women competing in that. Now, they modified the clothing rules because of that, which is a great accolade, I would say, for the Olympic Games to be able to acknowledge that and allow more women to be able to have an opportunity to participate. So religion still plays a key role in the ability to participate in sport for a couple of those reasons.

Tim 07:38

So when you're talking about that, you're talking about, primarily, clothing for women. Are there issues where religious beliefs would affect men in participating this sports or is it just the women's clothing issue that comes up over and over again with the religious--

Akilah 07:53

I think we can see it from a mens perspective, and maybe, how religious practices may interrupt their ability to train, and especially, if you're in a team sport and you're training on a certain time, and because of your faith, you can only perform certain activity at certain time or you have certain times where you need to set aside for that religious practice. Those are ways in which it can disrupt their abilities to participate.

Tim 08:20

There's always discussions about participation in sports during Ramadan, especially, with not being able to eat during the day and it affects performance and stuff.

Akilah 08:28

Exactly, yeah. So, we start looking at the physiology and sport performance and nutrition. What are we able to eat, not be able to eat due to fasting, for example, yeah.

Tim 08:37

Let me ask you a question that's come up in the past and we'll just ask you and see what happens. There's always an underlying question, why do we support women's athletics, especially in this day and age where everybody's time at cost? What brings in the money? Everything is so money focused now, especially, and with that lady departments, which I'll give you the free form to answer that. [laughter] Maybe outdated and outmoded concern, but I think they're still out there to some extent.

Akilah 09:05

No, I think there still is a still a level of legitimacy with that question. Why is there such a issue? Why are we still pushing, you know? You've had title nine and that ushered in the opportunity for women to participate in sport, as well as other things that we know about that particular amendment. But, I think for women to receive the same benefit that men do, and what sport can even do, you know when we talk about developmental aspects, when you're talking about character development, when you're talking about working with teams, working in a team, working with groups if you will, but I'm going to put on my health hat now and talk more about the ability for lifelong physical activity.

Akilah 09:53

When we look at issues of obesity, of diabetes, of heart disease, of cancers, women are number one in many of those areas, and then, we start to look at from a racial breakdown, then we start seeing some other specific demographics. But the lifelong physical activity that's related to that, in particular, sport performance, etc. It can help sort of alleviate some of these when we talk about obesity. When we talk about cancers, we talk about diabetes, specifically dealing with obesity, the ability to weight control. And having that type of activity. Dealing with stress, I mean being physically active. So yes, there's skills that are involved in sport performance, there are character development, things that happen, but I think even from a health perspective, we look at the emotion side of things and being able to handle high pressure situations. There's a lot of things that you can learn from being in a sport situation about-- that can transfer over into the work force, into your daily life.

Akilah 11:01 There's things that you can learn, again from just a stretching, if you will, and just what that takes, and I think there's so many benefits from sport participation, but I think I want to-- I open it up and talk about sport participation, and physical activity. So, while sport is what we look of the in all, be all of that activity, but to understand that their physical activity brings that sport participation to life. And getting involved at such a young age, I started at the age of six, and in competitive sport, but it's reminded me the value of - even though I'm retired, I'm very retired now [laughter] - from athletics, but to still be physically active.

Tim 11:46 Sure, yeah. Well, and we can't forget this is breast cancer awareness month and women who are active 150 minutes a week have a 24% less incidents of breast cancer. So yeah, certainly, there's certainly some help aspects.

Akilah 12:00 Yeah.

Tim 12:00 But I guess it comes back to, what is the notion of-- why do we have sport in a university setting? I mean, the things that you talked about helped the development of the athlete. Where so often now, sport is thought of as entertainment. There seems to be a little bit of paradox there, why do we support sports that may not be as half the same entertainment value as the other ones?

Akilah 12:23 That's a deep question. [chuckles]

Tim 12:27 Well, don't you know this is the Huffines podcast. We do deep topics here.

Akilah 12:31 Well, and It's challenging because I was in a sport, track and field, that is a non-revenue producing sport, and so it doesn't necessary bring that high value as basketball or football is. And we can even see that just in everyday society, we talk about professional sport. So when we hear about track and field, it's like every four years.

Tim 12:52 In the United States.

Akilah 12:54 In the United States.

Tim 12:55 In Europe, it's a different deal, isn't it?

Akilah 12:56 Yes. So I think it's still important. I think it is an opportunity for those skill sets, those characteristics to continue to be built during college. I was actually just reflecting because we're having a birthday party for my coach at Houston, Tom Tellez, in a couple of weeks that I'll be going to.

Tim 13:22 Does he know or are we letting the surprise out?

Akilah 13:24 You know, I don't know, but the time this -- [chuckles] you know, it'll be over. But it's one of those things of--

Tim 13:31 Happy birthday, Coach.

Akilah 13:32 Happy birthday, Coach.

Tim 13:33 If you didn't know that.

Akilah 13:34 Yeah, so he'll be turning 80, but it's one of those things that is just a pivotal time that I really remember in my life. I may not have been an All-American, but there were many things that-- lessons that I learned as being a part of the team. There are many friendships that I made. Networking opportunities that I was able to garner and things that I keep with me now to help me do my job. So sport was that platform, if you will. That was really a training ground for me and education for me, and so, I think it's something that needs to still be in this context. And working in from campus rec perspective, sport is still here. When we talk about club sport. So whether it is amateur, professional, club recreational, if you will, I think sport will always be a part of our daily lives and it's that competitive nature. Camaraderie that comes from it. Having a group to be a part of, that is a

beautiful thing about that system. And not to-- But, I think also to mention, there are some negative things that come from it. We hear about the violence that takes place through sport. We hear about stereotypes and prejudice that happen with individuals that are participating in sports. And so I think that is still a part of it, but I think it's a part of our everyday society as well.

Tim 14:59 Do you think that sport has helped alleviate some of that prejudice out there? Everybody talks about Jackie Robinson with baseball, and no one thinks anything about having black baseball players now, in major league baseball. But at a time, there was a time when that wasn't the case.

Akilah 15:17 I think sport has definitely allowed some of these walls to come down. When you think about a Jackie Robinson, I personally think of Wilma Rudolph. I think of the 1968 Olympics with Tommy Smith and John Carlos, but even when we get to times like today, you've got a number of different athletes that are doing some amazing things on the court - field, pool, track - but also, off the court, and giving back to society. Again, using sport as a platform for social change.

Tim 15:51 There are benchmarks that people use to look at an organization to say if they're encouraging diversity or if they're diverse or not, and one of the benchmarks has been African-American coaches, and there was emphasis on that NFL and so forth. It recently came to my attention that there's a university down the road from us that has never hired a person of color as a headman's coach in any of their sports. So what are some things that you think about that are benchmarks that we can use to look at organizations, or mostly sporting teams, to give us an indication of, are they diverse? Do they support that or not?

Akilah 16:31 I definitely think hiring of, not only coaches, but administrators. So, coaches is one thing and we may often see coaches being hired in those sports, but where are they positioned? Are they the head coach or they are the assistant coach? So being able to see a good balance of assistant coaches and head coaches-- but then I talk about administration as well. So if we were to look at a college sport environment, when we talk about academic advisers supports staff. Those associated administrators, seeing women administrators, if you will, do we have people in and around those positions that are of color if you will, that are of different sexual orientations if you will. Do we have women in those positions? Being able to have a good balance of that. Dr. Richard Blaszczyk actually, at the University of Central Florida, Florida puts out the racial and gender report card that begins to look at these organizations, and see if they're doing well from a racial and gender standpoint. He's looked at college sport, he's looked at WNBA, NBA, the major league baseball as well, and to be able to see if they're making the grade. But I think by looking at these different positions within the organization, not just the head coaching job, but also the support staff that is around that, that you'll see if we're making any strides. And then, to see if those numbers and those representations are in a good balance with the students that are coming through, to be able to know that we're making some progress in that range. I think another thing we kind of speak about the significance of that, comes to what I deal with, as far as the student athlete, them being able to see somebody that looks like themselves. To know that this is someone I can go to and talk to and have a safe place or a safe environment, and which I can discuss some issues that, maybe, outside of the realm of sports, but I'm comfortable enough to talk with Coach about it, because I know, based on their background, perhaps, they may have an understanding, a cultural understanding of some of the challenges that I faced that could also hinder my ability to perform well, academically and athletically, at this particular institution.

Tim 18:49 So they need role models?

Akilah 18:50 Yes, role models.

Tim 18:51 No matter what Charles Barkley said, "We all need a role model."

Akilah 18:55

Yes, definitely.

Tim 18:55

What's the role of time in all these? We're talking about diverse organizations and organizations that become diverse, but society doesn't change overnight.

No. [laughs]

What is the role of Time, and I guess a subsequent question I'll go ahead and ask is, what do you see down the road in 50 years? If we look back 50 years, there's been a tremendous amount of change in 50 years, and unfortunately, I remember all of that. But, what do you see in 50 years from now? So, what is the role of Time, and what do you see in 50 years?

The role of Time. I think it's something that we see these situations, these issues of diversity, if you will, come in cycles and in waves. So, while we may have had issues with Title IX for example, and had that amendment come through in 1972, now, it's another issue of women are in, but what women are in? It becomes an issue of an overlapping of women are there, but is it white women? Where are African American women? where other women of color, in these positions and so it takes an opportunity again to revisit this issue of title nine which I think a lot of conversations come about especially since its just turned 40

where we now? and how far have we come...

so I think through these anniversaries we see how far have we come. Over time I think it's a situation again where I think diversity scholars and those that aren't diversity scholars lay person's, practitioners and individuals that have grassroots organizations are working from every level to sort of address this issue, I particularly sort of attack it at the individual level. So by speaking with young women about who they are and developing into -- or using sport I should say to -- as a platform to development into the young women that they hope to be. I speak with them on a number of issues about how to communicate with one another. What is beauty? How much state do we put in with the media says about us and hopefully socializing them to a level where they are comfortable in their own skin. Yes, sport is what they're here to do but I think in the long run there comes a time when that the fan stops cheering, so how do these individuals become productive people in society. I tend to try to attack it from that level but we have others that deal with it at the organizational level, those that are dealing with it at the government level, those that are starting grassroots organizations with four, five and six-year-old little girls and promoting them and pushing them and supporting. I think any efforts towards addressing the issue are good if we can all work because it's going to take everybody.

Where you see this in 50 years?

My goodness, I don't know. In some I do need to definitely consider. I have a two-year-old little girl. I do think about her, and I hope that we're in a better place. Will there ever be a time when this is not an issue, that people will go, 'We don't need to talk about that. We have solved that'? I don't think so because every generation that comes through, we have a new set of issues. Also with every generation, we forget a little bit about our history, and how far we have come - and it often goes into a place of, Well, we don't need to worry about that now because that happened, and they addressed that 40 years ago. Again, that cycle--you're still perpetuating some of those things, some of those discriminatory practices, some of those stereotypes, some of those prejudices - and you may be doing them in a different way. We don't realize what's taking place. It is a matter of reminding each generation of how far we've and being able to check in and see, be able to measure - are we doing this, are we still doing this, are we still meeting this benchmark as you talked about to address this issues - because I think it's something that we need to keep at the fore of our thought with every generation that's coming through, with every new organization that's started, with every young person that we meet to make sure that they understand the value of diversity.

An example of how this thing popped up even when we think we got them under control, I think of Jeremy Lin, basketball player. He never got a chance because no one thought an Asian guy could play basketball and are very few people thought an Asian guy could play basketball. He's doing okay.

Yeah.

We got to pay attention. Thank you for being with us today. It's been great. We kind of running out of time and so we could talk about this for one time. I know, all day. We always give our guest the opportunity to tell us a take home message. What do you want the audience to remember from this broadcast?

Remember and acknowledge our history. I think it's something that can often get lost, specially now that were in this technological age of it's just a press of a button but remember what our forefathers and foremothers have done to create a way for us to be where we are today. To remember that, to acknowledge that and embrace it and then take their message and what the work that they've done and move forward. To make a better way for the next generation behind you.

Cool. Good take home message. Thanks again for being with us today.

Thank you.

And I like to thank all of you that have taken the time to download us and have listen to us. For being with us today and long time listeners of this broadcast will know that this is the point that at the podcast where we have the podcast question of the week and here with our podcast question of the week is our producer Kelly.

What does the gender report card grade?

Super. Be the first one to send us the correct answer to that question to HuffinesPodcast@hkn.tamu.edu and you'll win one of those nifty podcast t-shirts. Hurry up, our neon blue ones are going really fast, so it seemed to be pretty popular. Again, tune in, answer the question, and win that t-shirt. We hope that all of you join us again next week for another interesting person in the world of sports medicine and health. Again, thank you for being with us.

Thank you for having me here.

Yeah, and thank you all for being with us this week. Until next week. We hope you have an active and healthy week.