

## COMMENTARY / CULTURE

**“Shaping the game” – the overdue recognition of Black Quarterbacks!**

Terry Howard

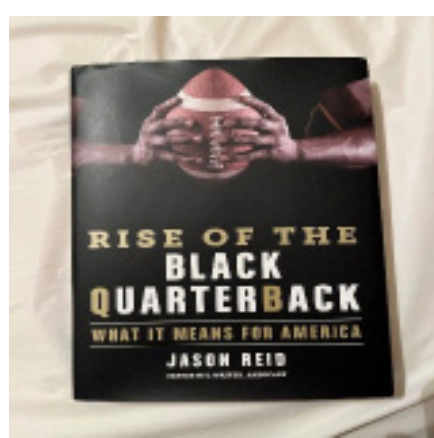
of men, Black men in particular, voices raised, and the room temperatures seemed to inch up a notch. Those nearby either looked up from their coffees or shut down their laptops and moved out of earshot.

Reminiscent of the long-gone days when Black men used to talk with pride and “trash-talked” during Saturday morning trips to the local barber shop about the latest knockouts by Joe Louis, the performances of Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlin or another massive home run by Hank Aaron, these days media rooms, bars and coffee shops are the venues. And throw in social media.

Now one could make the case that those “back in the day” venues provided welcomed and comedic relief, from the stifling realities of discrimination and segregation during those times let alone the glaring absence of Black quarterbacks in colleges and in professional football. You see, the fact was that there were no Black quarterbacks per se to brag about for many years.

So, lo and behold along came “Rise of The Black Quarterback” a superbly researched and written book by senior NFL writer Jason Reid. The beauty of this book, as is the case for most books that grab my attention (and wallet), are the summaries in the inside flap or the comments on the back. Here’s what New York Times author Ian O’Connor wrote inside.

“No American athlete has ever confronted and conquered more injustice than the Black quarterback, and Jason Reid, one of the nation’s best sports journalists,



is the perfect author to tell the tale.”

If you flip to the back cover, here’s what another best-selling author Seth Wickersham said. “Jason Reid has given us a definitive book on the prickly, uneasy, and ultimately triumphant relationship between the defining issue in American history and the defining issue in American sports.” By “defining issue” he’s talking about race.

Now as I sat back in front of my large TV screen last weekend in awe of breathtaking performances by gazillion dollar Black quarterbacks, I thought about the long dead “Jefferson Street” Joe Gilliam of the Pittsburgh Steelers, or the recently dead Marlon “The Magician” Briscoe of the Buffalo Bills, what they had to overcome and what could have been for them had they come along in recent times.

And I thought about other still living ground-breaking Black quarterbacks, among them Doug Williams, Warren

Moon and, of course Colin Kaepernick, each of whom stand on the shoulders of pioneering Black quarterbacks who paved the way with sacrifices for them.

In the end, Jason Reid’s book, I quote, “takes us to the center of the Black quarterback’s journey with passion, insight, heart, and unparalleled expertise. Along the way, he reveals a truth that is more than skin-deep: when it comes to sports and race, it’s not about how you play the game...it’s how you shape it.”

“If you had to choose between Patrick Mahomes and Lamar Jackson, who would you go with? I asked Eric Matthews, who played on the Super Bowl-winning Green Bay Packers team. With others looking on at our table he paused, rubbed his chin and responded, “it depends on which one has the best offensive lines blocking for him.”

Finally, this from “Bryant”, a “provocateur in training” at a nearby table... “Although he’s not Black, my choice would be Tampa Bay’s Tom Brady!”

Humm, the debate rages on.

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**The State of America’s Economy Is NOT Good**

By Robin Smith

the availability of money reduces spending, which means less goods and services are purchased.

The negative consequence of this approach to addressing the high cost of goods, coupled with a serious supply issue and a labor force problem to complicate it all, may mean a reduction in the need for workers as businesses and manufacturers see less demand for their wares.

Heaped on top of the economic policy mess is the decision to craft policy to eliminate fossil fuels and transition to a solar, wind and green economy for fuel, making the price of gasoline and diesel soar, essentially doubling since 2020.

This situation impacts not only those owning personal vehicles, but adds additional costs to any good or service that involves transportation or movement of that commercial item.

America is now back to importing oil, natural gas and other energy from nations that are not our allies after eliminating high-paying jobs in the energy industry, while efforts move forward to establish the technology needed to support a green economy.

By the way, energy policy must reflect that batteries need charging. Energy storage capacity does not currently exist to provide energy on demand—such as



lights going on at the moment of the switch turned—without fossil fuels.

As the monetary policy is addressed through the Federal Reserve, the American Stock Markets have had a dramatic downturn impacting the pensions, retirements and investments—not just of the wealthy—but all. According to analysts of CNBC, Americans have lost \$9 trillion in wealth, across all tiers of socioeconomic

status, this year.

So, what can we do? Save and spend carefully and wisely. Be a good employee to maximize your value on the job to avoid a potential firing. Hold on. Prices are predicted to rise on groceries, gas and essentials for the next several months.

Policies make a difference.

**This Week in African American History****THE HARLEM HELLFIGHTERS**

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LEARN  
TO READ  
READ  
TO LEARN



When World War I broke out in Europe, racial segregation was omnipresent in the United States. African Americans faced a series of statutes known as Jim Crow laws that prevented them from voting and codified discrimination in schools, housing, employment, and other sectors. In Southern states, more than one lynching of an African American took place per week. On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war against Germany and formally entered World War I. The first American troops arrived in Europe two months later.

The U.S. military did not offer Blacks respite from the racism and inhumane treatment they faced elsewhere in society. African American servicemen were

segregated from whites, who balked at the idea of fighting alongside them. For this reason, the 369th Infantry Regiment was comprised solely of African Americans.

Because of the persistent discrimination faced by Black Americans, Black newspapers and some Black leaders thought it hypocritical for the U.S. government to ask Blacks to enlist in the war. For example, President Woodrow Wilson had refused to sign an anti-lynching bill to protect African Americans.

Other Black leaders, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, argued for Black participation in the conflict. “Let us, while this war lasts, forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy,” Du Bois wrote in the NAACP’s Crisis magazine. (When it was revealed that Du Bois hoped to be named a military captain, readers questioned if his sentiments were really valid.)

The mistreatment of African Americans during this time was highlighted by the fact that not all military branches even wanted to include them. The Marines would not accept

Black servicemen, and the Navy enlisted a small number in menial roles. The Army stood out for accepting the bulk of African American servicemen during World War I. But when the troops departed for Europe in 1918, the Harlem Hell fighters weren’t allowed to take part in a farewell parade because of their skin color.

In Europe, where they served for six months, the Hell fighters fought under the French Army’s 16th Division. While racism was a global problem in the early 1900s (and remains so today), Jim Crow was not the law of the land in European countries such as France. For the Hellfighters, this meant the chance to show the world what skilled fighters they were. The nickname of the regiment is a direct reflection of how their combat abilities were perceived by their foes.

Indeed, the Harlem Hellfighters proved masterful foes of the Germans. During one encounter with enemy forces, Private Henry Johnson and Private Needham Roberts, wounded and lacking ammunition, managed to thwart a German patrol. When Roberts could no longer fight, Johnson

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