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Sport as a Bridge Across the Racial Divide

Richard E. Lapchick, Ph.D.
Director, Institute for Diversity and Ethics of Sport, University of Central Florida

Abstract
In racial tumultuous times, it is not easy to find ways to build a bridge to close the gap between various racial groups. New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina forced America to confront race and poverty in ways we have not been able to do in recent years. With college campuses being the third biggest site for hate crimes in America today, the concept of teamwork in sport presents us with a rare opportunity to bring different racial groups together on an equal playing field. The presentation will focus on this special role sport plays but also elaborate on how we can transfer the lessons of teamwork into society.

Richard E. Lapchick is a human rights activist, pioneer for racial equality, internationally recognized expert on sports issues, scholar and author, Lapchick is often described as "the racial conscience of sport." He brought his commitment to equality and his belief that sport can be an effective instrument of positive social change to University of Central Florida where he accepted an endowed chair in August 2001. Lapchick became the only person named as "One of the 100 Most Powerful People in Sport" to head up a sport management program.

Lapchick helped found the Center for the Study of Sport in Society in 1984 at Northeastern University. He served as Director for 17 years and is now Director Emeritus. Sport in Society has attracted national attention to its pioneering efforts to ensure the education of athletes from junior high school through the professional ranks. Sport in Society Project TEAMWORK was called "America's most successful violence prevention program" by public opinion analyst Lou Harris. It won the Peter F. Drucker Foundation Award as the nation's most innovative non-profit program and was named by the Clinton Administration as a model for violence prevention. Sport in Society helped form the National Consortium for Academics and Sports (NCAS), a group of over 215 colleges and universities that have adopted Sport in Society's programs. To date, more than 22,000 athletes have come back to NCAS schools. More than 9,000 have graduated. NCAS athletes have worked with more than 10 million students in the school outreach program, which focuses on teaching youth how to improve race relations, develop conflict resolution skills, prevent gender violence and avoid drug and alcohol abuse. Lapchick serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of NCAS.

Lapchick was the American leader of the international campaign to boycott South Africa in sport for more than 20 years. In 1993, Sport in Society launched TEAMWORK-South Africa, a program designed to use sports to help improve race relations and help with sports development in post-apartheid South Africa. He was among the 200 guests specially invited by Nelson Mandela to his inauguration.
Lapchick is a prolific writer. His tenth book was published in November 2001 with a foreword by Muhammad Ali. Lapchick is a regular columnist for The Sports Business Journal. He has written more than 450 articles and has given more than 2,600 public speeches. Considered among the nation's experts on sports issues, Lapchick has appeared

numerous times on Nightline, Good Morning America, Face the Nation, The Today Show, ABC World News, NBC Nightly News, the CBS Evening News, CNN and ESPN. Before Northeastern, he was an Associate Professor of Political Science at Virginia Wesleyan College from 1970-1978 and a Senior Liaison Officer at the United Nations between 1978-1984.

He is listed in *Who's Who in American Education*, *Who's Who in Finance and Industry*, and *Who's Who in American Business*. He was named for six consecutive years as "one of the 100 most powerful people in sport." In 1993, he was named as the outstanding alumnus at the University of Denver where he got his Ph.D. in international race relations in 1973. Richard is the son of Joe Lapchick, the famous Original Celtic center who became a legendary coach for St. John's and the Knicks.