Stevie Wonder Boycotts Florida Until 'Stand Your Ground' Law Abolished

By Andrea Billups

[continued from page 1]

"Until the Stand Your Ground law is abolished, I will never perform there again," he said to cheers.

Florida, however, is not the only state to feel Wonder's wrath.

"As a matter of fact, wherever I find that law exists, I will not perform in that state or in that part of the world," Wonder said Sunday at his performance in Canada's Quebec City.

Editor's Note: Seniors Scoop Up Unclaimed $20,500 Checks? (See if You qualify)

As mass protests continue around the country and other musicians pay tribute to Martin, many are calling for renewed awareness of civil rights and justice as they decry the jury's decision to find Zimmerman not guilty in the shooting death of Martin, 17.

Wonder encouraged his own fans to support him in speaking out against what he sees as an injustice.

"The truth is that -- for those of you who've lost in the battle for justice, wherever that fits in any part of the world -- we can't bring them back," he said in an emotional video posted on You Tube.

"What we can do is we can let our voices be heard. And we can vote in our various countries throughout the world for change and equality for everybody. That's what I know we can do," Wonder said.

The Business of Sports

By Carl B. Smalls

[continued from page 1]

In economics, there is a basic concept that centers on supply and demand as it relates to price and human behavior. For example, if supply exceeds demand then prices decrease; conversely, if demand exceeds supply then prices increase. Regrettably, for many HBCU athletic programs, basic economics appear to have taken a sabbatical and replaced by unsound business practices.

Perhaps it is because the majority of HBCUs are land granted institutions, meaning they are public institutions and these small public institutions generally rely heavily on funding their athletic programs through athletic fees charged to students. Though this simple approach may provide instant funding, this practice has several shortfalls. The first being that athletic programs generally have a tendency to grow much faster than student enrollment. In some cases, the relationship may be inversely related – meaning athletic costs go up while student enrollment (revenues from fees) goes down. Secondly, the athletic fees charged to the student increases the overall cost of attending the institution. Hence, affecting the institution's competitiveness in the market place. Thirdly, this practice of simply taxing the student through athletic fees has stifled the creativity to pursue alternative funding sources. Lastly, the decision of whether an increase in student fees will be approved is not the choice of the institution, but at the sole discretion of the board of governors or regents of the particular university system.

By The Numbers

According to the NCAA Division II for the 2010-11 academic year, the median total expenses for athletic programs with football was $5.1 million for both public (51%) and private (49%) institutions. My estimate is there is not one Division II, HBCU athletic program with a budget of $5.1 million. Therefore, how will they compete or be competitive if program funding is sub par? On average, Division II programs offer 15 sports and approximately half (46%) of them has enrollment of 2,499 and below. Looked at from the present method used by these institutions to generate athletic program funding, students would be taxed at a rate (athletic fee) of $2,041 per student to reach the median budget of $5.1 million (2,499 x $2,041). This is outrageous at best.

Moving Forward

If, for example, the majority of Division II student athletes pay for college through a combination of scholarship money, grants, student loans and employment earnings, wouldn't basic economics suggest that to increase the demand (assuming everything else basically stayed the same), you would not mark up the price (tuition); but would instead increase the demand by offering a better product?

So then, the fundamental question is, how does one offer a better product? In business there are best practices that govern day-to-day operations that work toward improving the overall financial health of an organization. It boils down to the customer experience. Each time a business and a customer interact, the customer learns something that will either strengthen or weaken the future relationship and that customer's desire to return, spend more and recommend the experience to others.

As in business, this is equally true for intercollegiate athletic programs that are trying to maximize attendance, ticket revenues, corporate sponsorships, suite sales, concessions, licensing and booster donations. Sadly, for many of the smaller programs, suites are not an option, concessions may not be either, and corporate sponsorships and licensing are generally small contributors or nonexistent.

So it is no longer enough to field a winning team. As fans have grown more sophisticated, they want to know how teams and athletic programs are evolving to provide consistent and entertaining products that transcend a team's performance. Now, more than ever, it is imperative to not only acknowledge this perspective but respond to it by building, nurturing, sustaining and expanding your brand.

A strong fan base is the most important asset an athletic program can achieve. Athletic programs must apply sound business practices to secure the longevity and loyalty of their customers (fans). These practices must be built on the powerful relationship between experiences and a brand that generates superior bottom-line results.

Though each athletic program is different, it is critical that they seek the assistance of a sports marketing firm to help them blend their mission and unique strengths with the best practices of sports marketing to further differentiate the program and create a targeted message to redefine the ultimate fan experience. Otherwise, they will continue to practice voodoo economics and subsequently experience what historically all institutions have experienced when there is taxation with no representation, a revolt.

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