**THE IMPACT OF THE 2014 RAYMOND CHESTER HALL OF FAME CAMPAIGN**

Let me first thank all the thousands of football fans worldwide and particularly HBCU Alumni football fans and the Oakland Raider Nation's officially recognized Booster Clubs; The D.C. Metro Raiders Booster Club, Washington D.C. and their chairperson Ms. Shronda Bell; and The Phoenician Raiders Club, Phoenix, Arizona and their president, Mr. Michael J. Smallwood. The Phoenician Raiders Club has dedicated a website towards the campaign for the Raymond Chester Hall of Fame campaign to get out the vote. **These two booster club presidents have been on several local and** **national radio talk shows, including the Coach Butch Mc Adams show, "IN AND OUT OF SPORTS "1450 A.M; " the "Bev Smith Show," and the " Carl Nelson Show," which are on the nationally syndicated Radio One Network,** along withRonald Bethea, CEO of the Black Sports Legends Foundation (BSLF), Raymond Chester, and his former Oakland Raider teammate Derrick Ramsey, presently Athletic Director at Coppin State University. Raymond Chester has done on over twenty radio shows, whose names and hosts are too numerous to name individually in this article. A nationally syndicated newspaper article done by an outstanding young African-American female sports journalist, Ms. Brenda Pitts, "CAMPAIGN TO FINALLY ELECT NFL LEGEND RAYMOND CHESTER INTO PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME," published on March 9, 2014.

What Raymond Chester has done outside the game of football was evident in what he shared with thousands of radio listeners concerning the unlevel playing field in the selection by the NFL Hall of Fame Selection Committee of players from historically black colleges and universities. These players, according to black college historians, played in what is known as the golden era of black college football - from 1946-1976 .

The period, known as the modern day era for African-Americans in NFL athletics, began in 1946 when [Woody Strode and Kenny Washington](http://content.cdlib.org/dynaxml/data/13030/t2/hb6k4007t2/files/hb6k4007t2-FID5.jpg), managed to break through the NFL's color barrier—becoming the "Jackie Robinsons of football," as it were—in 1946, one year *before* Robinson himself first ran out to play in Brooklyn's infield? Strode and Washington, whose rushing stats at UCLA were even better than Robinson's, got their chance to play in the NFL when the Cleveland Rams moved to the West Coast in 1946 and the commissioners who ran the [Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum](http://www.lacoliseum.com/) wrote a provision into the club's lease requiring the team to be integrated. Even though Woody Strode and Kenny Washington *weren't* really the first African-Americans to play in the NFL, because the NFL had included black players from the very moment of its founding in 1920.

**Fritz Pollard, a quick and elusive black halfback who had earned first-team All-American honors in 1916 while playing in the Ivy League for** [**Brown University**](http://www.brown.edu/)**, was by 1920 the star player for the Akron Pros, one of the NFL's charter franchises. Pollard not only played in the NFL's first season, he led the undefeated Pros to the** [**NFL's first championship**](http://www.nfl.com/history/standings/1920). And the following season, he officially took over leadership of the team, becoming the NFL's first African-American head coach even while he continued to play every down as the team's best player. In all, Pollard played eight NFL seasons, winning posthumous [induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame](http://www.profootballhof.com/hof/member.jsp?player_id=242) in 2005. And Fritz Pollard wasn't the only black athletes to play in the early NFL; at least 13 African-American players appeared on league rosters between 1920 and 1933. One of them was [Paul Robeson](http://prcc.rutgers.edu/images/robeson-football.jpg), who has to be considered [one of the most talented Americans—of any race—of all time](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/robeson_p.html). Before going on to achieve worldwide notoriety as a singer, actor, civil rights spokesman, and radical political activist, Robeson played three seasons in the NFL in order to earn money to pay his way through [Columbia University Law School](http://www.law.columbia.edu/).

We have provided you with this brief NFL historical overview to provide you with what the NFL refers to as the modern day athlete. We also are looking at the 30 year window in which the top talented athletes still were attending historically black colleges and universities. The statics and numbers show that after 1976, the major white state universities opened the flood gates and the recruiting wars began between the major white universities. Our black colleges and universities became casualties of that war without and television and advertising network and millions with which to fight back.

When you look at the Pro Football Hall Of Fame from **first pros from predominantly African-American schools, you have the following:** **Ezzret Anderson, end (Kentucky State), Los Angeles Dons (AAFC), 1947; John Brown, center (North Carolina College), Los Angeles Dons (AAFC), 1947; Elmore Harris, halfback (Morgan State), Brooklyn, 1947. The first name star from a predominantly African-American college: Paul (Tank) Younger, fullback-linebacker (Grambling). Los Angeles Rams 1949-1957; Pittsburgh 1958**. Raymond Chester's statistical numbers bear out that he is the greatest tight end to come out the black college era during that 30-year era, 1946-1976. The only other tight end from an HBCU to surpass Raymond Chester is Shannon Sharpe from Savannah State College inducted to the Pro-Football Hall of Fame on August 6, 2011.

Why was his campaign significant? Because of the above facts and the message about the numbers of players selected from HBCUs. Someone on the NFL Hall of Fame Selection committee must have been listening because August 3, 2014 marked the first time that three players from HBCUs where inducted on the same ticket. Do you think someone from the main stream media was listening to Raymond Chester and that his words had an impact on the voting committee's selection decision? The following players were inducted: **Michael Strahan of Texas Southern University;** offensive tackle Walter Jones; linebacker Derrick Brooks, defensive back **Aeneas Williams, Southern University**, defensive end **Claude Humphrey, Tennessee State University**, wide receiver Andre Reed and Ray Guy, who became the first full-time punter to be selected. During Aeneas Williams's induction speech he spoke to this fact. **I wonder if he was aware of 2014 Raymond Chester Hall Of Fame campaign for the class of 2015 and its impact.**