

9-16-2014

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Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Department of History News" (2014). *History News*. 17.
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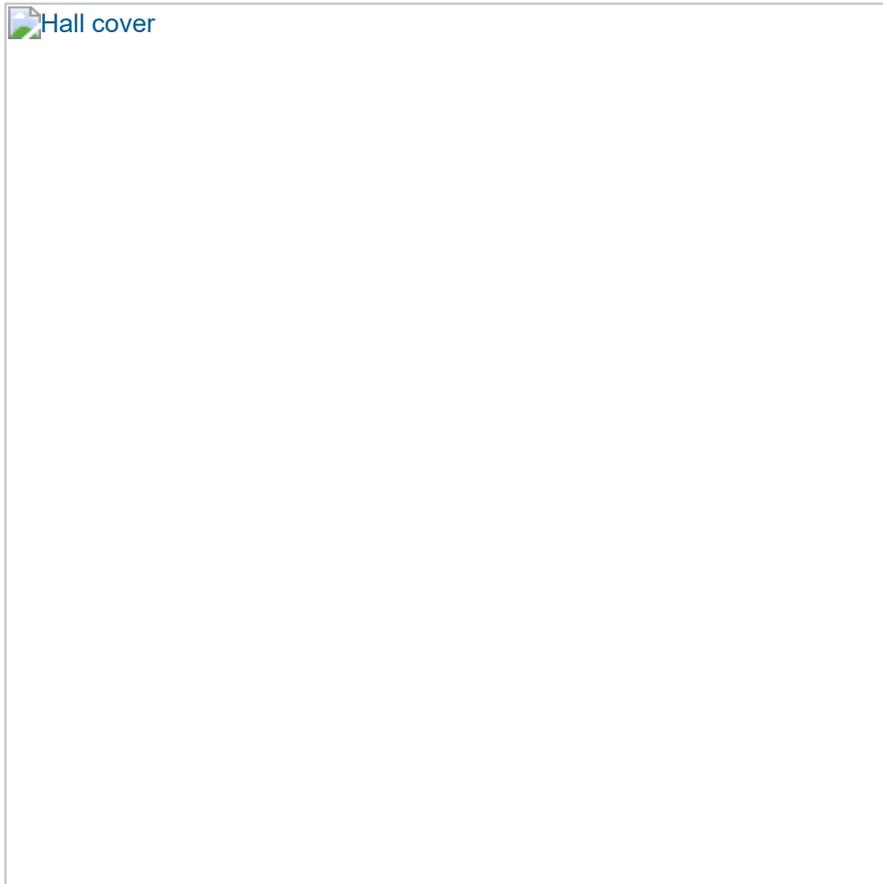
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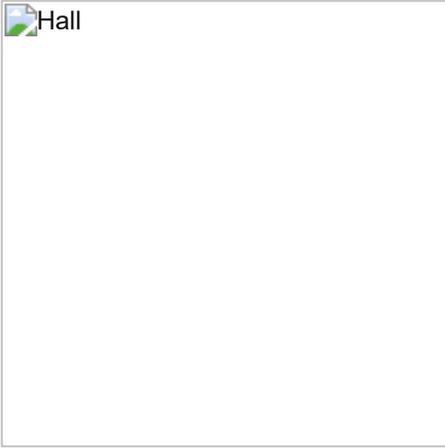
History professor's book chronicles life of tennis star Arthur Ashe

September 16, 2014

History professor's book chronicles life of tennis star Arthur Ashe

September 5, 2014



Hall

Eric Allen Hall, Ph.D., has had his first book, *Arthur Ashe: Tennis and Justice in the Civil Rights Era*, published by Johns Hopkins Press. Recently, Hall was also a featured blogger on the publisher's website, denoting how Ashe's story is still relevant today, as evident through such events as the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri.

"I grew up in a very racially and ethnically diverse suburb of Chicago," Hall said. "Even as a child, I was aware of racial and class divisions; I was also a huge sports fan. I played baseball and golf in high school and obsessively followed my favorite Chicago teams: the Bears, Cubs, Bulls and Blackhawks. As a graduate student at Purdue University, I began writing about sports as a means to examine social issues such as racism, classism and sexism. Arthur Ashe caught my attention because of his international activism, political independence, and willingness to engage in dialogue with his intellectual opponents."

Though many African-American athletes during the era of the Civil Rights Movement – including Muhammad Ali, Bill Russell, and Jim Brown – were branded by the media as radicals, militants and leftists, Ashe was unique, Hall said.

"Ali, as most of us know, joined the Nation of Islam and refused to fight in the Vietnam War," Hall said. "Other black athletes, such as Jesse Owens and Althea Gibson, remained mostly silent on racial matters. Ashe adopted some elements of Black Power but not others. He preferred open dialogue to disengagement and supported the Black Freedom Movement, but in his own way. He defied classification."

To write *Arthur Ashe*, Hall utilized newspapers, magazines, oral-history collections, FBI files, letters to and from Ashe, archival materials, and he was even able to examine more than 20 boxes of Ashe's personal papers, scrapbooks, and materials at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem. Though he had been researching Ashe for many years, Hall still learned new things during this process.

"I learned that Ashe was very good at controlling his public image," Hall said. "He was careful about what he said to the press and thought deeply before he spoke. He was also the most intellectual athlete that I have ever come across. He read and wrote about all kinds of things: Middle Eastern conflict, South African Apartheid, labor issues, and the exploitation of college athletes, just to name a few."

Hall's book is intended for popular audiences in addition to academics and is an expansion of an article he published in the *Journal of African American History* in 2011, "'I Guess I'm Becoming More and More Militant': Arthur Ashe and the Black Freedom Movement, 1961-1968."

"I wrote *Arthur Ashe* for a scholarly and popular audience because Ashe is was widely known as a tennis champion and advocate for human and civil rights. His life story has deep appeal for sports fans and those interested in the Black Freedom Movement; it also adds to the scholarly literature on race, sports and politics.

"My book examines the life and times of a man who had to negotiate the shift from civil rights to Black Power while excelling at the white, upper-class sport of tennis. He used his athletic platform to push for an end to Apartheid in South Africa, education reform, and open dialogue about race and inequality. His political moderation allowed him to work with people from all backgrounds: white, black, conservative and liberal."

For more information on *Arthur Ashe: Tennis and Justice in the Civil Rights Era*, visit jhupbooks.press.jhu.edu/content/arthur-ashe.

Hall is an assistant professor of history at Georgia Southern University. His research and teaching interests include African-American history, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements and popular culture.

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Former History Graduate Student Publishes in Salon

September 16, 2014

Former graduate student in the History Department—Keith Gentry—published an article in Salon about his experiences in the military:

http://www.salon.com/2014/09/15/dude_you_get_to_blow_up_stuff_the_moral_awakening_of_a_navy_man/#comments

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