Arthur Ashe the Militant and his Death

Name

Affiliation

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Arthur Ashe was one of the most prominent African American athlete, tennis player, author and civil rights activist in the United States of America. He was born in 1943 and died in 1993, at the age of 49 due to an illness. Arthur Ashe spent a very active life, as he took part in the civil rights activities to talk about the rights of the African Americans, as well as the racial segregation and social discrimination of the black population. He was the first African American who got the chance of playing tennis, at the international forums, where he was often discriminated as well, however, due to his remarkable performance and talents, he was able to make his name. He was of the view that he should utilize the opportunity of being a well-known person to talk about the rights of the black Americans and play his role in the civil rights movement. In addition to it, in the later part of his life, he contracted the disease of HIV AIDS, and instead of concealing it and focusing on his treatment, he actively talked about the disease and tried his best to create awareness about the disease among the general public. He wrote his autobiography as well, which enabled the world to know the struggles and achievements of the African American player, from his own perspective. The author, Eric Allen Hall also took the chance of shedding light on the civil rights activist and black freedom movement of Ashe through his research article, which provides detailed insight about the life and struggle of Ashe. Arthur Ashe may have been an African American tennis player, who achieved great victories in the sports; however, he did not just enjoyed the fame, but utilized it for the cause of black freedom movement and never let go of the chance of talking about the rights of the African American community.

Eric Allen Hall in his article ““I Guess I’m Becoming More and More Militant”: Arthur Ashe and the Black Freedom Movement, 1961–1968,” has specifically concentrated on the specific years of the life of Ashe, which he spent advocating the rights of the African Americans. The author had described in the initial lines of the article that when Ashe died, a great majority of the general public, without the discrimination of white or black, rich-poor came on the streets to acknowledge the services of the great activist and pay their final regards to him. He had struggled his whole life while fighting against the racial segregation and discrimination of the black community over the white population of the world and he was able to make a change in the society. He had not just witnessed the segregation and discrimination of the society; however, he had experienced it as well. When he was able to make his name in society, he realized that it was the best opportunity to take forward his cause of civil rights activism. He was recognized for his services at the international forums, and the great leaders like Nelson Mandela expressed his wish of meeting Ashe. He was among the African Americans athletes who played an active role in the black freedom movement. One of the most remarkable achievements of Arthur Ashe is that he not only talked about the racial segregation being practiced in the united states of America, however, also supported the anti-apartheid movement of South Africa, while talking about the rights of the black population in every part of the world.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Arthur Ashe belonged to Richmond Virginia, where he was brought up by his father, after the death of his mother, when he was only five years old. Racial segregation was a prominent part of that society as the black students had to attend a different school, play in a different neighborhood park and travel on the back seats of the public transport. He was warned by his father not to play American football, which was a popular sport among the white Americans at that time of history. So, he started playing tennis at the age of seven and immediately got the attention of Ron Charity, who identified his natural talent and Ashe found a lifelong mentor in him. He was included in the tennis team of the middle schools; however, he was denied the permission of playing against the Caucasian players, as well as use the tennis court of the school which was reserved for the white population. Still, he was able to win the junior championship and make his name. At that time, tennis was considered the sport of the upper and middle-class white community, due to which Ashe had to face great difficulties. Playing a match meant that he needed new equipment, which cost almost thousand dollars and it was essential to use the new equipment for every match, which added to the difficulties and financial strains of the young athlete.[[2]](#footnote-2)

He had to face a number of hurdles at the school level, when he was stopped to compete with the white players, however, he kept working on improving his game and strategies, with the help of his mentor and got an athletic scholarship from the University of California, Los Angeles. He also joined the group of ROTC, which required him t join the military service of the United States of America, after graduation as a mean of paying for his tuition fee. He actively took part in the tennis matches during his university, as well as military years and 1963 was the year when he finally set his feet in the tennis court as a professional player, which also started his active participation in the black freedom movement.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Arthur Ashe was the first ever African American player, who was selected in the United States Davis Cup team and he won the cup as well. He was also the first African American player who won the titles of U.S. Open, Australian Open, and Wimbledon in the singles. This was the time when he started being known at the international forums and the reporters and magazine representatives started asking his opinion about the racial segregation and the state of the civil rights movement. The athletes are usually instructed not to get involved in political matters and share their opinion regarding sensitive matters, as it can cause hurdles in their career. However, Ashe neglected all such instructions and actively voiced his opinion about the issue of racial segregation. He was denied the visa of South Africa multiple times, which strictly practiced the apartheid laws at that time. Due to being denied the visa, he was unable to take part in the South African Open. He actively talked about the discrimination of the South African government as well as the wrongfulness of the apartheid movement which was a part of the South African society. He also raised his voice for the black community of Haiti and remarked that the black populations in each and every part of the world deserve equal rights and recognition and their black skin color does not make them any less than the white community of the world. Due to the constant efforts and struggles of Ashe, the players of South African team were denied the permission to take part in the united states Davis cup, as well as the international Olympic committee, banned the country from the games due to its racial discrimination and apartheid movement at the national and international levels. The South African government did not let the black athletes represent the country on the national and international forums.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Arthur Ashe did not talk about the rights of the black communities on the sports forums; however, he delivered speeches at the community level as well, while talking about the rights of the African American community and the racial segregation of the American society. In the later years of his life, he was diagnosed with HIV AIDS, which he contracted due to the blood transfusion during one of his surgeries. He publically announced his disease, without being worried about the reaction of the public. He then created his foundation to support HIV patients as well as created awareness about the disease among the general public. He also laid the foundation of the tennis court to provide the opportunity to the African American children who equally accepted the white children as well. The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. was a great blow to Ashe as he became worried about the future of the black movement and actively supported the vision of King until his death.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Arthur Ashe was one of the most prominent African American athletes of the United States of America, who actively took part in the civil rights movement. He fought against the racial segregation and discrimination of the African American community and black poverty at the national level, as well as voiced his criticism of the apartheid practices of South Africa at the international forums. He worked for the cause, without caring about his careers and the prospective difficulties he could face due to his views. He also became the first African American to have won the titles of U.S. Open, Australian Open and United States Davis Cup. He received recognition for his services at the international level.

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5. Ibid 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)