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Standing Tall

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Standing Tall

03.16.2011 | Athletics, Campus and Community

It's one of life's truisms: celebrities are often shorter in person.

Not Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, arguably the best basketball player of all time. He's so towering that he needs to sit behind the podium at a news conference.

The 7-foot-2 Hall of Fame center spent time with national and local reporters, participated in a candid give-and-take session with University of Dayton and Dayton Early College Academy students in Boll Theatre, spoke to a huge crowd at the Schuster Center and showed up at the inaugural First Four NCAA games at University of Dayton Arena. He closed out the 2010-2011 Diversity Lecture Series in a larger-than-life fashion March 14-15.

Today, he's turned to a second career as a filmmaker and author of books that popularize the contributions of African-Americans to American culture and history. Some of his observations on life and hoops:

On March Madness: "At this time of the year, all junkies for the game get their fix."

On whether it was frustrating or maddening when dunking was briefly banned in college ball: "It was annoying. They were trying to limit my effectiveness. I think that the rules committee, they blew it that time."

On role models: "Kids today want to be Kobe Bryant or Jay-Z, and that bothers me."

On professional sports: "The sense of entitlement and 'the rules don't apply to me' have taken root among professional athletes. ...In my generation, we had to go to college or we couldn't play professional basketball."

On his best college class: "I doublemajored in English and history at UCLA. The History of India because it was such a unique culture I had never studied."

On Congressional hearings on Muslim radicalism: "I think Mr. (Peter) King's efforts are misguided. By and large, the overall majority of American Muslims do not subscribe to radical beliefs. He does have a legitimate issue, but he's trying to milk this for political gain."

On leukemia: "I had a big scare, but the type of leukemia I have can be dealt with. If I go to the doctor and take my meds, I should be around for awhile."

On education: "Knowledge is power. Unless you're going to inherit \$20 or \$30 million, that's the way things roll. Make sure when you leave college, you have a diploma in your pocket."

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