EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2014 NBA champion San Antonio Spurs are an example of how successful American enterprises today combine native-born and foreign-born talent to compete at the highest level. With 7 foreign-born players, the Spurs led the NBA with the most foreign-born players on their roster. Tony Parker (France), Boris Diaw (France) and Manu Ginobili (Argentina) played alongside Tim Duncan (U.S. Virgin Islands) and Kawhi Leonard (U.S.) to bring the team its 5th NBA championship since 1999.

The San Antonio Spurs are part of a larger trend of globalization in the NBA. In the 2013-14 season, the National Basketball Association (NBA) set a record with 90 international players, representing 20 percent of the players on the opening-night NBA rosters, compared to 21 international players (and 5 percent of rosters) in 1992.

Professional baseball started blending foreign-born players with native-born talent earlier than the NBA. On the 2014 Major League Baseball (MLB) opening-day roster there were 213 foreign-born players, representing 25 percent of the total, an increase of 2 percentage points from an NFAP analysis of MLB rosters performed in 2006. Leading foreign-born baseball players include 2013 American League MVP Miguel Cabrera, 2013 World Series MVP David Ortiz and Texas Rangers pitcher Yu Darvish.
SAN ANTONIO SPURS AND THE RISE OF FOREIGN-BORN PLAYERS IN THE NBA

Americans invented baseball and basketball. For much of the nation’s history the sports were almost exclusively played professionally by native-born Americans – and only white Americans. Both Major League Baseball and the National Basketball Association broke through the color barrier to permit non-white players, most famously Jackie Robinson in 1947. But the rise of foreign-born players came slowly, particularly in the NBA.

As of 1992, “the NBA had only 21 international players on its rosters,” about 5 percent of the NBA at that time.1 The “Dream Team” featuring Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson and other stars at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona is credited with boosting the profile of basketball globally and may have served as a catalyst for the rising talent level of international players.

In the 2013-14 season, 90 international players – 20 percent of the total – were on opening-night NBA rosters, a four-fold increase in the proportion of foreign-born players from 1992.2 Foreign-born professional athletes generally use temporary visas, such as P or O, that have no numerical limits, and thus avoid the backlogs that can prevent a highly skilled scientist and engineer from gaining, for example, an H-1B visa to work in the United States. Also, many athletes self-petition for green cards to become permanent residents, using the employment-based first or second preference (EB-1 and EB-2), and may avoid the waits of 6 to 10 years, as well as certain bureaucratic procedures, experienced by many talented individuals in the technology and business sectors.3

The San Antonio Spurs led the league with 7 foreign-born players, according to the NBA. Moreover, data on Wins Produced, compiled by BoxScore Geek, indicate the foreign-born players on the Spurs were responsible for 32 of the team’s league-leading 62 wins in 2013-14. The leading win producer among foreign-born players was Marco Belinelli, from Italy, with 6.7 wins produced, followed by Manu Ginobili, born in Argentina, with 6 wins produced, with important contributions also from Patty Mills (Australia, 5 wins), Tiago Splitter (Brazil, 4 wins), Boris Diaw (France, 3.8 wins), Tony Parker (France, 3.6 wins), and Cory Joseph (Canada, 2.8 wins).4

None of this is to argue that only the foreign-born players contributed to the San Antonio Spurs compiling the NBA’s best record and the league championship. The team’s two most important players were native-born Kawhi

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2 “NBA Tips Off 2013-14 Season With Record International Player Presence,” NBA.com, October 29, 2013. Note: NFAP eliminated two players from the NBA’s list, bringing the total number of foreign-born players to 90, since individuals born in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are U.S. citizens at birth.
3 Immigration and National Act; Jaensch Immigration Law Firm. Professional athletes generally do not have go through “labor certification” with the U.S. Department of Labor to receive an employment-based green card.
4 Data available at BoxScore Geek. For regular season only. Numbers rounded off.
Leonard and Tim Duncan, who was born in the U.S. Virgin Islands and is considered a U.S. citizen by birth. But just like it would make little sense for technology companies to refrain from hiring any of the 71 percent of electrical engineering graduate students (or 65 percent of computer science graduate students) who are international students at U.S. universities, it also would be poor business practice for any NBA team to eliminate foreign-born talent from its potential labor pool if it wants to compete at the highest level.\(^5\)

### Table 1
San Antonio Spurs: Wins Produced in 2013-14 Season by Foreign-Born Players

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Native Country</th>
<th>Wins Produced</th>
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<tr>
<td>Marco Belinelli</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>6.7 wins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manu Ginobili</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>6 wins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty Mills</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>5 wins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiago Splitter</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>4 wins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boris Diaw</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>3.8 wins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony Parker</td>
<td>France (born in Belgium)</td>
<td>3.6 wins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cory Joseph</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2.8 wins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL WINS PRODUCED**

32 (of 62 team wins, or 52%)

Source: BoxScore Geek, NBA. Numbers rounded off.

### MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

A similar story on the acceptance of foreign-born athletes and their contributions can be seen in Major League Baseball. In 1940, fewer than 2 percent of the players on Major League Baseball rosters were foreign-born. By 1990, the number had climbed to 10 percent.\(^6\) At the start of the 2014 season, 25 percent of the players on Major League Baseball rosters were foreign-born, a total of 213 players.\(^7\) (See Appendix.) That represents a higher proportion than the 23 percent recorded in a 2006 NFAP analysis of professional baseball rosters.\(^8\)

Major League Baseball teams, like all employers, seek out employees that will make their companies better able to compete. Even a quick survey of recent awards and current statistics indicates many teams are rewarded for being open to talented individuals without regard to their place of birth.


\(^7\) “2014 Opening Day Rosters Feature 224 Players Born Outside the U.S.,” Press Release, Major League Baseball, April 1, 2014. Note: NFAP excluded the 11 players from Puerto Rico from the MLB list, since individuals born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens by birth.

\(^8\) Stuart Anderson and L. Brian Andrew, *Coming to America: Immigrants, Baseball and the Contributions of Foreign-Born Players to America’s Pastime*. 
Two of the best pitchers in the American League in 2014, as measured by earned run average, are Yu Darvish, with the Texas Rangers, and Masahiro Tanaka, with the New York Yankees, both born in Japan. The two leading hitters for average in the American League in 2014 have been the Seattle Mariners Robinson Cano (Dominican Republic) and the Detroit Tigers Victor Martinez (Venezuela).

In 2013, the American League’s Most Valuable Player was awarded for the second consecutive year to Detroit Tigers slugger Miguel Cabrera, born in Venezuela. In the 2013 World Series, David Ortiz, born in the Dominican Republic, batted a remarkable 11 for 16, a .688 batting average, to garner the series’ MVP award and lead the Boston Red Sox over the St. Louis Cardinals in 6 games. The Rookie of the Year award in the National League in 2013 went to Florida Marlins pitcher Jose Fernandez, who was born in Cuba.

**CONCLUSION: SUBSTANTIAL REVENUE INCREASES FOR NBA AND MLB**

NBA revenues have increased substantially over the past 30 years. In the 1982-83 season, NBA revenues were $118 million, compared to $4.6 billion for the league’s 30 teams in the 2012-13 season, according to Forbes.\(^9\) Similarly, revenues for Major League Baseball rose from $1.4 billion in 1995 to over $8 billion in 2013, reports Forbes.\(^10\) And there is no evidence the entry of foreign-born talent has lowered the wages of NBA or Major League Baseball players, who have been enjoying record salary levels.

If the National Basketball Association and Major League Baseball had hired more foreign-born players and it resulted in an inferior product, then that would likely be reflected in league revenues. Both leagues rely on the voluntary purchases of tickets (and TV viewership) by consumers, who appear to be fine with foreign-born players on their favorite teams. Revenue figures indicate, it can be argued, that globalization and the ability to hire talent from around the world has benefited the leagues by enhancing the quality of play and attracting new fans and revenues. Being open to talented individuals without regard to their place of birth and combining their abilities with native-born athletes has not been bad for business.

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APPENDIX

2013-14 NBA Opening-Night Roster – International Players (90)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>BIRTHPLACE</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>TEAM</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Carlos Delfino</td>
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<td>Argentina</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emanuel &quot;Manu&quot; Ginobili</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Australia</td>
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<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>Boston Celtics</td>
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<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>Greivis Vasquez</td>
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Source: NBA. Note: Players from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands were removed, since individuals born in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are U.S. citizens at birth.
Foreign-Born Players on 2014 MLB Opening Day Rosters (213)

ARUBA (1)
Bogaerts, Xander, BOS

AUSTRALIA (2)
Balfour, Grant, TB
Rowland-Smith, Ryan, ARI

BRAZIL (1)
Gomes, Yan, CLE

CANADA (10)
Adduci, James, TEX
Axford, John, CLE
Crain, Jesse, HOU
Henderson, Jim, MIL
Lawrie, Brett, TOR
Martin, Russell, PIT
Morneau, Justin, COL
Paxton, James, SEA
Saunders, Michael, SEA
Votto, Joey, CIN

COLOMBIA (4)
Frieri, Ernesto, LAA
Quintana, Jose, CWS
Solano, Donovan, MIA
Teheran, Julio, ATL

CUBA (19)
Abreu, Jose, CWS
Alonso, Yonder, SD
Bueno, Francisco, KC
Cespedes, Yoenis, OAK
Chapman, Aroldis, CIN
Elias, Roenis, SEA
Escobar, Yunel, TB
Fernandez, Jose, MIA
Garcia, Onelki, LAD
Gonzalez, Miguel, PHI
Grandel, Yasmani, SD
Hechavarria, Adeiny, MIA
Iglesias, Jose, DET
Martin, Leonys, TEX
Nieto, Adrian, CWS
Pena, Brayan, CIN
Puig, Yasiel, LAD
Ramirez, Alexei, CWS
Viciedo, Dayan, CWS
**CURAÇAO (5)**
Bernadina, Roger, CIN
Jansen, Kenley, LAD
Profar, Jurickson, TEX
Schoop, Jonathan, BAL
Simmons, Andrelton, ATL

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (83)**
Abad, Fernando, OAK
Alburquerque, Al, DET
Almanzar, Michael, BAL
Almonte, Abraham, SEA
Alvarez, Pedro, PIT
Arias, Joaquin, SF
Aybar, Erick, LAA
Bastardo, Antonio, PHI
Bautista, Jose, TOR
Beltre, Adrian, TEX
Beltre, Engel, TEX
Benoit, Joaquin, SD
Bonifacio, Emilio, CHI
Cabrera, Melky, TOR
Cano, Robinson, SEA
Casilla, Santiago, SF
Castillo, Wellington, CHI
Castro, Starlin, CHI
Ciriaco, Pedro, KC
Cleto, Maikel, CWS
Colon, Bartolo, NYM
Cruz, Arnoldi, STL
Cruz, Nelson, BAL
Cueto, Johnny, CIN
De Aza, Alejandro, CWS
Deduno, Samuel, MIN
Encarnacion, Edwin, TOR
Familia, Jeurys, NYM
Figueroa, Pedro, TB
Florimon, Pedro, MIN
Furcal, Rafael, MIA
Garćia, Leury, CWS
German, Gonzalez, NYM
Gomez, Carlos, MIL
Hernandez, Roberto, PHI
Herrera, Kelvin, KC
Jimenez, Ubaldo, BAL
Lagares, Juan, NYM
Lake, Junior, CHI
Liriano, Francisco, PIT
Marmol, Carlos, MIA
Marte, Starling, PIT
Martinez, Carlos, STL
Mejia, Jenrry, NYM  
Nicasio, Juan, COL  
Noesi, Hector, SEA  
Nova, Ivan, NYY  
Ogando, Alexi, TEX  
Ortiz, David, BOS  
Oviedo, Juan Carlos, TB  
Ozuna, Marcell, MIA  
Paulino, Felipe, CWS  
Peguero, Francisco, BAL  
Peralta, Jhonny, STL  
Peralta, Joel, TB  
Peralta, Wily, MIL  
Perez, Juan, SF  
Pimentel, Stolmy, PIT  
Pineda, Michael, NYY  
Pujols, Albert, LAA  
Ramirez, Aramis, MIL  
Ramirez, Hanley, LAD  
Reyes, Jose, TOR  
Rodney, Fernando, SEA  
Rodriguez, Wandy, PIT  
Rogers, Esmil, TOR  
Rosario, Wilin, COL  
Salazar, Danny, CLE  
Santana, Carlos, CLE  
Santiago, Ramon, CIN  
Segura, Jean, MIL  
Sierra, Moises, TOR  
Simon, Alfredo, CIN  
Soriano, Alfonso, NYY  
Soriano, Rafael, WSH  
Strop, Pedro, CHI  
Uribe, Juan, LAD  
Valverde, Jose, NYM  
Ventura, Yordano, KC  
Veras, Jose, CHI  
Villanueva, Carlos, CHI  
Villar, Jonathan, HOU  
Volquez, Edinson, PIT  
JAPAN (9)  
Aoki, Nori, KC  
Darvish, Yu, TEX  
Fujikawa, Kyuji, CHI  
Iwakuma, Hisashi, SEA  
Kuroda, Hiroki, NYY  
Suzuki, Ichiro, NYY  
Tanaka, Masahiro, NYY  
Tazawa, Junichi, BOS
Immigrant Contributions in the NBA and Major League Baseball

Uehara, Koji, BOS

MEXICO (9)
De La Rosa, Jorge, COL
Estrada, Marco, MIL
Gallardo, Yovani, MIL
Garcia, Jaime, STL
Gonzalez, Miguel, BAL
Pena, Ramiro, ATL
Perez, Oliver, ARI
Salas, Fernando, LAA
Soria, Joakim, TEX

NICARAGUA (3)
Cabrera, Everth, SD
Lopez, Wilton, COL
Ramirez, Erasmo, SEA

PANAMA (4)
Chen, Bruce, KC
Delgado, Randall, ARI
Ruiz, Carlos, PHI
Tejada, Ruben, NYM

SOUTH KOREA (2)
Choo, Shin-Soo, TEX
Ryu, Hyun-Jin, LAD

TAIWAN (2)
Chen, Wei-Yin, BAL
Wang, Wei-Chung, MIL

VENEZUELA (59)
Adrianza, Ehire, SF
Altuve, Jose, HOU
Alvarez, Henderson, MIA
Amarista, Alexi, SD
Andrus, Elvis, TEX
Arcia, Oswaldo, MIN
Avilan, Luis, ATL
Belisario, Ronald, CWS
Blanco, Gregor, SF
Cabrera, Asdrubal, CLE
Cabrera, Miguel, DET
Callaspo, Alberto, OAK
Carrasco, Carlos, CLE
Cervelli, Francisco, NYY
Chacin, Jhoulys, COL
Chirinos, Robinson, TEX
Doubront, Felix, BOS
Escalona, Edgmer, BAL
Escobar, Alcides, KC
Escobar, Eduardo, MIN
Galvis, Freddy, PHI
Garcia, Avisail, CWS
Gomez, Jeanmar, PIT
Gonzalez, Alex, DET
Gonzalez, Carlos, COL
Gonzalez, Marwin, HOU
Gutierrez, J.C., SF
Guzman, Jesus, HOU
Hernandez, Cesar, PHI
Hernandez, Felix, SEA
Herrera, Jonathan, BOS
Infante, Omar, KC
Izturis, Maicer, TOR
Lobaton, Jose, WSH
Machi, Jean, SF
Martinez, Victor, DET
Medina, Yoervis, SEA
Montero, Miguel, ARI
Morales, Franklin, COL
Mujica, Edward, BOS
Navarro, Dioner, TOR
Ortiz, Joseph, TEX
Parra, Gerardo, ARI
Perez, Martin, TEX
Perez, Salvador, KC
Petit, Yusmeiro, SF
Pinto, Josmil, MIN
Prado, Martin, ARI
Ramos, Wilson, WSH
Rodriguez, Francisco, MIL
Rondon, Bruce, DET
Rondon, Hector, CHI
Sanchez, Anibal, DET
Sanchez, Hector, SF
Sandoval, Pablo, SF
Scutaro, Marco, SF
Tabata, Jose, PIT
Torres, Alex, SD
Valbuena, Luis, CHI

Source: Major League Baseball.
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