Beginning in the late 19th century, African-American baseball was the seedbed for talented players who would eventually pave the way to an integrated sport. Dozens of barnstorming black teams were playing around the country by the time the first successful African-American league was founded in 1920.
The first successfully organized black league appeared in 1920, and was soon followed by others. Although these early leagues were plagued by financial difficulties and changing teams and schedules, they managed to survive through perseverance, constant play, tremendous skill, and hard work.

Hoping to lessen the effects of discriminatory practices of white run booking agencies and enhance opportunities for black players, black owner-managers Rube Foster of the Chicago American Giants and C.I. Taylor of the Indianapolis ABCs formed the Negro National League in 1920. The Eastern Colored League soon followed for the 1923 season. These leagues prospered during the Roaring Twenties, as many southern rural African Americans migrated to northern and midwestern industrial cities looking for better work opportunities during “the Great Migration.” The first era of black professional baseball ended with the coming of the Great Depression, which created immense hardship for African-American communities.

The Great Depression of the 1930s hit hard in the many new and vibrant, but relatively poor, black neighborhoods of industrialized America, where African-American communities. Migration.” The first era of black professional baseball ended with the coming of the Great Depression, which created immense hardship for African-American communities.

After Robinson’s 1947 Dodgers debut, pressure mounted for the rest of the major league teams to integrate. But progress was slow, and it would take more than a decade before every club had at least one African-American player on its roster.

By 1959, every major league team’s roster was integrated, but in baseball, as in all parts of American life, questions concerning true equality of opportunity remained unresolved. The presence of black players, managers, executives or team officials was not always fully accepted or welcomed. Over the years, and often outside the public eye, integration of baseball’s executive offices and related businesses has remained an issue.