

By examining the challenges faced by African-American players as they formed their own leagues and later integrated the major leagues in the mid-20th century, **Pride and Passion** illustrates how these milestones in baseball were not individual points of significance in themselves, but part of an ongoing process in American society.



Ball autographed by the Kansas City Monarchs, winners of the 1924 World's Colored Championship
Photo by Milo Stewart Jr./National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

Pride and Passion: The African-American Baseball Experience, a traveling exhibition for libraries, was organized by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, New York, and the American Library Association Public Programs Office, Chicago. The traveling exhibition is based on an exhibition of the same name on permanent display at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.

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(Front Cover)
Brooklyn Dodgers' cap from Jackie Robinson's 10-year major league career
From the Barry Halper Collection
Photo by Milo Stewart, Jr./National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum



A Traveling Exhibition to America's Libraries

PRIDE & PASSION

The African-American Baseball Experience



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.



Pittsburgh Crawfords in front of their bus at Greenlee Field, 1935
Courtesy National Baseball Hall of Fame Library



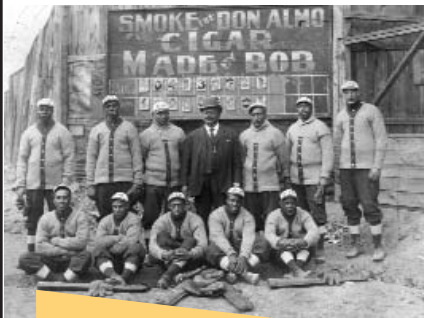


Moses Fleetwood Walker (back row, center) played on the integrated minor league Toledo team in 1883. In 1884, Toledo joined the major league American Association, making Fleet and his brother Weldy, who played on the same team, the last black major leaguers prior to Jackie Robinson in 1947. Courtesy of National Baseball Hall of Fame Library

FINDING A WAY IN HARD TIMES, 1860–1887

Following the Civil War (1861-1865), Reconstruction was meant to establish freedom and fairness for former slaves. It failed dismally, even in baseball, a game spread throughout the nation by the war. In both the North and the South, opportunities for black players in organized baseball narrowed as racial prejudice deepened. As black communities became worlds of their own within the larger American society, African Americans established teams in clubs and schools.

When lines of prejudice firmed up by the mid-1880s, black players also formed professional teams, as opportunities for playing with white ballplayers faded away. Moses Fleetwood Walker and his brother Weldy were the first black ballplayers to play on a white major league team when they played for Toledo in 1884, and they would be the last integrated major leaguers until Jackie Robinson in 1947.



Proclaiming themselves the "Colored World Champions" of 1909, the St. Paul (Minn.) Gophers were one of several independent all-black teams trumpeting that title. Courtesy of National Baseball Hall of Fame Library

BARNSTORMING ON THE OPEN ROAD, 1887–1919

By the late 1880s, more than 30 African Americans played on organized baseball rosters, mainly in the minor leagues. They were confronted with the insults of teammates, rough play of opponents, and the occasional violence of locals. Then in 1887, International League owners agreed to make no new contracts with African-American players. In unspoken agreement, other leagues adopted similar policies over the next 15 years.

With few if any options left, black players started their own professional teams. They barnstormed throughout many of the nation's towns and cities, playing against all comers and building a reputation for great baseball. By 1910, more than 60 teams were on the road. Some were so good that no amount of prejudice could deny their talent, yet throughout the era of segregated baseball teams scrambled simply to exist.

SEPARATE LEAGUES, PARALLEL LIVES, 1920–1932

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.



Belt buckle celebrating Hilldale's Eastern Colored League championship, 1923. Photo by Milo Stewart, Jr./National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

PAVING THE WAY TO INTEGRATION, 1933–1946

The Great Depression of the 1930s hit hard in the many new and vibrant, but relatively poor, black neighborhoods of industrialized America, where spending power was already limited. Attendance at black baseball games plummeted. By 1931, both the Negro National and Eastern Colored leagues had folded, but black baseball quickly reorganized. Eventually Negro league baseball grew into a multi-million dollar enterprise, one of the largest in the African-American community and a focus of pride.

Playing under lights helped preserve black baseball during the Depression, as did the East-West all-star game, which annually put the best players of the Negro leagues in the spotlight at Comiskey Park in Chicago, drawing as many as 50,000 fans for one of the most important events in the African-American community.

JACKIE ROBINSON BREAKS THE BARRIER, 1947

As World War II ended, many African Americans believed that "separate but equal" could no longer be tolerated because while much was separate, little was equal. Brooklyn Dodgers president Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson took the lead in testing America's tolerance for integrated baseball. Under pressure, the major and minor leagues began to desegregate, but slowly and on their own terms.

Robinson became a hero to millions of Americans. He embodied the hope that one day the color of a person's skin would no longer determine the limits of opportunity. Nearly everybody agreed that Robinson's ability to tolerate prejudice, and his ability to play, helped many accept that African Americans belonged in the majors and in mainstream American life. The integration of baseball acted as a harbinger of things to come.



Jackie Robinson's Brooklyn Dodger glove, bat, jacket and cap by Milo Stewart, Jr./National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

POST-INTEGRATION ERA, 1948–PRESENT

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.



Don Newcombe and Roy Campanella, Brooklyn Dodger teammates of Jackie Robinson. Courtesy of National Baseball Hall of Fame Library

RELATED READINGS

Dick Clark and Larry Lester, eds. *The Negro Leagues Book*. The Society for American Baseball Research, 1994.

Phil Dixon with Patrick J. Hannigan. *The Negro Baseball Leagues: A Photographic History*. Amereon Ltd, 1992.

Lawrence D. Hogan. *Shades of Glory: The Negro Leagues and the Story of African-American Baseball*. National Geographic and National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, 2006.

John B. Holway. *The Complete Book of Baseball's Negro Leagues: The Other Half of Baseball History*. Hastings House Publishers, 2001.

James Overmyer. *Queen of the Negro Leagues: Effa Manley and the Newark Eagles*. Scarecrow Press, 1998.

Robert Peterson. *Only the Ball Was White*. Oxford University Press, 1992.

James Riley. *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues*. Da Capo Press, 2002.

Jules Tygiel. *Baseball's Greatest Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

ON THE WEB

<http://web.baseballhalloffame.org/index.jsp>

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, New York

<http://www.nlbpa.com>

The Negro Leagues Baseball Players Association

<http://www.nlbm.com>

The Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, Kansas City, Missouri

<http://www.negroleaguelegends.org>

Negro League Legends and Barnstormers

EXHIBIT SITES

Pride and Passion: The African-American Baseball Experience is being displayed in libraries throughout the United States. For a schedule of exhibition locations and display times, please visit <http://www.ala.org/publicprograms>; contact the American Library Association Public Programs Office, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; or call 1-800-545-2433, ext. 5045.