Breaking Baseball's Color Line

Ashley Eva Gurevitz

The unwritten color line in Major League Baseball exemplified the racial tensions and prejudices in post-Civil War America. African-American ballplayers were banned from playing with their white counterparts, forcing them to create their own leagues. The Negro Leagues may have been a successful business for the African-American community, but it illustrated the racial division in America. Breaking the color line was a long process that required the participation and efforts of various groups. The end of World War II initiated the discussion of why African-Americans were barred from playing. Despite many calling for equal rights, there remained a serious debate within the African-American community on whether integration was worth fighting for. Once Branch Rickey and the Brooklyn Dodgers made integration possible in 1947, African-American players and spectators continued to face discrimination through the recommendation of a code of conduct. As a precursor to the Civil Rights Movement, the integration of Major League Baseball exemplifies African-Americans' fight for equal rights.

For nearly a century, African-Americans were banned from playing organized baseball with their white counterparts. In early leagues, there were blatant rules that restricted them from playing. The issue became more complex when this turned into an unwritten color line that seemed impossible to break. White managers and owners acknowledged African-American talent, but refused to sign one until they were "allowed." The public looked to baseball's commissioner, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, who repeatedly denied there ever being an official ban. In response to this unofficial ban, African-Americans formed their own Negro League in 1920. With twelve teams, the Negro League drew African-American crowds to nearly

110 games a season.[1] Despite being a successful business, the league also brought attention to the discrimination and segregation that existed in America.

Breaking the unwritten color line was an incredibly long process that drew effort from a variety of different groups. Beginning in the 1930s, African-American newspapers continuously ran stories to spread the word about the idea of integration. Starting in 1936, the Communist Party and their most popular newspaper, The Daily Worker, ran daily headlines regarding the talent in the Negro League and advocating for the admittance of African-Americans to the white leagues. Beginning in the 1940s, Branch Rickey, manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, secretly created a plan to integrate Major League Baseball. World War II was a major turning point in the effort to break the color line, with African-American veterans returning home and embodying the paradox of being denied the right to play baseball. Branch Rickey became the first to sign an African-American player to both a minor league and major league team. Between the community and well-known managers and politicians, the integration of baseball was made possible. The creation of the unwritten color line reflected the prejudices of post-war America. While most African-Americans were critical of Jim Crow laws and desired equal rights, there remained a serious debate about whether the integration of baseball was an appropriate goal.

Before the league we know today as Major League Baseball was created, there were numerous organizations formed in an attempt to become the leader of organized baseball. The National Association of Baseball Players was one of the first major leagues created, which began before the Civil War.[2] This association disbanded in the 1870s and the National League we know today was created in 1876.[3] The American Association often competed with the National League for dominance of major league baseball in the 1880s, before it was disbanded in the 1890s.[4] Major

1 Harvey Frommer, *Rickey and Robinson: The Men Who Broke Baseball's Color Barrier* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1982), 99.

2 Rick Swaine, *The Black Stars Who Made Baseball Whole: The Jackie Robinson Generation in the Major Leagues*, 1947-1959 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2006), 5.

3 Ibid.

4 Sol White, *History of Colored Baseball, with Other Documents on the Early Black Game*, 1886-1936, compiled by Jerry Malloy (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), xvi.

League Baseball did not come into official existence until the American League was founded in 1901 and set itself on equal footing with the National League.[5]

During this same time period, African-Americans came together and created their own baseball leagues. In 1886-1887, the League of Colored Base Ball Players was founded and consisted of six teams.[6] In the 1880s, the athletic ability of African-Americans was often unnoticed or viewed as unimportant. Player Sol White exclaimed that the league "served to bring out the fact that colored ball players ability were numerous."[7] The creation of their own league gave African-Americans a chance to have their own institution and culture during the Jim Crow era.[8] The Negro National League was created by Andrew "Rube" Foster in 1920, and in 1936 their rival organization, the Negro American League, was formed.[9] Baseball became an integral part of life for the African-American community in the 1930s and 1940s. There were hundreds of employees and millions of dollars in revenue for the Negro League.[10] As author and baseball historian Donn Rogosin stated, the Negro League "may rank among the highest achievements of black enterprise during segregation."[11] It was a highly successful business that gave African-Americans a sense of empowerment and pride through having their own league. Also, the Negro League gave African-American baseball players a chance to show their athletic ability in baseball, even against white teams. Beginning in the 1880s, white major and minor league teams would supplement their income by playing exhibition games against Negro League teams during the post-season.[12] The National and American Leagues eventually restricted their teams from participating due to the embarrassment of sometimes losing. Although these games occurred, there was a tradition of segregation in white leagues' bylaws.

5 Swaine, The Black Stars, 7.
6 White, *History of Colored Baseball*, xxii.
7 Ibid., xxiv.
8 Jules Tygiel, "The Negro Leagues," OAH Magazine of History 7, no. 1 (1992): 24.
9 Ibid; Neil Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball: The Rise and Ruin of a Black Institution*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 59.
10 Tygiel, "The Negro Leagues," 25.
11 Ibid.
12 Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 208.

Shortly after the Civil War ended, the National Association of Baseball Players amended their rules in 1867. The league's nominating committee reported at a convention that they "unanimously report against the admission of any club which may be composed of one or more colored persons."[13] While this league was later disbanded, their explicit rule shows the racial prejudices and stereotypes that filled the atmosphere. These explicit bans would shape the way the National and American League would view having African-American players on their roster.

As with the leagues that came before, African-Americans would continue to encounter explicit bans on their participation in organized baseball. Often, the players would experience racial episodes and prejudiced antics from their white counterparts. For example, there would be intentional errors made when an African-American was pitching or players would often refuse to pose for team pictures.[14] These antics were only the beginning of the various problems and discrimination African-American players would face.

One of the most famous African-American players during this time was Moses "Fleet" Walker, who played for the Toledo Blue Stockings. During his time in the minor leagues, Walker was the center of a well-known conflict that illustrated the racially-fueled situations in which African-American players frequently found themselves. Adrian "Cap" Anson, a famous baseball Hall-of-Famer, refused to play with Walker during an exhibition game between Toledo and the major league Chicago White Stockings.[15] When it was declared that his team would lose money, the game was delayed for over two hours before Anson finally agreed to play.[16] While further incident was avoided, Anson would later make another appearance in the creation of the color line. Later, in 1884, Toledo joined the American Association when it was in existence, officially making Walker the first African-American to play major league baseball. During Walker's major league season with Toledo, he again would experience conflicts with his race being the major issue. In one instance,

13 Nominating Committee of the National Association of Base Ball Players, "The Exclusion of African Americans from the National Association of Base Ball Players, 1867," ExplorePAHistory.com, 2011, http://explorepahistory.com/odocument.php?docId=1-4-E0.

14 White, *History of Colored Baseball*, xx.

15 Swaine, *The Black Stars*, 6.

16 Howard W. Rosenberg, "Cap's Great Shame - Racial Intolerance," Cap Chronicled, http://www.capanson.com/chapter4.html.

Toledo was set to travel to Richmond to play. Before arriving, manager Charles Morton received a letter warning that a group of men threatened to mob Walker if he were to show up in a baseball uniform.[17] The letter was soon discovered to be a hoax, but that did not stop Morton from leaving Walker "sick" at home.

Three years later in 1887, Anson again refused to play the Newark Little Giants in an exhibition game if African-American player, George Stovey was on the field.[18] This time, Anson refused to give in and eventually Stovey faked an injury and watched the game from the bench. That same day, the International League, a participant in minor league baseball, formally banned teams from signing any African-Americans in the future.[19] This created controversy due to the lack of a formal ban for nearly twenty years and the fact that there were multiple teams within the minor leagues that had African-American players. Moses Walker's brother, Weldy Walker, was playing in the Tri-State minor league when this occurred. It was rumored that these formal bans would spread across every league. This led to Walker writing a letter to the Tri-State league president, which was featured in The Sporting Life, a well-known publication known as the "baseball bible." Weldy exclaimed, "There should be some broader cause – such as want of ability, behavior, and intelligence – for barring a player than his color."[20] Despite the controversy, the banning of African-Americans in organized baseball would only become solidified and more complex.

The formal ban on African-American players in the minor leagues and some major leagues was a result of prejudiced attitudes after the Civil War and during Jim Crow era. Once the National and American Leagues became Major League Baseball, the color ban became more complex and would later prove difficult to tear down. Many historians refer to the color line in organized baseball as de facto segregation, because it was set in place without a formal rule. This became known as the "gentlemen's

17 Arthur R. Ashe, *A Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African-American Athlete* (New York: Warner Books, 1988), 71.

18 Rosenberg, "Cap's Great Shame - Racial Intolerance."

19 White, *History of Colored Baseball*, xx.

20 Weldy Walker, "Why Discriminate? An Appeal to the Tri-State League By a Colored Player," *The Sporting Life* (Philadelphia, PA), March 14, 1888.

agreement," because white club owners, managers, and ballplayers had a collective understanding that African-Americans would not play in organized baseball.

Because of this uncertainty and without a formal ban in the rulebook, baseball officials were able to push the subject aside. Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis was often at the front line of this issue and he would always avoid the question. His assistant, Leslie O'Connor, was quoted numerous times maintaining the stance that no color ban existed and that the subject of African-American players was never brought to discussion.[21] Commissioner Landis did not make a public comment on the issue until 1942, where he continued to state that African-Americans were not banned from baseball and club owners hired at their own discretion.[22] Landis was very consistent in stating that there was no "formal or informal or any understanding, unwritten, subterranean or subanything against the hiring of Negroes."[23] He would then go on to say, "The possibility of Negroes playing in the major leagues was up to club owners."[24] In a 1939 poll done by The Courier, 5 out of 8 major league managers expressed that they would be willing to sign an African-American if owners were granted permission.[25] This illustrated that not only was the color ban denied, but the commissioner, owners, and managers placed responsibility on others to break it. As journalist Curt Reiss pointed out in his article "May the Best White Man Win," "The color line is doubly unfair because it doesn't really exist…nowhere is the color line written into rules or conditions of admission."[26]

Adding additional concern to this fight was the fact that African-Americans were the only race to be denied rights to playing baseball. Alvin Moses noted in the popular African-American newspaper The Plaindealer that "Chinese, American Indians, Filipinos, Hawaiians, Japanese, Cubans and colored nationals appear on the rosters of our major ball clubs. It is to the undying shame of the United States, cradle of liberty and equality for all peoples, that the brilliant playing Negro is kept eternally on

21 Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 210.
22 Ibid., 233.
23 Edwin Bancroft Henderson, *The Negro in Sports* (Washington, DC: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1949), 190.
24 Ibid.
25 Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 229.
26 Ibid., 229

the sidelines."[27] It was troubling for many to comprehend why only this one particular race was banned and how they were going to fight an officially non-existent rule.

The political influence to end the color ban would later increase once World War came to an end and military members returned home. Firstly, in 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order prohibiting discrimination in the military.[28] The country was in the process of moving towards ending segregation and becoming aware of African-Americans being treated unfairly, and organized baseball was no different. Concerned individuals began to notice how African-Americans were able to fight alongside their white counterparts in the military, but did not have the opportunity to play alongside them in baseball. A communist councilman by the name of Benjamin Davis published a controversial pamphlet that depicted a dead African-American soldier next to an African-American baseball player. It spoke of the harsh reality and read, "Good enough to die for his country but not good enough to play baseball."[29] Many viewed this approach as lurid, but no one denied the truthfulness it displayed.

New York began to display some hope for the efforts to end the color ban when Governor Thomas E. Dewey signed the Ives-Quinn anti-discrimination bill on March 12, 1945.[30] The law made New York the first to penalize discrimination in employment on the grounds of race or religion. While the law did not officially apply to baseball, there was hope that one of the three major league teams in New York would step up to be the first to sign an African-American player. As history later shows, Branch Rickey and the Brooklyn Dodgers lead the way by signing Jackie Robinson.

African-Americans were banned from participating in organized baseball because of the prejudiced attitudes in America. This, however, did not stop the African-American community from disagreeing over the cause of the color ban. Many African-American writers placed the blame not on the prejudices held by the white owners and managers but instead on the African-American community. Most African-American baseball fans were very much aware of white players and their

27 Alvin Moses, "Beating the Gun," *The Plaindealer* (Kansas City, KS), December 17, 1943.

28 Swaine, *The Black Stars*, 9.

29 J.A. Mangan, *Ethnicity, Sport, Identity: Struggle for Status*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004), 76.

30 E. Baxter, "New York State Bars Economic Jim Crow," The Crisis, April 1945.

teams. At the 1932 World Series game, a Yankees commentator noted that 1/5 of the 30,000 fans in attendance were African-American.[31] In another instance, writer Frank Young criticized "the young Negro who prefers to spend his money to see two all-white teams play in a major league which draws the color line," after the White Sox were drawing more African-American fans than the American Giants in the Negro League.[32]

Writers for the African-American newspapers argued that by attending white games, this continued to show owners and managers that there was no need to integrate because they were able to make money regardless of the ban. Young continued his argument when he said the African-American community only stamped their "approval on anything worth while after all other races say that particular thing is great. And as long as this situation exists – just so long are we frozen out of chances of getting our proper place in the sun."[33] To achieve integration, it was going to take more effort than having players good enough to play and a few lone groups asking for it. The writers recognized that the entire African-American community was needed to achieve this goal and demanded that integration had to start with not attending white games. Journalist Walter St. Clair wrote that "it has been said, and his actions where organized baseball is concerned bear out the statement, that the American Negro has less race pride and self-respect than any other individual in civilization."[34] Instead of focusing efforts on changing the opinions of organized baseball officials, writers felt that African-Americans were the main reason for the color line and that their continued actions were to blame.

Writers also criticized African-Americans, in general, for creating their own programs and culture, and effectively segregating themselves. The Chicago Defender featured an article called "Sees Threat in Voluntary Segregation," in which the blame for the baseball color line was placed on the creation of the Negro League. The author, Marcell L. Johnson, wrote the piece to state his opinion that the greatest error committed by African-Americans was to voluntarily segregate themselves

31 Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 230.

32 Frank A, Young, "Dixie Whites would Not Quit Big Leagues If Our Men Could Play," *The Chicago Defender*, June 25, 1938.

33 Ibid.

34 Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 230.

in baseball, church, and schools. He argued that all energy and effort should have integration in mind if it were to be made possible. Johnson asked, "Does it make sense to combat segregation on one hand, arguing that Negroes as a group are segregated and discriminated against; and then on the other hand segregate themselves?"[35] The struggle of trying to place an African-American in organized baseball led to the creation of the Negro League, but Johnson argued that this was discrimination in their own programs and that they must avoid this situation. He ended his plea with the strong words, "Segregate yourselves and others will do no better."[36] This was an eerie way of Johnson saying that society was treating African-Americans based on their own actions.

While disagreements among the causes of color line were up for debate, other members of the African American community were firmly against the idea of integration. Negro League ballplayers and writers feared for the wellbeing of players, while Negro League managers and owners feared for their economic stability. Indeed, although civil rights and the end of segregation were desirable, integration was considered dangerous for the Negro League owners' business. By 1942, three million fans had seen Negro League teams play, and World War II was the highpoint for the league in revenue.[37] If integration were to occur, Major League Baseball would take the best players the Negro League had to offer and many questioned how the players left behind would make a living.[38] Owners were mostly concerned with the economic impact it would have on them. Journalist Dan Burley went as far to say that owners "don't give a single yap about Negroes getting in the big leagues."[39] He came to this conclusion after talking to the female co-owner of the Newark Eagles, Effa Manley, in which she proclaimed that she would not like to see her star players in the big leagues unless "we owners were given assurances that we wouldn't be robbed of our vested interests in the players we develop."[40] This would prove to be a major point in integration, because major league teams would eventu

35 Marcell L. Johnson, "Sees Threat in Voluntary Segregation," *The Chicago Defender*, November 10, 1945.
36 Ibid.
37 Tygiel, "The Negro Leagues," 26.
38 Sam Lacy, "Sepia Stars Only Lukewarm Toward Campaign to Break Down Baseball Barriers," *Washington Afro-American* (Washington, DC), August 5, 1939.
39 Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 237.
40 Ibid., 238.

ally sign African-American players without any regard of their contracts with Negro League teams. Many of the owners received no compensation for their players who left freely. After Jackie Robinson first made it into Major League Baseball, Negro League baseball announced that they were issuing protests to baseball's commissioner regarding the danger to the future of their league.[41] Owners' fears later came true as the integration of baseball resulted in the end of the Negro League.

Not only were Negro League officials reluctant of integration but so were ballplayers and journalists. One of the most well known journalists for Negro League baseball was Sam Lacy. He found it ridiculous that African-American ballplayers were not asked about their opinion regarding integration, since there were many advocates asking for players to be given the opportunity to play. Lacy discovered that many players were actually leery about the idea. Vic Harris, captain of the Homestead Grays, thought that "it might be a good thing and then again it might not be," before questioning what would become of the Negro League and the players who were not good enough for the major league.[42] Shortstop for the Newark Eagles, Dick Lundy, believed that there was too much focus on trying to achieve integration. Instead he advocated for more focus on creating a strong organization within the Negro League, so it would have ability to demand recognition.[43] Jud Wilson of the Philadelphia Stars had doubts about anything good coming from breaking the color line. Saying, "it would have to be a universal moment and that will never be."[44] Wilson was concerned about baseball being run by "southern blood" and the hate that would occur when teams would need to travel and stay in the South.

White managers in the major league shared this concern. Manager of the Dodgers, Burleigh Grimes, told The Daily Worker that integration could never happen because traveling to the South and trying to use trains, hotels, and restaurants would be too great of a hassle.[45] With managers and players from Major League Baseball showing these concerns, it was understandable that African-American

41 Johnson, "Sees Threat in Voluntary Segregation."
42 Lacy, "Sepia Stars Only Lukewarm"
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Irwin Silber, *Press Box Red: The Story of Lester Rodney, the Communist Who Helped Break the Color Line in American Sports* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 59.

players in the Negro League were worried about the potential abuse that could occur. Some writers empathized with this, including R.S. Simmons who wrote, "Why keep trying to throw Negro ball players on a group which has proved it doesn't want you. Why not have some independence by building up and praising your own leagues and forget the other fellow has a league, like he forgets you have one."[46] An unnamed player expressed to Dan Burley that if a player were to be given the chance to play, they would have to quit from all the abuse they would receive. Going on to say, "I believe it's best for us to stay in our place and keep Negro baseball wholly Negro."[47] Famous Negro League pitcher, Satchel Paige, disclosed to Sam Lacy in 1945 the frustration of everyone fighting for integration without thinking of the players. Paige was very concerned about it stating, "You keep on blowing off about getting us players in the league without thinking about our end of it…without thinking how tough it's gonna be for a colored ball player to come out of the club house and have all the white guys calling him 'n____r' and 'b____k' so-and-so."[48] While owners were concerned about the economic aspect of integration, ballplayers were deeply concerned about the wellbeing of African-American players and the hatred they would face in such a situation. Racial hatred was encountered each and every day on the streets outside of baseball and integrating the sport would perpetuate these practices on the field. Players thought that keeping the leagues separate was one way to avoid this.

While the disagreements with integration efforts would eventually be disregarded, the African-American community and supporters agreed that players and fans should follow appropriate behavior. Integration supporters understood that it would take an entire group effort if players were to succeed in playing major league baseball. This led to many groups advocating and arguing for a standard code of conduct in regards to not only the players, but the spectators as well.

The perceived "correct" code of conduct was an issue dominated by white journalists since the early 1900s. It first began when writers would often comment on stereotypical views of African-American's "natural" comedic traits, which were

46 Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 217.
47 Ibid., 241.
48 Ibid., 242.

referred to as clowning.[49] There were expectations that, when seeing a Negro League game, you would have the chance to see buffoonery. As journalist Dan Daniel of the New York World-Telegram noted, African-American baseball "embodies comic relief impossible in white games because no Caucasian can play baseball with the rhythmic quality inherent to the black race."[50] Their athletic ability was pushed aside and their clowning, dancing, and arguing was seen as entertainment instead of sports.[51] African-American writers knew that if integration was going to occur, players needed to embody a professional, athletic reputation.

African-American players understood that they were expected to act professionally, on and off the field. The first rule of survival in organized baseball was understanding that much more was expected of an African-American player beyond their athletic ability.[52] It was a major concern that certain players in the Negro League would not "act right." As Baltimore Elite Giant's manager Felton Snow put it, "many of the good players are bad actors and many of the ordinary players are fine characters."[53] It was all about trying to find the right combination if integration was to be well received in the major league. Branch Rickey, manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers and first to sign an African-American player, was very open about his criteria when choosing the right player to integrate baseball. Rickey was searching for the right man on the field as a player, and the right man off the field with "exceptional intelligence" and the ability "to grasp and control the responsibilities of himself to his race and could carry that lead."[54] Surprisingly, attention was focused less on the players and more on instructing spectators and fans how they should act.

The issues regarding improper behavior and ways to avoid it at games dominated sports columns and editorials in the African-American newspapers.[55] A campaign was launched and advertised by the African-American elite to focus efforts

49 Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 227.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 White, The *History of Colored Baseball*, iv.
53 Lacy, "Sepia Stars Only Lukewarm"
54 "Speech by Branch Rickey for the 'One Hundred Percent Wrong Club' Banquet," Atlanta, Georgia, aired January 29, 1956 on WERD.
55 Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 311.

on working class fans and teaching them to behave with restraint.[56] It was a major concern that once a player was given the chance to play major league baseball, that fans could take that chance away by acting in a way deemed "unacceptable." This was a "new era for social justice" for African-Americans in the American tradition of baseball and writers did not want to see that door close.[57] One writer had very clear instructions for fans attending games. They were to abstain from creating scenes when Robinson was struck out, avoid booing when he was hit by a pitch or walked intentionally, and most of all they were ordered to not take the race problem into the ballpark.[58] Robinson was to be viewed as any other player and his day of making history would come. By obeying these rules and making less noise, the author felt that future African-American players would face less antagonism. The author was optimistic about help from Major League Baseball in the sense that officials were trying to liberalize it or make it more open and accessible to all.[59] Frank Young described their situation by noting, "Robinson will not be on trial as much as the Negro fan. The unruly Negro has and can set us back 25 years."[60] Robinson later agreed, commenting that by acting belligerently, African-American fans would have affected his position on the roster.[61] These questions of conduct were another influence of discrimination that African-Americans faced. Not only were they banned from playing baseball, but also to break the color line they were expected to act a certain way. If they did not, it was expected that Major League Baseball could eliminate their opportunity to play.

The Brooklyn Dodgers shocked the nation when they signed Jackie Robinson on October 23, 1945, placing him on the minor league team, the Montreal Royals.[62] In April of 1947, the color line was officially broken when Robinson was called up to become a member of the Brooklyn Dodgers. He had an astonishing first year, being named "rookie of the year" by Sporting News and having the opportu-

56 Ibid.
57 "Professional Baseball," *The Chicago Defender,* April 26, 1947.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 311.
61 Ibid.
62 Henderson, *The Negro in Sports*, 190.

nity to play in the World Series.[63] The 1947 season for Major League Baseball drew an all-time record of over 20 million fans.[64] However, very few African-Americans were drawn away from the Negro League, mostly because integration was happening at an alarmingly slow rate.[65] Many African-Americans were stuck in "a state of limbo" due to a failing Negro League and being unwelcomed in organized baseball.[66] Robinson broke racial barriers, but portions of the color ban remained in place. It was not an immediate effect and would still take many years for all teams to follow suit. Six years after the color line had been broken, only six out of the sixteen total teams in Major League Baseball had allowed an African-American player on their roster.[67] The Boston Red Sox were the last to bring up an African-American player from their minor leagues, more than twelve years later.[68]

As expected, the Negro League's attendance plummeted after Robinson made it to the major league.[69] The league tried to revamp their efforts in the 1950s to become a breeding ground for young African-American talent, but it was very difficult. Integration thinned the league and by 1953, there were only four teams remaining.[70] The Negro League came to an end shortly thereafter.

The integration of Major League Baseball proved to be a precursor of the Civil Rights Movement. African-Americans were retuning from fighting in war and many began to see the disadvantages they faced once back in America. They underwent discrimination, and Major League Baseball showed the deprivation of their rights. The same year Robinson made his debut with the Dodgers, President Truman made his address to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Truman's speech identified the fact that Americans were being denied civil rights and human freedom, and that it was the government's job to protect the people. Truman stated that the immediate task was "to remove the last remnants of the barriers, which stand between millions of [our] citizens and their birthright.

63 Ibid., 192.
64 Swaine, *The Black Stars*, 12.
65 Tygiel, "The Negro Leagues," 27.
66 Ibid.
67 Swaine, *The Black Stars*, 1.
68 Ibid.
69 Tygiel, "The Negro Leagues," 27.
70 Ibid, 27.

There is no justifiable reason for discrimination because of ancestry, or religion. Or race, or color."[71] Here was the President taking stands against the prejudices and intolerance that hindered the guaranteed equality of opportunity. Baseball was the stepping-stone for guaranteeing civil rights for African-Americans. Robinson playing for the Dodgers occurred nearly seven years before state-sponsored segregation was deemed unconstitutional in Brown v. Board of Education. The integration of Major League Baseball was the first to take a stand, paving the way for civil rights to be guaranteed for all.

For nearly a century, beginning with the Civil War, racial barriers were constructed that ultimately denied African-Americans the opportunity to play baseball. Racial intolerance created a rule that was never really there with the "gentlemen's agreement." Banning African-Americans from baseball became a finger pointing game, placing responsibility on others involved. The color line also created a divide within the African-American community, causing Negro League owners to fight integration for economic reasons and players to avoid the hatred that would ensue. The blame for the color line's existence was placed on African-Americans for two different reasons, which clashed with each other. Some writers criticized those not supporting the Negro League, but there was also blame assigned to voluntarily creating a separate Negro League. Lastly, there was an imposed code of conduct given to players and spectators if integration was going to succeed. There was an expected way to act, and writers felt that integration would not happen if appropriate behaviors were not followed. These questions of conduct exemplified the discrimination of African-Americans due to being forced to act a particular way to be an accepted member of society. Achieving integration in baseball was a long, complex journey, and it was only the beginning of attaining civil rights.

71 Harry S. Truman, "Address to the NAACP," Speech to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Washington, DC, June 28, 1947..