

FROM DACHAU TO THE DUGOUT: BLACK AMERICA'S

DIAMOND-LINED RESPONSE TO RACISM

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RESPONSE TO RACISM

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ABSTRACT

Racism remains one of the greatest scourges upon humanity through the ages. History has recorded its cruelty and the devastating effects it has unleashed upon many groups of people across the globe. Within these pages there will be found several ways that racism and its effects have been alleviated, if not ultimately overcome. However, there is a more specific discovery regarding one such response and it comes from within the realm of sport. More specifically its origins are found within baseball, otherwise known as America's pastime. That the exclusion of black men from the professional baseball diamonds in the days of Jim Crow occurred should not be surprising to most. It was the method by which one Andrew 'Rube' Foster chose to organize the early Negro Leagues' response to such segregation that is the topic of this thesis.

## APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences have examined a thesis titled “From Dachau to the Dugout: Black America’s Diamond-lined Response to Racism,” presented by Daniel Isaac Stroud, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There has always been at least one question upon which all others are mounted. What is the meaning of life? There are answers offered from every direction. Love is said to bring meaning to one's existence. Wealth has been given strong marks in the search for the truest sense of happiness. The ability to give of oneself – to offer the truest sacrifice there is has also been offered to the fray. In many instances, one never finds a truer sense of direction than when faced with struggles and suffering.

This paper draws from the struggles of the Jewish people during the holocaust, the American black community, and, in an even more specific light, the men of the Negro Baseball Leagues during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There will be some introduction to the cause of racist attitudes and activities, but the greatest interest within these pages, lies within the struggle.

Psychoanalysts such as Victor Frankl and Bruno Bettelheim will be consulted for introspection into the Jewish response both during and entering the aftermath of the Holocaust. Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Dubois, and even the Reverend Jeremiah Wright and their responses to American racism will be inspected. But a group of black men, and more particularly, one man who had a vision to change his community, will be highlighted for the most unique response, perhaps even the model response, for the black

community in the twentieth century. Andrew Rube Foster was the premier pitcher of his time in early twentieth century baseball. His arm is regarded among the greats in the game including Cy Young, Walter Johnson, and Christy Matthewson. But it was his intellect that most greatly stirred his community's pot. One sportswriter, Fredrick North Shorey, suggested his business and political prowess was of such stuff that Booker T. Washington himself would have taken a back seat to Foster in Chicago.<sup>1</sup> It is suggested within these pages that despite the great work of all of these men, Rube Foster stands at least as tall as any, if not inching just a bit above the rest, in responding to the needs of his community. He also did these things in a self-sufficient manner that allowed him to grow his business against the white majority. He was a civil rights leader in his own right.

But before we move to the fourth chapter, there are some interesting parallels that can be plucked and compared to each group. That the Jewish community struggled with the Holocaust should come as no surprise to anyone. That there was need for push back within the black community is certain if not elementary. But both case studies offer similar ideals, much more similar than many would attest. Make no mistake; there is no place within this paper that compares these three events for their severity. Nevertheless, the places at which they seem to intersect should be most interesting to any reader.

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<sup>1</sup> Shorey, Frederick North, A Historical Account of a Great Game of Ball: How Rube Foster Cleaned Up With One of the Best Teams in the Country, *The Freeman* (Kingston, N.Y.), September 7, 1907, 7.

## CHAPTER 2

### RACISM ON THE RISE

The ideal of ultra-nationalism can be comparatively analyzed on a global scale in such a way that both commonalities and differences can be portrayed between any one nation as opposed to another. In particular, and for the purposes of this project, focus will be placed on the relative effects of oppression laid out by the elite within Italy, Germany during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth centuries through the world wars, as well as the pre and post-civil war era in the American South. Evaluation of cause will be saved for another time.

For Mussolini, his Italian Fascism sought purity of the citizens of the nation state through an emotional, albeit methodical, separation of the classes. In this fascist society, only the “purest” citizens of the Italian state were to rule. As long as the revolution raged, and Mussolini’s forces were charged with this populist objective, *Il Fascismo* thrived.

In Nazi Germany, a biologically racist charged ideology developed as an integral part of the fascist tenets of Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich. Within what has been suggested to be a German departure from the “community of civilized peoples,”<sup>1</sup> arose a demoralizing effort to

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 5.



devalue, desecrate, denigrate, and ultimately devastate an entire group of people to a point that achieved complete annihilation.

Though history's greatest recall has inevitably concerned the catastrophic annihilation of millions of Jews, the end game was actually built up over time. At its start, the Nazis' initial aim, though indeed ultimately to rid the German nation of the Jewish population, centered upon the evacuation of the Zionists out of Germany. Adolf Eichmann, in the trial held to condemn his pro-Nazi involvement in the Holocaust, astoundingly proclaimed himself in this so-called First Solution, to be nothing more than an agent of the Jewish people, bent on assisting them down the road to a homeland they could call their own. His son, years later, would continually repeat this interpretation of events over and over again, in defense of his father's name.

At the outbreak of the Second World War on September 1, 1939, the regular police security force of Germany as well as the Security Service were combined into the Gestapo, better known as the state's secret police, and were then enjoined into the Head Office for Reich Security (R.S.H.A.). In so creating this merger, all police forces within the country received their S. S. designations whether they held standing as members of the Nazi party or

not. This turned out to be the starting point of the Second Solution that of the internment of the Jews in German designated concentration camps.<sup>2</sup>

In 1941, Reinhard Heydrich was officially commissioned by Hilter to make preparations for the Final Solution which was to be the extermination of the Jews. Interestingly, Heydrich later in that same year wrote to the High Command of the Army that he had won Hitler's confidence years earlier with regard to the brutal end game.<sup>3</sup> Whether this is truly the case would be a secret Hitler took to his grave. Despite Heydrich's boast, the politically motivated map toward what became an unspeakable conclusion had been laid out systematically to ensure the German citizenry's compliance. It was likely through its consistency with the fascist doctrine that such a plan could be ably conceived and ultimately executed.

Daniel Jonah Goldhagen points out in his book on the German people and the Holocaust that the roots of German anti-Semitism ran both deep and wide. He makes the case that the "Jewish Problem" was a political problem that took shape in the nineteenth century, long before the Nazi movement began, to exact its criminal acts upon the whole of Europe. A national election held in 1884 bore witness to the German Conservative Party as it

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<sup>2</sup> Hanah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem; A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 56 – 82.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 83-84.

stated in an openly belligerent manner that Jews were to be held in direct opposition to true German natives.<sup>4</sup> This was clearly anti-Semitic racism at its core, again, hatched well in advance of the Nazis' ascension to power.

Yet it was Nazism from which Roger Griffin's populist ultra-nationalism found its truest roots, and it was through that concept in which Fascism as he has defined it, was able to ultimately thrive. It is through this reasoning that the theories of Stanley Payne, Zeev Sternhell, James Gregor, and Griffin seem to hold more congruence with one another.<sup>5</sup> Though Italian Fascism fell far short of Nazism with regard to its capacity for hatred and racial antagonism, the case can be made that the latter might never have achieved such blatant atrocities without the politically motivated properties espoused to by the former ideological perspective.

The application of ultranationalism in the United States, given the ongoing ideological division between its northern and southern regions, could be considered in comparison to the actions of the Italian Fascists and the Nazis as more complicated

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<sup>4</sup> Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah, 74.

<sup>5</sup> To better reflect upon these theories, see the following works regarding fascism by these authors to include: Payne, Stanley G. "Fascism: Comparison and Definition," Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980. See also Gregor, A. James. *The Ideology of Fascism*, (New York: The Free Press, 1969), Griffin, Roger, *The Nature of Fascism*, (New York: Routledge, 1991), and Sternhell, Zeev. *Fascist Ideology*, found in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), ed. by Walter Laquer.

situations. While it is true that many in the American South held a strong racial disdain for their fellow black citizenry, it could easily be construed that it was a smaller minority that sought superiority through violent means. The actions of the KKK, one such violence oriented group, was however tolerated and supported by many in the southern states while being ridiculed and sought for prosecution in states located in the north.

Though slavery and indentured servitude had been prevalent in the American colonies from its earliest days, the purest racial tensions began to take hold only as the black slave population began to grow. In the 1790s, slave ownership, no matter the race, was considered to be an avenue of status and class. The protection of class structure in the South determined the degree to which slavery was exacted upon poor whites and blacks alike. There was actually consideration of slaveholding and non-slaveholding classes of people. Many in the non-slaveholding class continued to support slavery as a rule, holding to the hope that they too might become slaveholders someday.<sup>6</sup>

By 1795, just three years after it had been admitted as a state, more than 830,000 acres of Kentucky land had already been claimed by wealthy land speculators.<sup>7</sup> This became significant because land ownership and voting rights had become synonymous. Poor whites

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<sup>6</sup> Pem Buck Davidson, *Worked to the Bone: Race, Class, Power, and Privilege in Kentucky* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth A. Perkins, "The Consumer Frontier; Household Consumption in Early Kentucky," *The Journal of American History*, 78(No. 2), (1991), 486-510.

and black slaves, wealthy land owners began to fear, would begin to see each other's plights as related. The question was, of course, whether either party could enjoy a sustainable existence absent land ownership or any say whatsoever in their constitutional government.

These aristocrats feared a day that might come when poor whites and blacks together might rise up against the land owners. This was not viewed with horror by Southern elites who had become accustomed to a steady worker population that was necessary for the conduct of their agrarian business interests. In their estimation, however, a storm was brewing not far over the horizon. They determined that there would soon be a need to widen the social gap between the poor whites and black slaves. In essence, they needed to cultivate the seed of bigotry and/or a prejudicial mindset among the poor white lower class with the intent being to inevitably divide them and the black slave population even further. It was becoming more difficult to separate the races merely through poverty. The fact that both groups shared similar economic deficiencies began to create more of a cohesive bond, and equally, less of a chasm.

Thomas Jefferson, himself a wealthy Virginia Aristocrat, had suggested what he thought might be a fair and equitable solution to the plight felt by himself and his fellow land barons. He suggested that the poor white citizenry be offered small parcels of land, thus creating a separation between the white servants and black slaves. This plan would in turn

give the lower classes of white men the right to vote, which theoretically gave them a greater stake in their government, not to mention one more leg up on their black counterparts.

Jefferson's idea received recognition and some approval from the wealthy landowners, but they concocted a similar though far more advantageous scheme to achieve the desired result, less the need to part with any assets already in their possession. Ultimately they were successful in staving off any type of white rebellion by offering the lower classes of white males the right to vote without the need or necessity to hold land. Needless to say their votes would be cast in anticipation of representation by the very men who had given them the privilege. As it stood, it turned out to be quite an effective plan for the privileged class.

Of course, this did not put more food in their families' bellies. But the ability to vote on who would hold particular offices in local, state, and federal elections ensconced white male privilege into the hearts and minds of a citizenry who had never experienced such rights before.<sup>8</sup>

As time passed, this white privilege grew on fronts and at levels that had not previously been seen on American soil. Where class privilege once held the lower classes at bay, white privilege, it seemed no matter the monetary divide, began to grow with respect to hatred and hauteur. With the additional passage of time, this self-imposed racial divide grew

to become more commonplace within the United States, not exclusive to the South, as it gained ground throughout the nation's vast regions.

Northern abolitionists fought slavery tooth and nail, throughout the years leading up to the American Civil War and Abraham Lincoln's emancipation of American slaves in 1863, along with the ratification of the thirteenth amendment in 1865. Stories of the travails of the Underground Railroad and other efforts to free blacks from their bondage to demonized plantation owners in the South have been well known. In contrast, by 1830, slavery had virtually been eliminated in the North, though there remained approximately 3500 members of the black community who remained enslaved in the free states.<sup>9</sup>

However, for most northern whites, their wish to end slavery did not match up with a belief in any kind of racial equality. It had been by and large determined amongst the white community in the North that blacks should be free. But at the same time, there was a feeling that these freed people should begin a search for an alternative dwelling place. Africa, naturally, and even areas in and around the Caribbean were popularly suggested destination sites.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Davidson, Pem Buck, 33.

<sup>9</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), Kindle Edition, LOC 353-361.

<sup>10</sup> Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jennifer Frank, *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005), Kindle Edition, LOC 95.

There were specific advantages that a Northern Negro held over a Southern slave. One was that the northern blacks could not be bought or sold. Another was that they could not be separated from their families, nor could they be made to work without compensation of one form or another. But this was not to say that there was not also a similarity between free and enslaved blacks in America.

To begin with, the Northern Negro was constantly reminded and made aware of the fact that he still lived in a society devoted to a white supremacy/negro inferiority doctrine.<sup>11</sup> The political parties of the day, no matter what each one's stance on the subject of slavery might have been, were unified in defense of this principle. Few were the politicians, who dared to challenge this thought pattern. For in the North, these legislators answered to constituencies that had as previously mentioned above, been conditioned to believe the black community was "incapable of being assimilated politically, socially, or physically, into white society."<sup>12</sup> The wealthy in the North made certain that blacks "knew their place." One way that this was accomplished was through segregation.

A literary example of this assertion came directly out of Harriet Beecher Stowe's nineteenth century novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In her powerful indictment of slavery, an anti-slavery citizen of New England named Ophelia goes on a visit to see her cousin, a Southern

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<sup>11</sup> Woodward, C. Vann, LOC 353-361.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



slave owner from Louisiana. In nearly the same instant that she chides her cousin for his involvement with the evil ills of slavery, she offers disdain when offered the opportunity to so much as touch one of the slaves. She abhorred the thought of putting a hand on this ‘uncivilized’ black servant.<sup>13</sup>

A more true to life example of this early and assumed segregation was itself found in the very heart of New England, a strong and outspoken hub of the abolitionist movement. The fact that citizens in the region were bent against slavery, certainly did not suggest that racism was absent outside the South in its many cities and towns. In 1847, white inhabitants of south Boston were proud to point out that ‘not a single colored family’ lived among them. Ghettos in the north in which blacks lived include such appallingly named communities as ‘Nigger Hill’ in Boston, ‘Little Africa’ in Cincinnati, and the ‘Hill District’ in Pittsburgh grew up segregated, set apart from their white counterparts.<sup>14</sup>

Most in the North seemed to favor Voluntary colonization, some form of forced expulsion, by whatever means deemed possible. Alexis De Tocqueville, on his trip around the United States in 1831, had already come to grips with the idea that blacks would never be able to cohabit in the same communities under the same standards. In his estimation the Negro race faced certain extinction with the United States eventually. “The prejudice of race

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<sup>13</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1884).

<sup>14</sup> Woodward, C. Vann, 369-376.

appears to be stronger in the states that have abolished slavery than in those where it still exists ...,” wrote the French dignitary.<sup>15</sup>

Tocqueville’s tone too, however exuded some of those same prejudicial feelings, as he offered what seemed a more personal assertion with regard to the state of racial affairs across the nation. He pointed out that though a black man was free, he likely could not meet a white man “upon fair terms in life or in death.”<sup>16</sup> One could question the objectivity of any person who would make such a statement.

From both a social and political perspective, some whites in the north looked through what to them was a benevolent rather than a prejudicial lens. One such ‘sympathetic’ Indiana senator suggested that the same power that gave blacks less intelligence, at the same time afforded whites a far greater intellect. There was nothing wrong with this on either side of the spectrum, it was a natural thing. In fact, many in the North suggested this progression away from integration was indeed a “natural consequence” of the white community’s enduring friendship with the black community.<sup>17</sup>

This sentiment began to show its face in baseball during the latter portion of the nineteenth century as well. In 1869, a black baseball team from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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<sup>15</sup> Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790 – 1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), Kindle Edition, LOC 632.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

applied for admission into the National Association of Baseball Players, to that point, an exclusively white organization of amateur white ball clubs. The squad was denied admission. Simply put by the league in its statement of denial, “if colored were admitted there would be some division of feeling. By excluding them, no trouble of the sort would arise.”<sup>18</sup> Such ideas must have been, to be sure, easy on the conscience of those who portrayed their motives in such a light. But in another vein, many others in the North needed no such justification to ease their minds.

Of those, there were some who feared that legislation, or an absence thereof, might cause a swell of emancipated slaves to converge upon the Northern states. Stephen Douglas, the infamous Illinois Senator and a formidable opponent of Lincoln in both the 1858 Illinois Senate election (of which Douglas was the victor) and the later race that led to Lincoln’s victory in the 1860 Presidential election, made it clear to all who would listen that his state would not be transformed into “an asylum for all the old and decrepit and broken-down negroes that may emigrate or be sent there.” In turn, Indiana, also, wanted no part of becoming a so-called “Liberia of the South.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, prods. *Baseball: A Film by Ken Burns* (Alexandria, Va.: PBS Home Video; Atlanta: Turner Home Entertainment), 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Litwack, Leon, Kindle Edition, LOC 662.

Much like the black community in the United States, Jewish communities all over Europe faced denigration and bigotry from their countrymen. They too were viewed more as strangers in their corresponding nations than as enduring citizens. Unlike the slave population and later the free black communities in America, who were characterized as barbarous and crude to a more physical degree, the Jews whether rightly or wrongly were feared from more of a fiscal and monetary view point in Europe.

But no matter the reasons for such ethnic denigration, one should be compelled to take notice of the lengths to which each group's oppressors went in order to maintain a status of superiority. Further still, it should be equally intriguing to seek understanding with regard to the way each of these minority communities sought to overcome such oppression. Both communities experienced setbacks and failures, but as history has progressed, fortunes have turned predominately to the better. It would seem that a closer look at the ways in which the black community in the United States and the Jewish community during World War II answered such brutish behavior, might be in order. For with every challenge, there was in most cases, an ensuing response ... or perhaps multiple responses.

To grasp the need for a specific response from a specific group of people requires points of reference. For those in the Jewish community there is but one such point from which they need refer. That savage blot upon the world came to light and grew to full bloom in Europe between and during the great wars. We are fortunate as residents of the planet

Earth to have historians who have captured this horrific period for humanity's sake, lest one person should ever forget.

As one walks forward into the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum at 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, Southwest in Washington, D. C.<sup>20</sup>, a sense of despair inevitably grips the soul. The lobby is covered in red brick and an institutionally eerie black metal framing of rails and stairwells. It is not meant to entice, but to cause abhorrence. Visitors are directed to an elevator that will carry them upward into the isolated halls of this dark, dank feeling<sup>21</sup> space that has been crafted to offer a more realistic portrayal of what life was like in the Nazi concentration camps during the dastardly days of World War II in Europe.

Each person entering the seemingly impenetrable steel walls of the elevator is given a small booklet with a number written on it. This book and number serve as the identity of a Jewish prisoner in one of these horrendous internment camps. Viktor Frankl, a survivor of the concentration camps describes the concept of the prisoner and his identity:

It is very difficult for an outsider to grasp how very little value was placed on

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<sup>20</sup>While attending the American Political Science Association Conference in September of 2010, I was able to make a six hour long visit to the museum during the late morning and early afternoon of the day just before the political science event was to begin. It had been my intention to spend no more than one hour inside the museum, but the souls portrayed on the museum's walls would simply have none of it. This was my experience, and though it is biased to be sure, the description is accurate and serves to convey the points of which I hope to speak throughout the paper.

<sup>21</sup>The museum is of course not wet and/or moisture ridden, but the curators have successfully created this eerie feeling, if not physically, then most certainly psychologically.

human life in camp. ... A man counted only because he had a number. One literally became a number ... dead or alive – that was unimportant; the life of a number was completely irrelevant. What stood behind that number and that life meant even less; the fate, the history, the name of the man ...<sup>22</sup>

It was in this spirit, in what seemed a silent, helpless ride on this lonely elevator to an as yet unknown destination, which ultimately would set the tone for one's journey through this building of grave reminders of one of man's greatest, yet in many ways, also his most banal evils.<sup>23</sup>

Once released from the chamber of transport, one is faced, head on with photos of human destruction in the concentration camps. It is a vision of horror, a lesson in despair, a large and unrelenting dose of reality. Moving along the walls and peering into the glass cases, the history of the attempted extermination of the Jewish people comes into clearer and clearer view as history is begrudgingly revisited.

You are reminded of a law perpetuated post World War I to protect the German "race," its "blood," and its "honor." This law forbade marriage and sexual relations between Jews and German citizens, as crimes<sup>24</sup> of "racial defilement." It was the first time in a long and already troubled history that Jews were no longer merely persecuted in the name of their

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<sup>22</sup>Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search For Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 52-53.

<sup>23</sup>See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem; A Report on the Banality of Evil*, (New York: Penquin Books, 2006) which is the inspiration for this descriptive phrase.

<sup>24</sup>Arendt, Hannah, 39.

religion, but in fact they were now pressed into a lower status due most emphatically to their Jewish birth. In this crucial instance, Germany had now seemingly been officially split between what the Nazis called “Aryan and Jewish races.”<sup>25</sup>

It is further explained, quoting Joseph Goebbels, Germany’s Minister For Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, not to mention a confidant to Adolf Hitler, “that racial defilement or *Rassenschande* usually “conjured up images of Jewish men seducing or raping German women or girls.”<sup>26</sup> In general, according to another photo exhibit set by Hugo Jaeger of Life Magazine in 1938, such (Nazi) propaganda tended to be “simplistic, emotional, repetitive, and uncompromising.”

At that time, it was said that Jews rated below Blacks, though the latter race was still understood to be inferior to the German race as set forth by Hitler in his book of rage, *Mein Kampf*. Germans had made a pair of charts, one being entitled “Races of the Earth I” which included the superior races and “Races of the Earth II” which harbored those included in the so-called inferior races. Yet throughout this unsettling development, it was pointed out that even up to 1933, many in the Jewish Community held out hope for calmer heads to prevail as it announced: “ we may expect ... that the German-Jewish question will be solved on a legal

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<sup>25</sup> Neither Aryan nor Jewish have validity as “racial” categories.

<sup>26</sup> This reference is none too similar to many southern white tales of fear in which black men overpowered and raped southern ladies as is discussed later regarding artistic screen play directed by D. W. Griffith which

basis and ... that there will be created an honest understanding of our place and way.”<sup>27</sup>  
Through it all, German Jews remained dependent on what they perceived to be their own government in the end to come to their rescue, and/or to their senses.

A film shown at the museum, skillfully dramatizes the Anti-Semitism that was the predominate ideology of the Third Reich. Hitler is shown in this film shouting to the German masses, “One People, One Nation, One Leader!” As you continue forward and walk across a gangway in the museum that leads to another section of exhibits, etched in glass walls on each side are the names of hundreds of towns wholly or partially lost as a result of the “Final Solution.”<sup>28</sup>

Even as millions of Jews were murdered in Europe during World War II in what was a horrific detriment to humanity itself, there were choices being made about how to respond to such barbarism. Further, there were those who questioned whether the Jewish victims actually stood and answered their captors at all. Questions have been asked that included why some of the Jewish leadership actually cooperated in the destruction of their own

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was based upon Thomas Dixon’s “The Leopard’s Spots,” and performed before large audiences in the early twentieth century.

<sup>27</sup>Again, this information has been extracted from wall exhibits inside the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

<sup>28</sup>The list was provided by the Yad Vashem Memorial in Jerusalem.



people, and whether the people themselves actually participated “in their death ... as lambs to slaughter.”<sup>29</sup>

It was said that some of the Jews in the concentration camps such as Dachau, could see no chance of escape from their fate. Rather than looking within to find an inner strength from which to pull themselves into a hopeful future, they instead chose to live in the past, thinking of about what once was, as if it could never be again. <sup>30</sup>Through this narrow lens, their lives became meaningless, and with no hope remaining, death soon followed many.<sup>31</sup>

Soon after being placed at Dachau, Victor Frankl, a Jewish academic scholar, was told that his nearly completed book had been destroyed. He pointed out that much of what kept him alive was a desire to re-piece together that work. It was one of the things that sustained his mind throughout the remainder of the ordeal.<sup>32</sup>

He further spoke of ideals such as love and humor in escaping the torturous rigors of the mind during times of extreme apathy and torturous vindictiveness. In love, he would think of his wife and the love that he felt for her. The humor often came from within, developing ways to laugh at himself and even at times, the situation that encompassed him. One analogy he used to describe this conduct was particularly intriguing:

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<sup>29</sup> Arendt, Hannah, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Frankl, Victor, 46.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 72.

a man's suffering is similar to the behavior of gas. If a certain quantity of gas is pumped into an empty chamber, it will fill the chamber completely and evenly, no matter how big the chamber. Thus suffering completely fills the human soul and conscious mind, no matter whether the suffering is great or little. Therefore the size of human suffering is absolutely relative.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, will itself played a significant role in determining who would stay, and who would leave the Third Reich's ovens behind at the end of World War II. Without this survival instinct, as Frankl pointed out, thoughts reverted to the past inevitably robbing such people of hope for their future. It was the newness, the freshness of looking forward instead of the musty, dank remembrance of the present and past that moved the survivors toward freedom and away from ultimate hopelessness and death.

These instincts form Frankl's theories with regard to his so-called logotherapy. In essence, it's an existential belief that one must reach within oneself to worth and meaning in life. It is the responsibility of each individual to take such an initiative and no one else's. From this he was able to describe reasons for the end that came to many Jews in the concentration camps and the hope that remained for those who fought back and ultimately escaped. It should be noted that this theory flies in the face of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 44.

Many in Europe however sought to assuage their misgivings through political reform. Some hailed communism, others, one of many deviations from National Socialism, and still more took a turn with social democracy. All of these methods however proved to offer mixed results at best. Another analyst born of the Holocaust and the Dachau concentration camp, Bruno Bettelheim developed his own analytic reason separate from that of Freud, though similar to that of Frankl, and again set apart from political reasoning. One suggestion of the analyst was that the “true conflict of our time is that man must choose between individualism and the comforts that come with the security of a collectivist society.”<sup>34</sup> Bettelheim, who studied children in the end felt the establishment of self-worth was essential to a substantive life.

So it was through such analysis of the inner being that many in the Jewish community attempted to overcome the tormentors of their history. After all, their governments had failed them, more specifically many of their parents who had seemingly chosen to fall on the same sword as the failed and/or corrupt leaders in their communities and amongst those in their government.

Back across the waters in America, there would be another form of analytical process that would be applied. This, however, would turn out to be more of a religious inspiration.

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<sup>34</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age.*( New York: The Hearst Corporation, 1960), 51.

However, unlike those in the Jewish community, this religious approach would assimilate back into the political realm from which it would split apart and seek enduring change.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE BLACK COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE TO RACISM

One step that achieved racial separation involved the voluntary withdrawal of the black community from the white dominated Protestant and Catholic establishments. This was not altogether understood to be a positive as far as whites were concerned.<sup>1</sup> Membership, after all, likely served a monetary purpose, though blacks were seated in segregated sections, usually at the back of the church sanctuary. Nevertheless, it was seen by the black community as a positive development in which they were for the first time able to establish and control their own religious institutions.<sup>2</sup> It was a factor that served them well and was perhaps the earliest response by the black community to racial oppression in America from colonial times and then into the future.

In the Holy Bible, and more specifically the Old Testament, one lasting story deals with bondage placed upon the Jewish people at the hands of the Pharaohs of Egypt. They were an oppressed people who were led out of the land by Moses, a man who claimed responsibility for deliverance as the chosen prophet of the God of the Hebrews. After what today's business community would call a hard fought negotiation, not to exclude frogs, fire,

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<sup>1</sup> Woodward, C. Vann, Kindle Edition, LOC 1522.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

locusts, and other mortal challenges, the Israelites were eventually delivered from the hands of their oppressor.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ, sent down from the same God into the midst of the same people, this time under Roman control, ultimately sought out the meek and heavily burdened. He was chastised and tortured by the Israeli leaders but in the end became the defender of the meek, weak, and impoverished underbelly of the Jewish nation and then of others as well. It is from within this context that an oppressed African American slave population found solace.

Up from these experiences rose Black Liberation Theology (BLT) according to James H. Cone, founder of the movement, which was to some extent also drawn out of the same framework that inspired the messages of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X in the 1960s. As Cone explains, the black community views its struggles thru an African-American lens that perfectly fits within this oppressed typology. He further contends that the black race has not yet been delivered from their bondage, and it is this struggle that has become paramount in ensuring the community's ultimate survival.<sup>3</sup>

This is a key point when one stops to consider the plight of the African American slaves. African villages were destroyed as families were picked apart and shoved onto ships bound for European, Caribbean, and North American shores. Though some families came

together over the ocean, most were separated on the trading block once they had reached the colonial shores. In most cases, they likely had no one to which they could turn in their family. There were only the equally oppressed members of their slave community upon whom they could possibly rely.

These people likely had nothing more than whatever clothing they wore upon their backs to sustain their existence. There was little or no hope for satisfactory existence within the setting laid out for them by their white slave masters. Total submission was all that was expected of them. The full life most had known on the continent that they no longer inhabited had evaporated into mere existence. It was from this point that each determined whether to live or to perish.

Reverend Jeremiah Wright, pastor of the Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois and a proponent of Cone's Theological framework has studied and discussed the mindset of the black community during those early years in America. He points out that being an African in the 1600s and arriving on the colonial shores offered a singular religious experience, that is, one that was more of a European American or more generally white persuasion. Conversion offered by Northern missionaries to the Southern slaves meant "...

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<sup>3</sup> James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, Revised, 1997), 67-75.

to become a Christian, one had to let go of all vestiges of Africa and become European, become a New Englander and worship like New England; worship God properly and right.”<sup>4</sup>

Such a religious experience would offer less comfort, compassion, and solace to the black slaves while at the same time offering their white apologists equal parts hubris, vindication, and increased self-worth. It served abolitionists just as well in the early days of slavery to speak against such behavior by slave owners, as it did to actually see slaves freed from their labors. Absolution was the goal, though compromise more often than not carried the day, leaving black slaves twisting in the wind.

BLT with its passionately held doctrine has been viewed by many in the white religious community in radical terms. This is likely because the same religious ancestry that had a hand in the indoctrination of the slaves and later, the freedmen, passed the information on down their family tree. It is Wright and Cone’s impression that white religiosity can never harbor, nor begin to understand, the black experience as it was historically laid out. In completing their portrait of racism and humanity in America, both men have consistently pointed out to their congregations that a church that is ‘unashamedly Black’ and ‘unapologetically Christian’ embraces Christianity while maintaining their African heritage.

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<sup>4</sup>Bill Moyers, prod. *Bill Moyers Journal* (Alexandria, Va.: PBS, April 25, 2008). <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/04252008/transcript1.hotmail> (accessed May 23, 2011).



This is a key distinction to understand as Wright goes on to describe the importance of the old Negro spirituals to those both in and recently freed from slavery. He asserts that the black community's music tradition which includes the spirituals, mixed with blues, and, a sprinkling of jazz has shared a part in their survival as a people. "Blacks learn how to sing rather than giving up on life ... it's that life goes on beyond this. Pain is just a moment," the reverend said. "This whole notion about what we're going through is only a season ... this came to pass, didn't come to stay ... that's what the spirituals have done ... what the gospel music has done, historically in our churches."<sup>5</sup>

He's saying that each word, bounced on and around every note, offers a hope to the black community in their time of need. It is their intimate and acute experience with the deliverer, the defender of their faith, as well as the faith of the poor, weak, and oppressed. Within the context of BLT, of course, the poor black community specifically experiences this unjust oppression at the hands of their American oppressors, even to this day. That the black community has not yet been delivered completely from its struggles becomes the straw that stirs BLT's drink. Taken a step further, it has become one refresher, one more trigger bent on quenching what at times has seemed in the still white and dominant community to be an unquenchable thirst for equality on all levels in a slow to change, at times deftly uncompromising and continuously waffling American society.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

There were other groups as well that fought against the growing racism of the nation. One organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), formed in 1909, fought the entire gamut of racist thought, but only after World War II, did it actually begin to expand and gain some reasonable amount of ground. In 1919, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation also hoped to eradicate racial tension. Though not seen among the strongest detractors toward segregation, the organization did focus a great deal of energy on racial discrimination in general and more particularly in stepping up to challenge lynching.<sup>6</sup>

This was important because the severity of the latter issue involved the taking of three thousand seven hundred and twenty four lives, more than four-fifths of that group being black, between 1889 and 1930 in the United States.<sup>7</sup> In this era, the greatest fear spread amongst whites toward the black race was that of black men raping their wives and daughters. It was an image of graphic proportion that was used over and over to further harden white men's hearts against black men no matter the circumstance from which they came or to where they might go.

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<sup>6</sup> Woodward, C. Vann, Kindle Edition, LOC 1538.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Franklin Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Dover Edition, 2003), 1. See also Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890 – 1940*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 3.

H. L. Mencken, famed American journalist and essayist termed the South as “the lynching belt.” This was a generalization to be sure and there was in fact a nation-wide affliction with such spectacle, but many post slavery whites did see the heavy spike of mutilation and torture as a means to maintain their social dominance in the changing society. It was an act of fear by white southerners brought forth mercilessly upon former black slave men.

But this symbolic dominance brought about through the spectacle of lynching had a psychological effect not only on blacks, but upon whites as well. Through such acts of violence, bonds of white superiority and domination could only be strengthened whether through moral grounding or the mere perpetuation of survival against a race such men believed to be inherently inferior. Such brute force of will had brought a cultural force to the notion of white supremacy in the Reconstruction south.<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly enough, the very spectacle that was caused by lynching in the south became a catalyst for response to it, not only in the black community, but all around the nation as well. These heinous acts of public mutilation and humiliation were so brutal that the American spirit itself would eventually put a stop to it. The displays became an affront to humanity that had to eventually bring about their demise.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

There was also the Harlem Renaissance of the 1930s, which was an outpouring of Negro literature, both fictional and non-fictional along with song (music) which happened to be a tool used to garner support for equality from many white intellectuals.<sup>9</sup>

There were some black intellectuals who threw their hats into the ring in search of equality as well. One such man who had his own vision of racial reform was Booker T. Washington, perhaps one of the earliest civil rights leaders. The “Atlanta Compromise” of 1895 was his most influential, which is also to say, controversial, speech on solving racism at the end of the nineteenth century. His infamous line, “Cast down your bucket where you are,” is included in a dialog in which he offers a visual image of a ship lost at sea and is very much in need of fresh water with no comprehension of the way in which this fresh water can be attained.<sup>10</sup>

Washington carefully and cautiously picked at the previous attempt made at reconstruction through black congressional seats and other bureaucratically appointed positions. “Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the production of our hands,”

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<sup>9</sup> Woodward, C. Vann, Kindle Edition, LOC 1520.

<sup>10</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Booker T. Washington Delivers the 1895 Atlanta Compromise Speech*. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/39/> (accessed on May 17, 2011).

Washington said to the crowd. “There is no defense or security for any of us except in the highest intelligence and development of all.”<sup>11</sup>

The man was trying to offer insights for his race into the challenges of living among those in white America. His point was that the intellect and industrial ability of his people was of the utmost importance. He expressed the need to both races for the effectual sharing of all things industrial, civil, religious, and commercial. It would be only through this shared experience that he believed there was any chance at all for true integration.

It was a simplistic manifesto to be sure. Washington was offering nothing more than a father would to a son coming of age. He was telling his people in essence, ‘nothing in life is free,’ ‘a penny saved is a penny earned,’ and ‘all good things come with time.’ It was a speech about patience thru adversity. It was a re-packaging, so to speak of what has come to be known since the age of the Puritans in New England, as the mythical American Work Ethic. Though it was a speech for the ages, it was accepted by some, but not all. There were in fact a few who believed he was giving up the farm, though stopping short of any accusations of betrayal by Washington for his own personal gain.

W. E. B. Dubois, a sociologist, civil rights activist, and author, was one such detractor. A self-assertion advocate known to revere the sentiments of Frederick Douglass, a former slave and outspoken leader of the post-Civil War freedmen’s movement, Dubois

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

framed and confined Washington's ideological core to three areas; thrift, patience, and industrial training. The former all but accused the latter of becoming a leader of not one, but two races. This is a curious conception if one looks at the animation that ensued during the throes of the 2008 Democratic Presidential primary season. At the outset, Hillary Rodham Clinton had a firm grasp on the black vote over her black opponent Barak Obama. It was suggested early and often by already powerful leaders of the black community that Obama catered more to white leaders than to those of his own race. Essentially, the candidate, in some circles was not seen to be 'black enough,' or interested enough in the needs of African-Americans. Ironically, he would not gain the support of his own community until they began to see and believe he could actually win the nomination.

In essence, Dubois said that Washington was nothing more than a 'compromiser' between the South, the North, and the black community. It was believed that there had been an early resentment by African-Americans as much of what Washington compromised with gave away their civil and political rights in exchange for economic incentives. In Dubois' opinion, his opponent was essentially selling out his own people through "adjustment and submission." It was in his estimation tantamount to accepting the inferiority of the black community to whites.

If this accusatory language had not been enough, however, to push Washington down, Dubois took his diatribe further. He pointed out that the black community had been asked to

give up their political power, any insistence they had for civil rights, and any higher education for the good of black youth. At the same time, in his words, this same piece of society would be nudged to take up industrial education, to attempt to accumulate a degree of wealth, and to press for conciliation with southern whites. What made the matter seem much worse was Dubois' opinion that such ideas had disenfranchised the black community, legally created a distinct inferior status for blacks, and that it had actually aided in the steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro.<sup>12</sup>

Stepping back for a look at the growth of such a perspective, it should be noted that it had been Douglass, again a man held in high regard by Dubois, who had taken political action in the black community to its highest levels during Reconstruction. Riding the waves of the community's reform movement soon after emancipation, Douglass was elected president of the National Colored Labor Union (NCLU). His tasks largely had been to place pressure on the U. S. Congress, demanding that the legislative body force the Klu Klux Klan and its intimidation tactics out of existence, and to help pass a civil rights bill that would have opened inns, juries, schools, etc., to anyone, color not being of distinction. On learning at the NCLU convention in 1871 of the despair that continued to face many in the black community, he said:

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<sup>12</sup> William Edward Burghardt Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), Kindle Edition, LOC 575.

Though not political in character, the facts presented in the addresses and reports of the condition and needs of the colored workingmen and women of the South are of a most important character, showing conclusively that ‘Reconstruction’ is far from complete, in assuring independence and actual personal freedom and safety to colored citizens.<sup>13</sup>

A generation later, the highest court in the land in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) would further exacerbate such concerns in declaring “separate but equal” as a principle, thus opening wide the doors for Jim Crow into an already beaten down and discouraged community.<sup>14</sup>

Such was the plight of an embittered, racially oppressed people. It was from beneath this oppression, that men of vigor and determination were sought out. Leadership was hard to come by, however, in these times, and to have different schools of thought from which to pull ideas, though not ideal for the competing interests themselves, certainly offered fresh perspectives from which to cull some current of change.

It is worth mentioning at this point with regard to Washington and Dubois that these men were cut far from the same cloth. They had vastly different life experiences. Booker T. Washington had been born into southern slavery and had received no formal education. This was a point that many, especially the well-educated in the North, would at times look to utilize in an attempt to rein in power lost to Washington. There were whites in the North who felt power over the black community should always remain within their grasp. Dubois

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<sup>13</sup> Philip S. Foner. *Frederick Douglass* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1969), 280-82.

<sup>14</sup> See *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).



was on the other hand, a highly educated black man from the North. He became, in 1895, the first black man to receive his Ph.D. from Harvard, the very year of the Atlanta speech.

Washington believed that Dubois was being used in an effort by Northern leaders to fold the civil rights movement back within their purview. In response to Dubois' accusations with regard to education, Washington found fault and suggested as much to an editor at the *Indianapolis Star*, that:

[Dubois] ... knows perfectly well I am not seeking to confine the Negro race to industrial education nor make them hewers of wood or drawers of water, I am trying to do for the Negro the same thing which is done for all races of the world ... to make the masses ... to combine brains with hand work to the extent that their services will be wanted in the communities where they live, and thus prevent them from becoming a burden and a menace.<sup>15</sup>

Dubois was in fact, using political means to overturn and undermine Washington's life's work. Contention between the two men would continue for many years.

In 1911, Washington wrote, "Dr. Dubois pursues the policy of stirring up strife between white people and black people. But ..., he flees to the North and leaves the rank and file of colored people in the South no better off because of the unwise course which he and others like him have pursued."<sup>16</sup> These were heavy and heated words.

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<sup>15</sup> This was written in a letter to J. R. Barlow by Washington on March 1, 1911.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Dubois would however offer scathing diatribes of his own. He repeatedly spoke of Washington's speeches to the people as propaganda. If that was not bad enough, he suggested in one of his books that Washington actually held up and, in a sense, justified lynching, and other abuses of black men throughout his philosophies. He then quickly turned back on this planted seed in the very next paragraph when he acknowledged that Washington had actually spoken in the past against lynching, though the aforementioned kernel had not been completely blanché. It was, after all, likely the desired effect.<sup>17</sup>

Washington spoke before the Union League Club of Brooklyn, N.Y. on February 12, 1896. In the speech, he spoke candidly and with fervor about his dreams for the black community: "We have spent time and money making political speeches and in attending political conventions that could better have been spent starting a dairy farm, or a truck garden, and thus have laid a material foundation on which we could have stood and demanded our rights."<sup>18</sup> This turned out in fact to be the primary contention that Dubois seemed most eager to hold on to. He argued that self-respect was worth far more than property or monetary gain. He wrote that "people who voluntarily surrender such respect, or

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<sup>17</sup> Dubois, W. E. B., Kindle Edition, LOC 517.

<sup>18</sup> Washington, Booker T., Kindle Edition, LOC 1778.

cease to strive for it, are not worth civilizing.”<sup>19</sup> These were harsh words and opened up into at least one more glaring difference between the societal underpinnings of the two men.

Dubois, it would seem, though concerned with the eventual liberty of his race, also seemed resigned to the fact that only a few, or approximately one tenth of the black community, of course he regarded any community as having a “talented tenth,” would stand for the rest of its race. He understood, though it was less clearly conveyed in his writing, that only a portion of the black community would essentially reach equality’s educational Promised Land, and was ready to sacrifice the rest so that these few could lead. In essence he spoke to the elite in the black community. Booker T. Washington came from slavery, understood slavery, and sought to help his fellow former slaves and their families rise up out of the life that otherwise awaited them. This was in fact a significant difference between the two men, and a distinction that followed their community far into its future. Washington believed in building from the foundation toward a sturdy and lasting future, while Dubois ultimately a top-down thinker who cared more about fast results and concerned himself less about lasting ones.

In the early 1900s Negro League baseball was more about promotion than actual organization. When Satchell Paige and others barnstormed across the country with their traveling All-Stars, it was more akin to a carnival attraction. In the smaller towns,

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<sup>19</sup> Dubois, W. E. B., Kindle Edition, LOC 568.

barnstormers would take on all challengers. Andrew “Rube” Foster was all too aware of this fact. He addressed the problem directly in an article written and submitted to *The Chicago Defender* on Nov. 29, 1919.

The message he presented was one of conservative planning for the future. His plan was to form a baseball league that would be played by black players, managed by black managers, and run by black owners. Competition would come from within the black community. White ballplayers would earn their revenue from the white community, and blacks would earn from their own community as well. Black ministers and black educators were needed as partners in the community with Foster and his players. This showed a shrewd business sense, as the major leagues suffered its own issues with fan and community relations at times. It was viewed by him to be a competitive advantage to build the Negro Leagues through community toward eventual parity with the white major leagues. Such was Foster’s ambition that he spoke of a day when a black major league would challenge the white major league in a true and interracial World Series.<sup>20</sup>

That Foster’s conceptual ideas, much like Washington’s, were being presented to the community as a whole, and not merely to a boardroom of speculative baseball owners, should be telling. It was evident early, just where the man’s loyalties fell. The man realized

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Peterson, *Only the Ball was White: A History of Legendary Black Players and All-Black Professional Teams* ( New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 113.

early on that the black population held the keys to any future success in the community. Washington's value system had found its fertile soil.

However Foster, though the movement's leader would not walk alone in these pursuits, and the black community would receive its first assist from a member of the white community as well. The *Sporting Life*, in 1915 wrote of J. L. Wilkinson and his Kansas City All-Nations barnstorming squad. The tabloid wrote that the white owner of a racially integrated squad had built "an outfit that baseball sharps claim is strong enough to give any major league club a ... battle and prove that it is possible for blacks and whites to play on one team."<sup>21</sup> These were not commonly used words; in fact they were quite brave. For it was in that same year, that D.W. Griffith's film "The Birth of a Nation" was released. It turned out to be a popular film ... one that honored white sheet clad Klansmen who faced down black soldiers bent on sullyng the reputations of helpless and horrified southern ladies.<sup>22</sup> They were indeed trying times for black businessmen, but as Washington and Foster knew all too well, no one should have expected it to be easy.

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<sup>21</sup> Timothy M. Gay, *Satch, Dizzy & Rapid Robert; The Wild Saga of Interracial Baseball Before Jackie Robinson* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

## CHAPTER 4

### NEGRO LEAGUE BASEBALL: AN UNCOMMON RESPONSE

*They came from places called the Carolinas and the Virginias, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. They came strong, eager, searching. The city rejected them and they fled and settled along the riverbanks and under bridges in shallow, ramshackle houses made of sticks and tar-paper. They collected rags and wood. They sold the use of their muscles and their bodies. They cleaned houses and washed clothes, they shined shoes, and in quiet desperation and vengeful pride, they stole, and lived in pursuit of their own dream. That they could breathe free, finally, and stand to meet life with the force of dignity and whatever eloquence the heart could call upon.<sup>1</sup>*

This passage, written by August Wilson in his Pulitzer Prize winning drama Fences, does as much to describe the plight of the black community during the first half of the Twentieth century as any historical passage that has been written. The great migration from the southern plantations of the United States to the Industrial cities of the north offers as many similarities as it does differences. The naiveté of many former slave families, assuming that their lives would be markedly different as they travelled to cities like Pittsburgh, Chicago, and Cleveland, was rampant. Much like the slaves who travelled out of Egypt toward an expected land of milk and honey, there was a grave wilderness of issues to

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<sup>1</sup> August Wilson, *Fences* ( New York: Plume, 1986), xvii.

include illiteracy, a repressive capitalist agenda, and an ever increasing advancement of Jim Crow era legislation which served as proverbial wakeup calls.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century, more than a generation after the end of the American Civil War, approximately 20,000 blacks had found residence in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Most lived in a residential community, on what was known as “The Hill.” The population included those who were native citizens of the city, and those who had migrated in. This mixture of residents produced more tension than serenity as the group continued to grow.<sup>3</sup>

Migration for the southern blacks was expected to produce employment and prosperity. Instead, it produced greater incidence of disease and even death. Fewer white children suffered illness in Pittsburgh than did the black migrant children in the poorer wards (the Third and Fifth Wards) of the city.<sup>4</sup> It would seem that the milk was scarce and the honey, largely unattainable.

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<sup>2</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet; Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 442.

<sup>3</sup> Rob Ruck, *Sandlot Season; Sport in Black Pittsburgh* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 13.

In such a community, the sporting life became a crucial point of release and revitalization. In 1910, when the legendary black boxer from Galveston, Texas,<sup>5</sup> Jack Johnson knocked out the white Jim Jeffries, the black community joyously paraded in the streets.<sup>6</sup> For this was no small achievement. For many years prior to the bout, the sport's most heralded champion to that date, John L. Sullivan, a white British boxer, had refused to fight a black man. As writer Gerald Early has said, holding the heavyweight title is akin to being the "Emperor of Masculinity." During this period of history, of course, it was unthinkable that a black man might actually hold the heavyweight crown. To keep that from happening, it became a simple matter of fact that no black boxers would be allowed to challenge or contend for the throne.<sup>7</sup>

As the last vestiges of Reconstruction began to topple with the passage of the *Civil Rights Cases (1883)*, so too did the attitudes of the organized professional white baseball leagues in the United States. Adrian Constantine (Cap) Anson was most likely the greatest baseball player of that era. Few would question his status among the all-time greats such as Babe Ruth, or John McGraw in fact.<sup>8</sup> His refusal to play against Negroes had as much to do

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<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey C. Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness: the Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 2004), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Ruck, Rob, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ward, Geoffrey, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Peterson, *Only the Ball Was White* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 29.



with the dissent toward black ballplayers as any other reason known to the game. Sol White, noted author of the book *History of Colored Base Ball*, was convinced that Anson led the charge to draw a color line across the baseball diamond at the end of the nineteenth century. It is pointed out that Anson's autobiography, published in 1900 includes a description of a white ball club's mascot as the "little darky" and the "chocolate covered coon," references that give testament to the man's racial biases.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, after this period of at the very least, minimal integration, the color line in organized professional baseball was emphatically drawn. The 1898 season of the Acme Colored Giants, an all Negro team in the white Iron and Oil League,<sup>10</sup> proved to be the last for either a team or an individual of color in white professional baseball for nearly half a century. Just two years earlier, the highest court in the land had ruled in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case that "separate but equal" was acceptable as a guideline for the American citizenry. "Jim Crow," a popular term used when people spoke of segregation, had taken the first steps into the court room, setting back integration between the black and white communities for many years to come.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Sol White, *History of Colored Baseball, with Other Documents on the Early Black Game, 1886-1936*. Compiled by Jerry Malloy (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 29.

<sup>10</sup> Peterson, Rob, 50.

<sup>11</sup> Max J. Skidmore, *Legacy to the World; A Study of America's Political Ideas* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998), 243.

During that period and just prior to it, at least four Negro leagues took runs at organized professional baseball themselves. They included the Southern League of Colored Baseballists in 1886, the League of Colored Baseball Clubs in 1887, The Inter-State League in 1890, and The International League of Independent Professional Baseball Clubs in 1906.<sup>12</sup>

In the early 1900s Negro League baseball was more about promotion than actual organization. In the smaller towns, barnstormers would take on all challengers. Andrew “Rube” Foster was all too aware of this fact. He addressed the problem directly in an article written and submitted to *The Chicago Defender* on Nov. 29, 1919.

The message he presented was one of conservative planning for the future. Thinking in such a way brought out suggestions with regard to scheduling and even more to the point, operating expenses. Foster rather bluntly stated that no black baseball club at that present time could name as many as ten games they would play in the coming year. Furthermore, he spoke of the renting of stadiums. He proposed that the average cost of the rental of a stadium for one game in a week was \$945 and the cost of playing three games in that same time span would run just \$400 more.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Janet Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs: Champions of Black Baseball* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1985), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Rube Foster, Pitfalls of Baseball. *The Chicago Defender* 29 November 1919, Big Weekend Edition, 11.

That Fosternomics 101 was being presented to the community as a whole and not merely a boardroom of other owners should be telling. It became evident from early on just where the man's loyalties fell. This would not be the last time Foster employed appeals that proved similar to those mastered by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s and Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. He was well aware that the black populous held the keys to his business model's success.

Everything began to shift toward a more positive light on February 13, 1920, however in Kansas City, Missouri. On the heels of the infamous Black Sox scandal the previous fall, the time seemed right to build a new business venture built on the loyalty, trust, and devotion of black fans across the country. It was a shrewd and incredibly well timed strategic move. Make no mistake, there was little left to chance in this move, it had been well orchestrated by a man who knew his way around the diamond, as well as the boardroom.

At the behest of Foster, a query of Midwestern baseball owners, newspapermen, and sportswriters came together at the Black YMCA located on the south end of 18<sup>th</sup> street on the Paseo Boulevard, the epicenter of the Heartland's infamous jazz district. Out of this meeting The Western Circuit, National Baseball League was formed. Owners present at the meeting included Foster himself, owner of the Chicago American Giants, C. I. Taylor, owner of the Indianapolis A.B.C.'s, the owner of the Detroit Stars, John "Tenny" Blunt, Joe Green, owner

of the Chicago Giants, J.L. Wilkinson who owned the Kansas City Monarchs, and St. Louis Giants owner Lorenzo Cobb.<sup>14</sup>

Black sportswriters from across the nation beckoned for “the Moses to lead the baseball children out of the wilderness.” They seemed confident that they had found their leader in Foster.<sup>15</sup> Almost in deference to their trust in his character, Foster stood at the meeting and announced that it would be the writers themselves, and not the ownership, who would draft the governing document for the league. Not only would they be counted on to handle this specific task, but they would in turn be counted on to select the players for each team formed. In handling this duty, the selectors chose players for each team based upon their individual talents and taking account of the relative strength of each squad.

Those handling these duties for the newspapermen included Dave Wyatt of the Indianapolis Ledger, Elwood C. Knox of the Indianapolis Freeman, Cary B. Lewis of the Chicago Defender, and attorney Elisha Scott of Topeka, Kansas.<sup>16</sup> They would write the document under the authority of the “National Association of Colored Professional Baseball Clubs.” Foster, Blount, Taylor, and Wilkinson made up the baseball commission for the

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<sup>14</sup> “Baseball Men Write League Constitution: Western Circuit Organized; to Become Effective April 1, 1921.” *The Chicago Defender* 21 February 1920, Big Weekend Edition, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce, Janet, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Baseball Men Write League Constitution ..., *The Chicago Defender* 21 February 1920, Big Weekend Edition, 9.

body while T. W. Champion, Green, and again Taylor as well as Foster formed the Board of Directors. Foster would chair both committees. Emblazoned atop the heart of the letterhead for the organization was a phrase that it would seem was a prevailing theme of Foster's leadership. It read, "We Are The Ship, All Else The Sea."<sup>17</sup>

*"We know what Master laid thy keel ..."*<sup>18</sup>

That the new league be viewed as a ship would seemingly lead one easily to recognize Foster as its captain, if not commodore. It was at his insistence after all, with the exception of Wilkinson in what was viewed to be the important Kansas City market, all ownership in the league was to consist of black men.<sup>19</sup> He was more than an owner, a manager, a league president even. It seemed his mission was to guide Negro League baseball through the choppy seas of integration and despair. He was forceful in his belief that those who controlled the great pastime in America had misled those who followed as it hobbled into its current situation. In December of 1921, the man once called "the old master of our group"<sup>20</sup> wrote the first of what would be a four part series to the fans of Negro League

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<sup>17</sup> Bruce, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Ship of State* from The Complete Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1910), line 6.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Barthel, *Baseball, Barnstorming, and Exhibition Games: 1901-1962; A History of Off-Season Major League Play*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Pierce's Letter. *The Chicago Defender*, 7 November 1925, National Edition, 7.

baseball in the *Chicago Defender*. His tone is set early with regard to the respect his expertise ought to be regarded as he writes; "...there may be many that may disagree with some of the things I say, yet much weight must be given to what I say, as I have dealt particularly with the subject longer, made a greater success and have been the only man of Color to remain continuously in the game for such a length of time."<sup>21</sup>

*"What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel*

*Who made each mast and sail and rope ..."*<sup>22</sup>

Though the man seemed to lack a proper amount of humility, by black or white standards, one might find it difficult to challenge his reasoning. The American Giants were the best known independent black squad in the Midwest. They rented and played their games in the Chicago White Sox's original home park on Thirty-ninth and Shields. Often they were known to outdraw both the Sox and the cross town major league rival Cubs during the summer.<sup>23</sup> Foster's teams were successful, not simply because of skilled players, but, as the ensuing articles would reveal, their leader had a strong vision of what they needed to accomplish to be successful. It was no accident that the American Giants fielded such prominent squads.

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<sup>21</sup> Rube Foster Tells What Baseball Needs to Succeed. *The Chicago Defender* 10 December 1921, National Edition, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, lines 7-8.

<sup>23</sup> Ruck, Rob, 123.

*“What anvils rang, what hammers beat,  
In what a forge and what a heat  
Were forged the anchors of thy hope!”*<sup>24</sup>

As one continues to read this first article of Foster’s series, it becomes clearer to read that he is not talking about integration between blacks and whites, but rather about community acceptance of black baseball. He writes of the “ignorance” of those who early on saw baseball as a game only of the “sporting,” or in a term more typically used in recent times, the gambling element. In the big man’s opinion, just as the major league business model had concluded just two years earlier at the height of the Black Sox scandal, there was no room for racketeering in the game. This was not a shared view by some of his counterparts on the east coast. In later years, long after his departure from the scene, the numbers racket would prove a prodigious tool of several Negro League owners.

*“Fear not each sudden sound and shock –  
‘Tis of the wave, and not the rock;  
‘Tis but the flapping of the sail,  
And not a rent made by a gale!”*<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, lines 9-11.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, lines 12-15.

Foster wrote that in his view, baseball had always been his business, his profession. Further time is spent by the man claiming that he had overcome the perceptions of distaste and unruliness that the game had once held mainly thru the eyes of ministers and even college professors in and around the black community. These same leaders, he now called some of his “staunchest” supporters.

Foster’s mini-sermon turned directly, in his mind anyway, to his game’s greatest detractors, the church and religion. He spoke of how that local Baptists and Methodists at one time fought each other and would not be seen with or near one another. This, in his estimation was no longer the case, as he wrote of the two denominations now “communing” together in each other’s church sanctuaries. “The more enlightened we become, the more we fall into the trend of the other highly intellectual nations,” Foster argued.<sup>26</sup>

These were not the words of a man obsessed with integration into white baseball. A businessman first, Foster recognized the importance of the appeal of the game to his Race, which was of the greatest importance. He was determined to keep this “ship” on a steady course. Subsequent articles in the series solidified his position and philosophy. In the second article of the series, Foster argues the ins and outs of the game, guiding his readers through an intellectual discussion of what makes a good baseball club as opposed to an undisciplined and underperforming one.



Specifically, Foster discussed how to select a club and how to manage a successful organization. Next, he rather harshly critiqued his league's owners and managers. "Managing a baseball club requires brains, patience, endurance, and an open mind," he rather bluntly declared. He then boasted of his affinity for handling a variety of temperamental players with little trouble. "To be frank, all of my players play baseball as if they had no mind of their own ... but knew what to do." [on the field]<sup>27</sup>

The third article in his series dealt with the players. Still the business man, the piece reads from a typical sports owner's position that the players' greed ultimately is ruining the game.<sup>28</sup> That he is writing this to his Chicago baseball fans should point one to his intentions. These are not merely letters written to better his league, but more lessons offered to his community on the keys to running, watching, and even supporting a well run baseball team. What may or may not have been clear at the time of the articles was just how big this community had or would become. One factor that even Foster himself may have failed to completely grasp was the national attention the *Defender* garnered.

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<sup>26</sup> Rube Foster Tells What Baseball Needs ..., *The Chicago Defender*, 10 December 1921, National Edition, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Rube Foster Tells What Baseball Needs to Succeed: The Second Article by the President of the National Negro League Tells Why Managers and Owners Have Been a Rank Failure. *The Chicago Defender*, 17 December 1921, National Edition, 9.

<sup>28</sup> Players Prove Serious Drawback to Baseball: Third Article of Series by President of the National Negro League on Baseball and Way to Make it a Success. *The Chicago Defender* 24 December 1921, National Edition, 10.

Rounding out the series on New Year's Eve in 1921, it was the issue of black umpires that Foster next chose to address. Once more, his article lacked a sense of humility as he wrote, "I know that the fans all over the country are waiting to get my opinion on 'Colored umpires. 'They have patiently waited a number of years...'"<sup>29</sup>

Yet, despite this seeming arrogance with regard to his understanding, one would find it hard to deny the impact his opinions had upon the game and that of the black community. One headline printed in *The Chicago Defender* in 1918 might offer a hint of the possible magnitude of the man's personality and dominion over his sport. It read: "Influenza Epidemic Closes Baseball Season for American Giants: Rube Foster's System Blinds Managers, Players, and Critics."<sup>30</sup> Further, his reputation and demeanor stretched well beyond the black community he seemed so passionate about converting to his way of thinking. In 1923, white baseball's first major league commissioner and likely integration's greatest nemesis for nearly three decades, Kennesaw Mountain Landis said to Foster, "When you beat our teams it gives us a black eye."<sup>31</sup> Landis subsequently forbade any exhibitions in

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<sup>29</sup> Future of Race Umpires Depends on Men of Today: Fourth and Last Article by President of National Negro League Deals with Dark Skinned Arbitrators of Today and Their Future Possibilities. *The Chicago Defender* 31 December 1921, National Edition, 10.

<sup>30</sup> Influenza Epidemic Closes Baseball Season For American Giants: Rube Foster's System Blinds Managers, Players and Critics. *The Chicago Defender* 2 November 1918, Big Weekend Edition, 9.

<sup>31</sup> John Virtue, *South of the Color Barrier: How Jorge Pasqual and the Mexican League Pushed Baseball Toward Racial Integration* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008).

season between whites and blacks. It was a rigid policy that would hold true until he stepped away from the commissioner's chair.

Upon learning of Foster's death in December, 1933, this headline in The Pittsburgh Courier said all that was necessary. It read: 'Rube' Foster, Former Baseball Czar, Is Dead; Diamond Magnate Called "Out." After Foster departed the game due to illness in 1926, the NNL, with a foundation in place, managed to survive a decade of tough circumstances, and survived the crushing blows it received from the great depression. In Kansas City, J. L. Wilkinson followed the Foster ideal and became the envy of Negro Baseball. The Monarchs' squad was so well organized that the team in 1939 had its own booster club of more than 200 people, including a bathing beauty queen dubbed 'Miss Monarch.'

The depression years from 1929 thru 1941 prevented Negro League world championships. Following that stretch, the Monarchs played in the Negro League World Series in 1942, winning four games to none over the Homestead Grays, and in 1945, falling to the Newark Eagles, four games to three. In the lean years, winter barnstorming tours kept Wilkinson's squad afloat.<sup>32</sup>

In February of 1938, the Negro National League (NNL) owners came together in Pittsburgh, PA to discuss their survival. The league was in disarray. The commissioner of

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<sup>32</sup> Bruce, Janet, 97.

the NNL, Ferdinand Q. Morton had called a meeting in New York just two weeks earlier. His call went unheeded.

However, the league's chairman Gus Greenlee, who was more likely calling the shots, was able to convene such a meeting in Pittsburgh.<sup>33</sup> A numbers banker and at one time a bootlegger in the Pittsburgh area, Greenlee was the proprietor of the Crawford Grill, a high profile night club in black Pittsburgh, and owner of the NNL Crawfords baseball franchise. His fame and fortune was such in the black community that he was best known as "Mr. Big."<sup>34</sup>

Greenlee picked Pittsburgh as the meeting place because in his estimation, it was the central location for all of the owners. In a letter to his colleagues, he mapped out a rigid agenda. His primary reasons for putting together this conference were to elect officers and to combine the positions of secretary and treasurer into one. But an article written in *The Pittsburgh Courier* on January 29, insinuated that there was much that needed to be done to fix the struggling enterprise. The key factor, said the article, was a need for better organization amongst all the teams and their owners. Out of this same article came a cry for a virtual exorcism of a fading but far from forgotten icon's ideology set forth at the onset of

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<sup>33</sup> Modern Baseball Needs Another Rube Foster! *The Pittsburgh Courier* 29 January 1938, 17.

<sup>34</sup> Ruck, Rob, 128.

Negro baseball's glory days. The article yearned for the return of the structure that Andrew "Rube" Foster had instilled in the original NNL during the 1920's.

So dubbed the "Rube Foster Method" in the piece, a philosophy that steered the league headfirst into the throws of the black community as its means of not only survival, but success as well, it was suggested by the *Courier* that a real need was now in place for "a man who will set a course and follow it ... regardless" of the whims and ramblings of the other league owners. Not only was he the founder of that first NNL, Foster was an outspoken force in the inner workings of black baseball during his day. He knew what would work and set out to insure that the other owners understood that his system was the right system to carry the league forward as a successful entity within the black community.<sup>35</sup>

What is surprising here is not that such longings for past success would be attributed to Foster, lauded in 1924 by a Pittsburgh writer and another future commissioner of the league, W. Rollo Wilson, as among other things "the magnet attracting both the brains and the froth of humanity."<sup>36</sup> No, the curious thing is the lack of understanding the article and the then current ownership had for the man's philosophy.

It had been on November 18, 1924, that the original "Negro National League of Professional Baseball Clubs" was secured through Articles of Incorporation set forth by the

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<sup>35</sup> "Modern Baseball ...", 17.

<sup>36</sup> Rube Foster Dominating Figure In World Series, *The Pittsburgh Courier* 11 October, 1924, 6.

Secretary of State in Illinois.<sup>37</sup> Five men are recorded within the documents as stockholders. Most prominent on the list as the purchaser of twenty shares of league stock valued at five hundred dollars is Foster, the founder and president of the newly formed alliance. Next in the order of likely significance was the majority owner, Willie Foster, Rube's twenty year old "kid" brother<sup>38</sup> and owner of forty shares valued at one thousand dollars. J.L. Wilkinson, owner of the Kansas City Monarchs, and listed as the league secretary, held twenty shares of his own valued at five hundred dollars. The group was rounded out by Russell Thompson of Chicago who garnered fifteen shares worth three hundred seventy-five dollars and Walter M. Farmer, also of the windy city, holding just five shares with a value of one hundred twenty five dollars.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately for Foster, this event marked the beginning of a shift away, rather than toward his dream of a self sufficient baseball league supported by a hopeful and determined black community.

The other common form of gambling play that was popular among the poor and specifically the black community after the turn of the twentieth century was that of policy gambling on the "numbers racket." It was generally assumed, that policy emerged as the practice of wagering on the outcome of legal lottery drawings. The term policy was actually

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<sup>37</sup> Articles are displayed prominently in the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum located in Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>38</sup> Willie Foster Hands St. Louis a 3 to 2 Drubbing. *The Chicago Defender*, 11 August 1923, National edition, 9.

<sup>39</sup> The list was expanded and finalized on December 5, 1925 with the inclusion of three additional owners as members of the board.

given as a similar word for insurance.<sup>40</sup> Essentially a poor white or black person, unable to afford to buy an actual lottery ticket, could place as little as a penny with an agent as a wager against what numbers turned up in the actual lottery.

Jacob Riis, in what was at the time a “classic study” of New York City’s underprivileged classes, wrote this of such forms of aggrandizement:

Of all the temptations that beset him (the Negro), the one that troubles him and the police most is his passion for gambling. The game of policy is a kind of unlawful penny lottery specially adapted to his means, but patronized extensively by poor white players as well. It is the meanest of swindles, but reaps for its bankers rich fortunes wherever colored people congregate. Between the fortune and the policy shop, closely allied frauds always, the wages of many a hard day’s work are wasted by the negro; but the loss causes him few regrets. Penniless, but with undaunted faith in his “ultimate” luck, he looks forward to the time when he shall once more be able to take a hand at “beating policy.” When periodically the negro’s lucky numbers, 4-11-44, come out on the slips of the alleged daily drawings, there are supposed to be held in some far-off Western town, intense excitement reigns in Thompson Street and along the Avenue, where someone is always the winner. An immense impetus is given then to the bogus business that has no existence outside the cigar stores and candy shops where it hides from the law, save in some cunning “broker’s” back office, where the slips are printed and the “winnings” apportioned daily with due regard to the backer’s interests.<sup>41</sup>

In 1921, at least in an official sense, Negro League baseball became intertwined with the numbers and policy rackets. In that year, a policy house known as the “Tijuana and Interstate” was opened by Detroit Stars owner “Tenny” Blunt. Such houses were also known

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pg. 38.

<sup>41</sup> Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1890, 1907 edition), 155.

to deal in games of chance such as dice and cards.<sup>42</sup> It was perhaps this development that led to Foster's tirade against such practices at the end of 1921. Even more likely, this could have been an important factor in the disbandment and subsequent reorganization and incorporation of the Western Circuit in 1925. Blount blasted Foster in an article he authored for the *Pittsburgh Courier* on December 27, 1924. He portrays himself as quite the helpless victim as he writes:

As I suggested in my article of last week I shall attempt to tell you how and why 13 ball clubs have failed or been forced to quit the Negro National League. I feel that I owe it to my many friends to explain my reasons for leaving the league. I shall tell them of the things I was compelled to put up with for six years and let them decide for themselves. It is a wonder how I put up with it for such a long time.

Blount goes on to discuss his issues with the way in which Foster booked league games and collected rent on game day venues. He refers repeatedly to the crookedness of "Mr. Foster."<sup>43</sup> Curiously enough, in all of the articles written by Foster, there is no specific mention of gambling practices, nor was there ever any implication of Blount in such matters. But this would not be the lone foray of gambling and numbers practices in and around the Negro Leagues. On the contrary it became much more widespread in the depression years.

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<sup>42</sup> Carlson, Gustav G., 46-47.

<sup>43</sup> Terry J. Blount, Big Baseball Scandal Grows: Rube Foster Resigns As League Head; N.N. League Disbanded – Blount Claims He Was Systematically Robbed by Booking System. *The Pittsburgh Courier* 27 December, 1924, 1.



The fact that such practices grew to the levels they did, has as much to do with the economic conditions of those years as did the investment by numbers bankers and other “sporting men” into the game. Numbers gamblers seem always to have viewed the game as a rational economic activity and characteristically referred to their numbers bets as “investments.”<sup>44</sup> In the context of such gambling, where a nickel or a dime is offered up to play the numbers, many in the community saw it as a form of personal savings. Remember, during the depression years, confidence was very low in regard to depository savings due to the major bank crashes in 1929. Further, a person on the street, who had a spare nickel or dime on his person, was expected to help his neighbor if asked. By placing a wager on the numbers, there was at least a chance of some recoupment with even hopes for greater profits. Lending or giving to a friend was in that mindset, more like throwing the money away, than was gambling on the numbers.<sup>45</sup> Further, even those who had savings accounts saw some logic in placing a wager at the barbershop or grocery store, rather than making no “investment” in the day at all.<sup>46</sup>

After Foster’s sudden departure from the Negro League scene in 1926 and his death in 1930, the black baseball community struggled to develop any form of continuity in its

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<sup>44</sup> Carlson, Gustav G., 138-139.

<sup>45</sup> Whyte, 141.

<sup>46</sup> Ivan Lyte, Numbers Gambling Among Black: A Financial Institution. *American Sociological Review*, 1977, Vol. 42 (December): 892-894.

business relations. That the depression had much to do with these factorings there can be little doubt. However, there were baseball men in the Negro Leagues who had a sense of the business nature that was necessary if not vital to the survival of these organizations in the black community. Wilkinson seemed to pick up the torch on a local level as he built his Monarchs club in and around a burgeoning black community with ties to the jazz and blues music culture as well. But one man in the east, Cum Posey, owner of Pittsburgh's Homestead Grays, actually made a strong effort in much the same vein as the work done by Foster. As alluded to above, however, the timing was wrong and would prove too much for his principles of business to overcome.

Posey diagnosed the situation in a 'Fosterian' sense with regard to the health of black baseball in the most general of terms. "The 1931 season among the colored clubs of the nation has never had a drearier outlook," he warned. He then, however, argued that businesses conducted in a "safe and sane manner" would find their way clear of the impending economic plight. "Baseball at this time needs men with much knowledge of all things connected with the operation of big time baseball." Building upon these ideals, Posey established the East-West League that same year, but while his business seemed to thrive at the local level, the remainder of the league, despite his best efforts, was never quite able to overcome the depressed conditions in the country at that time. There was not enough startup

capital available to new and inexperienced ownership groups to make a brand new league viable<sup>47</sup>, that is evidently ... outside the numbers and gaming industry.

Posey returned his full attention to building up his sandlot teams in Pittsburgh alongside his barnstorming Grays in 1932. But upon returning his attention to his bread and butter local business interests, a competitor, Mr. Greenlee was placing his own foothold on the Pittsburgh Hills. Greenlee, who had been born and raised in Marion, North Carolina, had joined the northern migration by hopping a freight train to Pittsburgh in 1916 to stay with an uncle who was already a resident. After a stint in the Army during World War I, Greenlee returned home to a job driving a taxicab and in the process began bootlegging and racketeering on the side. It was an opportunity afforded him by policies that included prohibition, supplanted by the Coolidge administration. In these years he would be known around town as “Gasoline Gus.”

As his reputation grew, so too did his influence. He built upon the bootlegging business, opening his own speakeasy. By the 1930’s, he owned and operated an establishment known as the Crawford Grill. It was inside the doors of the Grill, that the notorious Greenlee would handle much of his sporting operations. Author Rob Tuck likened the setting to be similar to that of Rick’s American Café in the acclaimed movie *Casa blanca*. As Ruck points out, “the Crawford Grill was the scene for many a whispered

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<sup>47</sup> Ruck, Rob, 134-136.

conversation tinged with illegality.”<sup>48</sup> It was evident in the Pittsburgh’s black community just where Greenlee’s main business interests lay.

Another of the racketeers who became involved in the rebirth of the Negro National League under Greenlee was Abe Manley, also curiously enough, a native of North Carolina. Manley set up shop after migrating north to Camden, N.J. and was a well known “gaming speculator” and, according to his wife Effa Manley, was real estate dealer.<sup>49</sup> It was a very neat and tidy way to describe her husband’s policy and numbers practices. In the same, largely self serving book, it is interesting to read Mrs. Manley’s description of the sporting and gaming elements within the black community on the day of the seventh and deciding game of the 1946 Negro League World Series, a series that Manley’s Newark Eagles would eventually win:

Tis a colorful crowd, indeed, in every respect ... Beauticians and barbers from the neighborhood salons ... Swaggering political bigwigs, surrounded by the usual retinue of fawning ward heelers and hangers on ... Assorted sportsmen and hustlers of every conceivable stripe --- all blending into some weird kind of a mosaic ... Intertwined with the thousands of non-descript domestics, garbage collectors and other “just plain ordinary people ...<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 138-139.

<sup>49</sup> Effa Manley and Leon Herbert Hardwick (Edited by Robert Cvornyek), *Negro Baseball ... Before Integration* (Chicago: Adams Press, 1976), 40.

<sup>50</sup> Manley, Effa, 35.

It is, it seems a passage meant to normalize the practices of the numbers barons as ordinary citizens of the community.

The argument has been made that Abe Manley's business interests, whatever they might have been in Camden, had ceased operation upon his move to the New York metropolitan area. In the 1930's the numbers racket was controlled by the white mobster, Dutch Schultz. There is some doubt that a newcomer could have infiltrated or could have become a paid contributor to Schultz's operation. James Overmyer claims in "Queen of the Negro Leagues: Effa Manley and the Newark Eagles," that Abe seemed to avoid the numbers business ... at least on a daily basis. Numerous police reports fail to turn up Manley's name with regard to gaming practices. But Overmyer also points out that it is not otherwise clear just how the Manleys maintained their high society status in such difficult financial times.<sup>51</sup>

Another unsubstantiated rumor mentioned by Ralph Koger, a member of Greenlee's inner circle, was that Effa Manley brought the numbers game back from Puerto Rico, as an off shoot of the game, *la bolita*, and offered it to the Negro League owners as a way to increase revenues.<sup>52</sup> This would seem a bit farfetched however, because the numbers game in New York dates back to the 1920's, not to mention the aforementioned policy houses

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<sup>51</sup> James Overmyer, *Queen of the Major Leagues: Effa Manley and the Newark Eagles* (Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1998), 15.

<sup>52</sup> Ruck, Rob,142.

operated in Detroit. It does however point back to the desire of numbers bankers for extreme discretion and secrecy in their business practices.

In 1933, even Posey, feeling the pinch of the depression, the financial aftershock of his failed East West League, and also the intense financial competition instigated by Greenlee, turned to Homestead's main numbers banker, Rufus "Sonnyman" Jackson, who relished the opportunity to own a piece of own of the black game's infamous franchises. Jackson, much like Greenlee, ran his numbers business as well as a café/night club known as the Skyrocket Café. The Skyrocket was a post-prohibition nightclub that featured top live entertainment in the Homestead Community.<sup>53</sup>

Each of these ownership groups benefitted substantially from promotion of the sporting element in the black community during the depression era. Of special interest is the high regard these men received from the black community. Greenlee and Jackson were known to "lend a helping hand."<sup>54</sup> Manley was often called "Honest Abe" by friends and business associates in the black community. He was trusted and well respected.<sup>55</sup> A small sample study performed in 1938 with regard to the sporting element showed that 31 out of 77 Negro informants viewed the racketeer as a "credit to the race." Furthermore, it suggested

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<sup>53</sup> Ruck, Rob, 171.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Manley, Effa, 40

that males and females of lower education held racketeers in higher esteem than did people of higher education.<sup>56</sup>

While the owners, the newspapermen, and the fans within the black community struggled with their sense of vision as recreation, there was another important group, perhaps the most important of all groups, yearning to move forward; to be recognized, for their unique gifts. These were of course, the Negro league players themselves. Josh Gibson, Cool Papa Bell, Hilton Smith, and Leroy ‘Satchell’ Paige were all players at the top of their game, dreaming of that lingering cup of coffee at the major league level. These men knew they were good enough to compete in the major leagues. Each time Jim Crow knocked them down, they sprung back up, ready to throw the next pitch, or take the next swing.

In his autobiography, *I Was Right On Time; My Journey from the Negro Leagues to the Majors*, Buck O’Neil shares some observations about his days spent as a barnstorming ballplayer. He writes of sneaking away out the back window because the squad hadn’t earned enough money to cover the rent. Then on another occasion, he describes himself and his teammates hopping a freight train, after their vehicle died on the road to an event in Wichita Falls, Texas. O’Neil is quick to point out this is not the way it always was for Negro players – it was just when they were in the off season, trying to earn additional paydays. Sometimes they did well, sometimes they broke even, but to hear him tell it, on most

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<sup>56</sup> Strong,,. 249.

occasions, they were fortunate to even make it back home after the games and tournaments dried up.<sup>57</sup>

Even as the infamous Negro Leagues' ambassador romanticizes about these days gone by, one might question the sensibility of taking such risks. It certainly couldn't have been about the money. It most assuredly was not a venture proffered because of the luxurious travelling conditions. It was most likely the case for he and his group of teammates this; merely the love of the game and the hope of better days ahead that kept these men on the road, rather than being at home with their families.

The most impressive tour across the nation in the falls of 1946 and 1947, at the same time that Jackie Robinson was integrating the game, was played between the Bob Feller All-Stars, a collection of white major leaguers and the Satchel Paige All-Stars, a combined group of players from the Negro National and Negro American leagues. The squads circled the country in Flying Tiger aircraft that had been left over from the war.<sup>58</sup> The DC-3's were reported to be logging 13,000 miles in their coast-to-coast tour at the outset of what had originally been scheduled to be a 27 game schedule, predominately played between the two squads, though other teams were insinuated to be on Feller's schedule as well.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Buck O'Neill, Steve Wulf, and David Conrads, *I Was Right On Time; My Journey from the Negro Leagues to the Majors* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1996), 52-61.

<sup>58</sup> Bruce, Janet, 105.

<sup>59</sup> Major Leaguers Oppose 'Satchel'. *The Chicago Defender* 5 October, 1946, National Edition, 21.



When the dust finally cleared, the squads had played a total of thirty-two games in just twenty-six days. The performances drew more than four hundred thousand fans and reportedly drew a greater amount of revenue than had the MLB World Series squads.<sup>60</sup> It was a threat that MLB commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis had already pondered in the past. A reprint of an article out of the Los Angeles News sports pages by Gordon Macker, a sports columnist pointed out that though Landis once stated “there is no rule against Negroes playing in organized baseball,” it didn’t amount to anything more than words. “... just another case of hypocritical buck passing,” Macker wrote.<sup>61</sup> Landis had during the height of the barnstorming days summarily banned such exhibitions between white major leaguer squads and Negro league teams.<sup>62</sup>

For the major leaguers, these games were all about making money. Certainly there was a challenge in facing the Negro League competition, but without the money offered, they likely would not have played. But the *Sporting News* rose in opposition to these barnstorming expeditions, saying that their play jeopardized the profitability of the owners,

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<sup>60</sup> Bruce, Janet, 105.

<sup>61</sup> Paige Says Negroes Not Ready For Big Leagues; White Writer Hits Landis; (Reprint from the Los Angeles News sports page). *The Chicago Defender* 15 August 1942, National Edition, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Bruce, Janet, 105.

who received little of the barnstorming profits. In the name of fiscal responsibility, the paper challenged the practice of barnstorming as a “cheapening of the great American pastime.”<sup>63</sup>

For the Negro League players these games meant a great deal more. O’Neil, whose Monarchs had recently completed the Negro League World Series in defeat at the hands of the Newark Eagles, shared his excitement about the upcoming barnstorming event, even as he played out the championship series string against the Eagles;

I was looking ahead myself during the Series, to the biggest barnstorming tour ever, when Satchel Paige and Bob Feller were going to square off against each other with their own all-star teams in games all across the country. I was excited to be chosen ... I knew I’d be making more money in one month than I had made in the last six. I was excited to be able to play against guys like Mickey Vernon, Phil Rizzuto, and Stan Musial. But I may have been most excited about taking my first plane ride ... that’s when we found out how the other half lived.

The Monarch first baseman went on to talk about how the tour might have had a large impact on baseball’s integration.<sup>64</sup> In essence, these players were knocking on baseball’s door as Robinson and Branch Rickey began to kick it down.

Paige and Feller’s squads went back and forth on this infamous tour for two years. One might assume that it was the draw of Major League baseball players and the chance for black America to see their best against the elite white ball players that proved to be the strengths of this great draw. Then again, this may not have been the case at all. In August of

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<sup>63</sup> Barthell, Thomas, 152.

<sup>64</sup> O’Neil, Buck, 179-180.

1948, Feller's Indians signed Paige to a major league contract. Already on that squad was one Larry Doby, the first black to integrate the American League. When Cleveland opened in Chicago at the start of the season, Doby and Feller played in front of a crowd of just over 6,000 fans. On August 3 of that year, Paige pitched a night game for the Indians against the White Sox that set a new night attendance record of 51,013 fans. Just as impressive was the fact that more than 10,000 fans that had been unable to get into the game, continued to mill about outside the stadium as it progressed.<sup>65</sup>

Barnstorming in its heyday is portrayed as purely as that of the sandlot games themselves. Many have said they saw it as a way to play the game that they loved. Some of this early play as it is portrayed might be deemed irresponsible. It leaves visual images akin to the cowboys of the wild west, roaming from town to town in search of their next adventure, albeit their next meal, and/or their next place to lay their heads. There was little money to be had, and mostly that covered travel expenses with the occasional frolic on the town.

Interestingly enough, even as teams such as the Kansas City Monarchs and the Homestead Grays barnstormed during the depression years, more often than not, they faced interracial competition. If the Grays were travelling through rural Pennsylvania and Ohio

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<sup>65</sup> Young, Fay. 'Satch', Baseball's Great Drawing Card; Through the Years ... *The Chicago Defender* 28 May 1949, National Edition, 20.

which were predominately white, it would often be the case that the white coal miners would take time out of their day, organize a baseball team and challenge the Negro League squad to a game.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, when black athletes like Gibson, perhaps the most acclaimed slugger in Negro League history, Heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, or Olympic sprinter Jesse Owens performed, there were as many, if not more white spectators as there were black spectators at an event, if not more.<sup>67</sup> Integration, though perhaps not spoken of directly, was beginning to enter the American mindset.

Furthermore, though the ultranationalist movement remained afoot, it failed completely in its attempts to dissuade the black players from competing on the ball diamonds, whether they were in the north or south. It was surely this determined spirit that pushed them forward each day, most of which were played for little more than meal money. The underlying contention this observation makes of course is that hope itself fueled these men, who in turn carried the black community on their shoulders.

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<sup>66</sup> Ruck, Rob, 209.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Though the title and an entire chapter of this paper might suggest otherwise, in its truest sense, there is little to do with baseball here. It's actually more of a narrative about the essence of humanity and the differing ways in which the minority<sup>1</sup> struggles to survive, maintain a normal condition, and at times even thrive amidst an unfair, cruel, and disparaged world.

There has been much written within these pages with regard to human cruelty. That many of these acts of history have occurred at all should not be considered of the entirety of human nature one might think. There are after all many tales that can be found in many places, from many differing angles, and many that are uplifting.

The Book of Job in the Holy Bible recounts the struggles that one man must face in working through his faith in both God and humanity. There is a great deal throughout anyone's own life that deals with personal struggles. A great portion of William Shakespeare's work deals in human tragedy. Thomas Hobbes once wrote of a human being's life as one that was "solitary, nasty, poor, brutish, and short."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper of course the minority includes the Jewish and the Black communities.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1957.) Manuscript was originally written and published in 1651.

In the presence of such negativity and disdain, one might wonder just how much life truly is worth living. Are there ingredients available within the physical, social, political, not to mention even the human realm that may be able to overcome such obstacles. This is a tough question to be sure, and there are no easy answers. Gray is all around; clarity can be quite elusive.

Yet it is the mere idea that men in uniforms and high stockings, who rode across the United States on the dustiest roads imaginable each day to play a game against foes who looked upon them with disdain, could rise to the occasion and supplant overwhelming odds, that is most impressive here. Most of the time they received barely enough food to sustain them, they were estranged from their homes and families for long periods of time, and much like the Jews in Europe, were exploited by their own race in profit seeking ventures.

There are great men discussed here. They include W.E.B. Dubois, Booker T. Washington, Victor Frankl, and Bruno Bettelheim, and the forgotten Civil Rights enthusiast, Rube Foster himself. Though this writer is partial to the latter, it will be for each reader to decide who is most worthy of regard.

This is a thesis about both the power and weakness of the human spirit. For if one looks back upon Victor Frankl's ideal of having a humorous take on life while sitting in the concentration camps, there is a relevant correlation to the happy go lucky Negro League player who is forced to play for little more than his supper and the promise of being able to

play another day. In baseball after all, for those black ballplayers, playing the game was akin to the Jewish prisoners living out their own meaning-filled existence. In the immortal words of Hall-of-Fame Major leaguer and former Negro League star Ernie Banks at the beginning of a double-header ... “It’ s a great day to play two.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted here as well, that the eternal optimist Banks, played for the hapless Chicago Cubs of the 50s, 60s, and 70s.

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Dan Stroud was born in St. Louis, Missouri on June 18, 1965. A U. S. Navy Veteran, he is proud to have served his country and considers his life's experiences with the highest regard. Dan's parents, Luther Frederick and Nancy Lee Stroud are a couple whose marriage of nearly forty-eight years has been a true inspiration to their son. Luther, a first generation college graduate, received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1977. He attained this degree as he strived to support his wife and four children. It was this strong determination that inevitably became the catalyst upon which his eldest son placed his long term goals which have culminated in the completion of this thesis and the Master of Arts Degree that comes with it.