



---

All Theses and Dissertations

---

2008-12-05

# Monarch Cheers, Integration Whimpers, and a Loyalty Conflict: Kansas City Call's Coverage of the Black Yankees, 1937-1955

Eric M. Eames

*Brigham Young University - Provo*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

---

## BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Eames, Eric M., "Monarch Cheers, Integration Whimpers, and a Loyalty Conflict: Kansas City Call's Coverage of the Black Yankees, 1937-1955" (2008). *All Theses and Dissertations*. 1929.

<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/1929>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

**Monarch Cheers, Integration Whimpers, and Loyalty Conflicts:  
Coverage of the Black Yankees in Black and White Kansas City, 1937-1957**

by

Eric M. Eames

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Mass Communication

Department of Communications

Brigham Young University

December 2008

Copyright© 2008 Eric M. Eames

All Rights Reserved

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Eric M. Eames

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ed Adams, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Stoker

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dale Cressman

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Eric M. Eames in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ed Adams  
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Stoker  
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rory Scanlon  
Associate Dean, College of Fine Arts &  
Communications

## ABSTRACT

Monarch Cheers, Integration Whimpers, and Loyalty Conflicts:  
Coverage of the Black Yankees in Black and White Kansas City, 1937-1957

Eric M. Eames

Department of Communications

Master of Arts

Already regarded as one of the top teams in Negro League baseball, the Kansas City Monarchs became known as a powerhouse unit in the 1930s and 40s. They rolled into towns with lights, amazing athletes, and competitive play. They won championship after championship during these years as Kansas City baseball fans strongly supported them. As they became an integral part of the city, the Monarchs' success, open-seating policy, and jazzy home openers fostered a large following of mixed-race fans. The local black newspaper, the *Kansas City Call*, held them up on a pedestal, while sportswriters for the mainstream *Kansas City Star/Times* downplayed the Monarchs' accomplishments and influence in the community.

This thesis focuses on the relationship the *Call* had with the best team in black baseball through the context of its treatment of games, players, league officials, and team owners, as well as other patterns and tactics. Analysis of the *Star/Times* coverage is also considered to show variances in coverage between one city's race-divided newspapers. Negro League baseball and the African American newspapers that covered the teams

grew out of and illustrated the segregation laws and prejudices feelings that existed in the United States during most of the twentieth century.

Over time, especially when the sports world moved into the post-integration period, the *Call's* bolstering of the Monarchs deteriorated as the paper's promotion of democracy steered its sportswriters away from a baseball organization that symbolized segregation. The different types of coverage by the *Call* throughout the twenty-year study can be described as all-out promotion, balance, and abandonment. In the 1950s nostalgia and conflict existed, as the *Call's* sportswriters became torn on how to cover a team that was once the pride of the black community, but now represented inequality. In an attempt to remedy this torment, the *Call* tried to convince black baseball officials to remove the "Negro League" stigma by signing players of all races in order to mirror the more democratic Major Leagues.

The white press, meanwhile, ignored the bigger issues of black baseball as one Negro League team after another died in the 1950s. The *Star/Times* peripheral coverage of the Monarchs provides context to the social issues and discriminatory practices at play in Missouri.

As this thesis outlines the coverage of the Monarchs through the Black and White newspapers of Kansas City, previous research is substantiated and challenged to provide a fuller account of Jim Crow's effects.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I must acknowledge the hand of God in this project. He opened up doors and opportunities to obtain the information needed to complete the research. He then provided strength at earlier morning and late night hours so I could focus, despite the many piles of papers and books surrounding my desk.

Secondly, there is no combination of English words that can adequately express the amazing encouragement and support provided by my beautiful bride, Jodi. She stood ready to hug me when I peeled myself away from the computer after a full day of writing, knowing that I had just experienced more cramps and strains than I ever experienced during my high school athletic career. In the midst of discouragement, disappointment, and tears, she became my rock and motivation. I can't thank her enough and must thank her for experiencing with me an elixir of weathered emotions—from blizzards and rainy days to sunsets at the beach. Without her partnership I might have failed.

I am also grateful to the rest of my lovely family for their constant prayers and love, and especially for my mother who taught a young boy to find joy in hard work. She also provided me with the imagination and desire to reach for the stars. Her weekly conversations helped to keep things in perspective and helped me to realize the importance of making time for family.

The goal-setting attitude of my thesis committee also provided motivation and helped me to stay on track to finishing the project and getting the facts right. I am forever grateful for their direction and passionate opinions. Their love for historical research, both collectively and individually, also rubbed off on me. I must specifically thank Dr. Ed Adams for helping me to realize the importance and significance of my research. He



also made me feel capable, confident, and talented enough to tackle this project from beginning to end.

Thanks must also be extended to Ernest Perry at the University of Missouri. Dr. Perry willingly and unselfishly provided me with advice to solidify my project when I shyly approached him at a conference for the American Journalism Historians Association. Much is owed and can never be repaid to the Woodward family of Independence, Missouri, who allowed a stranger to sleep and shower in their home for a week while I performed research at the downtown Kansas City Public Library.

Besides the Kansas City Public Library, the project is greatly indebted to Brigham Young University's interlibrary loan system, which responded to my many requests and made sure I received the exact rolls of film needed.

Finally, I must thank Byron Johnson (and his daughter Jacquelyn Benton), who allowed an acne-riddled college student to conduct a two-hour long interview. The moment Johnson relayed his story of playing for the great Kansas City Monarchs I was enthralled. I left his apartment in Denver salivating for more. When the time came to choose a topic, Johnson's story replayed in my head and I knew that the Negro Leagues and specifically the Monarchs would become a part of my thesis. May Johnson rest in peace.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents .....	ix
Introduction: Monarchs' Baseball, The Well-Dressed Social Gathering .....	1
Chapter One: Historians Shed Light on Negro Leagues.....	5
Review of Literature .....	5
The Black Press: Fighting and Promoting .....	12
<i>Kansas City Call</i> : A Booker T. Newspaper .....	15
<i>Kansas City Star/Times</i> : A Midwest Empire .....	18
Chapter Two: Twenty Years of Change .....	22
Methodology .....	22
Negro Leagues: A Cultural Institution.....	23
Chapter Three: Monarchs Rekindled, 1937-1941.....	26
The Pomp of Opening Day .....	26
White Press Monotone About Monarchs.....	28
Segregation Weakens America's Armor .....	31
<i>Call's</i> Position Toward Baseball Integration.....	36
Chapter Four: World Series Trifled, 1942-1944.....	41
Franklin Sets The Tone.....	41
McKibben Joins The Battle .....	43
Hushed Negro League World Series .....	47
Franklin Battles for the Buses.....	50
<i>Call</i> Avoids Baseball Integration Campaign .....	55

Chapter Five: From Battle Fields to Diamonds, 1945-1947.....	59
<i>Call</i> Attacks Segregation At <i>Star</i> 's Tournament .....	59
White Paper Respects Monarchs .....	61
Robinson's Rookie Year With Monarchs and Tryouts.....	63
Monarchs Above Robinson .....	70
<i>Star</i> Ignores Robinson's Historical Importance.....	72
Johnson Suggests Bold Remedy to "Sick" Negro Leagues.....	77
Chapter Six: A Season of Shifting Loyalty, 1948-1949 .....	80
Branch Ricky Named Man of the Year .....	80
Black Fans Root For Major League Black Players.....	82
Bitter Owners Complain Against Robinson and Black Press.....	84
Johnson Rebuked By <i>Star</i> Columnist.....	89
Loyalty Not A Problem For White Press.....	92
<i>Call</i> Wants Jim Crow Out of Black Baseball .....	93
Signed White Players Never Materialize.....	97
Black or White Segregation Is A Crime .....	99
Negro Leagues Limp Along .....	101
Chapter Seven: A Struggling Black Business, 1950-1953 .....	105
Several Teams Go Belly Up .....	105
Majors League Baseball Takes Up Space.....	107
Bring Back the Good Ol' Days.....	110
East-West Game In Shambles.....	112
White Press Avoids Bigger Issues .....	115
Poor Publicity From Negro League Officials .....	119

Negro Leagues Still Needed, White Players Welcome .....	122
Negro Leagues Experiment With Female Athletes .....	125
Chapter Eight: Black Baseball's Obituary, 1954-1957.....	130
<i>Call</i> Maintains Racial Labels.....	130
Kansas City Pushes for Big-League Look .....	135
Johnson Covers A's for News Wire .....	139
Franklin's Pressroom Funeral .....	141
Athletics Squeeze Monarchs Out.....	143
A New Team in Town .....	146
Who Is To Blame? .....	149
Chapter Nine: From Champs to Big-League Producers .....	153
Discussion & Conclusion.....	153
Implications for Future Research.....	162

## INTRODUCTION: MONARCHS' BASEBALL, THE WELL-DRESSED SOCIAL GATHERING

Even at a time when Jackie Robinson was making history, the Monarchs' traditional home opening festival remained an antidote to winter's boredom for the vibrant black community in Kansas City, Missouri.

Men arrived to the ballpark dandified in pinstripe suits, ties, and fedoras. Women slipped on new dresses and preened with polished jewelry. It was an opportunity to be seen, to meet new associates, to flirt and date, and to gamble. Mainly it was a great break from an atmosphere of high racial tensions.<sup>1</sup> Some fans followed the fifty-piece marching bands in an hour-long parade filled with local black and white leaders (including new Kansas City Mayor William Kemp), and plenty of pomp to the corner of 18th Street and Brooklyn Avenue. The parade shut down some of the main traffic arteries in Kansas City, as opening day for the Monarchs was both a citywide and mixed-race celebration. Most fans traveled right to Blues stadium to grab a seat and where a jazz band in centerfield trumpeted a jig into the cool spring air. In total, more than 16,000 watched the Kansas City Monarchs play against the Memphis Red Sox in the 1946 home opener. The following season, a stadium capacity of 17,000 showed up.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the harsh repression that existed in their segregated lives, for many blacks the Monarchs became a cherished fixture of celebration and honor as the Negro Leagues stood on the cusp of completing its great mission—integration.<sup>3</sup> The local white daily newspaper, the *Kansas City Star and Times*, never mentioned the big hoopla that attracted both black and white spectators. In contrast, *Kansas City Call* sports editor John I. Johnson of the local black weekly newspaper called the gala “a spectrum of color,” and

noted how a black man's chest should swell with pride from witnessing the ascension of the first modern black baseball player to the "Bigtime."<sup>4</sup>

The fact that Robinson, a former all-star shortstop for the Monarchs, was now playing for the Brooklyn Dodgers added excitement to the atmosphere as Kansas City African Americans saw Jim Crow began to pant with vulnerability. In 1947, Robinson made the Dodgers' starting lineup, breaking one of the thickest and longest segregated lines. This 50-year-old unwritten color ban extended to the sports pages.<sup>5</sup> Since the mainstream press refused to cover black athletic achievements in depth, sportswriters at the *Call* felt obligated to provide complete coverage on black achievements.

Past literature states that black newspapers, such as the *Call*, fought hard for baseball equality, however, this research indicates that the black Kansas City paper did not pursue the issue of baseball integration as intensely.<sup>6</sup> A newspaper molded after Booker T. Washington's self-help philosophy, the *Call's* focus was on promoting the Monarchs, and they covered the team like a white paper covered a Major League unit, with in-depth game stories, full box scores, and accumulative statistics. Even when Robinson and Larry Doby journeyed into the Majors, the *Call* kept its focus on the Monarchs, at least at the offset. But as the newspaper's sports editors witnessed African Americans pouring money into watching and traveling to Major League games, the *Call* also shifted its focus more and more to big league coverage of black players.<sup>7</sup>

By 1949 the shift was complete as the *Call's* leading editors pushed the black teams to integrate with white players and remove its own color ban. The front-page campaign to integrate the all-black league didn't last long, but proved immediately fruitful as one of the Negro League's top teams signed white players. However, none of those players panned out and the remaining Negro League officials shied away from the

experiment.<sup>8</sup> After the campaign failed, the *Call* only covered the Monarchs sporadically, blaming its lack of coverage on poor public relations from the team. With Major League baseball standing as a prime example of democracy at work, the *Call* sports editor seems rather tormented over covering the Negro Leagues, which mirrored an era of segregation that blacks wanted to bury. From time to time, the paper's sportswriters expressed nostalgia for the dying Negro Leagues and made attempts to rally fans back to ballpark, but stories and pictures of black Major League players on the main sports pages often drowned out those pleas.<sup>9</sup>

In the 1950s, the famed Monarchs were no longer considered the champions of black baseball, but as a team that bred and groomed players for future starting positions in the Majors. Then when the Major League Philadelphia Athletics transferred to Kansas City, the Monarchs were ultimately pushed out of town, and the sportswriters at the *Call* bid the black team farewell.<sup>10</sup>

This thesis focuses on the *Kansas City Call*, the most prominent newspaper in Kansas City's black community and its coverage of the Monarchs, noting relevant objectives, tactics, and shifts in coverage overtime. The study will also explore coverage of the black team through the *Kansas City Star/Times*, which was geared toward Kansas City's white community.

Even though the formal creation of the Negro Leagues occurred in Kansas City, and was home to black baseball's glamour franchise, coverage by the *Star and Times* provided an impartial, peripheral, and downplayed history of the Monarchs.<sup>11</sup> Despite being the most popular baseball team in town and nationally known, the Monarchs' success received little attention in the mainstream press. The white newspaper's coverage

remained that way despite Robinson's success, showing how the big-time daily represented the prejudices and racial barriers that existed in mainstream America.<sup>12</sup>



## CHAPTER ONE: HISTORIANS SHED LIGHT ON NEGRO LEAGUES

### Review of Literature

While the black press has been used as a primary source to piece together histories of Negro League teams, rarely has scholarship addressed the relationship between a newspaper and black baseball, with black sportswriters closely involved in the details of the formation, maintenance, and promotion of the Negro Leagues.

Historian Brian Carroll first charted this relationship throughout the formal existence of the Negro Leagues from 1920 and ending in the late 1950s. In his study, Carroll diagramed the black press's multidimensional shifts in its reporting of the Negro Leagues, from that of a lively, black-owned and black-run business in the twenties to pushing for integration in the thirties and forties. One of the most intriguing parts of Carroll's research is how the black press responded after baseball integration. Black sportswriters, he concluded, portrayed Jackie Robinson as hero. They reported on his every move by drawing attention to integration's social and historical context. The black press continued to transfer focus to the Major Leagues as more blacks integrated, squeezing out coverage of the Negro Leagues. Carroll argued that the minority press's push for integration and shift in coverage to champion black Major League players caused black baseball to fade into history. As the black teams disappeared, "black sportswriters displayed signs of nostalgia and appreciation for the Negro Leagues and even regret regarding their demise."<sup>1</sup>

Carroll's dissertation serves as a bedrock for this thesis and builds upon his work of looking at the tactics and different reporting angles the black press used in covering the Negro Leagues. In concentrating on the country's two largest black weeklies, the

*Pittsburgh Courier* and *Chicago Defender*, Carroll's conclusions point to the black press as whole. However, this thesis looks to test some of his conclusions in comparison to a smaller black newspaper, the *Kansas City Call*, whose main source of readership came from the local black community. Janet Bruce used the *Call* as a primary source to produce an overall history of the Monarchs, however, her focus was on the team's activities and not on the paper's relationship, team coverage, and tactics.<sup>2</sup> Initially Carroll indicates that the *Call* lead out in pushing for integration in baseball, but eventually concludes that the black paper did not play a central role in the campaign. However, he does not provide clear evidence for either declaration nor does he describe to what degree the *Call* pushed for baseball assimilation.<sup>3</sup> However, more black players from the Monarchs entered the Major Leagues (a total of twenty) after the color barrier broke than what came from any other Negro League team. With that alone, one might suspect some kind of protest against a segregated National Pastime.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis will chronicle the *Call's* pursuit for baseball integration in order to substantiate Carroll's statement. Additionally, it will explore whether the *Call* followed the lead of the *Pittsburgh Courier* and *Chicago Defender* in strategically attacking the color line to persuade the Major Leagues to shift its racial policy.

As far as the black press's reaction to integration, Carroll's research validates Mark Ribowsky contentions that black newspapers' sports coverage shifted from the Negro Leagues to Robinson's progress: "In the rush to see Robinson through his perilous journey, when homage (to the Negro Leagues) was called for, all that came up was silence, or worse, contempt."<sup>5</sup> This paper seeks to test Carroll and Ribowsky's analysis by providing examples of how the *Call* handled covering the Monarchs, Robinson, and other black Major League players.

Carroll has published other works examining the black press's relationship and involvement in the formative beginnings of Negro League baseball in the 1920s, as well as looking at how the black press created heroes out of black ball players in the 1930s up to Robinson's breaking of the color barrier in 1947.<sup>6</sup>

As far as comparing coverage between white and black newspapers, Chris Lamb and Glen Bleske noted a wide variance in coverage of Robinson's debut season in the Major Leagues. They concluded that the black press wrote with more passion, emphasized the historical importance of the event, and provided more personal insights than the white newspapers.<sup>7</sup> Both scholars expanded this research and examined newspaper coverage of baseball's first integrated spring training in 1947. In this study, Lamb and Bleske examined a variety of national papers on the east coast—the Brooklyn Dodgers held spring training in Florida—and used the *Defender* and *Courier* as primary sources of the black press. They once again found a few white sportswriters questioning the merits of segregation during the 1930s and 1940s, while most ignored the issue entirely. Whereas the black press covered Robinson's feat as a story that transcended sports and touched on racial issues neglected by the mainstream press.<sup>8</sup>

Lamb also analyzed the differences and similarities to the press's reaction to a derogatory remark made by a Major League player in July 1938. When a WGN radio announcer asked New York Yankee outfielder Jake Powell what he did during the off-season, Powell replied that he worked as a policeman in his hometown of Dayton, Ohio, and stayed in shape by cracking “niggers” over the head with his nightstick. Lamb noticed how this incident provided black weeklies from the North to the South “an opportunity to channel their collective and long-standing indignation at a single act of racism that represented the laws and customs of the country.” Unified, black sportswriters

from all around the country mobilized public opinion against racial injustices to gain an early victory in the campaign against baseball's color barrier. Meanwhile, the mainstream press wrote cautiously about the situation and avoided taking up the issue subjectively.<sup>9</sup>

A study by historian Patrick Washburn focused solely on the white press's coverage of Robinson's historic first season. Washburn concluded from his examination of daily New York papers that white sportswriters omitted certain facts to avoid racial tensions and ultimately treated Robinson no differently than any other rookie baseball player.<sup>10</sup>

The insights from these three researchers provide valuable guideposts for this thesis. However, no study exists that compares the coverage of a black weekly and white daily in the same city. This thesis looks to begin filling this gap in historical research by comparing and contrasting coverage of the Monarchs in the *Call* and in the *Star/Times*.

Additional research on the black press and the Negro Leagues has also focused exclusively on the integration of the Major Leagues and Robinson. At first scholars paid particular attention to the part played by white sports journalists and Brooklyn Dodgers President Branch Rickey in the desegregation of the Major Leagues.<sup>11</sup> However, according to studies done by journalism historians, the *Courier*, the largest black newspaper in the 1940s, and its sports editor, Wendell Smith, played the most influential roles in cracking the ban surrounding Major League baseball. Such research shines a light on the important role of black newspapers and black sportswriters of the era and how their tactics, strategies, and persuasive writings brought about athletic equality.<sup>12</sup>

Historian Bill Weaver contributed one of the first examinations of the black press and its reaction to Robinson's signing. Weaver stated that black newspapers responded in one of four ways to the announcement: they trumpeted the significance of the

accomplishment; demonstrated appreciation for Rickey's actions; expressed hopes for the future of the race now pinned on Robinson; and analyzed the intense pressure placed on Robinson, while expressing optimism for his success. For instance a black magazine, *The Crisis*, called Robinson the "symbol of hope of millions of colored people in this country and elsewhere," and "pinned the hopes of millions of fair-minded whites who want to see every American get a chance regardless of race, creed or color."<sup>13</sup> Weaver also noticed the fatherly advice given by the black press to readers, cautioning black fans to be on their best behavior at games to help Robinson's cause.<sup>14</sup>

In their respective research, each of the above scholars focused on articles appearing in the *Defender* and *Courier*. The heavy concentration on these two black weeklies is certainly valid considering both papers' accessibility and national distribution from the 1920s to the 1950s. Such research has provided a general overview of the black press's connection with the Negro Leagues, and indicates that other newspapers followed the example of these two stalwart black papers in order to gain more readership. However, no one has yet to look at how a smaller black paper, such as the *Call*, covered the Negro Leagues and the best team in black baseball for its hometown fans.

Ribowsky's research is one of many such studies that provide an overall chronological account of the Negro Leagues primarily based on narrative history, with the black press as a footnote. Sol White, a former Negro League pitcher, chronicled the early primitive years of black baseball.<sup>15</sup> Robert Peterson's classical work *Only the Ball Was White* concentrated on first-hand oral accounts of the Negro Leagues and did not analyze the writings of the black press. Research on the experiences and recollections of former Negro League players is most abundant.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to Bruce's well-known book on the Kansas City Monarchs, historians have revealed the adventures and trails of other individual Negro League teams and towns. The histories of the Pittsburgh Crawfords, Indianapolis ABCs, Detroit Stars, and Newark Eagles have each been chronicled. Beyond using narrative accounts, scholars in these individual areas of research used the black press as primary sources to sketch the comings and goings of each respective team, but did not describe the local papers' coverage or relationship with the team.<sup>17</sup>

Negro League historian Larry Lester also used the black press to piece together the pinnacle point of every black baseball season—the East-West All-Star Game. The game featured the Negro Leagues' top players and consistently drew crowds of 30,000 to 50,000 in the late 1930s and mid forties. While plenty of advertising and announcements brought attention to the all-star game, Lester ran into years in which statistical information on the outcome of the game was sparse or lacking. Often times, black weeklies failed to keep records or relay statistics to the public. It was in these all-star games that black fans spotted white scouts taking notes on players. As attendance for the celebrated game declined, so did the financial backing needed to maintain the Negro Leagues.<sup>18</sup> Michael Lomax specifically explored the financial aspects of the Negro Leagues, by studying black baseball's origins in connection with black businessmen in Chicago.<sup>19</sup>

John Holway, probably the most respected chronicler of black baseball history, and historian Robert Cottrell have brought recognition to some of the top players in the Negro Leagues, such as Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson, in biographical-type studies. The authors also highlighted Andrew "Rube" Foster, who owned the Chicago American Giants and founded the Negro National League in 1920. In his prime, Foster was

comparable to Paige on the mound, but most remember him as the father of the Negro Leagues. Foster laid the league's foundation and with experience, knowledge, and business-like authority he held together disagreeing team owners. He knew that in order for black baseball to thrive and for integration's door to open, black teams needed to be organized similar to the Major Leagues.<sup>20</sup>

From the most recent studies to those in decades past, scholars have recreated a great chunk of Negro League history, bringing awareness to the rich culture that existed before the Robinson era. Thirty-five black baseball players or owners are now enrolled in the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown thanks in large part to historians who have painstakingly combed over statistics and chronicled the athletic abilities of Negro League players. Black journalists Wendell Smith and Sam Lacy, of the *Baltimore Afro-American*, are now enshrined in the National Sportswriters Hall of Fame. Dying at 54 years old, Smith did not leave behind his experiences—beyond his newspaper columns—but Lacy and *Defender* sports editor Frank Young have provided some of their own thoughts about the Negro Leagues in respective books.<sup>21</sup>

The historian Jules Tygiel who is most connected with chronicling the story of Robinson and baseball integration, gives due credit to Smith, Lacy and Young, as well as Joe Bostic of the *Harlem People's Voice* and white sportswriters, such as Shirley Povich of the *Washington Post*, for crusading against the injustices of segregation.<sup>22</sup> Tygiel also recognized that Jim Crow inhibited sportswriters of the black press: "Segregation hid their considerable skills from the larger white audience and severely restricted their income-earning potential. Yet they rarely mentioned their own plight. Indeed, the barriers for black journalists lasted long after those for athletes disappeared."<sup>23</sup> Jim Reisler's recent anthology on ten African American sportswriters who covered the Negro Leagues

in the first part of the twentieth century, also addresses the hostilities and the discriminations the writers and players faced.<sup>24</sup>

While the black press continues to strike researchers' curiosity, even the most well-respected historians on Negro League baseball literature and integration, have avoided or superficially glanced over smaller black newspapers. This thesis fills this gap by looking at the *Call*, a black newspaper that concentrated on covering the interests of the local black community. In addition, looking at the coverage from the mainstream paper in the same town provides evidence of the social division in the city.

### **The Black Press: Fighting and Promoting**

Over the last three decades, scholars have brought general knowledge of the black press to the attention of historians, pointing out the role of black newspapers as an instrument to influence the attitudes of black readers to prime for a large-scale social movement. They have explained how black newspapers were expected to advocate black communities and respond to the injustices of segregation. Black journalists stated the goal of the black press was not objectivity, but to take a deliberate slant toward promoting advocacy and equality. This study leads into and through World War II; a time in which the circulation of many black newspapers reached its zenith and its bold cries against a hypocritical government caught the attention of the White House, with federal leaders viewing such advocacy as a form of treason.<sup>25</sup>

As a result, government officials, including the FBI and military, began investigating the Negro press prior to Japan's devastating raid on Pearl Harbor. During World War II, between three and half million to six million of the nation's thirteen million African Americans subscribed to a black newspaper. By the end of the decade,



the *Courier* reached a circulation of 350,000. Considered by historians as the most influential black newspaper, the *Courier* became a leader in the fight for civil rights. Under the executive management of Robert Vann, and later Percival L. Prattis, the *Courier* used an aggressive editorial style, pursuing stories with race appeal by devoting considerable column space to issues of social injustice. Before World War II such issues reported by the black paper included how the army excluded Negroes from its ranks, and how the Navy only used Negroes as cooking and cleaning sea maids.<sup>26</sup>

The increase in circulation did not concern the government as much as the unapologetic and intentional slants the black press took against racial injustices. The government feared that such negative advocacy would dampen black morale for the cause of the war. However, the black press offered a different reason for the sinking black confidence in the government. During the war, African Americans assumed racial barriers, especially in the military, would be scraped or modified in order to promote strength of unity. However, despite the efforts of the black press to persuade the government of the need for equality, policies did not shift. With no hope for change on the horizon, African Americans called into question the worth of fighting for democracy abroad when they had not fully experienced such freedom at home.<sup>27</sup>

Adopting an idea from a letter to the editor on such concerns, the *Courier* launched its famous “Double V Campaign” in February 1942. The campaign stood for victory against totalitarianism abroad and against similar forces in America that denied blacks equal rights. With a wide show of support from the Negro population, other black papers started to display the “Double V” slogan on the front page. The campaign became a symbol of unity among black editors as they trumpeted against various injustices placed upon people of darker skin. Black Americans loved the campaign, avidly reading each

weekly installment. From 1940 to 1945, the circulation of the country's more than two hundred black newspapers increased 42 percent from 1,276,000 to 1,808,060, though readership—with papers shared in church, barbershops and schools—was estimated in the millions.<sup>28</sup>

As the campaign continued, blacks gained a thirst for more rights, and saw no reason why they should wait until the end of the war to receive them. According to Washburn, the government viewed the “Double V” crusade as a prelude to disloyalty and disenchantment among the Negro people. The government launched investigations into several newspapers, including a handful of the country's largest black weeklies. From the investigations, President Franklin D. Roosevelt warned newspaper editors of the possibility of “press suppression” and “sedition charges” coming upon them if they did not tone down their aggressive style.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, thirteen publications, including the *Call*, faced accusations of having “alleged Communists on their editorial staff or employees who maintained contacts with Communists...or they ran articles that followed the Communist Party line.” Meanwhile the *Courier*, along with four other black newspapers, faced citations for running pro-Japanese content.<sup>30</sup>

Although the black press's resentment of U.S. policies was legal under wartime sedition laws, their aggressive style warranted investigation, making it clear to black editors just how much their relationship with the government had deteriorated. As the lawsuit threats from the government increased, the majority of black newspapers began to temper back attacks.<sup>31</sup>

However, on the heels of victory in Europe and in the South Pacific, civil rights issues ripened again. Black soldiers fought, bled, and died along side whites in an

ongoing effort to defeat the Nazi regime. Black press sports editors couldn't help but ask: If black soldiers battled in the trenches from Europe to Okinawa, why not at the plate, dug in against major-league pitchers? With that single question, black newspapers in Chicago, Pittsburgh, and New York reenergized its efforts to break baseball's color barrier.

### ***Kansas City Call: A Booker T. Newspaper***

On May 4, 1919, a year before the Kansas City Monarchs came into existence, Chester A. Franklin started the *Kansas City Call* with the dream of championing the cause of Kansas City's African American communities.<sup>32</sup> Chester's newspaper experience began at a young age. While living in Omaha, Nebraska, his father, George, became a printer and started a black newspaper called the *Omaha Enterprise*. After finishing high school, Chester attended the University of Nebraska for two years before leaving to assist his ailing father with the publication of the *Enterprise*. The paper existed for about four years until 1891 when the family moved to Colorado. In Denver, George became editor of a black weekly, the *Colorado Statesman*, later named the *Star*. Chester, meanwhile, served as associate editor behind his father's leadership.<sup>33</sup>

At age seventeen, with his father ill, Chester took over the business and found himself at once editor, printer, and distributor of the *Star*. When George died in 1901, Chester and his mother teamed up to continue the paper. For the first twelve years of the twentieth century, the *Star*, under Franklin's tutelage, grew in size, circulation, and reputation despite a relatively small black population in Colorado. The *Star* self-titled itself as the "Organ of the Colored People in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Utah and New Mexico." Despite the paper's prosperity, Franklin felt better journalistic

opportunities lay in the Mid-West. He left the *Star* in 1913 and headed to Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>34</sup>

With a larger black community in Missouri, Franklin felt Kansas City provided a more promising environment for a black newspaper. Eleven meat-packing houses in the area gave blacks plenty of opportunities to stay and work. Other employment options—janitorial, carpentry, and railroad service—were physically demanding, but unlike other towns, such dirty work was constantly in demand in Kansas City and therefore sustained the black communities even during the hardest economic times.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the array of entertainment industries in the black communities pulsated Kansas City's nightlife, bringing a population of curious black consumers and providing plenty of employment to many African Americans. The vibrant “wide-open” clubs brought some of the best jazz performers to Kansas City, where gigs never ran out of requests, and with leading black businessmen paying bands top dollar saxophones, booze, and gambling dominated the scenery on Twelfth and Eighteen Streets.<sup>36</sup>

This collection of activities, along with the steady employment, attracted more blacks to the city throughout the years. From 1937-1955, blacks made up about ten-to-twelve percent of the population in Kansas City, big enough to raise loud cries for fairness, for petitions to be signed, and picket lines to form.<sup>37</sup>

As the black population steadily increased, so did the *Call's* circulation, starting out at 2,000 in 1919 and reaching 16,737 by 1927, remaining at that level into the late 1930s. (Some estimates place the paper reaching a circulation of 25,000 in the late 1920s). Franklin's paper also began to stretch beyond the local scene and gained regional and national status quickly among black newspapers. By the late 1930s and into the 40s, the *Call* became the largest black business in the Midwest. Much like Franklin did with

the paper in Colorado, the *Call* trumpeted itself as the “Southwest’s Leading Weekly” paper. And while it became the sixth largest black weekly in the country, the paper’s highest circulation numbers came from the local black communities, where it showed up regularly in black schoolrooms, churches, and barbershops.<sup>38</sup> The success of the paper also became a community endeavor with black youth of Kansas City coveting a position to carry and sale the paper.<sup>39</sup> The *Call* eventually became the first black paper recognized by the Audit Bureau of Circulations. And by 1948, with new equipment and facilities, the *Call* published three editions—city, national, and Texas—and circulation reached more than 40,000.<sup>40</sup>

With the public as its forum, the *Call* argued against social inequalities and succeeded in forcing the court system to allow African Americans to serve on juries. It also fought for the right of blacks to purchase and reside in any home they can afford, no matter location; and lobbied for more black employment opportunities.<sup>41</sup> However, the *Call* pursued this mission of leading, educating, and unifying the colored people with more conservatism than other black weeklies and with a degree of optimism, which fell in line with the racial solidarity philosophy of Booker T. Washington.

After World War I, African American politics centered around W.E.B DuBois’s aggressive and integrationist liberalism, Marcus Garvey’s separatist radicalism, and Booker T. Washington’s non-confrontational and “self-help” conservatism. The *Call*’s philosophy and journalistic approach fell into the latter category.<sup>42</sup> Franklin preferred to focus more on African American platitudes and the importance of being responsible. He avoided printing all the negative aspects of segregation. In his paternalistic columns to the black community, Franklin often suggested that civil rights depended on hard work and good mannerisms or attitudes. Franklin also taught that tolerance, patient, and

persistence would solve much of the problems in the black communities, including the acquisition of equal rights.<sup>43</sup> When African Americans forgot these principles, Franklin chastised them like a church reverend: “Negro labor in Kansas City is being less and less desired, because it is not responsible. When the labor market, the labor market created by the demands of white capital, is closed against the Negro, we are destroyed.”<sup>44</sup>

In addition, with a year of education from the University of Nebraska, Franklin considered himself as a professional journalist, who believed the press should serve to disseminate news. He valued higher educated writers, and generally hired journalists who knew how to structure a news story and produce a good lead, and the paper reflected professional skill and academic excellence.<sup>45</sup>

With these values, Franklin did not create the *Call* for the prime purpose of leading blacks in a fight for social justice. Whether Franklin’s conservative approach to civil rights and his strong belief in work ethic affected the *Call’s* sports editors and their approach to pushing for baseball integration is one issue this thesis seeks to uncover.

Examining a black newspaper, such as the *Call* is necessary to bring a fuller perspective of the country’s past than what can be found in the white newspapers alone.<sup>46</sup> In addition, with the inherit connection between the black press and the Negro Leagues, black newspapers provide an important primary source for performing research on the Negro Leagues and the integration of Major League baseball.

### ***Kansas City Star/Times: A Midwest Empire***

While the *Call* acted as a race builder and facilitator of athletic spirit among the city’s African Americans, the *Kansas City Star* catered to mainstream society and held a daily newspaper monopoly in the region. William Rockhill Nelson, a late-budding

journalist, and his partner Samuel Morss, settled on Kansas City after scouring the country for an opportunity to start a high-ranking newspaper.<sup>47</sup> It certainly was not the town's beauty that attracted the two proprietors to the heart of America. With no paved roads and only a few planked sidewalks, Kansas City was either a muddy swamp after a rain shower or a dusty desert during the arid months. While the town's Union Depot served as the gateway to the west and to trading, the spirit of the town gave no hint to the broad boulevards and other changes to come in the next three decades.<sup>48</sup>

However, Nelson, a thirty-nine-year-old former bridge contractor, saw the golden glow of the future and an opportunity to take an active part in the development of a city. Using the press as a means to promote a community in all its material and civic relations, the *Star's* prosperity and city-improvement campaigns closely aligned with the growth of Kansas City. Bringing such a paternalistic and influential attitude to the print medium has earned Nelson a place in journalism history next to legends such as Horace Greeley, Charles Dana, Henry Watterson, and Joseph Pulitzer.<sup>49</sup>

With intense coverage of local events, the *Star*, starting in 1880, quickly became a prominent penny press in Kansas City with its intense coverage of local events. While editors of other local dailies didn't think much of the evening paper, the *Star's* popularity and influence eventually overcame each of its closest competitors.<sup>50</sup> Selling for two cents a day and ten cents a week, the *Star's* circulation more than doubled after its first year on the stands. In 1882, the paper bought a bigger plant and press in order keep up with demand and also purchased *The Evening Mail*, primarily to obtain its Associated Press franchise.<sup>51</sup>

As the city grew and improved, so did the newspaper. The *Star's* heavy concentration on problems close to home helped the paper gain more readers and

subsequently attracted more advertising. By 1889 Kansas City's population surpassed 130,000. In the new decade of the 1890s, Nelson launched *The Weekly Kansas City Star*, which circulated amongst country towns and concentrated on agriculture-type news. Nelson also started the Sunday edition of the *Star*.

The paper's biggest growth occurred in 1901, when the *Star* bought out *The Kansas City Times*, a Democratic morning daily. While the *Times* still retained its name, it was subtitled as the morning edition of the *Star*. Nelson called his new empire "the 24-hour *Star*." Not wanting the same news to appear in both papers, Nelson set up a system in which the *Star* reported on events that occurred in the early morning to just after noon, while the *Times* covered the evening and night life.<sup>52</sup>

When Nelson died in 1915, the paper had reached 200,000 in circulation and continued to flourish in the region, beating out *The Kansas City Post*, which reported a circulation of 126,000. Eventually the *Post* moved to Denver, and much later, in 1942, the paper's only other local competitor, *The Kansas City Journal*, folded.

By the early 1940s the *Star* became the most distributed newspaper in the city and the largest daily in Missouri, with circulation totals for both the morning and evening editions reaching around 350,000 each by 1947 and maintaining that mark into the next decade.<sup>53</sup> During the course of this study, the *Star* won two Pulitzers for its extensive local and regional coverage.<sup>54</sup>

With its saturation of the territory, including several states, the paper enjoyed a monopoly in the metropolitan area, and became known as the "Voice of Middle America" under its new leader.<sup>55</sup> Robust and loudly opinionated, Roy Roberts became president of the *Star* in 1947, bringing Nelson's paternalistic attitude back to the paper. A 1948 cover article by *Time* magazine about "Big Roy" stated that with no newspaper



competition in town, Kansas City citizens had to read what Roberts fed them. An earlier article in the same magazine called Roberts “the man to see in Kansas City—to get elected, to build a hospital, to get things into the paper and to keep them out.”<sup>56</sup> Fighting and winning battles against the government over taxes and labor relations, Roberts also oversaw the eight million dollar renovation to the paper’s production plant, adding presses capable of bringing color to the daily paper.<sup>57</sup>

The *Star*’s control over the Heart of America took a humble blow in 1953 when the federal government indicted the company for monopolizing advertising in the city. The government argued that the *Star*’s advertising requirements, dominant circulation totals, and bullying practices kept other media from competing in the same market. The trial against the *Star* began in January 1955 and ended the following month with the jury finding the company guilty of monopoly. Appealing several times without success, the *Star* dropped its forced policy on advertising, sold its television and radio stations, and allowed subscribers to choose one of the editions of the daily newspaper.<sup>58</sup> The guilty verdict led to more lawsuits from smaller newspapers in and around the metropolitan area, which cost the *Star* a million dollars. However, despite the reprimands, the *Star* continued to dominant in Kansas City, as readers enjoyed the coverage from a newspaper that kept selling, expanding, and bringing in money.<sup>59</sup>

## CHAPTER TWO: TWENTY YEARS OF CHANGE

### Methodology

This study is a comparative examination of the coverage the Kansas City Monarchs received in the *Call* and the *Star/Times*, covering twenty years from 1937-1957. This time period leads into and through World War II, when after the defeat of Germany, America faced its own dictators of racism and segregation. Research extends to the late 1950s in order to understand how Kansas City's black and white papers reacted to Major League integration and the collapse of the Negro Leagues. Kansas City became a nominal home for the Monarchs after the arrival of the metropolitan's first Major League baseball team, the Kansas City Athletics, in 1955. The following year, a businessman from Michigan bought and maintained the team for a year before selling it to investors in North Carolina in 1957.

Using both papers as primary sources, this research employed traditional historical research methods to uncover themes in the newspaper articles and address the meaning of the text. Secondary literature in the form of books on the black press, the Negro Leagues, Jackie Robinson, the Kansas City Monarchs, and the history of Kansas City were used to shed light on culture aspects.<sup>1</sup>

Microfilms of both newspapers were analyzed through the downtown Kansas City Public Library in Missouri and through Brigham Young University's interlibrary loan system. The *Call* was available in all years of study. The front page, sports pages, and editorials were closely examined in every issue of the *Call*. Using this black newspaper as a medium is valuable to the primary purpose of this paper, which is to outline the

*Call's* relationship with the Monarchs. Black newspapers, such as the *Call*, are the chief primary sources for researching the Negro Leagues.

Different archival sources provided the necessary microfilm for the *Star/Times*. This study analyzes both daily editions, since throughout most of this study subscribers received both papers as an inseparable entity. Thus, throughout this study the *Star/Times* together are referred to as “the white newspaper,” in the singular. With most of the Monarchs’ games occurring in the late afternoons and evenings, the *Times* provided more game result coverage, while the *Star* provided previews and the opinion of sports editors. The sports pages of both papers from the months of April (start of spring training) to November (end of Major-League season) were examined from 1937 to 1955.

### **Negro Leagues: A Cultural Institution**

From the roaring twenties to the late forties, black baseball flourished as one of the most successful African American businesses. Culturally the sport provided pride and summertime activities in black communities. (Previous attempts at establishing a Negro League system failed financially, with each venture lasting less than one completed season). Since its formal beginnings in 1920, the Negro Leagues have been tied closely to leading black weeklies such as the *Chicago Defender*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Indianapolis Ledger*, and the *Call*. Following preliminary meetings in Chicago and Detroit, Rube Foster, owner of the black Chicago American Giants baseball team, organized through the black press a meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, at the Paseo YMCA. From the meeting, consisting of black team owners and prominent black sportswriters, the Negro National League formed with the Kansas City Monarchs as its first team.<sup>2</sup>

However, this thesis is not concerned with the primitive years of the league for a couple of reasons. Previous research indicates that integration amongst black newspapers in the 1920s remained a relatively dead issue with respect to baseball. Since segregation reigned throughout America, separation on the sports field was accepted as the status quo. Black newspapers promoted black baseball as a successful black business, building it up financially in black communities. It wasn't until the 1930s that black sportswriters began pushing for integration and comparing black athletes to those in the Major Leagues. Thus, this thesis hones in on the years in which integration became a prime focus in the sports pages of the black press.<sup>3</sup>

The beginning year of 1937 was chosen because of the damage the Great Depression had on the Negro Leagues. Already struggling financially, the Negro National League spiraled to a dead stop when the economic epidemic enveloped the country. From 1930-1932 the league existed in name only. Kansas City Monarchs' owner J.L. Wilkinson quickly pulled his team from the league. Forced to barnstorm to survive, the Monarchs' owners looked for new ways to keep money flowing in, including becoming the first team in any league to play night baseball. Withdrawing from the league, the Monarchs barnstormed a variety of teams from Canada to Mexico, including white Major League all-star teams. During this stretch of seven years, the *Call* became increasingly dependent on the team's traveling secretary, Quincy J. Gilmore, for sporadic reports on the Monarchs' success.<sup>4</sup>

By mid-decade the Negro National League had recovered somewhat, however Wilkinson kept the Monarchs out of a formalized circuit until 1937, when owners in the western states banded together to form the Negro American League (NAL) to oppose the Negro National League.<sup>5</sup> The Monarchs' success in the NAL added to its reputation as

the champions of colored baseball. During the years studied, the team won twelve league championships (1937, '38, '39, '40, '41, '42, '46, '49, '50, '51, '53, and '55) and the 1942 Negro League World Series. With the Monarchs back on set schedule in 1937, the *Call* and *Star/Times* could more easily cover games for its readers.

The time period studied ends with 1957, two years after the Kansas City Athletics forced the Monarchs out of town. The team played its last game in Kansas City in 1956 before being moved to Michigan then to Raleigh, North Carolina. However, by this time the once enthused Negro League and Monarchs' fan base had trickled to near extinction. With nearly every Major League team integrated with black players by the mid-century mark, fans were no longer needed black baseball to find hope amid weakened but continued social injustices. By the early 1950s, remaining Negro League teams returned to barnstorming to financially endure. Although the Kansas City Monarchs retained its name and lasted until 1965, the team existed as a form of amusement, comparable to the Harlem Globetrotters in basketball.<sup>6</sup> In addition, since one of the chief aims of this thesis is concerned with the close relationship and affiliation between the *Call* and the Monarchs, the time period ends with the upheaval of black baseball's most storied franchise.

## CHAPTER THREE: MONARCHS REKINDLED, 1937-1941

### The Pomp of Opening Day

With the team joining the Negro American League in 1937, the Kansas City Monarch's booster club looked to immediately restore fanfare. The *Call* did its part to gather in a crowd with large zealous headlines on the sports page: "Monarchs In Big Opening Here Saturday," "Negro American League Opener," "TWO FORMER NEGRO WORLD CHAMPION TEAMS!" Two pages of advertisements from businesses showed support for the Monarchs organization and also brought recognition to the opening day festivities.<sup>1</sup>

A sports article prior to the Monarchs' first seasonal home game against the Chicago American Giants, focused heavily on the opening-day ceremonies and not so much on the star players from each team. In addition, to the traditional parade, which included every Negro taxi cab in the city, the Monarchs' booster club held homecoming dances and parties to introduce the players to the fans. Prizes donated by local vendors were given for a variety of feats on the field, such as the first player to reach base up to the first player to belt a homerun. There was even a prize for the player who committed the first error of the game: a sixteen-ounce jar of spaghetti from the 12th Street Market.<sup>2</sup>

The Monarchs' emergence into the NAL was not lost on the *Star's* sports editor, C.E. McBride. On April 4, McBride began his column with the pronouncement that "Kansas City again has a baseball team—the Monarchs, of course—in a Negro circuit to be known as the Negro American League." McBride informed readers about the Monarchs' opening day on May 16 (actually it was May 15). He also reassured readers that Monarch home games can only be played at Muehlbach Field when the Kansas City

Blues, a minor league team affiliated with the New York Yankees, were on the road. A quote and a mug shot of J.L. Wilkinson, the Monarchs' owner and a white man, accompanied the column. McBride also described what other teams existed in the newly formed league, ending with a comment alluding to the Monarchs' black following: "Kansas City has a loyal Negro baseball fandom, so there'll be rejoicing among the clansmen of Felix Payne."<sup>3</sup>

However, the talents of the black players were not discussed. McBride showed through his writing the uncomfortable gap that existed between white sportswriters and black players, which was no more than a reflection of the accepted Jim Crow laws.<sup>4</sup>

In other columns about the Monarchs, McBride once again used the team's white owners, Wilkinson and Tom Baird, as his only sources. Even in a column about Satchel Paige's travel itinerary—the Monarchs rented Paige out to other teams across the nation two or three times a week—McBride turned to the owners for insight and never to Paige himself, who was the most popular and most quoted Negro baseball star.<sup>5</sup>

However, in analyzing the writing of other sporting events in the white newspaper, writers of the era didn't use quotes as often as they do today. Game stories on the Blues, for instance, focused more on giving readers a play-by-play, inning-by-inning description of the outcome, rather than using quotes giving reasons for the wins or losses. In side stories, though, the white press sportswriters did seek comments from managers and well-known players, especially those in the big leagues. By refusing to give a voice to the Negro Leagues' best pitcher, the white newspaper left African American opinion in the shadows. There is some suggestion that other sportswriters for the *Times/Star* at least talked to the Monarchs' managers about possible starting pitchers for upcoming games.<sup>6</sup>

While McBride did produce a column on the Monarchs at least once a year, no amount of ink was used to show the black community's great love affair for the Monarchs' home opener. The paper did recognize the opening-day ceremonies for the Kansas City Blues, though they were filled with less pageantry and fanfare.<sup>7</sup> (The Monarchs' gate attendance outdrew the Blues on respective opening days 5,000 to 3,000 in 1937). The *Star* did cover the Monarchs' 1937 opening-day loss with a brief article that included the official box score. The rest of the games appeared in the *Times*, with the Monarchs winning the final three games of the series by decisive margins.<sup>8</sup>

Monarch pitcher Hilton Smith tossed a complete game shutout, a rarity in baseball. If not for walking one batter, Smith would have pitched a perfect game. The *Call* described Smith as being "sensational" and "superb." *Call* sports editor Ernest "Hippis" Brown wrote that people would be talking about the feat for weeks to come.<sup>9</sup> But the *Times* article yawned at the performance. It didn't refer to Smith's performance as being rare, near perfect, or even brilliant in anyway. The paper reported the game facts objectively, without promotion.<sup>10</sup>

### **White Press Monotone About Monarchs**

Though the Monarchs didn't receive much fanfare from the local white newspapers, they did receive steady coverage from the *Star* and *Times* throughout the season. Previews of upcoming home games distinguished most of the *Star's* side of the coverage. During the following years, readers of the *Star* became accustomed to seeing the following headlines: "Monarchs To Open Here," "Birmingham Is Foe," "Monarchs In Twin Bill," and "Monarchs Under Lights."<sup>11</sup> No more than four paragraphs long, each of these previews read the same. The time, date and place of the game(s) appeared in the



first paragraph. Where the Monarchs stood in the NAL standings compared to its upcoming opponent fell into the second paragraph. The final paragraphs outlined the probable starting pitchers for both teams and identified the best hitters. The batting order of both teams then appeared below the article.

This type of coverage from the *Star* was consistent with Nelson's aim to keep the content different between the two newspapers. So while the *Star* provided the game previews, the *Times* reported on the outcomes of Monarch home games, including double headers. The *Times* game coverage also took on a noticeable pattern, which included four-to-six paragraphs of general game highlights, followed by a full box score.

The *Times* did provide a couple away game articles, but these were shorter—one paragraph—and only the scorecard, not a box score, ended the story. Generally, the *Times* reported on games close by, such as in St. Joseph, Missouri; Omaha, Nebraska; and towns in Kansas. Occasionally though the morning paper would cover games as far away as Chicago, Illinois; Indianapolis, Indiana; Cincinnati, Ohio; and New York. With the articles on away games, the white newspaper made sure to give itself credit for the coverage. Before these types of stories, just below the subhead and in parenthesis, a note declared the paper's ownership of the small article: “(From The Star's Own Service).”<sup>12</sup>

Certainly the paper used the note as a way to distinguish the stories from those written by the Associated Press, but a few more conclusions can be made from this kind of self-recognition. Either the *Star/Times* had a specific writer assigned to cover the Monarchs and had a budget to fund the writer to attend away games close by, or the paper was simply using its connections with freelance writers or satellite offices throughout the country. The self-endorsement also indicates that the newspaper acted independent of the reports or information coming from the Monarchs' press secretaries. In any case, this

finding shows that although white sportswriters steered away from obtaining quotes from black players, they knew about the Monarchs, went to the team's games, and kept feasible tabs on the black squad, even when they hit the road.

While the Monarchs had proven themselves as champions before the Great Depression shattered the Negro Leagues, the *Star/Times* stayed away from offering praises to the team at this stage of the study.<sup>13</sup> When the Monarchs won the Negro American League pennant by beating its rival, the Chicago American Giants, in a seven-game series, the *Times* did not provide any color to the story to help the reader feel a sense of pride for a hometown team. No Monarch win received special considerations. The *Times* typed out the conclusion of the championship series like it did any other Monarch game story—with straightforward facts.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast, the *Times* gave more hype to the St. John's Catholic club beating the Schneiders in the semifinals of the interstate baseball tournament.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps because this contest was between semi-professional baseball teams, the *Times* felt more obligated to provide a colorful story. Whereas, the Monarchs, and the Negro Leagues as a whole for that matter, were not recognized as professionals or even as an organized league by the mainstream press. The term “organized baseball” was commonly used in reference to white baseball. Beyond its usage, the idiom reflected the stereotypes of the time and the obstacles encountered by black ballplayers. Scholar and historian Sarah Trembanis noted how the term “organized” was particularly used to highlight stark differences between the white and black race.<sup>16</sup> For Negro League players the term was derogatory in nature. They objected the phrase “organized” as an attribute only meant for white baseball, and they resented how continued usage and acceptance of the word made black baseball appear inferior. Walter “Buck” Leonard, who played black baseball for the Washington

Grays from 1933-1950, stated that the Negro Leagues “were not disorganized, just unrecognized.”<sup>17</sup>

The ho-hum and inferior treatment of Monarchs’ championships by the *Star/Times* continued throughout the late thirties and earlier forties. In 1939, the championship series was not only a battle for the NAL title, but also for bragging rights as the best black baseball team in Missouri. The St. Louis Stars faced off against the Monarchs in a three-game series. The *Star* provided a well-balanced preview for that day’s doubleheader, but failed to report the Monarchs’ third-straight NAL title.<sup>18</sup> In subsequent years, even as the Monarchs won six straight NAL titles, the white daily did not refer to the black team as champions, but only as mere “members of the Negro American league.”<sup>19</sup>

When Paige came to Kansas City to pitch full-time for the Monarchs, team attendance, both home and away, increased two-fold. The Monarchs played in front of 15,000 on a number of occasions, and in front of nearly 40,000 fans in an exhibition against the Chicago American Giants in Detroit. The increased attendance and winning resume did not translate into more attention from the mainstream press. The lack of recognition of the Monarchs’ achievements kept white newspaper readers from completely appreciating African American progress and was one of the reasons for the *Call*’s existence—to provide readers with a complete, two-sided perspective of the news in a lily white world.<sup>20</sup>

### **Segregation Weakens America’s Armor**

During the late 1930s, with another war (World War II) raging in the name of freedom and peace, the *Call* began to push for equality in the military and in

employment. Meanwhile, its petitions against Major-League baseball's color ban remained conservative and relatively nonexistent.<sup>21</sup>

The *Call* deemed all racial divides as undemocratic in a proud democratic society. The unequal treatment not only represented everything wrong with America, but also sapped the country's strength in the eyes of its communist enemies.<sup>22</sup> Chester A. Franklin, editor of the *Call*, met with officials from the U.S. War Department in a fight to remove injustices and discriminations against Negroes in the armed forces, in which black units were reduced to labor units and black sailors only cooked and cleaned.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, professional baseball's color barrier was also seen as a hypocritical slash in the American flag by the black press.<sup>24</sup> Black sportswriters in Pittsburgh and Chicago amplified this double standard, petitioning for blacks to join Major League clubs. At this time, baseball began feeling pressure from its own players, including Joe DiMaggio, and other athletes.<sup>25</sup> Wendell Smith, newly appointed sports editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, conducted a series of survey interviews with forty Major League players and all eight managers of the National League. Smith's aim in conducting the interviews was to remove one of the most stated excuses made by officials. The belief was that Major League white players, most of whom hailed from the South, refused to play with black players. However, Smith found that 75 percent of those he interviewed were in favor of baseball integration.<sup>26</sup> Smith's interviews made a great impact as newspapers throughout the country, including *The Sporting News* and the Associated Press, picked up the findings. The surveys brought the issue of the color ban to the forefront and revealed white players support of integration.<sup>27</sup>

Frank Young of the *Chicago Defender*, meanwhile, used the "pandemonium" surrounding the 1938 East-West Negro League All-Star Classic as further proof of black

players' popularity and their ability to play in the Major Leagues. A record 30,000 fans watched the contest, including a number of scouts and daily newspaper writers. The West hung on to defeat the East all-stars in a 5-4 thriller. While that was the game's outcome, Young and other daily newspaper writers concluded that there was a definite interest in black baseball players.<sup>28</sup>

In fact, a month prior to the classic, Young described many Major League owners desirous for the services of black baseball players. Young's article also pointed out the hesitancy of the owners, who pointed to their managers as the ones capable of judging whether a player was ready for the big leagues. However, the managers responded, stating how they wished they could sign a black player, which pointed the finger back to the owners.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Call's* sportswriters remained relatively silent on the issue of baseball integration and the increasing interest in black ballplayers.<sup>30</sup> In his report on the East-West classic, Brown wrote that the Negro American League players had proven "that they were not a bunch of amateurs" to the Negro National League, who were the heavy favorites in the contest. Neither does the *Call's* game story nor Brown's column hint at the excitement encircling the game that Young described.<sup>31</sup> This type of peripheral coverage by the black Kansas City paper makes it appear out of touch with the deeper issues. Three articles in 1938 from the Associated Negro Press appeared in the *Call* with reference to both blacks and some white Major-League owners asking for the services of black players from the Negro Leagues, especially all-star pitcher, Satchel Paige.<sup>32</sup> However, the *Call's* sportswriters never pursued the case for integration on their own accord. Ultimately, they promoted the Monarchs as champions of colored baseball,

quietly showing along the way that the black team housed some of the greatest baseball players.

The *Call* hinted as much in October of 1937 when the Monarchs faced a Major-League all-star team headed by Cleveland Indians pitcher Bob Feller. Feller was a young pitcher who held the record for most strikeouts in a single game with seventeen. The *Call* and *Star/Times* each previewed the game nearly a week in advance, with each paper taking different slants to the game's importance.<sup>33</sup> The white newspaper built hype around the Major Leaguers, especially Feller, who pitched "extremely fast" and had a "sharp" curve ball. Since the town did not have a Major League team of its own, the *Star* framed the game as a rare time for the people of Kansas City to witness professional ball players in action. Such a statement made the Monarchs seem second rate. Even when rain forced the game to be rescheduled, another preview from the *Star* kept praising Feller and the other Major Leaguers who would play.<sup>34</sup>

The *Call* also recognized Feller as a young pitching sensation and as a "strikeout artist." However, most of the *Call's* preview articles talked about the quality and caliber of players on the Kansas City Monarchs as being comparable to any Major-League squad: "In the lineup of the Monarchs are players who are capable of playing big league baseball any time and any where that they may get the call."<sup>35</sup> However, the paper never argued for the call to be made. With that, the statement becomes merely a representation of how good the players are and not where they should be playing.

A week earlier, the Monarchs showed they could beat a semi-professional squad when they outplayed the best players the Kansas City Blues had to offer, 8-6. However, in the game against Feller, the Monarchs played with only four regulars in the lineup. Newt Allen, considered the best second basemen in the Negro Leagues, Willard Brown,

the Monarchs' best hitter, along with Negro League All-Stars Frank Duncan and Hilton Smith failed to show up for the game, hampering the Monarchs' chances. As a result, Feller and the other Major-League pitchers shut down the Monarchs 1-0.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the loss, the *Call* placed the game at the top of its sports section with a short balanced story and a box score. The black paper did not take the opportunity to push for integration, neither did it remind readers of the Major-League ability on the Monarchs' roster. The loss seemed to damage some of the pride the *Call* sportswriters had in the team prior to the game. Meanwhile, the *Times* provided a longer story, with the first five paragraphs complimenting Feller's three-inning stint, in which he gave up no runs and struck out five batters.<sup>37</sup>

A couple years later, Feller came through town again, and once again the white dailies centered attention on the Major League pitcher's ability. In an article separate from the game story, *Star* sportswriter Ernest Mehl painted a heroic aura around Feller, quoting the pitcher extensively.<sup>38</sup> Mehl's concentration on the Major Leaguers coming to town reflects upon the passion he later used in 1954 in a campaign to bring Kansas City a Major League team.<sup>39</sup>

The Monarchs continued to play second fiddle in the pages of the white daily throughout this study. Not only did Major League teams overshadow them, but also the hometown minor league affiliate Kansas City Blues. The Blues became a farm club of the New York Yankees in 1936. In 1939 they won one hundred and seven games with a .695 winning percentage, and became known as one of the best teams to ever play in the American Association. The Blues always caught the top spot in the *Star/Times* and regularly drew the attention of the paper's sports columnists, McBride and Mehl.

### ***Call's Position Toward Baseball Integration***

Throughout subsequent years, the *Call* seemed rather content on allowing other newspapers to make uproars about the colored baseball barrier. For instance, in July 1938, Jake Powell of the New York Yankees told WGN radio that in off-season he stayed in shape by cracking “niggers” with a nightstick as a Dayton, Ohio, police officer. In response to the derogatory comment, historian Chris Lamb suggested an all-out unity existed among the black press as they strongly voiced their opinion against racial injustices, sparking a battle against the baseball color barrier. But the comment made by Powell and the outrage expressed in other black newspapers was nonexistent in the pages of the black Kansas City paper.<sup>40</sup>

Other sport editorials at the very end of 1938 and into 1939 paint a bright picture of the *Call's* philosophy toward baseball integration. In a year-end wrap up of Negro sports, the *Call* sports editor gave significant praise to black boxers Joe Louis and Henry Armstrong. Brown also talked about African American college football players, track athletes, and tennis stars.<sup>41</sup>

However, Brown made no mention of the progress, if any, against the baseball color line, but in a separate column he stated that the Negroes advancement in the athletic field in 1938 was an advancement for the race, “and last but not least have instilled in the minds of other youths to go forward and attempt to duplicate their feats.”<sup>42</sup>

Becoming the next world champion in boxing like Louis or Armstrong was certainly a valuable goal for youngsters to replicate. But since the color line still existed in the Major Leagues, playing in the Negro League all-star game remained the greatest accomplishment a black baseball player could hope to duplicate; anything above that appeared hopeless or too far in the future. Perhaps Brown made no mention of black



baseball achievements, because those feats did not come in a similar democratic environment, which existed in boxing and college football. Or perhaps, since only minor progress occurred in the black press's battle for baseball integration, the *Call* steered away from the subject. Whatever the case, future articles and columns in the *Call* suggest the paper's lack of interest in the topic.

For instance at the beginning of the 1939 season, the *Call* published an article by Lester Rodney, the sports editor of the *New York Daily Worker*. Disgusted, once again, at the Major Leagues refusal to allow blacks to tryout during spring training drills, Rodney wrote that this form of sports inequality was the worst blot on America's athletic landscape. He suggested four main reasons why blacks should be allowed in the Majors: white sportswriters are for it, fans are for it, players are for it, and the Negro players have the talent. Rodney also felt Major League magnates, through heavy protests, could be forced to change their restrictive policies. In a note before the article, though, the *Call* stated that it printed the story "because of its timeliness and the desire of this department to foster the development and progress of our own athletes."<sup>43</sup>

Why was the note needed? With the note, *Call* editors showed how much they wanted to play it safe when it came to discussions on the baseball integration issue. Instead of leaving the article without a note, or declaring a firm agreement with Rodney's column, the *Call* instead gave a reason as to why they were printing such an opinionated article about the baseball color barrier. Since none of the *Call*'s sportswriters commented or responded to the piece, the paper seems to be holding back full support for the campaign. Integration would certainly fall into line with the paper's strong feelings for democracy, but the phrase "our *own* athletes" in the note may not mean all black baseball players. Since the *Call* published this column in its national edition, it is probably referring to

athletes with Kansas City ties. Rodney shows considerable praise and respect for the Monarchs in the article. He uses the Kansas City team's defeat of white all-star teams in 1936 as an example of the talent that existed in the Negro Leagues.

The *Call* did make a bigger deal of athletic discrimination at the collegiate level. While Kansas City was considered part of the Midwest, colleges in the area adopted southern principles, banning blacks from competing with or against whites. The University of Missouri held such a policy, and prior to a triangular track meet in April, the school's athletic directors ordered Wisconsin to leave its African American hurdler at home. Wisconsin declined to show up to the meet, as did Notre Dame, a Catholic university, leaving Missouri to compete against itself.

The *Call* published the incident on the front page, declaring "prejudice" as the winner of the meet. Even Missouri's white student body protested against the school's decision to not compete against men of color. One student started a petition, obtaining one hundred signatures before withdrawing because of disciplinary threats from school counselors.<sup>44</sup> Also on the front-page of the *Call*, an editorial blamed Missouri officials for keeping "Negroes down" and described the school's academia as purposeless, since it did not allow for new ideas.<sup>45</sup> However, the *Call* did not extend the fight into making policy changes. The subject disappeared from its pages after a week.

Halfway through the 1939 season, the *Call* reprinted a story on how the campaign to get black baseball players into the Majors had dissipated in the black press. In this article, the unknown author mentioned how integration will not happen for a number of years unless it is taken seriously and pursued intensely by black sportswriters.<sup>46</sup> The following month, Smith began printing his survey series on Major League players. However, the *Call* never picked up on the "revolutionary" and revealing month-long

interviews printed in the national black newspaper.<sup>47</sup> Throughout Smith's series the *Call* continued to promote the Monarchs and the events surrounding the team's games, including the first annual bathing beauty contest, and Jesse Owens' exhibition run at a Monarchs' home game. But never in that month did the paper broach the subject of integration, much less fostered the idea among readers.<sup>48</sup>

Another example of the *Call's* position to stay out of the integration fight and to promote the home team came through a different reprint at the end of the 1939 season. If the *Call* reprinted sports editorials from outside writers to state the position of the paper, then the paper's reprinting of R.S. Simmons' objection to fight for blacks' entrance into the Majors makes the paper's goals seem rather translucent. This points to an internal conflict among editors at the paper. On the one hand, they wished to see black athletes progress and become known as equals on the athletic field. On the other hand, they wanted to promote the Monarchs as the best team in America. This type of indecisiveness is a bit out of character when looking at other black newspapers that strove to gather allies in white sportswriters against the barrier.<sup>49</sup>

In the reprint, Simmons, a scribe for the Associated Negro Press, did not agree with how black sportswriters fought for equality on the baseball diamond. He saw no reason to fight for baseball integration by complaining against the unjust color barrier. Instead, Simmons believed sportswriters of the black press should cover the Negro Leagues with the same intensity that Major League teams garner. Doing so, he wrote, will help baseball fans recognize the Negro Leagues as another big league.<sup>50</sup>

This promotional type method is part of the Booker T. Washington school of philosophy and was definitely more conservative than the intense tactics applied by the *Courier and Defender*. Certainly other black paper's tried the less boisterous, semi-

objective slant toward baseball integration, but by the latter part of the 1930s Carroll stated that these two national newspapers, along with the *Daily Worker*, the *Baltimore Afro-America*, and *Harlem People's Voice*, took their protest against the color barrier all the way to Major League offices. They became strong activists in the crusade, moving the fight for integration from the sports page to the front cover.<sup>51</sup>

However, the more conservative approach by the *Call* was furthered emphasized when an article stated that the duties of the black paper's sports columnist were to "interpret current sports happenings impartially, realistically and with the aim of evaluating these happenings in terms of benefits accruing to the Negro public."<sup>52</sup> This philosophy of patiently promoting the Negro Leagues to Major League status, and allowing truth, justice, and fairness to win over supporters and readers, falls right in line with the journalistic philosophy of the *Call's* editor-in-chief, Chester A. Franklin.

With such minuscule, objective coverage of the Monarchs by Kansas City's white paper, the *Call* certainly felt obligated to place the Monarchs on a pedestal by helping boosters usher in the new season and home games with headlines and stories that connected the team to its fans. However, this promotional coverage briefly took a backseat with a new World War and a black press campaign exploding in 1942.

## CHAPTER FOUR: WORLD SERIES TRIFLED, 1942-1944

### Franklin Sets The Tone

Chester A. Franklin knew the Negro press was the most important and effective instrument in arguing for justice, fair play, and equality. He took advantage of his position as chief editor of the *Call* by writing long editorials that took up two columns on the front cover and spilled over to the jump page.

Being a sought after speaker in and around Missouri, and especially in front of church congregations, Franklin wrote with the feel of a preacher at the pulpit. He often pulled in examples and stories from the Bible to illustrate his point and to prove that God's doctrine is the true and only doctrine of democracy.

For instance, Franklin once reprinted a speech he had given some sixteen years earlier at a community church. In it he called for the white race to help emancipate blacks from the handicaps of segregation, because Christ teaches that your neighbor is the very man lying in the ditch on the road to Jericho. For Franklin that man in the ditch represented the black population, especially black children, who had given up on dreams of becoming engineers and lawyers because of the color of their skin. "So long as America tantalizes the Negro boy with its rewards but thwarts his ambitions, it makes easy his path downward," Franklin wrote. He concluded his column with the hope that all Americans will answer the inner cry of humanity and look to lift every man up to the high road:

We are not envious of you [white Americans]. Though you have five talents and we but two, we can win the same approval of our Lord. Let us set out on this great adventure into brotherhood and find the solution of race relations here. Then America will be ready to take leadership in the

great democracy of the world, leadership not expressed in subjects, but that real leadership of service.<sup>1</sup>

Franklin's main complaint against the U.S. government centered around the hypocrisy of its battle cry for democracy in central Europe. The criticism landed the paper under the scope of federal investigators.<sup>2</sup> Franklin stated, "World War No. 2 has been a struggle between two contenders, one of whom means what he says, down to the last brutal mass killing and wholesale pillaging. The other talks democracy he does not believe in to the point of practicing it. His half-heartedness invites disaster."<sup>3</sup>

While Franklin made such bold statements in his column on a regular basis, he in no way felt such hypocrisy gave blacks the right to enact revenge through violence or by not doing their duty as Americans in the military or wartime factories.<sup>4</sup> He also adopted a campaign to teach African Americans public courtesy and good mannerisms.<sup>5</sup>

From the public scene to the private sector, including the need of good teaching by black parents in the home, Franklin's words stood to promote and improve the image of blacks in the American society. He wanted the people of his race to fight by working hard and pressing forward through the inequalities without bitterness or pity, but with a sense of class. In order for segregation lines to break, he taught, African Americans needed to become superior to the revenge philosophy by quenching such feelings in hope that white Americans will gain a sense of compassion and respect toward them. In his column on race relations, Franklin directed his words toward whites and appealed for their help:

I honestly believe my greatest contribution to my country is that I keep reminding my people that justice will triumph in the end, if only they will persevere.... But I also believe that just as your fathers had to take the sword to cut out the cancer of slavery, so you will see a personal duty in the solution of interracial troubles and will stop America from

having one law for the white man and another for the black.  
I hold for the day to come when private conscience will  
dictate public policy toward my people.<sup>6</sup>

### **McKibben Joins The Battle**

Franklin's persistent and hard work approach to battling segregation spilled over into each section of the paper, including sports. In addition to the hypocrisy from a democratic government, Franklin noticed the unpatriotic lines in competitive games, in which white teams refused to play black teams of the same sport. However, instead of harping about every injustice, Franklin realized that the one of the main purposes of his paper was to bring recognition to black accomplishments in order to provide a seed of hope against unfair treatments and to counter biases. "And this we shall continue to do until the white papers stop implying in their news columns that Negroes have a monopoly on defectives," Franklin wrote.<sup>7</sup>

The *Call's* sports pages reflected this attitude. Like most black weeklies, the *Call's* sportswriters scoured the country for stories revealing the triumphs of black athletes. By the Fall of 1940, the paper was paying considerable attention to Jackie Robinson's success in track, football, basketball, and baseball at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The *Call's* sport editor at the time, Bill Bagby, devoted a whole column to Robinson's talent describing him as "180 pounds of fury," and that "as Robinson goes so goes the Bruins."<sup>8</sup>

While the black paper took more of an entertainment approach when writing about football, boxing, and basketball, coverage of baseball by the black newspaper was more serious. The sport was seen primarily as a black-run and black-owned business—the Monarchs owners and Effa Manely of the Newark Eagles were the only white owners

in the leagues—offering jobs and income opportunities.<sup>9</sup> Black teams represented black communities as a separate and unequal version of Major League baseball: “Though virtually ignored by the dominant white culture, in the black community the Negro League was a cultural institution of the first magnitude.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, *the Call*, like other black newspapers, became a public forum of black baseball to the black community. Between 1940 and part of 1942, the issue surrounding the baseball color ban took a short hiatus in the black press as focus returned to the importance of the Negro Leagues.<sup>11</sup> But in February of 1942, racial issues heated up again shortly after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor and Roosevelt’s declaration to enter the war. The *Pittsburgh Courier* launched its Double V campaign in support of “victories over totalitarian forces overseas and those at home who were denying equality to Negroes.”<sup>12</sup> During World War II, activism became a part of the black press’s mission as they took on social and civil rights issues in every form, including those found in the military, in employment, and in the Major Leagues. They became known as a “fighting press.”<sup>13</sup> While the *Call* never displayed the Double V banner on the front page as other black newspapers did, its push against baseball segregation grew in volumes in 1942, and Franklin showed the paper’s support with an editorial against prejudices right after the Double V campaign launched:

Somewhere somehow there must be a demonstration that men of different birth can live together in peace. No evading the issue. It is either tolerance between race or chaos.... Democracy pays! For that reason whoever weakens or destroys it is an enemy to our country, and to all men. We do not argue with whites who are prejudiced against black fellow citizens. Rather we are sorry for such irrational conduct.<sup>14</sup>



Sam McKibben, the *Call's* new sports editor, took Franklin's bold statement for democracy to heart and revealed his frustrations against athletic unfairness on the sports pages. With the renewal of the integration campaign, McKibben printed fewer stories about the Monarchs' championship season and more on the inequalities of segregated baseball. His vendetta against the color ban started on opening day with this poem:

It is not without much trepidation...  
In this vast nation of democracy,  
That I dare write about segregation,  
And the treachery of its hypocrisy.<sup>15</sup>

Whereas past *Call* sports editors focused on the big opening day ceremonies and stars of the game in their columns, McKibben spoke out against the unfair treatment taking place in the grandstands at Ruppert Stadium. His argument stemmed from the fact that when the Kansas City Blues played at the stadium, black baseball fans are placed in segregated boxes, whereas when the Monarchs play, white and black fans can mingle together. As further proof of his argument, McKibben laid out five pictures on the sports page, in montage fashion. The photographs showed whites sitting next to, in front, and behind blacks at the Monarchs' opening game. McKibben's aim of showing black and white fans mingling together without incident was proof that the races could get along and that fans would pay for integrated baseball.<sup>16</sup>

When the Monarchs beat a group of Major League all stars in an exhibition game at Wrigley Field in Chicago 3-1, McKibben played up the win as proof that black baseball was the best. He later felt that James Green, the Monarchs' catcher who drove in the winning run in the contest, should be playing the Major Leagues.<sup>17</sup> Just before the late May game and in a display of activism, the *Chicago Defender* brought together a committee, consisting of a white hotel owner, two attorneys, and Frank Young, the

paper's sports editor. Pointing to actual experiences, the four argued that black and white athletes could very well play, and even room together. They also stated that Major League baseball needed black players in response to the war draft, and they also pointed to the testimonies of big league players who did not object to playing with black teammates.<sup>18</sup>

Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis added more fuel to the black press's conquest in late July. Feeling the pressure of the black press and with team owners and managers pointing the prejudice finger toward him, Landis, the commissioner of professional baseball, denied the existence of a color ban in the Major Leagues. He said as many as twenty-five black players had enough talent to play in the big leagues and that team owners had the freedom to sign any player they so desired. The black press, though, concluded that Landis' statements did not change Major League baseball's stance.<sup>19</sup>

After interviewing Monarchs' star pitcher Satchel Paige at the Negro League all-star game in Chicago, McKibben wrote a story, not about the pitcher's success with the Monarchs, but on Paige's thoughts on segregation. Always confident, Paige explained that he could pitch in the Majors once the color line was abolished, but only for a fair price.<sup>20</sup>

Sam Lacy, sports editor for the *Baltimore Afro-American*, also brought the question of integration to Paige and other the players. He got a different response, with most players uncertain as to how it might happen, if at all, or if it was even good for black players or not. Some stated that if black players were allowed in, it would probably kill attendance in the Negro Leagues, which has always struggled for good crowds at each game. Jud Wilson of the Philadelphia Stars felt the prejudices that existed in the

South, where most Major League teams train, would be too hard for any black player to handle.<sup>21</sup>

Along those same lines Paige once told Lacy that the black sportswriters, who were pushing for integration, were not taking into consideration all that a black ball player would have to go through to survive in the Majors. Paige complained that all the sportswriters wanted to see was a successful outcome to their campaign:

And here's something for you. You writer fellows stink. You keep on blowing off about getting us players in the league without thinking about our end of it...

You fellows don't understand what we have to go through. You harp on "give them a chance," without thinking how tough it's gonna be for a colored ballplayer to come out of the club house and have all the white guys calling him nigger and black so-and-so.

...It'd be more than a man can stand and nobody can play his best ball unless he's in good spirits, and who the hell could be in good spirits under those conditions.

Another thing, you guys cry about fellowship and good will. What I want to know is what the hell's gonna happen to goodwill when one of those colored players, goaded out of his sense by repeated insults, takes a bat and busts fellowship in his damned head?<sup>22</sup>

### **Hushed Negro League World Series**

In the meantime, Monarchs' owner J.L. Wilkinson had assembled a talented club full of youth and experience. Quincy J. Gilmore, the Monarchs' traveling secretary and frequent contributor to the *Call*, wrote in a May article that the Monarchs had its best team in ten years.<sup>23</sup>

Paige served as the team's drawing card. In nearly every story for the *Call*, whether pregame or postgame, Paige is mentioned as the Monarchs' ace pitcher. A crowd-pleasing alpha male, Paige cultivated a seed of cruelty on the mound, making it his passion to soundly beat his opponents. He was a strikeout magician, who could pitch

scoreless inning after scoreless inning. When Negro League teams played against Major-League all stars, Paige was called in to pitch.<sup>24</sup> Back in 1938, future baseball hall of famer Jerome “Dizzy” Dean called Paige the best pitcher in all of baseball.<sup>25</sup> Byron Johnson, an all-star shortstop for the Monarchs from 1937-1939, said Paige, more than any other person, revived the excitement of the game after the depression years.<sup>26</sup>

Paige’s name became legend amongst the black communities throughout the country. Fans in Kansas City constantly wanted to know about his feats and whereabouts, and the *Call* responded to the request by keeping tabs on the star’s performance and off-field appearances.<sup>27</sup>

While people may have come to see Paige, Hilton Smith won the most games on the Monarchs’ pitching staff. Though records are not clear, Smith won more than twenty games in 1942 and went 25-1 the previous year. Paige would usually pitch the first three innings to boost attendance figures, then Smith would take care of the rest. In this way, the Monarchs captured business and wins at the same time. Meanwhile, at the plate the Monarchs had plenty of power in Green, Willard Brown, and Ted Strong, coupled with clutch hitting by John “Buck” O’Neil and Jesse Williams.<sup>28</sup>

With this unit, the Monarchs won its fourth-straight Negro American League pennant, edging out their rival the Chicago American Giants in the standings. Without even a mention of the pennant triumph in the *Call*, the Monarchs headed to Washington to clash with the Homestead Grays in the first Negro League World Series in fifteen years.<sup>29</sup>

The Grays had its own superstar in catcher Josh Gibson, along with all-stars Buck Leonard, and two lefty pitchers in Roy Partlow and Roy Welkemaker. Throughout the season, McKibben did not show much confidence in the Monarchs; neither did he

promote the Monarchs as the best black team in baseball. In fact, he stated that the Monarchs could not survive in a series against the Grays' feared lineup.<sup>30</sup>

However, Kansas City took the first three games from the Grays easily with scores of 8-0, 8-4, and 9-3. In each of the stories found in the *Star* about the Negro League World Series, white reporters concentrated on Paige's "masterful" pitching, regularly identifying him as a "sensational right-hander."<sup>31</sup>

League officials nullified the fourth game, won 4-1 by the Washington squad in Kansas City, after the Monarchs protested against the Grays use of ineligible players from other Negro League teams. The series moved to Philadelphia next, where the Monarchs fell behind early 5-2 with Jack Matchett acting as an emergency substitute pitcher in place of Paige. The ace pitcher failed to show up until the fourth inning. Trying to get to the game, Paige had been arrested and charged twenty dollars for speeding through Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Much to the delight of the 14,029 fans at Shibe Park, Paige immediately entered the game and held the Grays scoreless in the final five innings as the Monarchs battled back for a 9-5 series win.

Despite the magnitude of the game, Paige's great rescue, and the Monarchs second overall Negro League World Series title, the *Call* placed the game story in a rather atypical location for a paper that typically raved about the team's accomplishments. The title win did not make front page, nor did it make it into the *Call's* sports section, in which football coverage drowned out other sports. The Monarchs' win quietly appeared on page twelve, tucked underneath a story about school safety worries for black teachers during the war.<sup>32</sup>

While the *Star/Times* reduced Monarchs' history to a case of game previews and small recaps with no fanfare, at least the story about the team's Negro League World Series win landed on its weekday sports page.<sup>33</sup>

With McKibben concentrating on the color barrier, the *Star/Times* provided more routine coverage on the Monarchs in 1942, giving fans a better idea of what happened during each contest, such as who drove in the winning runs and who pitched. Why the Monarchs' title win received slight attention from the *Call* may have had to do with McKibben's apparent disregard of the Monarchs and more outspoken frustrations against Jim Crow. As McKibben ignored the Monarchs, he also became the first sports editor to believe that the team was not the best in black baseball. In addition, by the time the Monarchs won the series, football season had kicked off and McKibben had shifted coverage to the local black high school football teams.

However, this type of insufficient coverage of the Monarchs didn't last long in the *Call's* sports pages. In the following year, a new sports editor emerged placing focus back on the Monarchs, as the reigning champions of black baseball tried to survive with a draft-depleted roster.

### **Franklin Battles for the Buses**

A total of fourteen Monarchs served in World War II. For most of the 1944 season, the Monarchs survived with a nine-man roster. With Paige on the mound, the Monarchs still drew better than any other team in the league during the war—averaging 6,000 to 7,000 a game. In addition, Monarchs' owner J.L. Wilkinson took a patriotic approach in advertising games, with Uncle Sam serving as a mascot. Wilkinson thought it necessary to keep the game going for the sake of providing escapism for wartime

workers, and the white team owner received help as the Negro press promoted the Monarchs' home games with great fanfare.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the estimated one million African Americans fighting in the war and the Monarchs' reduced roster, the 1940s saw a surge in attendance throughout the Negro Leagues.<sup>35</sup> One Monarchs' historian attributed the increased attendance to African Americans having a slightly more disposable income to attend games. Defense factories provided more opportunities for employment among the black communities, with most probably earning higher wages than they had prior to the war. With more money to spend and Wilkinson's patriotic theme, which included changing game times to accommodate swing-shift workers and allowing all soldiers in uniform free tickets, fans could more easily attend games. In addition many Southerners migrated North during the war. With most of the Negro League teams in the North, the increased black population in the region provided teams with a larger fan base.<sup>36</sup>

Chester A. Franklin, the *Call's* editor-in-chief, also observed how the black community took considerable interest in the Monarchs and how the team's play provided war workers and all blacks with a way to unload from the stresses and discriminations of the day.

Franklin realized this more than ever in April 1943 when the Negro baseball world received a shock when the Office of the Defense Transportation put a stop to the use of buses by Negro League teams. The order came from ODT Director Joseph B. Eastman. He explained that due to the reduction of new buses being built, the demand for bus transportation for war workers increased to the point that extra buses could not be spared for private purposes. The ODT also placed a similar restriction in June 1942 on

public buses used to transport entertainment groups and other similar parties that desired exclusive use.<sup>37</sup>

The ODT's decision was announced at the Negro National League meeting in Washington, D.C. *Pittsburgh Courier* sports editor Wendell Smith, who attended the meeting, described how the dejected owners responded to the order differently. Some felt the need to cooperate with the government to show patriotism. While all the owners eventually agreed to move forward with the season, others felt the need to give up on the season:

Consequently, the owners in the Negro National League are trying to figure out how they are going to ride around the country this summer with such a big overhead staring them in the countenance. You see, some of the owners are suffering from the shorts, which is another way of saying there isn't anything in their pockets to jingle.<sup>38</sup>

For the Monarchs' owners and other Negro League teams, the buses were more than just a form of transportation. They came to symbolize "an effective strategy against segregation and discrimination as well as an effective advertisement."<sup>39</sup> In order to make it possible for the Monarchs to play a series of road games, Wilkinson had two trailers attached to the back of the team bus. The trailers were used for lodging players and cooking food in areas of the country where businesses refused to offer services to African Americans.<sup>40</sup> The Eastman decision created a double conflict for Negro League team owners. First each had to lease out its bus and find a separate form of transportation from one game to the next, either by train or individual cars. Secondly, the all-black teams would have to depend on the mercy of white business owners, who did not shrink from the prejudice tradition of denying service to coloreds. So where black players would sleep and eat on those long trips, added to the concerns for the upcoming season. In the face of



these circumstances both of the Monarchs' team owners, Tom Baird and Wilkinson, immediately met and consulted with Franklin to map out a plan to have the order reversed.

From Franklin's explanatory and influential columns, which promoted black achievements, gave fatherly advice, and, in the past, helped blacks gain equal rights to housing, the owners knew the *Call's* head chief had power to rally enough support to save the season and the owners' pocketbooks. During the same year, Franklin urged blacks to fight with their minds, not their fists, after a series of race riots broke out in different states. He asked blacks to protest by placing pressure on city officials through the printed word and letters.<sup>41</sup> Franklin, along with the entire Negro press, also continually reminded blacks to stand one hundred percent behind and with the country as it battled a bloodthirsty opponent in Europe.<sup>42</sup>

This is in stark contrast to the opinion columns Franklin wrote at the start and height of the Double V campaign. The black press' confrontational and activist approach to civil rights soured the federal government. After a series of investigations into several black newspapers, the federal government accused the black press for being disloyal to America, for destroying black morale for World War II, and for printing pro-Communist material. The federal government issued threats of press suppression to black editors if they did not tone down their harsh articles against prejudice behaviors or acts. These threats caused the black press to reevaluate their approach in covering civil rights issues.

However, the federal government abstained from shutting down any of the black newspapers that came under its microscope. Black press historian Charles A. Simmons noted how extremely low African American morale was during the war years. Shutting

down the Negro press, the one source of information and community connection and one of the only bright spots for blacks, might have been the final blow.<sup>43</sup>

Franklin felt Negro baseball and the Monarchs provided another bright spot in the African American community. In a series of telegrams, Franklin first sent letters to three area senators, two in Missouri and one in Kansas, petitioning for their help to reverse the ODT order. Unlike many of the Eastern teams in the Negro League, where train transportation was more readily available, the Monarchs, the team furthest west, would travel more than seven hundred miles to playing points out east, such as Birmingham and up north to Chicago. If they took the train, Baird and Wilkinson admitted that the team would have a huge overhead and would not make enough money to pay the railroad rates and still maintain current player salaries. In addition, the Monarchs wouldn't be able to make barnstorming stops where spectators in small towns flocked to their games.

The *Call* quickly reminded readers of the Monarchs' championship status. Because of the team's great play, the Monarchs had become one of the most famous baseball attractions in the country, playing to large crowds, and easily producing \$30,000 a year in taxes for the government and contributing charity games for the United Service Organization.<sup>44</sup>

On the same day of the *Call's* article, C.E. McBride of the *Star* reminded white readers of the Monarchs' contributions to the economy. McBride though was less hopeful of the ODT making an exception for the Negro Leagues, and the sports editor strayed away from helping the Monarchs. He wrote in an almost obituary-type tone, stating that the "Monarchs will be missed from several angles" for the 1942 season.<sup>45</sup>

Later on, McBride praised the Monarchs' owners as being "resourceful men" for looking for a way around the decision to keep the team going.<sup>46</sup> Beyond that, the white

newspaper paid no attention to the other efforts the owners and Franklin were making to keep the team from letting down its vast fan following.

With no buses, the Monarchs abandoned its spring training plans in South Texas. They instead practiced at a local park in Kansas City on the corner of 18th and Paseo, while the owners and the *Call* continued to fight Eastman's decision.<sup>47</sup> On top of the telegrams to local senators, on the last page of the black paper Franklin made a sheet-long petition form that subscribers could sign and send into the *Call*.<sup>48</sup> Within two weeks from the start of the petition drive, Franklin forwarded the first batch of 2,250 signatures to the ODT in an attempt to amend the order.<sup>49</sup> On those sheets appeared one of the clearest statements of loyalty between the Negro Leagues, the Monarchs, and the paper: "Baseball has been the chief summer entertainment of many of the signers of this petition and we have depended upon these six teams to provide it. Let Negro baseball live."<sup>50</sup>

Following Franklin's lead, Eastern Negro League owners also voiced their disapproval of the Eastman decision by sending in letters to area senators.<sup>51</sup> However, the *Call* continued to pilot the cause. At first, the *Call's* petition drive failed when Eastman wrote a letter to Franklin declining to reverse the decision, forcing black teams to start the season traveling by train. However, Eastman promised that once he could relax the order he would do so for the sake of Negro League baseball. By mid-season the ODT granted the teams an exemption, and the Monarchs were back to making barnstorming stops between scheduled league games.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Call* Avoids Baseball Integration Campaign**

The amount of resources and energy the *Call* placed into the bus campaign was frowned upon by some Eastern sports writers, including Joe Bostic of the *Harlem*

*People's Voice*, who accused the black paper for ignoring the more important campaign—that of baseball integration. By late February, Willie Bea Harmon took over sports editor duties at the *Call*. Not wanting to make the Monarchs' success seem second fiddle to the fight for integration as McKibben had done, Harmon responded to the allegations by stating the *Call's* intentions to first help the Monarchs survive and gain as much equality as possible in the segregated world. Though she apologized for the apparent over-emphasis on the matter, Harmon refused to believe the paper was wasting its time, and said that once the bus issue died, “maybe we'll hop on the ‘Big League Bandwagon.’ We're for it.”<sup>53</sup>

Harmon's “maybe” to join the other sportswriters in a fight for integration was as credible as Pinocchio's answers to the blue fairy. The main news in the sports section centered on the Monarchs' efforts to once again capture the league crown. The *Call* also provided regular coverage of the Cincinnati Clowns, who entered the league in 1943 and were known for their theatrical gimmicks between pitches. With every Monarch article, the *Call* never failed to mention Paige's greatness. But as great as Paige was, a war depleted roster left the team scrapping for wins and they fell to third place in the standings by the end of the season.

The Monarchs experienced similar results in 1944, but the paper never let up on its coverage of the local team. This included full coverage of most away games such as those played in Memphis, Tennessee; Birmingham, Alabama; New Orleans, Louisiana; Chicago, Illinois; New York, New York; Brooklyn, New York; and Washington, D.C.<sup>54</sup> The stories on away games didn't come from any wire service. The *Call* regularly used reports made by Quincy J. Gilmore, the Monarchs' press secretary, for stories and also used its own resources to have writers tag along with the team as it made trips out of

town. Also by this time, the *Call* began to provide updated player statistics from the Negro American League.<sup>55</sup>

The *Call* was given another chance to speak up on the issue of baseball integration at the end of 1943, when talk about the Major Leagues using black players resurfaced. Major League Commissioner Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis discussed the matter with heads of both the National and American leagues at a hotel in New York. Landis invited several black paper publishers (no one from the *Call*), including John H. Sengstacke, publisher of the *Defender* and president of the Negro Newspaper Publishers Association. Sengstacke presented to officials reasons for using black players in the Majors and listed off demands for compensation to any Negro League team that lost a player to the Majors.<sup>56</sup>

Instead of taking advantage of the meeting to push for integration, Harmon wondered why Landis, who ruled the Majors with an iron fist, refused to shoulder any responsibility for keeping blacks out, and why he refused to speak up for integration. However, on the positive side, the very fact that the owners are considering using black players “throws a cheery gleam on the [segregation] situation,” Harmon wrote. But she also prophesied that black players leaving to the Majors could lead to the collapse of the Negro Leagues:

Should the majors admit Negroes, the Negro baseball teams and their owners will have to look to their laurels. Of course, as yet, we don't have to worry. The majors have not yet decided to use Negroes.... However, we want to say here and now that Hilton Smith and Willard Brown are two who might be able to make the majors.<sup>57</sup>

Though in-line with the theme of the Double V campaign, Sam McKibben's efforts to raise a voice against the baseball color barrier in the sports pages of the *Call* did

not fit the original purposes and philosophy of the paper. After only a year, a female writer replaced McKibben as sports editor. The new sports chief refocused coverage on the Monarchs and revealed the *Call's* goal to help the Monarchs receive equal attention and praise despite segregation. While the *Star/Times* wrote off the Monarchs after the government took its team bus, Chester A. Franklin, the *Call's* creator, showed through a front-page campaign that the paper's content was meant to support the Monarchs and the Negro Leagues. In doing so, the paper showed its loyalty to the black teams, and showed that it was powerful enough to rally fans and reverse decisions. In the coming years, the *Call's* coverage of the Monarchs increased as players returned home from World War II.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FROM BATTLE FIELDS TO DIAMONDS, 1945-1947

### *Call* Attacks Segregation At *Star's* Tournament

Though governmental and presidential threats subdued the *Pittsburgh Courier's* Double V campaign, the theme of the movement continued throughout the war and the black press's civil rights push brought improvement to the occupational climate for African Americans. There were many tangible signs of these gains. Between 1940 and 1944 blacks had attained more work improvements than in the previous seventy-five years combined. For instance, blacks had served in every military branch throughout the war. Meanwhile, the black press trumpeted the achievements of black service men. In addition, black women worked along side white women in war factories as the government agencies expanded to meet wartime supply and labor demands.<sup>1</sup>

As World War II came to a mushroom cloud end, the breaking point of segregation seemed near. Black newspapers, including the *Call*, and even some white dailies maintained that since black and whites came together in war factories and in battle to defeat Hitler's German machine, they should be able to unite to win a game. For just as bullets and bombs evened out the battlefields, scoreboards and statistics leveled the playing field. While the *Call* did not tolerate any form of segregation as soldiers started coming home from World War II, the paper moved to break up segregation in amateur sports, a movement that did not include baseball.<sup>2</sup>

The *Call* at first attacked sports played at the high school level:

No finer example of Americanism could be displayed in the Greater Kansas City area than in interracial football and basketball games sponsored by the boards of education.... Sports is probably the least painful and the most profitable

way in which to bring down racial prejudices. It is in this field that least difference is shown save in organized or professional baseball and sports...the more exclusive type.<sup>3</sup>

“We Fought And Died TOGETHER in the South Pacific, Why Segregate in Public Auditoriums in America?” Leroy Jeffries, a war veteran and former Golden Gloves champion, held this sign while picketing outside the annual Golden Gloves championship in Kansas City. During the tournament boys of all races and creeds—black, white, Italian, Indian, Jew, Catholic—slugged it out in the ring. However, in the stands the officials of the Municipal auditorium segregated black spectators into certain sections.<sup>4</sup> In a distinct effort played out on the front page, the *Call* aggressively sought to find who allowed such a practice to exist during a sporting event, after all blacks and whites mingled together at the Monarchs’ home games with no problems. “Segregation, of course, is out of place anywhere, but especially at a sports event where the spectators are universally known as good sports,” wrote Louis Blue.<sup>5</sup>

When the *Call*’s reporters approached auditorium officials about the manner they denied any wrong doing, saying they were only following the wishes of the tournament’s promoter—*The Kansas City Star*.<sup>6</sup> However, Ernest Mehl, the *Star*’s main sportswriter and man in charge of the event, told the *Call*’s sports editor, John I. Johnson, that he did not believe in segregation and neither did the paper condone or enforce Jim Crow-type laws. Mehl also told the NAACP the same thing, adding that the paper left decisions on fan guidelines up to the auditorium directors. While the buck-passing irked the *Call*, the black paper sided with Mehl and the *Star*, blaming the auditorium officials for using segregation as a default and for hiding behind the promoters. The paper also blamed city officials for not doing their part to put an end to the practice in a public building.<sup>7</sup>



As players continued to return home from the war, switching from army greens to baseball, basketball and football uniforms, they returned as armies for justice according to Johnson:

Many of our Negro athletes are fighting on the diamond, the basketball court, the gridiron, the ring and track. These athletes are our peacetime army fighting for victory and for justice and for democracy; fighting against a vicious though incidious [sic] foe, who, hiding behind positions of policy making committees, behind offices of management, and positions of influence, have long ago made their resolutions to block the progress of all Negro boys and girls in the sports world.<sup>8</sup>

The atomic bombs of “goodwill and brotherhood” in baseball were meant to bring about integration and equality.<sup>9</sup> As the 1945 baseball season began, pressures by black and whites fans, letters to the editor, and even by New York politicians to integrate reached a new high, and Major League owners began to reconsider the color ban.<sup>10</sup> The black press even gained some allies in white sportswriters such as Haywood Broun and Shirley Povich of the *Washington Post*, and Dan Parker of the *New York Daily News*.<sup>11</sup>

Through the 1930s and 1940s, talented black athletes helped to spearhead a drive for equality through their success as competitors. Heavy weight champion Joe Louis and 1936 Olympic gold medallist Jesse Owens were prime examples of the emotional impact athletes can have on people. Through these two champions, white sportswriters and white fans had gained a respect for black athletes, and tempered their prejudices.

### **White Paper Respects Monarchs**

However, most white newspapers continued to disregard coverage of black baseball achievements. During his period as the *Star*'s main baseball writer (1937-1950), Mehl broke away from his regular coverage of the Kansas City Blues only once to write

about the Monarchs. However, that one article showed the amount of respect the *Star* sportswriters had gained for the black team throughout the years. In that piece, Mehl acknowledge the Monarchs as a popular Negro professional team that attracted huge interracial audiences because of the “diamond celebrities” in its lineup and the team’s aggressive style of play. He also described the Monarchs as a dominant team in the Negro Leagues, a worthy opponent for any opposition, and that it was not uncommon for them to string together thirty-five straight victories. While this was the first time Kansas City’s mainstream press paid such respect to the Monarchs during this study, it would be wrong to say that such admiration did not previously exist in the circle of the white paper’s sports department. In fact, with the way the *Star/Times* kept regularly track of the team, especially on the road, its sportswriters seemed to know what the Monarchs’ players were capable of and what potential they had if given the chance to show it.<sup>12</sup>

The Monarchs’ success and drawing power could no longer be ignored by the white paper. The *Star*’s sports editor, C.E. McBride, noted how the minor league Kansas City Blues couldn’t compete with the Monarchs in attendance figures.<sup>13</sup> In fact parts of nine columns by McBride during the 1946 season focused on the Monarchs. McBride covered how “Kansas City’s great Negro team” played in some of the country’s most famous ballparks. The black club played in front of 14,000 fans at Yankee stadium on July 7, while 16,000 saw them play at the Polo Grounds in New York on July 14. Tom Baird, co-owner of the Monarchs, gave Satchel Paige, the Negro Leagues’ most talked about pitcher, credit for the large attendance figures. Once again McBride avoided getting reaction from Paige or the Monarchs’ manager, preferring to play it safe by seeking out the white owners and avoiding any type of controversy by talking to the players.<sup>14</sup>

With Paige on the mound, the *Call's* coverage of the Negro Leagues and the Monarchs increased substantially from 1945-1947. Outcomes of road games were reported more frequently. Along with small reports about other Negro League teams, particularly the Indianapolis Clowns, each issue during the season had at least three stories, including part of a column devoted to highlighting the Monarchs or one of its players. In addition, Negro League standings appeared in nearly every issue and official box scores appeared more readily, enabling statistics of the top batters and pitchers to be compiled and printed.

### **Robinson's Rookie Year With Monarchs and Tryouts**

Having kept track of his feats while at U.C.L.A., the Monarchs' signing of Jackie Robinson in March 1945 topped the sports pages of the *Call*.<sup>15</sup> Despite serving in the army after leaving U.C.L.A., Robinson's feats at the Southern California college still echoed three years later and allowed him to gain quick respect among black sportswriters. His name was recognizable to the American public. Most recalled his college football feats, especially a year-end game in which college all-stars played against the Chicago Bears of the professional football league. In addition, his bother Mack, won a silver medal in the 1936 Olympics next to Jesse Owens' gold. While Robinson certainly was not the best Negro League player, his resume alone made him an exemplary candidate for the big leagues. Wendell Smith of the *Pittsburgh Courier* arranged for Robinson and a two other Negro League stars—Marvin Williams and Sam Jethroe—to tryout for the Major League Boston Red Sox team. Smith wanted to pick young talent for the tryout. By this time, black baseball's most well-known players, Josh Gibson and Paige, were in their late and mid thirties. Clearly, Smith didn't want players whose age was considered a

risk, neither did he want to provide Major League officials with any excuses for not signing a player. With the three hand-picked players, the big-league officials were getting the best up-and-coming players in the Negro Leagues.<sup>16</sup>

Before the tryout, Willie Bea Harmon, the *Call's* sports editor for most of 1945, called Robinson the Monarchs' "ace in hole," alluding to the possibility of the rookie's ascension to the Major Leagues.<sup>17</sup> All accounts named Robinson the most impressive player at the tryout. He hit balls over the fence and rattled the giant "Green Monster" wall in left field. The Red Sox chief scout, Hugh Duffy, is said to have exclaimed: "What a ballplayer! Too bad he's the wrong color."<sup>18</sup> However, the tryouts were never publicized, neither did they draw much comment from Boston's white and black newspapers.<sup>19</sup>

At relatively the same time, Negro League players Dave Thompson and Terris McDuffie tried out for the Brooklyn Dodgers. While none of these players heard back from the Major League clubs, Harmon called the tryouts a moral victory: "Every time a colored player dons a suit in one of the Major League camps he breaks down one of the bars that keeps him from playing on Major League teams."<sup>20</sup> Robinson, voted as a Negro League all star, garnered little attention from the *Call* after his initial signing with the team and Major-League tryout. The paper treated him more like a regular everyday player. But with a player like Paige livening up the game and the clubhouse, it was hard for any other players on the Monarchs' roster to reap any type of attention from the media.

The question of integration didn't return to the *Call's* sports pages until mid-August, when World War II was concluding. In a column, Harmon admitted that the subject boiled up every now and again, gained some steam, but eventually evaporated. The statement served as an indication of the *Call's* objective to maintain a Booker T.

Washington-type philosophy in its printed pages, by promoting black achievements. The paper also felt it was delivering what readers wanted, by spending more ink on the Monarchs rather than injustices. Thus, the *Call's* push for integration came in short bursts, with about two columns per year focusing on the matter. The sports editors, though, never felt compelled to pursue the issue as frequently as other black sports editors Smith, Sam Lacy, Frank Young, and Joe Bostic. Besides the Monarchs were winning pennants, and that was most important. Much like Franklin's advice to blacks that good, respectable behavior and hard work would go along ways to gaining equality, the sports writers at the *Call* ultimately wanted the team's play on the field to speak for itself.<sup>21</sup>

So while the *Call* pushed aside the integration issue, Smith and Lacy not only argued frequently and forcefully for an end to the color barrier, they also made "first-person intervention by sportswriters a natural expression if not an implicit duty."<sup>22</sup> Both men arranged for meetings with Major League officials, forming and becoming a part of committees to study the most successful way to integrate the big leagues. As has been noted, Smith arranged for Negro League players to try out for Major League rosters.<sup>23</sup>

This type of activism was often displayed in the *Call's* efforts to gain better working conditions for wartime factory workers and military unit equality. However, none of the *Call's* sportswriters or editor-in-chief took a direct involvement in the issue. But unlike the Northeastern sportswriters, the *Call's* sportswriters offered some new, fresh ideas to help the Negro Leagues mirror the Majors. Harmon, for instance, suggested that the Monarchs should create a breeding ground for adolescent ball players—a sort of farm system for the Negro Leagues, much like the farm system Branch Rickey developed for the St. Louis Cardinals in 1936 when baseball was regaining its footing after the Great

Depression. Current and former Monarch players could tutor the young players, Harmon said. The Monarchs could then sign those who reached full development or “perhaps the Monarchs would like to sell him to a big league team for \$10,000 or more.”<sup>24</sup>

However, the problem with the latter suggestion was one of “contract” loyalty. Players on the Monarchs and other teams in the Negro Leagues only had a contract in theory. That contract usually was nothing more than a verbal agreement, which allowed players, such as Paige, to play for any team that offered the most salary. No player felt compelled to honorably stay with one team.<sup>25</sup> In fact, when Robinson joined the Monarchs he inquired about his contract and was told that the letter he received from the secretary inviting him to play constituted the only contract he needed. Players received pay monthly and, according to Robinson, could end the verbal agreement at any time.<sup>26</sup>

More than a week after Harmon’s column, Robinson met secretly with Rickey in New York. The Brooklyn Dodgers’ owner spent a great deal of money in the last two years sending scouts out to find the best Negro ballplayer capable of breaking the color line with dignity. In another example of Smith’s active participation in the integration operation, the “revolutionary” sportswriter sat down with Rickey after the Boston tryouts and recommended Robinson to the Dodger president. Smith continued to provide Rickey with reports on Robinson while both men traveled to different cities. This direct involvement by the black press—specifically by Smith, Lacy, and Young—proved to facilitate a black player’s entrance into the Majors.<sup>27</sup> As it was Robinson, who hit over .340 for the Monarchs, signed a contract to play for the Dodgers’ top minor league team, the Montreal Royals, and thus the color line broke in the office of a man who admired and wished to emulate Abraham Lincoln.<sup>28</sup>

In the next issue of the *Call*, Alvin Moses, a syndicated sports columnist for the Associated Negro Press, mentioned how the “25 year fight to permit Americans of African descent to play baseball in the big leagues [was] still going on...”<sup>29</sup> Though Smith knew well beforehand of the signing, he did not spill the beans out of respect for Rickey.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly enough, *Call* sports editor John I. Johnson may have also received contact from the Brooklyn club. In a sports column eulogy to Johnson, days after his death from a illness, the *Call's* new sports editor, Bob Greene, stated that Johnson's tenure as sports editor began right before Rickey signed Robinson. Greene also described how the Dodgers contacted Johnson to see if he agreed with their selection of the Monarch shortstop as the first black in organized baseball. Johnson responded by saying that he felt other players on the Monarchs' squad held more promise than Robinson.<sup>31</sup>

Whether the Brooklyn club contacted Johnson immediately after the signing or after the announcement is unknown. From an analysis of the newspaper, it appears that no one on the *Call's* staff knew about Robinson's signing, or, like Smith, Johnson did not mention it out of respect for Rickey, until the official announcement came on Oct. 23. The announcement was covered in the *Call's* sports section in its October 26, 1945, issue. In it an anonymous sportswriter mentions how “newspapers cried out against... (the) unwarranted discrimination against one segment of American citizens” and how the efforts made by Smith and black sportswriters had finally proved fruitful. Fans in the 18th and Vine district of Kansas City cheered the announcement and greeted each other on the streets with the news of Robinson's advancement from the Monarchs into organized baseball.<sup>32</sup>

In the coming weeks, the *Call* praised Robinson's signing as history in the making. Though the owners of the Monarchs may have ended the season on a sour note

with Robinson, they were now singing him praises and offering well wishes.<sup>33</sup> Johnson gave thanks to Rickey for having the gull to make a stand for democracy on the playing field. However, on the same page, opposite that thanks, Johnson criticized Rickey's actions. The Dodgers' president yanked Robinson away from the Monarchs without compensation. The Monarchs' owners at first protested Rickey's under-the-table tactics. However, not wanting to prevent Robinson's—and African American's—participation in Major League baseball, the owners backed off. Johnson's column then went on to echo statements given by Harmon and Smith years earlier. The latter writer warned Negro League officials in 1943 that they needed to organize its teams and players better so that Major League owners would recognize the existence of contracts between players and teams. Now that this very thing had happened, Johnson urged Negro League owners to create a plan to prevent such unfair treatment from repeating in the future:

If the owners of Negro baseball clubs are not organized sufficiently to prevent any Tom, Dick or Harry from plucking out of their team any desirable player they want, they should so organize, and the sooner the better. If a baseball magnate wants a player, let him pay the price. This is the American way.<sup>34</sup>

Despite disapproval over Rickey's lack of respect, a week later Johnson asked the "Negroes of America" to write letters to both Robinson and Rickey to give both men full support.<sup>35</sup> In a paternalistic editorial, a writer also stated another critical way black fans can support Robinson: by conducting themselves properly in public. Robinson's success depended on the good nature of all African Americans. With him on the field there would no doubt be more black fans in the stands at Major League games. But if those fans became unruly at games, then Robinson's and every other black ballplayer's shot at



proving themselves in the big leagues would not last long. No team owner wanted a riot in the stands.<sup>36</sup>

Johnson also felt it his duty to teach black fans the importance of civility, chastising their “monkey actions” and minor scraps that occurred among themselves in the grandstands. Colored athletes, he harshly argued, cannot win help or friends if other African Americans are providing shallow examples of the race’s intelligence and sports chivalry.<sup>37</sup>

The *Star* assumed a similar love-hate relationship for Rickey. On the one hand McBride continued to recognize the former mastermind of the St. Louis Cardinals organization as a baseball “Mahatma,” yet they also sympathized with the Monarchs’ owners: “Mr. Rickey, you will recall, apparently had no twinge of conscience in luring Robinson away from the Kansas City club...”<sup>38</sup>

But as more facts came forward in 1946, McBride backed away from his mild objections of Rickey, realizing the Monarchs did not have Robinson under contract. The paper credited Rickey for researching whether Robinson was the Monarchs’ rightful property before bringing the black shortstop into organized baseball. Some how the paper got a hold of a recent letter Robinson sent to Rickey. In it Robinson reassured Rickey that he had made no agreement with the Monarchs, and Wilkinson acknowledged that Robinson was under no contract. McBride reprinted the letter to show Rickey’s respect for legally-binding contracts. However, out of respect for the Monarchs’ club, who treated Robinson fairly with a hundred dollar raise in monthly pay at mid-season, the sports editor avoided stating who was right or wrong in the controversy. McBride presented the facts and figures objectively, safely leaving the matter up to readers to decide.<sup>39</sup>

## **Monarchs Above Robinson**

Robinson's splendid success with the Montreal Royals made his entrance into the Major Leagues a foregone conclusion in 1947. The *Star/Times* used reports from Associated Press writers to keep track of Robinson, who "became the first Negro to break into organized baseball." During Robinson's first game "he stole the fancy of the sellout crowd of 25,000" by hitting a three-run homerun, scoring and driving in four runs, and stealing two bases.<sup>40</sup> Articles about Robinson only appeared three times in Kansas City's white newspaper, once at the beginning of the season and twice toward the end when Robinson led Montreal to an International League championship. In each article Robinson was always identified as a Negro, and only once as a former member of the Kansas City Monarchs.<sup>41</sup>

While Robinson's feats were not lost on the sportswriters at the *Star* or the *Call*, both papers maintained the same respective focus on the Blues and Monarchs during the 1946 season.<sup>42</sup>

Since Robinson came from the Monarchs' system, more crowds turned out to watch the Kansas City club. The elaborate pre-game festivities on opening day drew 16,000 fans (stadium capacity), who watched the Monarchs defeat the Memphis Red Sox 3-0 with "an errorless performance behind the masterly pitching of Hilton Smith."<sup>43</sup>

News on the Monarchs' wins and losses appeared at least two times a week in the daily white paper. The *Star/Times* started to use more Associated Press articles for Monarch away games. The paper not only announced upcoming home games, but also allowed the Monarchs to occasionally run advertising in its sports pages (albeit the ads were always placed at the bottom of the page and about half an inch tall in size.)<sup>44</sup>

Much like the *Call*, the white newspaper became interested in following Paige's colorful antics in 1946. While the lengthy and wiry pitcher tasted some bitterness at not being selected as the first Negro player to break into organized baseball as Robinson was, he still held on to hope that his opportunity would materialize. In the meantime, the six-foot three-inch, one hundred and ninety pound thrower continued to turn heads with his glove-popping fastball. Still regarded as the greatest Negro baseball star, Paige "humbled the best hitters" in the Negro Leagues in 1946, the *Times* wrote. During the season, Paige compiled twenty-one victories to zero defeats and gave up only two runs in ninety-three innings of work. Paige insisted that he could pitch in the Majors despite his age: "Don't let 'em tell you I'm too old to pitch baseball. I'm not old—only 40 September 25. And 40—even 50 isn't old if your arms and legs are only 20."<sup>45</sup>

Authored by an anonymous writer, but definitely in *Star* baseball reporter Ernest Mehl's style, the article marked the first time the paper quoted a black baseball star. The writer devoted the entire article to Paige and his amazing feats, such as his string of sixty-four scoreless innings. As he had done with many others, Paige had the writer "convinced that he's one of the greatest hurlers in the business by refusing to quit winning." Interestingly enough, the *Star* waited till integration occurred before printing a quote by a black player. With Robinson succeeding in organized baseball and receiving coverage in other mainstream papers, black players did not seem all that taboo. This article, with its back log of Paige's career exploits, also adds further evidence to the contention that white sportswriters at the *Star/Times* followed and held inward respect for the black team, which feelings could not have been shared in the sports pages for fear of social retribution. Even at this time, with Robinson garnering the cheers of all fans, the sportswriter who profiled Paige deemed it unsafe to not put his name on the story.

Proof of the local white paper's respect for the Monarchs showed from time to time in the content, but the *Star/Times* quenched the team's stature as being comparable to a Major League unit. When Paige's all stars played and beat a team filled with Major League stars, the *Times* buried the story on the bottom of the last page in the sports section. The white daily thus showed by placement its lack of acknowledgment and promotion of Negro achievements<sup>46</sup>

The *Call* maintained that the only way black baseball players could progress was if the Negro League organization was perfected and presented well. This was a reminder of the goal Negro Leagues creator Rube Foster had set from the beginning—to make the black leagues comparable in every aspect to the Majors. As the 1946 season rolled along, the *Call's* coverage still included standings of teams in the Negro American and National Leagues. Perhaps more for the sake of Major League scouts appearing at every Negro League game, the *Call* published statistics of the best hitters and pitchers in the Negro American Leagues every month.<sup>47</sup>

The *Call's* intense coverage of the Monarchs earned Johnson respect as the best sports editor of the black press from the Southwestern Conference Association. The group of collegiate coaches also felt the *Call* contained the best national sports coverage.<sup>48</sup>

### ***Star* Ignores Robinson's Historical Importance**

The *Call's* baseball coverage in 1947 focused basically on two things—the Monarchs and Robinson. Robinson's emergence into the Major Leagues with the Brooklyn Dodgers was hailed as history in the making and a great victory for Negro baseball. Meanwhile Rickey continued to receive praise from the *Call* for defying the

Major's unwritten color ban.<sup>49</sup> All of black American rooted for Robinson as he batted segregation out of Major League ballparks with his friendly smile—an article in the *Star* reported that Robinson was well liked by his teammates—and aggressive play.<sup>50</sup>

Robinson also became a famous black icon. An editorial cartoon in Kansas City's black paper showed Robinson sliding home ahead of a white baseball labeled "Jim Crow."<sup>51</sup> Johnson contended that the success of Robinson and other Negro athletes would dispel those "who hug their hates and prejudices."<sup>52</sup>

The *Star* identified Robinson as the first modern black player in the Majors, but beyond this mere mention, the paper failed to capture the social significance and historical context of a end to nearly sixty years of baseball segregation. Instead, Robinson was treated like any other rookie ball player. This became especially evident after McBride quoted Ben Chapman, manager of the Philadelphia Athletics, in a column that reduced Robinson's black-hero status. Led by Chapman, the Athletics hurled insults, one after another toward Robinson during the game. Chapman told the press that his club was simply treating Robinson as they would other rookie ball players—with harshness boarding on scorn. Only the veterans and those who have proved themselves year after year received respect, Chapman said, adding:

He's just like any other rookie player. He has to prove his mettle and he'll be given plenty of opportunity to prove it. Sure we'll ride him. We ride all newcomers and some of the older players. That's part of the game. If a youngster has Major League stuff in him he takes it and weathers it.<sup>53</sup>

With that, the *Star* said little about Robinson throughout the season. During the week and on Sundays, box scores and game recaps on the Dodgers appeared in sports pages through the *Star's* Associated Press service. While Robinson's name appeared in the box scores, he was rarely mentioned in the preceding write up, no matter his success

on the field.<sup>54</sup> The *Star/Times*' unawareness of the Robinson's impact showed the extent of the discrimination in Missouri and matched the racism of America. The findings also support analyses made by several researchers, who found that the black press immediately showed the historical magnitude of Robinson's signing, while the white press showed limited appreciation for the event and avoided conversations about possible future implications on civil rights.<sup>55</sup>

At the beginning of the season, there was some heated concern about the St. Louis Cardinals, who threatened to strike when they played the Brooklyn Dodgers, simply because of Robinson's presence in the lineup. These threats undoubtedly showed the level of prejudices that existed in Missouri. In his book *Standing Fast*, Roy Wilkins, former *Call* writer and president of the NAACP, wrote that Missourians' feelings on race and equality were about as harsh as those that existed in Gulfport, Mississippi.<sup>56</sup>

As the Cardinals-Dodgers series drew near, the player walk-out threats were extinguished and even denied by the Cardinals. The teams played the games without incident. However, the white daily decided, avoiding the controversy, refused to send a reporter east to St. Louis to cover the three-game series. The *Star/Times* once again pushed aside Robinson's presence in the state and his impact on history. As before, the paper relied on the Associated Press for peripheral coverage.<sup>57</sup>

In the meantime, Johnson was rallying *Call* readers to make the trip to St. Louis to watch the former Monarch in action. Because of Kansas City's huge contingent of black baseball fans, the Missouri Pacific Lines offered fans a "Jackie Robinson Special" train to carry anyone interested to St. Louis for the game. For the next month, the *Call* ran short blurbs to remind fans about the special train, its fares, and departure schedule.<sup>58</sup>

Several fans from different states made the trip to St. Louis only to be disappointed at seeing the Dodgers lose the series to the Cardinals. Johnson attended and covered the games for the *Call*. He produced a main article on the game and a separate sidebar that covered every move Robinson made during the contests and even during pre-game warm-ups: "...Goes out to snag flies, scoop up grounders or retrieve balls...At infield practice he brings ball out of dugout...Tosses slow rollers to third short and second..." He even stated in a column how he felt the Monarchs and a couple of other Negro League teams could beat the Brooklyn Dodgers, especially after their poor performance in St. Louis.<sup>59</sup>

Later on in the season, when the Major League-dwelling St. Louis Browns signed outfielders Henry Thompson and Willard Brown from the Monarchs, the *Star's* sports editor called the signing of black players the new "fad" in the Major Leagues and as "an ill advised" method to increase game attendance.<sup>60</sup> Ricky had warned that Robinson, and other black ball players to follow, would be considered nothing more than a "sideshow attraction" than actual ball players, but time would change those opinions.<sup>61</sup> So despite Robinson's presence, the dominating white paper took its normal approach to the baseball season, concentrating, as usual, on the Kansas City Blues' wins and losses. Stories on the Monarchs also appeared as usual—straight forward and concentrating on game outcomes.

While Robinson continued to make inroads and gain fanfare throughout his first season, the Monarchs continued to receive the top headline and attention in the sports pages of the *Call*. In fact, thirty-one articles about the Monarchs garnered the top headline on the sports page or front page of the newspaper throughout the year, compared to twelve headline stories on Robinson—ten of which came before and after the

Monarchs' 1947 season. In total, the *Call* equally balanced stories between Robinson and the Monarchs, with each subject receiving eighty-two articles. Wire services generated most of the articles on Robinson that the *Call* printed and provided space for. While the paper added coverage on Robinson, its coverage on the Monarchs did not suffer. What did suffer was the paper's coverage on the Negro Leagues in general, including league meetings. Outside of the Monarchs' activities, news on other teams, such as the Indianapolis Clowns, appeared less frequently than in past years. Obviously with a new subject to make space for another topic needed to go.

Meanwhile, coverage of the Monarchs—from road games to home games—remained the same and Monarchs' statistics appeared monthly. And for the first time, the Monarchs' home opener became front-page news in the *Call*, as a record-breaking crowd of more than 17,000 watched the Monarchs whoop its Eastern rivals, the Chicago American Giants, 13-3.<sup>62</sup> This type of coverage on the Monarchs that existed in 1947 does not resemble the “wholesale” shift of focus and resources to Robinson and the Dodger organization and away from the Negro Leagues as described by Carroll and Ribowsky.<sup>63</sup> Make no mistake that Johnson had a new item to cover in his columns, and the *Call* made space to cover Robinson, but the paper did not do so at the Monarchs' expense. Although the paper's coverage of the Major Leagues would gradually match that of the *Courier* and *Defender* in coming years, the *Call* may have felt obligated to cover the Monarchs, especially since big-league scouts were signing players to Major-league contracts.

While the Monarchs failed to win the Negro American League pennant in 1947, Johnson still honored them as the most talented team in black baseball. After all, three out of the four black players who were playing in the Major Leagues by August



graduated from the Monarchs' baseball "school," proving to baseball critics that the team could very well compete against any Major League club.<sup>64</sup>

Only after the Monarchs' season ended did the *Call* shift full attention to Robinson, who won rookie-of-the-year honors, and the Dodgers, who won the National League pennant and played against the New York Yankees in the World Series.

Johnson traveled to New York to cover the contest. It was the first time in the paper's history a sportswriter covered the Major Leagues. Johnson's reports, two appearing on the front page, focused more on Robinson's every at bat and move, and less on the actual outcome of the games, in which the Yankees proved to be too powerful for the Dodgers.<sup>65</sup>

Johnson also got feedback from other sportswriters about their thoughts on Robinson's first season of play. One such sportswriter was Mehl of the *Star*. Johnson respected Mehl's opinion enough to run his comments on Robinson for two straight weeks. Johnson called Mehl a "capable member of the Kansas City Stars' sports staff." So while Mehl laid off in giving praise or credit to Robinson's feats in his own articles on the World Series, he did tell Johnson that "Jackie Robinson, beyond the question, has been the main reason for the success of the Brooklyn Dodgers this season."<sup>66</sup>

### **Johnson Suggests Bold Remedy to "Sick" Negro Leagues**

For the 1947 season, the *Call* maintained its coverage of the Monarchs while balancing stories about Robinson. However, fan interest throughout the season shifted away from black baseball and more toward Major League ballparks. Black fans were more likely to lay down money for Major League games in order to see the likes of Robinson and Cleveland Indians outfielder Larry Doby.

With this in mind, Johnson's column a week after the Major League World Series described black baseball as a "sick baby" with many owners financially in the red. Also as more and more Major League teams signed black players, the talent level in the Negro Leagues dropped, contributing to a decrease in competitive play and fan interest. Johnson suggested Negro League team owners needed to do something drastic to keep their respective teams full of first-class players that could jump to the big leagues.

Turning the tables on the separate-but-equal practice, Johnson suggested the time had come to integrate the Negro Leagues with young talented white players. With white fans embracing Robinson's award-winning play, that same spirit of democracy would also pay dividends in black baseball. Johnson wrote: "It is a known fact that mixed sports bring out the very best in both Negro and white athletes. With such a mixed roster more interest, and we believe, faster, better baseball would result."<sup>67</sup>

Johnson's bold statement did not parallel the messages of any other black sportswriters at the end of 1947. Sportswriter John Fuster of the *Cleveland Call-Post* also hoped the black team owners would follow Rickey's lead and open the Negro Leagues to all faces.<sup>68</sup> For the most part, however, previous research described an internal conflict in black newspapers in the northeast, specifically in the *Courier*, *Chicago Defender*, and *Indianapolis Freeman*. Unlike the *Call*, these papers made a definite shift in coverage toward the Major Leagues in 1947. Carroll described Smith of the *Courier* and Young of the *Defender* as blaming the inability of Negro League teams to supply information to the black newspapers as a reason for the shift in coverage. However, in the midst of their shifting loyalty, the black sportswriters urged the African American community for fan support of the black teams, reminding readers that Robinson, Don Newcombe, and Roy

Campenalla's Major-League success was evidence of the great talent that existed in the Negro Leagues.<sup>69</sup>

Beyond such emphatic calls to the black community, none dared to suggest that the Negro Leagues had become more undemocratic than the Major Leagues. But Johnson did exactly that with his column, believing that both blacks and whites would accept integration in a league that grew out of the separation status.

Johnson later opined that officials, including Negro League officials, not the fans have maintained the color barriers in all sports. The answer to all prejudices, Johnson wrote, is to listen to the fans, who yearn for progress, better competition, and championship teams.<sup>70</sup> However, despite all of the talk of democracy needed in America after World War II and perhaps because of the *Call's* smaller circulation size, Johnson's words did not start a crusade toward an unrestricted Negro League free of its own color ban.

In general, though, 1947 saw much progress in interracial sports as color bans deteriorated and fans cheered athletes without regard to color or religion. Besides the Major Leagues, black players played football in the Rose Bowl and Cotton Bowl, respectively, and Buddy Young played professional football for the New York Yankees.

Suppressed by the social issues of the day, white sportswriters at the *Star/Times* still showed respect for the Monarchs on occasion. However, only the black press put Robinson's barrier-breaking success into historical significance. The *Call* achieved balance in its coverage of the Monarchs and Robinson. But by the end of 1947, with the integration experiment deemed a success thanks to Robinson's stellar season, Johnson noticed how undemocratic the term "Negro Leagues" had become. This hypocrisy only served to fuel his efforts to integrate black ball.

## CHAPTER SIX: A SEASON OF SHIFTING LOYALTY, 1948-1949

### Branch Rickey Named Man of the Year

As athletic achievements supplanted skin color, the nation moved a little closer to the democratic ideal. After learning of Jackie Robinson's signing to play in the Dodgers' system, one black Kansas City fan said, "Yes, sir, democracy means much more to me today than it did yesterday." A total of five African Americans played in the Majors in 1947, with others waiting in the wings in the upper minor leagues. *Star* baseball writer Ernest Mehl wrote that Negro players in the Major Leagues are of no great concern, with sports being the one place where racism's weight is not as easily felt. "Players are inclined to regard each other with more respect to ability and sportsmanship... so Robinson and other Negro players are discussed as would be players of any other race. They praise his speed, question his fielding, recognize his batting strength."<sup>1</sup>

With an untapped talent market to explore, scouts appeared at nearly every Negro League game. Robinson received honors as Major League Rookie of the Year, but the *Call* sports editor felt another person deserved greater credit.

Certainly impressed by his courage, expertise, and daredevil persona, Branch Rickey was named Man of the Year by John I. Johnson in the first edition of the 1948 black paper. Johnson penned that Rickey's act of signing Robinson and breaking the color ban lifted the suppressed dreams of many young ballplayers to a new height—beyond the Negro Leagues—and he had done more for democracy than Truman's Marshall plans.<sup>2</sup>

While the paper always reflected on the top feats made by black athletes in its year-end wrap up, the *Call* had never previously showered an individual with Man-of-the-Year praise. Not even Satchel Paige received such praise from the black paper that arrived weekly to his Missouri home. In addition, up to this point, the Monarchs alone served as the democratic clog for the city. With the team's non-segregated seating policy at home games, an editorial in the *Call* in the early 1920s stated, "There is nothing in Kansas City that brings the two races closer together than the Monarch ball games."<sup>3</sup>

Well-traveled and well-recognized by other sportswriters as one of the best teams, black or white, owners throughout the country welcomed the Monarchs because of their success and great drawing power, which led to high revenue returns. But the team's contribution extended beyond the field and the account books, as one *Call* sportswriter wrote, "From a sociological point of view, the Monarchs have done more than any other single agent to break the damnable outrage of prejudice that exists in this city. White fans, the thinking class at least, can not have watched the orderly crowds at Association Park and not concede that we are humans at least, and worthy of consideration as such."<sup>4</sup>

Fast-forward a quarter of the century, and the Monarchs were no longer inspiring equality. Rickey had become the new hero and the Major Leagues became the face of democracy. The Monarchs became a reminder of a harsh, segregated past. In 1948, Johnson kept mildly insisting that the Monarchs and the Negro Leagues in general hindered progress toward a class-free world. He also stated the league's exclusion of whites was one of the causes for decreased attendance.<sup>5</sup>

## **Black Fans Root For Major League Black Players**

With a handful of new black players being added to big leagues in 1948, including the Negro Leagues' biggest drawing card in Paige, who was picked up by the Cleveland Indians, fans were turning more and more to in the "democratic Major Leagues." Johnson was disappointed when he spotted several fans amongst the crowd of 42,099 at the East-West game in 1948 carrying portable radios and listening to Major-League broadcasts in order to keep tabs on Paige and Larry Doby of the Cleveland Indians and Robinson, Don Newcombe, and Roy Campanella of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Both the Indians and Dodgers lost that day, but Johnson recalled how fans seemed more interested in the far away games on the radio than the actually game playing out right under their noses. So while more than 42,000 came out to support the Negro League contest at Comiskey Park in Chicago, fans' hearts pointed elsewhere to a "new love" that was here to stay.<sup>6</sup>

As the season played out, black teams continued to lose the interest of the fans and *Call* sportswriters, alike. At first the black paper tried to maintain an even coverage between the Monarchs and the Major Leagues. But as the 1948 season came along, the *Call's* shift from the Negro Leagues to Major League baseball was complete. While the Monarchs' home opener and welcoming ceremonies still received top billing in the *Call*, throughout the season the Monarchs became more and more second rate. At mid-season the *Call* paid particular attention to the Indians' signing of Paige, who at this time was in his forties. Paige's stellar and not-so stellar relief performances with the Indians stole the top spot on the front page of the sports section on many occasions.<sup>7</sup> On other occasions the *Call's* focus on Robinson, Campanella, Newcombe, and Doby kept readers

entertained.<sup>8</sup> Even amateur golf tournaments marginalized the Monarchs' home victories against its rival, the Chicago American Giants, and other games.<sup>9</sup>

So while the *Call* began to steer in another direction, coverage by the Kansas City white daily remained the same. The *Star/Times* even began to report on events about the Monarchs that the black paper missed. In May 1948, during the season's infancy, the white daily previewed a game between the Monarchs and the Clowns by reporting on how the two teams "tied two Major League fielding marks and the Kansas City outfit barely missed tying three others." This interesting comparison of the Monarchs statistics to those set by teams in the Major Leagues came as a novelty for the white paper, and continued to show how much inward respect the sportswriters at the *Star/Times* had for the Monarchs. The story stated during a game in Okalahoma City, the Monarchs and Clowns tied a 1924 mark for assists in a single game with thirty-five as well as the 1931 record for number of infield chances with seventy-six. Meanwhile, the Monarch's forty-three infield chances was one shy of the Major League record of forty-four set back in 1901. The team's nineteen assists in the contest fell two short of the Major League mark and the black club's twenty-four infield putouts fell one short of the best.<sup>10</sup>

In the month of May alone, the *Star/Times* reported on the Monarchs fourteen times, with one story appearing every third day at the most. The coverage was fair and straightforward as usual, still lacking platitudes for the Monarchs' play, but it did on occasion give notice to some of the team's top players, such as infielder Gene Baker.<sup>11</sup> The *Star/Times* also continued to keep close tabs on Paige—mainly through its wire service—after he signed with the Major League Cleveland Indians. The paper printed pictures of Paige, and stories on his ability.<sup>12</sup> Though he was referred to as the "ageless Negro hurler" or "ancient Alabaman," by Kansas City's main white newspaper, Paige

helped the Indians win the World Series in 1948, and captured the attention of black fans throughout the country.<sup>13</sup>

This accomplishment further damaged the Negro Leagues. African Americans were not only doing well in the Majors—as evidenced by Robinson’s first season—but for two years in a row they were displayed on the grand stage of the sport, and now they were helping teams win titles. Black fans undoubtedly jumped on the bandwagon. Even in smaller cities black communities turned away from their own local teams to the Major Leagues. Having seen the caliber of play in the Major Leagues and having seen black players compete in the World Series, African American baseball fans were hooked on watching professional baseball and there was no going back.<sup>14</sup>

### **Bitter Owners Complain Against Robinson and Black Press**

In addition to the signs of shifting loyalty among fans and the black press, at the end of the 1948 season, many Negro League owners could no longer afford to keep their team’s afloat. Publicity remained a problem for each black team and the owners blamed the black press for hindering gate receipts instead of helping the league. Effa Manley, co-owner of the Newark Eagles, was particularly bitter when she had to sell her team to Houston. She held the black press liable for abandoning the Negro Leagues: “If the sports writers...will evidence the same enthusiasm toward our Negro baseball leagues...as they do about the...Negro players in the white major leagues, the future of Negro baseball will not be in jeopardy.” Manley was jealous that the black press never covered the Negro Leagues springing training with the same intensity as they did for the Major League training camps. She also placed heavy blame on Rickey for the decline of the Negro Leagues with the way he stole Robinson from the Monarchs without compensation.<sup>15</sup>



All this came in response to Robinson's article in *Ebony* magazine titled, "What's Wrong With Negro Baseball?" In it Robinson complained that the Monarchs did no conditioning; the umpires of the Negro Leagues were untrained and unsupervised. He also complained about other conditions, such as the long overnight bus rides to get to the next town and play the next day. Dan Bankhead and Roy Campanella of the Dodgers also added to the negative publicity of the Negro Leagues. Bankhead said he would never go back to playing for the Memphis Red Sox and suffer the long bus rides and soft competition. Though he later denied the following statement, Campanella is said to have informed Dick Young of the *New York Daily News* that the Negro Leagues were a joke: "They'd dream up some batting averages, fielding averages, and pitchers' records, but nobody every really knew how much he was hitting or fielding.... They claim that organized ball killed off colored baseball by taking some of its best players. The colored league killed itself."<sup>16</sup>

In response, Johnson came to the defense of the Monarchs and its owners. He felt Robinson's criticism was unfairly directed at the Monarchs since that was the only Negro team Robinson had played for. Johnson reminded readers that Robinson was at the very least morally bound to the team. His leaving the team showed no amount of loyalty. Johnson continued to defend the Monarchs' team owners, reminding readers how the owners of the Monarchs had at times mortgaged everything they had to keep the team from declaring bankruptcy. So while players did not find the same luxuries in the Negro Leagues as they did in the Majors, Johnson wrote that owners still gave everything they had for its players and team. Ultimately, Johnson felt Robinson could "do a lot more good for himself and for Negro baseball by concentrating on maintaining his high

standing in the majors than ... by letting himself be persuaded to pop-off continually about 'What's wrong with Negro baseball.'"<sup>17</sup>

According to a column by the *Star's* sports editor C.E. McBride, Manley used harsher language against Robinson, who said that he left Kansas City on his own volition. Manley stated, "Frankly no greater outrage could have been perpetrated. No greater invasion of the good sense of the American people could have been attempted. No greater ingratitude was every displayed. I charge Jackie Robinson with being ungrateful and more likely stupid."<sup>18</sup>

While Johnson stood up strongly against Robinson for his complaints, he also felt Manley was a bit too cruel, and went a bit overboard in her remarks. In fact Johnson felt Manley's words were unnecessary because it brought "a gloomy, defeated outlook to colored baseball." Johnson pointed the finger right back at the Negro League owners, accusing them of being too quick to give up.<sup>19</sup> However, black sportswriters did not acknowledge their own shifting loyalty to the Majors. They instead continued to blame owners for the shoddy play that existed on the field and for the lack of press information available to journalists as reasons for not covering the black leagues. The black press argued that Negro League officials needed to shape and strengthen the organization if they wanted more coverage.<sup>20</sup>

But a consensus seemed to be forming about black baseball and its shrinking presence. One writer from the National Newspapers Association (also known as the Black Press of America) stated that Negro baseball had "made little or no progress since the days before the first world war," when the "immortal" Foster and others laid the leagues' foundation. Investments by team owners had not increased beyond team buses and uniforms; owners forced players to travel all night and play the next day with little

rest or conditioning; and player contracts had yet to be established.<sup>21</sup> Other sportswriters began to disregard the past contributions made by black baseball and its owners, and even began to reject the organization as a valued black-owned, black-run entity—a stark contrast from the pre-war and pre-depression era, when the black press considered themselves important partners to black business and helped to make the Negro Leagues a success in a segregated time. Chris Perry of the African American *Philadelphia Tribune* said black baseball was a laughable league and compared the level of play to the lower Class D minor leagues.<sup>22</sup>

George Trautman, president of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, further slammed the inadequacy of black baseball with a letter issued in response to both the Negro National and American league presidents, who requested that their leagues become a part of organized baseball and be recognized as a professional loop:

The application of the Negro Leagues seeking affiliation with the National Association were given consideration by the executive committee during the period of our convention in Miami recently.

The committee was of the opinion that it would be impossible to do anything with these applications at this time, other than to express a sympathy for your problems and to offer our aid in helping you set up an organization that would meet your needs.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. J.B. Martin, president of the Negro American League, later responded to all the negativity, by saying there was more to black baseball than just money and perks: “Where would our present Major League Negro stars have received their early experience had there not been a thriving Negro circuit to give them their first chances to show their wares?”<sup>24</sup> Olympian Jesse Owens echoed a similar statement in a column to the *Chicago Defender*. The 1936 Olympic gold medalist pleaded with owners and fans to preserve the

black teams so that future African American baseball players can be groomed for the Majors. “If Negro baseball dies, there is no other means of preparing Negro players for the majors.”<sup>25</sup>

Despite Martin’s plea, as the off-season continued the Negro Leagues lost (in addition to the Newark Eagles) the Cleveland Buckeyes, New York Black Yankees, and the Washington Homestead Grays, each folding under financial pressures. Each of these teams existed in areas where Major Leagues teams also played, causing a large drop in attendance as black fans shifted their focus. For instance, a record 80,403 fans packed into Cleveland Stadium to watch Paige shut out the Chicago White Sox 3-0 in August 1948. Major black newspapers like the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender* placed the game on their front pages. Meanwhile, across town the Cleveland Buckeyes struggled to compete for the same fan base. More than two and half million fans bought tickets to watch the Indians during their title run, a club record, leaving the Buckeyes dead to the new love.<sup>26</sup>

As four teams folded, ten black teams remained standing in a limp league of their own. Only a few teams made a profit in 1948. Despite cutting salaries, several owners reported losses of more than \$20,000. As they did during the depression years, the owners reduced scheduled games and barnstormed more to make up for losses. In 1948, the Monarchs collected nearly \$6,500 in profits from barnstorming. Other evidence of the league’s turmoil was shown through its struggle to stage a Negro World Series. By this point a team only had to play thirty games to be eligible for the season-ending contest, which never gained much prominence and had even less distinction than the East-West classic.

Also in 1948, black sportswriters lamented the loss of one of Negro baseball's finest and smartest men when J.L. Wilkinson sold his portion of stock in the Monarchs to co-owner Tom Baird.<sup>27</sup> Since 1920, Wilkinson had been at the reins of the Monarchs and had earned the respect of every player with his fair treatment. He kept the team afloat in large part because of the "never failing loyalty of Kansas City fans." At age seventy-four, Wilkinson's eyes had gone blind, but clearly he understood that the era of black baseball was dying.<sup>28</sup>

### **Johnson Rebuked By *Star* Columnist**

With so many Negro National League teams folding before the start of the 1949 season, that half of the loop was disbanded and absorbed into one Negro American League. "With the Negro National league now on the junk pile, the American league will carry the interest of all Negro baseball patrons. Ten teams form the circuit which is spilt into so-called East and West divisions."<sup>29</sup>

As the red flags flew, black sportswriters tried to bring fans back into the fold. They plead with black fans to not forsake the leagues that produced Robinson, Paige, Campanella, and Newcombe. With these pleas, the black press seemed at odds with itself. On the one hand they are fighting to abolish all forms of segregation, while at the same time trying to rally black fans back to the "old love" in order to preserve a black owned and operated business on the frets; a business that first came into existence only because of the Jim Crow laws. On the other hand, the black press' coverage pointed fans to the accomplishments being made by black Major League players.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the 1948 and 1949 seasons, Johnson kept insisting that the Negro fan base was still alive. Despite his complaints against team owners and once calling the

league a “sick baby,” Johnson wrote columns reassuring fans of the “good health and prosperity of Negro baseball.” Though he wasn’t blinded by the shifting interest of black fans, Johnson honestly did not believe fans would entirely turn their backs on the black game or their hometown teams.<sup>31</sup>

However, shortly after this column a letter came in to the *Call* rebuking Johnson for feeding readers and fans with a false sense of security. The *Call* felt the letter important enough to print it in next week’s issue. The editor’s note at the top of the article stated that the letter came from “a well known white Kansas City sports writer and a close friend of your sports editor. We offer his view for your consideration.”<sup>32</sup>

Though the author of this letter is unknown, this research has shown that Ernest Mehl of the *Star* and Johnson often corresponded with each other. In fact, Johnson referred to Mehl as a good, if not close, friend.<sup>33</sup> However, in the letter the unknown author made a reference to “Ernie Mehl.” In looking through the sports section for both the *Star* and *Times*, the only other sportswriter on the newspaper’s staff who received a regular byline to be considered “well known” in the community was C.E. McBride, the sports editor.

The letter sternly told Johnson that his column last week, though interesting, was wrong. The writer strongly believed the Negro Leagues were going to fall, not only because of the color ban being lifted in the Majors, but also because of the poor play that existed on the Negro League field.

First I wouldn’t walk across the street to watch a class ‘D’ ball game. Neither would you. Neither would most fans... Negro baseball, Johnny, with only a few exceptions, has been composed of teams built around one or two really good players. The balance of the ball club again in most cases, has been made up of has-been’s and never-were’s, clowns, freaks and characters.

The latter part of this comment was probably in reference to the Indianapolis Clowns, who continually looked for new ways to entertain and get people to the ballpark with various staged acts throughout a game, for which the writer viewed as being unprofessional. The adamant letter informed Johnson that Major Leagues scouts were going to get to the black players long before the Negro Leagues had a chance to sign them.

Where are your Negro clubs going to get talent?

Answer: They aren't.

Where are your Negro clubs going to get fans?

Answer: They aren't.

The writer then gave the suggestion, "which is a good one, but which probably won't be used," to integrate the Negro Leagues with white players. The author expressed a desire to see the Kansas City Monarchs hire players for their talent and not their skin color. A team composed of the best possible talent, whether black or white or Latino, would help the Negro Leagues progress and spark attendance.

There you have my suggestion. As long as you retain the outmoded all-Negro League composed of all-Negro teams, you'll contribute to the popular fallacy among us whites that all Negro baseball players are clowns and not to be taken seriously.<sup>34</sup>

The author of the letter seemed unaware that Johnson had already suggested such an idea to Negro League owners a year ago. From this it appears the well-known sports writer didn't always read the *Call*. But at least both the writer and Johnson agreed that an all-colored team was just as Jim Crow in nature as an all-white team.

## **Loyalty Not A Problem For White Press**

But until the Monarchs left Kansas City in the mid 1950s, Johnson, who never publicly responded to the letter, tried to balance his loyalty between black players in the Major Leagues and the black-owned Negro Leagues. Thus Johnson's columns on urging black fans to come see the Monarchs play and the paper's steady coverage on the Major Leagues only served to contradict and confuse the reader.

The *Star/Times* didn't have this problem of split loyalty. They didn't have the same historical attachment and concern for the Negro Leagues as the black press did. So while McBride conducted his usual pre-season interview with one of the Monarchs' owners, the white paper made no mention of how the team or league was doing financially as they faced the future. Neither did the paper indicate a loss of fan interest in the Negro Leagues. To the mainstream reader, the Monarchs appeared to be operating as normal.<sup>35</sup>

So as the white Kansas City paper eliminated coverage of black baseball's underlining problems. The *Star/Times'* coverage remained on game stories. In the month June 1949, the white daily included short stories on the Monarchs' road games in towns such as Atchison and Wichita, Kansas; Grand Island and Omaha, Nebraska; Buffalo, New York; Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Oklahoma.<sup>36</sup> While these stories were more like blurbs, each no longer than four paragraphs with no accompanying box score, the white paper still coordinated and pooled together resources to keep track of the Monarchs on the road. The white paper also covered four home games with a preview of each game the day before and recognized that the outstanding play of the Monarchs young players "has attracted Major League scouts to the games."<sup>37</sup> The paper also kept track of the different Monarchs' players signed by big-league clubs, such as outfielder Bob Thurman's chance



of making the New York Yankees ball club, the signing of pitcher Booker McDaniel to a minor league squad in Los Angeles, as well as the signing of Henry Thompson to the New York Giants.<sup>38</sup>

The white paper's coverage of the Monarchs during June 1949 was more than what can be said for the *Call's* coverage. During the same span, the black paper did not cover one of the Monarchs' contests, home or away. During the whole month, the *Call* concentrated on the black Major League players, keeping track of their individual statistics, as well as the pennant chances for each of those teams with black ball players. The paper's shift fell in line with its attempts to promote democracy. The Major Leagues represented that promised equality preached by politicians. The continuation of black baseball, though, meant segregation was still acceptable in the culture, which was a message the *Call* tried to avoid.

### ***Call* Wants Jim Crow Out of Black Baseball**

But by this point the *Call* seemed disinterested in the Monarchs or disinclined to promote what black baseball represented, mainly because the league did not fit democratic ideals. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, Johnson suggested in 1947 that the attempts of Negro League officials to move forward as a separate institution in a changed and modernized America would prove to be hypocritical and counterproductive.

While owners and writers tossed the blame around, Johnson felt the contention did not offer solutions to the real problem of the Negro Leagues—the problem of non-competitive, non-democratic play. Beyond just preparing African Americans for the Majors, Johnson expected the Negro League owners to produce teams that housed Major-League caliber players.<sup>39</sup>

Johnson also continued to argue that integration of the colored game was the only way to revive the leagues from its downward spiral. While he cautioned that such an attempt may cause a few wrinkles, Johnson pointed to the examples already set by Major-League and minor-league clubs: “Such a democratic lineup would increase the patronage of the club that could and would play baseball. And in addition it would give fans and Major League scouts now attending a little more variety. The Negro game shouldn’t be the only one left with a color line.”<sup>40</sup>

The paper eventually pushed Johnson’s idea into a campaign “to drive old Jim Crow out of Negro baseball.”<sup>41</sup> Johnson shared his thoughts with leading managers and editors at the *Call*, who recognized democracy had made more progress in sports than in any other institution. They also noticed how integration in major sports like baseball, basketball, and football had created a stronger, more fervent fan base. It seemed quite obvious to them that for the Negro Leagues to progress or survive, the next decade team owners needed to follow democracy’s example.

Johnson presented Dowdal H. Davis, general manager of the *Call*, with his idea, and Davis quickly became a major ringleader in the campaign. With his numerous civic duties, Davis was a leader in the African American community. Having gained a love of sports from his high school and college playing days, Davis had a particular interest in the topic of Negro League integration. Davis would also later fill in as a guest columnist and sportswriter when Johnson was out sick.<sup>42</sup>

In a column on the sports page, Davis wrote that as talented black ballplayers are absorbed by the Major Leagues, Negro baseball will become a thing of the past. He also stated that only when the Negro Leagues integrate, bringing in the best possible players black or white, and remove the word “Negro” from its title, will Major League executives

consider them as organized clubs and feel inclined to use the teams as another form of a minor league training grounds.<sup>43</sup>

The following week, Davis and Johnson brought the new fight against segregation to the front page in the paper's city edition. The black paper never fought for Major League integration on page one of any of its editions. Neither did the Monarchs 1942 Negro World Series victory make the paper's front facade. Certainly having Davis onboard the campaign helped Johnson to push the topic to the forefront; however, other editors, such as assistant editor Lucile Bluford and chief editor Chester A. Franklin, must have approved and sacrificed the needed space for such an outlandish protest to be placed on the front cover.

In side-by-side columns, Davis and Johnson reiterated the reasons democracy needed to come to black baseball. Johnson indicated that with declining attendance figures and financially failing teams, the Negro Leagues stood at a crossroad. The leagues two options were to either "remain color tight and dwindle into a pitiful little non-entity, or it can liberalize and give every worthy player an opportunity without discrimination."<sup>44</sup>

In a broad-sheet long and two-column width editorial, Davis outlined why the *Call* believed Negro baseball should integrate. Mainly, Davis made the argument that an all-black team is no different than an all-white team. Davis and Johnson also employed some of the same tactics used by the black press in the fight for integration of the Major Leagues. For instance, the black press made it repeatedly known that the fans were ready for democracy in baseball, but Major Leagues owners were not. This became more evident when Major League Commissioner Keneshaw "Mountain" Landis declared a pseudo color barrier existing among owners. Davis applied a similar argument to the

color barrier of the Negro Leagues. Fans were ready, Davis declared, but black team owners remained reluctant to let go of old traditions:

The handwriting is all over the wall in letters 40 feet high. It says that the average American fan is just a normal decent guy who likes good baseball and wants to see his team win. And he isn't especially concerned about the color of the fellow who pokes one over the fence in the last of the ninth, with the score tied. In short, the average American fan—Negro or white—is no longer interested in Jim Crow baseball—Negro or white.

Does that mean the death of such teams as the Kansas City Monarchs or the Chicago American Giants or the Cleveland Buckeyes? Not at all! It simply means that democracy must come to so-called “Negro” baseball just as it has to the Major Leagues. It is not only the logical thing to do but it is also just plain good business.<sup>45</sup>

The *Call* believed plenty of white players would love a chance to play for the Monarchs or the Chicago American Giants, and black fans want the Negro Leagues to mirror the Major Leagues in all aspects. The paper also believed the hypocrisy that existed in the Negro Leagues had become a sore spot on sports scene. Just years ago, players on black teams complained against the color-barrier that existed in the Majors, yet as those barriers collapsed they did not penalize themselves for its own “color-locked policy.”

Years ago, the *Call* ignored the fight for Major League integration. Now it lead out in condemning the guidelines of the very black business they promoted for nearly thirty years and seemed content to fight against the color barrier in the colored leagues “until any American players can have the right to try for and hold a place on any team and not face barriers just because he happened to be born with different color of skin or texture of hair.”<sup>46</sup>

The *Call* pushed the issue through its editorial pages the next week and asked the Monarchs to lead out by being the first Negro team to sign a promising white player.

“How about it Monarchs, can’t we get the movement started?”<sup>47</sup>

While most of the *Call*’s readership came from the locals, about a fourth of the paper’s circulation was distributed nationally, especially in areas of strong African American populations, like Chicago, Indianapolis, Memphis, and New York. Other black sportswriters, including those out west in Los Angeles, picked up on this idea. A.S.

“Doc” Young, brilliant writer of *Los Angeles Sentinel* and later on with *Jet* and *Ebony* magazine, was opposed to kicking the Negro Leagues while they were down. However, he agreed that something needed to be done to improve the game. “Admittedly, Negro baseball represents segregated living.... Now that democracy has hit Organized Baseball, why doesn’t Negro baseball move for its betterment on all levels and become democratic, too?”<sup>48</sup>

### **Signed White Players Never Materialize**

Before the end of February, the *Call*’s outcries had paid off. Dr. J. B. Martin, owner of the rival Chicago American Giants and also current president of the Negro Leagues announced the addition of a white player to the Giants club, and spoke of the possibility of another being signed. Martin told Johnson in a telephone interview for a story that made the front page, that he had instructed Giants manager, Winfry Welch, to tryout players without regard to color. In the process, Martin signed a promising white player that would travel with the team to spring training in the Southern states.<sup>49</sup>

Martin reminded Johnson that his team’s signing of a white player was not the first time an owner tried to integrate the Negro Leagues. Back in 1946, with Robinson

headed to the Dodger's farm hand in Montreal, the Cleveland Buckeyes signed a white pitcher named Eddie Klep. From Erie, Pennsylvania, Klep played for a semipro local all-star team in 1945. A left-hander, Klep threw three strong innings in a game against the Negro Leagues Cleveland Buckeyes. Cleveland owner Ernest P. Wright Sr., fashioning himself as a black Branch Rickey, agreed to take Klep with the team to spring training in March. On parallel with the discrimination Robinson faced, Klep was forced out the lineup during a spring training game in Birmingham, Alabama, when police took him off the bench, made him change into civilian clothes, and sit in the "white" stands away from his team. But Klep's similarities with Robinson stop there. After pitching in three games, Klep was considered a disappointment, released, and later played for the Rockview (Penn.) State Prison baseball team, spending time in the jail for theft, drunkenness, fornication, and adultery.<sup>50</sup>

Martin ensured Johnson that the white player signed by the Giants won't have to deal with the same racial tensions as Klep did, simple because of the great reaction by white fans to the play of African Americans in the Major Leagues, with most of these teams spending spring training in the Southern states. However, the white players signed by the Giants never made it out of spring training and onto the club's opening day roster.<sup>51</sup>

Johnson, though, was not shy about taking the credit for Martin's willingness to heed the *Call's* campaign. He viewed Martin's action as a way to free black baseball from "a death struggle." After all, fan interest had dropped all over the country for segregated sports. The following week, Johnson praised Martin for being such a great leader, for having the courage to take a step toward democracy, and for setting the example to other team owners. Johnson, though, later criticized the other team owners,

which included the Monarchs' Baird, for not following Chicago's example as spring training started with only the Giants trying out a white player.<sup>52</sup>

Johnson also made it clear that the paper is not out to hinder the Negro Leagues, but to help them progress. He reiterated how the paper had backed and fought for the Negro Leagues from the beginning. The *Call* also battled against the federal government when the Monarchs and other black teams lost its busses at the start of World War II. However, Johnson never mentioned the paper putting up a fight for Major League integration. Perhaps that fight did not serve the Negro Leagues. Perhaps, Johnson didn't mention it because he very well knew that the *Call* was not a strong participant.<sup>53</sup>

### **Black or White Segregation Is A Crime**

The *Call* treated segregation in the Negro Leagues as a crime against democracy. Consequently, at the same time the black paper was campaigning for Negro League integration, it also was fighting hard against black-on-black crime. Negroes committed forty-one of the sixty-four murders recorded in Kansas City in 1948. A week after the *Call* began the crusade, blacks were involved in three murders, an average of one every other day. Four black-on-black crimes occurred in January alone. The paper asked leaders of black communities to form a protest and asked for readers to write in with possible reasons and solutions to the crime.<sup>54</sup>

Letters poured into the paper's office at 18th and Woodland. Readers blamed liquor, non-cooperation with police officers by blacks, accessibility of guns, concealed weapons, poor parenting, and lack of church attendance.<sup>55</sup> Police lieutenant Charles Welch wrote in adding that most of the blacks booked at the Kansas City police station

come from broken homes where there are single parents or people raising children out of wedlock.<sup>56</sup>

The *Call* also welcomed the opinion of readers with regards to their campaign for the integration of the Negro Leagues. However, from an analysis of the newspaper and Johnson's columns, there was no indication of readers writing in and responding to the issue.

Just as the *Call* claimed success with its Negro League integration campaign, when the Giants signed a white player to take to spring training, the black paper also credited itself with success when there was not one black crime committed in March 1949.<sup>57</sup> The *Call* tried to encourage the African American community to repeat that same feat in April. In fact, the *Call* wanted the community to beat the record of six straight weeks without a black-on-black crime—a record set twice in 1945.<sup>58</sup> However, the paper's efforts were to no avail as the “calm and peace of the community was broken by a double slaying....”<sup>59</sup>

Following the slayings, the black paper redoubled its efforts to stop black-on-black murders.<sup>60</sup> In doing so, the paper's campaign for Negro League integration got pushed aside. Johnson never broached the subject again till late September. By this time, the black press conceded that there was no stopping the downfall of the Negro Leagues. The *Call* gave up its short fight for integration of black baseball, a campaign the paper believed would help the Negro Leagues survive. White players signed by the Giants, however, never stayed on, giving other owners further reason to stay away from the integration experiment.



## **Negro Leagues Limp Along**

But by this point in history, Johnson wrote, African Americans were not drawn to anything that did not practice democracy, and the strictly all black league was viewed as being an antique of the yesterdays. While some sportswriters and fans predicted that a Major League team would some day consist of entirely black players, Johnson inwardly hoped that day would never come. The paper had voiced a disinterest in all-blacks teams, and its own interest in sports that reflected democracy by the way it reduced its coverage of the Monarchs. Yet the paper seemed conflicted and did not want to totally abandon or offer too much criticism toward the Negro Leagues. At the end of the season, Johnson continued to state the paper's loyalty to bring readers highlights of the colored game and stand by the league executives until they are convinced of the value of democracy.<sup>61</sup>

While readers did not write in about the campaign to make Negro Baseball democratic, loyal fans did write in with disgust when they found out that the Monarchs had conceded the western half of the league pennant to its rival, the Chicago American Giants. Johnson and the fans wonder why the Monarchs would just hand over a chance of winning another world series and further adding to its reputation as the best team in black baseball. Monarch owner Tom Baird explained the team had nowhere to play for the pennant. Scheduling a playoff series with the Giants proved problematic especially since they shared the Municipal Stadium with the Kansas City Blues, who were also in a fight for a playoff spot in the American Association.

The Monarchs have always shared the stadium, so this problem was not new to Baird. When Baird owned the team with Wilkinson, the two owners always seemed to book games in a neighboring city or across the river in Kansas when a scheduling conflict with the Blues arose. The fact that Baird could not resolve the conflict in some other

matter showed how weakened the Monarchs upper offices had become with the departure of Wilkinson. This also pointed to why Rube Foster consented to having Wilkinson as the Monarchs owner, even though Foster originally wanted the Negro Leagues to be a strictly black-run and black-owned business. Wilkinson had connections in the Midwestern United States that no other owner had. His reputation superseded Baird's in many ways.

The lack of ideas and leadership had affected the entire Negro Leagues by this point. Johnson noted how the owners had not developed any new business strategies after Major League integration: "Other than a few window cards and for-free publicity in newspapers, they are trying to do business in the same old way at the same old stand." Other sports writers such as Russ Cowans of the *Defender* offered similar criticisms against the owners.<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps it wasn't just a matter of not having Wilkinson around to swing deals with ballpark owners. As has been mentioned before, by this point every Negro team was struggling to balance their respective checkbooks. Baird could very well not afford the expenses or face more losses from downed attendance. The latter seems more factual. Even though their reputation remained, the Monarchs had lost their luster. At one point, any ballpark owner welcomed the team with open arms, because the Monarchs attracted big crowds and brought in big money. The Monarchs, more than any other club, built and cultivated a close relationship with the local black community. "Not surprisingly, the team's well-organized and active Booster's club was the envy of every team, enabling the Monarchs' attendance to remain strong."

The Monarchs certainly still attracted big opening day crowds, however fan attendance at other games dropped below 4,000. As the Negro Leagues' fan base slipped, organized baseball teams that shared stadiums with black teams became less inclined to

risk financial losses by scheduling a Negro League baseball game. They instead looked to replace them with more profitable events, such as rodeos, horse shows, boxing matches, high school sports, and rallies. Since Negro League officials did little in the way of progressing beyond reliance of these shared stadiums, they had to rely on the mercy of ballpark owners, and as the patronage dropped so did the opportunities to rent the stadium.<sup>63</sup>

So while Johnson may have said “there is nothing wrong with the Monarchs as a ball club” the team limped into the next decade with young, inexperienced players. As far as the Monarchs letting the Giants have the pennant without a fight? Johnson stated that the most important contribution the Monarchs are making at this point was its advancement of players to the Major Leagues and not its collection of trophies.<sup>64</sup>

This shift in emphasis toward the development of players fit to sell to the Majors or upper-level minor leagues offered a solution to regaining lost revenues, and becomes the new focus of Johnson at the *Call* in the coming years. Throughout the remaining years studied in this paper, the sports editor frequently noted how the Monarchs had sent more players into organized baseball than any other Negro club, and how Baird “found out that there is gold” in developing young talented players. In 1949 the Monarchs’ gate income dropped nearly \$25,000 from the previous year. However, the Monarchs sold four youngsters to Major League teams—Frank Barnes and Elston Howard to the Yankees, Gene Baker to the Cubs, and pitcher Gene Richardson to the Boston Braves. Baird collected nearly \$22,000 from the player sales to nearly equal its gate receipt losses and to erase a \$1,599.43 operating loss.<sup>65</sup>

Amid its objective coverage of the Monarchs, more evidence of the *Star/Times* interest in and knowledge of the Negro Leagues appeared. Sportswriters at the white

paper undoubtedly read the *Call* to stay informed of the Monarchs circumstances. The black paper continued to fight for democracy and took its fight against the very league it once gave priority treatment. The goal of the Monarchs was not to win championships anymore, the *Call* declared, but to feed players into the Major League's growing democratic system. As attendance figures continued to spiral, the Monarchs adopted this new operating strategy, and black players across the country "learned that the shortest distance to the major leagues is through the Monarchs."<sup>66</sup>

## CHAPTER SEVEN: A STRUGGLING BLACK BUSINESS, 1950-1953

### Several Teams Go Belly Up

In the 1950s, black sportswriters knew the Negro Leagues teetered on the brink of bankruptcy after one of its highly popular teams collapsed. After a string of years with poor attendance figures, the great Chicago American Giants operated by Dr. J.B. Martin, who doubled as president of the Negro Leagues, sold the team for \$50,000. On top of that, the Philadelphia Stars were sold, as were the Houston Eagles, formerly the Newark Eagles, to Nashville. Despite all this, club owners came out of their winter meetings optimistic for the upcoming decade. While none of the owners were expecting the plush attendance of the war years to return, Martin expected future financial success and believed black baseball fans would prove him correct.<sup>1</sup>

Eight Negro League teams started out in the 1951 season. In the first half, the Monarchs played only three games at home, which did not provide much chance for the team to take advantage of home attendance and gate receipts. John I. Johnson, though, was surprised that the Negro Leagues were still going forward at all. Black sportswriters had been predicting since 1947 that the Negro Leagues were badly wounded, if not dead. Johnson at times fought back the urge of writing black baseball off in an obituary. As the years past, clouds of uncertainty continued to gather and hover over the future of the black business with signs of washout imminent. The league shrunk to six teams in 1952, then to four in 1953. The New Orleans Eagles and Baltimore Elite Giants bowed out. Plus, the Birmingham Barons were on the selling block and eventually picked up by a businessman in Nashville for the measly sum of \$2,000.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Johnson noted the resolve of the owners to maintain the Negro Leagues as it plugged along with fewer teams, fewer fans, and inadequate publicity. In 1954 the loop expanded its dying market from four teams back to six, adding teams in Detroit and in Louisville, with Ted Raspberry of Grand Rapids, Michigan, owning the Detroit squad. In the face of “the baseball boneyard...piled high with the remains of hundreds of clubs and dozens of leagues in recent years,” the expansion deserved praise, Johnson wrote, as league officials showed their determination to make black baseball work in what has become a non-segregated sport.<sup>3</sup>

Despite giving the Negro Leagues a bleak forecast, Johnson indicated that his loyalty kept him pointing back to the Monarchs’ winning-tradition. He believed the Negro League fans had the same type of loyalty as he did. So even when baseball segregation ended in Kansas City, with the New York Yankees signing Vic Powers to play for its minor league affiliate, the Blues, in 1951, Johnson was not worried about fans deserting the Monarchs for the minor league team. Neither was he concerned when three years later, the St. Louis Cardinals of the Major Leagues signed its first Negro recruit in Tom Alston from the minor league San Diego Padres of the Pacific Coast.<sup>4</sup>

Blacks fans swear by the Monarchs, Johnson wrote. Black fans also know the Blues have never compared to the magical talent possessed by the players on the hometown black team. The Monarchs play with more determination, style, and dash; “they are to Negro baseball what the Yanks are to white baseball, the best there is year in and year out.” Fans would be foolish to substitute minor league baseball for the Monarchs, Johnson concluded.<sup>5</sup>

However, Johnson’s occasional reminders of the Monarchs’ greatness masked his own disloyalty and the omission of comprehensive coverage of the team. In 1950, the

paper tried to refocus its efforts on promoting the Monarchs. The *Call* covered home games with a similar intensity found in 1947, which included full box scores and weekly Negro League statistics and standings. While the refocus seemed to be attempt to show the paper's returned loyalty for the black game, it all came a little too late. But 1950 was more of exception than the rule for the paper's coverage of the team in the 1950s.<sup>6</sup>

As it had in 1948, the *Call's* coverage of the Monarchs in the remaining years slipped to second place and sometimes third place in the sports section. The Monarchs' first game of the 1951 season was placed below a story about Jackie Robinson. On the next page, the *Call* allowed an Associated Negro Press writer to type up an overview of the team and its players. Normally, this type of story would flow from the pens of the *Call's* sports editor, who would attend the Monarchs' spring training drills to obtain such a report.<sup>7</sup>

### **Majors League Baseball Takes Up Space**

By 1950s, though, the *Call's* coverage of spring training was not focused on the Monarchs, but on the Major League teams fielding colored players. Talk of the National league and American league in the *Call* referred to Major League baseball and not the Negro Leagues as it once did. On one front page of the *Call* in 1953 appeared four of the five colored players in the lineup for the Milwaukee Braves. Later that year, the Braves once again appeared on the front page after their opening day victory over the Cincinnati Reds, an all-white team.<sup>8</sup>

The *Call* also continued to follow Robinson. This time the veteran Robinson was trying to out battle rookie Jim "Junior" Gilliam for the second base position. Gilliam ended up outshining Robinson. Besides the Braves and Dodgers, the *Call* also printed

spring training reports on the New York Giants, who featured Willie Mays, Hank Thompson, and Monte Irvin. The black paper also reported on the New York Yankees, who had Vic Power and Elston Howard playing well in spring training and as major contributors to the club's farmhand team, the Kansas City Blues. As these latter two players turned into standout players for the Blues, black fans in the city displayed the same type of loyalty Johnson had for the Monarchs, proving him wrong. More African Americans showed up for Blues' games during the 1950s, taking away from the Monarchs' attendance figures. Even though the Blues and the Monarchs never played at home during the same time, blacks poured their profits into the Blues leaving no change left to buy Monarchs' tickets.<sup>9</sup>

Despite that an average of 17,000 fans (18,000 in 1950; 18,000 in 1951; 12,039 in 1952; and 20,000 in 1953) packed into Blues stadium to watch the Monarchs' home openers between 1950 and 1953. Johnson chalked up the record attendance figures for opening day to loyalty and "Civic Pride." This type of excitement for baseball did not exist in other cities, Johnson wrote as he compared the Monarchs' attendance figures to that of teams in the America Association, the region's minor league, and the rest of the Negro Leagues. Kansas City just continued to be a black baseball-loving town, he concluded.<sup>10</sup>

That same type of love did not transfer to the *Call's* sports page, though. Lack of photos drowned out the black paper's coverage of the Monarchs' home openers in the 1950s. In fact, not one photograph of the home opening events, crowd, and players appeared in the paper. Though its game preview stories on the home opening event still received the top headline in the sports section and a side column from Johnson, the coverage was lacking from the plush war years. Photographs of Monarch players in the



sports section throughout the season were reduced to thumbnails, meanwhile three-column wide photos of Luke Easter of the Major League Cleveland Indians and other “tan” Major Leaguers overshadowed the rest of the sports page.<sup>11</sup> A large picture and story about Robinson took up three columns and half the sports page, distracting attention from the Monarchs’ 9-7 come from behind triumphant in its opening game against the Memphis Red Sox in 1951. Space in the paper obviously favored the Major Leagues and pointed fans in that direction.<sup>12</sup>

The decline in coverage of the Monarchs made it hard for fans to understand their continued significance. Fans also could not be expected to come to know or recognize key players, creating a fan-player disconnection. This was a barrier the Monarchs had strove to remove through its booster club, but without the black press on board, not even all the promotion by the boosters could help bring the community and the team together. Fans may have packed the stadium for the home openers, but afterward attendance figures quickly dropped to between 2,000 and 5,000 a game. While the *Call’s* lack of pictures on the Monarchs may of had to do with photographer availability, what is clear is an obvious lack of concern and promotion of the Monarchs.

In addition, local advertisers no longer bought space in the black paper to usher in the Monarchs’ season. Such advertisement, which usually took up two pages and appeared a day or two before the home opener, did not appear at all in the 1950s, showing that with a reduction in fanfare businesses wisely looked to spend their advertising dollars in more profitable ways.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout each season in the 1950s, Monarch games were usually placed on page two of the sports section, along with Negro American League standings and statistics. On the second page, Monarch game stories competed against other summer

sports, such as track and field, tennis, golf, and stories about black baseball players in the Majors.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, the content of the game stories on the Monarchs became more objective and less promotional, focusing more on outcomes and less on the feats of individual players. Sidebars to the game stories, especially home games, also became less frequent as did box scores. For the most part, achievements of black Major League ball players appeared on the first page of the sports section. A section of the sports first page was also boxed out to provide updated statistic of each “tan” player in the Majors. Pictures and captions of star performers, such as Robinson, Easter, Mays, Irvin, and others, always took up three columns and at least a third of the page.

Although, all the stories about black achievements in Major League baseball came from Associated Negro Press writers, the *Call* showed by placement and space assignments that it too, like the black baseball fans, had shifted attention away from the Monarchs and to the Major Leagues. Thus, the paper had abandoned its efforts to place focus back on the black team as they tried to do in 1950. By giving readers the Major League coverage they wanted, the *Call* was certainly doing the smartest thing to maintain a high circulation. And with this shift, Johnson went against his own words in which he stated many times that the paper would stand by and promote the Monarchs as the best team in Kansas City. From the coverage shown, it became pretty clear that the Monarchs had slid down the totem pole of importance in the pages of the *Call*.<sup>15</sup>

### **Bring Back the Good Ol’ Days**

Johnson also took a nostalgia approach when covering the post-integration Monarchs, expressing a longing for “the all-time greats” and not excitement over current players. In a column meant to preview the 1952 squad, Johnson couldn’t help but recall

“those titans of past: Doby Moore, Frank Duncan, Heavy Johnson, Newt Joseph, Newt Allen, Bullet Rogan, Rube Curry, John Donaldson, Sam Crawford, [Jose] Mendez, [Theodore] Anderson, [George] Carr, [Cristobel] Torrenti, [Hurley] McNair, [Lemuel] Hawkins, [James ‘Cool Papa’] Bell, Jay Bird (sic) Ray, [Eddie] Dwight, [Bill] Gistentainer (sic) [Gissentanter] and many more stalwarts who had helped to make the name ‘Monarchs’ respected and feared from coast to coast.”

As Johnson reminisced, new players took to the field for the Monarchs. They were young and less experienced, and perhaps the very reason why Johnson longed for the good ol’ days, when players came to the Monarchs not as youth, but as men who were married or at least old enough to vote. He called the new players “babies,” or “kids.” They were straight out of high school, eighteen and nineteen years old. For most it was their first experience away from home and manager Buck O’Neil was not only their manager but also a parental figure.<sup>16</sup>

But by this time the Monarchs were known among young black baseball players as “the club that offers Negro players the shortest jump to Major League baseball.” When he wrote about the Monarchs, Johnson constantly reminded readers that no other Negro League team had sent more players to the big leagues and upper minor leagues (thirty-one by 1954) than the Monarchs. For instance, in 1953 the Monarchs sent seven players to organized baseball, which proved to be the only feat Johnson raved about, even though the team finished first in the league with a 56-21 record. Monarchs who had graduated to the higher ranks were now scattered throughout the country from Texas to Cleveland, Chicago, and New York. In 1954 the entire buzz in the big leagues was about a pair of young stars in Ernie Banks and Gene Baker, who both played for the Monarchs in 1953.<sup>17</sup>

Also black and white fans were buzzing about the Milwaukee Braves new rookie phenom by the name of Henry “Hank” Aaron.<sup>18</sup>

Along with the number of players the Monarchs were sending into organized baseball, Johnson stated that the Monarchs, more than any other organization or group in town have been the prime ambassadors for Kansas City for the past thirty-one years, helping the city to stand out despite the Midwest shadow of hoodlums and gangsters.<sup>19</sup> Not even the Kansas City Blues, even with its attachment to the New York Yankees, could match the popularity of the Monarchs, Johnson continued. The Monarchs were known throughout the country for its superb play year after year. The crowds the team attracted, especially on opening day, gave Kansas City the reputation as being an excellent baseball town; a town with an unlimited supply of fans ready to “root for the home team.” To Johnson, the Monarchs had played a considerable role in preparing the City of Fountains to be allowed a Major League baseball club.<sup>20</sup>

### **East-West Game In Shambles**

As has been the case in the last few years, the black newspaper pinned the health of the Negro Leagues on fan turnout at the East-West All-Star game. Johnson wrote that the game and the league were once again looking in the face of death, and the fans held the rope that could save them from the gillateen. They can either support the black teams through attendance or watch it wither and die. Either way the responsibility of the Negro Leagues’ success or failure fell upon the fans. Like the many black churches, banks, and insurance companies, Negro baseball served a need that is not matched by any other organization, Johnson claimed. The need was to train future black players for the Majors and provide employment for blacks. Johnson continued by stating that no matter the

difficulty or the cost, the Negroes of this country must spilt their allegiance equally by helping black baseball stay afloat and cheering for black Major Leaguers. While they may find complete satisfaction in the events of the white world, they must remember to aid their own because no one else will do so.<sup>21</sup>

And certainly baseball fans showed flashes of support for the Negro Leagues. They crowded into Blues Stadium for the Monarchs' home openers in the early part of the 1950s, and two days prior to the 1952 all-star game, 25,000 fans showed up at Briggs Stadium in Detroit to watch the Monarchs and the Indianapolis Clowns split a double header. Event directors for the East-West game continued to set high predictions. Despite that, only 21,312 watched the game in 1951. The following year attendance dropped to 18,279. By 1953 and 1954, the turnout for the East-West classic hit a new low, with a mere 10,000 to 12,000 showing up for the contests.

Comiskey stadium, which could accommodate 50,000, was so sparse that stadium directors "didn't bother to open the second balcony. No one was there except the birds," Johnson wrote.<sup>22</sup> The vast stadium "was as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard and there was room for plenty bones anywhere in the lower grandstand," the *Call* sports editor added.<sup>23</sup> Big crowds, while expected by the event's coordinators, were nothing more than farfetched dreams. Once again feeling nostalgic, Johnson noted how black baseball fans no longer penned the game on their calendar, neither did they plan vacations to attend the game. Hotels in Chicago lay dormant when the black all-stars came to town. In the game's glory years, cars with different licenses from all over the nation rolled into town. But now Chicago no longer buzzed for the black contest. Once admitting that no amount of persuasion could change fans interest from the Majors back to the Negro Leagues,

Johnson now harshly blamed fans in Chicago for the game's deterioration and blamed their shifting loyalty to the "Major Leagues with its integrated personnel."

A great example of this shift was seen in 1953. Despite the wonderful play by Monarch middlemen Ernie Banks and Gene Baker, who rocked the Negro Leagues in 1952 and made Major League scouts drool, the Monarchs could barely draw a couple thousand to the ballpark. In 1953 both players suited up for the Chicago Cubs, and black fans became crazy about them, lining up to see them play wherever the Cubs traveled. Johnson said, when black fans failed to support their own businesses it almost seemed sinful in nature and tantamount to committing suicide.<sup>24</sup>

As Johnson wrote, the game, once hailed as the limelight of the Negro Leagues, was now "sick" and on its deathbed. By now it had become apparent that no Negro League team could survive in the same city as a Major League club. Lack of support starved the Chicago American Giants to death, as fans turned their attention toward the Chicago White Sox and Cubs. Now the same thing was happening to the East-West game. Nevertheless, Johnson argued for the necessity of the game. It needed to be kept alive for the young players who for years have dreamed of playing in Comiskey park as part of an all-star roster. In order to save the Negro League all-star game, Johnson felt it was high time for the game to be rotated to other cities in order to build a newer fan base.

25

Only the most obtusely blind can fail to see that the East-West game is definitely committing suicide in big, dirty Chicago, where the teeming thousands of Negro fans literally ignore the classic and leave it to the visitors to support.

The game is dying of stagnation because the interest of those who should be best able to give it support, the Chicagoans, has turned to other things and the visitors appear to have become tired of making an annual

pilgrimage to the same city to see the same things year after year.<sup>26</sup>

Negro League president Dr. J.B. Martin, though, thought the Negro pressmen were being a little too rash and jumping to conclusions too quickly. Instead, he thought the decision as to whether to move the game or rotate it to another city should be made by the fans.<sup>27</sup> Despite Martin's feelings, "every scribe in the press box at Comiskey park was set to write the obituary of the classic in the Windy City park and advocated in the strongest terms that the great game bid Old Chi goodbye as its annual meeting place."<sup>28</sup>

The problem with turning to the fans was there were very little of them left to chime in about the matter, and with the lack of publicity surrounding the event, Johnson was astonished any fans showed up to the park—how did they find out the time and date of the event, he wondered?<sup>29</sup>

### **White Press Avoids Bigger Issues**

However, the *Star/Times*, maintaining a subdued, objective tone while covering the Monarchs, continued to ignore the bigger problems. Perhaps the paper was complacent when it came to believing that the Monarchs were on the out. After all, close to 18,000 watched the Monarchs' home opener against the Memphis Red Sox in 1951 and another 20,000 came to watch the team's opening game against the Clowns in 1953. From this standpoint, the Monarchs seemed to be operating as usual, but white mainstream readers were certainly missing the great struggle the Monarchs and other Negro League teams faced. Past evidence indicates that the paper's sportswriters remained astute on the Monarchs' state of affairs by reading the *Call* and keeping track of the team, but its reporters failed to publicly report on the circumstances going on inside

the Negro Leagues. White fans who attended Monarch games currently and in the past, may not have fully realized how much the team was struggling to make ends meet, and thus there could be no rallying of support from the greater population. None of the sports columnists or editors at the white paper raised awareness concerning the leagues bleak future.

The *Times* fully covered the Monarchs' home opener and part of the pre-game festivities. In 1951, a *Star* photography was sent to the opening game, and the paper ran a series of action photos depicting the completion of a fast double play being turned by the Monarchs' shortstop and second baseman.<sup>30</sup> There was, however, a slight slip in coverage by the white paper in Ernest Mehl's first full year as sports editor. He had taken over C.E. McBride's position in 1950. Though a good friend to Johnson and a writer who had in the past shown respect and admiration for the Monarchs, Mehl said nothing about the team's financial strains. Instead, Mehl's first column on the team took a similar nostalgia approach that Johnson had used. Mehl wrote a column on Frank Duncan, a former Monarch catcher back in the 1920s who also managed the Monarchs to the 1942 Negro World Series title.<sup>31</sup>

Also, unlike McBride, Mehl did not produce spring training reports on the team through an interview with Monarchs' owner Tom Baird. For instance in 1950, McBride produced two columns about past and future Monarchs prior to spring training. He got up close and personal with Satchel Paige (recently released from the Cleveland Indians because he refused to take a pay cut) and J.L. Wilkinson, and did his regularly pre-season check up column with Baird.

In the former column, McBride sat down in Paige's Missouri home with the old pitcher and Wilkinson. Together, Wilkinson and Paige talked about different aspects of



the game. McBride also provided an intimate visual of Paige at home, taking care of his two baby girls. “The youngest, 6 months, was lying, tummy down, on Satchel’s lap and the famous Negro pitcher kept pulling a covering down around her bare feet.” McBride didn’t seem to have much of a direction to this column, but he focused in on Paige’s pitching performances and style. When directly quoting Paige, McBride tried to capture the Alabaman’s Southern accent, which obviously made it apparent who was talking when the black pitcher was quoted along side Wilkinson, Paige’s former boss. When McBride asked Paige whether the pitcher had started training or not, the sports editor quoted Paige as saying, “Not yet. Ah’ll start soon. Ah’ll do some runnin’ for my legs first. Later Ah’ll start throwin’. Then Ah’ll take some baths here and over to Excelsior Springs and maybe down at Hot Springs. Then Ah’ll be ready.”<sup>32</sup>

McBride’s interview with Baird focused on the Monarchs’ upcoming season. This type of column with the team owner occurred last year as well, and it regularly appeared in other years during the course of this study. As before, McBride consulted no players or even O’Neil for the column. And as before, McBride seemed most comfortable getting information from the Monarchs’ white team owner.

As with other columns, Baird spoke about the players with the most talent. He also felt a handful would make it to the big leagues, namely William Serrell, Curtis Roberts, Joe Williams, and outfielder Elston Howard. Of those, Roberts, a second baseman, and Howard made it to the Major Leagues. Roberts played professionally for the Pittsburgh Pirates from 1954 to 1956. Midway through the 1950 season, the *Star* reported that the New York Yankees purchased Howard from the Monarchs.<sup>33</sup> Howard would later become the first black player on the Yankees roster in 1955. Baird also brought to McBride’s attention the Monarchs’ farm club, “known as the Kansas City

Monarch Travelers,” which was being managed by James “Cool Papa” Bell, one of the all-time great outfielders in Negro baseball and later inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1974.

Baird’s greatest emphasis, though, was on how young black players were drawn to the Monarchs of the Negro Leagues in much the same way white aspiring athletes looked to the Yankees in the Major Leagues:

Some of our scouts tell me that Negro high school boys, who play baseball, train their sights on the Monarchs just like the white kids do on the New York Yankees. It’s sure good to hear that our club has a reputation like that.<sup>34</sup>

Also unlike McBride who used the paper’s Associated Press wire service to keep tabs on the Negro team while it jumped from one city to the next, Mehl refused to use the service for such means.<sup>35</sup> The Monarchs, like most every other Negro team, were barnstorming more than usual by this time, which may have added to the difficulty of covering them on the road. However, during the month of August in 1951, the Monarchs played two series at home, with several scheduled road games. The white paper only covered those couple of home games, abandoning resources to keep track of the team on the road.<sup>36</sup>

The lack of concern from the white daily once again showed the importance of looking at the black press to get a complete understanding of the situations and struggles black athletes and black baseball teams faced at the start of a new decade. Without the attention from the black press in Kansas City, the issues facing the Monarchs would never have been heard.

## Poor Publicity From Negro League Officials

After the minuscule showings at the East-West games, Negro League officials remained silent toward the black press who demanded reform and better organization.<sup>37</sup> After the 1951 All-Star game, the Monarchs played only a handful of games, and then barnstormed with the Indianapolis Clowns. The *Call* billed the exhibition contests between the two teams as being equivalent to a Negro League World Series. The *Call* reported that a four-game contest was to be played at Blues stadium in Kansas City. Special attractions were made, including drills and other demonstrations from a military marching band. However, those contests were rained out, and when the teams hit the road for dryer country, the *Call* didn't bother to provide the readers with coverage of the contests.<sup>38</sup>

Part of the reason for the lack of road coverage stemmed from the lack of press releases, information, and other publicity coming from the Negro League offices to help the black press keep up with the black teams. This "paucity of publicity" upset Johnson and black sportswriters countrywide, whose newspapers lacked the resources to cover the team on a daily basis and were forced to rely heavily on club-issued press releases.<sup>39</sup>

During the 1920s and into the 1940s the paper relied heavily on the game reports provided by the Monarchs' press secretary, Quincy J. Gilmore. While little is known about Gilmore's history, he was a one-man public relations tactician for the Monarchs for more than two decades. He would write game stories when the Monarchs were on the road, and wire them in for the *Call*. Beyond that he would also provide the paper with news about special events. Working closely with the *Call's* different sports editors, Gilmore developed a targeted message for *Call* readers, whom he believed wanted to support a professional African American team. Gilmore's efforts tried to promote the

Monarchs to that level and thus dispel whites' stereotype of black baseball players as being nothing more than circus clowns. This type of relationship underlined the close connection Negro League teams had with the local black press during pre-integration years.<sup>40</sup>

So while Johnson criticized the circuit's headquarters for lack of publicity in the 1950s, he was really missing the contributions made by Gilmore, who passed away between 1946 and 1948. It is of interest to note that if Gilmore did indeed pass away in 1948, it was the same year Wilkinson stepped away from the team and the same year the *Call's* coverage dramatically shifted toward the black Major Leaguers. Wilkinson originally hired Gilmore, who developed a reputation of working well with the black community. It seems Baird did not have the same business sense or simply lacked the funds to hire a press secretary as capable and as respected as Gilmore was.<sup>41</sup>

With no one wiring in copy, the *Call's* coverage of the Monarchs' road games and barnstorming suffered. Even when the Monarchs and Clowns once again attracted more than 20,000 to Briggs Stadium in Detroit, the Monarchs still received blurb treatment in the *Call*.<sup>42</sup> In comparison, the paper found adequate and more easily obtainable copy coming from Major League teams. For this Johnson complained in 1952 that "Negro baseball is probably the only going concern that has never seen the wisdom of utilizing qualified publicity agents. Just anybody can write their...copy and judging from the kind of releases that are usually received, just anybody does."<sup>43</sup>

Johnson also claimed that neither league officials nor individual team owners did anything to promote their teams through press releases or information to the black press.<sup>44</sup> Black baseball fans also backed up Johnson's argument as they noticed how the Major Leagues advertise and promote players like Baker, Banks, and Robinson. In the

Negro Leagues the same type of publicity is nonexistent and as result fans do not know the athletes, and less fans are showing up to the ballpark. Without a player-fan connection, fans don't care, argued Johnson.<sup>45</sup> Before integration, black baseball players were an integral part of the local black community, stated Frank Young in the *Chicago Defender*: "Fans knew most of those players intimately...could tell all about their lives, where they came from, and what their batting and fielding averages were at the time." But now, the best black ball players stayed in the Negro Leagues for two or three years tops, before they moved up to the Majors or minor leagues. With integration, the Negro Leagues became a mere stepping-stone toward organized baseball, and the players became nothing more than "passersby."<sup>46</sup>

Johnson's complaints came after Young and the *Pittsburgh Courier's* Wendell Smith made similar statements in 1947 about Negro Leagues' failure to distribute information to the black papers. Both called out team owners for being too quick to blame integration as the cause for the drop in attendance, overlooking their own inability to distribute and promote the Negro Leagues.<sup>47</sup> By the late 1940s and certainly into the 1950s, financial constraints greatly hampered owners in adequately informing fans and writers. However, for most black journalists, the money issue was less of a problem when compared to the lack of cooperation from league officials and teams. If anything, the black writers felt they were being slighted by industry leaders when compared to the abundant news provided about Major League trades, contacts, statistics, and game results. "With the exception of Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson, most league players were under publicized by owners, a ploy that, according to Joe Bostic, was a conscious decision to keep potential salary demands in check."<sup>48</sup>

Johnson's arguments were certainly not the first time the sports editor showed signs of disloyalty to the Negro League owners. He felt the Negro Leagues, like any other black institution, should not expect black journalists to accept a passive role as nothing but faithful endorsers of everything black-owned, when obvious problems existed within such organizations. Back in 1946, Johnson implored league owners to get themselves organized after Branch Rickey signed Robinson in 1945 with no return investment for the Monarchs. Throughout the years, he repeatedly blamed owners for not putting together competitive teams that were good enough to attract crowds the same way the Major Leagues did. And then there was his whole short-lived campaign attempt to integrate the Negro Leagues, which he continued to push on a more subdued level.

### **Negro Leagues Still Needed, White Players Welcome**

While Martin also admitted disappointment of the fan response to the East-West classic, he was more saddened by how "a Negro League still is necessary to insure the colored player opportunities to practice the fundamentals of baseball and to play every day. There were too many stories in the past year of anti-Negro sentiment in the South. Too many minor leagues still do not want colored players.... Therefore the NAL once more will have to operate in 1954. So right there is my pledge that the NAL will work to operate as a bigger, and better loop next year, and it will bring to you better baseball than in the past."<sup>49</sup>

Negro baseball was certainly not an ideal fit in a democratic world, Johnson wrote, and was about as ridiculous as a Irish, German, or even a Dutch baseball league. While such a statement reverts back to the *Call's* Negro League integration campaign, by now Johnson seemed rather conflicted on where he exactly stood on the issue. Johnson

also stated that until the ideal society came into existence, the Negro Leagues would still be valuable and necessary to give future black ball players a chance. Those now playing in the Majors had a least one year of training in the Negro Leagues or on a similar semi-pro club. To date, no Negro player had been signed by a Major League club out of college or high school. And until that day arrived, there would be a need for black baseball and for black baseball fans, Johnson concluded.<sup>50</sup>

So while the reason for the existence of Negro baseball continued to be questioned by the *Call*, Johnson provided the answers to his own internal battle. Further evidence of the *Call's* inward wrestle was shown when it provided space for several columns by Martin, president of the Negro American League. In these editorials, Martin consistently brought up reasons for the existence of the Negro Leagues. His best answer was player development. Performances of those who had jumped from the Negro Leagues to “organized baseball” had been better than those players who have not come through the black baseball ranks. Another reason was the continued segregation practices that existed in the south and the fact that not all of the 16 Major League teams had hired a black player.<sup>51</sup> By 1953 only six teams carried Negro athletes. That meant ten teams or a majority of pro baseball teams were still without a colored player in their regular day lineup. While some had colored players developing in the minor leagues, other teams such as the St. Louis Cardinals, Boston Red Sox, Detroit Tigers, and Pittsburgh Pirates, who had Rickey as their head official, had no colored prospects forthcoming.<sup>52</sup> In fact, the six teams featuring black players have been the same six teams to do so in the last three seasons. For Martin this reason alone was considerable evidence for the existence and continuance of the black baseball squads: “In other words, the color line has not been cracked nearly as much in baseball as you might be led to believe.”<sup>53</sup>

Martin also defended questions about whether the Negro Leagues were just a relic of the Jim Crow era. These questions started to come forward more frequently in the 1950s, not only as a result of the many black players in the Major Leagues, but also because Major League teams with black players had successfully played spring training games in the South without incident, and some minor league loops in the land of Dixie started allowing black players to compete on their clubs. In Georgia, for instance, the state loosened its segregation laws to allow black and whites to compete in baseball together.<sup>54</sup>

With integration happening in every part of the country, some black journalists, including Johnson, wondered why the Negro Leagues held on to its old ways. In response, Martin announced that the Negro Leagues do not discriminate against race or creed. Owners will play any player with the talent and ability to play: “Any young man who thinks he can play baseball, regardless of race, color, or creed may report to one of our clubs for a tryout. If he can play good ball, I guarantee he will make the team.”<sup>55</sup>

White players had been signed to play for a couple of Martin’s Chicago American Giants squads before, but none of them made any significant impact. While the presence of the white players initially bolstered attendance, their marginal talent forced them out of the league. Martin even admitted “if the majors hadn’t started signing Negro players, we might not have signed these white boys.” The murky and futile Eddie Klep experiment and these other failed attempts prevented other blacks teams from pouring resources, which were already limited by a large operating cost, into searching for and signing white players. Had a white player succeeded in the Negro Leagues, much like Robinson did in the Majors, perhaps other black baseball teams would have followed suit in recruiting and



signing white players. But the fact that one of the Negro Leagues top teams could only attract subsidiary talent troubled other owners and caused them to bury the experiment.<sup>56</sup>

Though Martin repeatedly welcomed any white player to try out for any Negro League team through columns in the black press, black baseball officials certainly did not trumpet this philosophy, which was similar to its other promotional pains. Each Negro League team's main objective was to attract fans of all races on the basis of playing good baseball in every game during the season, Martin wrote.<sup>57</sup> As can be gleaned from those comments, Negro League officials seemed content to layback on the publicity and let each team's winning play provide all the advertising needed.

The Monarchs' William "Dizzy" Dismukes certainly never pursued any white baseball players or at least he was never given the green light and resources to do so from Baird. Dismukes served as the Monarchs' scout during the 1950s. For the upcoming 1950 season, a year after the *Call's* Negro League integration campaign, Johnson wrote a few stories on Dismukes as he scoured the country for young talent to rebuild the Monarchs and build for the future. Johnson followed Dismukes to Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana where the team scout signed one young black player after another. Not once did Johnson mention Dismukes evaluating the performance of a white player. Of course, not once did Johnson question why Dismukes didn't do so.<sup>58</sup>

### **Negro Leagues Experiment With Female Athletes**

In 1952, the Monarchs finished fourth in the league, the worst finish in the club's history. Baird and O'Neil felt confident and excited about the team's chances to make a run at the league pennant. While the owner and manager said the same thing every year, this year they could hang their hats on some emerging talent, including the exciting play

of Ernest Banks, a twenty-two-year-old, who was turning heads with his play at shortstop in spring training. With his dazzling defensive play and a powerful swing that whacked balls all over the ballpark, Major League scouts from the very beginning were keeping tabs on the six-foot four-inch youngster, who was just released from the Army.

The *Times* also did a write up on Banks in April, along with an overview of the Monarchs' upcoming season.<sup>59</sup> Also before the season started, McBride, still a member of the paper's sports staff, did his usual interview with the Monarchs' team owner, in which they discussed Banks and other key players. This time, though, McBride also talked to O'Neil, who said the combination of Banks at shortstop and Gene Baker at second added up to "the best combination around second base the Monarchs have had since the days of Newt Allen and [Dobie] Moore," who played together for five seasons from 1922 to 1926. McBride's article touched on how the Negro Leagues had been reduced to four teams. He didn't write about the reasons for the reduction neither did he go into the financial status and lack of fan attendance of each team faced. He merely stated that since its formation "the Negro League has had its ups and downs, but always the Monarchs have survived and thrived."<sup>60</sup>

As opening day approached, the Monarchs' booster club began to create excitement. They expected good attendance figures for the year, even though the Negro Leagues had only four teams to rotate around. The booster committee set a prediction of having more than 12,000 fans at the home opener against the Clowns. This figure may have seemed far-fetched, due to increased fan interest in colored players in the integrated Major Leagues, and other entertainment appeals, such as television, Major League radio broadcasts, and cross country trips in new and shiny cars. Johnson noted that "there are fewer and fewer paying fans who feel inclined to leave their comfortable homes, their

televisions, their motor cars and the hundred other beguilements to go sit in a hot park and watch their boys stumble around on the diamond.”<sup>61</sup>

To compete against all this the booster club didn’t introduce new ways of advertising or offer any freebies to those who showed up to the park. They felt the name of the Monarchs, its reputation as a championship-caliber team, and its tradition of pompous home openers would be enough to get folks to the stadium.<sup>62</sup>

It actually worked.

A record number of 18,205 paid to watch the game, and with thousands more coming into the stadium as part of the parade, attendance reached 20,000. Visitors from several states backed up traffic on the streets surrounding the stadium for three to four blocks as they tried to find a parking spot. Blues stadium at the time had a maximum capacity of 17,000, so the overflow crowd “spilled out on the grassy slopes that bound the left field. Hundreds were unable to find any kind of seat and they seemed to content themselves [to] standing on the top ramps or bumping about as best they could.”<sup>63</sup>

While the Clowns have always been one of the bigger attractions in the Negro Leagues, because of their antics, this year they also featured the first women to play in the Negro Leagues in Toni Stone. Despite that, Johnson wrote that tradition and pride were the main reasons for the outpouring of fans:

...The magic of the name Monarchs is still effective and that baseball fans have come to expect the best when the team takes the field.

The Monarchs, like the Yankees, instill something into a kid who dons their uniform that makes him live up to a tradition.

...But perhaps the outstanding cause for the mass of persons that jammed the park and overflowed on the hillside was the civic pride of the fans of Greater Kansas City.<sup>64</sup>

The *Times* placed a write up of the huge pre-game antics on the front page of the morning paper. However, the story seemed to tarnish the Monarchs' reputation of having such a large following. The paper stated that the 20,000 fans showed up to watch the oddity of a woman playing baseball with men. The staff writer of the story felt Stone's appearance on the field—she played only the first three innings and recorded zero statistics—was just another one of the Clowns many spectacles to draw in the crowd, which may have been a fair assumption to make. The writer also assumed that former Monarch players would be offended, because the only way black baseball could now draw a crowd was to have a twenty-two-year-old female on the field:

The old-time Kansas City Monarchs probably would have thrown up their hands in horror at what happened when the Monarchs took the field against the Indianapolis Clowns....

Playing second base for the Clowns was a woman, Miss Toni Stone of Indianapolis.

Miss Stone was no threat to the Monarchs, who won the game by a score of 8 to 3, but it was a little unusual to have a woman invade the realm of professional baseball.<sup>65</sup>

Other black journalists made similar lamentations and sexist remarks, stating that the Negro Leagues had sunk so low it depended upon a woman in order to survive. But the Clowns were not the only team in 1953 that placed great emphasis on entertainment in order to survive. The Birmingham Black Barons signed a harmonica player and traveled with acrobats. Upon hearing this, former Monarch owner J.L. Wilkinson called the organization a "joke," well removed from the professionalism he and Gilmore tried to bring to black baseball.<sup>66</sup>

The novelty of Stone and other antics by Negro Leagues teams quickly wore off after the first week, and gate receipts returned to the same discouraging level as in the last few years. However, despite the comments about Stone, the fact that the Monarchs could

draw such a large crowd despite the number of fans shifting their cheers to colored Major Leaguers or to the television and radio broadcasts, only added to the Monarchs' legacy as not only champions of Negro League baseball, but as the team with the best suited players for organized baseball to adopt, Martin wrote. "Year after year, they are always the team to beat if anybody wants to be champions. When organized baseball finally decided to take its first step in breaking down the unholy racial barriers, it reached into the ranks of the Monarchs for a player, Jackie Robinson, to pioneer the cause."<sup>67</sup>

The angst that existed among the *Call's* sportswriters could be felt through its content. The paper's aim was for democracy to prevail. But its history and connections with the Monarchs meant the paper felt obligated to stand besides the failing black business, despite its segregated representation. The paper tried to reconcile both objectives by promoting the Monarchs in a way that could help its players enter into the integrated Major Leagues. The standard presence of black players on the baseball diamond in the coming years, eventually removed the Negro distinction from the sports pages of the mainstream press.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: BLACK BASEBALL'S OBITUARY, 1954-1957

### *Call* Maintains Racial Labels

By 1954, the racial landscape on the sports field had shifted so dramatically that most of the white daily sports writers stopped identifying Negro players by their race. Star performances throughout the years by Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Larry Doby, and Willie Mays had earned the black athletes a place on the field as equals. In total, twenty-eight “tan” players had made the roster of eleven Major Leagues teams by 1954, including the recent additions of Ernie Banks sold by the Monarchs to the Chicago Cubs in 1953 and Henry “Hank” Aaron, who was sent to the Milwaukee Braves from the Clowns.<sup>1</sup> More and more, blacks were becoming accepted and expected in the Major Leagues. While some white sportswriters, fans, and even players still used the racial tag, *Call* sports editor John I. Johnson hoped for the day when it would be dropped altogether. However, Johnson also felt the removal of the Negro distinction in the pages of the white press hindered black fans from following “their own” players, because they could no longer distinguish a black player’s accomplishments from that of a white player. Not all the teams in the Majors had integrated yet, so Johnson felt the racial distinction was still needed, and since the white press refused to do so, he stated that the black press needed to assume the responsibility. He wrote, “Negro papers are forced to point out who their boys are for [the black fans].”<sup>2</sup>

This thought from Johnson was rather contradictory to the democracy and equality the black press had fought for and was still fighting for. The whole reason for the existence of the black press was because white papers refused to cover African American issues or athletic events. The black press also existed as a means of furthering the race

and fighting for equality and democracy in a segregated nation. Black sportswriters' wholesale fight for Major League integration was for the purpose of recognizing black baseball players as equals, rather than minorities on the field of play. At first white dailies identified Robinson, Doby, Campanella, and other black baseball players by their skin color. However, doing so made them seem like oddities more than equals on the field, and some black journalists took issue with this at the start of Major League integration. Now that more and more black athletes were taking to the field, more and more white baseball writers reported games without regard to race. Black sportswriters were now no longer fighting for equality, but according to Johnson, they needed to focus their attention on distinguishing black players from the rest for the sake of black fans following the game in the printed press. The only way black sportswriters could do this was by deliberately making a distinction between the races. So while the black press wanted democracy in baseball and achieved it through integration, Johnson still wanted black players to stand out in a democratic sport.

In the same breath that Johnson pointed out the black press's new purpose, he also asked black fans to let their pocketbooks become the best form of picketing. He wrote how significant it was for every black fan to set a resolution to not spend any money on any sports institution that penalizes an American player because of his race.<sup>3</sup>

Johnson most likely meant for fans to stay away from Major League teams that did not have a black player in their lineup. Whether Johnson also meant for fans to stay away from the Negro Leagues would most likely be taking his column out of context. But as more and more black players headed to the Majors, the black fans' money followed, and the Negro Leagues stood nearly deserted, and as a mirage of its former self.

By the 1950s the phrase “organized baseball” no longer meant just white baseball. It meant integrated baseball—American and democratic baseball. The type of baseball played in the Major Leagues. The type of baseball, in which people could take pride. It was this integrated sport of fair play and equality that journalists wanted the whole of America to emulate.

The Negro Leagues remained segregated. And the league officials were not looking to make the teams better through integration or by becoming part of a farm team for a Major League baseball club. Such new ideas seemed to die at the league office doorstep, as owners focused solely on survival. Even cities in the Deep South continued to drop Jim Crow laws that existed in athletics. While the primary purpose was for removing the segregated ban was for financial reasons—black fans happily poured into any football or baseball game they wished—increased dollars meant improvement, which was always better than mere surviving.<sup>4</sup>

While some club owners [in the South] gave out pronouncements that they were willing to experiment with colored players only in an effort to have strong club, actual reason for signing them was the increased income that would be spent by the colored fans who were wild to see “our boys” play.<sup>5</sup>

The effects of Branch Rickey’s decision to sign Robinson seven years ago was finally becoming more and more apparent, as black and white boys played against each other for the first time in the southern states. Johnson and other black sportswriters agreed that this sign of democracy meant that race and color was becoming less and less important and a player’s ability was the ultimate deciding factor. To Johnson the continued progression of black baseball players in the Major Leagues was the result of



the great ability of so many Negro players and the rabid enthusiasm and support by black fans for black players.<sup>6</sup>

Johnson, though, had a limited view of the owners' purpose for hiring a black athlete. While doing so certainly increased profits, black players often became key to a team's chances of winning the pennant. Robinson, Campanella, and Don Newcombe were arguable the most important players on the Brooklyn Dodgers for years. Mays was a tremendous offensive and defensive weapon for the New York Giants. Doby and Satchel Paige helped the Cleveland Indians bring home the World Series crown in 1949. Nearly every Negro player signed during the last five to seven years proved to be a great source of a team's victories and pennant runs. When Rickey brought Robinson into his office to offer him a contract, the Dodger president said he wanted the former Monarch because he wanted the best players, no matter their race, and wanted to win pennant after pennant.<sup>7</sup>

Baseball segregation officially ended in Kansas City, Missouri, with the Blues hiring of Vic Powers in 1951. It ended in St. Louis three years later when the St. Louis Cardinals of the Major Leagues signed its first Negro recruit in Tom Alston from the minor league San Diego Padres of the Pacific Coast. The Cardinals already had thirteen young black players in its farm system, but Alston was considered big-league material.<sup>8</sup>

With spring just around the corner, Johnson once again wrote a lengthy column on the bleak future of the Negro Leagues. He also noted the resolve of the owners to maintain the Negro Leagues as the loop tried to expand its dying market from four teams to six. To Johnson this was a sign of courage to continue to move forward. In the face of "the baseball boneyard ... piled high with the remains of hundreds of clubs and dozens of leagues in recent years," the expansion deserved praise as league officials show their determination to make black baseball work in a non-segregated sport.<sup>9</sup>

Johnson also wrote how the Negro League continues to be robbed by organized baseball, always the giver but never the receiver. Year after year, Negro League teams take young ball players and mold and polish them into great talents, only to see them move away, leaving the Negro Leagues starting over from scratch, scrapping together a new bunch of players. But this it seems is the only purpose of the Negro Leagues:

Thinking fans must agree too that there is still a need for the Negro League. As long as it operates, there remains an opportunity for aspiring young Negro ball players.

If the colored circuit discontinues, the future supply of colored players will diminish. There is no other setup in sight or thought that will make a place for the large number of players the league employs each season.<sup>10</sup>

For instance, last season the Monarchs sent seven players to organized baseball, which proved to be the only feat Johnson raved about, even though the team had a 56-21 record in 1953 and finished first in league standings. In total the Monarchs had by this point sent thirty-one players into organized baseball, a record unmatched by any other Negro club.<sup>11</sup>

Johnson wrote that the Monarchs success both on the field and in sending players to the Majors had made Kansas City known throughout the country. Not even the Kansas City Blues, even with its attachment to the New York Yankees, could match the popularity of the Monarchs. It is because of the Monarchs' superb play year after year, along with the amount of players it sends to the big leagues, that has given Kansas City the reputation as being an excellent baseball town; a town with a unlimited supply of fans ready to "root for the home team." There is no doubt that Kansas City fans' support of its athletic teams played a considerable role in the City of Fountains becoming home to a Major League baseball club the following season.<sup>12</sup>

## **Kansas City Pushes for Big-League Look**

In August of 1954, Kansas City officials were pushing hard to secure a big league franchise to help the town bolster its image. Ernest Mehl is noted as playing a huge role in Kansas City obtaining the Athletics.<sup>13</sup> His columns from September and into October focused strictly on the reasons why the Fountain City was a great place for a Major League team. Mehl used his columns to answer every concern the American League officials might have in moving the Philadelphia Athletics to Kansas City. He spoke of how excited the city was to have a Major League team compared “to the apathy of the fans in Philadelphia.” If Kansas City were to receive a franchise, they would become the furthest team from the East coast, and some league officials became worried about extra travel costs. Mehl resolved this issue by pointing to the increase in revenue: “There would be more travel involved if the Athletics were transferred to Kansas City, but again the A’s drew 306,000 in Philadelphia and would draw more than a million in Kansas City.”

Besides, the National League at this time was toying with the idea of moving two teams to California, where no other Major League team existed. Some officials wondered if Kansas City had a large enough population to support a major-league franchise. With that, Mehl promptly broke out statistics that showed how Kansas City was home to more than 900,000 people. Taking into account surrounding areas, there were more than five million people ready to watch baseball. When it came down to the numbers and having money in the bank, Mehl thought the decision was obvious as long as officials “put personal feelings to one side in a matter this important... To a businessman there could be only one answer.”<sup>14</sup>

Mehl's opinions prompted Kansas City civic and business leaders to pursue a Major League franchise more vigorously.<sup>15</sup> In mid October, American league club owners voted in favor of switching the Philadelphia Athletics to Kansa City. For the next several months, from October to the beginning of the Kansas City Athletics' season in 1955, the *Star/Times* covered all the bases of the sale and move of the team, and then prepared fans to come to the ballpark. The paper even campaigned to have voters approve 60 million dollars in funds to spruce up the town and increase the city's Major League appeal.

The *Call* responded enthusiastically to the idea of a Major League team coming to town. But much like chief editor Chester A. Franklin's series of Booker T. Washington, boot-strapping-type columns for the year, in which he urged Negro workers to do more and grumble less—providing illustrative word pictures on how blacks need to smile and be respectable—editors at the black paper once again felt a patriarchal need to lecture the city on its minor league habits and attitudes. Only this time, the editorials focused on discriminatory practices espoused by a select number of restaurants, hotels, and other public places. Big league fans from all over are going to come to Kansas City, but they will not return for a great contest if racial pride and ignorance smacks them in the face.<sup>16</sup>

Louis Blue, a guest columnist writing in the absent of Johnson, enthusiastically promoted the news of Kansas City's shift to a Major League town when it was officially announced that the Philadelphia Athletics had become the Kansas City Athletics in November 1954. When Johnson returned from vacation, he talked about the positive impact a Major League team would have on the city and among fans, and commented that Kansas City was prepared to receive more professional sport teams, so long as all

public places threw out their welcome mat to all who would flock to the developing cosmopolitan.<sup>17</sup>

But with all this, where on the totem pole did the Monarchs fall, Johnson asked. What is going to happen to them, now that they will have to compete for Major League fans in the same ballpark?<sup>18</sup> History has shown that Major League and Negro League clubs cannot exist in the same town, and especially not in the same stadium. On the East Coast, the Baltimore Elite Giants, Washington Grays, New York Cubans, and Newark Eagles disbanded after losing too many fans and too much money to their Major League cohorts. The same happened to the Chicago American Giants and now the East-West All-Star game.<sup>19</sup>

These were questions the *Star/Times* had not considered in their campaign to help the city obtain a Major League franchise. In fact, the white daily did not give the Monarchs any credit for representing Kansas City as great and successful baseball town. That credit was given to the Kansas City Blues. The paper stated how the team was “Kansas City’s oldest professional athletic teams and the only one that survived until the present time.” So while the Blues would have to leave to make room for the Athletics, they had represented the city and professional sports well. In fact, seven former Blues’ players now played on the Athletics’ roster. With that, the white paper stated that the Blues were the only team of professional caliber in the area, despite the fact that the Monarchs had sent more than twenty players into organized baseball by this point.<sup>20</sup>

Johnson complained against this lack of recognition. While he never attacked the white daily (after all he did respect Mehl and his journalistic abilities), Johnson did gripe against city officials, who failed to recognize the significance of the Monarchs’ championship caliber play and how its fame and great fan following played a huge part in

convincing decision makers that Kansas City was big league ready. No one at city hall recognized the number of players the Monarchs had developed and sent to the Major Leagues.<sup>21</sup>

With demand for the recruits from the Negro Leagues having climbed in the last few years, black youngsters throughout the loop hustled and tried their best everyday. During 1954, seven former Monarchs contributed to the success of six Major League teams. Further proof that the Athletics were the second Major League caliber team in town, Tom Baird said. The Monarchs were the first.<sup>22</sup> Developing Major League talent had become the Monarchs' forte:

It is also gratifying to me and the other club owners that Negro youngsters have come to look upon the Negro American league as a good stepping stone into the Major Leagues. As long as we maintain these players standards a lot more Negro boys will have a better chance to make good in baseball.<sup>23</sup>

Developing Major League talent seemed to be the goal of Monarch manager Buck O'Neil, who also said, "The Monarchs don't keep 'em; we develop them and send them on to the majors."<sup>24</sup> Because of this philosophy, the case was made for O'Neil to become the first Negro to manage a Major League baseball club. He's credentials included an all-star baseball player, with impressive statistics and ability. The same can be said of his managing, in which he led the Monarchs to four league titles in eight seasons and sent some twenty-five players into organized baseball. Every player who has ever played for O'Neil, praised him as a baseball genius. General managers in the big leagues respected his decision-making ability. "When O'Neil puts his stamp of approval on a player, it is like money in the bank to general managers who have come to respect his judgement

(sic).” Even Baird respected O’Neil so much that he boldly said that the day O’Neil stops managing, is the day he would step away from the team too.<sup>25</sup>

### **Johnson Covers A’s for News Wire**

As the Athletics’ came into town, the Monarchs applauded their arrival. Baird told the black press that he expected the Monarchs to reap some rewards for having a big league team in town, while stressing all the Monarchs did to contribute to the progress of the national pastime.

As opening day for the Athletics approached, editors at the *Call* wrote columns expressing their excitement and also put in another plug for all public accommodations to stop its small town ways of refusing service to persons on account of their race, color, and creed. Johnson also concentrated on the A’s home opener, so much so he did not make a trip to the Monarchs’ spring training. The paper had to rely on a report from the International News Service for a preview on the Monarchs’ upcoming season. Even then that story took fourth place on the sports page, behind the A’s home opener preview, a sidebar on how Kansas City acquired the big-league team, and a story on Girl Scouts.<sup>26</sup>

Johnson’s attention to the A’s continued to increase after the first couple of games by choice and opportunity. The International News Service offered him a chance to become a daily sportswriter by wiring in stories about the A’s. He accepted, and just like that Johnson became one of the first Negro sportswriter working for a major news service. Milton Bledsoe, a member of the Associated Negro Press, wrote that Johnson was the only Negro sportswriter to have regular access to press boxes across the Major Leagues. He was extended the same privileges as members of the Baseball Writers Association, members which have exclusive use of wire services and other facilities in

Major League parks. During his ten years of covering sports, Johnson had done press releases for Cotton Bowl games at Bal-Hi stadium, Dallas, and grid tilts for a Texas college, Texas Southern University, the annual East-West ball games and games, played between the Cardinals and Dodgers. He also announced all the Monarch home games over the public address system. As an INS writer he filed copy over Western Union wires to INS headquarters in Chicago, from which the releases were sent to member newspapers across the nation.<sup>27</sup>

In taking the job, Johnson admittedly knew that he would have to cover the game from two different perspectives. For sports fans reading the *Call*, he would not only report on the outcomes of games, but also spotlight Negro players on the team, namely first baseman Vic Power and pitcher Bob Trice. However, the “story for the news service will make no mention of the race of these players. It will be a straight baseball story, all the way, with only rare occasions to mention the racial identity of any of the players.”<sup>28</sup>

By this point, black baseball players had proved their validity and strength to the big leagues, and were considered as equals among teammates and fans, even though restaurants and hotels throughout the country still denied them service. Finally it no longer mattered who brought home the winning run or who was the winning pitcher. Johnson realized that he would have to apply this concept when writing for the news service. He no longer could only concentrate on the plays made by Negro players. He would report on the team as a whole. Ironic as it sounds, Johnson would need to apply racial connotations when writing up reports for the *Call*, which makes the black newspaper seem more discriminatory in its approach to integrated baseball.



## Franklin's Pressroom Funeral

While the city celebrated its new future with a Major League team, tragedy struck the 18th and Vine district when the *Call's* editor-in-chief, Chester A. Franklin, died in the wee hours of May 7, 1955, a month short of his seventy-fifth birthday. Franklin wrote his final column on April 22, focusing on civil rights and what part the blacks played in achieving equality. With certain school districts refusing to hire black teachers, Franklin felt it was the black's population responsibility to put pressure on the school district, be persistent in their pleas of injustice, and have courage. He asked for the opinion of his fellow Missourians on the matter, wanting to know how they felt about creating a protest or what other ideas they may have. "Let me here from you Missourians at once," he wrote. With that remark, it seemed that Franklin had planned to write a follow-up column, and did not give any clue that his health was poor.<sup>29</sup>

On May 2, he suffered a heart attack, which he seemed to fully recover from, at least to the extent that he was able to get around the house from one room to the next without problems, which is why his death came unexpectedly. He passed away in his bed at 5:15 a.m. on May 7. As news spread of his death, telegrams poured into the *Call* with journalists from other black newspapers, U.S. senators, and other public figures all over the country expressing their condolences to his wife Ada and to the loss of a great advocate for democracy, justice, and freedom.<sup>30</sup>

THE CALL will never be the same without C.A. Franklin. But although he will not be with us physically, he will be with us daily in spirit and thought. The staff that he left behind will be ever mindful of the ideals and principles that he set forth during the 36 years that he was in active management of THE CALL. We shall strive to continue publishing the kind of newspaper that Mr. Franklin wanted THE CALL to be.<sup>31</sup>

The *Call* paid tribute to the editor's career with an obituary that covered two front-page columns and half of a column on a jump page. The obituary not only talked about Franklin's life history but also the numerous battles he led in the fight for equality and for Negroes to earn the respect of others through hard and smart work, and high ethical standards.

A militant fighter through the years, C.A. Franklin wanted nothing less than full, first-class citizenship for his people. At the same time, he was insistent that Negroes prepare themselves for citizenship by being ready to assume the responsibilities that go along with it. He wanted Negroes to be good citizens, to register and vote, to pay their taxes, to own their homes and keep them in good repair, to take an interest in their community and in their fellow man.<sup>32</sup>

Two pages of the paper contained a collage of photographs from different events in Franklin's life, including his seventieth birthday celebration, various speaking opportunities, and his successful campaign to save Negro baseball during the early years of World War II, when team buses and gasoline permits were restricted by the government.<sup>33</sup>

The following week his funeral services were held inside the *Call's* pressroom, where Franklin spent most of his time. Nine speakers paid tribute to Franklin on May 18, including Lucille Bluford, managing editor of the *Call*, and Roy A. Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP and former writer for the paper.

Roy Roberts, president of the *Star*, also spoke and said Franklin's life epitomized all the characteristics of a great American story. Franklin started at the bottom, developing the black paper from scratch and raised it up to a respectable national standard, proving that America, despite its faults, was still a land of grand opportunity. He said that the best way to pay tribute to Franklin was to not build a monument, but to

carry on the paper and keep his press running. “Mr. Roberts asserted that the paper built by Mr. Franklin embodied all the elements which make a good newspaper: character, integrity, organization, personnel, physical plant and devotion to the truth.”<sup>34</sup>

THE CALL will remain clean. It will remain true to the ideals of its founder. The memory of C.A. Franklin will never die. Truth and accuracy in the new has always been THE CALL’s policy. It will ever remain so.<sup>35</sup>

For Johnson, Franklin would always be remembered as a man of good sportsmanship, who took an active interest in sports. Almost daily, he would sit down next to Johnson to talk about certain players and games. Johnson said, Franklin took great pride in following the black players of the Major Leagues. He knew each one of them by name, and constantly kept himself updated as to their individual statistics. Johnson said nothing as to how Franklin’s philosophy fit into the sports pages, though the sports pages promoted the black athlete with the same sense of pride that Franklin felt for them.<sup>36</sup>

### **Athletics Squeeze Monarchs Out**

As the black community mourned Franklin, the *Star/Times* ushered in the Athletics with full coverage of the team’s move, spring training highlights, and the transformation of the stadium. Articles on the Athletics appeared daily on the front page of both newspapers, providing twenty-four-hour coverage on the newest updates as well as providing profiles on nearly every player and on the wives of some of the Athletics players.<sup>37</sup> On opening day for the A’s, half of the *Times*’ front page covered the game and the festivities. A crowd of 32,844 packed the stadium to watch the A’s beat the Tigers 6-2.<sup>38</sup>

Sharing the town and the stadium with a Major League team meant the Monarchs were on the outside looking in. Johnson felt the team was on the edge of a cliff, with the fans once again in control of the tipping point. Johnson pointed out in his column two weeks before the Monarchs' first home game that the crowd at the opener would determine where the Monarchs stood in relation to the Athletics. If fans throng to the park, the Monarchs would survive. If not, over the cliff they would fall.<sup>39</sup>

Despite its complete coverage on the Athletics, the *Star* wrote two weeks before the game how the Monarchs sported "one of their finest rookie crops in years."<sup>40</sup> The paper followed that story up with a deeper preview of what fans should expect from this year's Monarch squad. For the first time, the *Star* writer was not the sports editor. Also the writer of the preview didn't turn to Baird for insights or quotes. Instead, the unknown scribe turned directly talked to O'Neil. The Monarch manager received credit from the ghostwriter for assembling "one of the speediest clubs in the 36-year history of the team." Quoted extensively by the writer, O'Neil described how the Monarchs were forced to play hit and run ball, because of the lack of power hitters on the roster this year.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, the Monarchs' booster club was preparing for a near-capacity crowd of 26,000 to attend the team's home opener against the Detroit Stars on May 15. Fans, however, predicted a smaller crowd of about 12,000. Shockingly enough, only 7,395 showed up for the home opener, and another 1,500 came to the doubleheader the following week. Johnson said the numbers would be welcoming if the game was not a home opener, but to the Monarchs' booster club the attendance was grossly disappointing. Arthur Toney, president of the booster club, said it had to do with the many new forms of entertainment that are competing for fan interest and attention:

There's just too much competition in entertainment these days and it's getting worse. The fans that used to attend baseball games are out riding in fine cars, or lolling in fine homes, listening to radios or watching television, playing golf.

However, others interviewed by Johnson said the arrival of the Athletics had turned many fans toward Major League baseball and that some fans who would have ordinarily shown up at the ballpark spent the afternoon listening to a radio broadcast of the Athletics versus the Yankees.<sup>42</sup>

This toxic combination of entertainment options, higher stadium rental costs, and the arrival of Athletics, along with low attendance numbers placed a big squeeze on the Kansas City Monarchs. So much so that by mid-season, Johnson wrote a column explaining that these reasons were forcing the Monarchs out of Kansas City. Though Kansas City was part of the team's title they were more like wanderers of the road. For home games, Baird paid out more than \$3,000 per game. He was left with less than half of the gross from the gate receipts, which he had to divide with the visiting team. "Baird's daughter correctly summed up the situation: 'The Monarchs were priced out of Kansas City.'"<sup>43</sup>

Unable to afford the cost of rent at Municipal stadium and with fans staying home to listen to the radio broadcasts of the Athletics, Baird had no choice but to play his team in other cities and diamonds away and around the team's official headquarters. Baird, who once thought Kansas City was big enough for "two Major League baseball teams," now realized how farfetched his prediction was and how his hopes were dashed by a high overhead that kept the Monarchs away from its home field. Besides the opening game series, the Monarchs returned to play in Kansas City only one more time. With these

unfavorable conditions unfolding for Negro League baseball in Kansas City, Negro League officials decided to keep the East-West classic in Chicago's Comiskey park.<sup>44</sup>

One loyal Monarchs' fan expressed his disgust for what was happening in Kansas City in a letter printed in the *Call's* pages along side a story about the East-West game in Chicago that drew 11,000 fans. Mainly, the fan aimed his comments at fellow baseball fans in the area who abandoned the one team that had supplied the region with the best form of entertainment long before Major League baseball arrived. The fan argued that because of the Monarchs, who have played in nearly every Major League ballpark, that every avid baseball fan knows that Kansas City is a great baseball town; a town definitely worthy of a Major League team. But the Monarchs, despite their thirty-six years of being baseball ambassadors, are now vagabonds with no place to call their own.

The Monarchs belong to Kansas City and are deserving its support at this time when it is needed.

The Monarchs have ceased to be a ball club; we look upon the club as an institution now.<sup>45</sup>

### **A New Team in Town**

Baseball fans in Kansas City, though, adored the Athletics. It didn't take long for the baseball contingent to latch onto the new team. Attendance records were being set for the Athletics first season in the league. Kansas City's African Americans also adopted the team as their own. With black players Vic Powers and Bob Trice on the team, the A's took, "a gripping interest on the Negro fan."<sup>46</sup> Fans also were no longer selective in who they rooted for by race, nor did they care who knocked in the winning run for the Athletics; every fan just wanted to walk away from the stadium with a victory to cheer

about. In addition, as black and whites sat side by side in Municipal stadium cheering for the same team, they became enamored to each other, Johnson wrote.

There is a fierce allegiance and a deep feeling about our ball club that gives all Kansas Citians something they can share on an equal plane. The feeling recognizes no races, nationalities, no religions. It is a feeling solely related to the success of an interest which virtually every man, woman and child wants to prosper.<sup>47</sup>

Robinson, whom sportswriters occasionally sought for a political comment, said that baseball had set a pattern of integration that the rest of the nation needed to follow. He pointed out that there are Negro players on just about every single Major League team. “This has given Negroes a new incentive by making them feel that if they have ability they can strive for professions and opportunities which were previously denied them because of race.”<sup>48</sup>

Later in September, a group of players from the Athletics visited the *Call* pressroom, along with manager Leo Boudreau and Mehl of the *Star*. Mehl talked about how he went about persuading officials to pursue a Major League team.<sup>49</sup>

This focus on the Athletics left little room for a second-tier baseball organization that was floating around as it did during the barnstorming years of the Great Depression and as all Negro League teams did in the 1910s before Rube Foster organized a formal league. At the end of 1955 baseball season, with no certainty of the Monarchs’ return to the field in 1956, Johnson penned an obituary to Negro League baseball, saying without promotion it certainly must die. He once again harshly criticized the league for not providing enough publicity before and after games. This lack of public relations had cornered writers of the Negro Leagues, Johnson wrote, into using second-hand facts and

mere guesses. He was upset that no one knew which team won the pennant, the final league statistics, and the final record for the Monarchs in 1955.

The Monarchs were credited to winning the first half of the split of season, but no word was coming forth from league offices on what happened in the second half or if any playoffs occurred at all. Because of this silence, the *Call* could not be sure as to when the last game was played or where. League officials and owners did not release final standings. Still searching for an answer, Johnson went to O'Neil for an up date on the final standings, but not even the manager knew how the other teams finished. Johnson went to the team owner, Baird, but he too was in the dark. Johnson said the fact that one of the smartest men in baseball and one of the most invested men in the Negro Leagues, respectively, did not know the final outcome is “the result of paucity of publicity about the league.”

With the lack of promotion now surrounding the Negro Leagues, Johnson seemed content to let black baseball go. He wrote about gossipers who stated that black baseball was no longer needed, neither could it be justified as a breeding ground for future star black players. Careful not to pass it off as his own statement, but with strong leanings toward the end of a league, Johnson wrote,

It is the opinion of some persons that Negro League baseball has served its purpose, has eternally proved that race has absolutely nothing to do with the ability to measure up whenever a man is given a fair chance to make good.

It is these who maintain that Negro baseball, once a necessity, is now a relic of a jim crow (sic) period, and has lost the interest it once held.<sup>50</sup>

The interest in Negro Leagues, once held by every black sportswriter in the country, had turn to the Major Leagues.



In December, both the *Call* and the *Times* covered how O'Neil was hired as a scout for the Chicago Cubs.<sup>51</sup> True to his word of not wanting to be part of the team if O'Neil left, Baird also left the Monarchs to become a scout for the Athletics, but not before getting as much money as possible from his three-decade long investment. He sold eight Monarch players to the Majors and another four to the upper minor leagues, before selling the franchise to Ted Rasberry, a businessman from Grand Rapids, Michigan, in February of 1956.<sup>52</sup>

Rasberry had operated the Detroit Stars the previous season. He wanted to keep the Negro Leagues going for the sake of the black youth, who dreamed of a chance to play in the majors. Rasberry kept the name of the Kansas City Monarchs, but like Baird, he could not afford the rent at Municipal Stadium. The city became the team's "nominal home," and nothing more than that.<sup>53</sup>

### **Who Is To Blame?**

The fact that the Monarchs and other Negro League teams no longer had permanent home playing fields, added to the "sad plight" of black baseball. Johnson put the square blame on the teams, for they had substituted well-known and established players for "a bunch of short-term kids about which no one knew anything." Baseball fans, Johnson wrote, need players that stick with a single club for a long time; or at least long enough so that fans can get to recognize them and recall them by name.<sup>54</sup>

Back in the heydays of the Negro Leagues fans could rattle off the names of several players—like Frank Duncan, Bullet Rogan, Josh Gibson, Cool-Papa Bell, Paige and many more. Of course those were the days before television; days when fans could only get their baseball fix at the diamond and not in a box.<sup>55</sup>

While the sportswriters put the blame on team owners, league officials put the blame on the fans, saying if they did not “support the Monarchs and NNL baseball, they will be doing our youth a grave injustice for this league is one of the better training and developing rounds for future big league stars.”<sup>56</sup>

James C. Brown, a guest columnist for Johnson while he was out of vacation, wrote that the fans had forsaken the Negro Leagues ever since blacks became a part of organized baseball. Fans have used illegitimate excuses for not attending Negro League games; chief among them is that black baseball is not as good as organized baseball. But Brown argued that the talent level in each league is the same. Besides Major League scouts continued to pop up at each Negro League game, and if black baseball players can play great ball in the big leagues they must have also played great baseball in the “small tent” or else scouts would not have taken a chance on them.<sup>57</sup>

Brown wrote to encourage fans to make it out to the Monarchs’ home opener, which was being played at Municipal stadium. However, no amount of persuasive print was going to bring the fans back. Attendance for the late June home opener hit a new low with only 2,235 taking in the contest.<sup>58</sup> Johnson paid no mind to the game. He instead talked about the National League and American League pennant chases for the upcoming season, and printed Major League training camp stories and pictures.<sup>59</sup>

Besides the opener, there was only one other Monarch game story the *Call* reported on in 1956, which came in July when Detroit beat out the Monarchs at home 5-4. The story received a few paragraphs of type, but did not feature a complete box score.<sup>60</sup>

Once again, no report came from league officials regarding the standings of the Negro League teams. No pennant winner was announced either. But with fans no longer

interested in a team based out of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and turning all their attention to the A's, the comings and goings didn't matter, and black sportswriters no longer put forth energy to keep fans coming out to see black baseball. Under these circumstances, Rasberry kept the Monarchs away from Kansas City, squelching the traditional home opener in 1957. Rasberry also harshly blamed the Kansas City fans:

The only thing that keeps the Monarchs away is the failure of the fans to support them.... Until they want to watch them play, the team must remain homeless wanderers, unwelcome and unsupported.<sup>61</sup>

Then in May 1957, Rasberry sold the team to Arthur Dove of Raleigh, North Carolina. Dove was a former owner of the Raleigh Tigers, a local semi-professional team. Dove said the Monarchs' name would change to the Raleigh Monarchs, and they would play in a nearby park. Johnson ended his final articles on the Monarchs with a feeling of regret. Not regret that the team no longer was part of the city and was virtually dead, but regret that the club didn't close down shop earlier when it was considered a "top-flight baseball" program, and at a time when they were the only team in town to love:

While we, too, are in love with the Kansas City Athletics and watch every game they play at home and never miss a broadcast about them when they are away, we can never forget the team that once was a prime favorite in Kansas City, and that has contributed so richly to the national pastime.<sup>62</sup>

In retrospect, former manager Buck O'Neil noted that the fall of the Negro Leagues did not come with bitterness or regret. It was time for it to go. It had served its purpose. The respected Negro League all-star player said, that if given a chance to start with the Monarchs again and put up with all the discriminatory laws and treatment, he would do it in a heartbeat:

In '55 the Philadelphia A's came in to Kansas City, and we knew that was the death knell for us. They just killed us as far the draw was concerned.

...But don't feel sorry for any of us... We know that we could play as well as anyone that ever played. There is nothing greater for a human being than to get his body to react to all the things one does on a ball field. It's as good as sex; it's as good as music. It fills you up.<sup>63</sup>

Skin color distinctions disappeared from its sports pages, and the *Star/Times* provided more press about the Monarchs than the *Call*. Sports John I. Johnson of the *Call* blamed his paper's lack of coverage on the Monarchs on the lack of publicity by Negro League owners. Bitter, Johnson spoke against the black teams and eventually gave up covering them. His efforts were spent writing about the new team in town, the Kansas City Athletics, for widely distributed wire service. Johnson had the opportunity to sit next to and converse with white sportswriters as he followed the town's Major League team. Interestingly enough, his stories for the news wire forced Johnson to write more objectively and more democratically.

## CHAPTER NINE: FROM CHAMPS TO BIG-LEAGUE PRODUCERS

### Discussion & Conclusion

One of the purposes of this thesis was to outline the loyal and often conflicted relationship the *Kansas City Call* had with the best black baseball team in history, the Kansas City Monarchs. The tactics and shifts in coverage overtime provide evidence of this close and evolving relationship. As the Monarchs emerged from the Great Depression in 1937, the *Call* prominently featured the team and its players with hype and promotional words. Previews, game stories, columns, and overall coverage on opening day provided the greatest evidence of the paper and town's love affair with the all-black team. The *Call* would cover and photograph the hour-long parade that occurred right before each home opener. The parade stretched beyond the black community and into white neighborhoods, shutting down some of the main traffic arteries in Kansas City as the celebration extended to a more citywide and mixed-race festivity. Both men and women dressed up in their best clothes for the event. As whites and blacks sat side-by-side to watch Satchel Paige, Buck O'Neil, Willard Brown, and Hank Thompson, Monarch home games provided a break from racial tensions.<sup>1</sup> And when the Monarchs hit the road, anticipation would build for the team's next home game, and the *Call* made sure fans knew when their boys were returning.<sup>2</sup>

Another example of the mixed-race cheers for the Monarchs also came at the beginning of the season, when advertisers for both white and black businesses bought space in the *Call* to wish the Monarchs luck. Some of the white businesses advertising in the *Call* included Ben Hurst's Pawn Shop, which was located in the heart of 18th and Vine district, and Piney's tavern. Through an advertisement, Judge Thomas V. Holland of

the North Side Municipal Court also wished the Monarchs “All the Success in the World Throughout the Season!”<sup>3</sup>

By 1939, the *Call's* coverage of the Monarchs included regular box scores and occasional Negro League statistics. Quincy J. Gilmore, the Monarchs' press secretary, fed the paper reports on upcoming activities, such as the bathing beauty contest, top performers on the team, and reports on most away games. Gilmore also sent the paper reports on other Negro League teams and worked closely with the *Call's* sports editors to develop content black fans in Kansas City desired.<sup>4</sup> By the mid 1940s, the *Call's* coverage of the Monarchs improved greatly and what the Monarchs' fans received was in-depth, Major-League like coverage of their hometown team. For instance, pictures and short profiles of the players helped fans to identify the top performers and feel connected to them, bridging the gap between athlete and fan. The black paper especially kept track of Paige, making note of his sensational play, heroic aura, and even his off-field appearances.<sup>5</sup>

The *Call* felt the concentrated coverage of the Monarchs was necessary, especially since the local white daily refused to say much about the team, essentially leaving no other place for blacks to get news about their athletic accomplishments except for in church or in personal conversations.<sup>6</sup> In analyzing the variances between the white press and the black press coverage of the Monarchs and integration, it becomes easy to see the prejudices that existed in society were reflected on the sports pages. Coverage by the *Kansas City Star/Times* of the Monarchs, a team that regularly beat Major League all-star squads, was peripheral at best. The *Star/Times* did provide steady, objective coverage of the Monarchs' games, but the paper's editors shied away from obtaining comments from the players or managers on the black team, despite the fact that the Monarchs'

boasted Satchel Paige, the most quoted and talked about Negro League player, and other black players that would go on to play in the Major Leagues.

After integration, the Monarchs and the Negro Leagues in general, struggled to survive from year to year. However, the *Star/Times* covered the Monarchs without so much as a peep about the team's falling attendance numbers and bleak future in the 1950s. This type of incomplete reporting kept mainstream readers in Kansas City from becoming concerned about the Monarchs' affairs. Besides those white fans who happened to read the *Call*, the Monarchs never appeared in the white newspaper as being on the out.<sup>7</sup> Yet this type of coverage from the white press was to be expected. Sportswriter Ed Harris of the African American *Philadelphia Tribune* once explained, "there is too much going on in the white sports world, for the dailies to devote any space to anything other than a routine report of previous games, (meaning of course those papers that carry even that)." For instance, the *New York Times* provided a few paragraphs on the East-West All-Star game and other promotions, such as opening day or the Negro World Series winner, but generally the white press refused to provide readers with any inside observations on the black teams. Ultimately, since black baseball was not considered part of the organized baseball spectrum, white sportswriters could easily justify limiting their coverage of the Negro Leagues. The lack of information and occasionally blurbs associated with the *Star/Times*' coverage speak loudly to the discrimination and hypocrisy that existed between races at this time in America's history.<sup>8</sup>

However, the Jim Crow laws may have even suppressed the true thoughts and feelings of white sportswriters. Rare evidence clearly shows the *Star/Times* sportswriters printing words of respecting and admiration for the Monarchs winning ways and talented

players. Other facts show how the paper kept track of the team and how the sports editor and perhaps others at the *Star/Times* read the *Call*. This following gave the white sportswriters a well-versed knowledge of the Monarchs' situation and influence. Once the color barrier in baseball fell, these same writers started using the Monarchs' coaches and players as sources as supposed to only the two white team owners. If not for the prevailing cloud of racial tensions, sportswriters at the *Star/Times* might have typed up more about the popular black baseball team.

The difference in coverage between the white daily and black weekly in Kansas City found in this thesis does support previous research done by Chris Lamb and Glen Bleske, who concluded from their study that, when writing Jackie Robinson, black sportswriters and editors "wrote with more emotion, emphasized the historical significance of the story and included more personal insights...."<sup>9</sup> The *Call* certainly provided a more in-depth look of the Monarchs and provided readers the historical context of Jackie Robinson's Major-League debut in 1947, along with his subsequent World Series appearance and rookie-of-the-year honors. Even though Ernest Mehl said he did not believe in segregation and indicated that Robinson played a huge role in the Brooklyn Dodgers 1947 World Series appearance, the baseball writer only said so through the black press and never through his own newspaper.

America entered World War II to guarantee all people the right to live life without fear, terror, and tyranny. It was a war to guarantee freedom. But while blacks and whites fought to spread democracy throughout Europe and the Pacific with high-powered artillery, African Americans still lived faced prejudices at home. It appeared obvious that if blacks and whites can fight for peace then the "nation would revise its ancient regard of



Negro people and spread about a little democracy...at home, while it is in the dispensing mood.”<sup>10</sup>

The dispensing came in doses, taking civil rights movements, protests and the printed words in the black press to break the Jim Crow laws. The baseball color ban stood as one of the longest lines of segregation. While in the 1920s, black sportswriters advocated the business of black baseball, in the 1930s and 1940s scholars indicated a more decisive push for integration from the black press, as they called for change, created and launched proposals, and demanded tryouts for black athletes. While scholars agree that the *Pittsburgh Courier* and *Chicago Defender* led out in promoting integration, it is wrong to presume that all black paper’s followed suit. The *Call* occasionally contributed to the cause, but it certainly was not a leader or even central to the crusade. In 1942, when the theme of the Double V campaign spread from one black newspaper to another, a new sports editor at the *Call* expressed his frustrations about baseball segregation to the point of ignoring the Monarchs’ championship achievements that season. However, Sam McKibben’s personal vendetta against the baseball color barrier didn’t last long.

The following year, a female sports editor replaced McKibben and brought attention back to the Monarchs as the *Call* fought on the front page for the team to be able to use its bus during the war years. Chester A. Franklin, the *Call’s* editor-in-chief, provided readers with petitions sheets in the back of paper to sign and send into the federal government. On those sheets appeared one of the clearest statements of loyalty between the Monarchs and the paper: “Baseball has been the chief summer entertainment of many of the signers of this petition and we have depended upon these six teams to provide it. Let Negro baseball live.”<sup>11</sup>

The *Call's* loyalty to the team meant writers and editors at the paper never actively looked to destroy the baseball color barrier as did sportswriters at the *Courier, Defender, Baltimore Afro-American, and Harlem People's Voice*.<sup>12</sup> Even Willie Bea Harmon, one of the *Call's* many sports editors, admitted the subject of baseball integration lost interest quickly in Kansas City.<sup>13</sup> The black paper's Booker T. Washington philosophy of achievement, improvement, and patience also played a factor in the paper's refusal to join the fight.

The *Call's* reaction to the Brooklyn Dodgers signing of Robinson also challenges previous research. When Robinson broke into organized baseball, scholars indicate that black newspapers immediately abandoned its coverage of the Negro Leagues as readers became more interested in Robinson.<sup>14</sup> However, the *Call's* coverage of the Monarchs actually increased between 1945 and 1947. While the paper certainly did provide stories on Robinson's historical feats in 1946 and 1947, the Monarchs still dominated the top headlines on the sports page, with additional stories and statistics in every issue providing complete coverage of the team. In stories about Robinson, the *Call* sportswriters quickly reminded readers that since he played for the Kansas City squad prior to signing a big league contract, Robinson's success portrayed the Monarchs' successful organization.

However, the *Call's* concentration on the Monarchs could not stop the movement by the fans toward Major League baseball. With more black players being signed to big league clubs in 1948, the Majors became an example of democracy in America. Black and white fans loved it, and they poured into big league stadiums. Seeing this shift, the *Call's* own change in coverage from the Monarchs to blacks in the Majors, though more gradual than other black newspapers, was complete by the start of the 1949 season.

Complaints about the lack of publicity coming from Negro League teams surfaced as the main reason as to why the black press had turned its back on the organization it help create. While John I Johnson, the *Call's* sports editor, made similar complaints, he believed the cure for the Negro Leagues ailments began and ended with democracy. He expressed a desire to help the league, and unlike Wendell Smith of the *Courier* and Sam Lacy of the *Afro-American*, Johnson respected the Monarchs' owners for what they gave up to keep the team going.<sup>15</sup> Proof of this respect is evidenced by the many times Johnson defended the Monarchs' owners. To help them keep their teams alive, Johnson felt the black business needed to make an unprecedented change in personnel on the field in order for it to survive. The change meant black teams needed to sign good white players, Johnson proclaimed.

Johnson's solution did not match the opinions of other black newspapers at the time. The *Defender*, for instance, offered a plan to officials to build a baseball school for the Negro Leagues. The *Courier* offered one hundred dollars for any reader who could recommend a player who would be signed by a black or white professional team. Other journalistic endeavors included the *Afro-American's* essay contest on why the Negro Leagues "should be supported and preserved." The winning writer explained how the league "gave colored players a chance to develop skill and prowess, and earn a lucrative salary when the majors had their doors barred. It has done commendably well with limited capital and material."<sup>16</sup>

But unlike these efforts and beyond pleading for fans to return and save the game, the *Call* believed the death of the Negro Leagues would actually be most beneficial. The paper felt there was no room for racism in the American Pastime: "Baseball, like

everything else in the American scheme, will never realize its full destiny until it is no longer able to be characterized by meaningless and undesirable identification labels.”<sup>17</sup>

In convincing managing editors at the *Call*, Johnson brought his fight for Negro league integration to the front pages of the paper. The short-lived campaign achieved immediate success when the Chicago American Giants signed two white players. Once that occurred, the *Call* backed off from continuing the fight, and Johnson urged owners to sign white players in a more subdued manner, perhaps realizing that his campaign appeared as a form of disloyalty to the Monarchs.

However, the white players signed by the Giants never panned out. Dr. J.B. Martin, the Giants’ owner and president of the Negro American League, made the signings only to avoid the appearance of an undemocratic league, stuck to its segregated beginnings. The mediocre white players he signed failed to accomplish the same feats and results that Robinson and other black players had achieved in the Major Leagues.<sup>18</sup>

Unable to persuade Negro League owners to integrate their teams with white players, the *Call* found itself trapped with covering a team that symbolized everything the black population hated—segregated units. This paradox is mirrored in the paper’s coverage. During the 1950s, the *Call* tries to re-emphasize its loyalty to the Monarchs and its owner. However, if the paper was going to stick by the Monarchs they were going to cover them with respect to the democratic Major Leagues. With that, the *Call* moved away from referring to the Monarchs as champions of black baseball. Instead, they became known as the team that sent the most players to the Majors. A institutional breeding grounds of sorts; that’s what the Monarchs had become, in order to help individual Major League baseball teams integrate their rosters. The Monarchs’ prime reason for existing was not just to give blacks jobs or build pride for black achievements,

but mainly to groom players for big-league fame. Hank Thompson, Gene Baker, and Ernie Banks became an example of the Monarchs' ability to produce Major League talent. Banks, especially, became the darling of Chicago Cubs fans. He had sharp defensive skills at shortstop, while his powerful bat put him among the leaders in homeruns in 1955. From Banks' success alone, the Monarchs received credit from the press, including the *Star*, as a team that grooms Major League baseball players.<sup>19</sup>

When the Athletics rolled into Kansas City they set Major League attendance records, despite being considered bottom dwellers in the standings. Baseball fans in the black community became enamored to the "underdog A's." With black players Vic Powers and Bob Trice playing regularly in the A's lineup, Johnson noticed how the A's took a "gripping interest on the Negro fan."<sup>20</sup> The *Call* sportswriters also referred to the team as "our Athletics."<sup>21</sup>

With this shift in interest by the fans and the black paper, "the Monarchs' day of decision" arrived as they began to play in a city "going mad about the Kansas City Athletics." Attendance at the Monarchs' home opener would answer the question as to whether the Monarchs could "continue to call Kansas City home, or must the team become a wanderer or give up the ghost altogether?"<sup>22</sup> Johnson posed those questions in May of 1955. By June the answers were no, yes, and yes, respectfully. Officially, the Monarchs were done in Kansas City.<sup>23</sup>

Black fans and the black paper disassociated themselves with Monarchs, and became enthralled with the Athletics. While former Negro League players look back on their careers without regret, Johnson's columns in the late 1950s suggested a longing for the former years when "the Monarchs inspired parades, dinners, beauty contests, and dances in the summer heat."<sup>24</sup> He wrote about how "days before games... fans gathered in

barber shops or in hot stove league bull sessions to discuss the league and the individual stars. And on the days of play the fans would flock to the park, armed with picnic baskets, thermos, jugs, bulging hip pockets, prepared to stay all day.” The Monarchs’ initial games were gala events in town, and fans flocked from miles around to watch the season begin.<sup>25</sup> But as history has unearthed the Monarchs as one of the best teams in the history of baseball, citizens of Kansas City, whether baseball enthusiast or not, “can well be proud of having such fine representation in the baseball world.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Implications for Future Research**

In moving away from nationally distributed African American newspapers, this thesis provides an account of one local black newspaper’s role and relationship as a chronicler for a black business that captured the enthusiasm of the Kansas City community. Though the *Kansas City Call* had some national distribution, it was primarily known as a local or regional black newspaper. In addition, this research provides a comparative analysis of the coverage made by the top white newspaper, the *Kansas City Star*, in that same town. This examination provides context to the themes and struggles of the time period. However, since the focus was on two newspapers in one town, the results found here can only apply to the type of sports coverage in and around Kansas City, Missouri. Further exploration of black newspapers in the region, including those in Topeka (*Call/Plaindealer* and the *Colored Citizen*), Wichita (*Negro Star* and the *People’s Elevator*), Okalahoma City (*Black Dispatch*), and the more than two hundred black paper’s that existed in Texas, is needed to bring context to the region’s excitement for the Kansas City Monarchs.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence emerged from this research pointing to the existence of a close friendship between John I. Johnson of the *Call* and Ernest Mehl at the *Star*. When the International News Service assigned Johnson to write about the Athletics in 1955, the black sports editor sat next to or near Mehl during the games, further increasing the communication between them. Their relationship appears to violate the societal norms of the time period. Further time and monetary expenses are needed to unearth the significance and impact of this relationship in regards social expectations and to sports coverage of the Monarchs, the Athletics, and interracial events.

The personal influence of individual reporters on a newspaper could also stem from this thesis, as it revealed a handful of different sports editors working for the *Call*. Also, further time is needed to review the letters and papers of both Monarch owners, J.L. Wilkinson and Tom Baird, with respect to their feelings and dealings with the local black newspaper and other sports journalists.

Further consideration also needs to be given to the impact of Quincy J. Gilmore, the Monarchs' press secretary. Besides the mere mentions of him by Janet Bruce in her classic tale of the Monarchs and by a journal article, information is lacking about Gilmore's duties with respect to press and community relations and his close partnership with the *Call*.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, gender issues in the Negro Leagues are also worthy of further historical studies. The treatment by the black press of the outspoken Effa Manley, co-owner of the Newark Eagles, and other female athletes in the league, such as Mamie Johnson, Connie Morgan, and Toni Stone, who each played for the Indianapolis Clowns, is ripe for analysis.<sup>29</sup>

---

## REFERENCES

### Introduction

<sup>1</sup> See Robin D.G. Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem:’ Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” *Journal of American History*, 80 (June 1993), 86; and Graham White and Shane White, *Stylin’: African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998). Each of these researchers note the culture significance of dressing up for African Americans, especially those of the working-class, who had to wear uniforms on a daily basis. The authors also state how the wearing of fancy clothes collapsed the status distinctions between whites and blacks. By dressing up African Americans showed they could present themselves as being higher-class.

<sup>2</sup> See “Monarchs Meet Memphis in Blues Stadium, May 12,” *Call*, May 3, 1946, national edition, 8; John I. Johnson, “Sport Light,” May 10, 1946, national edition, 7; “Monarchs Meet Memphis Red Sox, May 12,” May 10, 1946, city edition, 18; “Monarchs Shutout Memphis, 3-0, Before 16,000,” May 17, 1946, national edition, 7; Johnson, “Sport Light,” May 17, 1946, national edition, 7; “Monarchs In Opening Game Sunday,” May 2, 1947, city edition, 1; and “Monarchs Defeat Chicago 13-3 in League Opener,” May 9, 1947, national edition, 7.

<sup>3</sup> William Donn Rogosin, “Black Baseball: The Life in the Negro Leagues.” (doctoral dissertation, University of Texas-Austin, 1981), 206. Rube Foster, the Negro Leagues’ founding father, once said, “We have to be prepared when the day comes.” Mimicking the whiter Major Leagues, Foster’s idea was to show the professionalism, firmness and talent of the Negro Leagues to such an extent that white baseball would invite the blacks into the big leagues.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, May 17, 1946, national edition, 7.

<sup>5</sup> From the late 1880s to the early 1890s, organizations of professional white leagues practiced a limited degree of integration. Such organizations ranging from Massachusetts to Nebraska and Colorado allowed a very small number of colored players to compete. However, a short five years later, each Negro ball player—the most recognized being Bud Fowler and brothers Moses Fleetwood Walker and Weldy Walker—faced harsh resistance from segregationists on the field, in the stands, as well as in political and league offices, eventually driving the black players out of the game. At this point a “gentleman’s agreement” barred Negroes from the National Pastime. This ban on black players created a pattern followed by Major Leagues teams and owners. For more information on professional baseball’s battles with the color lines in the 1880s to 1890s, see: Robert Peterson, *Only the Ball Was White* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), chapters 2-4; Jerry Malloy, “Out at Home,” *The National Pastime* 2, No. 1 (fall 1983): 14-29; Malloy, *Sol White’s History of Colored Base Ball with Other Documents on the Early Black Game, 1886-1936* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Gregory Bond, “The Segregation of Professional Baseball in Kansas, 1895-1899: A Case Study in the Rise of Jim Crow During the Gilded Age,” *The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture 2002*, Ed. Alvin L. Hall (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2003): 61-77.

<sup>6</sup> See Brian Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering?: The Black Press, the Black Community and the Integration of Professional Baseball” (doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, 2003); Carroll, “Early Twentieth-Century Heroes: Coverage of Negro League Baseball in the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*,” *Journalism History*, 32, No. 1 (Spring 2006): 34-42; Bill Weaver, “The Black Press and the Assault on Professional Baseball’s ‘Color Line,’ October, 1945-April, 1947,” *Phylon*, 40, No. 4 (1979): 303-317; and David K. Wiggins, “Wendell Smith, the *Pittsburgh Courier*-Journal and the Campaign to Include Blacks in Organized Baseball, 1933-1945,” *Journal of Sport History*, 10, No. 2 (Summer 1983): 5-29.

<sup>7</sup> For the *Call*’s coverage philosophy see Thomas D. Wilson, “Chester A. Franklin and Harry S. Truman: An African-American Conservative and the ‘Conversion’ of the Future President,” *Missouri Historical Review*, 88, No. 1 (1993): 48-77; and George Everett Slavens, “Missouri,” in *The Black Press In The South, 1865-1979*, ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 217-218; For examples of coverage see *Call*, September 26, 1946, national edition, 10; February 11, 1944, national and city editions, 1; February 25, 1944, national edition, 14; March 26, 1948, city edition, 21; and May 14, 1948, city edition, 27.

<sup>8</sup> See Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, February 11, 1949, national edition, 8; and Johnson, “Negro Ball Clubs Hold Color Line,” *Call*, February 11, 1949, city edition, 1.



---

<sup>9</sup> See Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 273, 274; Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 9, 1952, national edition, 10; September 29, 1950, national edition, 8; and November 24, 1950, national edition, 8.

<sup>10</sup> See Neil Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball: The Rise and Ruin of a Black Institution* [University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004], 357; Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, March 3, 1950, national edition, 9; "Giants May Have Pitching 'Find' In Ruben Gomez," February 27, 1953, national edition, 10; "Yanks' Tan Farm Hands Prove Powerful At Plate," April 17, 1953, national edition, 11; March 27, 1953, national edition, 10, 12; April 3, 1953, national edition, 10; April 10, 1953, national edition, 10; March 13, 1953, national edition, 1; April 24, 1953, national edition, 1; and Johnson, "Sport Light," May 31, 1957, national edition, 10.

<sup>11</sup> The Monarchs won six championships and the 1942 Negro League World Series from 1937-1947 while averaging 5,000 fans a game, doubling the home attendance of the Kansas City Blues, a semi-pro white team affiliated with the New York Yankees, whom the Monarchs shared Muehlbach field and Ruppert Stadium with.

<sup>12</sup> See Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 194; and C. E. McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, April 14, 1949, 18.

## Chapter One

<sup>1</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 311.

<sup>2</sup> For the full account of the Monarchs see Janet Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs: Champions of Black Baseball* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," compare 38 with 50 and 63.

<sup>4</sup> The list of former Monarchs players that made into the Major Leagues includes Jackie Robinson, Satchel Paige, Willard Brown, Hank Thompson, Ernie Banks, Elston Howard, and John "Buck" O'Neil, who became a coach for the Chicago Cubs. For more information see the Negro League Baseball Players Association Web site, [www.nlbpa.com/kansas\\_city\\_monarchs.html](http://www.nlbpa.com/kansas_city_monarchs.html).

<sup>5</sup> Mark Ribowsky, *A Complete History of the Negro Leagues, 1884-1955* (Seacaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1995), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Carroll, "From Fraternity to Fracture: Black Press Coverage of and Involvement in Negro League Baseball in the 1920s," *American Journalism* 23, No. 2 (2006): 69-95 and "Early Twentieth-Century Heroes: Coverage of Negro League Baseball in the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*," *Journalism History* 32, No. 1 (Spring 2006): 34-42.

<sup>7</sup> Chris Lamb and Glen Bleske, "Covering the integration of baseball—a look back," *Editor & Publisher* 129, No. 4 (1996), 48-50.

<sup>8</sup> Lamb and Bleske, "Democracy on the Field," *Journalism History* 24, No. 2 (1998): 51-59.

<sup>9</sup> Lamb, "A Story in Black and White: Baseball and Racism in 1938," found in *The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture, 1997 (Jackie Robinson)*, Alvin Hall and Peter M. Rutkoff eds. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000), 50-51.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Washburn, "New York Newspapers and Robinson's First Season," *Journalism Quarterly* 58, No. 4 (1981): 640-644.

<sup>11</sup> See Harvey Frommer, *Rickey and Robinson: The Men Who Broke Baseball's Color Barrier* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982); Arthur Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story* (New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1950); Bill Roeder, *Jackie Robinson Story* (New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1950); and Peterson, *Only the Ball Was White*.

<sup>12</sup> See David Wiggins, "Wendell Smith"; and Bleske, "No Hits, No Runs, No Blacks: Wendell Smith, the Black Press, and a Strategy for Racial Equality in 1946," paper presented to the Southeast Colloquium of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Stone Mountain, GA, March 26 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Dan Burley, "What's Ahead for Robinson?," *The Crisis*, (December, 1945), 364 as found in Weaver, "The Black Press and the Assault," 307.

<sup>14</sup> Weaver, "The Black Press and the Assault," 315.

<sup>15</sup> See Malloy, *Sol White's History of Colored Base Ball*, 119-130.

<sup>16</sup> See John B. Holway, *Black Diamonds: Life in the Negro Leagues from the Men Who Lived It*, (Westport, CT: Meckler Books, 1989); *Voices from the Great Black Baseball Leagues*, (New York: Dodd, Mead &

---

Company, 1975); *Blackball Stars: Negro League Pioneers*, (Westport, CT: Meckler Books, 1988); Brent Kelley, *Voices From the Negro Leagues: Conversations With 52 Baseball Standouts of the Period, 1924-1960* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Company, Inc., 1998); *The Negro Leagues Revisited: Conversations With 66 More Baseball Heroes* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000); Donn Rogosin, *Invisible Men* (New York: Kodansha America, 1983); Rob Ruck, *Sandlot Seasons: Sport in Black Pittsburgh* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1987); and Bruce Adelson, *Brushing Back Jim Crow: The Integration of Minor-League Baseball in the American South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> For more information on these select teams see Jim Bankes, *The Pittsburgh Crawfords* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2001); Paul Debono, *Indianapolis ABCs: History of a Premier Team in the Negro Baseball Leagues* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1997); Richard Bak, *Turkey Stearnes and The Detroit Stars: The Negro Leagues in Detroit, 1919-1933* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994); and James Overmyer, *Queen of the Negro Leagues: Effa Manley and the Newark Eagles*, (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1998).

<sup>18</sup> Larry Lester, *Black Baseball's National Showcase: The East-West All-Star Game, 1933-1953* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Michael Lomax, "Black Entrepreneurship in the National Pastime: the rise of Semiprofessional baseball in Black Chicago, 1890-1915," *Journal of Sport History* 25, No. 1 (1988): 43-64 and *Black Baseball Entrepreneurs* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> See Holway, *Josh and Satch: The Life and Times of Josh Gibson and Satchel Paige* (Westport, CT: Meckler Press, 1991); and Robert Charles Cottrell, *The Best Pitcher in Baseball: The Life of Rube Foster*, Negro League Giant (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>21</sup> See Sam Lacy and Moses J. Newson, *Fighting for Fairness: The Life Story of Hall of Fame Sportswriter Sam Lacy* (Centerville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1998); Ron Firmirite, "Sam Lacy: Black Crusader," *Sports Illustrated* 73, No. 18 (October 29, 1990): 90-94; and Frank Young, *Great Negro Baseball Stars* (New York: AS Barnes & Co., 1953). In the late 1940s, Young became sports editor of the *Cleveland Call-Post*. In the fifties, he worked the same position for *Ebony* magazine.

<sup>22</sup> Jules Tygiel, *The Jackie Robinson Reader* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1983); *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York: Vintage, 1997); *Pastime: Baseball as History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and *Extra Innings: Reflections on Jackie Robinson, Race, and Baseball History* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> Jim Reisler, *Black Writers/Black Baseball: An Anthology of Articles from Black Sportswriters Who Covered the Negro Leagues* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007).

<sup>25</sup> *Leading scholars*: Lee Finkle, *Forum for Protest: The Black Press During World War II* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1975); T. Ella Strother, "The Race-Advocacy Function of the Black Press," *Black American Literature Forum*, 12, No. 3 (Autumn 1978): 92-99; Washburn, *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Frankie Hutton, *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993); Stanley Nelson, *The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords* (Half Nelson Productions, Inc. ; San Francisco: California Newsreel [distributor], 1998); William G. Jordan, *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of Chapel Hill Press, 2001); Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and The Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); and Washburn, *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Charles A. Simmons, *The African American Press, 1827-1965* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 1998), 75-76.

<sup>27</sup> Washburn, *A Question of Sedition*, 99.

<sup>28</sup> Simmons, 80-81.

<sup>29</sup> Washburn, *A Question of Sedition*, 100-101.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-148.

<sup>32</sup> Charles E. Coulter, *"Take Up the Black Man's Burden": Kansas City's African American Communities 1865-1939* (Columbia, MS: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 112.

<sup>33</sup> Slavens, 217.

- 
- <sup>34</sup> Armistead S. Pride and Charles C. Wilson II, *A History of the Black Press* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1997), 102-103.
- <sup>35</sup> Coulter, 61, 73, 75, and 85.
- <sup>36</sup> Sherry Lamb Schirmer, *A City Divided: The Racial Landscape of Kansas City, 1900-1960* (Columbia, MS: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 167.
- <sup>37</sup> For population see Schirmer, 29; and Coulter, 289; For “petitions” see Roy Wilkins, *Standing Fast: The Autobiography of Roy Wilkins* (New York: The Viking Press, 1982), 91.
- <sup>38</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 53; and “The History of the Kansas City Call,” <http://www.blackarchives.org/thecall/home.htm> (accessed July 15, 2008).
- <sup>39</sup> Delia C. Gillis, *Black America Series: Kansas City* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 34.
- <sup>40</sup> Slavens, 224.
- <sup>41</sup> Coulter, 112.
- <sup>42</sup> See August Meier, “Booker T. Washington and the Negro Press With Special Reference to the *Colored America*,” *Journal of Negro History*, 39 (January 1953): 67-90. Washington rejected obtaining equal rights through protest in favor of blacks developing vocational skills, and creating a reputation of reliability and dependability through hard work and achievement. Washington believed through these type of qualities African Americans would gain respect and become accepted in the white community. In pushing this philosophy, Washington became known as a racial accommodationist. He advised blacks to accommodate white suppressors, accept white supremacy, and find ways to achieve, despite being socially separate.
- <sup>43</sup> Slavens, 225-226.
- <sup>44</sup> See *Call*, July 18, 1924 as found in Wilson, “Chester A. Franklin and Harry S. Truman,” 51.
- <sup>45</sup> Slavens, 218.
- <sup>46</sup> Washburn, *African American Newspapers*, 7.
- <sup>47</sup> Monroe Dodd, *The Star & The City* (Kansas City, MO: Kansas City Star Books, 2006), 1-2. Nelson dominates *The Star*’s history more than Morss, for two reasons. First, Morss sold his interest in the paper in 1882 to Nelson because of ill health. Second, Nelson exuded a commanding nature in the newsroom. A cannon ball of a man, Nelson’s big body, grand confidence and large ego earned him the nickname “Colonel” by his associates. Nelson felt no one had rights over him, and he led out in campaigning by mustering all of his editorial forces together for the struggle against corruption and other maladies that plagued Kansas City’s chance for growth.
- <sup>48</sup> *William Rockhill Nelson: The Story of a Man, a Newspaper and a City* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1915), 15-17.
- <sup>49</sup> Harry Haskell, *Boss-Busters & Sin Hounds: Kansas City and Its Star* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 13-15. Eager to establish its credentials as a crusader for an improved city, the *Star*’s very first campaign demanded that the Opera House upgrade its deteriorating wood-and-brick structure as a matter of public safety. Each week the paper ramped up its criticism against the “firetrap” building at Tenth and Broadway until the owner spent forty-five thousand dollars to fix up the theater and apologized to Nelson privately. Nelson always went to great extents to campaign for the betterment of Kansas City. In his crusade for urban beautification that started in the late 1880s, Nelson enabled a law to be passed that allowed the city to allocate a portion of taxpayers’ money on parks. Once the measure passed, Nelson hired engineers to study parkways and boulevards around the country, and sent reporters to cover the park movements in other budding cities, such as Baltimore, Minneapolis, St. Louis, and Chicago. While this campaign for better parks and boulevards started only eight months after the formation of the paper, it lasted well into the 1950s, and the tree lined streets and attractive parks was considered Nelson’s best monument to the city. A complete list of everything that Nelson fought for in the pages of the *Star* is impossible to compile, but the following list suggest a variety of constant crusading: streetcar service and rapid transit; workman’s compensation; abolish property tax; develop parcel post; stone or concrete bridges rather than “tin” bridges; build stronger houses for tornado protection; and no liquor in amusement parks and home neighborhoods.
- <sup>50</sup> Eugene Field, then editor of *Times*, wrote a poem to his newest rival: “*Twinkle, twinkle, little Star Bright and gossipy you are; We can daily hear you speak For a paltry dime a week.*” as found in Frederic Hudson, Alfred McClung Lee, and Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism, 1690-1940* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 469-470.
- <sup>51</sup> Nelson, 17-20.

---

<sup>52</sup> Dodd, 21-25. While Nelson considered the *Times* and *Star* as two editions of the same product, he set up news coverage so that each was responsible of covering news from the preceding 12 hours. In this way, neither paper duplicated material printed in the other.

<sup>53</sup> *Editor & Publisher International Yearbook* (New York: Editor & Publisher Co., 1948).

<sup>54</sup> Dodd, 73. The *Star* won a special citation from the Pulitzer Prize committee in 1944 and 1951, the latter given for the paper's coverage of the flooding of the Kansas River that buried west side of the city under water.

<sup>55</sup> Haskell, 321.

<sup>56</sup> See "K.C.'s Sun," *Time*, April 12, 1948 and "Big Roy," February 24, 1947.

<sup>57</sup> Dodd, 77.

<sup>58</sup> Dodd, 80-86. When Nelson acquired *The Kansas City Times*, he placed a requirement on national advertisers to purchase space in both the morning and evening editions. Meanwhile, subscribers were not given the option to purchase only the morning edition or only the evening edition. They had to purchase both or only the Sunday edition of the paper. As far as the bullying, testimony was heard from different advertisers throughout the trial, who accused the *Star's* advertising director, Emil Sees, of threatening advertisers with banishment if they publicized in other newspapers or with other companies.

<sup>59</sup> Dodd, 86.

## Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> Leading scholars for black press: Lee Finkle, *Forum for Protest: The Black Press During World War II* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1975); T. Ella Strother, "The Race-Advocacy Function of the Black Press," *Black American Literature Forum*, 12, No. 3 (Autumn 1978): 92-99; Washburn, *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Frankie Hutton, *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993); Stanley Nelson, *The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords* (Half Nelson Productions, Inc. ; San Francisco: California Newsreel [distributor], 1998); Charles A. Simmons, *The African American Press, 1827-1965* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 1998); William G. Jordan, *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of Chapel Hill Press, 2001); Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and The Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); and Washburn, *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2006). Leading scholars for Negro League baseball: John B. Holway, *Black Diamonds: Life in the Negro Leagues from the Men Who Lived It*, (Westport, CT: Meckler Books, 1989); *Voices from the Great Black Baseball Leagues*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1975); *Blackball Stars: Negro League Pioneers*, (Westport, CT: Meckler Books, 1988); Brent Kelley, *Voices From the Negro Leagues: Conversations With 52 Baseball Standouts of the Period, 1924-1960* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Company, Inc., 1998); *The Negro Leagues Revisited: Conversations With 66 More Baseball Heroes* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000); Donn Rogosin, *Invisible Men* (New York: Kodansha America, 1983); Rob Ruck, *Sandlot Seasons: Sport in Black Pittsburgh* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1987); and Bruce Adelson, *Brushing Back Jim Crow: The Integration of Minor-League Baseball in the American South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999). Leading scholars for Jackie Robinson: Jules Tygiel, *The Jackie Robinson Reader* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1983); *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York: Vintage, 1997); *Pastime: Baseball as History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and *Extra Innings: Reflections on Jackie Robinson, Race, and Baseball History* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); and Arnold Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson: A Biography* (New York: Arnold A. Knopf, 1997). For the Monarchs see Janet Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs: Champions of Black Baseball* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1985). For Kansas City culture see Charles E. Coulter, *"Take Up the Black Man's Burden": Kansas City's African American Communities 1865-1939* (Columbia, MS: University of Missouri Press, 2006); and Sherry Lamb Schirmer, *A City Divided: The Racial Landscape of Kansas City, 1900-1960* (Columbia, MS: University of Missouri Press, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 138.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 67-90.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ribowsky, *A Complete History*, 314-315.

### Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> See *Call*, May 14, 1937, national edition, 6; and May 14, 1937, city edition, 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Higgs Brown, "Chicago American Giants Invade K.C. for 4 Game Series; Twin Bill Sunday," *Call*, May 14, 1937, national edition, 6

<sup>3</sup> C.E. McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, April 4, 1937, 1B. Felix Payne, by this time, was well known in the community as one of the most prominent black businessmen and Democratic politicians in Kansas City. His jazz clubs and bars provided entertainment within the black community. But he also ventured out into the sports world, becoming one of the major contributors to the Monarchs booster club, which is what McBride was probably referencing. For more on Payne see Coulter, 114-115.

<sup>4</sup> Lynn Klyde-Silversein, "From the Negro News Page to the Sports Page: Mary Garber's Influence on the Newspapers of Winston-Salem, N.C.," *American Journalism* 23, No. 2 (Spring 2006), 101. For most of this study the white sportswriters at the *Star/Times* are reporting 17 years before the before *Brown v. the Board of Education*, in which the United States Supreme Court overturned the separate but equal ruling. Klyde-Silversein's research states that the sports pages of white newspapers practiced the segregated laws that existed in the society. As was the case found in the newspapers Klyde-Silversein analyzed in North Carolina, the main Kansas City white newspaper did not cover black high school or college sports. Instead of using space for those means, the *Star/Times* concentrated on other sports exclusive to whites, such as organized baseball, horse racing, tennis, golf, fishing, and hunting.

<sup>5</sup> McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, April 2, 1938; May 12, 1941, 9; August 17, 1941, 1B; September 3, 1941, 12.

<sup>6</sup> "Negro Leaders in Clash," *Star*, July 2, 1939, 4B. In this game preview, the *Star* sportswriter stated that "Hilton Smith, husky righthand ace, will pitch one game today and Manager (Frank) Cooper indicates he may hurl again Tuesday."

<sup>7</sup> "Blues Home Soon," *Star*, April 12, 1937, 12.

<sup>8</sup> See "Monarchs Lose In 10th," *Star*, May 16, 1937, 2B; and "Monarchs Win The Series," *Times*, May 18, 1937, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Ernest "Higgs" Brown, "Hilton Smith, No-Hit, No-Run Game," *Call*, May 21, 1937, city edition, 17.

<sup>10</sup> "A No-Hit, No-Run Game," *Times*, May 17, 1937, 11; In latter years the *Star/Times* began to refer to some players by their nickname, which reflected a players' personality or on-field play. In games in which he pitched well, the white paper referred to Smith to as "No-Hit" Smith. Another nickname the newspaper often used was Willard "Home Run" Brown. See Holway, *Black Diamonds*, 98; "Monarchs Here Today," *Star*, May 15, 1938, 2B; and "Memphis is the Foe," May 16, 1939, 10.

<sup>11</sup> See *Star*, May 8, 1938, 5B; June 12, 1938, 5B; August 6, 1939, 2B; and July 4, 1940, 8.

<sup>12</sup> See "A 6-1 Monarch Victory," *Times*, June 7, 1937, 14; and "Monarchs Back in Lead," June 14, 1937, 12.

<sup>13</sup> The Monarchs won the 1924 Negro World Series and played in the 1925 Negro World Series. They had a winning percentage of .785 in 1929 with a 62-17 record, the highest in Negro League history. Before the Great Depression they had established themselves as the best team in black baseball. See Larry Lester and Sammy J. Miller, *Black American Series: Black Baseball in Kansas City* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2000), 7-8.

<sup>14</sup> "Pennant to Monarchs," *Times*, September 18, 1937, 20.

<sup>15</sup> "Schneider Are Upset," *Times*, September 6, 1937, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Lorraine Trembanis, "They Opened the Door Too Late: African Americans and Baseball, 1900-1947," (doctoral dissertation College of William and Mary, 2006), 268.

<sup>17</sup> John "Buck" O'Neil with Steve Wulf and David Conrads, *I Was Right On Time: My Journey From the Negro Leagues to the Majors* (New York: Fireside Books, 1997), 139 as found in Trembanis, 269-270.

<sup>18</sup> "A Series For A Title," *Star*, September 3, 1937, 4B.

<sup>19</sup> "Monarchs Open Today," *Star*, May 25, 1941, 2B.

<sup>20</sup> "Your Paper's Value," *Call*, March 19, 1937, national edition, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 331.

<sup>22</sup> "The Weak Spot in America's Armor," *Call*, June 14, 1940, national edition, 1.

- <sup>23</sup> “To Increase Negro Army Strength, Official Tells Editor,” *Call*, June 21, 1940, city edition, 1.
- <sup>24</sup> Lester, *Black Baseball’s National Showcase*, 21.
- <sup>25</sup> See David Orro, “Budge, DiMaggio Denounce Jim-Crow In Sports,” *Chicago Defender*, January 15, 1938, 20 as found in Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering,” 191.
- <sup>26</sup> *Pittsburgh Courier*, July through August, 1939 as found in Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering,” 206-208.
- <sup>27</sup> Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering,” 208.
- <sup>28</sup> See Frank A. Young, “West Beats East in Classic Thriller; 5 To 4,” *Chicago Defender*, August 27, 1938, 21; Young “The Stuff Is Here,” August 13, 1938, 21; and “Baseball Is Next,” August 20, 1938, 18 as found in Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering,” 191-192.
- <sup>29</sup> Young, “Dixie Whites Would Not Quit Big Leagues If Our Men Could Play,” *Chicago Defender*, June 18, 1938, 21 as found in Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering,” 192.
- <sup>30</sup> Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering,” 45.
- <sup>31</sup> See Brown, “Sports Chatter,” *Call*, August 26, 1938, city edition, 14; and “West All-Stars Defeat East 5-4.”
- <sup>32</sup> See “Big Leagues Eye Negro Baseball Loops; Writer Predicts White Ownership,” *Call*, March 18, 1938, national edition, 6; “Why No Negroes In Majors,” June 17, 1938, city edition, 15; and “Dizzy Dean Calls Satchel Paige Tops In Pitchers,” September 23, 1938, city edition, 14.
- <sup>33</sup> See “Bob Feller Here Next Friday Night,” *Call*, October 1, 1937, city edition, 15; and “Feller Here Friday” *Star*, October 3, 1937, 2B.
- <sup>34</sup> “Feller On Mound” *Star*, October 8, 1937, 26.
- <sup>35</sup> See “Bob Feller Here Next Friday,” *Call*, October 1, 1937, city edition, 15; and “Fans To See Bob Feller In Action,” October 8, 1937, 14.
- <sup>36</sup> See “Monarchs in 8-6 Win Over All-Leaguers,” *Call*, October 1, 1937, city edition, 14; and “Monarchs in 1-0 Loss to All-Leaguers,” October 15, 1937, national edition, 6.
- <sup>37</sup> “Beat The Monarchs, 1-0,” *Times*, October 11, 1937, 13.
- <sup>38</sup> “It’s Back to Farm for Feller When His Tour Ends Tonight,” *Times*, October 8, 1941, 11.
- <sup>39</sup> See Stephen Von Drehle Bird, “Ernest Mehl: A sports editor’s role in a city’s acquisition of two major league franchises” (master’s thesis Central Missouri State University, 1992).
- <sup>40</sup> See Lamb, “A Story in Black and White” and “L’affaire Jake Powell: The Minority Press Goes to Bat against Segregated Baseball,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76, no. 1 (1999): 21-34; and Richard Crepeau, “The Jake Powell Incident and the Press: A Study in Black and White,” *Baseball History* (Summer 1996): 32-46.
- <sup>41</sup> “1938 Sports Parade Comes to Record Close,” *Call* December 30, 1938, national edition, 9.
- <sup>42</sup> Ernest “Hipps” Brown Jr, “Sport Chatter,” *Call* December 30, 1938, national edition, 9.
- <sup>43</sup> Lester Rodney, “Negroes Excluded From Big Leagues As Annual Spring Training Begins,” *Call* March 24, 1939, national edition, 9.
- <sup>44</sup> “Spurn M.U. Track Meet,” *Call*, April 14, 1939, national edition, 1.
- <sup>45</sup> “Behind The Times,” *Call*, April 14, 1939 [national ed.] 1.
- <sup>46</sup> “What Became of Campaign to Get Negroes In Majors,” *Call*, June 16, 1939, national edition, 9.
- <sup>47</sup> Chester L. Washington, “Sez Ches,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 15, 1939, 16 as found in Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering,” 208-209.
- <sup>48</sup> See *Call* July through August, 1939. During the month, space in the *Call*’s sports section was also taken up by coverage of a Kansas City, Kansas integrated tennis tournament.
- <sup>49</sup> Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering,” 195.
- <sup>50</sup> R.S. Simmons, “Objects to Fight for Negroes’ Entrance Into White Major Leagues,” *Call*, September 8, 1939, national edition, no page number available. 9.
- <sup>51</sup> Carroll, 196, 197.
- <sup>52</sup> J.E. Alsbrook, “What Goes On Here,” *Call*, November 17, 1939, national edition, 8.

## Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> Franklin, “A Discussion of Race Relations,” *Call*, January 1, 1943, city edition, 1, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Washburn, *A Question of Sedition*, 180.

- <sup>3</sup> Franklin, "Our Freedmen Prove 'No Revenge' Brings Peace and Progress," *Call*, city edition, 1, 24.
- <sup>4</sup> See *Call*, June 25, 1943, city edition, 1; and Franklin, "Steady, Brothers!," June 25, 1943, city edition, 2.
- <sup>5</sup> See "Hold Your Job!" *Call*, September 3, 1943, city edition, 1; and February 14, 1944, national edition, 1. The "Watch Your Conduct" campaign with one column in 1943 by Franklin that reprimanded black workers in war plants for fighting with each other and injuring each other to the point of missing several days of work. The column stated that such attitudes are slowing down the country's production and damaging the black workers reputation. The following year, Franklin felt black citizens still needed some help in the area of public courteous, continuing the good mannerism campaign with picturesque cartoons titled "Do's and Don'ts" appearing on the front page. An example of one such cartoon shows a black man in a top hat and striped suit cursing (shown with symbols) while talking to another man on a street corner. A white lady walking by is depicted in the foreground plugging her ears and making a disgusted face. A child is shown standing next to the cursing black man. The caption underneath reads: "**BAD LANGUAGE IS NOT NECESSARY.**—The use of bad language is inexcusable at all times. It is not 'smart' to stand on the street and curse and swear. It is a disgrace. The weakling who uses such language, insulting his women and corrupting little children's minds, is often the first to cry about the mistreatment of his race. Let's be more careful."
- <sup>6</sup> Franklin, "A Discussion of race Relations," *Call*, January 1, 1943, city edition, 20.
- <sup>7</sup> Quote is from a letter made available through *Call* that C.A. Franklin wrote to Time magazine in response to a July 15, 1940 issue of the weekly news magazine. The Time article stated that the black press ignores the failings of its black people, turning all black things into good things. "Negro Press Plays 'Up' Good Points of Negroes Because White Press Plays Them 'Down'" *The Kansas City Call* July 26, 1940 [national], 1.
- <sup>8</sup> Bill Bagby, "Bill-O'-Fare," *Call*, September 13, 1940, national edition, 9.
- <sup>9</sup> Carroll, "Early Twentieth-Century Heroes," 34.
- <sup>10</sup> Rogosin, "Black Baseball: The Life in the Negro Leagues," 1.
- <sup>11</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 209.
- <sup>12</sup> Washburn, *A Question of Sedition*, 100.
- <sup>13</sup> Arnold Rose, *The Negro in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1948), 289.
- <sup>14</sup> Franklin, "Only real Democracy Will Save Us From Armageddon," *Call*, February 20, 1942, city edition, 1.
- <sup>15</sup> Sam McKibben, "Sports Potpourri," *Call*, May 22, 1942, national edition, 11.
- <sup>16</sup> "Truth is Light," *Call*, May 22, 1942, national edition, 10.
- <sup>17</sup> See McKibben, "Sports Potpourri," *Call*, June 5, 1942, city edition, 16.; and "Sports Potpourri," June 26, 1942, national edition, 11.
- <sup>18</sup> "Chicagoans Claim Times Is Ripe Now," *Chicago Defender*, May 23, 1942, 24 as found in Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 221.
- <sup>19</sup> "Landis Denies Ban on Negroes in Baseball," *Call*, July 24, 1942, national edition, 11.
- <sup>20</sup> McKibben, "Paige Says Abolish Jim Crow and He Will Be Ready For His Major League Debut But Not Before at Any Price," *Call*, August 21, 1942, national edition, 11.
- <sup>21</sup> Sam Lacy, *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 12, 1939, as found in Reisler, *Black Writers/Black Baseball*, 19-21.
- <sup>22</sup> Lacy and Newson, *Fighting for Fairness*, 59.
- <sup>23</sup> Q.J. Gilmore, "Best Team In Nearly a Decade, Says Q.J. Gilmore, in Speaking of the '42 Monarchs; Team Has Youth—Balance," *Call*, May 15, 1942, city edition, 16.
- <sup>24</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 32 and 112. No contracts existed in the Negro Leagues, so players constantly jumped around, thus Paige could pitch for whomever he wanted. The signing of contracts among Negro League players doesn't happen until after Jackie Robinson signs to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Because Robinson didn't have a written contract with the Monarchs, the black team received no compensation for the loss of Robinson's services.
- <sup>25</sup> "Dizzy Dean Calls Satchel Paige tops in Pitchers," *The Kansas City Call*, September 23, 1938, city edition, 14.
- <sup>26</sup> Eric Eames, "Byron Johnson: Remembering the Negro Leagues at 92." *Above the Fruited Plain: Baseball in the Rocky Mountain West*, Thomas L. Altherr, ed. (Cleveland, OH: Society for American Baseball Research, July 2003), 97.
- <sup>27</sup> Willie Bea Harmon, "Sportorial," *Call*, August 3, 1945, national edition, 6.

---

<sup>28</sup> Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 94-95.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>30</sup> McKibben, "Can The Grays Repulse The Monarchs Three Times in a Five Game Series?" *Call*, July 17, 1942, national edition, 11.

<sup>31</sup> See "An 8-0 Monarch Victory," *Star*, September 9, 1942, 16; "Monarchs vs. Grays," September 13, 1942, 4B; and "Negro Series Game Here," September 17, 1942, 12.

<sup>32</sup> "Monarchs Wrest Negro World Series Diadem From Homestead Grays," *Call*, October 2, 1942, national edition, 12.

<sup>33</sup> "Monarchs Win Title," *Star*, September 30, 1942, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 99-101; David S. Neft et al., *The Sports Encyclopedia: Baseball* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1974), 278. About 54 professional black baseball players are said to have served in World War II. The Monarchs who served were John O'Neil, Ted Strong, Ted Alexander, Willard Brown, Hilton Smith, Jesse Williams, Norris Phillips, Frank Bradley, Cliff Johnson, Joe Greene, Allen Bryant, Leroy James, Lee Moody and Sam Haynes.

<sup>35</sup> Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 98.

<sup>36</sup> Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 100-101, 106.

<sup>37</sup> See "Start Fight For Negro Baseball," *Call*, April 2, 1943, city edition, 1; and "Eastman Turns Down Request For Baseball," May 7, 1943, city edition, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Smith *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 10, 1943, as found in Reisler, *Black Writers/Black Baseball*, 47-48.

<sup>39</sup> Trembanis, "They Opened the Door Too Late," 105.

<sup>40</sup> See O'Neil, *I Was Right on Time*, 83; and Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 61, 78.

<sup>41</sup> See Franklin, "Steady, Brothers!," *Call*, June 25, 1943, city edition, 2. In 1943, riots involving blacks broke out in nearly every part of the country—zoot suit riots in Los Angeles, Harlem riots in New York and the race riots in Beaumont, Texas, and Detroit—leaving thousands injured and 43 people dead (33 blacks). With segregation already providing a wedge of tension between blacks and whites, hard conditions in wartime factories (with the prevailing 48-hour work weeks) increased prejudices to the point of violence. Working next to blacks in wartime factories made whites resentful and caused many stoppages and slowdowns in production. Blacks also protested against segregated work conditions that still existed in war factories despite the U.S. military's efforts to integrate and the government's talk of promised democracy. While African Americans might have felt compelled to retaliate after the riots and other prejudices, Franklin urged blacks to stay cool and turn the other cheek. In a column a week after the Detroit riots, he strongly reminded members of his fellow race that progress, not revenge, was the ultimate goal: "Great values are at stake in the world. When others desert them, the more reason why we should not. It is spiritual suicide. To copy our enemies is to approve their practices." To enact vengeance through violence, he added, would halt the progress of obtaining social equalities and give those in authority further reason to keep the races separated.

Federal troops arrived to put an end to the brutality of the Detroit race riots that left 34 people dead, 25 of which were black. As the black population doubled from 1933-to-1943, so did the racial tensions in the city. Finally, after a housing feud that granted blacks access to homes in a white neighborhood and a rumor about two blacks raping a white woman spread, a white mob gathered and headed into the black community of Woodward, not necessarily looking for justice, but looking to vent. Whites pummeled black bystanders as they waited for a bus or as they stepped off the trolley cars, often times in full view of white police officers. They tipped over and set fire to cars belonging to blacks. They broke out store windows and lootings occurred.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph C. Carroll, "Negro Press Is Race's Best Method of Self-Expression," *Call*, March 12, 1943, national edition, 22.

<sup>43</sup> See Washburn, *A Question of Sedition*, 101-103 and 144-146. Simmons also notes how the black press' outcries against unfair governmental policies were legal under wartime sedition statutes, but were "severe enough to warrant many investigations." The threats made by the government attempted to scare the black press out of business or into submission. J. Edgar Hoover wanted the black press to give up its demands for equality until after the war. Ultimately, some of the government's threats worked and some did not. All in all, the black press survived the war years and the pressures of lawsuits, without any black newspaper folding. Simmons, *The African American Press*, 87-90.

<sup>44</sup> "Start Fight For Negro Baseball," *Call*, April 2, 1943, city edition, 1.

<sup>45</sup> McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, April 2, 1943, 18.



- 
- <sup>46</sup> McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, April 27, 1943, 14.
- <sup>47</sup> "Monarch Abandon Practice Plans," *Call*, April 9, 1943, city edition, 17.
- <sup>48</sup> "SAVE NEGRO BASEBALL!" *Call*, April 9, 1943, city edition, 24.
- <sup>49</sup> "Baseball Petitions to D.C.," *Call*, April 23, 1943, national edition, 1.
- <sup>50</sup> "SAVE NEGRO BASEBALL!" *Call*, April 9, 1943, city edition, 24.
- <sup>51</sup> "East Changes Mind and Decides To Fight With The Call for Buses," *Call*, national edition, 10.
- <sup>52</sup> See "Eastman Turns Down Request for Baseball," *Call*, city edition, 1, 24; and Bruce, 100.
- <sup>53</sup> Harmon, "Sportorial," *Call*, city edition, 16.
- <sup>54</sup> See *Call*, August 17, 1945, city edition, 16; May 12, 1944, city edition, 16; June 9, 1944, national edition, 6; June 30, 1944, national edition, 6; July 7, 1944, national edition, 6; August 4, 1944, national edition, 6.
- <sup>55</sup> See *Call*, June 9, 1944, national, edition, 6.
- <sup>56</sup> "Will Major League Baseball Heads Drop Color Line?" *Call*, December 10, 1943, city edition, 17.
- <sup>57</sup> Harmon, "Sportorial," *Call*, December 10, 1943, city edition, 17.

## Chapter Five

- <sup>1</sup> Washburn, *The African American newspaper*, 162, 176, and 177.
- <sup>2</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 239.
- <sup>3</sup> "Interracial Athletics," *Call*, May 25, 1945 [national], 14.
- <sup>4</sup> "Segregate at Golden Gloves: Pickets Protest Jim Crow," *Call*, February 14, 1947, city edition, 1, 27.
- <sup>5</sup> Louis Blue, "Segregation Issue Now Squarely Up To City," *Call*, February 14, 1947, city edition, 1, 27.
- <sup>6</sup> "Segregate at Golden Gloves: Pickets Protest Jim Crow," *Call*, February 14, 1947, city edition, 1, 27.
- <sup>7</sup> Blue, "Segregation Issue Now Squarely Up To City," *Call*, February 14, 1947, city edition, 1, 27.
- <sup>8</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, January 4, 1946, City edition, 16.
- <sup>9</sup> Harmon, "Sportorial," *Call*, August 24, 1945, city edition, 18.
- <sup>10</sup> See Lorenzo C. White, "A Chance for Baseball," *New York Times*, May 16, 1942, 19; "Champions Negro Stars: Senator Perry Seeks Recognition for Baseball Players," *New York Times*, January 23, 1940, 30; "Goldstein to Seek Help for Negroes: Mayorality Candidate Pledges He Will Attempt to Assure Equal Rights in Baseball," September 24, 1945, 11; and Rogosin, *Black Baseball*, 18.
- <sup>11</sup> Rogosin, *Black Baseball*, 192.
- <sup>12</sup> Ernest Mehl, "The Monarchs, Led By Frank Duncan, Seem Headed for One of Best Season," *Star*, May 29, 1946, 14.
- <sup>13</sup> See McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, May 9, 1946, 10; and "Monarchs Before 64,586," July 16, 1946, 10.
- <sup>14</sup> McBride, "Sporting Comment," July 19, 1946, 18.
- <sup>15</sup> "Jack Robinson, Gridster, to Monarchs," *Call*, March 9, 1945 [national], 6.
- <sup>16</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 242-243. Smith worked with Boston councilman Isadore Muchnick to arrange tryout. Both Smith and Muchnick drove the players to Fenway Park. The *Courier* also paid for the player's accommodations.
- <sup>17</sup> Harmon, "Sportorial," April 20, 1945, national edition, 6.
- <sup>18</sup> Arnold Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson: A Biography* (New York: Arnold A. Knopf, Inc., 1997), 120. In Reisler's book, the historian notes how after one of the workout sessions in Boston, Smith talked with Brooklyn Dodgers' president Branch Ricky, who asked Smith if he knew of any blacks talented enough to play in the Major Leagues. Smith responded, "If you aren't serious about this, Mr. Rickey, I'd rather not waste our time discussing it. But if you are serious, I do know of a player who could make it. His name is Jackie Robinson." Reisler, *Black Writers/Black Baseball*, 39.
- <sup>19</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 243. Smith sent information prior to and after the tryouts to Boston's black and white newspapers. Carroll argues that with the nation making the transition from FDR to Harry Truman, there remained little public attention for blacks trying out for a Major League team. In fact, the Red Sox executives left the tryouts in the hands of their junior coaches.
- <sup>20</sup> Harmon, "Sportorial," *Call*, April 27, 1945, national edition, 6.
- <sup>21</sup> See *Call*, February 11, 1944, national and city editions, 1; and February 25, 1944, national edition, 14.

- <sup>22</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 200. In context with other social issues, economic opportunity and full integration were the most prominent themes in black coverage from 1944 to 1945. See also W.H. Hollins, "The Negro Press in America: A Content Analysis of Five Newspapers," unpublished M.A. thesis (University of Minnesota, 1945), 75.
- <sup>23</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 200, 201.
- <sup>24</sup> Harmon, "Sportorial," *Call*, August 17, 1945, national edition, 6.
- <sup>25</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 32; and "Satchel Paige Celebrates 20 Years as Ace Hurler," *Call*, July 16, 1943, city edition, 16. In this article, it states that Paige will be pitching for the Memphis Red Sox for a couple of games. Team owners would negotiate to get Paige on loan, primarily as a tactic to boost attendance figures, when he wasn't scheduled to pitch for the Monarchs.
- <sup>26</sup> Frommer, *Rickey and Robinson*, 7; and Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 116.
- <sup>27</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 244-245, 249.
- <sup>28</sup> Frommer, *Rickey and Robinson*, 3, 14; and Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 127.
- <sup>29</sup> Alvin Moses, "Beating the Gun," *Call*, August 31, 1945, national edition, 6.
- <sup>30</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 246. Carroll writes the Smith did not write any stories on Robinson or Rickey until September, informing readers for the first of Rickey's steady observance of Robinson. But the writer made no mention of the "season-long surveillance" or of Rickey's signing of Robinson to a minor league contract with open possibilities to the big leagues.
- <sup>31</sup> Bob Greene, "John I. Johnson's Spotlight," *Call* April 15, 1960, 11.
- <sup>32</sup> "To Play With Montreal Royals; Jackie Robinson Signed By Dodgers," *Call* October 26, 1945, city edition, 18.
- <sup>33</sup> See Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 128; and "Jackie Robinson Not Suspended From Team," *Call*, September 21, 1945, city edition, 16. Rampersad states that the Monarchs suspended Robinson for his unexcused absent from the team when he traveled to New York to meet with Rickey. However, J.L. Wilkinson, the Monarchs' owner, told the *Call* that the star shortstop missed the remaining games due to a sore shoulder: "He was away from the team for a few days near the end of the season, but he was still a member of the team until the end of the season. He did not play the last few games because of an injury."
- <sup>34</sup> See Johnson, "Sportlight," *Call*, November 2, 1945, national edition, 6; Johnson, "Monarch Owners Bless Jackie Robinson," *Call*, November 2, 1945, national edition, 6; For Smith's warning see "Smitty's Spots Spurts," December 18, 1943, 14 as found in Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 235; "To Play With Montreal Royals; Jackie Robinson Signed By Dodgers," *Call* October 26, 1945, city edition, 18. Tom Baird, one of the Monarchs owners, is quoted in the article as saying, "I was misquoted by the Associate Press story, if there was an implication that we are going to start a fight to keep Robinson out of the league or were going to cause him any trouble. We do not intend to do anything of the kind. We are glad of his advancement and hope more Negro players get the same opportunity. We are not in the Negro baseball just to make money; we want to see the Negro race advance to full participation in American activities."
- <sup>35</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, November 9, 1945, national edition, 6.
- <sup>36</sup> "A New Era in Baseball," *Call*, November 2, 1945, national edition, 14.
- <sup>37</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 9, 1947, city edition, 17.
- <sup>38</sup> McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, August 8, 1946, 10.
- <sup>39</sup> McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, September 21, 1946, 5.
- <sup>40</sup> "His Day to Celebrate," *Times*, April 19, 1946, 17.
- <sup>41</sup> See *Times*, October 3, 1946, 18; October 4, 1946, 14; October 5, 1946, 14.
- <sup>42</sup> McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, October 3, 1946, 14. McBride stated that the Robinson will be in a Dodger uniform in 1947 based on his stellar performance in the upper minor leagues. "In the meanwhile Jackie Robinson has made good in a triple A baseball, the flight rating just below the majors, and the fact is quite generally accepted that Robinson will be a member of the Brooklyn squad in spring training camp and will be a definite threat to all contenders for infield."
- <sup>43</sup> "Play To 16,000," *Star*, May 13, 1946, 9.
- <sup>44</sup> See *Times*, May 13, 1946, 9; May 20, 1946, 9.
- <sup>45</sup> "Satchel Paige, at 40, Has an Eye on a Big League Berth," *Times*, September 6, 1946, 18.
- <sup>46</sup> "Paige's All-Stars Win," *Times*, October 1, 1946, 12.
- <sup>47</sup> For example see *Call*, September 26, 1946, national edition, 10.
- <sup>48</sup> "The Call's Sports Win Coaches' Favor," *Call*, December 27, 1946, city edition, 18.
- <sup>49</sup> See entire sports page of *Call*, April 18, 1947, national edition, 6.

- 
- <sup>50</sup> “At Ease With Dodgers,” *Star*, April 26, 1947, 5.
- <sup>51</sup> “We Wish Robby Success,” *Call*, April 25, 1947, national edition, 14.
- <sup>52</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, March 28, 1947, national edition, 8.
- <sup>53</sup> McBride, “Sporting Comment,” *Star*, May 11, 1947, 1b. See also Lacy and Newson, *Fighting for Fairness*, 66
- <sup>54</sup> For example see “Dodgers Nip Reds,” *Star*, August 24, 1947, 1b. In this game, Robinson went 3-for-3 at the plate, scored a run, batted in another and stole a base to help the Dodgers win 8-5.
- <sup>55</sup> See Lamb and Bleske, “Democracy on the Field” and “The Road to October 23, 1945: The Press and the Integration of Baseball,” *Nine: A Journal of Baseball and Social Policy* 6 (Fall 1997), 48-68; Lamb, “I Never Want Another Trip Like This One: Jackie Robinson’s Trip to Integrate Baseball,” *Journal of Sport History* 24 (Summer 1997), 177-191; William G. Kelley, “Jackie Robinson and the Press,” *Journalism Quarterly* 53 (Spring 1976), 137-139; Washburn, “New York Newspapers and Robinson”; Weaver, “The Black Press and the Assault on Professional Baseball”; and Wiggins, “Wendell Smith”.
- <sup>56</sup> Wilkins, *Standing Fast*, 60.
- <sup>57</sup> See *Times*, May 9, 1947, 20; May 10, 1947, 19.
- <sup>58</sup> See *Call*, May 16, 1947, city edition, 14; May 23, 1947, city edition, 18; May 30, 1947, national edition, 8; June 6, 1947, city edition, 18; and June 13, 1947, city edition, 19.
- <sup>59</sup> See *Call*, June 20, 1947, national edition, 7; and June 20, 1947, national edition, 8.
- <sup>60</sup> McBride, “Sporting Comment,” *Star*, August 4, 1947, 12.
- <sup>61</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, April 25, 1947, national edition, 6.
- <sup>62</sup> See “Monarchs In Opening Game Sunday,” May 2, 1947, city edition, 1; and “Monarchs Defeat Chicago 13-3 in League Opener,” May 9, 1947, national edition, 7.
- <sup>63</sup> Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering,” 247; and Ribowsky, *A Complete History of the Negro Leagues*, 7.
- <sup>64</sup> “Monarchs In Opening Game Sunday,” *Call*, May 2, 1947, city edition, 1; “Monarchs Defeat Chicago 13-3 In League Opener,” May 9, 1947, national edition, 7; and Johnson, “Sport Light,” August 1, 1947, national edition, 7.
- <sup>65</sup> See Johnson, “Brooklyn Wins Third Game of Series,” *Call*, October 3, 1947, city edition, 1; “Yanks Win Series, 5-2; Jackie Makes History,” October 10, 1947, national edition, 1; “Jackie Outstanding as Dodgers Lose First Two,” October 3, 1947, city edition, 21; “Jackie Mainspring in Dodgers Machine-Mehl,” October 10, 1947, national edition, 6; “Interest in the 1947 World Series Crips [sic] Nation,” October 10, 1947, national edition, 7; and “Jackie Makes History in Tense World Series,” October 10, 1947, city edition, 19.
- <sup>66</sup> “Jackie Mainspring In Dodgers Machine-Mehl,” *Call*, October 3, 1947, city edition, 21.
- <sup>67</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, October 17, 1947, national edition, 8.
- <sup>68</sup> See *Cleveland Call-Post*, Jan 14, 1950 as found in Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 353.
- <sup>69</sup> Carroll, “When to Stop the Cheering,” 268-269, 273-274.
- <sup>70</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, October 24, 1947, national edition, 8.

## Chapter Six

- <sup>1</sup> Mehl, “A Player Raises Interesting Point About Negro Athletes,” *Times*, April 6, 1948, 15.
- <sup>2</sup> “Man Of The Year,” *Call*, Jan 2, 1948, Texas edition, 8
- <sup>3</sup> Kansas City Call, June 3, 1922.
- <sup>4</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 130; and *Call*, October 27, 1922. See also Wilkins, *Standing Fast*, 60. “I still remember the sunny afternoon I told everyone at *The CALL* that I was going to take a half a day off to go down to Muehlebach Field to watch the Kansas City Blues play a visiting team from St. Paul. People looked at me strangely, and when I reached the ballpark I found out why. It turned out that Negroes could sit in the last section of the bleachers, a few yards farther from home plate than the right fielder. I skipped the Blues from then on . . . Not long afterward I went to Muehlebach Field to watch the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro National League play. It was the first NNL game I had seen, and when I arrived I discovered that the stands were full of white people scattered among the Negro fans, the same white people who could not bear to sit besides Negroes when a white team was on the field.”
- <sup>5</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, January 16, 1948, city edition, 9.
- <sup>6</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, August 27, 1948, national edition, 8.
- <sup>7</sup> See *Call* July 8, 1948; August 13, 1948; August 20, 1948; August 27, 1948; and September 3, 1948.

- 
- <sup>8</sup> See *Call* March 26, 1948, city edition, 21; and May 14, 1948, city edition, 27;
- <sup>9</sup> See *Call* July 2, 1948, city edition, 16; July 9, 1948, national edition, 9; and July 16, 1948, national edition, 8.
- <sup>10</sup> "In Three Games Here," *Star*, May 19, 1948, 30.
- <sup>11</sup> "15,000 See Game," *Times*, May 12, 1948, 12.
- <sup>12</sup> See *Star*, July 7, 1948, 22; July 8, 1948, 12; August 14, 1948, 18; See *Times*, July 15, 1948, 17; July 17, 1948, 18; and August 31, 1948, 14.
- <sup>13</sup> "Paige Fans Side," *Times*, June 15, 1948, 17.
- <sup>14</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 288.
- <sup>15</sup> See "Newark Eagles Disband And Bears Are For Sale," *Call*, November 19, 1948, city edition, 27; and *Memphis World* June 25, 1949, in Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 331.
- <sup>16</sup> See (Bankhead) *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 27, 1949 and (Campanella) *New York Age* February 5, 1949, as found in Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 331-332.
- <sup>17</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 21, 1948, city edition, 20.
- <sup>18</sup> McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, June 1, 1948, 15.
- <sup>19</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, November 26, 1948, national edition, 8.
- <sup>20</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 289-291.
- <sup>21</sup> See *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 2, 1948, as found in Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 331.
- <sup>22</sup> See Carroll, "Negro Leagues in the 1920s," 2; Chris Perry, *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 15, 1948 and January 8, 1949, as found in Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 331.
- <sup>23</sup> "Negro Baseball Has Made Little Progress," *Call*, March 5, 1948, national edition, 8.
- <sup>24</sup> Vernon Jarret (ANP), "Negro League Conflabs [sic]," *Call* December 24, 1948, city edition, 16.
- <sup>25</sup> Jesse Owens, "Jessie [sic] Owns Corner," *Chicago Defender*, 4 September 1949, 13.
- <sup>26</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 290.
- <sup>27</sup> Bruce, *Kansas City Monarchs*, 117.
- <sup>28</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, February 20, 1948, national edition, 8. See also *Call* February 18, 1948, city edition, 1. Terms of sale undisclosed.
- <sup>29</sup> McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, April 14, 1949, 18.
- <sup>30</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 290.
- <sup>31</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, November 26, 1948, national edition, 8.
- <sup>32</sup> "White Sports Writer Says Negro Baseball Must Lift Its Color Bar," *Call*, December 10, 1948, national edition, 9.
- <sup>33</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, July 14, 1950, national edition, 8.
- <sup>34</sup> "White Sports Writer Says Negro Baseball Must Lift Its Color Bar," *Call*, December 10, 1948, national edition, 9.
- <sup>35</sup> McBride, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, April 14, 1949, 18.
- <sup>36</sup> See *Star*, June 2, 1949, 24; June 3, 1949, 20; June 6, 1949, 13; June 13, 1949, 14; June 30, 1949, 20. See *Star*, June 1, 1949, 28; and June 18, 1949, 6.
- <sup>37</sup> See *Times*, June 10, 1949, 20; June 21, 1949, 18; June 22, 1949, 18; June 25, 1949, 19; June 27, 1949, 13; June 28, 1949, 18. See *The Kansas City Star*, June 12, 1949, 6B; and June 27, 1949, 12.
- <sup>38</sup> See *Times*, June 11, 1949, 18; July 6, 1949, 17; July 28, 1949, 20; and August 6, 1949, 17.
- <sup>39</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, November 26, 1948, national edition, 8.
- <sup>40</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, September 17, 1948, national edition, 8.
- <sup>41</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, February 11, 1949, national edition, 8.
- <sup>42</sup> Biographical information from: Ophelia T. Pinkard, "Dowdal H. Davis, Jr. (1913-1957): Journalist, Businessman, Activist," *Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society*, Vol. 18, 2, p. 104-107. Dowdal Henry Davis came to *The Call* in 1937 after graduating as a Fine Art major from the University of Kansas. He played several sports including football, tennis, golf, and basketball. A broken leg shortened his athletic career. He became the paper's advertising manager in 1943, general manager in 1947, and as president of the newspaper by 1950. At the same time he was president of *The Call*, Davis also acted as president of the National Newspaper Publisher's Association. Davis held a number of civic posts during his life, becoming a well-known African American leader in the community and in the nation. He was active in the fight for African American civil and voting rights. He was one of seven African American newspapermen selected to tour and inspect United States military conditions in Germany and Austria in 1948. This committee's report recommended that segregation and discrimination should be abolished in the

---

armed forces. This report influenced President Harry S. Truman to sign Executive Order No. 9981, which called for equality with regard to treatment and opportunities in the American armed forces. Truman then included Dowdal in a group of six members on the Government Contract Compliance Committee, which was responsible for making sure Federal contract clauses barred racial or religious discrimination in employment.

<sup>43</sup> Dowdal H. Davis, "Courage in Sports Most Vital in Our Democracy," *Call*, February 4, 1949, city edition, 19.

<sup>44</sup> Johnson, "Negro Ball Clubs Hold Color Line," *Call*, Feb 11, 1949, city edition, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Davis, "Wake Up, Negro Baseball," *Call*, February 11, 1949, city edition, 1.

<sup>46</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, February 11, 1949, national edition, 8.

<sup>47</sup> "We've Got to Practice What WE Preach," *Call* February 18, 1949, national edition, 18.

<sup>48</sup> A.C. Young *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 13, 1950 as found in Jim Reisler, *Black Writers/Black Baseball*, 183.

<sup>49</sup> Johnson, "Chicago Giants Sign White Ball Player," *Call*, February 25, 1949, city edition, 1, 20.

<sup>50</sup> Larry R Gerlach, "Baseball's Other 'Great Experiment': Eddie Klep and the Integration of Negro Leagues," *Journal of Sport History*, 25 (Fall 1998): 453-81.

<sup>51</sup> Johnson, "Chicago Giants Sign White Ball Player," *Call*, February 25, 1949, city edition, 1, 20.

<sup>52</sup> See Johnson, "Chicago Giants Sign White Ball Player," *Call*, February 25, 1949, city edition, 1, 20; Johnson, "Sport Light," March 4, 1949, city edition, 20; and "Sport Light," March 18, 1949, national edition, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, February 25, 1949, city edition, 18.

<sup>54</sup> "Murders Must Stop In K.C.," *Call*, January 28, 1949, city edition, 1.

<sup>55</sup> See "Say Liquor Leads To Many Slayings," *Call*, February 4, 1949, city edition, 1; "Murder Toll Rises As Letters Pour In," February 11, 1949, city edition, 1; "Letters Pour In As Slaying Toll Rises," February 25, 1949, city edition, 1; and "Negligence of Church Blamed For Slayings," March 4, 1949, city edition, 1.

<sup>56</sup> "Common-Law Mating As Cause of Slaying," *Call*, March 11, 1949, city edition, 1.

<sup>57</sup> "No Murder In Month of March," *Call*, April 1, 1949, city edition, 1.

<sup>58</sup> "Let's Make It Another Month," *Call*, April 8, 1949, city edition, 1.

<sup>59</sup> "Fail to Equal No Murder Mark," *Call*, April 15, 1949, city edition, 1.

<sup>60</sup> "Redouble Efforts To Curb Slayings," *Call*, April 22, 1949, city edition, 1.

<sup>61</sup> See Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, September 23, 1949, city edition, 8; and October 21, 1949, national edition, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, September 17, 1948, city edition, 9. For Cowans see Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 367.

<sup>63</sup> Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 191.

<sup>64</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, September 30, 1949, national edition, 8.

<sup>65</sup> Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 357.

<sup>66</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, March 3, 1950, national edition, 9.

## Chapter Six

<sup>1</sup> See "A Survey of Negro Athletes In Sports in 1950," *Call*, January 5, 1951, national edition, 10; "NAL Club Owners See Fine Future," January 19, 1951, national edition, 12; and "Eight Hopeful Clubs to Start NAL Race Sunday," May 4, 1951, national edition, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Russ J. Cowans, "NAL Officials To Meet in Chi Feb. 4; Black Barons' Future Still Uncertain," *Call*, February 1, 1952, national edition, 11; and "Negro Amer. League Draws Schedule; To Start 1952 Campaign on May 11," *Call*, February 15, 1952, national edition, 11.

<sup>3</sup> "N.A.L. To Start With Six Teams," *Call*, March 26, 1954, national edition, 10.

<sup>4</sup> "St. Louis Cardinals Buy First Negro Recruit for \$100,00, Four Players," *Call*, February 5, 1954, national edition, 11; The Cardinals already had 13 young black players in its farm system, but Alston was considered big-league material.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, April 11, 1952, national edition, 10.

<sup>6</sup> See *Call*, June 16, 1950, national edition, 8; June 23, 1950, national edition, 8; and June 30, 1950, national edition, 9.

- 
- <sup>7</sup> “Monarchs Maul Memphis 10-4 In League Starter,” *Call*, May 11, 1951, national edition, 10; “Review of the Personnel of the Monarchs And the Clowns, Division Leaders in 1950,” May 11, 1951, national edition, 11.
- <sup>8</sup> See *Call* March 13, 1953, national edition, 1; and April 24, 1953, national edition, 1.
- <sup>9</sup> See “Giants May Have Pitching ‘Find’ In Ruben Gomez,” *Call*, February 27, 1953, national edition, 10; “Yanks’ Tan Farm Hands Prove Powerful At Plate,” April 17, 1953, national edition, 11; See March 27, 1953, national edition, 10, 12; April 3, 1953, national edition, 10; April 10, 1953, national edition, 10; March 13, 1953, national edition, 1; and April 24, 1953, national edition, 1.
- <sup>10</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, May 30, 1952, national edition, 10.
- <sup>11</sup> See *Call*, May 25, 1951, national edition, 10.
- <sup>12</sup> See *Call*, June 1, 1951, national edition, 10.
- <sup>13</sup> See *Call*, May 25, 1951, national edition.
- <sup>14</sup> See *Call*, July 24, 1953, national edition, 10.
- <sup>15</sup> See *Call*, June 29; July 6; and July 27, 1951, national edition.
- <sup>16</sup> See Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, May 9, 1952, national edition, 10; September 29, 1950, national edition, 8; and *Call*, November 24, 1950, national edition, 8. For complete roster names see Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, Appendix A, 133-143.
- <sup>17</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, March 26, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>18</sup> “Milwaukee Inks Rookie Phenom Henry Aaron,” *Call*, April 16, 1954, national edition, 10. Aaron batted .362 in the Northern Class-A Sally League, scored 125 runs and drove in 125, while hitting 22 homeruns. Now he was making the jump to the big time and Branch Rickey called him one of the finest prospects in all of baseball. Both Aaron and Banks were inducted in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Aaron held the career home run record with 755 for 33 years until Barry Bonds of the San Francisco Giants surpassed the mark in 2007.
- <sup>19</sup> “Monarchs Ink Three Rookies And Tag Others,” *Call*, March 23, 1951, national edition, 11; and Johnson, “Sport Light,” March 25, 1951, city edition, 10.
- <sup>20</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, May 14, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>21</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, December 29, 1950, national edition, 6.
- <sup>22</sup> “East-West Game Faces Death in Chicago Park,” *Call*, May 15, 1953, national edition, 11.
- <sup>23</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, August 15, 1952, national edition, 12; and August 22, 1952, national edition, 12.
- <sup>24</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, September 29, 1950, national edition, 8; November 24, 1950, national edition, 8; and July 2, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>25</sup> “East-West Game Faces Death in Chicago Park,” *Call*, May 15, 1953, national edition, 11; July 18, 1952, 10; August 15, 1952, 10, 12; and August 22, 1952, 12.
- <sup>26</sup> See Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, August 17, 1951, national edition, 10.
- <sup>27</sup> Dr. J.B. Martin, “The East-West Game, Should is (sic) Be Rotated? Loop Prexy Wants Opinions,” *Call*, September 4, 1953, national edition, 10.
- <sup>28</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, August 27, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>29</sup> Johnson, “West Beats East, 8-4 In NAL East-West Classic In Chicago,” *Call*, August 27, 1954, national edition, 11.
- <sup>30</sup> See “Monarchs, 9-7,” *Times*, May 28, 1951, 14.
- <sup>31</sup> Mehl, “Sporting Comment,” *Star*, August 14, 1950, 12.
- <sup>32</sup> McBride, “Sporting Comment,” *Star*, April 4, 1950, 18.
- <sup>33</sup> “Yanks Buy Two Monarchs,” *Star*, July 19, 1950, 28.
- <sup>34</sup> McBride, “Sporting Comment,” *Star*, April 28, 1950, 32.
- <sup>35</sup> See *Times*, July 3, 1950, 11; July 10, 1950, 13; July 11, 1950, 16; July 17, 1950, 15; July 21, 1950, 19; July 24, 1950, 13; July 26, 1950, 16; July 27, 1950, 19; and July 31, 1950, 13. See also *Star*, July 5, 1950, 24; July 16, 1950, 8B; July 23, 1950, 7B; and July 30, 1950, 4B.
- <sup>36</sup> See *Times*, August 1, 1951, 15; August 21, 1951, 14; and August 22, 1951, 17. See also *Star*, August 12, 1951, 3B; and August 26, 1951, 5B.
- <sup>37</sup> Johnson, “Sport Light,” *Call*, December 21, 1951, national edition, 10.
- <sup>38</sup> See “Clowns, Monarchs In World-Series Like Contests,” *Call*, August 31, 1951, national edition, 10; and “Clowns and Monarchs Vie In World Series Tour,” September 14, 1951, national edition, 10.

- <sup>39</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, July 2, 1954, national edition, 10. See also Luix Virgil Overbea, "Negro Baseball on the ropes, Needs Support of Negro Fans to Survive," *Call*, September 8, 1950, national edition, 9. A.C. Young, *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 13, 1950, as found in Reisler, *Black Writers/Black Baseball*, 182.
- <sup>40</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 22; and Jason Berger, "Promoting Monarchs' baseball through community-based weekly journalism: Quincy J. Gilmore, the pitcher, and The Kansas City CALL, the catcher" *Grassroots Editor*, Vol. 45, no. 4 (2004), 1-8.
- <sup>41</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 22; and Berger, "Promoting Monarchs' baseball."
- <sup>42</sup> See *Call*, June 26, 1953, national edition, 12. With fewer teams to play against and with Major League fan competition in the bigger cities, the remaining teams would often pair up together for barnstorming tours in small towns in the Midwest and Canada. The Clowns and Monarchs primarily dominated the league, regularly teaming up together for barnstorming games, and drawing between 2,000 to 7,000 fans. See also Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 121.
- <sup>43</sup> See Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, March 7, 1952, national edition, 10; and Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 191.
- <sup>44</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, March 7, 1952, national edition, 10.
- <sup>45</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, July 2, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>46</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 121.
- <sup>47</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 273, 274.
- <sup>48</sup> Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 192, 193.
- <sup>49</sup> Martin, "Negro League Prexy Praises Fans For Outstanding Support In 1953," *Call*, September 11, 1953, national edition, 10.
- <sup>50</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, March 23, 1951, national edition, 10.
- <sup>51</sup> Martin, "Dr. Martin Says," *Call*, May 30, 1952, national edition, 10.
- <sup>52</sup> "23 Tan Players Start Major League Season Play," *Call*, April 17, 1953, national edition, 10.
- <sup>53</sup> Martin, "Negro American League Prexy Denies The Colored Loop Practices Jim Crow," *Call*, June 5, 1953, national edition, 11.
- <sup>54</sup> "Colored Boys Get Inspiration, Owners Joy as Sally Loop Opens With Negroes," *Call*, May 1, 1953, national edition, 11.
- <sup>55</sup> Martin, "Negro American League Prexy Denies The Colored Loop Practices Jim Crow," *Call*, June 5, 1953, national edition, 11; "Dr. Martin Says," *Call*, May 30, 1952, national edition, 10.
- <sup>56</sup> Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 353, 354.
- <sup>57</sup> Martin, "Dr. Martin Says," *Call*, May 29, 1953, national edition, 11.
- <sup>58</sup> "Dizzy Dismukes Prowls the Country Seeking Likely Prospects for Monarchs Ball Club," *Call*, January 27, 1950, national edition, 9; "Sport Light," March 3, 1950.
- <sup>59</sup> Paul O'Boynick, *Times*, April 6, 1953, 18.
- <sup>60</sup> McBride, "Monarchs Loaded With Talent For 1953 Season Opener May 24," *Times*, May 19, 1953, 19.
- <sup>61</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, June 12, 1953 as in Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 366.
- <sup>62</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 15, 1953, national edition, 10.
- <sup>63</sup> "Near 20,000 attend Monarchs Home Opener," May 29, 1953, national edition, 10.
- <sup>64</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 29, 1953, national edition, 10.
- <sup>65</sup> "All This And Baseball," *Times*, May 25, 1953, 1.
- <sup>66</sup> See Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 382 including endnote.
- <sup>67</sup> Martin, "Kansas City Monarchs Are The Royalty of Negro Baseball, Say League President," *Call*, July 17, 1953, national edition, 12.
- <sup>1</sup> "May 12 Deadline Cut Leaves 28 Negro Players on 11 Major League Rosters," *Call*, May 21, 1954, national edition, 10. Both Ernie Banks and Hank Aaron have been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Aaron held the Major League record for most career home runs with 755, a record he held for 33 years until Barry Bonds surpassed it in 2007.
- <sup>2</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, January 2, 1953, national edition, 9; January 1, 1954, national edition, 8.
- <sup>3</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, January 1, 1954, national edition, 8.
- <sup>4</sup> "Birmingham Drops Ban On Negro-White Competition In Baseball And Football," *Call*, February 5, 1954, national edition, 11.
- <sup>5</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, April 23, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>6</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, April 23, 1954, national edition, 10.

- <sup>7</sup> Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 122-126.
- <sup>8</sup> "St. Louis Cardinals Buy First Negro Recruit for \$100,00, Four Players," *Call*, February 5, 1954, national edition, 11.
- <sup>9</sup> "N.A.L. To Start With Six Teams," *Call*, March 26, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>10</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, February 26, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>11</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, March 12, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>12</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 14, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>13</sup> See Bird, "Ernest Mehl: A sports editor's role."
- <sup>14</sup> Mehl, "Sporting Comment," *Star*, September 29, 1954, 32; October 6, 1954, 43; October 7, 1954, 22; October 8, 1954, 34.
- <sup>15</sup> See Bird, "Ernest Mehl: A sports editor's role."
- <sup>16</sup> "Let's Be Really Big League," *Call*, August 13, 1954, national edition, 18.
- <sup>17</sup> See Louis Blue, "Sport Light," *Call*, November 12, 1954, national edition, 10; Johnson, November 19, 1954, national edition, 10; Johnson, December 17, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>18</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, November 26, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>19</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, November 26, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>20</sup> Joe McGuff, "Blues Since 1901," *Star*, October 13, 1954, 50.
- <sup>21</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, November 26, 1954, national edition, 10.
- <sup>22</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," April 8, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>23</sup> "Demand For Top Recruit Of Negro Loop Causes High Mortality Rate In The NAL," *Call*, April 15, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>24</sup> "Monarchs Hail Coming of A's," *Call*, January 14, 1955, national edition, 12;
- <sup>25</sup> "Monarchs' Manager Buck O'Neil Has Skill to Be Skipper Of A Major League Ball Club," *Call*, March 18, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>26</sup> See *Call*, April 8, 1955, national edition, 12.
- <sup>27</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, July 1, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>28</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, April 22, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>29</sup> C.A. Franklin, "Civil Rights Must Be Paid For In Cash," *Call*, April 22, 1955, national edition, 1, 4.
- <sup>30</sup> "Chester A. Franklin Is Dead"; "Numerous Telegrams Received," *Call*, May 13, 1955, national edition, 1.
- <sup>31</sup> "Our Chief Is Dead," *Call*, May 13, 1955, national edition, 1.
- <sup>32</sup> "His Pen Is Stilled," *Call*, May 13, 1955, national edition, 20.
- <sup>33</sup> See *Call*, May 13, 1955, national edition.
- <sup>34</sup> "In Tribute to C.A. Franklin," *Call*, May 20, 1955, national edition, 1.
- <sup>35</sup> "His Memory Forever Green," *Call*, May 20, 1955, national edition, 20.
- <sup>36</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 13, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>37</sup> "Wives of the A's," *Star*, April 15, 1955, 26.
- <sup>38</sup> See *Times*, April 13, 1955, 1.
- <sup>39</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 6, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>40</sup> "Monarchs Open May 15," *Star*, May 1, 1955, 4B.
- <sup>41</sup> "Count on Speed," *Star*, May 10, 1955, 22.
- <sup>42</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 20, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>43</sup> Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 125.
- <sup>44</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, June 17, 1955, national edition, 10. The top talent of Negro baseball was set to gather in Kansas City for the mid-year East-West classic in 1955. After much pressure from black sports journalists, the game was being transferred from Comiskey Park to the brand new Municipal stadium in Kansas City. It would mark the first time the classic had ever been played outside of Chicago. Johnson thought the change of scenery would help the game and the league survive. Plus, marketing coordinators could certainly take advantage of the renewed baseball fever now spreading contagiously throughout Kansas City with the arrival of the Athletics. However, when league officials saw what a new Major League team was doing to the Monarchs' attendance figures, they immediately reverted back to Chicago. See also Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, February 11, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>45</sup> J. Cordell White, "Writes Open Letter to Baseball Fans of Greater Kansas City," *Call*, August 5, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>46</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 124-125.



- <sup>47</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, August 12, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>48</sup> "Jackie Robinson Says Baseball Set Integration Pace," *Call*, September 30, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>49</sup> See Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, September 2, 1955, national edition, 10; "Call's Sports Editor Honored at Banquet," February 26, 1955, national edition, 11. At the 10th annual "Nite (sic) Of Sports" athletic banquet in Kansas City, Kansas, Johnson was honored for his leadership to youth and service to mankind. Mehl, meanwhile, was presented the top award for spear-heading the drive to bring the Philadelphia Athletics to Kansas City.
- <sup>50</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, September 23, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>51</sup> "Named Cubs Scout," *Call*, December 16, 1955, national edition, 12; "O'Neil A Scout," *Times*, December 13, 1955, 21.
- <sup>52</sup> See *Call*, February 17, 1956, national edition, 10-12.
- <sup>53</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 125-126; "Tom Baird Follows His Boys; Goes Major League," *Call*, February 17, 1956, national edition, 11. Rasberry had taken part in Negro professional athletics since 1940. He played with outstanding Negro traveling teams throughout the Midwest. After World War II, he started the Grand Rapids Black Sox, one of Michigan's leading semi-pro teams. Under his guidance, the team won national recognition and forged into one of the leading Negro teams in the Midwest. Rasberry then took over the ownership of the Detroit Stars. He still served as business manager of the Stars while becoming the Monarchs general manager.
- <sup>54</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, March 30, 1956, national edition, 8.
- <sup>55</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, July 27, 1956, national edition, 10.
- <sup>56</sup> "Monarchs' Home Opener Will be Night of June 3," *Call*, May 11, 1956, national edition, 12.
- <sup>57</sup> James C. Brown, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 25, 1956, national edition, 10.
- <sup>58</sup> "Monarchs Dim Detroit Stars in Season Opener," *Call*, June 8, 1956, national edition, 10.
- <sup>59</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, June 8, 1956, national edition, 10.
- <sup>60</sup> See *Call*, June 22, 1956, national edition, 11; June 29, 1956, 10; July 6, 1956, 11.
- <sup>61</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, April 26, 1957, national edition, 10.
- <sup>62</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 31, 1957, national edition, 10.
- <sup>63</sup> Holway, *Black Diamonds*, 102, 104.

## Conclusion

- <sup>1</sup> See Robin D.G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem: ' Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *Journal of American History*, 80 (June 1993), 86; and Graham White and Shane White, *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998). Each of these researchers note the culture significance of dressing up for African Americans, especially those of the working-class, who had to wear uniforms on a daily basis. The authors also state how the wearing of fancy clothes collapsed the status distinctions between whites and blacks. By dressing up African Americans showed they could present themselves as being higher-class.
- <sup>2</sup> See *Call*, June 2, 1943, national edition, 10; and city edition, 16.
- <sup>3</sup> See *Call*, May 14, 1937, national edition, 6; and May 14, 1937, city edition, 14-15.
- <sup>4</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 22; and Berger, "Promoting Monarchs' baseball," 4-6.
- <sup>5</sup> See "Satchel Paige is 1-Ain the Army," *Call*, February 11, 1944, national edition, 4;
- <sup>6</sup> Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 51.
- <sup>7</sup> See Wilkins, *Standing Fast*, 107. Wilkins writes that by 1931, the *Call* had reached a circulation of 20,000 copies per week. "Since there were only about 14,000 black families in Kansas City, we calculated that we were reaching just about every black household and some of the whites as well. These figures were certified by the Audit Bureau of Circulation..."
- <sup>8</sup> See *Philadelphia Tribune* (Harris) February 14, 1935 as found in Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 194.
- <sup>9</sup> Lamb and Bleske, "Covering the integration of baseball, 48-50 and "Democracy on the Field," 51-59.
- <sup>10</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, March 21, 1947, city edition, 23.
- <sup>11</sup> "SAVE NEGRO BASEBALL!" *Call*, April 9, 1943, city edition, 24.
- <sup>12</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 49-50.
- <sup>13</sup> Harmon, "Sportorial," *Call*, August 17, 1945, national edition, 6.
- <sup>14</sup> Ribowsky, *A Complete History*, 7.

- 
- <sup>15</sup> Carroll, "When to Stop the Cheering," 204. Carroll describes Smith and Lacy as having friendships with the sport's players and not the owners. Smith and Lacy consistently spoke out against the league's deficiencies with regards to planning, scheduling, and keeping statistical records. The two sportswriters endorsed the play and advancement of the best Negro League players without regard to the impact it would have on team owners and the remaining athletes employed by the black business. (Including support staff, the Negro Leagues employed about 500 African Americans. The leagues were easily considered one of the biggest black businesses during the Jim Crow era. See Bruce *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 127).
- <sup>16</sup> See *Baltimore Afro-American* May 22, 1948 as found in Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 329.
- <sup>17</sup> Dowdal H. Davis, "Courage in Sports Most Vital in Our Democracy," *Call*, February 4, 1949, city edition, 19.
- <sup>18</sup> Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, 353-354.
- <sup>19</sup> "Big League May Bet Another Monarch Star," *Star*, August 8, 1955, 15; "Ernie Banks Can't Explain His Homers," "Monarchs Share In Banks' Feat," *Call*, August 12, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>20</sup> See *Call*, April 8, 1955 as found in Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 124-125
- <sup>21</sup> "An Over-Flow Crowd Expected To Greet The A's," *Call*, April 8, 1955, national edition, 12.
- <sup>22</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, May 6, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>23</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, June 17, 1955, national edition, 10.
- <sup>24</sup> Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 127.
- <sup>25</sup> Johnson, "Sport Light," *Call*, March 30, 1956, national edition, 8.
- <sup>26</sup> "Salute to the Monarchs!" *Call*, October 11, 1946, national edition, 16.
- <sup>27</sup> See Pride and Wilson II, *A History of the Black Press*, 72, 80, 233-34; and Carroll "Beating the Klan: Pre-integration baseball coverage in Wichita, 1920-1930," paper presented at the American Journalism Historians Association Annual Convention in Seattle, WA, October 4, 2008.
- <sup>28</sup> See Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs*, 22; and Berger, "Promoting Monarchs' baseball," 1-8.
- <sup>29</sup> For on at least two of the female players in the Negro Leagues see Michelle Y. Green, *A Strong Right Arm: The Story of Mamie "Peanut" Johnson* (New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2002); and Barbara Gregorich, *Women at Play: The Story of Women in Baseball* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1993), 169-176.