

“Jackie Robinson and the American Mind: Journalistic Perceptions of the Reintegration of Baseball”

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Jackie Robinson. For many the mere mention of that name conjures up a series of indelible tableaux. Yet the reintegration of Organized Baseball continues to attract an apparently inexhaustible supply of popular writers and scholars. A plethora of books and articles, even a Broadway musical, have examined the assault on baseball's color line from a variety of perspectives. The *Boys of Summer*, perhaps the most widely read account of the reintegration of baseball, is, by turns, memoir of Roger Kahn's youth, chronicle of Brooklyn baseball during the Robinson era, and a series of character studies focusing on the lives of former Dodgers. Kahn's poignant account of fathers and sons, men and time, discrimination and justice always leads the reader back to Robinson and the lingering resonances he left for those who knew him. Jackie Robinson, embattled, courageous, and proud, appears a tragic hero. A very different, albeit equally brilliant book, is *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* by Jules Tygiel. While Kahn's vantage point is the individual and personal sensibilities, public events and their societal consequences form Tygiel's frame of reference. *Baseball's Great Experiment*, a well researched monograph, analyzes racial practices in baseball prior to 1945, factors that led to the signing of Robinson, stratagems employed by those who wanted baseball integration to succeed and those who wanted it to fail, the subsequent entry of other blacks into Organized Baseball, and the impact of Robinson's career on the latter history of sport and the larger American society.¹ Thanks to Kahn, Tygiel, and others we know much about baseball integration in terms of individual participants and social context.

Yet important phenomena defy definitive treatment. New questions and alternate approaches inevitably emerge. What, for example, did the controversy surrounding Robinson reveal about the ideology, assumptions, values, and perceptions of that era? By their content analysis of the media, Al-Tony Gilmore and Richard Crepeau, authors respectively of studies examining press images of

1. *New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1981, 24; Roger Kahn, *The Boys of Summer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

black boxer Jack Johnson and of baseball during the Great Depression, demonstrate that sport can facilitate a more complete understanding of the American mind. A number of books dealing with the reintegration of baseball give attention to the reaction of the media; compilation of opinion, however, does not constitute systematic content analysis. Nevertheless, a few articles concerned with baseball integration make the media their major focus. The best of these, David Wiggins' study of the 1933-1945 campaign of a single black newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, to integrate Organized Baseball emphasizes strategy and tactics more than values and ideology. William Kelley's brief and disappointing survey of press reaction to the signing of Robinson concerns the number of stories and photographs publications devoted to the story while offering only the most minimal content analysis. Bill Weaver's examination of the black press coverage of baseball integration probes values and perceptions with intelligence. Weaver discusses four topics—the significance of the breakthrough, tributes to Dodger President Branch Rickey, obstacles facing Robinson, and aspirations attached to Robinson by fellow blacks.² Still, Weaver has not exhausted the field. Additional concepts merit scrutiny, and the metropolitan and sporting press remain beyond Weaver's scope.

The integration of baseball was the most widely commented on episode in American race relations of its time. At an October 23, 1945, press conference it was announced that Robinson had signed a contract to play baseball with the Montreal Royals, a minor league affiliate of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Coming at the end of a war that had encouraged Americans to define themselves by a liberalism not found in Nazi Germany, the announcement that Robinson would become the first black to participate in Organized Baseball since the late nineteenth century generated extensive public discussion about consensus, conflict, equality, liberty, opportunity, prejudice, democracy, and national character. As an episode that encouraged articulation of important values, analysis of this phenomenon has the potential to deepen our understanding of American thought. Social scientists differ about the distinguishing characteristics of the American mind. Vernon Louis Parrington and Howard Zinn depict an enduring dualism in American thought between the forces of liberalism and conservatism. Conformity and an absence of ideology are described by Daniel Boorstin. An ability to harbor contradictory perceptions simultaneously, argues Michael Kammen, makes Americans a people of paradox. In *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, published almost contemporaneously with the signing of Robinson, Gunnar Myrdal argues that most Americans believe in a shared Creed. This American Creed, contends Myrdal, endorses the "ideals of the essential dignity of the

2. Al-Tony Gilmore, *Bad Nigger: The National Impact of Jack Johnson* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1975); Richard Crepeau, *Baseball: America's Diamond Mind* (Orlando, FL: University Presses of Florida, 1980); 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 (Summer 1983): 5-29; William Kelley, "Jackie Robinson and the Press," *Journalism Quarterly* 53 (Spring 1976): 137-139; Bill L. Weaver, "The Black Press and the Assault on Professional Baseball's 'Color Line,' October 1945-April 1947," *Phylon* 40 (Winter 1979): 303-317.

individual human being, of the fundamental equality of all men, and of certain inalienable rights to freedom, justice, and a fair opportunity.”³

Employing the case study approach, this paper will focus on media reaction to the signing of Jackie Robinson. Media attention to the actual signing appeared during a chronologically circumscribed interval; during that interval, however, an abundance of commentary appeared. Utilizing the contemporary print media-metropolitan newspapers, black newspapers, sporting publications, and magazines, this article will examine public reaction to the Robinson signing as a means of illuminating American thought at the opening of the post-war era.⁴ Given that the announcement of the Robinson signing occurred in Montreal with notation that he would begin his Organized Baseball career in that city, the Montreal press also receives some attention.

This article will seek to demonstrate that the tenets of Myrdal’s American Creed significantly shaped contemporary press coverage of the reintegration of baseball. Newspaper accounts typically described an American public imbued with the belief that Robinson ought to succeed or fail on the basis of his abilities, not his color. According to the *Baltimore Afro-American*, “The signing of Jackie Robinson . . . has met with nationwide approval by fans all over the country.”⁵ And an International News Service article reported, “General approval was voiced today by baseball men to the signing of Jack Roosevelt Robinson. . . .”⁶ Although the media certainly acknowledged criticisms of the signing, especially those that emanated from the South,⁷ few articles denied that a liberal consensus supported Robinson’s entry into Organized Baseball.

The conventional wisdom holds that baseball mirrors American values, and scholarship suggests that in some eras it has.⁸ At the time of Robinson’s signing, however, the media often asserted that baseball’s conservative racial practices lagged behind practices already prevailing in America. Black journalists frequently termed baseball inferior to certain sports in living up to America’s egalitarian beliefs. Although pugilism involved “brutal body contact,” the *St. Louis Argus* argued that integrated boxing matches outside the South proceed “in grand style.”⁹ *The Pittsburgh Courier* also noted prior “achievements of colored men and women in various branches of sport.”¹⁰ A third black

3. Harvey Frommer, *Rickey and Robinson: The Men Who Broke Baseball’s Color Barrier* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982), III; John Higham and Paul Conkin, eds., *New Directions in American Intellectual History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Gunnar Myrdal with Richard Steiner and Arnold Rose, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 4.

4. The author incurred debts to numerous libraries that made available bound, or more commonly, micro-filmed copies of old newspapers and magazines. Newspapers in cities with major league teams generally exhibited the strongest interest in the signing of Robinson. Thus, this article places primary emphasis on the Negro and general circulation press of those cities.

5. *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 3, 1945, 23.

6. *Chicago Herald American*, Oct. 24, 1945, 26.

7. *Boston Herald*, Oct. 24, 1945, 24; *Detroit Tribune*, Nov. 3, 1945, II; *New York World Telegram*, Oct. 25, 1945, 30.

8. Steven Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 7; Richard Goldstein, *Spartan Seasons: How Baseball Survived the Second World War* (New York: 1980), 33.

9. *St. Louis Argus*, Nov. 2, 1945, 17.

10. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 13.

newspaper, the *Amsterdam News*, quoted Douglas Hertz, a promoter of inter-racial games: "It is extremely gratifying to see at this late date organized baseball has finally seen the light." And the black press reported a comment by a member of New York City's Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia's Committee on Unity, which suggested that baseball was tardy in conforming to practices long accepted by other sports: "There is every reason to hope that this will lead to a constructive solution by which organized baseball will be brought in line with those other sports in which Negroes have for a long time been participants."¹¹

Not only did it appear negligent in comparison with other sports, baseball, asserted pundits, failed to keep pace with racial practices prevalent on a macrocosmic level. As "the nation moves toward a postwar lessening of discrimination," chided the *Brooklyn Eagle*, "the national game of Americans . . . cannot forever lag behind."¹² A letter to the editor of the *Detroit News* argued, "Colored artists and performers in all other fields have proved that the absence of a colored player in the major leagues of baseball is nothing more than the absence of the true American spirit in the greatest of American sports."¹³ Aside from athletics, American blacks had already made notable contributions "in drama, opera, music, the stage," and other endeavors.¹⁴ Beyond harboring reactionary attitudes, baseball, implied the press, practiced hypocrisy and irrationality in the enforcement of the color barrier. Writers frequently noted the participation of numbers of blacks in Organized Baseball before the establishment of the unofficial color line in the late nineteenth century.¹⁵ Contemporary journalists also commented extensively on integrated play during post-season barnstorming, often featuring exhibition games that matched the ageless Satchell Paige against white stars.¹⁶ When "baseball club owners are perfectly willing to take the money of Negro fans at the gate," editorialized the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, while excluding Negroes from the playing field, the failure of "the Great American Game" to live up to its name became most evident." Moreover, pundits acknowledged that a few twentieth-century blacks had entered Organized Baseball under the guise of an Indian or Cuban identity.¹⁸ Negro newspapers and, indeed, most of the general circulation press assumed blacks had earned the right to compete in the National Pastime without concealing their identities. "We want Jackie to meet the test as a Negro," asserted a black journalist, "not as a sun-tanned white man or Eskimo."¹⁹

World War II, claimed the press, rendered arguments based on racial inequality unAmerican. Columnist Dink Carroll believed the war demonstrated that

11. *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 3, 1945, 14.

12. Editorial, *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 25, 1945, 12.

13. Letter to the Editor, *Detroit News*, Oct. 30, 1945, 14.

14. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 13.

15. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 6; *Philadelphia Record*, Oct. 25, 1945, 18.

16. *New York World Telegram*, Oct. 25, 1945, 30; *Washington Daily News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 38; *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Oct. 26, 1945, 19.

17. Editorial, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 25, 1945, 26.

18. *New York World Telegram*, Oct. 25, 1945, 30; *Washington Daily News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 38; *Washington Evening Star*, Oct. 25, 1945, 16.

19. *New York Daily Mirror*, Oct. 25, 1945, 26.

baseball segregation derived from Southern exceptionalism, a violation of American democracy:

. . . Many Americans have criticized baseball for drawing the color line, and have argued that it couldn't truly be called America's national game because of this discrimination hostility to colored players didn't originate with the club owners or with the leagues, but with the players themselves. A good many of the players are Southerners part of the Japanese propaganda in the Pacific was to point out that colored people were discriminated against in the United States. Many Americans had to ask themselves should they not courageously back up their fighting men—of all races, creeds and color-by eradicating the color line at home?²⁰

Indeed, asked the *Boston Daily Globe*, did “the masters of baseball” forget that America’s mortal enemy, Nazi Germany, had domiciled the “boastful headquarters of the ‘master race’ theory?”²¹ Journalists frequently quoted the tribute by Hector Racine, president of the Montreal Royals, to black efforts during World War II: “Negroes fought alongside whites and shared the foxhole dangers, and they should get a fair trial in baseball.”²² A *Pittsburgh Courier* respondent employed similar rhetoric: “Those who were good enough to fight by the side of the whites are plenty good enough to play by the side of whites!”²³ Ironically baseball, which during World War II was frequently employed as a patriotic icon, at conflict’s end came to appear as a transgressor of American values.

So pervasive was the liberal consensus that even opponents of baseball integration generally exhibited careful avoidance of public statements that violated egalitarian principles. Rather than attacking integration directly, opponents typically utilized more circuitous strategems. Critics sought to avoid the stigma of illiberalism. One tactic of obstructionists was to raise doubts about Robinson’s baseball abilities. Ignoring Robinson’s fine record in the Negro American League and employing sophistry to explain the failure of his own team to sign “Jackie” after having granted him a tryout, Eddie Collins, general manager of the Boston Red Sox, told the press, “Very few players can step off a sandlot or college diamond into a major league berth . . .”²⁴ A United Press release implied that Robinson’s baseball skills might not measure up to his proficiency in other sports by juxtaposing football, basketball, and track achievements with a former coach’s observation that “Jackie didn’t try too hard at baseball. . .”²⁵ Terming Robinson’s background in other sports a liability Bob Feller, star pitcher for the Cleveland Indians, authored perhaps the most widely quoted expression of doubt about Robinson’s baseball potential”

He’s a typical football player-they’re all alike. he is fast as blazes and a great athlete, but that doesn’t make him a ball player Honestly, I can’t see any

20. *Montreal Gazette*, Oct. 24, 1945, 14.

21. *Boston Daily Globe*, Oct. 25, 1945, 14.

22. *Cleveland Press*, Oct. 24, 1945, 16; *La Presse* (Montreal), Oct. 27, 1945, 36; *Washington Daily News*, Oct. 24, 1945, 40.

23. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 12.

24. *Boston Daily Globe*, Oct. 24, 1945, 17.

25. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 25, 1945, 24.

chance at all for Robinson, And I'll say this-if he were a white man I doubt if they'd even consider him as big league material.²⁶

Like others who questioned Robinson's future in baseball, Feller eschewed overt racism despite his belief that no contemporary black player possessed major league skills: "When you say things like that, somebody usually accuses you of racial discrimination . . . but I'm not prejudiced in the least."²⁷ And an editorial in "the baseball bible," *The Sporting News*, pontificated, "Robinson, at 26, is reported to possess baseball abilities which, were he white, would make him eligible for a trial with, let us say, the Brooklyn Dodgers' Class B farm at Newport News, if he were six years younger . . . the waters of the International League will flood far over his head."²⁸

Silence, however, constituted the most common public image of non-support. Journalists frequently perceived those who refused to comment "cool" toward integration.²⁹ *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, believed, for example, that those who spoke "with extreme caution" left "the impression that they were pulling their punches."³⁰ Since reform could succeed only by eliciting a positive response from the public, reticence implicitly provided support for the existing arrangements that excluded blacks from Organized Baseball. With sophistry Bill Klem, Chief of Staff for the National League's umpires, justified his "no comment" by arguing, reported the United Press, "That's the proper stand for an umpire."³¹ Connie Mack, dean of major league managers, told the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "I am not familiar with the move. I don't know Robinson and wouldn't care to comment."³² A *Sporting News* editorial regarded those who "refused to comment" more diplomatic and effective than those openly "blasting the hiring of a Negro."³³ One could thus impede integration without appearing to challenge the liberal consensus.

Critics of the Robinson signing often tried desperately to portray themselves as opponents of discrimination and thus the true proponents of American values. A number of newspaper articles reflected the viewpoint of individuals concerned that Robinson's entry into Organized Baseball would undermine the Negro leagues; this line of argument purported that the Negro leagues provided important opportunities for black entrepreneurs and athletes. Tom Baird, white co-owner of the Kansas City Monarchs, the Negro baseball team for which Robinson played during 1945, protested the "steal" of Robinson by Rickey.³⁴ Angry that Rickey had not reimbursed the Monarchs for Robinson, the Kansas City co-owner feared, "If the wholesale robbery of Negro players from our

26. *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 10, 1945, 18; *Chicago Daily News*, Oct. 31, 1945, 29; *Washington Post*, Oct. 25, 1945, 22.

27. *Syracuse Herald Journal*, Oct. 27, 1945, 6.

28. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 12.

29. *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 3, 1945, 23; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Dec. 1, 1945, 12.

30. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 28, 1945, 1B.

31. *Detroit News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 46.

32. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 24, 1945, 28.

33. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 12.

34. *Cleveland Press*, Oct. 24, 1945, 1B.

league continues we may as well quit baseball.”³⁵ A *Washington Post* editorial agreed: “A general competition among major and minor league owners for the best Negro players would certainly wreck the Negro leagues and with them the not inconsiderable capital investment of Negro entrepreneurs.”³⁶

Some prominent figures from Organized Baseball also expressed concern that the signing of Robinson would prove detrimental to Negro baseball. According to the *Brooklyn Eagle*, Larry MacPhail, president of the New York Yankees,

took the view that signing Negroes at the present time would do the cause of Negro baseball more harm than good. He pointed out that Negro baseball is now a \$2,000,000 business and Negro clubs pay salaries ranging up to \$16,000 a year.

He pointed out that comparatively few good young Negro players were being developed. He feared that if Organized Baseball raided the Negro League and took their good young players, the Negro Leagues would fold, the investments of the club owners would be lost and a lot of professional Negro ball players would lose their jobs.³⁷

Journalists frequently quoted the caveats of Clark Griffith, 75 year-old owner of the Washington Senators.³⁸ Condemning Rickey’s signing of Robinson, Griffith denounced those who “steal” from the Negro leagues and “act like outlaws”: “In no walk of life can one person take another’s property unless he pays for it.”³⁹ Griffith exhorted, “We have no right to destroy” the Negro leagues.⁴⁰ Griffith’s dissatisfaction with the Robinson signing culminated in a long letter of counsel and praise for Negro baseball that the *New York Age*, a black newspaper, printed in its entirety. Part of the letter read:

Your two (Negro) leagues have established a splendid reputation and now have the support and respect of the colored people all over this country as well as the decent white people. They have not pirated against organized baseball nor have they stolen anything from them and organized baseball has no moral right to take anything from them without their consent

[A]nything that is worth while is worth fighting for so you folks should leave not a stone unturned to protect the existence of your two established Negro leagues. Don’t let anybody tear it down.⁴¹

Nevertheless, the press generally represented the attempt to link concern with the survival of Negro baseball with misgivings about the Robinson signing as a cynical distortion of American values. Negro newspapers, in particular, reflected a disdain for obstructionists who clothed themselves in the rhetoric of racial justice. Both the metropolitan and Afro-American press noted that some blacks connected with Negro baseball, such as Effa Manley, co-owner of the

35. *Washington Daily News*, Oct. 24, 1945, 40.

36. *Washington Post*, Oct. 27, 1945, 10.

31. *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 24, 1945, 17.

38. *Detroit News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 46; *New York Herald Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1945, 26; *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1945, 17.

39. *Boston Daily Globe*, Oct. 25, 1945, 8; *Montreal Gazette*, Oct. 25, 1945, 1b; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 25, 1945, 24.

40. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1945, 29; *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Oct. 25, 1945, 1b.

41. *New York Age*, Nov. 17, 1945, 25.

Newark Eagles, felt Rickey was wrong to sign Robinson without compensating his former team. The media agreed, however, with near unanimity that black America viewed integration as a more important goal than the economic prosperity of Negro baseball. Earl Brown, a columnist for the *Amsterdam News*, pointed out the illogic of owners of Negro baseball teams posing as apostles of opportunity for black athletes: "Most Negro ball clubs are owned by enterprising white men who pay a few star exhibitionists, such as Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson, good salaries, but who pay the average player starvation wages."⁴² The *St. Louis Star Times* pointedly noted "that Baird is white, not a Negro." And the *Chicago Daily News* said of Baird's original statement, "The attitude of the Kansas City Monarchs in the Negro National League . . . for whom Robinson played last year . . . is not commendable. They should be enough interested in what Robinson may accomplish in the majors . . . both for himself and his race . . . to let him go without any monetary furor about it."⁴³

The Negro press argued that obstructionists were disingenuous about their motives. Attributing Griffith's support for Negro baseball to his rapacity, the National Negro Press Association stressed that rentals of Griffith Stadium to the Homestead Grays, a black team, constituted a significant source of revenue.

The Old Fox, as Griff is known in organized baseball, is a shrewd business man. It's his business acumen that causes him to compliment the National Negro League by saying it is well established and organized baseball shouldn't raid it by taking their players . . .

But Griff is no liberal by any means. Not until colored baseball made the turnstiles click in figures comparable to those of the Nationals did he allow colored clubs to play white clubs in Griffith Stadium.⁴⁴

The *Amsterdam News* denounced the "unholy, reactionary, anti-Negro setup led by Clark Griffith" for attempting "to beat Rickey's attempts to Americanize baseball and allow all qualified to do so to participants[sic]."⁴⁵ In addition many general circulation newspapers, such as the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, found Griffith's piety hypocritical given his disregard for the stability of Latin American baseball: "Certainly Clark Griffith of the Senator's should have little to say about that. He's been raiding Cuban, Mexican and even South American leagues for playing talent for years and up to now we've heard little about his buying the players' contracts."⁴⁶ Likewise, several newspapers, including the *Washington Post* published Larry MacPhail's admission that self-interest influenced his position on the Robinson signing: "President Larry MacPhail of the Yankees admits that park rentals to colored teams at Yankee Stadium, Newark and Kansas City produce \$100,000 in revenue for the Yankee chain annually."⁴⁷

Negative images of the black leagues abounded in the Negro and general circulation press, but they possessed an almost visceral intensity in Afro-

42. *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 3, 1945, 12.

43. *Chicago Daily News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 33.

44. *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 10, 1945, 10.

45. *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 17, 1945, 24.

46. *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, Oct. 25, 1945, 36.

47. *Washington Post*, Oct. 21, 1945, 18; *New York World Telegram*, Oct. 25, 1945, 30; *New York Sun*, Oct. 25, 1945, 29.

American newspapers. These criticisms extended beyond disappointment over black baseball's reaction to the Robinson signing. Noting the diffuse organizational structure of the Negro leagues, including an absence of binding player contracts, and the dominance of white promoters and entrepreneurs, numerous articles quoted Branch Rickey, "There is no Negro league as such as far as I am concerned. Negro baseball is in the zone of a racket . . ." ⁴⁸ One of the most scathing indictments of Negro baseball appeared in the *Amsterdam News*:

Mr. Rickey said one thing about Negro baseball with which I emphatically and enthusiastically concur: it is a racket. At least it was when I used to play on Negro teams and recent checks with sports writers (Negro) and players (also Negro) corroborated Mr. Rickey's and my statements There is little or no discipline among the players. . . the league had no constitution, by-laws or word of mouth customs by which to go . . . and the league is still about as stable as the smoke ascending from the mogul's stogie. ⁴⁹

But misgivings about Negro baseball extended beyond the issues of mismanagement and corruption.

Discrimination, contemporary black liberals assumed, came not from the American values but rather from their violation. The black press of the mid-1940s regarded integration as a fulfillment of national ideology The distinctions that radicals of a latter generation would draw between separation and segregation were perceived as canards by contemporary black newspapers. Since the Negro press termed segregation cruel, undemocratic, and anti-American, images of Negro baseball connoted an accommodation to an unjust situation. Thus, a *Pittsburgh Courier* editorial condemned the "foolish protest" of those who felt protecting the sanctity of contractual agreements in the Negro leagues more important than advancing the cause of integration:

For many years colored organizations and institutions have fought against jim crowism in major league baseball, and now that a small victory has been won with the selection of one colored player, it is annoying to have a wrench thrown into the machinery

Let us not at this juncture play the part of a crab in a barrel of crabs. Instead of trying to hamper those who have made a step forward, let us help them as much as we can. ⁵⁰

The assault against segregation, voluntary or involuntary by several Afro-American publications included proposals to admit white players into black baseball and for the Negro leagues to become part of Organized Baseball.⁵¹ A letter to the editor of the *Chicago Defender* reflects the disdain the black press typically directed at those who attempted to elevate "voluntary segregation" into a positive good:

There are occasions when segregation is practical, due to the existing laws and traditions that are next to impossible to contest openly A Negro youth in a

48. *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 3, 1945, 9; *Philadelphia Record*, Oct. 25, 1945, 18; *Syracuse Post-Standard*, Oct. 24, 1945, 10.

49. *Amsterdam News (New York)*, Nov. 3, 1945, 12.

50. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 24, 1945, 6.

51. *Philadelphia Tribune*, Dec. 29, 1945, 9; *St. Louis Argus*, Nov. 2, 1945, 17; *Amsterdam News (New York)*, Nov. 3, 1945, 14.

southern community wishing to attend a college and his funds are limited, naturally should take advantage of the nearest institution until time warrants his condition as to improve upon this condition.

But this is not enough. It is up to every Negro to aid himself and his entire group. If it's freedom from discrimination that we desire, then we should cast away all types of discrimination from our programs.

The protest of the Negro baseballers is as selfish as any plantation owner of slavery-bound men in the days prior to the Civil War. Their own interest is above that of their nation. This is an appeal to all Negroes to avoid this, for their freedom means freedom to all men, and courage to men of other lands. Segregate yourselves and others will do no better.⁵²

The general circulation press also overwhelmingly rejected, albeit with less vigor, attempts to portray black separation as compatible with American values. The *Boston Herald*, for example, related integration to "equal opportunity."⁵³

Racism remained a national phenomena during the mid-1940s. Race riots in New York City and Detroit documented the intensity of group conflict. A shared consensus supporting the American Creed, brought to its zenith by World War II, made it difficult for Americans to acknowledge that their values deviated significantly from their behavior. A means was needed to recognize conflict without challenging the belief in consensus. An emphasis on Southern exceptionalism became the means by which many Americans of the mid-1940s reconciled consensus and conflict. Racism and discrimination obviously existed, but they were typically termed Southern, rather than American, phenomena. Newspapers did acknowledge obstacles, actual and potential, that were not exclusively Southern—"icy stares and a boatload of caustic remarks," restrictive hotels in the North, "snobs and discrimination in cities where the Dodgers play other National League teams," "no little prejudice from a few members of his team," "insults," "racial strife in the grand stand," and a "terrible riding from the bench jockeys."⁵⁴ But references to racism outside the South were muted. Obviously the black press demonstrated a greater awareness of Northern racism. Yet even commentary in the black press on Northern racism lacked a certain precision. American racism during the Robinson controversy thus appeared an attribute primarily distinctive to the South; its people and its institutions, tarnished by segregation law and practice, deviated from the national consensus. Journalistic concern with Southern exceptionalism took on great importance due to the perception that the region significantly shaped baseball's ambiance, thus threatening the game's position as the National Pastime.

Despite the occasional use of code language, context left little doubt that phrases like "some parts of the United States where racial prejudice is rampant" meant the South.⁵⁵ "Although fans in Northern cities will be extremely

52. Letter to Editor, *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 10, 1945, 14.

53. *Boston Herald*, Oct. 24, 1945, 24.

54. *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 10, 1945, 18; *Boston Daily Globe*, Oct. 24, 1945, 22; *Boston Guardian*, Nov. 3, 1945, 4; Editorial, *Detroit Tribune*, Nov. 3, 1945, 6, *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 10, 1945, 13, *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 31, 1945, 17.

55. *Chicago Herald American*, Oct. 26, 1945, 29; *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1945, 16.

friendly,” the *Boston Herald* believed that “the Southern player and the Southern fan are in the wrong,” ready to create “a most harrowing situation.”⁵⁶ Journalists examining racism wrote of “the Southern attitude,” “the Southern interests,” “those in the South,” and “the baseball constituency which hails from the South.”⁵⁷ While not objecting to Robinson playing on integrated teams in the North, the sports editor of the Spartansburg (S.C.) *Herald Journal* warned, “Segregation in the South will continue to be an unalterable rule. . .” The Northern pattern of “Negroes and whites mix(ing) in practically every undertaking” was rejected by the Jackson (TN) *Sun*: “Here in the South we believe in the segregation of Negro and whites. This rule applies to baseball teams as well as to every other sport activity.”⁵⁸ The press reported that both Branch Rickey, Jr., head of the Dodger farm system, and his father felt that most criticism of their actions would come from the South.⁵⁹

As portrayed by the media, the South appeared a region apart. Judge William G. Bramham of Durham, the president of the National Association of minor leagues, received greater press visibility than any other advocate of separation to comment on the Robinson signing. Bramham, however, attempted to synthesize Southern exceptionalism and American values. Bramham presented himself as committed to justice for all people, both black and white. After Bramham noted with undisguised disappointment that the rules of the National Association provided him with no basis for disqualifying Robinson’s contract, he claimed that segregation provided the most beneficent context for the advancement of blacks:

It is my opinion that if the Negro is left alone and aided by his unselfish friends of the white race, he will work out his own salvation in all lines of endeavor.

The Negro is making rapid strides in baseball, as well as other lines of endeavor. They have their own form of player contracts and, as I understand it, their organizations are well officered and are financially successful. Why should we raid their ranks, grab a player and put him, his baseball association and his race in a position that will inevitably prove harmful?⁶⁰

Utilizing Reconstruction imagery to demonstrate that Southern paternalists understood blacks better than Northern liberals, Bramham told the press: “It is those of the carpet-bagger stripe of the white race under the guise of helping, but in truth using the Negro for their own selfish interests, who retard the race.”⁶¹ Writing for *The Sporting News*, Jack Homer of the *Durham Morning Herald* praised Bramham:

Bramham has been an outstanding fighter for the Negro cause during his 40-odd years of residence in Durham. Bramham helped the Negroes form their own

56. *Boston Herald*, October 24, 1945, 24.

57. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1; *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 12; *Chicago Daily News*, Oct. 24, 1945, 26.

58. *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 3, 1945, 7.

59. *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Oct. 24, 1945, 1; *Chicago Daily News*, Oct. 26, 1945, 33.

60. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 4.

61. *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Oct. 26, 1945, 20; *Chicago Herald American*, Oct. 25, 1945, 22; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 26, 1945, 12.

separate fire department. He has been influential in assisting the Negro to better his conditions in many other ways.⁶²

Outside of the South, however, the press generally viewed Bramham as spokesman for a regional code that defied the national consensus.

The press made clear that not all Southerners camouflaged their racism in the paternalism and self-righteousness employed by Bramham. Unlike Bramham some Southern whites quoted by the press did not leaven their advocacy of racial separation with the assumption that such an arrangement would produce equality.⁶³ Fred (Dixie) Walker, a popular Brooklyn Dodger outfielder, for example, proclaimed that he most definitely did not want Robinson for a teammate: "As long as he isn't with the Dodgers, I'm not worried."⁶⁴ Likewise, Spud Davis, catcher-coach for the Pittsburgh Pirates, responded, "So long as the Pittsburgh Club hasn't signed a Negro there's no need for me to worry now."⁶⁵ George Digby was more emphatic: "I think it's the worst thing that can happen to organized baeball. I think a lot of Southern boys will refuse to compete with Negroes in baseball."⁶⁶

Many newspapers published a prediction by Branch Rickey, Jr., which some mistakenly attributed to his father, that white Southerners might refuse to play for the Dodgers: "If they come from certain sections in the South, they may steer away from a team with colored players."⁶⁷ The younger Rickey then added, "But, they'll be back in baseball after a year or two in the cotton mill."⁶⁸ Significantly those journalistic acknowledgements of Southern resentment over the younger Rickey's remarks derived from his implication of a lack of resolve, not to his assumptions about regional racism. *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, for example, described the reaction of Southern athletes to young Rickey's statement from an interesting vantage point: ". . . if the subject had been left untouched especially the sneering part about the cotton mills, the boys probably would have taken it even if they didn't like it."⁶⁹ Likewise, a *Sporting News* article argued "ball players resented the comment, since the majority of Southern boys in baseball came off the farms."⁷⁰

Due to "strict race segregation laws" in Daytona Beach, Florida, site of the Dodger organization's pre-season training camp, "the possibility was considered," reported the United Press, "that the team may have its new recruit train somewhere north of the Mason-Dixon line . . ."⁷¹ Journalists left little doubt

62. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 4.

63. *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 10, 1945, 18; Editorial, *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 10, 1945, 14; *Detroit Tribune*, Nov. 3, 1945, 6.

64. *Boston Chronicle*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1; *New York Herald Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1945, 26; *Philadelphia Record*, Oct. 25, 1945, 18.

65. *Boston Traveler*, Oct. 24, 1945, 21; *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Oct. 25, 1945, 14; *Washington Daily News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 38; *Washington Times Herald*, Oct. 25, 1945, 38.

66. *New York Daily Mirror*, Oct. 25, 1945, 34; *New York World Telegram*, Oct. 24, 1945, 40.

67. *Chicago Daily News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 33; *Cleveland Press*, Oct. 24, 1945, 16; Editorial, *Washington Post*, Oct. 27, 1945, 10; *Boston Chronicle*, Nov. 3, 1945, 7.

68. *New York Age*, Nov. 3, 1945, 6; *Philadelphia Tribune*, Oct. 27, 1945, 1; *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 25, 1945, 17.

69. *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, Oct. 25, 1945, 3C.

70. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 4.

71. *Boston Traveler*, Oct. 24, 1945, 21.

that the South would enforce its "segregation rules," and that a black athlete would receive no exemption.⁷² In Daytona Beach, commented *La Presse* (Montreal), "Robinson will not be permitted to live in the hotel as the other players of the Montreal club because of a special law. The city has also special lines of buses for men of color and for the white race."⁷³ A myriad of articles quoted the Daytona Beach city manager's concept of "a very good situation between the races here:" ". . . we never have had mixed teams."⁷⁴ With consistency media images cast the people, customs, and laws of the South as a threat to baseball integration.

Baseball, implied the media, had long violated the nation's egalitarian values due to the influence of the South. Often described as the national game, baseball, at this particular juncture, appeared in danger of becoming the Southern game. Just as the press exaggerated the South's role in promoting racism in the nation at large so it also readily attributed baseball's conservatism to the Southern influence. Given that none of the 16 major league franchises were located further South than St. Louis, the press emphasis on Southern exceptionalism takes on an insistent tone. But farm team nurseries for the big leagues, asserted the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, frequently "operate below the Mason and Dixon line."⁷⁵ And with the war over and travel restrictions lifted the South would once again provide spring training sites for major league teams. Moreover, despite the Northeast and Midwest domiciles of major league franchises, "many big leaguers," emphasized numerous articles, "are from Southern areas."⁷⁶ Various estimates of the number of major league "players born below the Maxon-Dixon line" appeared in the press, ranging from "approximately 27 percent," a fairly accurate count, to "a guess . . . (of) 50 percent," a highly exaggerated figure.⁷⁷ The press could thus attribute baseball's conservatism to a regional aberration without questioning the national commitment to liberal values. Scribes found college football, track, boxing, and army athletics less restrictive than baseball. A *Detroit News* editorial stated, "More than most sports, organized baseball clings to . . . color line."⁷⁸ And a *Boston Daily Globe* editorial employed sarcasm: "In other fields of sport, news percolated around long ago that Grant had taken Richmond. Baseball has hitherto displayed hesitation about crediting that somewhat ancient news."⁷⁹

Despite a predilection for identifying racism with Southern exceptionalism, Americans tended to believe that in time the South would conform to national standards. Certain media images offered hope that, despite deeply entrenched

72. *Detroit News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 45; *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Oct. 25, 1945, 14; *St. Louis Star Times*, Oct. 24, 1945, 21.

73. *La Presse* (Montreal), Oct. 25, 1945, 21.

74. *New York Daily Mirror*, Oct. 25, 1945, 34; *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 3, 1945, 9; *New York World Telegram*, Oct. 24, 1945, 40.

75. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 25, 1945, 6C.

76. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 28, 1945, 1B; *Boston Daily Globe*, Oct. 24, 1945, 22.

77. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 6; *The Sporting News*, Nov. 29, 1945, 6; *New York World Telegram*, Oct. 25, 1945, 30.

78. Editorial, *Detroit News*, Oct. 26, 1945, 22.

79. *Boston Daily Globe*, Oct. 25, 1945, 14.

Southern prejudice, the Robinson episode would eventually help move the South into the mainstream of American life. Some Northern journalists suggested that segments of the Southern press questioned the South's racial protocols. The *New York Age* generalized, "Sports writers by and large, North and South, have given Robinson good press."⁸⁰ The United Press also indicated, "With few exceptions . . . Sports writers both north and south of the Mason Dixon line agreed that it was eminently fair that a Negro should have a chance to play in organized baseball . . ."⁸¹ A few Afro-American and sporting publications even featured compilations of Southern press opinion. Representative of the Southern press comment most favorable to Robinson were assessments similar to the following—" . . . if Jackie Robinson hits homers and plays a whale of a game. . . the fans will lose sight of his color"; "If he is qualified, then give him an opportunity"; "A star is a star no matter what his race"; and "It all makes far keener competition and most definitely will raise the standard of major league baseball . . ."⁸² Acknowledging that some Southern journalists adopted a progressive stance on the race issue, however, did not fundamentally alter the media's perception of the region's dissent from national values. Nevertheless, paralleling the younger Rickey's "they'll be back" prognosis, several pundits hoped that a transformation of Southern values would follow the initial period of turbulence. For instance, an editorial in the black *Michigan Chronicle*, declared, "It is our guess, like that of the Dodger management, that the southern white boys who may be shocked will recover in due time. A good stiff democratic shock in the right place might do them a lot of good."⁸³

Several black and general circulation newspapers contended that Robinson had, and thus could again, help Southerners to recognize the incompatibility of their regional code with national values. Jackie Reemes, *Amsterdam News* reporter, wrote: ". . . I can recall Robinson's basketball days at U.C.L.A. There were several southern white boys on the team with Robinson who handled any opposing players who unduly roughed up colored members of U.C.L.A. If those lads, three of them from the heart of Texas, learned to overcome their prejudices others can and will learn the same lesson."⁸⁴ Southern exceptionalism thus obstructed the liberal consensus, but time and effort, suggested the press, would render justice triumphant over regional conservatism.

Not surprisingly, given the association drawn between baseball and Southern exceptionalism, the press frequently depicted the redemption of the National Pastime emanating from forces external to the game. Many images of Rickey as an emancipator appeared, and more than one pundit discovered Lincoln-esque qualities in Rickey. Some journalists called the Dodger president a "hero," a "savior," "courageous," "meritorious," "liberal," "sincere," "just," "dem-

80. *New York Age*, Nov. 3, 1945, 6.

81. *Cleveland Press*, Oct. 25, 1945, 26; *Detroit News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 45; *Syracuse Herald Journal*, Oct. 25, 1945, 38.

82. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 5; *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1.

83. *Michigan Chronicle*, Nov. 3, 1945, 6.

84. *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 3, 1945, 20.

ocratic,” “idealistic,” “righteous,” and “strong hearted.”⁸⁵ Other images, however, leavened praise for Rickey’s altruism and morality. Both the black and general circulation press frequently suggested that Rickey was not the prime mover behind the game’s belated experiment in integration. Many articles contained Rickey’s denials that he had yielded to outside forces. “No pressure groups had anything to do with it . . .” Rickey told the Associated Press.⁸⁶ Yet, a wire service article reported his admission that macrocosmic considerations made integration an inevitability: “. . . racial equality in all sports must be an eventual fact . . .”⁸⁷ Employing contradictory logic, Rickey steadfastly portrayed himself immune to influence emanating from outside Organized Baseball while acknowledging, “. . . some of these owners who declared that they’re not going to hire Negro players are going to run into difficulty . . . This is a movement that cannot be stopped by anyone.”⁸⁸ Referring to antidiscrimination legislation, the Dodger owner confessed to *The Sporting News*, “The time is nearing fast when every professional baseball club operating in the state of New York will have to hire Negro players.”⁸⁹ Thus, Rickey portrayed himself as a free agent while depicting societal pressures foreclosing traditional options to his fellow owners. Rickey’s claims of exemption from external considerations, however, did not emerge as the dominant media perception of events. A plethora of articles served to undermine the inclination to view Rickey as a disinterested moralist. According to the Associated Press, for example, Rickey himself admitted, “I have never meant to be a crusader, and I hope I won’t be regarded as one.”⁹⁰ Typically journalists implied that forces outside of baseball were prodding the game to reflect the national consensus.

Although the normative media approach to this episode recognized the salutary influence of pressures external to baseball on the game, a minority response articulated misgivings about the impact of such outside forces. Ed Danforth, sports editor of the *Atlanta Journal*, warned, “The only menace to peace between the races is the carpet-bagger white press and agitators in the Negro press who capitalize on racial issues to exploit themselves.”⁹⁰ Writing for *The Sporting News*, Joe Williams recalled memories of having witnessed “the Negro . . . cruelly victimized by pressure groups, social frauds and political demagogues.”⁹² Likewise, a *Cleveland Press* sportswriter denigrated “high-

85. *Boston Chronicle*, Oct. 27, 1945, 1; *Boston Chronicle*, Nov. 3, 1945, 7; *Boston Chronicle*, Nov. 10, 1945, 7; *Boston Herald*, Oct. 26, 1945, 26; *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 3, 1945, 7; *Detroit Tribune*, Nov. 24, 1945, 11; *Amsterdam News* (New York), Oct. 27, 1945, 1; *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 3, 1945, 1, 17, and 25; *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 17, 1945, 24; *New York Herald Tribune*, Oct. 26, 1945, 26; *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1945, 16; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 26, 1945, 30; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1 and 4; *St. Louis Argus*, Nov. 2, 1945, 17.

86. *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Oct. 25, 1945, 20; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 25, 1945, 24; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 25, 1945, 30.

87. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 24, 1945, 29.

88. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1.

89. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 4.

90. *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Oct. 24, 1945, 15.

91. *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1.

92. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 12.

geared groups (who) tried to force their way into the major leagues . . .”⁹³ Much more common in both the black and general circulation press, however, was the belief that outside influences had a positive impact on the National Pastime.

Journalists claimed “the long-sought opening wedge into the big leagues”⁹⁴ “represents the first success scored by all the organizations and individuals who have been clamoring for big league baseball to end its . . . discrimination against colored ball players.”⁹⁵ Dave Egan, sportswriter for the *Boston Daily Record*, believed “major league moguls” would not truly accept integration “until public opinion forces them to accept the basic principles of such an old and conservative document as the Constitution of the United States of America.”⁹⁶ Some general circulation newspapers, including the *Philadelphia Record*, congratulated themselves for prompting Rickey’s decision. More frequently, however, the white press attributed the integration of baseball to “all the recent laws and rulings aimed at an end of racial discrimination.” *The Baltimore Morning Sun*, for example, noted “that the legislatures of many states had passed bills in recent years aimed at eliminating racial prejudice.”⁹⁷ The *New York Post* acknowledged that the “anti-discrimination Ives-Quinn law, written into the New York State statutes this summer, increased the demands of those organizations, who now had the law on their side.”⁹⁸ And some articles in general circulation journals commented on efforts by Negroes themselves to create opportunities for blacks in Organized Baseball.

For their part, black newspapers thanked white allies for their assistance. The *Amsterdam News*, for example, “spotlighted the liberal viewpoint of Gov. Thomas E. Dewey of New York, whose insistence that a State Fair Employment Practice Commission be established, formed the opening wedge by which Negroes are being integrated into all avenues of employment, including professional sports.”⁹⁹ Similarly, the *Boston Guardian* praised the “*Boston Daily Record* ace sports columnist, Dave (The Colonel) Egan . . . (who) led the fight in the daily newspapers. . .”¹⁰⁰ To a much greater extent than the general circulation press, however, the black press emphasized that the efforts of Negroes themselves played a pivotal role in forcing baseball to acknowledge its delinquency. Negro newspapers pointed to black civil rights organizations, black public opinion, and black standard bearers who contributed to the “long contending of Negroes for the white major leagues to take in qualified Negro players . . .”¹⁰¹

The Negro press tended to view itself as the prime force behind the signing of Robinson. Sam Lacy, sports editor of the *Baltimore Afro-American*, remarked, “I have had a longtime connection with the campaign to break down the major

93. *Cleveland Press*, Oct. 25, 1945, 26.

94. *Detroit News*, Oct. 24, 1945, 21.

95. *New York Post*, Oct. 24, 1945, 68.

96. *Boston Daily Record*, Oct. 25, 1945, 36.

91. *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Oct. 24, 1945, 1.

98. *New York Post*, Oct. 24, 1945, 68.

99. *Amsterdam News* (New York), Oct. 27, 1945, 1.

100. *Boston Guardian*, Oct. 27, 1945, 1.

101. *New York Age*, Nov. 10, 1945, 11.

leagues' color bar . . ."102 Similarly, a *Boston Chronicle* writer claimed, "This column has been hammering away for many seasons at the illogical viewpoint shown by "those opposed to the integration of Organized Baseball."103 The *Boston Guardian* also saluted the "efforts . . . of colored writers."104 Readers of the *Amsterdam News* were reminded that "Dr. C. B. Powell, editor of the *Amsterdam News* . . . was a member of the . . . commission against discrimination which drafted the Ives-Quinn Bill . . ."105 Don Le Leighbur wrote in the *Philadelphia Tribune*, "I have been in the forefront of the fight for years against these reactionaries in organized baseball to relax color bans . . ."106 The *Pittsburgh Courier* reminded readers of "its intensive campaign to smash the color barrier in organized major league baseball . . ."107 Although Negro pundits differed about the importance of their own individual contributions to the campaign against discrimination, they agreed that the collective efforts of the black press had a decisive influence on the signing of Robinson. A number of articles employed Robinson's tribute to the black press for confirmation:108 "I cannot thank the Negro press too much . . . for the wonderful things they have said and done in my behalf and in behalf of the hundreds of other Negro ball players down through the years."109 Indeed, a *Baltimore Afro-American* headline exclaimed, "It's a press victory . . ." Recent scholarship suggests that the black press did indeed make vital contributions to the long campaign to eradicate segregation from Organized Baseball."110 The historian David Wiggins, for example, has documented the nearly twelve year publicity campaign waged by the *Pittsburgh Courier* against Jim Crow practices in the National Pastime.111 As believers in the liberal consensus, black journalists congratulated themselves for forcing Organized Baseball to yield to national values.

American values synthesized self-interest and mortality Baseball integration, implied the press, would promote utilitarian benefits for both blacks and whites. By signing Robinson, suggested scribes, Rickey had chosen to transform blacks into an opportunity for the Dodgers specifically and for Organized Baseball in general. Both the black and general circulation press gave much attention to the benefits they believed Rickey would soon derive. The *New York Times* depicted Rickey primarily motivated by a desire "to win baseball games."112 Black players constituted a potentially rich reservoir of untapped talent for a man anxious to "win the pennant for Brooklyn."113 In the *New York Age*, "Buster" Miller wrote, ". . . he (Rickey) was in the market for a shortstop and went and

102. *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 10, 1945, 18.

103. *Boston Chronicle*, Nov. 3, 1945, 7.

104. *Boston Guardian*, Oct. 27, 1945, 1.

105. *Amsterdam News (New York)*, Oct. 27, 1945, 1.

106. *Philadelphia Tribune*, Dec. 29, 1945, 9.

107. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 12.

108. *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 3, 1945, 23; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 10, 1945, 1.

109. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 12.

110. *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1.

111. Wiggins, "Wendell Smith, the *Pittsburgh Courier* Journal and the Campaign to Include Blacks in Organized Baseball," 5-29.

112. *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1945, 17.

113. *New York Post*, Oct. 25, 1945, 53.

bought what he thought was the best he could get for his money. Don't we all, whether its shortstops, shoes or sealing wax, cabbages or kings?"¹¹⁴ Other newspapers, including the *Philadelphia Record*, reinforced the perception that integration would prove "profitable" to Organized Baseball.¹¹⁵ Alluding to the growing presence of blacks in the urban North, several articles viewed the Robinson signing as a ploy to attract black fans: "If Negro players were included in the lineups of the major league teams, many new fans undoubtedly would be recruited from the large colored populations of cities like New York and Chicago."¹¹⁶

Perhaps the most representative media image germane to the Robinson signing derived from a widely quoted remark by Frank Shaughnessy, president of the International League. Shaughnessy endorsed racial integration "as long as any fellow's the right type and can make good and can get along with other players. . . ."¹¹⁷ A *Sporting News* article, considering the various opinions expressed, declared, "Shaughnessy . . . seemed to strike the most intelligent note."¹¹⁸ Numerous articles echoed Shaughnessy's assumption that Organized Baseball would give the "right type" of black a fair trial. With few exceptions the media employed phraseology, such as "right type of fellow," "right man," "right boy," "a credit to the race," "no better candidate," "ideal candidate," and "ideal Negro," that portrayed Robinson as a good choice to reintegrate baseball.¹¹⁹ The Robinson portrayed by the media was "the right type" because rather than challenge the liberal consensus he appeared to apotheosize it.

Athletic skills alone were not sufficient to win Robinson "the right type" designation. Nevertheless, both the general circulation and black press gave extensive and glowing attention to Robinson's accomplishments while a collegiate football, track, basketball, and baseball star and to his stellar performance for the Kansas City Monarchs, a Negro American League team.¹²⁰ Yet Rickey and much of the press knew that there were better and more experienced baseball players in Negro baseball than Robinson.¹²¹ The Robinson described by the press in the aftermath of his signing was not the man the press would depict in latter years. Recognizing that "the right type" of black would encounter fewer difficulties, the Dodger president and the Negro athlete became collaborators.¹²² Robinson's intelligence, poise, courage, and athletic ability were assets, but his independence and his anger, actually more radical in its intensity than its content, might have made him appear a critic of American values if not muted. As part of Rickey's stratagem for ameliorating opposition to the integra-

114. *New York Age*, Nov. 10, 1945, 11.

115. *Philadelphia Record*, Oct. 24, 1945, 22.

116. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 12.

117. *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), Oct. 27, 1945, 14; *Detroit News*, Oct. 24, 1945, 21; *New York Sun*, Oct. 24, 1945, 36.

118. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 12.

119. *Syracuse Herald Journal*, Oct. 27, 1945, 6; *Boston Daily Record*, Oct. 24, 1945, 29; *New York Herald Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1945, 26; *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 26, 1945, 15; Editorial, *Detroit News*, Oct. 26, 1945, 22.

120. *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1945, 17; *Chicago Daily News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 33; *Pittsburgh Sun Telegraph*, Oct. 24, 1945, 20; *St. Louis Argus*, Oct. 26, 1945, 1.

121. Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 58.

122. *Ibid.*, 67.

tion of Organized Baseball, Robinson, for a time, agreed to assume the personae of “the right type” of Negro.¹²³

At times misinformation or omissions served to reinforce positive images of “Jackie’s” personal history. Many articles referred to the migration of Robinson’s family “when he was a year old” from Cairo, Georgia, to Pasadena, California.¹²⁴ Yet articles that appeared in print during 1945 failed to acknowledge one of the major reasons for the migration: Robinson’s father had deserted the family.¹²⁵ The *Philadelphia Record*, for example, printed Robinson’s fallacious account of the past: “I’ve never known my father. He died when I was a baby.”¹²⁶ Miscegenation, like familial instability, might pose image difficulties for an individual seeking identification with the values integral to the national consensus. But the press clearly implied nocturnal adventures, interracial or otherwise, obviously held little appeal for a man who planned to soon marry a woman he had known since his college days.¹²⁷ The *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* went as far as to explicitly identify Robinson’s fiancée as “a Negro.”¹²⁸

The building of a usable history extended to Robinson’s education. Copious references to Robinson’s association with the University of California at Los Angeles appeared in the press.¹²⁹ Repeated use of phrases such as “college bred,” “an educated man,” and “was educated” juxtaposed with references to “UCLA” implied Robinson graduated college.¹³⁰ Very few articles admitted that Robinson did not receive a degree, and even these extremely atypical accounts generally invented compelling excuses for Robinson’s withdrawal from UCLA. *The Sporting News*, for example, gave the false impression that “he was a senior at University of California in Los Angeles” when he patriotically “enlisted” in the army.¹³¹ Long after Robinson signed his first Organized Baseball career he candidly described his decision to quit college: “After two years at UCLA I decided to leave. I was convinced that no amount of education would help a black man get a job.”¹³² In 1945, such an admission by a black might have appeared as disillusionment with American values.

Likewise, journalistic ellipses and inaccuracies distorted Robinson’s military record. Numerous articles noted that Robinson was a “former army lieutenant.”¹³³ Yet sportswriters omitted the most significant aspect of Robinson’s army

123. Robert Peterson, *Only the Ball Was White* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 189-190; Arthur Mann, *Branch Rickey: American in Action* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), 218.

124. *Michigan Chronicle* (Detroit), Oct. 27, 1945, 1; *New York Daily Mirror*, Oct. 24, 1945, 14; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 24, 1945, 20.

125. *The Sporting News*, March 20, 1971, 30.

126. *Philadelphia Record*, Oct. 28, 1945, 23.

127. *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1; *Detroit Tribune*, Nov. 17, 1945, 11; *Michigan Chronicle*, Nov. 10, 1945, 6.

128. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 26, 1945, 36.

129. *Washington Times Herald*, Oct. 24, 1945, 22; *Washington Daily News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 30; *New York Sun*, Oct. 26, 1945, 34; *Detroit Times*, Oct. 25, 1945, 18C.

130. *Detroit Free Press*, Oct. 27, 1945, 6; *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 10, 1945, 18; *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1945, 16.

131. *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 5.

132. Jackie Robinson and Alfred Duckett, *I Never Had It Made* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1972), 23.

133. “A Negro on the Farm,” *Newsweek* 26 (Nov. 5, 1945): 95; “Jackie Robinson,” *Life* 19 (Nov. 26, 1945): 133; *Washington Daily News*, Oct. 24, 1945, 40.

career; he faced court-martial, "charged with willful disobedience and disrespect."¹³⁴ The episode evolved from Robinson's refusal to submit to racial discrimination on a bus at Camp Hood, and he was ultimately acquitted."¹³⁴ Acknowledging that baseball violated the liberal consensus was legitimate; the "right type" of black did not, however, suggest that national values were unjust. A number of journalists also attributed "¹³⁵months overseas" service to Robinson although he remained stateside during the war."¹³⁶ The media Robinson was defender, not critic, of the American creed.

"The right type" imagery enveloped every aspect of Robinson's personality and character. Almost uniformly the media portrayed Robinson's devotion to values sanctioned by the national consensus-patriotism, patience, self-denial, and hard work. Black newspapers often appeared even more eager than the general circulation press to identify Robinson with these values. According to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Robinson coupled gratitude toward Rickey with appreciation of country: ". . . when I think of this opportunity, I'm very glad that I'm an American, because with all its so-called faults, it's the only place in the world where a young man can get such a chance-a chance to make a success out of life on his ability"¹³⁷ Images of Robinson's "confidence," "self-assurance," "intelligent" manner, and determination to strive for his "best" appeared within a journalistic context that frequently alluded to the athlete's "level-headed," "shy," "well-behaved," "quiet," "modest," "responsible," and "sincere" demeanor.¹³⁸ Devoid of bravado, Robinson, as portrayed by the media, was "a high type of fellow" and "a high-class citizen."¹³⁹ His "good habits" and a "good character" encompassed abstinence from "drink or smoke."¹⁴⁰ Restraint and caution figured prominently among the traits newspapers attributed to this "fine type of young man."¹⁴¹ The image of Robinson as deferential and soft-spoken that the press projected in 1945 differed markedly from the athlete's true self. Rickey and Robinson were thus successful in encouraging the press to view the athlete as "the right type" of black, one who sought to affirm, not challenge, American values. For the liberal consensus would reciprocate by demanding equality of opportunity for Robinson. In contrast the "bad nigger" imagery-carnality, miscegenation, bravado, iconoclasm, flamboyance, hostility toward whites, assertiveness, and irresponsibility-once embodied by boxer Jack Johnson, evoked fear from white Americans. Joe Louis, the current heavyweight champion, had already demonstrated

134. Jackie Robinson and Charles Dexter, *Baseball Has Done It* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1964), 37.

135. Jules Tygiel, "The Court-Martial of Jackie Robinson," *American Heritage* 35 (Aug./Sept. 1984): 34-39.

136. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 24, 1945, 20; *Philadelphia Tribune*, Dec. 1, 1945, 13.

137. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 12.

138. *Baltimore Afro-American*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1; *Chicago Herald American*, Oct. 24, 1945, 26; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 24, 1945, 6C; *La Presse* (Montreal), Oct. 30, 1945, 16; *New York Age*, Nov. 3, 1945, 6; *Amsterdam News* (New York), Oct. 27, 1945, 5; *Brooklyn Eagle*, Nov. 3, 1945, 6; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 24, 1945, 20; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 12; *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 5.

139. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1; *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 26, 1945, 15.

140. *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 25, 1945, 17; *New York Post*, Oct. 25, 1945, 53; *Detroit Tribune*, Nov. 17, 1945, 11; *The Sporting News*, Nov. 11, 1945, 6.

141. *Montreal Gazette*, Oct. 24, 1945, 14; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1.

the press' willingness to identify "the right type" of black with the liberal consensus.¹⁴²

The American press displayed little sense of irony that a foreign country would host the integration of the National Pastime. Some elements of the Canadian press did engage in self-congratulatory comparisons between the two nations, and the *Pittsburgh Courier* was also impressed by the benevolence of "French Canadian fans."¹⁴³ Nevertheless, typically American newspapers, including the black press, implicitly portrayed Montreal's ambiance as an extension of the racial practices normative north of the Mason-Dixon line. Newspapers perceived Rickey's assignment of Robinson to the Montreal Royals as an attempt to minimize Southern interference with integration of baseball. Both Afro-American and general circulation journals noted that, aside from the Daytona Beach training camp and a franchise in the border city of Baltimore, the Montreal Royals would avoid areas influenced by Southern mores.¹⁴⁴ In addition to Montreal and Baltimore, the International League including Jersey City Newark, Toronto, Rochester, and Syracuse. Due to the nature of "International League membership," host cities other than Baltimore, reported the United Press, "were expected to show no unusual interest" in a black athlete.¹⁴⁵ Outside the South "the right type" of black, indicated journalists, could expect the fair trial dictated by national ideology

While journalistic opinion overwhelmingly favored granting "the right type" of black "the chance . . . to make the big league grade,"¹⁴⁶ neither the general circulation nor Afro-American press suggested that a Negro athlete should receive special consideration. The *St. Louis Argus* counseled blacks to remember that they shared in Robinson's testing and warned "Tan" fans of "Jackie's" against "loud provocative remarks" that would "stir race hatred."¹⁴⁷ The liberal consensus encouraged those who espoused equal opportunity for Robinson to often neglect the obvious: historical deprivation and endemic racism necessitated positive intervention on Robinson's behalf to create conditions amenable to equal opportunity. Endorsements for such positive intervention extended no further than supporting Rickey's pledge to take "adequate steps" against players in the Dodger organization who "openly worked against Robinson."¹⁴⁸ Without hesitation, however, Rickey indicated that Robinson would not remain in Montreal "if he doesn't make good . . ."¹⁴⁹ The press did not seek absolute assurances that major league rosters would include black

142. Gilmore, *Bad Nigger*: Dominic Capeci and Martha Wilkerson, "Multifarious Hero: Joe Louis, American Society and Race Relations During World Crisis, 1935-1945," *Journal of Sport History*, 10 (Winter 1983): 5.

143. *La Presse* (Montreal), Oct. 25, 1945, 20; *Montreal Gazette*, Oct. 25, 1945, 16; *The Sporting News*, Nov. 1, 1945, 6; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 10, 1945, 11.

144. *La Presse* (Montreal), Oct. 24, 1945, 18.

145. *Detroit News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 45; *Syracuse Herald Journal*, Oct. 25, 1945, 38.

146. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Oct. 25, 1945, 6.

147. *St. Louis Argus*, Nov. 2, 1945, 17.

148. *Detroit News*, Oct. 25, 1945, 45; *New York Herald Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1945, 26; *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 24, 1945, 17.

149. *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 25, 1945, 17; *New York Herald Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1945, 26; *Boston Daily Globe*, Oct. 24, 1945, 22.

players. Media images reflected no significant pleas for guarantees in regard to outcome. Essentially the burden rested with Robinson to "go as far as he can . . ."150 A headline in the *Syracuse Herald-Journal*, for example, proclaimed, "Player Must Prove Worth on Diamond."¹⁵¹ Although Arthur Siegel, *Boston Traveler* sportswriter, called the signing of Robinson "very nice," Siegel asked, "Is he (Robinson) of fast enough calibre to make the International League team?"¹⁵² "Whether Jackie Robinson is or is not a good ballplayer," stated the *Saturday Review of Literature*, "is the only question at issue."¹⁵³ Robinson himself, suggested scribes, felt his fate should hinge only on his abilities.¹⁵⁴

Nor did the black press ask any more for Robinson than a trial decided "solely on his baseball merits."¹⁵⁵ "Can Jackie Make The Grade?" questioned a *Detroit Tribune* article: "Branch Rickey may have opened the gates . . . but it is up to Jackie himself to prove whether he can stay inside the field."¹⁵⁶ The "End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee," stated the *Amsterdam News*, felt only a "competent Negro player who is qualified" should "play in the major leagues."¹⁵⁷ Likewise, the *Pittsburgh Courier* shared Rickey's aspiration that the Robinson's episode could become "just a matter of giving another young man a chance."¹⁵⁸ Unlike racial spokesmen of a latter generation the contemporary black press's interpretation of opportunity did not include quotas or affirmative action. All Negroes wanted, indicated the *Michigan Chronicle*, was acceptance "on the basis of merit."¹⁵⁹

The prevailing consensus largely checked the impulse to portray baseball segregation as a microcosm of American society. Instead the press generally depicted the Robinson signing as a stratagem for redeeming the National Pastime. Relatively few media images suggested that the signing of Robinson was a disproportionately modest reponse to combat a problem as central to the social structure as racism. Even that media commentary most derisive of baseball's conservatism generally avoided placing such phenomena within a context that implied the game merely reflected national life. Dave Egan, for example, of the Boston *Daily Record*, charged, ". . . generations of Jackie Robinsons now dead and gone must have smiled indulgently, when Christy Mathewson was called the greatest pitcher of all time, when they felt, all along the black Mathewson, Joe Mendez, was entitled to the place reserved for whites alone in the Hall of Fame."¹⁶⁰ Likewise, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* believed, incorrectly as it turned out, that time had run out for the great Satchel Paige.¹⁶¹ As the *Washington Post* noted, if Rickey truly regarded talent as the only

150. *Washington Evening Star*, Oct. 20, 1945, 12.

151. *Syracuse Herald Journal*, Oct. 25, 1945, 38.

152. *Boston Traveler*, Oct. 24, 1945, 20.

153. J. T. Winterich, "Playing Ball," *Saturday Review of literature* 28 (Nov. 24, 1945): 12

154. *Chicago Herald American*, Oct. 26, 1945, 12.

155. *Detroit Tribune*, Nov. 3, 1945, 11

156. *Detroit Tribune*, Nov. 17, 1945, 11.

157. *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 3, 1945, 14.

158. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 3, 1945, 1.

159. *Michigan Chronicle*, Nov. 3, 1945, 6.

160. *Boston Daily Record*, Oct. 25, 1945, 36.

161. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Oct. 26, 1945, 19.

germane criteria for evaluating an athlete, baseball integration might have occurred years ago.¹⁶² These general circulation newspapers, however, reminded readers that baseball had arrived too late for many great Negro athletes without characterizing national life off the diamond as suffused with racism.

Criticism of baseball's recalcitrance was more apparent in the black press than in the general circulation press. Although accolades for Rickey appeared in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, this same newspaper carried lawyer Louis Nizer's statement "that what the Montreal Royals did in signing Jackie Robinson should have been done many years ago."¹⁶³ Earl Brown, a black columnist, expressed bitterness over "the fact that Jackie Robinson, a young Negro who is intellectually, culturally and physically superior to most white baseball players, has signed a contract to play in a minor league has caused a national sensation."¹⁶⁴ Similarly, the *Amsterdam News* printed the caveat of a civil rights group that "this is only the beginning . . ."¹⁶⁵ Writing for the *Michigan Chronicle*, Horace White strongly argued that tokenism of the sort employed by Rickey exploited blacks:

The minority groups usually succumb to these controls of the majority group. One way of succumbing to the controls of the majority is to bite for every sap that the majority group hands out. The assigning of a Negro to a berth in organized baseball is an example of what is meant here. The Negro population has been lead to believe that Negroes have gained something by the very fact that the young man has been assigned to play with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Still, nothing has been gained.¹⁶⁶

Even within the black press, however, White's tone was unusual. White clearly believed that the mere signing of a single black to Organized Baseball contract failed to address a problem with dimensions as broad as that of American racism. The extent of his resentment was atypical. In the black press strong disapproval of baseball's illiberalism almost always avoided suggesting a general disillusionment with American values.

The liberal consensus evident in press commentary on the signing of Robinson closely resembles the mid-1940s American Creed described by Gunnar Myrdal. Despite regional, class, and racial distinctions, Myrdal reported "that most Americans have most valuations in common." This shared Creed, stated Myrdal, is for "liberty, equality, justice, and fair opportunity for everybody." Myrdal argued that the prevalence of group and individual strife did not vitiate the consensus supporting the American Creed. Indeed, he perceived the need to reconcile belief with practice the nation's central dilemma. And no issue, Myrdal asserted, more vividly illuminated those contradictions than the status of the American Negro. World War II made domestic dissent from the tenets of the American Creed most difficult. "In fighting fascism and nazism," wrote Myrdal, "America had to stand before the whole world in favor of racial

162. *Washington Post*, Oct. 27, 1945, 18.

163. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov. 10, 1945, 11.

164. *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 3, 1945, 12.

165. *Amsterdam News* (New York), Nov. 3, 1945, 14.

166. *Michigan Chronicle*, Nov. 3, 1945, 6.

tolerance and cooperation and of racial equality” Even racists found it difficult to publicly disavow the Creed. Despite discrimination, blacks, argued Myrdal, endorsed the values of the American Creed: “Negroes show, by taking that position, that they have not lost their belief that ultimately the American Creed will come out on top.” Northerners, contended Myrdal, exaggerated the South’s contributions to contemporary racism. Perhaps even more significant, Americans, he reported, seriously minimized the extent of racial conflict in the North.¹⁶⁷

Examination of press reaction to the Robinson signing suggests that Americans had little awareness of the extent and severity of racism in the nation’s social fabric. The media fallaciously depicted prejudice as largely a regional problem. Recent race riots, housing discrimination, limited employment opportunities, and economic disparities make clear that the liberal consensus described a belief system rather than empirical phenomena.¹⁶⁸ Most Americans, however, mistook their values for both a system of belief and a method of operation while, in fact, it constituted only the former. By emphasizing unity, consensus, commonality and agreement, the liberal consensus obscured conflict. Analysis of the mid-1940s media attests to the pervasiveness of shared values. A people highly cognizant of their similarities found it difficult to acknowledge their differences. It was possible to acknowledge isolated defiance of the consensus, as with Southern exceptionalism, but to acknowledge a sociological divergence from that belief system endemic to national life would throw into question the essence of the consensus, the belief that it could compel compliance from Americans. Furthermore, World War II encouraged Americans to view the United States in terms of characteristics antithetical to the racism and illiberalism of Nazi Germany. The crusade against Hitler nurtured a sense of national exaltation that acted as a deterrent against acknowledging the severity of America’s domestic problems. Thus, in the mid-1940s a consensus about values flourished despite the existence of significant social conflict. Racism, a major contradiction to the consensus, could thus appear a manifestation of an atavistic region’s refusal to conform to the consensus rather than as a criticism of the American way of life itself. Americans could then keep “to liberalism as a national creed, even if not as its actual way of life.

In retrospect it is apparent that the signing of Robinson was primarily a symbolic breakthrough. Over the next decade integration in America proceeded slowly even within the context of baseball. Five years after the signing of Robinson, only a dozen blacks had played in the big leagues, and until late July 1959, fourteen years after the announced reintegration of baseball, the Boston Red Sox excluded negroes from their lineup. No black managed in the major leagues until 1975. Indeed, in the 1980s blacks remain grossly underrepresented at the coaching, managerial, executive, and entrepreneurial levels of baseball.

167. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, xlviii, 1004, 799, and 600.

168. John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 442-444.

169. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 12.

And “stacking,” the practice of concentrating black athletes at certain positions, still continues.¹⁷⁰ More significantly, the emphasis on symbolism obscured the irony that as the Dodgers accepted racial integration, de facto segregation increased in Brooklyn and in many other Northern cities in the years following the signing of Robinson. The emphasis on symbolism detracted from attention to racism outside the South, contributing to the “invisible man” phenomena of the 1950s.

Extensive analysis of the contemporary print media reveals a nearly universal belief in the American Creed on both sides of the color line. As Myrdal recognized, blacks, as well as whites, tended to believe in the promise of the Creed: “The American Negroes know that they are a subordinated group experiencing more than anybody else in the nation the consequence of the fact that the Creed is not lived up to in America. Yet their faith in the Creed is not simply a means of pleading their unfulfilled rights. They, like the whites, are under the spell of the great national suggestion. With one part of themselves they actually believe, as do the whites, that the Creed is ruling America.”¹⁷¹ Black and white journalists generally shared similar assumptions about the benevolence of the American Creed. Excerpts from two letters, one written to a black newspaper and the other to a general circulation journal, reflect this common perspective. The *Chicago Defender* correspondent wrote, “the placement of a Negro in major league baseball is very encouraging. At last America’s favorite pastime has accepted the democratic principle that accompanies the American ideal.”¹⁷² An epistle to the *Baltimore Morning Sun* articulated the same sentiment, “The recent signing of a Negro player by a major league baseball club was a definite step toward the attainment of that American way of life chartered by our forebears.”¹⁷³ Unlike militants of the late 1960s social critics of the mid-1940s reflected an ideological consensus; injustice, they believed, deviated from, rather than expressed, American values. Thus, “the right type” of black could redeem Organized Baseball from Southern practices and allow the game to once again truly embody American values. Sportswriters were wrong, however. To deal with racism effectively, Americans had to acknowledge it as more than a regional malady. “The Negro problem,” wrote Myrdal, “is an integral part of . . . the larger American civilization. It cannot be treated in isolation.”¹⁷⁴

The ideological consensus suggested by media reaction to the Robinson signing obviously did not signify social consensus. With the social science’s “move away from a holistic view,” “nowadays . . . the generalizations of consensus scholarship are out of fashion.”¹⁷⁵ A generation of scholarship has

170. Merl Kleinknecht, “Integration of Baseball After World War II,” *Baseball Research Journal* 12 (1983): 104-105; John Lucas and Ronald Smith, *Saga of American Sport* (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, (1978), 395.

171. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 4.

172. Letter to the Editor, *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 10, 1945, 14.

173. Letter to the Editor, *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Oct. 28, 1945, 12.

174. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, liii.

175. John Ibsen, “Virgin Land Or Virgin Mary? Studying the Ethnicity of White Americans,” *American Quarterly* 33 (Bibliography 1981): 286.

ably documented the persistence of social conflict in the American past. Juxtaposing the near unanimity of the liberal response to the Robinson signing with race riots, housing and employment discrimination, the confinement of Japanese-Americans to concentration camps, and other contemporary phenomena indicates consensus about values amid social conflict.¹⁷⁶ Unlike David Riesman, Daniel Bell, Sloan Wilson, William H. Whyte, and critics of the 1950s who found conformity a source of sterility, mediocrity, and stagnation,¹⁷⁷ media reactions to the signing of Robinson criticized the particular, the South and Organized Baseball, while exalting the universal, the American Creed. External conflict, according to Lewis Coser, stimulated internal cohesion,¹⁷⁸ and World War II created a need to define America in terms diametrically opposed to those embodied by Nazi Germany. My research for an earlier article, "The Athlete as Jewish Standard Bearer: Media Images of Hank Greenberg," identified a different relationship between the particular and the universal. During the divisive years of the Great Depression the particular, baseball, appeared an idealized League of Nations, able to diffuse social tensions while the universal, the larger American society, seemed to abound with unresolved strife.¹⁷⁹ Perhaps additional case studies will further clarify the symbiotic relationship between the American mind and perceptions of the National Pastime.

176. David Noble, et al., *Twentieth Century Limited: A History of Recent America* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1980), 298-303.

177. Alonzo Homby, *The Imperial Years: The United States Since 1939* (New York: Weybright and Tally, 1976), 225-235.

178. Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1956).

179. William Simons, "The Athlete as Jewish Standard Bearer: Media Images of Hank Greenberg," *Jewish Social Studies* 44 (Spring 1982): 95-112.