

MCNEIL, WILLIAM F. *Cool Papas and Double Duties: The All-Time Greats of the Negro Leagues*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2001. Pp. ix+246. Photographs, appendices, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cb.

In another world—the world of Jim Crow—African Americans created parallel institutions of mainstream America to provide themselves with healthy opportunities and to prove their aptitude. Denied resources and denigrated by the racist guardians of Americanism, many of these institutions and their constituents flourished, despite the chronic economic and psychological impediments that would help define the community. As many great works attest, the parallel Western institutions of racism also influenced the great American pastime, baseball. William F. McNeil's *Cool Papas and Double Duties* continues the proliferation of works on the Negro Leagues and simultaneously deals with one of the foremost problems of contemporary America: the continued denial of the legacy of racism in America. McNeil argues that the election of *more* Negro League players to Cooperstown is important, because "Blacks have been looking for equality in all segments of American society for 200 years. It is time they found it. The National Baseball Hall of Fame can be a leader in the fight" (p. 5).

McNeil argues that only a miniscule number of former Negro League Baseball players have been elected to the Hall of Fame because there has been a profound bias by Cooperstown's selection committees, which historically have had little knowledge of the black leagues. In response, McNeil has polled former Negro League players, historians, and writers in an effort to identify a "quota" of twenty-seven worthy candidates for inductions. *Cool Papas and Double Duties* is excellently researched and despite the subjectiveness of evaluating the intangibles of athletics, McNeil makes a formidable argument, complete with statistics, for the consideration of seventeen Negro Leaguers into the Hall of Fame.

Contemporary conservatives and neo-liberals will undoubtedly criticize McNeil's establishment of a "quota," which would bring numerical equity to Cooperstown's Jim Crow era players. However, the "quota" seemed to be only a suggestion, because McNeil asserts, "If there is only one former Negro League player that is deserving of induction into the Hall of Fame, then only one should be admitted. But if 100 players are of Hall of Fame caliber, than all 100 should be admitted" (p. 4). The Negro League committee seemed to agree and "in good conscience" only recommended seventeen former players for consideration. Other critics will find fault with McNeil's system of evaluating players. Likewise, I would like to suggest another way of evaluating Negro League players would be to compare their numbers to the average of all players or Hall of Famers at their positions *during their era* in both leagues. The Cooperstown committees, although unfamiliar with the black leagues, cannot argue with the numbers.

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