

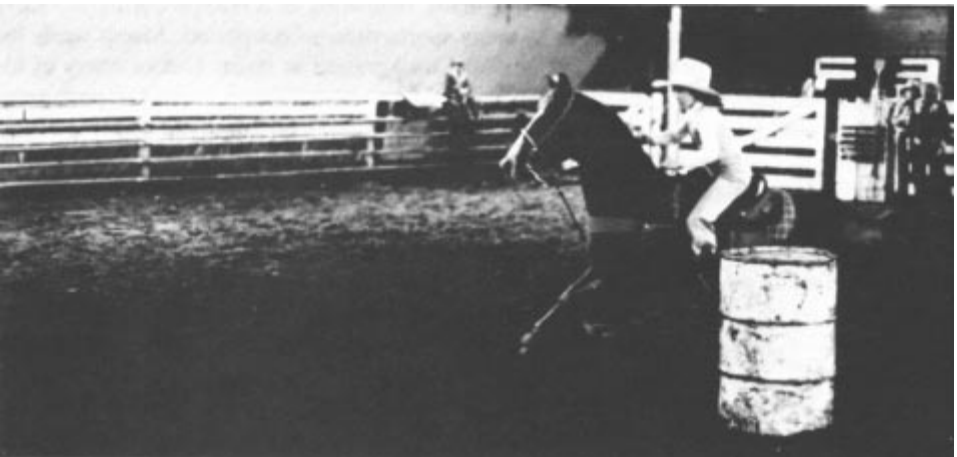
The Jake Powell Incident And The Press: A Study in Black and White

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On July 29, 1938, in a radio interview in Chicago, New York Yankee outfielder Jake Powell said that he kept in shape in the off-season while working as a policeman in Dayton, Ohio, by “cracking niggers over the head.” This remark drew immediate response at the radio station and set off protests across Black America. Powell was suspended from play by the commissioner of baseball for ten days, and many felt the punishment too soft. There were numerous calls in the Black communities and Black newspapers for Powell to be banned from baseball for life. Protests of an organized nature were developed in both Chicago and New York.

To a remarkable degree the development of this story beyond initial reporting of the incident was neglected by the White press. Only when Powell returned to the Yankee line-up to be greeted by a bottle-shower did the White press take note. In the meantime the Black press gave extensive coverage to the protests, the growing organized movements in Chicago and New York, continual Yankee attempts to pacify opinion in the Black community, and the extraordinary trip to Harlem by Jake Powell to visit people on the street and to issue denials and seek forgiveness in the offices of Black newspapers.

The reporting of this incident and its aftermath demonstrates the existence of two different worlds in American society, and the systematic neglect in the White press of issues of significance and concern in Black America.



Weaving successfully among the barrels, she won their hearts at the Rodeo exhibition