

Moses Fleetwood Walker: A Reaction To Baseball's Nineteenth Century Color Line

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In 1908, Moses Fleetwood Walker, the first black major league baseball player, reacted to the first fifty years of his life among whites by writing *Our Home Colony*, a bitter and oversimplified history of the Negro race. In this treatise Walker concluded that America's race problem could be solved only by the emigration of blacks to Africa. Though twenty years had passed between the end of Walker's baseball career and the formulation of this extreme political stance, the two were connected. While later events conspired to bring Walker's radicalism to fruition, the circumstances of his seven years spent with white baseball teams were instrumental in his politicization.

Those circumstances were of several kinds. Harassment from opponents, teammates, fans, and the press made an obvious contribution to Walker's eventual outrage. But subtler clues also pointed to Walker's rising activism and involvement. He rejected both the alternative of playing for all-Negro teams and the mulatto label available to him. Additionally, he was involved in the Sunday baseball controversy, and he was effected by the political vigilance which his younger brother, Weldy, had brought to the black cause.

Walker's politicization peaked in the years following his retirement from baseball. He and Weldy edited a newspaper, *The Equator*, and the two brothers opened an office for emigration coinciding with the publication of *Our Home Colony*. It cannot be said that the reaction to life expressed in *Our Home Colony* was natural, inevitable, or even reasonable; or that Walker's call for emigration was representative of the surrender of blacks to Jim Crowism, to blatant acts of racial hostility, or to the color line of professional baseball. There were, however, connections in those matters.



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