

“Felipe Alou: A Forgotten Egalitarian”

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Felipe Alou's outspoken egalitarianism developed as a result of his early experiences with American culture and disagreements with the big league bureaucracy. Like other Latins who climbed to the major leagues, Alou's acculturation into the United States was beset with such problems as the strange American diet, language barrier and racism. By 1958 he succeeded in his quest to make the major leagues and excelled in the years thereafter.

While he was generally soft-spoken, Felipe Alou also stubbornly gave little ground in defense of his principles. Twice during the 1959 season he challenged the baseball echelon by, first, refusing to pay a fine-he deemed unfair- to the National League office and, second, threatening to quit the San Francisco Giants when that club proposed to demote him to their Triple A team in Phoenix, Arizona. On both counts Alou acted in accordance with his principles. In another incident, the Dominican was incredulous after having been fined by Commissioner Ford Frick for participating in "unauthorized" contests during the 1963-1964 winter season. Alou struck back by launching a campaign designed to win greater representation for Latin American players within the commissioner's domain. The Dominican insisted that an office was needed to, both, address the needs of the Latin American players and to act as a mouthpiece on behalf of Latins to the baseball's hierarchy. The upshot of Alou's efforts came in 1965 with the appointment of Cuban Bobby Maduro to serve in the office of Commissioner William D. Eckert. Felipe Alou's campaign generated positive steps for Latin players who had been so long overlooked. Furthermore, his own acculturation helped bring to the forefront his egalitarianism which, inevitably, transformed him into a campaign leader.