

baseball by the color line. The townspeople loved the game in an era when it was the national pastime and they wanted to see the best. The normal school, carpet mill, and fair brought black teams to play because they were proven revenue producers and were good teams. The black teams also had to provide entertainment along with their baseball skills. This varied over the years from comedy routines to precision infield fielding drills to a jazz band.

The Bloomsburg State Normal School was unique in Pennsylvania and beyond, for an institution of its type to compete with numerous black professional baseball teams. These opposing teams were excellent in the level of talent they possessed, and the fact that the players were black seems to have had nothing to do with the decision to schedule them. The normal school, led by Coach Albert Aldinger, strove to be the best and play against the best. The initial success hosting black teams continued on into the 1920s as the people in town turned out for these athletic contests just as they had before.

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Racializing the Rumble: Blackness vs. Whiteness in the Jungle

Sports in general and boxing in particular are inextricably linked to society's economic and political dynamics. Athletes have a powerful role in this interplay and, perhaps, no other figure in the history of sports exemplifies this better than the three-time world heavyweight boxing champion, Muhammad Ali. This paper addresses the history of sports by looking at the notion of race and the world championship title fight, the "Rumble in the Jungle," between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in Kinshasa, Zaire on October 30, 1974.

The "Rumble in the Jungle" – so labeled because of the fight's location in Africa – was organized at a time when boxing promotions and economics were largely controlled by a tight circle of white New Yorkers, with New York generally being the venue for most major boxing events. The white boxing establishment represented what John Hoberman has described as the "entrapment of African Americans in the world of athleticism." This world has to do with "blacks seeking respect and expanded opportunity and whites seeking entertainment, profit, and forms of racial

reconciliation that do not challenge fundamental assumptions about racial difference.” The “Rumble in the Jungle,” however, followed none of the usual patterns. Don King, a newcomer to U. S. boxing circles at the time, and Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga, the President of Zaire, organized the event. Their idea was to create a boxing event with black boxers, black promoters, and black ring-girls in an all-black nation. Furthermore, Muhammad Ali upset all existing sports logistics by: claiming active agency in creating the nature of the event; making the implicit politics of boxing overt and explicit; and by questioning fundamental assumptions about race and racial difference.

During the last decade, a large scholarly consensus has emphasized the sociohistorically constructed meanings of race as well as the ideological nature of racial formations as central principles of social organization within the United States. According to this view, there is no essential biological nature of race – either in terms of physical characterization or fixed meanings – but race is seen as a social construction and a political phenomenon, shifting in different historical climates. Racial formations, in turn, are seen as socio-historical processes. or projects, which create, transform. and destroy racial categories.

Despite the wide acceptance of these views of race and racial formations, some scholars claim that the new interpretations have changed little, if anything, outside of academia, that the practical significance of the scholarly debates are next to nothing, and that few people actually believe these new definitions. According to Ira Berlin, the reason for the reluctance to embrace the new understanding derives from the failure to demonstrate how race is continually redefined, who does the defining, and why. With this paper, my attempt is to participate in the general discourse on race by demonstrating one actual racial project in which race, indeed, manifests itself as a socio-historical construction defined for a specific political and practical reason. I will argue that, within the context of the “Rumble in the Jungle” fight, Muhammad Ali’s “racial project” entails creating a particular “racial rhetoric” which centers on redefining and contrasting “blackness” against “whiteness,” within the political contexts of the United States and Africa. The devices of Ali’s rhetoric stem from his previous conflicts with the United States and include

naming, physical characterization, references to religion, and patriotism. With these, Ali attempts to outwit, “outpsyche,” and “outblacken” his opponent, George Foreman.

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A League of Our Own: B. F. Moseley’s 1910 Negro National Baseball League

In early-twentieth century Chicago, the world of segregated professional baseball was engulfed in numerous conflicts arrayed along class lines. In 1910, a war began for control of black baseball in the city, pitting the old guard against a new vanguard from the city’s growing, African American professional class. A leader of the new generation was Beauregard F. Moseley – lawyer, businessman, and baseball entrepreneur. Moseley combined his passion for baseball and business acumen with a commitment to race advancement. His unsuccessful attempt to form a national, all-black professional baseball league created a unique blueprint for urban racial reform and highlighted struggles over the many facets of black identity in the rapidly growing city.

Taking his cue from Booker T. Washington, B.F. Moseley set out to establish an all-black national baseball league rather than simply demand the integration of “Organized Baseball’s” two major leagues. Moseley’s interest in baseball came from his entrepreneurial instincts as well as his sense of racial justice. In the early 1900’s, baseball was proving to be a profitable enterprise. Moreover, by 1910 Organized Baseball’s white magnates were loudly touting the sport as the national pastime, a bastion of both rugged masculinity and gentlemanly dignity, and a remedy for a perceived “crisis of masculinity” resulting from the close of the western frontier. This was a gendered, racially-specific construct, but because of the sport’s special popularity in Progressive Era American culture, success in the baseball world held a unique social and political significance for African American men as well.

Moseley believed a professional national baseball league financed and managed by African Americans would lead to success in other race endeavors and thereby expedite the eventual end of segregation. He used a highly-visible black business venture and the image of the male African American athlete as a