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**Writing Midwestern Urban Sports Histories: Race,  
Culture, Politics, and Sport**

From the late 1880s until the early 1950s, African Americans in Chicago created, developed, and cultivated black professional baseball into a cultural institution. They operated within a deeply segregated context that excluded them from the ranks of major league baseball and barred them from the city's many social, political, and economic structures. Nonetheless, African Americans in Chicago found that success and longevity in black professional baseball enabled them to both build an internal community and insert themselves into the larger urban environment.

Control of the sport passed through many hands, from the elites of the nineteenth century, to members of an emerging professional class, to gangsters, and finally to members of the postwar middle class. This changing of the guard within the sport intersected and overlapped the great migration, rapid industrialization and urbanization, the cultural renaissance of the "New Negro," two world wars, the great depression, and the first stirrings of the modern civil rights movement. Through all of these issues, African Americans consistently positioned black professional baseball to establish a presence as "respectable" citizens of Chicago, and of the United States, with all the benefits and obligations that entails.

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