

**Baseball Should Follow the Flag:  
Latinos, the Color Line, and Major League Baseball's Globalization Strategies**

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That Base Ball follows the flag is abundantly proven by facts set forth in these pages. It has been played by our soldiers and sailors where[ever] they have carried the stars and stripes.

A.G. Spalding,  
*America's National Game* (1911)

Indeed, why may we not look forward to a succession of visits from 'colonial' players, from Cuba and Porto Rico, from Hawaii and the Philippines? Someone has said that in the British military expeditions to the four corners of the earth, the Cricket bat goes with the cannon, and while the United States has no lands of tribes to conquer, it is only to be expected that Base Ball, along with Boston beans and beefsteaks, will invade our new possessions.

*New York Sun*,  
Quoted in *America's National Game* (1911)

**More than a Game**

In 1911, sporting goods mogul A.G. Spaulding and his alleged ghostwriter sports journalist Henry Chadwick authored a history of baseball that celebrated America's "national game." Several of the chapters ventured outside the continental United States to discuss baseball's spread in the "American colonies." Described as a positive development, Spalding noted that baseball had already begun its formal development at several of the outposts of the new American empire. "Throughout

Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii regularly scheduled league games are played, exciting deep interest and attracting great throngs of spectators. The same is true of the Philippines,” Spalding notes before adding, “Wherever our soldiers and sailors go the game is immediately introduced, the native acquiring it with avidity.”<sup>1</sup>

Spalding was correct in acknowledging the presence and even popularity of baseball in the outposts of the emerging American empire. Baseball had indeed established roots in a number of locations where the U.S. military set up quarters following the War of 1898. His description, however, did not account for baseball’s arrival in Cuba in the 1860s and other parts of the Spanish-speaking Americas before the U.S. flag flew over these new lands. Rather than the result of military action, the game’s arrival in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean region largely resulted from cultural exchange, commercial activity, and labor migration within the region before 1898.

Even before United States’ involvement in the Spanish-American War in 1898, North Americans had begun to envision baseball as part of an intercultural exchange that would influence North-South relations. Popular support for *Cuba Libre* resulted in pressure being exerted on U.S. political leaders to intervene in Cuba. Others hailed the U.S. intervention in Cuba and the larger war against Spain a new “civilizing mission.” This mission would reaffirm the sociological work of American institutions in these new settings through the inculcation of American cultural practices on the local populace.

It was in this spirit that A.G. Spalding joined a chorus of North American moral reformers who believed that baseball should follow the U.S. flag as the nation embarked on its imperial and colonial projects in the Caribbean and Pacific. The call for baseball to follow the flag illuminates the cultural investment made in the U.S. national game. At the turn of the twentieth century, baseball was widely viewed as the sport most representative of American culture. The game’s supposed democratic underpinnings hinged on the belief that anyone who played could learn the values it

instilled: individual responsibility to the larger community (teamwork), hard work (performing at your best), and collaborating for the greater good (winning as a team versus individual achievements).

The association of baseball with democracy is contradicted by the professional game's history in the United States. Organized baseball embraced segregation in the late 1880s after limited experiments with racial inclusion in the minor leagues in the mid-1880s. This artificial barrier to open interracial competition for positions within organized baseball had several important effects. First, racial segregation hampered the ability of management to introduce alternative labor sources: the implementation of organized baseball's racial barrier meant the circuit was for whites only. Second, the combination of segregation and continued labor strife—mainly over the reserve clause in player's contract that bound them for life to an organization—eventually resulted in several organizations turning to racialized communities that were not black in their efforts to widen the talent pool. Although this strategy that met resistance on and off the playing field, the first two decades of the twentieth century saw *Indian* (Native American), Cuban, and Mexican American players break into organized baseball.

Organized baseball's strategy of turning to Latino talent would develop into a longer practice than its dependence on Native Americans or Asians. The turn to Latinos enabled Major League organizations to manipulate organized baseball's color line while continuing to bar blacks. Significantly, the incorporation of talent from the Spanish-speaking Americas at the opening and closing of the twentieth century reveals a racialized structure that has long supported the operation of "America's national game" at the professional level. Established in the Jim Crow era, this structure has privileged U.S. citizenship and racial understandings while elevating the value of whiteness. This facilitated the positing of class and race-based values within organized baseball that

actively sustained the logic of the color line as an exclusionary device that protected baseball from denigration.

### **A National Game Gains a New Mission**

By examining organized baseball's attempts to procure cheap labor sources in the Spanish-speaking Americas we can learn about the racialization of labor, the uneven process of inclusion, and the agency of transnational actors. This paper offers a historical interrogation of how the globalization strategies pursued by organized baseball and its supporters in ancillary industries, such as the sporting goods industry that A. G. Spaulding represented, reinvigorated hierarchies of cultural and racial difference even as they effectively broadened the terms of inclusion for non-white Others. I situate professional baseball as more than a game that is played for leisure and provides entertainment. Rather, the professional game is examined as another site where we can learn about the production of difference. I argue that organized baseball's attempts to incorporate the Spanish-speaking Americas reiterated race-based difference beyond black-and-white terms. Yet, the incorporation of Latinos also illustrates how the formation of transnational circuits of exchange within the sporting world in the Americas effectively altered the policing of baseball's color line.

Framed as part of a broader history, current globalization strategies within organized baseball with its reliance on Latinos sheds light on the exploitation of young teenage boys in impoverished parts of the Dominican Republic and Venezuela as a continuation of earlier practices in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere in the Caribbean prior to baseball integration (1947). Ultimately, it is my contention that organized baseball's interests in these area today are driven by the same motivations that they were interested in the early twentieth century: locating an alternative source of talent that would boost the profitability of their operations yet it is one that effectively maintains a racialized economy of difference within the sport.

For those who lived at the outposts of the new American empire, baseball would become associated with the U.S. presence and colonial authority. Due to the game's longer history in Cuba and other parts of the Spanish-speaking Americas, Latinos would infuse baseball with their own meaning about nation, gender, and race that distinguished this scene from what took place in the Philippines and the Pacific theater.<sup>2</sup> The baseball diamond therefore evolved into more than an athletic arena, it also became a cultural battleground where players and spectators waged discursive battles about citizenship, respectability, and racial equality.

The U.S. imperial presence in the Caribbean after the War of 1898 accelerated the transportation of North American cultural practices to Cuba and Puerto Rico. Most North Americans arrived in the Caribbean islands imbued with the belief that the United States had a civilizing mission.<sup>3</sup> The island's natives were viewed as less civilized, less cultured, and incapable of self-rule. Their style of dress, food, and marital traditions, among other cultural practices, were seen as indications of inferiority to their colonial rulers.<sup>4</sup> North Americans thus placed themselves in the position of moral and cultural authority in teaching cultural practices, including baseball, to their colonial charges.

Moral reformers in the United States had begun to advocate baseball as a vehicle to indoctrinate the nation's immigrants and children with American cultural values since the 1880s. The incorporation of Americans who descended from what were then viewed as the lesser European races—the colonized like the Irish in the 1880s, and Southern Europeans such as the Italians—represented further proof of the assimilative powers of America's game. The ascent of European Americans, such as Irish-American Mike "King" Kelley and German-American Adrian "Cap" Anson, into the game's elite was read like a Horatio Alger story of pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps, and as proof positive that individuals who worked hard could achieve their dreams in American society.<sup>5</sup> But the wider inclusion of European Americans did not alleviate the hardening of

the color line in U.S. professional leagues; the opportunity to break into the Major Leagues was not available equally to all Americans.

Organized baseball's expanded search overseas for talent prompted questions about who exactly was eligible to perform in the segregated Major Leagues. Questions about racial eligibility within organized baseball were extensions of broader societal anxieties about the racial stock and impending introduction of natives from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines into the U.S. body politic. The establishment of U.S. colonial authority in these lands shaped popular perceptions about the racial status of the new colonial subjects. The ability to self-rule, as Matthew Frye Jacobson demonstrates in his study of naturalization in the United States, has long been a prerequisite for naturalization (acquiring U.S. citizenship).<sup>6</sup> That these new people were under colonial authority therefore made them suspect. Anxieties about the new colonial subjects, moreover, were exacerbated by their not fitting into familiar racial categories of black or white: many from President Taft to the print media regularly referred to the new colonial people as "little Brown brothers."

### **In Support of *Cuba Libre***

The incorporation of Cubans into organized baseball that started in the late 1900s powerfully captures the issues involved in determining racial eligibility in U.S. professional baseball. Attempts to broker the entry of Latinos into organized baseball resulted in the introduction of new ethnoracial categories, such as Castilian, into baseball circles to differentiate among Latinos and allowed a select group to participate in the Major Leagues. In so doing, the process involved in the entry of these and other players from the Spanish-speaking Americas would mirror the concerns surrounding the incorporation of colonial people from newly acquired territories in U.S. society.

Political conditions Cuba became a popular topic of discussion in the late 1890s as the print media began coverage of Cubans launching their war for independence. North American editors and sportswriters crafted sympathetic articles about the cause of *Cuba Libre* and sided with Cuban

insurgents struggling to break away from the bonds of the Spanish Empire. Coverage portrayed Spain as a backward, despotic nation, swaying popular sentiment in the United States for the insurgents. As the armed conflict, which started in 1895, labored on into its second year, increasing numbers of Americans began to call for U.S. intervention to liberate and civilize Cuba.<sup>7</sup>

A few individuals within the U.S. sporting world formulated plans to assist the Cuban insurgents in their nationalist cause. In January 1897, *Sporting Life* published a proposal that would radically restructure U.S. professional baseball should a manpower shortage arise if the United States joined forces with Cuban insurgents. The proposal called for “the farming system [to] be extended farther” and for “players not really needed at once [to] be farmed out to the Cuban patriots.”<sup>8</sup> Prominent major league figures also came out in support of *Cuba Libre*; some even volunteered to fight for the Cuban cause, if called.

The popularity of the cause of *Cuba Libre* sparked rumors that well-known pitcher Clark Griffith had deserted Chicago’s big league team in 1898 to enlist in the Cuban cause. In its May 21<sup>st</sup> issue, *Sporting Life* explained that Griffith’s ardent patriotism was the cause of such rumors but that he had not abandoned his team. “On the subject of Griffith having the war fever it was correct. Griffith is a great patriot in every sense of the word. He wears a ‘Remember the Maine’ flag ... and can give a convincing argument to show why the United States is right in fighting Spain.”<sup>9</sup>

Griffith was not alone in aligning himself with the U.S. intervention and in support of a free Cuba. Informed by U.S. periodicals that covered the Cuban struggle for independence, other North Americans also spoke on behalf of the aggrieved Cubans. But the U.S. intervention in the Cuban War of Independence in April 1898 would change the stakes. For North Americans, the fight in Cuba had become an American struggle, the Spanish-American War.

North American sporting periodicals discussed the potential impact the Cuban War for Independence on professional baseball in Cuba and the United States for several years before the

U.S. intervention and subsequent military occupation of the island. In January 1897, *Sporting Life* published “Sympathy for Cuba,” an interview with Frank Bancroft, a veteran Major League team official employed as the Cincinnati Reds business manager. Reflecting on his first encounter with Spanish colonial rulers in 1879 while leading the first U.S. professional baseball team to tour Cuba (the Rochester-based Hop Bitters), Bancroft remarked: “Several of the team have since passed away, but it is dollars to doughnuts that those who are living are dyed-in-the-wool rooters for the Cubans in their struggle for independence from Spanish tyranny.”<sup>10</sup>

Support for a “free” Cuba also had another basis beyond politics: economics. Sporting goods manufacturers and professional baseball promoters anxiously awaited the cessation of hostilities in the Caribbean to energize the followers of America’s game on the islands. As the U.S. participation in the War came to a close and an American victory against Spain seemed imminent, the prospect of a Cuba open to trade sparked optimism. After all, one of the fringe benefits of a free Cuba was the opening of a new consumer market.

Entrepreneurs such as Albert Spalding hoped that economic activity in the newly liberated territories would revive the faltering sporting goods industry. A *Sporting Life* correspondent described the optimism of another sporting goods dealer who attributed “a small decline in the demand for base ball goods” in 1898 to the War. This entrepreneur remained hopeful for “a record-breaking base ball season next year” with the War’s end, noting that the same conditions predominated right after the U.S. Civil War. “Everybody seemed to have plenty of money and sports boomed from ocean to ocean.”<sup>11</sup>

The prospect of free trade with Cuba led baseball promoters Frank Bancroft and Ted Sullivan to begin drafting their plans to tour the island. Bancroft’s plan called for organizing a barnstorming team composed of National League stars to land in Havana for a series of games with Cuban clubs once the capital was under U.S. control following the January 1, 1899 turnover.<sup>12</sup>

Sullivan drafted similar plans for another barnstorming club to tour in the early months of 1899. Their optimism in developing these plans hinged on the expectation that the U.S. military occupation would create the right conditions to promote the game on the Island. For them, the presence of a friendly government in Cuba offered some assurance that profits from their economic ventures would not be eaten by hefty taxes, as occurred during Spanish colonial rule.

The existing popularity of baseball among the new colonial subjects in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean fit neatly into the United States' imperial project. North American newspapers reported the game's adoption by the Islanders enthusiastically. Just over six months after the U.S. flag was raised over Cuba, *The Sporting News* reported: "Our national game has taken a strong hold in Cuba, having been played on the island since 1874 [sic]."<sup>13</sup> Two years later in August 1901 under the headline "Baseball's Spread throughout the Spanish-speaking Americas," *Sporting Life* described the success of the project in San Juan, Puerto Rico, stating "Uncle Sam's New People Learning the National Game."<sup>14</sup>

These periodicals' enthusiastic reports about baseball's growing popularity did not fully acknowledge the sport's popularity decades before the U.S. occupation. Specifically, Cubans had begun formal league play in 1879 and were quick to organize their own barnstorming tours of the United States after the change in ruling authorities on the Island. In anticipation of the first U.S. barnstorming tour by a Cuban professional team (the All Cubans) in January 1899, *The Sporting News* alerted U.S. baseball enthusiasts to the difference between the visiting Cuban team from the more familiar Cuban Giants. "This [Cuban] team is the first and only club that ever contemplated a visit to the States and is the only native born Cuban Giants in existence."<sup>15</sup> The clarification reminded fans that the teams that normally played under the Cuban Giants name throughout the Northeast and Midwest were composed of African Americans and not actual Cubans.

## **Incorporating the Brown Others**

The end of Spanish colonial rule helped transform Cuba into a regular winter stop for U.S.-based teams and players. Over the next half-century a transnational circuit took shape linking New York, San Francisco, and Chicago with Havana, San Juan, and Santo Domingo. Annual exchanges facilitated the development of this transnational circuit as talented players from North American leagues began formal participation in Latin American professional leagues, and Latino players would venture north.

The period between 1899 and the early 1920s featured teams from organized baseball and the Black baseball circuits making regular tours of Cuba and other Latin American points within baseball's transnational network. Racial and economic realities influenced which teams and players participated in these locations. The most talented African American players, ironically, enjoyed perhaps more liberty than their white counterparts from organized baseball for several reasons. First, Black baseball teams lacked the economic standing or the power to enforce a reserve clause like the better financed Major Leagues. The Negro League teams thus lost more players to opportunities to play in Latin America than teams in organized baseball. White players had to carefully weigh the power of organized baseball in considering positions in Latin American leagues. This especially since organized baseball typically paid the best salaries and held the power to permanently blacklist players who went contrary to league management's stated policies. Organized baseball officials approached the question of Latin American competition with a different set of concerns. Chief among their concerns was the sporting public's perception of its players and teams losing games to interracial teams in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, or elsewhere in the Spanish-speaking Americas.

Rumors about North American teams interest in signing Cuban players began to make the rounds shortly after the opening of the barnstorming era. In February 1902, the Cuban baseball columnist for the Philadelphia-based *Sporting Life* shared gossip circulating in the Cuban circuit that

two Cubans were drawing the interest of minor league teams. “I hear that [Esteban] Prats, the famous outfielder of the “Habana,” and V. Gonzales are in demand to play in faster company in some of the big leagues in the Unites States,” the columnist wrote. “These two men are the fastest in the Cuban League,” the columnist wrote confident that “they will make good in any outfield in the United States.” A more detailed rumor followed a month later, naming New York Giants manager Fogel as the interested party who he was “negotiating for Prats and pitcher Royer, both of the Habana club.”<sup>16</sup> In the end, none of the three Cubans would sign with the Giants organization but they would begin to appear in organized baseball less than five years later.

Direct contact on each barnstorming trip North or South continued to spur interest in Cuban players. Excitement about this new pool of players moved league and team officials into action. Minor league teams proved more willing to sign Cuban and Latino players. By the end of the 1900s, Latino players had appeared in the New York State League, the Connecticut League, Atlantic League, Texas League, and the Pacific Coast League.

The vagaries of racial assignment in the U.S. playing field is powerfully captured in the process of signing these Cuban players. Initially, Cuban teams enjoyed the ability to play against any type of competition, regardless of racial considerations. By the late 1900s several Cuban teams had started to participate in independent professional circuits in the Midwest and Northeast, a few of which also featured prominent Black professional teams. The story took a different tenor when teams within organized baseball attempted to sign Cuban talent.<sup>17</sup>

The line between inclusion and exclusion was not clear-cut. Some of the Cubans that began participating outside of organized baseball would eventually be ushered into the Major Leagues in the early 1910s. This part of the story illustrates the advantage gained by those who participated in baseball’s transnational circuit as well as how the inclusion of Cubans did not destabilize the overall racialized hierarchy within organized baseball.

The rush to corner the market on the new talent contributed to several controversies erupting over contractual and racial matters. In 1907 Cuban players Rafael Almeida and Armando Marsans were at the center of an inter-league controversy as Scranton (Pennsylvania League) and New Britain (Connecticut League) made competing claims on their services. Unable to resolve their conflict, the issue went before Garry Herrmann, president of the National Commission, the organization that governed all the leagues within organized baseball. Herrmann decided to award the rights to Scranton.<sup>18</sup> It turned out to be a temporary setback for New Britain.

The following spring New Britain succeeded in its pursuit of Cuban players, signing four Cuban players for the 1908 season: Almeida, Marsans, Alfredo “Cabbage” Cabrera, and Luis Padrón. All four enjoyed strong campaigns in the Class B minor league, the equivalent of today’s AA minor league. Padrón was the league’s fourth-leading hitter, with a .313 batting average whereas Almeida and Marsans ranked eleventh and fourteenth with .293 and .274 averages, respectively. Their inclusion did not proceed without protest.

Protests by players and team owners prompted Connecticut League officials to institute a new color line after the 1908 season. The new policy forbade league teams to contract “black” players. Since no African American players participated in the league, the change specifically called into question the racial ancestry of New Britain’s Cuban players.

Concerns about the Cuba players’ racial background were expressed as soon as New Britain had signed them. The *Springfield Union* alluded to the mounting suspicions in the weeks preceding the 1908 campaign: “Manager Humphrey is getting what looks like a good team together. He has signed up to four Cuban players ... It will not be surprising if a drive is made against them in organized base ball on the ground that they are negroes, and it is well known that the colored brethren are not welcome in organized ball.”<sup>19</sup>

Concerned with the league's new racial policy, New Britain's new manager, Billy Hanna, traveled to Cuba hoping to secure documentation that verified the racial eligibility of his Cuban players. A previous traveler to Cuba as a sportswriter that covered the Detroit Tigers 1908 visit, Hanna came back to the States with mixed results in his mission to find out whether his players were "*genuine Cubans* and not Negroes." According to a published report, Hanna discovered that "all the players were *real Cubans* except Padron."<sup>20</sup>

### **Planning a Cuban Invasion**

Given the protests that occurred in the Connecticut League, careful planning went into getting Cubans into the Majors. Family history was scrutinized; team officials had to produce "proof" of racial eligibility. To break into the Major Leagues, or even to get a chance to perform in the minors, it had to be definitively established that a player was not black.

Engineered primarily through the efforts of Frank Bancroft, the door of opportunity for Cuban players to enter the Major Leagues was opened in the winter spanning late 1910 and early 1911. In December Bancroft traveled to Cuba with the Philadelphia Athletics, having agreed to lead the American League champion team during its Cuban tour as a favor to Connie Mack, Philadelphia's regular manager. The two-week visit gave Bancroft the chance to survey the Cuban talent and to provide his regular employer, the Cincinnati Reds, with scouting reports on the Cuban talent.

The Cuban teams Philadelphia faced during its tour featured native Cuban and African-American talent. Cuban infielder Rafael Almeida was especially impressive in the games versus the visiting major leaguers. Excited with the young Cuban's performance, Bancroft wrote a letter to Cincinnati team president Garry Herrmann from his Havana hotel room. After providing an update on Philadelphia's performance against the Cuban teams, Bancroft shared a brief scouting report on Almeida, and concluded the letter: "Wish we had him. He is not colored."<sup>21</sup> Alerting Herrmann that

Almeida had already played in the minors the previous season with New Britain, Bancroft set in motion the process whereby the Cincinnati Reds would not only sign Almeida but would also land fellow Cuban Armando Marsans for the 1911 season.

“Banny,” as local Cincinnati sportswriters referred to him, also shared news of his trip with local newspapers back home, informing the Cincinnati faithful of the game’s continuing development on the Island.<sup>22</sup> The Cincinnati fans who read the December 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* learned about the Cuban talent that was just waiting for a daring Major League organization. In his column that day, *Enquirer* sportswriter Jack Ryder updated fans on the Athletics tour and on Bancroft’s activities, providing in brief a scouting report on Cuban players. “Four of the Havana team would be in one of the big leagues if they were white men and four of the Cubans on the Almendares team play in the Connecticut League during the regular season, and at least one of these men is of major league caliber.”

The following day Ryder informed Cincinnati followers of Bancroft’s specific interest in Rafael Almeida. “Frank Bancroft is full of enthusiasm for a young Cuban athlete who played against the Athletics during their sojourn in Havana this fall.” “The young man’s name is Rafael Almeida,” Ryder noted, “and he played third base for the Almendares team, which is composed entirely of native Cubans, *of Spanish descent.*” The Cincinnati sportswriter then attempted to assuage possible concerns about Almeida’s racial eligibility. “The young fellow is a real enough star, ... He would be a valuable addition to the infield candidates. *He is a native Cuban, of Spanish blood, and is not a Negro.*”<sup>23</sup>

In order to gain support for their Cuban experiment, Cincinnati had to assert that there existed fine lines of racial difference among individuals from the Spanish-speaking Americas. The Reds organization thus had to convince fellow team owners that they were not breaking the racial compact in place that excluded blacks. Cincinnati’s defense for signing Rafael Almeida and Armando

Marsans validated the racial eligibility of a select few Cubans while continuing to designate other Cubans as either too racially ambiguous or as being of African descent.

Ethnicity thus worked as a critical factor in distinguishing among Cubans and among all those from the Spanish-speaking Americas. Major League officials and sportswriters sympathetic to the signing of Almeida and Marsans adopted ethnic labels such as Castilian and descriptions such as “Northern Spanish” to differentiate them from those deemed racially ineligible. The point that not all Cuban and Latino players were the same racially was repeatedly made to the Cincinnati faithful as the Reds considered signing Almeida and Marsans.

Two weeks before the Cuban duo made their official debut with the Reds, a June 23, 1911, *Cincinnati Enquirer* column cited Cuban sportswriter Victor Muñoz’s letter to Reds president Garry Herrmann as validation of the racial eligibility of Almeida and Marsans. “Both of these men are pure Spaniards, without a trace of colored blood.”<sup>24</sup> In distinguishing among a group that most North Americans perceived as an undifferentiated mass, league officials and sportswriters participated in the creation of a hierarchy of ethnoracial types for Latinos. It was a process that made would make Castilians out of Latinos of various national origins who possessed the right blend of talent and physical features.

The entry of Almeida and Marsans into the National League caused unease despite the precautions taken made by the Cincinnati team management. The two Cubans made their first appearance on July 4<sup>th</sup> on the road versus the Chicago Cubs. Shortly after their debut several large urban newspapers, including the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Philadelphia Enquirer*, published a full-page story along with a photograph of the two Cubans in Reds uniform.<sup>25</sup> Evidently, the Cuban’s appearance in print had unsettled some observers; the photo rendered their “race” visible and revealed physical features that caused alarm for those concerned with maintaining the racial barrier.

A number of people speculated: Why did the Reds launch their Cuban experiment on the road? Was the team trying to hide something?

Concern about public perception compelled some local sportswriters to show their support. In defense of the signing, a *Cincinnati Enquirer* reporter offered a grand introduction: “Ladies and Gentlemen, we have in our midst two descendants of a noble Spanish race, *with no ignoble African blood* to place a blot or spot on their escutcheons. Permit me to introduce two of the *purest bars of Castilian soap* that ever floated to these shores, Senors Alameda [sic] and Marsans.” Other papers within the National League circuit would pick up on the lead of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. In short order, publications ranging from the *New York Times* to sporting periodicals such as *The Sporting News* were referring to Almeida and Marsans not just as Cubans but also as Castilian and of Northern Spanish ancestry.<sup>26</sup>

“Adding Bronze to the Red,” as a columnist referred to Cincinnati’s Cuban experiment, revealed part of the spectrum of baseball color line reserved for individuals from the Spanish-speaking Americas. The racial categories of “Bronze” and brown represented the intermediate space along professional baseball’s color line. These categories at times had to work against popular perceptions of Cubans as non-white individuals and as possibly black. This was apparent in a *New York Times* July 16<sup>th</sup> item about New York fan expectations about the physical appearance of Almeida and Marsans. Less than two weeks after the Cubans made their big league debut, the *Times* reported that fans had expected the Cubans to look like “Pullman porters” were “surprised” when they witnessed the lighter-skinned Cubans performing in the contests between Cincinnati and the New York Giants.<sup>27</sup>

The debut of Cincinnati’s Cuban players invited speculation about the inevitability of integration. In African American circles the signing sparked a glimmer of hope that with the entry of Cubans, many of whom were viewed as “mixed,” the entry of African Americans could not be too

far behind. Writing for the *New York Age*, one of New York City's Black weeklies, Lester Walton expected the successful entry of Cuban players would clear the path for others and ultimately for the dismantling of the racial barrier. "With the admissions of Cubans of a darker hue in the two big leagues it would then be easy for colored players who are citizens of this country to get into fast company," Walton wrote in a September 1911 column. "The Negro in this country has more varied hues than even the Cubans, and the only way to distinguish him would be to hear him talk," the African-American journalist explained. Then he shared some advice: "Until the public got accustomed to seeing native Negroes on [sic] big leagues, the colored players could keep their mouths shut and pass for Cubans."<sup>28</sup>

In spite of the belief expressed by Walton that African Americans could pass as Cuban, no tangible change to the Major Leagues' racial policy would arise for African Americans until November 1945 when Brooklyn Dodgers general manager Branch Rickey broke ranks and signed African American infielder Jackie Robinson. In the interim, the steadfast manner in which big league officials adhered to beliefs in racial supremacy (white over black) offered little hope to individuals perceived as black. The hard truths of organized baseball's racial system affected not only African Americans but also Latinos who ventured North.

All players from the Spanish-speaking Americas underwent an experience of racialization that uniquely positioned them in the racial system of U.S. professional baseball. Darker-skinned Latino players such as Martín Dihigo and Cristobal Torriente, who went on to star in the Negro Leagues, bore a special burden. In the U.S. playing fields, they had to endure the dual impact of their race and ethnicity. As Black Latinos, they could not just "keep their mouths shut and pass for Cubans" to break into the Major Leagues. Even those players from the Spanish-speaking Americas that were signed by teams within organized baseball were never actually admitted into the fraternity of whiteness. To the contrary, their skin color and other physical features were viewed through a

North American racial gaze that was also filtered by an ethnic lens. Presented as Castilians, Spaniards, or Portuguese, these players' ethnoracial background justified different treatment from both their countrymen who were perceived of having "mixed" or African ancestry and also from European Americans.

The expanded terms of inclusion within organized baseball did not alter its racialized hierarchy. After all, the acquisition of Latino talent was driven by the desire to secure better talent at an affordable price. Cincinnati management's insertion of race in a salary dispute with Armando Marsans in 1913 reveals the intersection of economic considerations and racial concerns economic that influenced the turn to the Spanish-speaking Americas.

Knowing his worth as a talented big leaguer after two solid big league seasons, Marsans held out trying to secure a contract that paid him the equivalent of a North American player. When the Reds balked at meeting his salary demands Marsans threatened to jump to the Federal League, an upstart rival league. Cincinnati made several attempts to induce their wayward player back to their camp. At one point, the Reds even called on Cuban sportswriter Rafael Conte to "retrieve" Marsans. When that attempt failed, Cincinnati sent Frank Bancroft to Cuba hoping he could entice Marsans back. Neither side equivocated. Cincinnati team management informed the sporting press what it was willing to pay its Cuban players. "We will not pay any Honus Wagner price for a pair of dark-skinned islanders."<sup>29</sup> The Cuban player stood firm, and jumped to St. Louis when the Reds failed to match the salary the Federal League team offered him.

The story of Armando Marsans' strong stance is an exception to the overall story of the vulnerability of Latino players on two accounts. First, the offer from a rival league seeking to position itself as a major league gave Marsans an alternative should the Reds not meet his demands. However, the emergence of such a rival league to the Majors did not arise often in the twentieth century—the Federal League's challenge was crushed after several seasons and court decisions that

sustained the Major Leagues' antitrust exemption. Second, unlike most of the Cuban players who entered organized baseball, Marsans came from a privileged class position in Cuba. In a certain sense he did not need baseball as much as those ballplayers who were discovered playing in the sugar mill leagues throughout the island. Indeed, their status as foreign-born talent (non-U.S. citizens) in conjunction with their class position left most of the Cuban players that entered organized baseball highly vulnerable to exploitation by management.

### **Making the System Work**

Cincinnati's signing of the two Cubans in 1911 inspired other big league organizations to pursue Cuban talent. New York Giants manager John McGraw, who first visited Cuba as a player, made regular visits to the island for a combination of business and pleasure. Following the Giants 1911 visit, McGraw signed lighter-skinned Cubans Emilio Palmero and José Rodríguez. Other organization followed suit. The Boston Braves signed Miguel Angel González and Adolfo Luque, among other Cuban prospects. After former Cincinnati Reds manager Clark Griffith took over the managerial helm of the Washington Senators in 1912, he put his imprint on the organization by actively pursuing Cuban talent. Over the next four decades, the Senators would become the most active recruiter of foreign-born Latino talent.

The turn to Cuba and Latin America for talent sheds light on organized baseball's racialized economy. In the Jim Crow era, Major League organizations sought Latino players not just for their talent but also as a means to improve their own financial standing. This was clearly the case with the most active recruiter of Cuban talent, the Washington Senators.

Clark Griffith took control of the Senators in 1919 when he purchased part of the franchise and was named team president. As the Senators president, Griffith earned a reputation as a miserly executive who had little qualms in selling off his top players to other teams to avoid paying them high salaries. In 1934 Griffith instituted a series of drastic measures after the Senators finished an

extremely disappointing seventh place in the American League a year after having claimed the league pennant. First, he dismantled his team's roster, selling away several star players. Just as significant, Griffith hired Joe Cambria as Washington's scout in Latin America, making the Senators the first Major League organization to have an official scout working the Caribbean.

Together, Cambria and Griffith profoundly shaped the way that the Major Leagues approached the Latin American baseball market. Cambria's tactics in securing the services of Cuban players bordered on exploitation, and was the predecessor to what Major League team executive Dick Balderson calls the "boatload mentality." Led by Cambria's tactics in Cuba, Major League scouts and team officials have long prided themselves in how cheaply they sign foreign-born Latino players. This mentality leads to Major League organizations to sign large quantities of teenage players for low signing bonuses—the philosophy being quality would arise out of expendable quantity.<sup>30</sup> This approach capitalizes on the "special hunger" that foreign-born Latinos exhibit in working to make it into the big leagues.<sup>31</sup> Hungry for a chance, these players agreed to sign for minuscule signing bonuses that were in no way reflective of their talent or comparable to what they would have received if they had been U.S. citizens.

Griffith brought Cambria on board to save Washington money. Their agreement called for Cambria to receive a commission for each Cuban prospect that secured a roster spot in the Senators system. The arrangement worked as an incentive for Cambria to sign as many Cuban prospects as possible since the more players that made the grade, the higher his commission. Cambria scoured the entire Island in search of talent. Once he located a prospect, Cambria would sign him to a conditional contract. The arrangement clearly had its impact on Washington's rosters. In all, Cambria signed over 400 Cubans for the Senators over a twenty-five year span (1934 to 1959).<sup>32</sup>

The Senators' turn to Cuban and Latin American players drew sharp criticism within professional baseball circles. Critics complained that Griffith did not really have his heart set on

winning but on the bottom line. *New York World Telegram* sportswriter Joe Williams sharply criticized Griffith for his organization's approach. "Old Griff has enough Cubans around to start an international rhimba [sic] contest ... By opening day Washington will probably be known as the Cuban Giants," Williams complained. "There was a time when old Griff used to try to build his club, but that time is gone."<sup>33</sup> Despite such criticism, Griffith's Senators evolved into the most active Major League organization in Latin America, accounting for over forty percent of the Latino players (thirteen of thirty) to debut in the Majors between 1935 and 1945.

The Senators and Joe Cambria clearly took advantage of the impoverished conditions in which many of the Cuban players were raised in securing their services. The contracts that Cambria and the Senators offered to the Cuban prospects promised little to the young Latino prospects. All a prospect received was a one-way ticket to the Senators' spring training camp with no guarantee of a position within the organization; if he failed, he would have to find his own way home.

The first Cuban player Cambria signed, Roberto Estalella, highlights the economic stakes involved. After Estalella spent two years in the minors with Cambria's minor league teams, Washington called him up to the big league squad. The transaction, as sportswriter Sam Murphy noted in his column, would offer a big payoff to all involved except for Estalella. Clark Griffith, whose initial investment in Estalella was \$75, the cost of transportation and accommodation to bring the Cuban ballplayer to the States, stood to gain a major leaguer. Cambria, who owned Estalella's contract, was in line to secure \$10,000 for transferring Estalella's rights to the Senators.<sup>34</sup> Estalella, like the majority of the Latinos who followed him into the Senators organization, had received no signing bonus when he initially signed and only had a chance to break into the Majors.

Strong advocates for racial integration, sportswriters for the *Daily Worker* constantly called attention to the Senators' signing of Latin American players and how Clark Griffith and Joe Cambria exploited the desire of foreign-born Latinos to break into the structures of the Major Leagues. The

paper noted in a 1942 column that Griffith, with Cambria's invaluable assistance, "has pioneered in finding capable Cuban and Venezuelan stars, such as Carrasquel and Estalella, at no cost."<sup>35</sup> What some criticized, others celebrated. "Cuba has become the favorite hunting grounds of Scout Cambria," reported *Washington Post* columnist Shirley Povich. "He prefers the kids fresh from the sandlots and the colleges. It requires no outlay of cash to sign them." Cambria, Povich noted, had learned an important economic lesson: "He has learned that in Cuba ball players can be had cheaply. He clinks a few pesos in their ears and they put their marks on a contract."<sup>36</sup>

Cambria's tactics drew at least one extremely vocal critic in Cuba, journalist Jess Losada. The Cuban writer was not subtle, complaining that these tactics constituted outright exploitation. According to Cuban scholar Roberto González Echevarría, Losada used the pages of *Carteles* to mount "a campaign against the Senators scout, ... accusing Cambria of signing players to a blank contract that he would then sell to the major-league club, without much concern about the prospect's ultimate chances of making the majors." Losada mocked Cambria's scouting efforts on the Island, stating that Cambria sought to become the "Christopher Columbus of baseball."<sup>37</sup>

Critics also pointed out that the Senators paid little attention to the cultural dislocation that young Cuban players encountered once in the United States. Communication was a continual comedy of errors for some and stories about miscommunications between Cuban players and their teammates or with the team managers littered newspaper columns. The Senators did implement the occasional stopgap measure. In 1943 Cambria began to hold English classes for his Cuban recruits on the Island; Cambria himself, though, never mastered Spanish.<sup>38</sup> On a few occasions, the Senators manager would official designate one of the Cuban players as the official interpreter. But the language barrier would remain a constant source of frustration and occasional embarrassment for Washington's Latino players.

## **Tensions of MLB and Globalization in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Taking the long historical view, the Major Leagues have long looked to Latin America and Latinos as a source of talent, whether before the demolishing of the racial barrier or in the era of high-priced free agency. In the Jim Crow era, big league teams such as the Cincinnati Reds, the New York Giants, and the Washington Senators looked to Cuba. In the contemporary era even more Major League organizations have turned to the Dominican Republic and Venezuela in their search to find prospects as cheaply as possible and to offset the high cost of developing North American players and signing superstar free agents. These practices link the history of the hundreds of Latinos who have performed in the Majors in the integrated era with those who entered the U.S. playing fields during Jim Crow.

Until recently, baseball historians have written about Latino baseball as a relatively new phenomenon, effectively describing it as *lacking* a history, a broader context to understand Latino participation in U.S. professional baseball. Collectively, the works of Marcos Bretón, David Fidler, Alan Klein, Arturo Marciano, Samuel Regalado, and Rob Ruck have begun to address this void by critically assessing the individual and collective impact of Latino participation in the post-integration era.<sup>39</sup> Their works call attention to the profitability of player development in Latin America for Major League organizations as well as the impact of Major League Baseball's policies on local and national communities.

Broad political and economic considerations have influenced shifts in the focus of Major League teams in Latin America. Cuba was the favorite stomping ground for Major League teams to find Latino players on the cheap prior to the Cuban Revolution and the severing of diplomatic ties with the United States. Once Cuba was closed off, Puerto Rico emerged as the favorite scouting domain for much of the 1960s and the 1970s. A few pioneering organizations such as the Toronto Blue Jays, Los Angeles Dodgers, and Houston Astros shifted their scouting efforts to the

Dominican Republic and Venezuela in the early 1980s. Each of these shifts reaffirmed the practice of using Latin America to locate new talent at bargain basement prices.

The shift in organizational scouting efforts to the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and, to a lesser extent, Panama was accelerated with the inclusion of Puerto Ricans in organized baseball's amateur draft in 1989. This policy change granted Puerto Ricans a protection that they had previously been denied although they were U.S. citizens. The change meant Major League organizations could no longer sign Puerto Rican prospects as amateur free agents as young as sixteen years old and had to treat them just like all North Americans. Just as significant, the new policy enhanced the position of Puerto Rican prospects in their negotiations with Major League organizations. Since organizations did not want to lose their early draft picks, they were willing to sign the Puerto Ricans they drafted to larger signing bonuses. However, the number of Puerto Ricans drafted has steadily declined since their inclusion in the amateur draft and Major League organizations have redoubled their operations in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela.

Dependence on Latin America talent is part of a cost-effective strategy to offset the increasing cost of signing prospects selected in the amateur draft. The recent trend within the amateur draft is selecting college players over less-developed high school players and, as a result, "current North American draftees are older, more mature, and better educated than draftees in the early years of the draft."<sup>40</sup> Moreover, as scholars Arturo Marcano and David Fidler note, scouting practices in Latin American countries do not typically undergo the same level of scrutiny as in the United States. In Latin America "major league teams are not restrained in their recruiting practices by the draft or agreements between the MLB Commissioner's Office and Latin professional leagues. Free agency reigns, giving each major league team the incentive to be the first to sign promising prospects in Latin American countries."<sup>41</sup>

The competition to sign a prospect has contributed to an array of questionable practices becoming part of the “culture” of scouting in Latin America. The cumulative effect of these practices is to distinguish foreign-born Latinos from all other participants in organized baseball as not worthy of these same protections and full enforcements of the Major Leagues’ own rules.<sup>42</sup> Rife with its own contradictions, Major League practices in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela at times verge on the exploitation of Third World children, according to law scholar David Fiedler and Venezuelan player representative Arturo Marciano in their exposé *Stealing Lives*.

There is an important issue of child labor protection in the operations of training academies and scouting practices in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela. Although prohibited from having a player in their camp until he is fourteen and from signing a prospect until he is sixteen, children in Venezuela and the Dominican Republic typically come under a scout’s radar as young as ten years old. Those viewed as legitimate prospects are often hidden away until they are of signing age. Yet, even when they become of age questionable practices occur that further elucidate the contradictions involved in Major League Baseball’s dependence on foreign-born Latinos as a cheap labor source.

### **Striking Out and Striking Back**

The infamous case of Laumin Bessa illuminates the worst aspects of scouting practices in Latin America. Bessa, a Venezuelan prospect, was signed by Cleveland Indians scout Luis Aponte, a former big league pitcher, in 1998 at the age of fifteen and was hidden away until he could be legally signed. Aponte, moreover, told Bessa and his family that the young Venezuelan’s signing bonus was \$300,000. However, upon signing the contract the Bessas only received \$30,000. As the family later learned, Aponte had apportioned out the signing bonus making parts of it contingent on Bessa meeting certain criteria regarding his development within the Cleveland organization—i.e., Bessa would receive \$150,000 when he made Cleveland team’s roster.<sup>43</sup> The Cleveland scout was in violation of Major League rules on both counts. Brought to the attention of the Commissioner’s

Office by *Washington Post* reporter Steve Fainaru, the League imposed a fine and a couple of other sanctions on the Cleveland organization. But perhaps as shocking as the whimsical manner that Cleveland handled the Bessa controversy was their reason for not dropping their scout from the organization's payroll. "The Indians opted not to fire Aponte," Fainaru explained, because Aponte "was following normal business practices at the time."<sup>44</sup>

To be certain, Cleveland was not alone in signing underage prospects. The Florida Marlins, Los Angeles Dodgers, and Atlanta Braves have all been caught and penalized for violation of Major League rules regarding age eligibility. Just the same, it is difficult to determine the number of organizations that have not been caught signing underage prospects.

"Late" bloomers have devised their own strategic response to the preference of big league organizations for young Latino prospects. Their main strategy is to lie about their age by signing contracts under a sibling's name, falsifying a birth certificate, or entering into an agreement with an organization's scout. As the other side of the age game, players subtract anywhere from a few months to six years from their actual age to land a shot at signing a contract.

In an extremely ironic twist, Major League organizations claim that they are the ones victimized in the age game. "The teenage player lied to us about his age" was the familiar refrain when it was discovered that a player's stated age and official documentation did not match. A second claim that the authentic documentation to validate the player's age was more difficult to obtain in Latin American countries than in the United States would be debunked in the increased scrutiny of immigration after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks.

The international politics of the "age game" and its manipulation on both sides came to the fore as a result of tightened national security post-September 11<sup>th</sup>. A component of the tightened security campaign, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) started to more closely scrutinize all visa applications. Prior to the opening of the 2002 season, the INS required all Major

League organizations applying for work visas for their foreign-born players to provide authentic documentation of their applicants' age. "When the INS tightened its requirements for documents in connection with obtaining visas, teams and players apparently had few problems actually producing the proper documents," Arturo Marciano and David Fidler write, "This situation suggests that major league teams have themselves been lax about requiring proper documents from players. The reason for such laxity with Latino players arises from the major league teams' desire not to check birth certificates and other documents closely."<sup>45</sup>

Tightened regulation of visa applications shed light on a number of practices and myths within the age game. First, it revealed that it was possible for Major League organizations to secure authentic documentation to verify the age of Dominican and Venezuelan players. Second, the increased scrutiny exposed the number of foreign-born players from the Dominican Republic and Venezuela whose applications had erroneous information.

By mid-May, *Baseball America* had identified 126 players, out of a possible 840 visa applications within organized baseball, had misrepresented their age.<sup>46</sup> A few players would be immediately released when it was discovered that the "young" prospect was in actuality much older. In the case of second baseman Marcus Agramonte, the Dominican who had claimed that he was nineteen was actually twenty-five years old leading to his release by the Texas Rangers. The same occurred to Miguel Richardson when the Seattle Mariners learned the supposedly 22 year-old player was actually 28 years old. In total, the overwhelming majority of the 126 players whose application contained erroneous information turned out to be older and not younger. This fact contradicted claims by Major League organization that they have been the unwitting victims of underage prospects who lie about their age. To the contrary, only six players had actually claimed to be younger when they first signed with their Major League organization.

Importantly, the overwhelming majority of these players did not have legal representation or an agent when they first signed and presented “proof” of their age to Major League team officials. Nor did were they encouraged by Major League organizations encourage to seek representation. Andres Reiner, the director of international scouting for the Houston Astros, in the late 1990s outright refused to negotiate with agents “because they tend to inflate a player’s value.” His explanation reveals part of the economic stakes involved. Asked in October 2001 by *Washington Post* reporter Steve Fainaru if he wanted to control the market, Reiner responded: “I don’t want to control the market. I just want to make the decision of how much a player is worth and how much I will pay him.”<sup>47</sup> The lack of representation is exacerbated by the sheer difference in power that the teenage prospect holds versus the scout as a representative of a Major League organization.

*Buscónes* have emerged as pivotal figures in the system of scouting Major League organizations have come to depend on to locate and develop young talent in Latin America. These men traverse the Dominican Republic and Venezuela searching for promising young players as young as ten years old and then works at training and developing the potential prospect.<sup>48</sup> The *buscón* arranges tryouts with Major League scouts who make the final determination whether the prospect is ready to be signed.

*Buscónes* benefit financially from several of the system’s quirks. Since prospects lack legal representation it often falls to the *buscón* to negotiate the signing bonus. In exchange for having served as the player’s trainer the *buscón* exacts a sizable portion of the player’s signing bonus—anywhere from 25 percent to 50 percent. In addition to being paid by the player, a *buscón* often receives a commission from the Major League organization that signs the player.

The involvement of *buscónes* in player development and in the scouting operations of Major League organizations have come under intense scrutiny due to several prominent cases. The controversy surrounding the June 2002 signing of Dominican pitcher Adriano Rosario by the

Arizona Diamondbacks organization highlights the blurred line between non-involvement and complicit participation of Major League team representatives. In this and other cases, concerns arose about the relationship that Major League organizations have developed with *buscónes* and the vulnerability of the scouting system to fraud and manipulation.

The Rosario story broke in early May 2004 in an ESPN exposé that revealed improprieties in the Diamondbacks signing of Rosario. At the center of the controversy was Ivan Noboa a *buscóne* (an “independent evaluator of talent”) who sought to extract 25% of Rosario’s \$400,000 signing bonus in violation of Major League rules—this amount in addition to the \$100,000 the Diamondbacks had already paid Noboa.<sup>49</sup> Ivan Noboa’s involvement in the signing raised concerns about a possible conflict of interest on two accounts. First, Ivan Noboa was the brother of Arizona’s director of Latin American scouting, Junior Noboa. Second, the Arizona Diamondbacks had listed Ivan Noboa as one of its scout in the Dominican Republic the previous year. The Diamondbacks’ payment to Ivan Noboa thus came under scrutiny because, as journalist Tom Farrey notes, Major League Baseball rules “prohibit the payment of fees from a club to family members of club employees, as well as agents, for the recruitment of players.”<sup>50</sup>

Matters got worse in mid-May for the Diamondbacks organization when published reports announced that the Diamondbacks’ Dominican scout Rafael Mena had encouraged Rosario to sign under a different name and alter his birth date. Thus the pitcher signed using the name of his nephew, Adriano Rosario, who was three years his junior—and not his birth name Ramon Antonio Peña Paulino. The ruse enabled all involved parties to extract a larger signing bonus for the prospect and a higher commission for themselves. When the ruse came to the attention of Rosario’s first agent, Rob Plummer, in June 2002, he strongly advised the pitcher against signing with Arizona under a false name. The young pitcher signed nonetheless, prompting Plummer to quit as his agent—a claim disputed by Rosario’s camp. Although Mena later denied his role in the ruse,

Rosario's new agent, Scott Boras, confirmed Plummer's version of the story. "Mena told him that if he used the (phony) name it would help him get more money from a team," stated the well-known agent Boras. "These are kids. They'll do anything the buscone tells them to do because they control these kids' lives."<sup>51</sup>

In this racialized economy foreign-born Latinos (except Cubans) enter as cheap, raw talent in need of training (refinement) that results from participating in organized baseball. Given the mass quantity of available talent in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela, Major League organizations have sought ways how to acquire this talent as inexpensively as possible. This preference has sparked a series of responses from individual prospects and others not directly affiliated with organized baseball. Individuals manipulate their age hoping to first attract the attention of Major League scouts and possibly extract a larger signing bonus. *Buscónes* position themselves as middlemen who train adolescent boys and broker their big league aspirations to Major League organizations. Their actions illustrate the agency that individuals can exercise even within a hierarchal structure. Yet, their ability to "strike back" does not minimize the impact of the exploitative system that has developed in baseball's incorporation of the Spanish-speaking Americas.

## **Conclusion**

Acquiring Latino talent as an alternative talent source has figured prominently in Major League Baseball's globalization strategies in the late twentieth century. Published reports during the past few big league seasons have begun to more closely examine Major League Baseball's scouting practices in Latin America. These reports reveal that the Rosario controversy was not an isolated incident while illuminating the different system of scouting and player development that has emerged in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela as big league organization continue their attempts to find the next Sammy Sosa, Miguel Tejada, or Vladimir Guerrero on the cheap.

The creation of a narrative that presents the arrival of Latinos into the Major Leagues or, conversely, the interest that Major League organizations in Latin America as recent developments belie a long history of interactions. The strategic inclusion of foreign-born-Latinos has a much longer history than Major League Baseball's amateur draft or formalized agreements with other professional leagues across the globe. Thus rather than a move toward a more egalitarian system, the incorporation of talent from the Spanish-speaking Americas at the opening and closing of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has reaffirmed the operation of a racialized economy in organized baseball.

Giving special focus on the labor politics involved in the entry of Latinos in professional baseball requires justification in the minds of some; in a certain sense, the experience of these men as professional athletes are certainly atypical compared with the rest of Latinos participating in the U.S. economy. Professional ballplayers do enjoy a distinct advantage in their ability to secure legal entry into the United States as professional highly skilled labor, especially compared with the obstacles that unskilled Latino laborers have historically encountered. One must bear in mind that these men did not spend their entire lives on the baseball field. At the end of the day, especially when they retired from the professional playing fields, these men returned to their roles as brothers, fathers, sons, workers, immigrants, and citizens. Their lives were always lived as individuals embedded in multiple relationships and affiliations, what scholars refer to as subject positions.<sup>52</sup> The reality that they all hold multiple subject positions—as ballplayers, citizens of different countries, siblings, men, and so on—does not make them unique. However, the public manner that their professional careers are lived and discussed allow us to observe the ways that different individuals negotiate power structures, employ their racial knowledge, and seek to advance their own position in America's game.

The position that these ballplayers occupy within organized baseball illuminates the intersection of race, citizenship, and labor within professional sports. The question of whether

organized baseball should adopt a worldwide draft as part of its Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) illuminates the role that citizenship status can play as well as the hierarchical ordering of the world within the structure of the Major Leagues. This is quite evident in the question of a worldwide amateur draft.

The Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) and team owners discussed the possibility of instituting a worldwide draft as part of their labor negotiations for a new CBA in 2003. The MLBPA, composed of all current major leaguers who pay dues to the union, opposed the worldwide draft. Their position is perhaps not too surprising given that the majority of major leaguers are U.S. citizens and that the vast majority of these ballplayers entered organized baseball through the amateur draft. Simply stated, the expanded talent pool eligible for the draft impacts the probability of being an early draft pick and receiving the high signing bonuses and guaranteed contracts that can approach upwards of ten million dollars. Their concern is not entirely without foundation. The trend in professional basketball's draft (the NBA) has been to increasingly draft foreign-born players, resulting in U.S.-born players losing out on the guaranteed contracts that come with being first-round draft picks.

Baseball owners were not too upset with MLBPA's opposition to the worldwide draft. Management also had much to lose. If the same protections were extended to foreign-born players, then they too would not be eligible for the draft until they turn eighteen years old or graduate from high school. This would limit the supply of Dominican and Venezuelan players who could sign and participate in the minor leagues—current rule allow Major league organizations to sign such players as soon as they turn sixteen years old. The extension of these protections would also mean that Major League Baseball would have to enforce its rules and police the scouting activities and signing practices of its membership much more closely.

A worldwide draft would alter the place of Latin America in the Major Leagues' operations and globalization strategies. The expanded draft would drastically alter the way Major League organizations conduct business in Latin America in terms of procuring young talent. The extension of the same protections MLB grants to North Americans (U.S. and Canadian citizens) to all other amateur players regardless of national origins would also mean that North American players would lose a privileged position. Ever since the institution of the amateur draft in 1968, North Americans have enjoyed a privileged position as the only ones eligible to be drafted. Foreign-born Latinos, however, were ineligible for the amateur draft and were acquired under a scouting system that offered them little protections from exploitation and abuse.

The fact that Dominican players like Sammy Sosa and Miguel Tejada make it to the Majors and command upwards of fifteen million dollars a year obscures a grim reality. The system produces the occasional Sosa or Tejada works by capitalizing on the impoverished conditions and exacerbates the uneven development of economies in the Dominican Republic where the majority of baseball's Latino talent is drawn. Unfortunately, this aspect of America's game has become a major part of the global mission that has also followed the flag into Latin America.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Albert G. Spalding, *America's National Game* (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, rep. 1994), pp. 377-78.

<sup>2</sup> On Cubans and the meaning they attached to baseball and some of the racial conflict that arose from the entry of Afro-Cubans into professional baseball in the late nineteenth century, see Adrian Burgos, Jr., "Entering Cuba's Other Playing Field: Cuban Baseball and the Choice Between Race and Nation, 1887-1912," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 29, no. 1 (February 2005): pp. 9-40.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Levine, *A. G. Spalding and the Rise of Baseball: The Promise of American Sport* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup> North American occupiers placed everything from marriage, sexual practices, and personal hygiene to public health, under scrutiny. The occupation led to a flood of scientists, doctors, and other experts visiting the islands to examine the causes of the physical and cultural maladies of "our little neighbors." These imperial programs have served as a ripe field for scholarly examinations of the American Empire, particularly in terms of gender roles, sexuality, and citizenship. On the impact of U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico in the realm of sexuality and marital practices, see Eileen Findlay Suarez, *Imposing Decency* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999). Also see Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Kelvin Santiago-Valles, "'Higher Womanhood' Among the 'Lower Races': Julia McNair Henry in Puerto Rico and the 'Burdens' of 1898," *Radical History Review* 73 (Winter 1999): pp. 47-73. For a nuanced study that examines race and gender discourse that motivated U.S. expansionism in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, see Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization, op cit.* For a study that analyzes the impact of U.S. imperialism at the various points of cultural contact of the American Empire, see Amy Kaplan, and Donald Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> For a typical rags-to-riches tale, see Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick* (New York: rep. 1962). On the cultural indoctrination of immigrants, see James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *Journal of American History* 79 (December 1992): 996-1020.

<sup>6</sup> An important criterion for inclusion into legal Whiteness for much of U.S. history, according to Matthew Frye Jacobson and Mae Ngai, is rooted in the idea of "racial eligibility for citizenship." This notion, they argue, arose from the 1790 Naturalization Law that established the criteria for immigrating to the United States on the basis of whether one was a "free white person." The Courts extended this notion toward naturalization. Hence, the struggle for inclusion into the body of first-class citizens through naturalization has been on the basis of whiteness until revisions in the immigration laws in the early 1950s. On court cases where the battle for legal recognition involved racially suspect Southern and Eastern Europeans, Asians, and Latin nationals, see chapter 7, "Naturalization and the Courts," Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of A Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 223-45. On the creation of "national origins" and the use of "racial eligibility for citizenship," see Mae Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *Journal of American History* (June 1999): 67-92.

<sup>7</sup> For a critical discussion of the U.S. historiography about attitudes concerning the Spanish-American War, see Louis Pérez, *The War of 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

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<sup>8</sup>*Sporting Life*, January 1897. Griffith also managed the Cincinnati Reds (1908-1910) and later owned the Washington Senators for more than four decades (1920s to the 1950s).

<sup>9</sup>*Sporting Life*, May 21, 1898.

<sup>10</sup>*Sporting Life*, January 2, 1897.

<sup>11</sup>*Sporting Life*, October 29, 1898.

<sup>12</sup>*The Sporting News*, October 1, and October 29, 1898. *Sporting Life*, November 5, 1898.

<sup>13</sup>*The Sporting News*, July 1, 1899.

<sup>14</sup>*Sporting Life*, August 24, 1901, p. 7. A league was formed in San Juan. Members of the teams, the article explained, were a mixture of “Americans employed by private concerns” and several Puerto Ricans.

<sup>15</sup>*The Sporting News*, July 1, 1899.

<sup>16</sup>*Sporting Life*, February 1, 1902, and March 22, 1902.

<sup>17</sup>For Cubans and Latino players who were unable to pass the organized baseball’s racial litmus test, the formal organization of Black baseball with the emergence of the Negro American League (1920) and the Eastern Colored League (1923) gave them a viable professional option.

<sup>18</sup>*Detroit News*, January 28, 1912. Details of the Cuban duo’s stint in Scranton are incomplete. Scranton belonged to a low minor league and therefore did not receive much attention in national sporting papers. Research on the 1907 Scranton team conducted by baseball historian Peter Toot failed to yield any box scores where either of the two Cubans appeared.

<sup>19</sup>*The Sporting News*, April 16, 1908. [Emphasis Added].

<sup>20</sup>Undated newspaper clipping, Marsans Player File, NBLA. Another aim of the mission may have been scouting additional Cuban players, at least that is what another sportswriter speculated: “Manager Hanna, of New Britain, has gone to Cuba in search of players. Last season he had four Cubans on his team—Cabielsa [sic], Marsans, Almeida, and Padron. If he digs up any more like last season’s lot, he certainly will have a classy collection of ball-tossers.” *The Sporting News*, February 25, 1909. According to a letter written to *The Sporting News* by self-proclaimed Latin-American baseball enthusiast Ernie Landgraf, Hanna was also involved in covering the first tour by the All Cubans in 1899. *The Sporting News*, November 27, 1941. [Emphasis Added].

<sup>21</sup>Bancroft correspondence, “1080 1914 Box,” Garry Herrmann Papers, NBLA.

<sup>22</sup>*The Sporting News*, January 5, 1911. *The Sporting News*, November 10, 1910, and November 17, 1910. On the Athletics trip, also see *The Sporting News*, December 28, 1910, and *Cincinnati Enquirer*, December 4, 11, and 28-31, 1910. The Athletics were the second Major League team to tour Cuba that winter, the Detroit Tigers having spent two weeks the previous month. For specific details, game recaps, and player reactions on their Cuban journey, see *The Sporting News*, November 3, 1910, and from December 1 to December 28, 1910.

<sup>23</sup>*Cincinnati Enquirer*, December 27, 1910, and December 28, 1910. [Emphasis added].

<sup>24</sup>*Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 23, 1911.

<sup>25</sup>Five days after the Cuban made their Cincinnati debut, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* also published photos of the Cuban duo, but they appeared in New Britain uniform. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 9, 1911, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup>*Cincinnati Enquirer* passage quoted in Lisa Brock and Bijan Bayne, “Not Just Black,” p. 185; *New York Times*, September 25, 1911.

<sup>27</sup>*New York Times*, July 16, 1911.

<sup>28</sup>*New York Age*, September 28, 1911.

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<sup>29</sup> *Havana Post*, June 25, 1913, and July 7, 1913; Bretón, *Away Games*, p. 98. Wagner was a Hall-of-Fame shortstop who played from 1897 to 1917, primarily with the National League's Pittsburgh Pirates.

<sup>30</sup> See chapter 2, "A Boatload Mentality," in Bretón, *Away Games*.

<sup>31</sup> Regalado, *Viva Baseball*, p. xiv.

<sup>32</sup> Bjarkman, *Baseball With a Latin Beat*, p. 119.

<sup>33</sup> *New York World Telegram*, April 4, 1939.

<sup>34</sup> Newspaper clipping, Sam Murphy, "Barefoot Boy Learned to Hit on Cuban Farm," Estalella Player File, NBLA.

<sup>35</sup> *Daily Worker*, September 3, 1942.

<sup>36</sup> *Washington Post*, February 17, 1939.

<sup>37</sup> *Pride of Havana*, p. 269. Another critique of Cambria is provided in Heuer, "The Cuban Slide," p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> *Washington Post*, March 11, 1943.

<sup>39</sup> Recent works that focus on Latinos and baseball in the Caribbean, see Marcos Bretón, *Away Games: The Life and Times of a Latin Ball Player* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999); Alan Klein, *Sugarball: The American Game, the Dominican Dream* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991); Arturo J. Marciano Guevara and David P. Fidler, *Stealing Lives: The Globalization of Baseball and the Tragic Story of Alexis Quiroz* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2002); Samuel Regalado, *Viva Baseball: Latin Major Leaguers and Their Special Hunger* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), and Rob Ruck, *The Tropic of Baseball* (Westport, CT: Meckler, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> Marciano and Fidler, *Stealing Lives*, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> Marciano and Fidler, *Stealing Lives*, p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> Arturo Marciano Guevara and David P. Fidler, *Stealing Lives: The Globalization of Baseball and the Tragic Story of Alexis Quiroz* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> Fainaru, "Baseball's Minor Infractions." Marciano and Fidler also discuss the Bessa case at length, see chapter 3, *Stealing Lives*.

<sup>44</sup> Fainaru, "Baseball's Minor Infractions."

<sup>45</sup> Marciano and Fidler, *Stealing Lives*, p. 36.

<sup>46</sup> "Dawn of a New Age," *Baseball America*, May 13, 2002,

<http://www.baseballamerica.co/today/features/agechart.html>. Last accessed May 13, 2002.

<sup>47</sup> Fainaru, "Baseball's Minor Infractions."

<sup>48</sup> Marciano and Fidler, *Stealing Lives*, p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> Ed Price, "Rosario Signing Raises Red Flag," *Baseball America* May 8, 2004. <http://www.baseballamerica.com/today/news/040508rosario>. Last accessed June 5, 2004. Tom Farrey, "Boras Confirms Player Used False Identity," May 18, 2004. <http://sports.espn.go.com/mlb/news/story?id=1803614>. Last accessed June 5, 2004. Later reports stated that Ivan Nobao had agreed to have the pitcher sign with the Diamondbacks although the Los Angeles Dodgers had offered the prospect a \$750,000 signing bonus; however, the Dodgers refused to pay Nobao directly, telling the *buscone* to negotiate his fee with the prospect.

<sup>50</sup> Farrey, "Boras Confirms Player Used False Identity."

<sup>51</sup> "In exchange for keeping quiet about Rosario's identity, Mena wanted between \$20,000 and \$40,000 of his signing bonus," according to Rosario's former agent Rob Plummer. Farrey, "Boras Confirms Player Used False Identity." The Rosario story was the subject of several featured segments during April and May 2004 on ESPN and ESPN.com. It was also the subject of a story on

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ESPN2's *Cold Pizza*, May 20, 2004, which featured interviews of ESPN *Deportes* reporter Ernesto Jerez and player agent Rob Plummer.

<sup>52</sup>On multipositionality, see Lewis, "Invoking Concepts, Problematizing Identities: The Life of Charles N. Hunter and the Implications for the Study of Gender and Labor," *Labor History* 34: 2-3 (Spring-Summer 1993): 292-308.