

Although my view of the content of the book is from that of an “outsider,” I feel confident in judging that it makes a valuable contribution to the broad concern of ethnic and cultural understanding. It is a scholarly work that should be read and referenced by many.

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**Jules Tygiel. *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) xii, 392 pp., \$16.95.**

The relationship of black Americans to baseball has never been explained completely, Jules Tygiel believes, because previous accounts have failed to place the events and personalities “into a social or historical context.” To rectify this, he has researched meticulously (thirty-two pages of notes and references) the well-known Jackie Robinson story and widened his focus to deal with black Americans and their baseball athletes from 1945 to 1970. His thesis is that Jackie Robinson and professional baseball in general form a paradigm and a foreshadowing for the American integration process, particularly the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Possibly one way of viewing this process is to examine a quasi-secret document prepared during July-August, 1946, after Rickey's choice, Jackie Robinson, was playing with the triple-A Montreal Royals. This is the official “Report” of a major league steering committee which consisted of Larry MacPhail as chairman, both major league presidents, and Tom Yankey of the Red Sox, Sam Breadon of the Cardinals, and Phil Wrigley of the Cubs. According to Tygiel, the report is “a damning document.” It tried to explain away the all-white major leagues, by insisting the real fault lay not with the baseball establishment “which was free of prejudice,” but “with ignorant protestors, inadequate black athletes, and selfish Negro League owners.” It asserted that the leagues would suffer financial losses, and it had no suggestions as to how to bring blacks into the majors. “For Rickey, who had dared to confront the problem unilaterally, the document expressed nothing but mildly concealed contempt and condemnation.” Compare these assertions to Tygiel's concluding remarks after integration had been strongly developed in the big leagues; the behavior of Robinson and subsequent black big leaguers “demonstrated the possibilities of interracial cooperation and dramatized the plight of black Americans.”

The peripheral issues that Tygiel had to examine include a history of race relations in organized baseball; the rise and demise of the Negro

leagues; the 1930s attempt by “a small coterie of young black sports-writers and the American Communist Party” to push integration into the minor and major leagues; a careful survey of early black players such as John Wright and Roy Partlow; the role of Bill Veeck and his signing of Larry Doby; the incipient near-rebellion of some white major-league ballplayers in 1947; the callous treatment of early black major-league ballplayers, and the more than twelve years it took to establish full integration, for the Red Sox held out until 1959 before promoting “Pumpsie” Green to Fenway.

Even to a lifelong Brooklyn Dodger fan who now teaches a college course called “Sports in American Life,” which features a segment on racism in sports and who saw, sitting in the fifty-five cents bleacher seats in Ebbets Field, Robinson play magnificently in the late forties and early fifties with the other boys of summer, this volume offered new material and brought new insights. Tygiel stresses, for example, Jackie’s change when in 1949 after two years of bearing insults, intimidations, and injuries with patience and restraint, he was allowed to become “proud, defiant and combative,” a figure to foreshadow the militant stance of the burgeoning civil-rights movement.

For the richness of factual information, for the clear and direct style, and for the sensible, closely reasoned and cogently sustained thesis, this is an indispensable volume. Its final paragraph which illustrates Tygiel’s sensitivity and intelligence, can serve as a coda to this review:

In the three and a half decades since Robinson and Rickey eliminated baseball’s color line, the elements that contributed to the desegregation of baseball—direct confrontation and personal courage, economic pressures, and moral persuasion by the mass media—have been re-created in many other areas of American life. The concept of a Negro League or an all-white team has become alien; black drinking fountains and seating sections have become obsolete. Legislated segregation has disappeared not merely in fact, but from the national consciousness. And if the vision of an integrated and equal society, free from racism and discrimination, which impelled Rickey and Robinson to launch their “great experiment,” remains unfulfilled, their efforts have brought it closer to reality.

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**Anna Lee Walters. *The Sun Is Not Merciful.* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1985) 133 pp., \$13.95; \$6.95 paper.**

Anna Lee Walters’ first collection of short stories has already won two awards, the Virginia McCormick Scully Literary Award for “the best published work during 1985 reflecting the life, history or heritage of the Western Indians” and the 1985 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.