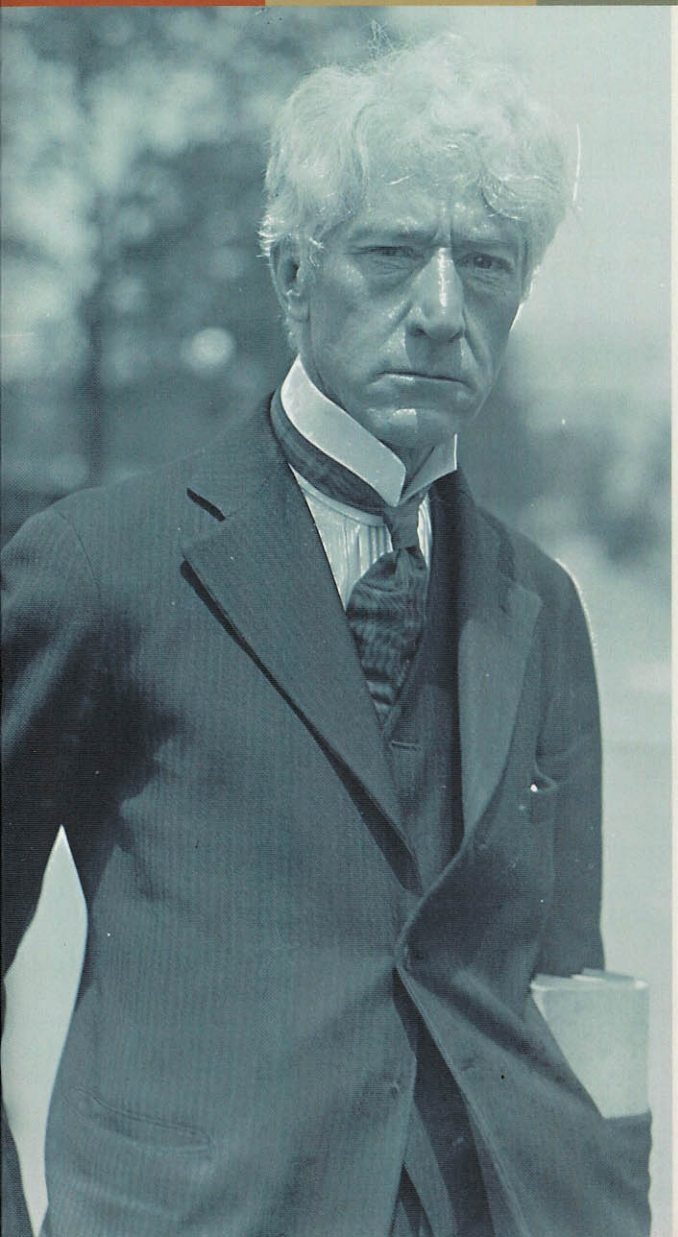
A NEGRO LEAGUES JOURNAL

BLACK BALL

VOLUME 1 • NUMBER 2 • FALL 2008



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Can You Read, Judge Landis?

Larry Lester

Abstract

By the late 1930s, and particularly during the years of U.S. involvement in World War Two, segregation in sport and society was a topic of increasing public interest. Nationalism had at least briefly trumped racism when Joe Louis and Jesse Owens emerged triumphant against the Germans. Within baseball, members of the media had loudly called for integration, which some major league managers, players, and even owners publicly supported. And as big leaguers went off to war, leaving behind diluted rosters and flagging attendance, calls for the signing of black players grew more persistent. In spite of these facts, some researchers contend that Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis must be held blameless for extending the color line; segregation, they argue, was a cultural wrong, and the time was not yet ripe to change it. This article advances a counter-argument, presenting evidence that Landis repeatedly disregarded calls for integrated play and in some instances acted to perpetuate segregation.

"*The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.*"
Edmund Burke (1729–1797), Irish philosopher

In his presentation "Does Baseball Deserve Its Black Eye?" at SABR's 37th annual convention in St. Louis, Missouri, Norman Macht discussed prevailing attitudes and societal restrictions on racial integration in the era of Judge Landis's baseball leadership, excusing Landis and major league team owners from any responsibility for America's social ills. Macht argued that team owners were "businessmen, not social reformers" and as *laissez-faire* thinkers are exempt from responsibility. Furthermore, Macht stated there was no proof that Landis opposed the integration of baseball, adding that if he had, David Pietrusza's extensive biography would have indicated this.[1] However, a considerable body of evidence contradicts Macht's assertions. Thus, this counterargument to Landis's position on integration is based on Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison's premise that "Racism is a scholarly pursuit, it's taught, it's institutionalized."[2]

From the beginning, the idea that "all men are created equal" has been at the core

Black Ball / DOI: 10.3172/BLB.1.2.57 / Volume 1, Number 2 / Fall 2008 / pp. 57–82 /
ISSN 1939-8484 (Print) / ISSN 1939-8379 (Online) /

of American beliefs. But as pioneering journalist Sam Lacy said, "Some people were created more equal than others."[3] Nearly two hundred years after the Declaration of Independence, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech reminded us that these inalienable rights were still a dream for some.

One such dream was to play baseball. "Next to religion, baseball has furnished a greater impact on American life than any other institution," boasted President Herbert Hoover.[4] Several years before Jackie Robinson crossed the color line, wartime activists and writers initiated a campaign to integrate the institution known as the national pastime. This crusade targeted Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis. Named after a Civil War battle resulting in a Confederate victory, Commissioner Landis ruled apartheid baseball with a dictatorial influence for almost a quarter of a century.

With few exceptions, major league baseball in Landis's time took down the welcome sign for players with names like Tyrone, Torriente, Clemente, Miñoso, Dihigo, Ichiro, or Nomo. It was another story, however, when a player's ancestry was something he and the owners had in common.[5] Baseball seems to have had a fascination with ethnicity, even in the years immediately after Robinson broke the color line. Ethnic background was a standard part of the entries in *The Baseball Register,* for instance, where the fan could find out that his heroes were Scotch-Irish, Irish-Dutch, Slovenian, Italian, or even Swiss-English-German.[6]

Often when looking at one's self through another's eyes, race seems a clumsy concept, but one that can—and does—overwhelm the mind. Racism in baseball was not a static force. Transforming as it went from host to host, it infected the game from the bottom to the very top.

The Formative Years

Kenesaw Mountain Landis was a central figure in our segregated game. Yet he was meagerly educated and minimally trained for the profession of law.

Born in Millville, Ohio, Landis grew up in Logansport, Indiana. After failing an algebra class, he dropped out of high school and later taught himself dictation to secure a job as a courtroom reporter for the Cass County (Indiana) circuit court. Landis earned his high school diploma in night school and in 1891 received his bachelor of law degree from Chicago's Union Law School, now part of Northwestern University. Landis boasted to Tom Swope of the *Cincinnati Post*, "You know, ... I never went to college myself. Mighty few persons know that, but it's a fact. I started my law course at the Y.M.C.A. Law School in Cincinnati and finished it at a similar school in Chicago."[7]

In 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed Landis as a federal judge for Illinois. In 1907, Landis gained national fame when he ordered the nation's wealthiest man, John D. Rockefeller, to testify in the highly publicized suit against his Standard Oil

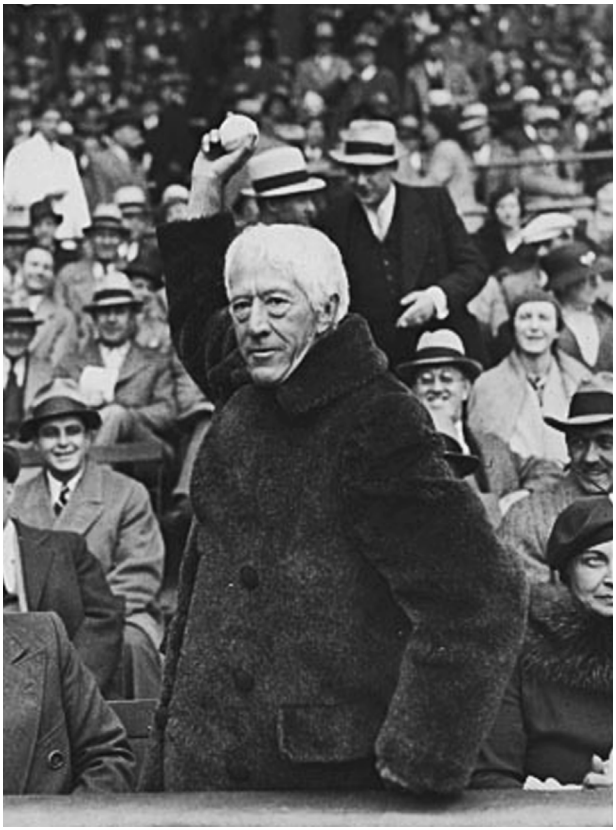
Company for conspiring with railroads to fix prices. Landis smacked Standard Oil with an unprecedented fine of more than $29.4 million, but Rockefeller won the case on appeal and never paid the fine.

In 1914 and 1915, Landis sat on the outlaw Federal League's anti-trust suit against major league baseball. Suddenly finding himself on the side of monopoly, trustbuster Landis strategically withheld a decision in the case, eventually forcing the Feds to accept a settlement and fold their teams, thus preserving the hegemony of the American and National Leagues. Baseball kept its monopoly, and Landis became the hero of club owners.

Historian Harold Seymour described Landis as a "scowling, white-haired, hawk-visaged curmudgeon who affected battered hats, used salty language, chewed tobacco, and poked listeners in the ribs with a stiff right finger."[8] About the Judge's influence on sport Seymour commented, "Landis had a deep affection for baseball and looked upon the players more as heroes than as employees. He had a keen aversion to organized labor, liquor, and the New Deal. The rub was that he permitted his personal dislikes to warp his judicial objectivity."[9]

After the infamous Black Sox Scandal in the 1919 World Series damaged the national pastime's brand and image, major league baseball sought a remedy. Although the eight players suspected of fixing the Series had been acquitted in court, Judge Landis argued that the need to clean up baseball's reputation took precedence over any legal judgments. His no-nonsense approach made him an ideal figure to preside over baseball's kangaroo court. As baseball commissioner, his salary rose from $7,500 as a judge to $50,000; however, Landis would only take the difference of $42,500 for his sovereignty.[10]

Landis restored America's faith in baseball, but at the price of making the game paternal and sacred. In his first years as commissioner, the monarch of segre-



Judge Landis throws out the first pitch. Date unkown.

gated baseball, with complete authoritative influence, banished 21 players for life and at one time ruled 53 players ineligible.[11] Often accused of a restricted outlook on America's game, particularly in race matters, Landis issued a decree in 1921 to prevent even barnstorming teams of major leaguers like the Babe Ruth All-Stars from competing against black teams in the postseason.[12] Telling the press there was a rule "agin it," the commissioner threatened to ban the Bambino, Bob Meusel, and Wild Bill Piercy if they played against Oscar Charleston's Colored All-Stars in the Southern California League. After the white team lost to Charleston's club, Landis withheld their World Series pay and suspended Ruth, Meusel (the Yankees' second leading hitter), and Piercy (a third-string pitcher) for 39 days, or until May 20 of the 1922 season, for not adhering to his dictum.[13]

Landis's new ruling disallowed exhibitions in which more than three players from a single big league team were to compete against black teams. Permissible match-ups had to be explicityly promoted as "exhibition" games, to avoid any suggestion of a meaningful contest. Major league owners' support of the ruling revealed the underlying concern that black teams could in fact compete at high levels. In 1922, the Bacharach Giants already had done damage to the notion of Negro League inferiority, beating the New York Giants twice. The St. Louis Stars had likewise defeated the Detroit Tigers two out of three games. Meanwhile, the Hilldale Club (of Darby, PA) took five of six games from the Philadelphia Athletics, and the Chicago American Giants split two games with the Detroit Tigers.[14]

The commissioner's policies were often accepted, if not applauded, by the baseball nation. While writers often viewed Landis as harsh and narrow-minded, he was generally popular because of his steadfast efforts to maintain the game's integrity, which had been seriously shaken during the Black Sox scandal. His rule became nearly absolute with the 1922 Supreme Court decision that exempted the major leagues from anti-trust legislation.

By 1926, *Washington Post* columnist Shirley Povich summed up the icon's growing legacy:

> There is a man of mystery. Mysterious in the manner that he so completely dominates his associates, who, in his present undertaking, are his employers. And he makes them like it. Sixteen major league magnates, supposed to be business men and drivers of hard bargains, are so completely under the thumb of the man with the funny name and the well-deserved title that it is strange if not mysterious or weird.
>
> Judge Landis is either the possessor of some spark of personality indescribable that puts him far ahead of his time or he is a grand hoax.

Landis had an uncanny capacity to influence and intimidate people, and major league baseball "clothed him with the full power of his office." However, Povich observed,

> Why the sixteen major league magnates fear the displeasure of the man whom they elected to arbitrate in their own cause is strange.... What sort of a man is he who, by his mere presence and demeanor and the dignity that goes with age, turns such an adverse situation into a rout of his enemies? Surely he is no ordinary personage. It may be the very

audacity of his methods in flaunting the authority of his employers that gains him their respect.[15]

The Movement Starts

In his SABR presentation, Macht made the dubious claim that America was "not socially ready" for integrated play. In fact, history holds many examples of peaceful contests between black and white teams as well as fully integrated games. In 1925, the Ku Klux Klan #6 of Wichita, Kansas, played the local colored Monrovians, and to avoid preferential treatment, two Irish Catholics officiated the contest.[16] The Monrovians were victorious, yet no violence was reported on or off the field.[17] Further evidence reveals integrated team play in Wichita's National Baseball Congress tournaments (in 1935, with extensive coverage by *The Sporting News*) and the 1934 *Denver Post* Tournament, without incident.[18] Such incident-free integrated play occurred throughout Landis's tenure as commissioner.

As the country moved forward to 1939, the National Baseball Hall of Fame opened in Cooperstown, New York, to honor baseball's greatest (white) players, managers, and executives. Meanwhile, some members of the mainstream press were outraged that African American ballplayers were barred from major league baseball and thus had no hope for Cooperstown fame. After the New York Giants finished the 1939 season in fifth place with a 77–74 record, Jimmy Powers for the *New York Daily News* wrote to Giants manager Bill Terry, "Get yourself a batch of Satchel Paiges, Josh Gibsons and other truly great ball-busters. You'd find the Polo Grounds jammed with new and enthusiastic rooters.... [Y]ou can make yourself the biggest man in baseball and I mean big. There is absolutely no law on your books barring a decent, hard-working athlete simply because his skin is a shade darker than his brother's.... You've got a pennant at your fingertips."[19]

A few months later, the *Philadelphia Record* gave the same advice to its local teams:

> The Athletics and Phillies can be pennant contenders—not next year or the year after or five years from now—but immediately. Experienced players are available who could strengthen the A's shaky pitching staff, give the Phillies the batting punch they need. These players could make potential champions out of any of the other also-rans in either major league.... But they are Negroes, and organized baseball says they can't come in.... But no vote is ever taken on the subject, no manager or owner dares defy the Jim Crow tradition which in the past has been the most inflexible unwritten law in the game.[20]

The unwritten law allowed the 1939 Phillies to finish last with a 45–106 record, 50½ games back. Generating a paltry .317 slugging percentage, they failed to produce a batter with more than 70 RBIs or double-digit homers. On the other side of Philly, the A's pitching staff had a 5.79 ERA and only one ten-game winner (Lynn Nelson), as they finished in 7th place in the American League with a 55–97 record. Yet the city of Brotherly Love did not extend any love to their black brothers.

As more attention than ever focused on the integration issue, 1939 proved a piv-

otal point for baseball in America, particularly black baseball. With the exclusion of the Negro Leagues from the national pastime, segregation became a symbolic rip in the American flag. More press coverage and campaigns questioned the so-called "gentlemen's agreement" imposed by major league owners. In the April 7, 1939, issue of the *Washington Post,* Shirley Povich commented,

> There's a couple of million dollars worth of baseball talent on the loose, ready for the big leagues yet unsigned by any major league clubs. There are pitchers who would win 20 games this season for any big league club that offered them contracts, and there are outfielders who could hit .350, infielders who could win quick recognition as stars, and there is at least one catcher who at this writing is probably superior to Bill Dickey.
>
> Only one thing is keeping them out of the big leagues— the pigmentation of their skin. They happen to be colored. That's their crime in the eyes of big league club owners.
>
> Their talents are being wasted in the rickety parks in the Negro sections of Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and four other cities that comprise the major league of Negro baseball. They haven't got a chance to get into the big leagues of the white folks. It's a tight little boycott that the majors have set up against colored players.

Noting that only "a sort of gentleman's agreement among the club owners [was] keeping Negroes out of big league baseball," Povich directed responsibility at the commissioner: "It's definitely understood that no club will attempt to sign a colored player. And, in fact, no club could do that, because the elasticity of Judge Landis' authority would forbid it."[21] Since Landis had such absolute authority from the owners no one would defy this unwritten rule without some indication from the commissioner that it would be acceptable.

Pitcher Webster McDonald of the Philadelphia Stars signs a petition by the Young Communist Party to end discrimination in baseball.

Truths, Lies, and Alibis

In the summer of 1939 Wendell Smith launched a series of eight articles in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, covering interviews with 40 players and eight managers who shared their opinions on integration. Smith strongly felt that Landis "never used his wide and unquestionable powers to do anything about the problem" and instead played a subtle "fence game."[22] Selected interview excerpts support this premise.

"The Forgotten Man," a cartoon editorial expressing the plight of black ballplayers, was published in the *New York Amsterdam News*, March 25, 1939.

William E. Benswanger, president of the Pittsburgh Pirates, declared, "If the question of admitting colored baseball players into organized baseball becomes an issue I would be heartily in favor of it. I think the Negro people should have an opportunity in baseball just as they have an opportunity in music or anything else." And Deacon Bill McKechnie, then Cincinnati Reds manager and later Larry Doby's coach with Cleveland (1947–49), agreed: "Yes, if given permission I would use a Negro player on my team. I have seen at least 25 Negro players who could have made the grade."[23] Doc Thompson Prothro, manager of the last-place Philadelphia Phillies, acknowledged the

need for black players on his team: "Two years ago, I played in some exhibition games out on the Coast. I played in at least five games and I guess I saw at least six colored players whom I thought I could use in the big leagues."[24]

Some of the best players also supported integration. Ernie Lombardi, the 1938 National League Most Valuable Player, testified, "A few years ago, we played an exhibition game in Oakland, California, against a Negro all-star team. Satchel Paige, the fast ball wizard, pitched against us, and I'm telling you he was great. I said right there that he was as good as Dizzy Dean." Cincinnati Reds pitcher Bucky Walters, the 1939 National League Most Valuable Player, agreed, "I grew up in Philadelphia which was the hotbed of colored baseball. I saw any number of Negroes who should have made the big leagues. They had some of the best players I have ever seen on those teams." Johnny Vander Meer, the Cincinnati Reds pitcher who hurled back-to-back no-hitters in 1938, added, "I certainly wouldn't object to a good Negro ball player on our team. They have some of the best ball players I have ever seen. Although it's none of my business, I don't see why they are barred."[25]

Gabby Hartnett, 1935 National League MVP, then Chicago Cubs manager, and 1955 Hall of Fame selection, recognized black talent even in his youth: "I saw two of the greatest ball players that ever lived, Rube Foster and Smokey Joe Williams. They were both pitchers and although I was just a kid, I was convinced that they were certainly good enough for the majors." The 1934 National League Most Valuable Player and Future Hall of Fame pitcher Dizzy Dean commented specifically on Satchel Paige: "If some of the colored players I've played against were given a chance to play in the majors they'd be stars as soon as they joined up. Listen, Satchel Paige could make any team in the majors. He's got everything a pitcher can have. Shucks, only his color holds him back. He could be plenty of help to some of these big league teams—I'm tellin' you."[26] Catcher Babe Phelps, who hit .367 in 1936, added, "Yes indeed, I've seen a number of Negro players whom I think were good enough for the majors. I rate Dick Lundy, Satchel Paige, Mule Suttles and [Robert] Clarke among the best players I have ever seen."[27]

Even in 1939 Brooklyn Dodgers manager Leo Durocher anticipated his team's eventual role in integration: "I've seen plenty of colored boys who could make the grade in the majors. I have played against some colored boys out on the coast who could play in any big league that ever existed. Paige, [Cy] Perkins, Suttles and Gibson are good enough to be in the majors right now. All four of them are great players. Listen, there are plenty of colored players around the country who should be in the big leagues. I certainly would use a Negro ball player if the bosses said it was all right." Dodger third baseman Cookie Lavagetto, who would later play with Jackie Robinson in the majors, added, "I've seen a whole gang who could make the grade. Paige, Gibson and Suttles are real big leaguers." And Brooklyn coach Charley Dressen reflected on early players who would never have a chance in the majors: "Most of the great players I've seen are through. However, I'd name [Oscar] Charleston, [Martin] Dihigo and [Cristobal] Torriente. They were good enough for any big league team that ever existed."[28]

Overall, the 48 men Smith interviewed agreed on the value of accepting black players and acknowledged the superior talents of some Negro Leaguers. Managers McKechnie, Prothro, and Durocher appeared willing to accept black players on their respective teams, if permitted. In turn, Lester Rodney, a white writer for the *New York Daily Worker*, a Communist newspaper, explained his motivation to end racism in baseball:

> I belong to an organization which had as part of its party's platform the ending of discrimination — as a dream. Even long before I joined that party I had been a red-hot baseball fan and got to know about some of the great players who were not allowed to play in America's national pastime.
>
> I would go out and see the Kansas City Monarchs and Satchel Paige pitch and all. You couldn't be a real baseball fan without knowing something was wrong there. Especially since my team, the Brooklyn Dodgers of the thirties, was pretty pathetic.[29]

Rodney congratulated Smith for his efforts and noted the numerous statements by players and managers welcoming desegregation. Lambasting the apologists for blaming white fans and ballplayers for wanting the color line, Rodney and others also pointed out to owners the high attendance at games between Negro League and major league all-star teams.

Gate receipts at Negro League games also drew attention. In 1941, the East-West All-Star game hit an all-time high in attendance with 50,256 fans, prompting Ed Harris of the black-owned *Philadelphia Tribune* to pose the integration question to the moguls of major league baseball.

> You read about the 50,000 persons who saw the East-West game and the thousands who were turned away from the classic and you get to wondering what the magnates of the American and National League thought about it when they read the figures. Did any of them feel a faint stir in their hearts; a wish that they could use some of the many stars who saw action to corral some of the coin evidently interested in them? Or did they, hearing the jingling of the turnstiles in this, one of the good seasons baseball has had, just dismiss the motion and reserve the idea of Negro players in the big league until the next time there is a depression and baseball profits began to decline? Fifty thousand people at any baseball game, World Series included, is no small figure.[30]

As years went on, this economic argument began to overshadow major league owners' other reasons for rejecting black players.

Can You Read?

In 1942, Lester Rodney and the *Daily Worker* initiated a campaign called "Can You Read, Judge Landis?" With the war effort and national pride foremost on American minds, many social activist groups campaigned for the inclusion of blacks in major league baseball. Joining the fight was columnist Eddie Gant of the *Chicago Defender*.

He claimed Landis had always "disliked the colored player and colored baseball" and attempted to prevent the upcoming Satchel Paige All-Stars from playing against a white all-star team, arguing that it was a phony relief game to benefit the war effort. Two earlier interracial games that year had attracted 29,755 fans in Chicago and 22,000 in Washington, D.C. Landis told major league park owners not to rent their parks for these fund raisers.[31] This reveals the commissioner's conscious strategy to maintain apartheid baseball.

Lester Rodney in later years, when he worked for the *Long Beach Independent Press-Telegram*.

Concurrently, the Greater New York Industrial Union Council, representing over a half million CIO trade unionists from more than 250 locals, unanimously passed a resolution to end apartheid in baseball. The council's resolution in part read:

> Whereas, in the spirit of national unity, Americans from all sections of the country have united to end the discrimination against race, color or creed.... Whereas, President Roosevelt in his address to the nation has stressed the importance of ending discrimination to insure victory.... Be it resolved, that we, the Greater New York Industrial Union Council ... demand that Judge Landis end jim-crow in the big league baseball now.[32]

The group sent this resolution to Judge Landis and challenged other trade unions to follow their example.

Another union, the United Packinghouse Workers of America, local 347, sent four resolutions asking Judge Landis to end discrimination against black players, asserting, "It is the expression of Hilterism we are all seeking to destroy."[33] In June 1942, the largest trade union in the United States, Ford Local 600 of the UAW, sent Landis its own "Can You Read" message, emphasizing that "National Unity embracing all races, colors and creeds is particularly necessary at this point in order to win the war against Fascism." These factory workers were producing tanks and planes to defeat Nazism, and the Ford local had 15,000 black workers, including board members and union leaders. In all, more than 80,000 workers approved the following resolution to Judge Landis:

> Whereas, Ford Local 600 UAW-CIO is opposed at all times to all forms of discrimination anywhere because of race, color or creed, and Whereas, Negroes are barred from

Members of the United Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Union (CIO) marching in the New York May Day parade, circa 1940.

> playing in major league baseball and Whereas, such leading baseball players as Joe DiMaggio, Bob Feller, Dizzy Dean and others have claimed that such Negro stars as Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson and others are capable of playing major league ball, and Therefore be it resolved that Ford Local 600 goes on record against the ban of Negro ball players ... and petition baseball commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis to use his powers to lift this ban.[34]

By the middle of July, more than one million signatures had been gathered on a petition to Judge Landis to lift the color barrier. Lester Rodney wrote of the effort, "I would say the petition drive was a success when a million signatures landed on Landis' desk. And we didn't have a million Communists. These were people who were going to the ballpark and wanted to see justice. It played a role, but that didn't make the difference. A lot of great people started to join in and make noise."[35]

Spreading beyond ballparks and factories, the "Can You Read" campaign continued at movie houses. Protestors bombarded the 1942 motion picture debut of *Pride of the Yankees* with pamphlets calling for an end to Jim Crow "In the Spirit of Lou Gehrig."

Roughly 20,000 leaflets distributed to ten New York theaters featured a statement Gehrig had made in 1938: "I have seen and played against many Negro players who could easily be stars in the big leagues. I could name just a few of them like Satchel Paige, Buck Leonard, Josh Gibson and Barney Brown who should be in the Majors. I am all for it, 100%."[36] And there still came no response from the commissioner's office.

The Communist Party was diligent in its campaign to bring racial equality to the forefront. Historian Henry D. Fetter noted, "The Communist paper's sports staff approached the breaking of baseball's color line with the belief that class, not race, provided the determinative fault line on American social life, and that racism was instigated by the bosses to foment division between white and black workers, including baseball's working class: the players."[37]

Meanwhile, marching activists, organized by the Harlem-based "League for Equality on Sports and Amusements," routinely picketed downtown Manhattan with signs that read: "IF WE CAN STOP BULLETS, WHY NOT BALLS?" and "WE CAN PAY, WHY CAN'T WE PLAY?"[38]

Jim Crow Must Go!

For years, journalists promoted the cause of "one game for all." Among those at the forefront of this effort were Joe Bostic (*Harlem People's Voice*), Ches Washington (*Pittsburgh Courier*), Wendell Smith (*Pittsburgh Courier*), Jimmy Powers (*New York Daily News*), Sam Lacy (*Chicago Defender*, *Baltimore Afro-American*), Eddie Harris (*Philadelphia Tribune*), Eddie Gant (*Chicago Defender*), and Shirley Povich (*Washington Post*).

On May 6, 1941, the day before the highly attended Satchel Paige-Dizzy Dean match-up in Chicago, Rodney addressed Judge Landis, pressuring the commissioner to officially react to the apartheid issue in baseball. Rodney recalled, "We had always pointed to Landis as the one who had the authority to end the color line. But now we really put the spotlight on him. The war was on and blacks were being sent overseas and were among the casualties. So I decided to write Landis an open letter using that as a theme. We ran it under the headline 'TIME FOR STALLING IS OVER, JUDGE LANDIS.' This was about a month before I was drafted."[39]

Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis
Commissioner of Baseball
333 North Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Illinois

The first casualty lists have been published. Negro soldiers and sailors are among those beloved heroes of the American people who have already died for the preservation of this country and everything this country stands for — yes, including the great game of baseball.

So this letter isn't going to mince words.

You may file this away without comment as you already have done to the petitions of

Scribes from the various black weeklies from left to right are Sam Lacy (*Baltimore Afro-American*), Art Carter (*Afro-American*) and Cleveland Jackson (*Cleveland Call & Post*) (courtesy Sam Lacy).

more than a million American baseball fans. You may ignore it as you have ignored the clear statements of the men who play our National Pastime and the men who manage the teams. You may refuse to acknowledge and answer it as you have refused to acknowledge and answer scores of sports columns and editorials in newspapers throughout the country—from Coast to Coast, Philadelphia, New York and down to Louisville and countless smaller cities.

Yes, you may again ignore this. But at least this is going to name the central fact for all to know.

You, the self proclaimed "Czar" of Baseball, are the man responsible for keeping Jim Crow in our National Pastime. You are the one who, by your silence, is maintaining a relic of the slave market long repudiated in other American sports. You are the one who is refusing to say the word which would do more to justify baseball's existence in this year of war than any other single thing. You are the one who is blocking the step which would put baseball in line with the rest of the country, with the United States government itself.

There can no longer be any excuse for your silence, Judge Landis. It is a silence that hurts the war effort. You were quick enough to speak up when many Jewish fans asked for the moving back of the World Series opening by one day to avoid conflict with the biggest Jewish holiday of the year ... quick to answer with a sneering refusal. You certainly made it clear then that you were the one with the final authority in baseball. You certainly didn't evade any responsibility then.[40]

America is against discrimination, Judge Landis.

There never was a greater ovation in American's greatest indoor sports arena than that which arose two months ago when Wendell Willkie [a liberal-minded Republican who lost the presidential election to FDR in 1940], standing in the middle of the Madison Square Garden ring [after Louis defeated Buddy Baer the night of January 9, 1942], turned to Joe Louis and said, "*How can anyone looking at the wonderful example of this great American think in terms of discrimination for reasons of race, color or creed?*"

Dorie Miller, who manned a machine gun at Pearl Harbor when he might have stayed below deck, has been honored by a grateful people.[41] The President of our country has called for an end to discrimination in all jobs.[42]

Your position as big man in our National Pastime carries a much greater responsibility this year than ever before and you can't meet it with your alliance. The temper of the worker who goes to the ball game is not one to tolerate discrimination against 13,000,000 Americans in this year of the grim fight against the biggest Jim Crower of them all—Hitler.

You haven't a leg to stand on. Everybody knows there are many Negro players capable of starring in the big leagues. There was a poll of big league managers and players a couple of years ago and everybody but Bill Terry agreed that Negro players belonged in the big leagues. Terry is not a manager any more and new manager Mel Ott, who hails from Gretna, Louisiana, is one of the players who paid tribute to the great Negro stars.

Bill McKechnie, manager of the Cincinnati Reds, set the tone for all the managers when he said, "*I could name at least 20 Negro players who belong in the big leagues and I'd love to have some of them on the Reds if given permission*." If given YOUR permission, Judge Landis.

Manager Jimmy Dykes of the Chicago White Sox this spring was forced to tell two fine young Negro applicants for a tryout at the Pasadena training camp, "*I know you're good and I'd love to have you. So would the rest of the boys and every other manager in the big leagues I'm sure. But it's not up to me.*" It's up to YOU, Judge Landis.

Leo Durocher, manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who were shut out in Havana this spring by a Negro pitcher, has said, *I wouldn't hesitate a minute to sign up some of those great colored players if I got the OK*. YOUR OK, Judge Landis. Get that?[43]

That's the sentiment of player, manager and fan.

The *Louisville Courier Journal*[44] of a month ago, entering the nationwide demand for

the end of Jim Crow in our National Pastime said, "Baseball, in this war, should set an example of democracy. What about it, Mr. Landis?" Yes, what about it, Mr. Landis?

The American people are waiting for you. You're holding up the works. And the first casualty lists have been published.

Yours,
Lester Rodney,
Sports Editor, *Daily Worker*
New York City

One of the incidents Rodney refers to occurred on March 22, 1942, when Jackie Robinson, then 23, and Nate Moreland, 25, had appeared unannounced at Brookside Park in Pasadena, California. They requested a try out from White Sox manager Jimmie Dykes, who allowed them to go through the motions of fielding and pitching, giving words of encouragement, but no incentives of employment. Dykes claimed, "Personally, I would welcome Negro players on the Sox and I believe every one of the other fifteen big league managers would do likewise. As for the players, they'd all get along too." Dykes added that he felt Robinson would be worth $50,000 to any major league team and suggested they talk with Commissioner Landis and team owners about the possibility of employment. Dykes claimed, "There is no clause in the baseball constitution, nor is there any one in the by-laws of the major league which prevents Negro baseball players from participating in organized baseball. Rather, it is an unwritten law. The matter is out of the hands of us managers. We are powerless to act and it's strictly up to the club owners and in the first place Judge Landis to start the ball a rolling. Go after them!"[45] Under the banner, "'Get After Landis, We'd Welcome You,' Sox Manager Tells Negro Stars," the *Daily Worker* was the only newspaper to cover the event.

Lester Rodney was not finished with the baseball czar. He later recalled,

> After that [letter to the Commissioner] we kept blasting away at Landis every chance we got. "Can You Read, Judge Landis?" "Can You Hear, Judge Landis?" and "Can You Talk, Judge Landis?" in huge headlines." ... One time I noticed the attendance figures for a game between the Kansas City Monarchs and a team of former Big League All-Stars at Wrigley Field in Chicago. So out of curiosity, I checked the attendance of the White Sox-Detroit doubleheader being played in Chicago the same day. Well, the Monarchs-All-Star game, with Satchel Paige pitching, had outdrawn the White Sox-Tiger doubleheader by more than ten thousand fans. We turned that into a "Can you Count, Judge Landis?" piece. All these [articles] ran with our biggest headline type, above the masthead.[46]

Black journalists including Joe Bostic, Eddie Gant, Ed Harris, Sam Lacy, Alvin Moses, Ches Washington, Rollo Wilson, Fay Young, Dan Burley, and others supported Wendell Smith's strong effort in the early thirties to end segregated baseball. Following Smith's lead, the *Daily Worker* published more articles about the need to integrate baseball than any other newspaper.[47] In fact, in 1937, the *Daily Worker* published more than fifty articles on the issue and nearly a hundred more in 1938.[48] These articles, along with signed petitions, perhaps encouraged Judge Landis to make his first

official statement on the race question. On July 17, 1942, the *Los Angeles Times* and several other newspapers released Landis's strong testament to end the debate:

> There is no rule against major clubs hiring Negro baseball players. I have come to the conclusion it is time for me to explain myself on this important issue. Negroes are not barred from organized baseball by the commissioner and have never been since the 21 years I have served. There is no rule in organized baseball prohibiting their participation to my knowledge.
>
> If [Leo] Durocher, or any other manager, or all of them want to sign one or 25 Negro players, it is all right with me. That is the business of the manager and the club owners. The business of the Commissioner is to interpret the rules and enforce them.

In the wake of the commissioner's statement, headlines across America read, "Landis's O.K. on Negro Stars Is a Great Democratic Victory for All America,"[49] "Commissioner Landis's Emancipation Proclamation,"[50] and "Landis Clears Way for Owners to Hire Colored."[51] Suspecting something else behind the commissioner's words, Fay Young of the *Chicago Defender* called Landis's statement a "smokescreen for owner bigotry."[52] White writer Gordon Macker of the *Los Angeles News* also questioned the statement: "What does that mean? Not a damn thing. [Landis] has merely stated that there is no rule against Negroes playing in organized baseball. There never has been any rule against them playing." Macker added, "The statement of the high commissioner is just a lot of words ... just another case of hypocritical buck passing."[53]

An explicit Jim Crow rule was unnecessary if major league owners silently agreed to keep non-white players out of the game. In effect, Landis was the only man in baseball with the power to end discrimination. Thus, his unwillingness to change the status quo or even address the racial climate is his true legacy, not because he failed to act, but because he refused to take action. Landis defended baseball's lack of official policy when he should have been making a rule saying that baseball "shall not discriminate."

Perhaps seeing a need to protect Judge Landis, J.G. Taylor Spink of *The Sporting News* immediately proclaimed, "No value would come from discussing the race issue as the color line was in the best interests of both black and white folks."[54] Further championing the commissioner, in 1947 Spink published the best selling *Judge Landis & 25 Years of Baseball*.

Landis's statement also provoked comment from major league players and management. Courageous New York Giants all-star hurler Carl Hubbell replied, "Yes, sir, I've seen a lot of colored boys who should have been playing in the majors. First of all I'd name this big guy Josh Gibson for a place. He's one of the greatest backstops in history, I think. Any team in the big leagues could use him right now. Bullet Rogan of Kansas City and Satchel Paige could make any big league team. Paige has the fastest ball I've ever seen."[55] Alva Bradley, owner of the Cleveland Indians said, "Cleveland would consider Negro players." His manager Lou Boudreau (Larry Doby's first major league manager) mentioned that he had competed with black players and had no objection to having them on his team, but added, "It's all up to Alva Bradley — he owns the team."[56]

The Tryouts

Responding to public pressure, William E. Benswanger, president of the Pittsburgh Pirates, scheduled a tryout for New York Cubans ace Dave Barnhill (actual age 28, reported to be 24) and two players from the Baltimore Elite Giants: catcher Roy Campanella (age 20) and second baseman Sammy T. Hughes (actual age 31, reported to be 27). The tryout was originally scheduled for August 4, 1942, but was postponed to accommodate the Pirates' return from a road trip that day. Benswanger declared, "Negroes are American citizens with American rights and deserve all the opportunities given to a white man. They will receive the same trials given to white players."[57]

Homestead Grays owner Cum Posey had expressed skepticism about the proposed tryouts, but in an interview with sportswriter John P. McFarlane of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Posey excused the Pirates' president: "We've known Bill Benswanger for years. It was through his father-in-law, the late Barney Dreyfuss, that we got into baseball. Bill is sincere and he may go through with this thing, but we imagine that he will not try out colored players until he is sure some of the other teams will do the same, and I hardly think this will be before next spring, if then."[58]

Added approval appeared to come from National League President Ford Frick, who declared, "If a contract for a colored player came across my desk today, I would approve it, providing it was otherwise in order. There is nothing in the rules of baseball that I know of that would permit any other action. I state unequivocally that there is no discrimination against Negroes or anybody else per se, in the National League. And you can quote me on that." Frick claimed that African Americans had a false impression of baseball's attitude toward race relations: "This is really a social problem, not a baseball problem. And it would be unfair to call on 'organized' baseball to solve it now or any other time. I don't think that racial or any other kind of discrimination is right. In fact if I thought that the inclusion of Negroes in baseball would end racial discrimination in America, I would start right out today and crusade for it." Unwilling to step up to the plate, Frick defended his position by focusing on the potential issues of black players' access to public accommodations and their vulnerability to discrimination:

> Baseball has nothing to do with discrimination against Negroes in hotels, on trains, in restaurants, training camps and other public places.
>
> A colored player traveling with a white club would be subject to all kinds of embarrassments and humiliations which he would not ordinarily have to face while playing with his own people.
>
> It should also be realized that a ball club is a highly trained group of athletes who live, sleep two in a room, eat, travel and fight their team battles in the ball parks of the nation for eight months a year. They play 154 games in all, 77 at home and 77 on the road. In addition they have to spend from a month to six weeks in the South during a strenuous training period so that the players can quickly develop into a smooth-running athletic machine. Absence of one or more players from training camp might prove an insurmountable problem.

Before Campanella (left) jumped to Mexico in mid–September 1942, he, teammate Sammy T. Hughes, and New York Cubans ace Dave Barnhill were promised a tryout with the Pirates. The black press promoted the cause with this image in several papers as Pirates president Benswanger continued to change the workout dates. The tryout never materialized.

> With some of these obstacles in view, however, I still say colored ball players will find no barriers in my office. They are welcome anytime.[59]

After three weeks of excuses and delays, the Pittsburgh Pirates asked Negro League officials, sportswriters, managers, and owners to select four players from the East-West game for tryouts. The short list became Campanella, Hughes, and Barnhill, plus Josh Gibson, Ted Strong, Hilton Smith, Satchel Paige, Willie Wells, Leon Day, Sammy Bankhead, Howard Easterling, Thomas "Pee Wee" Butts, Pat Patterson, Ted Strong, and Bill Wright. Ultimately, Gibson, Wells, Day, and Bankhead were chosen for the tryout on September 1, and the black press began to heavily advertise these players' attributes. The owners also selected eight alternates, which included the original trio of Campanella, Hughes, and Barnhill, plus Strong, Smith, Easterling, Patterson, and Butts.[60] Paige and Bankhead did not make the cut.

On August 22, the National League standings showed the Pirates in fifth place,

four games behind the fourth place Cincinnati Reds. Catching for the Pirates was 34-year-old Al Lopez, batting .250 with 21 RBIs and one home run. Lopez was no competition for Gibson, who was hitting around .375 in his league. At shortstop the Pirates had Pete Coscarart, a utility player who had hit for a .129 average for the Dodgers in 1941. Coscarart would have wilted before a serious challenger like all-star Willie Wells. Leon Day, who had reportedly won 24 games the previous year, could have bolstered the Pirates' pitching staff, which was led by Truett "Rip" Sewell, already 35, with a mediocre win-loss record of 12–10. Bankhead's all-around power and speed would have been a welcome addition to the Pirates' weak outfield of Van Robays, Vince DiMaggio, and Jimmy Wasdell, all batting under .260.

As the Pirates finished up their season, the Homestead Grays proceeded to lose the 1942 Negro World Series to the Kansas City Monarchs. Although Gibson batted less than .200 in the series, he claimed, "I am in good shape for my try out with the Pittsburgh Pirates."[61] After several postponements, the tryouts never materialized. The Pirates management offered no excuses to the press, as they finished in fifth place (68W-81L), 38½ games behind the National League pennant-winning St. Louis Cardinals.

In the American League, the Cleveland Indians announced on September 2 they would soon offer workouts to Cleveland Buckeyes manager and third baseman Parnell Woods (age 30, reported to be 26), outfielder Sam Jethroe (25, reported to be 22), and pitcher Gene Bremer (26). John Fuster, sports editor of the black-owned *Cleveland Call & Post*, had arranged the tryouts, but Indian Vice-President Roger Peckinpaugh would not set a definite date. Eventually, like the promised tryout in Pittsburgh, the Cleveland organization walked the plank of solidarity.[62]

New hope reigned during a September 15 meeting at the offices of the Brooklyn Dodgers. New York State Assemblyman William T. Andrews and Catholic Priest Raymond Campion met with Dodger president Larry MacPhail for almost two hours. Others in attendance were former Negro League commissioner Ferdinand Q. Morton, Fred Turner of the NAACP, Dan Burley of the *Amsterdam News*, George Hunton of the *Catholic Interracial Review* and Joe Bostic of the *People's Voice*. Again presented with the race issue, MacPhail responded with a different tone: "Plenty of Negro players are ready for the big leagues. In five minutes I could pick half a dozen men who could fit into major league teams." Father Campion and Assemblyman Andrews emphasized that Cleveland and Pittsburgh had both failed in their commitment to grant players an opportunity to make their teams. MacPhail voiced his criticism of those owners, "It's not necessary to try [these players] out. They're ready and willing to go into the majors [now]." MacPhail added that he thought "Negroes should have the opportunity not only to play in the leagues, but should have a lot of other opportunities, in employment, housing and other things." MacPhail also announced he was willing to book his Dodgers against the Negro League winner for a postseason championship if his Bums won the National League pennant. He proposed playing the game at Ebbets Field, with a 60–40 split of gate receipts between the winners and losers. The sports section of the September 19 *Daily Worker* boasted in large one-inch type, "DODGERS

MAY PLAY MONARCHS, NEGRO LEAGUE CHAMPS, IN POSTSEASON TILTS" Like many earlier promises, this one failed to materialize as the Dodgers finished two games out of first place.[63]

The 1942 season brought success and failure. After Lester Rodney left the *Daily Worker* and became a private in the Army, writer Nat Low took over command of the paper's fight and wrote his analysis of the integration battlefield: "We DID get the Landis statement, and whereas we DID get the campaign much favorable national publicity and whereas we DID get promises of tryouts from two major league owners—William Benswanger of the Pittsburgh Pirates and Alva Bradley of the Cleveland Indians—we DID NOT succeed in our main objective—to get Negro stars onto major league teams, in uniform."[64]

Despite their best efforts, writers were unable to force major league baseball powers to acknowledge and correct their "gentlemen's agreement" and desegregate the national pastime. "If you ask any honest sportswriter, he will tell you Landis was a racist," claimed Rodney. "He was a cold man. He could at any time as Commissioner,

From left: Nat Low of the *Daily Worker,* Dave "Showboat" Thomas, Terris McDuffie and Joe Bostic of *The People's Voice.* The foursome were en route to Bear Mountain, New York, where Thomas and McDuffie expected to try out with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1945.

said 'something is wrong with this game.'"[65] The owners pointed fingers at the commissioner, while Landis held the owners accountable to hire whomever they pleased. Meanwhile, the skeptics were right: the promised tryouts never took place in 1942.

Sam Lacy, a Spink Award Winner and the first African American member of the Baseball Writers Association of America (1948), summed up the situation best: "Baseball in its time has given employment to known epileptics, kleptomaniacs, and a generous scattering of saints and sinners. A man who is totally lacking in character has often turned up to be a star in baseball. A man whose skin is white, or red, or yellow has been acceptable. But a man whose character may be of the highest and whose ability may be Ruthian has been barred completely from the sport because he is colored."[66]

From an End, a Beginning

Before the public ever knew whether Judge Landis would "learn how to read" the signs of change, the commissioner died on November 25, 1944, with the color curtain still tightly drawn. His rule had been absolute. Although generally regarded as the perfect man to bring integrity back to baseball after the Black Sox scandal, Landis held the throne too long.

In general, mainstream Americans accepted the racial exclusion of African American players because baseball executives claimed there was no color line issue to address. In effect, they chose the path of least resistance by ignoring that a "gentleman's agreement" needed addressing. Landis and his businessmen were about the business of keeping the status quo, despite *prima facie* evidence of any injustice.

Despite ample evidence of Landis's role in perpetuating the color line, Norman Macht asserted that because historian David Pietrusza did not address the issue in his 1998 biography *Judge and Jury: The Life and Times of Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis*, the commissioner cannot be singled out for criticism or blame. But despite generally favorable reviews for Pietrusza's book, critics decried the omission. One reviewer notes, "The work does have one glaring deficiency ... with regard to the book's chronicle of Landis and the efforts to integrate the game. ... this (certainly the most significant of any shortcoming of his reign) was given less than adequate coverage.... Others have written more authoritatively (including first hand reporting of confrontations over the issue) about how intractable a foe Landis was of integration of the American pastime. This book not only ignores almost all of these, but glosses over the issue in general with little more than an apologist's dismissal. From my perspective, this is an unpardonable transgression."[67] Although the text reaches 452 pages, Pietrusza only lightly touched on the race issue.

Reviewing the book in the *Journal of Sport History*, John C. Chalberg notes, "Not content with praising Landis's actions, Pietrusza also defends his omissions. For example, he absolves Landis of any significant degree of responsibility for preserving base-

ball's color line. Pietrusza asserts that ... Landis was ... no worse than ... [others] on the integration issue. To see Landis as the 'George Wallace of baseball' is to 'oversimplify' things and 'exculpate' the rest of the game's hierarchy."[68]

Yes, Landis cleaned up the game, but he also held back the master key to apartheid baseball. This is confirmed by his successor, former Kentucky governor and senator Albert Benjamin "Happy" Chandler, who reported,

> For twenty-four years Judge Landis wouldn't let a black man play. I had his records, and I read them, and for twenty-four years Landis consistently blocked any attempts to put blacks and whites together on a big league field. He even refused to let them play exhibition games.
>
> I was named the commissioner in April 1945, and just as soon as I was elected commissioner, two black writers from the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Wendell Smith and Ric Roberts, came down to Washington to see me. They asked me where I stood, and I shook their hands and said, "I'm for the Four Freedoms,[69] and if a black boy can make it in Okinawa and go to Guadalcanal, he can make it in baseball.[70]

The story of America's unpardonable acceptance of racial weakness and our nation's protracted obedience of segregated and discriminatory practices toward African Americans is well documented. Sadly, Landis and his men were never able to transcend the social constraints of the period, despite the willingness of baseball executives like Bill Veeck and Branch Rickey — or other sports executives like Paul Brown (Cleveland Browns), Dan F. Reeves (Los Angeles Rams), or Red Auerbach (Boston Celtics). As the French philosopher Voltaire accurately declared, "Every man is guilty of all the good he did not do."

Landis had unlimited authority and tremendous influence, but the historical record makes all too clear that he lacked the fortitude to put a little soul into the game. Controlling the monopoly of racial exclusion, Landis and his converts provided a plethora of excuses for their refusal to act. Besides integration, ultra-conservative Landis also opposed night games and the farm system.[71] Major league baseball's support of Judge Landis's position on the color line is clear from the length of his 24-year reign as commissioner. In 1944, even as Landis lay on his death bed in Chicago's St. Luke's Hospital, the joint committee of the two leagues recommended him for re-election.[72] And major league baseball romanticized his quarter-century tenure as commissioner with a special selection to the Hall of Fame just a month after his death. His Hall of Fame plaque reads: "His Integrity and Leadership Established Baseball in the Respect, Esteem and Affection of the American People." Clearly this declaration does not reflect the view of all Americans.

Before the one-year anniversary of Landis's death, Brooklyn Dodger president and general manager Branch Rickey signed Jackie Robinson to a minor league contract with the Canadian Montreal Royals, literally changing the face of major league baseball and the racial landscape of the United States forever. Some say Judge Landis and Babe Ruth changed baseball, but others believe that two men with one voice — Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson — changed America.

On April 7, 1945, seven months before Landis's death, the *New York Amsterdam News* ran this cartoon under the title "Same Old Story."

Notes

1. The author attempted to obtain a printed copy of Macht's presentation from SABR's Research Library, but it was not available. Hence, references to the talk are from the author's notes.
2. E. B. Washington, "Toni Morrison Now," *Essence*, October 1987, 58–60.
3. Sam Lacy interview with author in Washington, DC, October 14, 1993.
4. Paul Dickson, *Baseball's Greatest Quotations* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 187.
5. The owners of major league teams in 1944 were Sam Bearden (St. Louis Cardinals), Bill Benswanger (Pittsburgh Pirates), Powel Crosley, Jr. (Cincinnati Redlegs), Philip K. Wrigley (Chicago Cubs), Horace Stoneham (New York Giants), J.A. Robert Quinn (Boston Braves), James and Dearie Mulvey (Brooklyn Dodgers), Robert R.M. Carpenter (Philadelphia Blue Jays), Donald Lee Barnes (St. Louis Browns), Walter Briggs, Sr. (Detroit Tigers), Larry MacPhail, Dan Topping, and Del Webb (New York Yankees), Tom Yawkey (Boston Red Sox), Alva Bradley (Cleveland Indians), Connie Mack (Philadelphia A's), Grace Comiskey (Chicago White Sox), and Clark Griffith and George H. Richardson (Washington

Judge Landis Headstone, Oak Woods Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois.

Senators). William DeWitt of the St. Louis Browns was voted *The Sporting News* Executive of the Year. Our knowledge of individual owners' positions on integration is limited because minutes of the leagues' executive board meetings, currently housed at the National Baseball Hall of Fame, are unavailable to researchers as major league baseball has not "signed off" on their release. Email from Erik Strohl, curator at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY, April 25, 2008.

6. *Baseball Register* (St. Louis: C. C. Spink & Son, 1953).

7. J.G. Taylor Spink, *Judge Landis and 25 Years of Baseball* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell, 1953), 7–8.

8. Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 367.

9. Seymour, *Baseball: The Golden Age*, 368.

10. Spink, *Judge Landis and 25 Years of Baseball*, 72.

11. "List of Major League Baseball figures who have been banned for life," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Major_League_Baseball_figures_that_have_been_banned_for_life#People_banned_under_Commissioner_Kenesaw_Mountain_Landis (accessed June 30 2008).

12. "Judge Landis Talks on Ruth's Status," *New York Times*, 19 May 1922.

13. Spink, *Judge Landis and 25 Years of Baseball*, 104–105.

14. Neil Lanctot, *Fair Dealing and Clean Playing: The Hilldale Club and the Development of Black Professional Baseball, 1910–1932* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1994), 180.

15. *Washington Post*, December 18, 1926.

16. Brian Carroll, "Beating the Klan: Pre-Integration baseball coverage in Wichita, 1920–1930" (unpublished).

17. Bob Rives, *Baseball in Wichita* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2004), "Klan and Colored Team to Mix on the Diamond Today," 58.

18. In 1869, The Philadelphia Pythians become the first black team to defeat an all-white squad, defeating the cross-town City Items, 27–17.

19. "Memo to Bill Terry," *New York Daily News*, February 23, 1940. Earlier, Powers in his February 8, 1933, article reportedly asked league and team officials if they objected to black players in baseball. The only exception came from John McGraw, while John Heydler (National League president), Jacob Ruppert (New York Yankees owner), Gary Nugent (Philadelphia Phillies president), and ball players Lou Gehrig, Herb Pennock, and Frankie Frisch welcomed the opportunity to have black ball players join their teams if Judge Landis gave permission.

20. *Philadelphia Record*, 14 May 1940.

21. *Washington Post*, 7 April 1939, 21.

22. Brian Carroll, *When to Stop the Cheering? The Black Press, the Black Community, and the Integration of Professional Baseball* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 134.

23. *New York Daily Worker*, July 30, 1939.

24. *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 5, 1939.

25. *New York Daily Worker*, July 30, 1939.

26. *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 12, 1939.
27. *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 5, 1939.
28. *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 5, 1939.
29. Lester Rodney telephone interview with author, October 31, 1997.
30. *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 7, 1941.
31. "I Cover the Eastern Front," *Chicago Defender*, June 13, 1942.
32. *New York Daily Worker*, June 8, 1942.
33. *Chicago Defender*, July 11, 1942.
34. *New York Daily Worker*, June 18, 1942.
35. Lester Rodney telephone interview with author, October 31, 1997.
36. *New York Daily Worker*, July 15, 1942.
37. Henry D. Fetter, "The Party Line and the Color Line: The American Communist Party the Daily Worker and Jackie Robison," *Journal of Sports History*, Fall, 2001, 28, no. 3, 384.
38. *New York Times*, April 18, 1945; *Baltimore Afro-American,* April 28, 1945.
39. Irwin Silber, *Press Box Red* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 79.
40. Yom Kippur is probably the most important holiday of the Jewish year. The name "Yom Kippur" means "Day of Atonement," set aside to atone for the sins of the past year. The year before, 1941, two New York Councilmen, Brooklyn Democrats Walter R. Hart and Joseph T. Sharkey, sent telegrams to National League president Ford Frick, American League president Will Harridge, and Commissioner Landis, requesting movement of the first game of the subway series, between the Dodgers and the Yankees, to October 2nd from October 1st. The telegram read: "The Council of the City of New York unanimously passed resolution urging the postponement of the opening game of the World Series to Oct. 2, to enable thousands of sport-loving members of the Jewish faith to attend." Although the Council sent telegrams to the league presidents, the feeble Ford Frick cried, "It's entirely up to Judge Landis. It's his party and I have nothing to say about it." "Day's Delay Asked in Start of Series," *New York Times*, September 17, 1941. Four days later, from his Chicago office Landis ruled that the World Series would open on October 1st as scheduled. The autocratic Landis mentioned that any person of the Hebrew faith could have a complete refund, including tax and the cost of postage if they sent their tickets by registered mail to him, in care of the National City Bank of New York. "Series Dates Unchanged; Landis Denies Request," *New York Times*, September 21, 1941.
41. Miller was an African American cook in the United States Navy and a hero who went above and beyond the call of duty during the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He dragged his dying captain, Mervyn Bennion, away from the shelling before manning a machine gun. The following year in June, Miller's rank was raised to Mess Attendant First Class. On May 27, 1942, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet, personally presented to Miller on board aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* for his extraordinary courage in battle, the Navy Cross, second highest honor awarded by the Navy after the Medal of Honor. Sadly, Miller didn't survive the war. In November of 1943, he died during an attack on the USS *Liscome Bay*.
42. More accurately, Executive Order 8802, signed in June 1941 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, prohibited racial discrimination in national defense plants. This order required all federal agencies and departments involved with defense production to ensure that vocational and training programs were administered without discrimination as to "race, creed, color, or national origin." All defense contracts were to include provisions that barred private contractors from discrimination as well. The executive order was issued in response to pressure from pre–King civil rights activists Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph, founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, who had planned the original march on Washington, DC, to protest racial discrimination across America. Randolph suspended the march until Executive Order 8802 was issued. Some civil right critics felt betrayed by the suspension because Roosevelt's proclamation only pertained to defense industries and not all the armed forces. Seven years later, in July of 1948, President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981, expanding #8802 to include equality of treatment and opportunity in all the Armed Services, not just defense plants, becoming the first American institution to officially prohibit racial discrimination. The operative statement was: "It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale." The order also established a committee to investigate and make recommendations to the civilian leadership of the military to realize the

policy. In effect, it eliminated all-black Montford Point (New River, NC) as a segregated Marine boot camp, with the last of the all-black units in the United States military dismantled in September 1954.

43. The *New York Daily News* had the largest newspaper circulation in the country at the time. In that paper on July 21, 1942, Hy Turkin wrote, "A casual remark made by Leo Durocher to Lester Rodney, Sports Editor of the *Daily Worker*, now in the Army, may do more for his place in history than all his shortstopping and managing histrionics. He said that he would hire Black players and this is like the tail of the tornado that has overwhelmed Judge Landis with two million signatures and threatens the democratization of our national pastime."

44. Tommy Fitzgerald, editorial, *Louisville Courier Journal*, April 12, 1942.

45. *New York Daily Worker*, March 23, 1942.

46. Silber, *Press Box Red*, 82.

47. Chris Lamb, *Blackout: The Untold Story of Jackie Robinson's First Spring Training* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), x, xi.

48. Kelly Rusinack. "Baseball on the Radical Agenda: The Daily and Sunday Worker on the Desegregation of Major League Baseball, 1933–1947" (Master's Thesis, Clemson University, 1995), 31, 57.

49. *New York Daily Worker*, July 18–20, 1942.

50. *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 25, 1942.

51. *Baltimore Afro-American*, July 18, 1942.

52. *Chicago Defender*, July 25, 1942.

53. "White Writer Hits Landis," *Chicago Defender*, August 15, 1942, 21.

54. *The Sporting News*, August 6, 1942.

55. *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 1942.

56. *Cleveland Call & Post*, July 24, 1942.

57. *New York Daily Worker*, July 28, 1942.

58. *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 22, 1942.

59. *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 8, 1942.

60. *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 22, 1942.

61. *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 17, 1942.

62. *Cleveland Call & Post*, September 2, 1942.

63. *New York Daily Worker*, September 19, 1942.

64. *New York Daily Worker*, December 2, 1942.

65. Lester Rodney telephone interview with author, October 31, 1997.

66. *Baltimore Afro-American*, 10 November 1945.

67. Eric C. Moye, review of *Judge and Jury: The Life and Times of Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis*, by David Pietrusza, http://www.amazon.com/review/product/1888698098/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints=1 (accessed June 30, 2008).

68. John C. Chalberg, review of *Judge and Jury: The Life and Times of Judge Kenesaw Landis,* by David Pietrusza, *Journal of Sport History*, 27, no. 2, 350.

69. The four freedoms given by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's address to Congress on January 6, 1941, were: (1) freedom of speech and expression, (2) freedom of every person to worship God in his own way, (3) freedom from want, and (4) freedom from fear.

70. Peter Golenbock, *Bums: An Oral History of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Breaking Baseball's Color Barrier* (New York: Putnam, 1984), 122.

71. "Senators' Plea for More Night Games Denied as Landis Cast Deciding Vote," *New York Times*, July 7, 1942.

72. "Judge Landis Dies; Baseball Czar," *New York Times*, November 26, 1944, 78.