THE COLOR LINE



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A "color line" descended on baseball in America, in the late-19th century, as some white players refused to play with (or against) black players. In this photo, part of a collection by W.E.B DuBois, we see the African-American baseball team of Morris Brown College (in Atlanta, Georgia). The picture was taken in 1899 or 1900 and is maintained at the Library of Congress. Click on the image for a full-page view.

Eight years after the first women's professional team was formed, Moses Fleetwood Walker was the <u>Toledo Blue Stockings</u>' catcher. Still a minor-league team, in 1883, the <u>Toledo "nine"</u> (as starters were called at the time) were ready to begin a game against the Chicago White Stockings on the 10th of August.

Then, a problem surfaced.

"Fleet" (as the Toledo catcher was known) was African American. Adrian "Cap" Anson (leader and star of the Chicago team known as the "Cubs" since 1903) refused to take the field against a man of color.

Although the game went forward that day - and Fleet Walker became the "<u>first black major-league player</u>" in the U.S. when his team joined the <u>American Association</u> the following year - the sport itself was on the verge of a significant backtrack.

Too many people shared Cap Anson's point of view.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, African-Americans were forced to play segregated baseball. <u>Sol White</u> (an infielder/outfielder on various teams) <u>documented</u> some of those years (from 1887 through 1903) with his <u>History of Colored Base Ball</u>. In the book's <u>current edition</u>, the late historian Jerry Malloy included contemporary documents like this April 11, 1891 article from *Sporting Life* magazine:

Probably in no other business in America is the color line so finely drawn as in base ball. An African who attempts to put on a uniform and go in among a lot of white players is taking his life in his hands.

Were black and white players also <u>treated differently</u> by business establishments as they traveled to various towns? From firsthand experience, Sol (a 2006 Hall-of-Fame <u>inductee</u>) tells us that it was even difficult for him, and others similarly situated, to find a place to sleep:

The colored player suffers a great inconvenience at times while traveling. All the hotels are generally filled from the cellar to the garret when they strike a town. It's a common occurrence for them to arrive in a city late at night and walk around for several hours before getting a place to lodge. (Sol White's History of Colored Base Ball, page 77.)

It was not always thus. White describes a significant change:

The situation is far different to-day in this respect than it was years ago. At one time the colored teams were accommodated in some of the best hotels in the country ... The cause of this change is no doubt due to the condition of things from a racial standpoint.

With the color question upper-most in the minds of the people at the present time, such proceedings on the part of hotel-keepers may be expected and will be difficult to remedy. (Sol White, page 78.)

Sol White traced the attitude change to Cap Anson. He could not understand why Cap was so opposed to African-American players, but that issue - according to White - caused an unwritten "color line" to evolve:

Just why Adrian C. Anson, manager and captain of the Chicago National League Club, was so strongly opposed to colored players on white teams cannot be explained. His repugnant feeling, shown at every opportunity, toward colored ball players, was a source of comment through every league in the country, and his opposition, with his great popularity and power in base ball circles, hastened the exclusion to the black man from the white leagues. (Sol White, pages 76-77.)

The "color line" was not broken until Jackie Robinson stepped onto Ebbets Field - in Brooklyn - on April 15, 1947.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-COLOR-LINE-Baseball-Cards

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream



Baseball's Color Line at Work in Georgia

Library of Congress; part of W.E.B. DuBois' collection of African-American photos which he compiled for the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900. Part of the Daniel Murray Collection at the Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

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The Toledo "Nine" Baseball Team

University of Michigan / Bentley Historical Society.

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Fleetwood Walker

Image online, courtesy the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

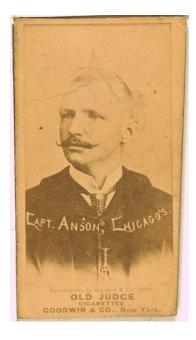
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Adrian "Cap" Anson

Image online, courtesy the PBS.org website.

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Cap Anson

Image online, courtesy Baseball Almanac.

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Sol White

Image online, courtesy the Major League Baseball website.

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Sol-White0



Jackie Robinson

Courtesy, congressionalgoldmetal.com website.

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Inside View of Ebbets Field

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

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Ebbets Baseball Stadium

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Aerial View of Ebbets Field

photo, courtesy scpr.org website.

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Brooklyn New York Map

Image online, courtesy epodunk.com website.

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Jackie Robinson - Breaking Baseball's Color Barrier

Clip from *Jackie Robinson: A Life Story* (2003), online courtesy cafeurban's channel at YouTube.

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