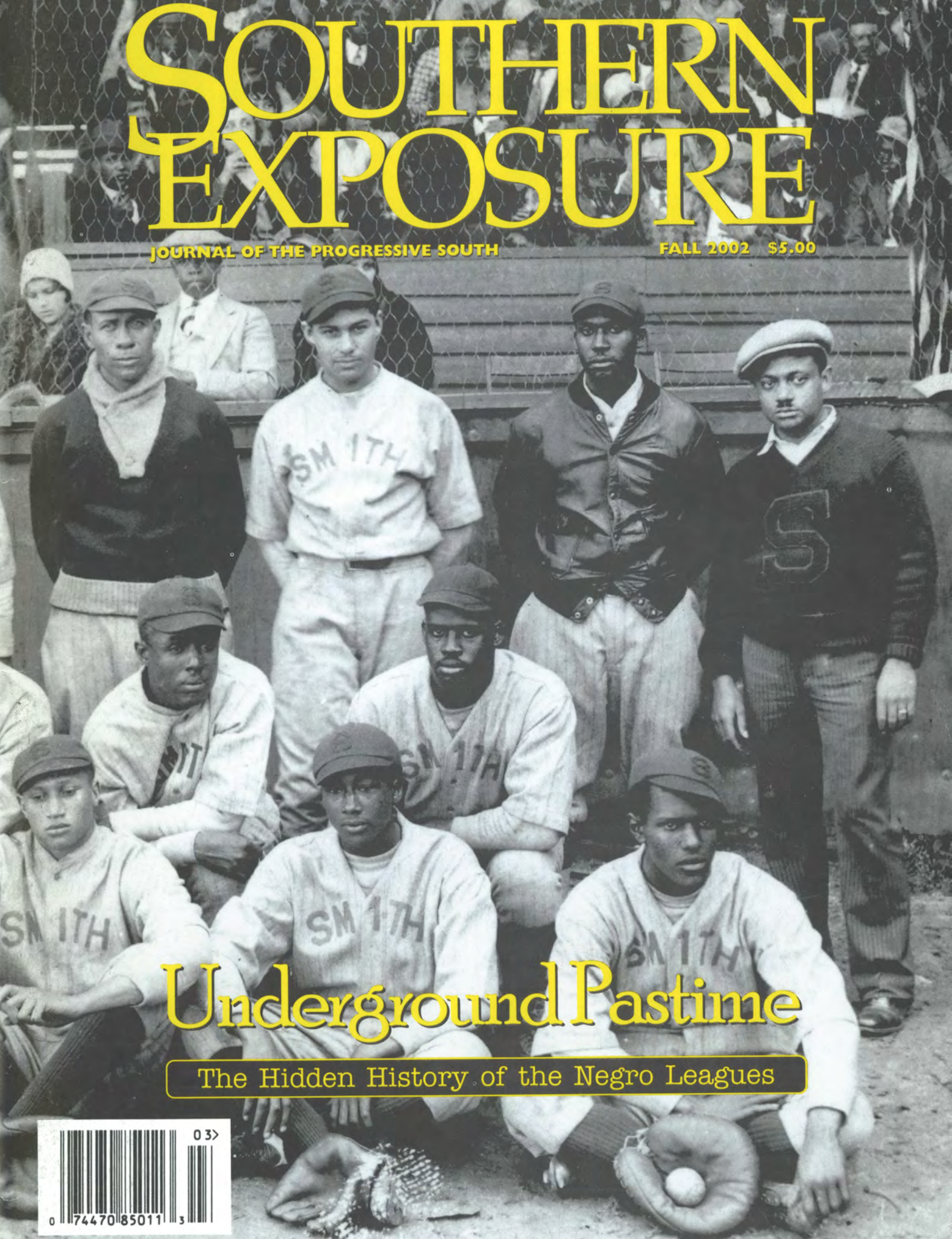
SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

JOURNAL OF THE PROGRESSIVE SOUTH

FALL 2002 $5.00



Underground Pastime

The Hidden History of the Negro Leagues

03>
0 74470 85011 3

Tools for understanding and changing the South

From the *Southern Exposure* Library

■ *Southern History*

LIES ACROSS THE SOUTH

Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 & 2 Spring/Summer 2000 – A journey through the region's museums, monuments, and other historic sites reveals that many get the story all wrong.

■ *Anniversary Issue*

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Vol. XXVII, No. 1 Spring 1999 – Special edition features Julian Bond, Jim Hightower, Rep. Cynthia McKinney and other key leaders on the past and future of the South.

■ *The Changing South*

NO EASY JOURNEY

Vol. XXVII, No. 2 Summer 1999 – New immigrants, especially Latinos, are changing the face of the South. This issue investigates the anti-immigrant backlash, and strategies for change.

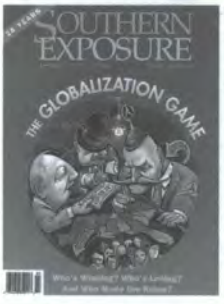
■ *Southern Militarism*

THE SOUTH AT WAR

Vol. XXX, Nos. 1& 2 Spring/Summer 2002 – The South's connection to the "war against terror," including stories of GI resisters and complete state-by-state profiles.

■ *Politics & Economics*

GLOBALIZATION GAME



Vol. XXVI, No. 2 & 3 Summer/Fall 1998 – The South is turning "world class," but at what cost? Winners and losers of the globalization game – and how to change the rules.

To order any of these back issues of *Southern Exposure*, send $5 for each issue to:

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

P.O. Box 531
Durham, NC 27702

** If you order 5 or more, take $1 off the price of each issue.*

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE has been published since 1973 by the Institute for Southern Studies. With its combination of investigative reporting, historical perspective, oral histories, photography, and literature, the magazine has earned a national reputation. The magazine has received several Project Censored Awards; the Sidney Hillman Award for courageous reporting on racial injustice; two Alternative Press Awards for best regional publication; a National Magazine Award; and the John Hancock Insurance Company award for economic reporting.

THE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN STUDIES is a nonprofit center working for progressive change in the region. Since its founding in 1970, the Institute has sponsored research, education, and organizing programs to (1) build the capacity of grassroots organizations and communities with strong local leadership and well-informed strategies, (2) provide the infor-mation, ideas, and historical understanding of Southern social struggles necessary for long-term fundamental change, and (3) nourish communication, cooperation, and understanding among diverse groups.

THE INSTITUTE is supported by foundations and individual members. Annual membership is $24 and includes a full year of *Southern Exposure* (four issues); *Facing South*, the email newsletter; and discounts on Institute resources and publications. Address all membership correspondence to The Institute, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702, (919) 419-8311 or fax (919) 419-8315 to place credit card orders (MasterCard or Visa).

COVER PHOTO: Johnson C. Smith University (Charlotte, N.C.) baseball team, late 1920s. (Baseball Hall of Fame Library)

Southern Exposure
Vol. XXX, No. 3
Fall 2002

Contents

Investigations

Features

Cover

Departments

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

FALL 2002

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE is published quarterly by the Institute for Southern Studies, a non-profit research, education and publishing center founded in 1970 to work for social, political, and economic change in the region. Views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute.
Southern Exposure
Institute for Southern Studies
P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702 (919) 419-8311
info@southernexposure.org www.southernstudies.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS for Southern Exposure are available with a membership in the Institute for Southern Studies at the following rates:
- $24/year for individuals ($45 for two years; $65 for three years)
- $35/year for libraries, institutions, businesses and government agencies ($68 for two years; $100 for three years)

Please add $12 for surface mail postage outside the U.S.

For subscription orders, changes of address, and other subscription inquiries, please contact Circulation Department, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702, or call (919) 419-8311 x21 or e-mail circulation@southernexposure.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR are welcome at letters@southernexposure.org or by mail to SE Letters, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

SUBMISSIONS: Manuscripts and photos may be submitted if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Address all correspondence and requests for writer guidelines and sample issues ($5) to the address above.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE is indexed in Alternative Press Index, The American Humanities Index, and Access: The Supplementary Index to Periodicals, and is available on microfilm from University Microfilm, 300 North Zeeb Road, Anne Arbor, MI 48106. Periodical postage is paid at Durham, NC 27702 and additional offices. ISSN: 0146L809X. Post Office No. 053470, POSTMASTER: Send form 3579 with address changes to Southern Exposure, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

For Peace, Will Travel

Just days after the last issue of *Southern Exposure* – "Missiles and Magnolias: The South at War" – rolled off the presses, we decided the subject was just too important not to spread the word. So Institute program director Rania Masri, editorial associate Jordan Green and I loaded up boxes of the magazine, piled into a minivan, and headed southward.

The "South at War Tour" visited such military hotspots as Atlanta, Georgia; Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas; and Fayetteville, North Carolina. The message was simple: the South, more than any other region, is entangled with the "anti-terror" war, the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, and what President Eisenhower presciently warned to be a "growing military-industrial complex."

The response to our low-budget publicity road trip was inspiring. On short notice and with finals looming, hundreds of students came out at Georgia Tech and University of Texas-Austin to learn how their universities are complicit in militarism and the arms industry. Long-time community activists in Fort Worth and Fayetteville – where Institute staffer and retired Special Forces Master Sergeant Stan Goff joined the tour – examined how the politics, economics and culture of the war economy shape Southern life.

In Dallas, Rania debated a former Israeli arms merchant, and groups in Dallas, Austin and Atlanta, formed coalitions in the wake of our trip to push for divesting their campuses and cities from Israel's military occupation of Palestinian land. (As you'll remember from the last issue, two-thirds of U.S. arms sold to Israel, including F-16 fighters made in Fort Worth, are manufactured in the South, and Jimmy Carter and other human rights activists have deplored the use of these U.S.-made and funded arms against civilians.)

Of course, the education went both ways. Our hunch that Southerners remain ruggedly suspicious of shouldering the burden of U.S. military adventures abroad was pleasantly confirmed. Diverse groups of labor, peace and community activists showed that divides can be crossed to resist militarism. Jordan personally credited our engaging late-night conversations with Arab activists with convincing him to take a two-week trip to the West Bank.

A whirlwind week of non-stop speaking engagements, cheap hotels and bad car games isn't for the feint of heart. But the inspirations (not to mention the unexpected visits to Cuba, Alabama and Palestine, Arkansas!) made it all worthwhile, and left our spirits bolstered with the sense that another South – and world – is possible.

Halliburton: You Heard it Here First

The second week of July, 2002, *New York Times* reporter Jeff Gerth "broke" the story about how a subsidiary of Halliburton Company – the energy corporation Dick Cheney headed before becoming Vice President – secured an unlimited military contract for "forward deployment" operations in President Bush's anti-terror war. *Los Angeles Times* columnist Robert Scheer and others credited Gerth with "revealing" how Halliburton was "benefiting from the war against terrorism."

However, national columnist Alexander Cockburn credits another news source for bringing the Halliburton story to light. In a July 17, 2002 column for *CounterPunch*, Cockburn writes that "reading [Gerth's] story was a bit like walking around some familiar room in the dark, tripping over and then gradually recognizing bits of furniture." This is not only, in Cockburn's eyes, because the story summoned memories of past insider deals between politicians, corporations and the Pentagon. Cockburn writes:

"Another reason for the sense of familiarity was that the story was broken, and furthermore told in an exciting and accessible way several months ago, by Jordan Green of the Institute for Southern Studies, published in *Facing South*, the Institute's internet newsletter, with a shorter version in the Institute's *Southern Exposure* magazine."

After quoting two paragraphs from Green's expose of Halliburton's special deal, Cockburn concludes: "That's how to write a story!"

Yankees for *Southern Exposure*

The war issue of *SE* also drew attention from Amy Wilentz, media critic at *The Nation* magazine in New York. After a friendly crack about our bare-bones appearance, Wilentz writes in the July 15, 2002, issue that "*Southern Exposure*...is still doing a fine job on its old beat: investigating the strange mix of culture and corporatism that has made the South what it is today."

Wilentz rightly observes that, despite our regional moniker, each issue of *SE* "poses the same basic question: What exactly is America?" She also finds the last issue's roundup on Southern states and the war industry to be "useful and unassailable."

The review closes thus: "The South has helped situate America in the world today; that puts it in a unique moral position. But after reading this issue of *Southern Exposure*, one really wonders: Do most Southerners care?"

Which brings us back to the "South at War Tour," and why the hope and determination we witnessed from Texas to the Carolinas to resist a society built around arms merchants and permanent war was so inspiring.

CHRIS KROMM
Editor-in-Chief
chris@southernstudies.org

In-Depth Reports

Investigating a Home-Grown Enron

Everyone's heard about Enron. Most have also heard about Duke Power, most likely because it was exposed in the national media for manipulating energy supplies in California's 2001 energy crisis.

But seemingly few have heard of another North Carolina-based energy giant, which has become just as adept at extending its corporate tentacles and flexing its political muscle for private gain: Progress Energy.

In June 2002, the Institute released *Power Politics*, an in-depth investigation of Progress Energy and its North Carolina subsidiary, Carolina Power & Light. The finding? Progress Energy and CP&L exert "massive and undue influence" over politics in North Carolina – often resulting in policy decisions that benefit the corporation, but threaten air quality, nuclear safety and consumer accountability in the state.

"From backing powerful politicians to aggressive PR campaigns, CP&L and Progress Energy invest millions of dollars to cultivate influence – and it pays off," said Jordan Green, the report's lead author. "Against that kind of money and power, citizens concerned about code-red air pollution, radioactive disasters, and consumer rights don't stand much of a chance."

The report detailed a variety of strategies used by CP&L and Progress Energy to dictate policy in the state, including:

- CP&L and Progress Energy provide generous financial backing to key political figures in both parties and at all levels of government, ranking among the top corporate contributors to North Carolina elected officials. In the last decade alone, CP&L/Progress Energy's PAC gave $603,150 in direct political donations to state officials and candidates – a figure which doesn't include individual contributions from corporate executives or "soft money" to political parties.
- In the last election, 72 percent of N.C. state senators and 64 percent of state representatives benefited from CP&L campaign backing.
- CP&L employs a small army of powerful political operatives, including the state's top-ranked lobbyist, Zeb Alley, as well as a revolving door of political officials, to sway policy to their advantage.
- In 2001, the Progress Energy Foundation dispensed $7.6 million in charitable contributions – part of what *The Business Journal* calls the companies' "strategic philanthropy" in the state.
- Each year, CP&L and Progress Energy spend millions of dollars on aggressive advertising and PR campaigns – estimated by one source at over $20 million a year – even though the companies have a guaranteed market due to electricity regulation.

The pay-off for this investment, the report charges, is "undue influence" over state politics and stifled criticism of corporate practices. The study examines three cases where CP&L and Progress Energy's inordinate sway have resulted in policies contrary to the public interest – air quality, nuclear safety, and consumer accountability:

Photo by Jerry Markatos

On May 15, the Institute joined 17 public interest groups petitioning North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper to stop Progress Energy's train shipments of high-level nuclear waste.

- As evidence mounts of a growing public health crisis from smog and other air pollutants, the report documents how CP&L pressured the N.C. Environmental Management Commission to water down air quality standards in 2000, with support from CP&L-backed Gov. Jim Hunt.
- With federal officials naming nuclear facilities as high risks for terrorist attacks, CP&L's train shipments and stockpiling of high-level nuclear waste at its Shearon Harris plant near Raleigh-Durham, N.C., have come under citizen scrutiny. Yet state and national political figures like Rep. David Price – whose top corporate backer is CP&L – have declined to support local officials who are calling for open hearings on the public health risks.
- CP&L and parent Progress Energy have played politics with energy deregulation, on one hand funding a secret

THE POWER POLITICS INDEX

- Number of Progress Energy electricity customers (the parent company of Carolina Power & Light) has in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida: 2,500,000
- Chances that a North Carolina state senator received campaign contributions from Carolina Power & Light (CP&L) in the 2000 election cycle: 7 in 10
- Chances that a U.S. senator has received campaign contributions from Enron since 1997: 6 in 10
- Amount CP&L's Employee PAC gave to North Carolina state-level candidates from 1990 to 2000: $603,150
- Amount CP&L and Duke Power gave to former North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt from 1990 to 2000: $100,000+
- Amount by which the CP&L Employee PAC exceeded campaign contribution limits to North Carolina gubernatorial candidate Mike Easley in 2000: $1,000
- Ranking of CP&L's Roxboro coal-fired plant in severity of chemical pollution, according to the EPA: 1
- Chances that the air was unhealthy to breathe somewhere in the state of North Carolina during the summers of 1998 and 1999, according to North Carolina Public Interest Research Group (NCPIRG): 1 in 3
- Number of asthma attacks caused by smog (a byproduct of nitrogen oxide) each year, according to NCPIRG: 240,000
- Number of citizens who weighed in on hearings across the state of North Carolina in 2000 on new air quality standards for coal-fired power plants: 11,000+
- Percentage of citizens who favored strict new emissions standards of 0.15 lbs per million BTU of nitrogen oxides, as proposed by environmental groups: 97
- Ratio of members of the Environmental Management Commission who voted in favor of laxer emissions standards proposed by CP&L and Duke lobbyists (0.21 lbs), to commissioners who voted against them: 9 to 5
- Chances that a team of mock terrorists made up of Special Forces operatives can successfully hijack a truck carrying nuclear materials: 1 in 5
- Estimated number of people who would have been exposed to radiation had the CSX train that wrecked in Baltimore last summer been carrying nuclear waste: 390,388
- Percentage of U.S. nuclear plants that have a "weakness in armed response" to mock terrorist teams made up of three assailants, according to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission: 46
- Number of seconds Sandia National Laboratories estimates it would take for terrorists to breach the fence line of a nuclear facility and be inside a secured building: 60
- Percentage of earnings Progress Energy expects will come from deregulated markets by 2005: 40 to 50
- Number of executives formerly employed by the failed energy corporation Enron hired by Progress Energy since January 2002: 1

From the Institute report, "Power Politics."

"front group" to lobby to preserve their regulated market, decried "as shameful conduct" by a Republican spokesman, and on the other pressuring the North Carolina Utilities Commission to approve Progress Energy's transformation into an Enron-like "holding company" to exploit deregulated markets, lowering accountability to consumers.

The report came just weeks after the Institute joined watchdog group NC WARN and 17 other public-interest organizations in filing a legal petition with North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper. The complaint calls on Cooper to use his authority to stop CP&L from "recklessly endangering the health and safety of North Carolinians" through shipment of high-level nuclear waste.

"Right now in Washington, elected leaders are conducting hearings on how energy giants like Enron manipulated politics to the detriment of the public," said report co-author Chris Kromm, who noted that Progress Energy recently hired former Enron executive Joseph Hirl. "I hope our state officials have the same courage to investigate the overwhelming – and corrosive – influence CP&L and Progress Energy have in North Carolina politics."

For copies of "Power Politics," please send $15 for Institute members ($30 for non-members) to Institute Reports, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702 or call (919) 419-8311 x21 for credit card orders.

BODIES OF EVIDENCE

Killings by Police Spur Greensboro, N.C., Residents into Action

GREENSBORO, N.C. – On May 18, 2001, twenty-two year old Gil Barber was in a car accident that left him severely injured and delirious, presumably from a skull fracture incurred in the accident. He was found wandering around the area naked and yelling at passing motorists. A neighbor called the Guilford County Sheriff's Office, who responded with an officer to the scene. Within 113 seconds of his arrival, Gil Barber was dead and the officer injured by his own gun.

Like the 1994 shooting of Daryl Howerton, the 1999 shooting of Pat Howell and the 2001 shooting of William Lewis, Barber's death was stark proof of the police depart-ment's inability to handle situations involving persons who are mentally ill or suffering from mental distress.

Scott Trent, a Greensboro activist who helps produce a local newspaper about police repression, believes the Barber case was a clear example of the dangerous trigger reflex that pervades the culture of policing. "This deputy comes up on a situation where you have a severely injured, naked, clearly unarmed black man and his response was to respond with violence."

Because of these circumstances, the family of Gil Barber filed a lawsuit in June 2001 against the Guilford County Sheriff's Department accusing the Deputy who shot Barber of wrongful death.

Jessie Barber, Gil Barber's mother, said the lawsuit was filed primarily to gain access to information they were legally entitled to, yet was blocked by the sheriff's department. Trent said the effort to get information was stonewalled at every turn.

"We don't know what happened that night. But we do know that every time we've tried to find out, we've hit a brick wall."

Photo by Rashaun Rucker

Calvert Stewart and Jessie Barber hold a photo of their son, Gil Barber, who was shot and killed by police.

The failure to release information combined with the Department's refusal to conduct an independent investigation has led many of Barber's supporters – perhaps most significantly the local chapter of the national organization the October 22nd Coalition founded by Barber's father – to believe some sort of cover up is afoot.

But their persistence in continuing to publicize the case – and most importantly the name of Barber's killer Deputy Thomas Gordy – resulted in an unexpected problem when Gordy countersued the family in October of 2001, accusing them of defamation. Gordy's suit sought up to $10,000 in compensatory damages and up to $10,000 in punitive damages from Jessie Barber and Calvert Stewart, the parents of Gil Barber.

The family settled the case last July, but did not agree to all demands filed by Gordy. One section of the suit in particular hit a nerve with Barber's supporters. The document requested the names of all individuals who provided financial support for protests or who created signs used at the rallies. This seemingly strange request within the context of a defamation lawsuit led Trent to believe the suit was "more an attack on them (the family and supporters) and the protests going on" than a real concern that Deputy Gordy was defamed.

Shortly after the settlement, Deputy Gordy's attorney requested that the court sanction the Barbers for comments they made in a July 19 rally announcing the terms of the settlement. During the rally, the family referred to Deputy Gordy several times as an "executioner" and "slayer" – but pointedly avoided the court mediated disallowed term of "murderer." Gordy's attorney has asked the court to reopen the case and find the family in contempt for refusing to abide by the court-ordered settlement.

But regardless of the department's refusal to cooperate with the family's information-seeking process or the attempts by Gordy to suppress protest activity by legal intimidation, the organizing around Barber's death goes on. Jessie Barber and Calvert Stewart have become statewide activists around the issue of police brutality, meeting with families from the immediate Greensboro area and elsewhere whose loved ones have died at the hands of police. Trent credits the family with intensifying the protest activity and success of the groups in the area, largely because "one of the scariest things

[the police] can see is when the family of a victim rises up together and says, 'We're not going to accept this just because you say we should'."

It's her faith that this kind of collective action can actually have an impact on the behavior of police that keeps Jessie Barber active in her son's case and so many others. "I'd hate to know that anyone else is going to go through this," she said. "Gilbert shouldn't be dead. He'd committed no crime. He's lying there in the ground, but I feel like I can help him."

Scott Trent and the other activists at Copwatch and the Greensboro chapter of the October 22nd Coalition see a frightening trend of police responding with excessive violence to situations that could have been resolved without the deaths of people like Gil Barber, who had committed no crime.

"It might not be on the same kind of scale as a place like Los Angeles or New York, but anytime it happens, it's part of the same system of control, trying to keep poor people and people of color oppressed," said Trent. "The only thing that's going to make a difference is a mass movement of people."

– Jenny Stepp

COLOMBIA'S OTHER COKE PROBLEM

ARE COCA-COLA AND THE DRUMMOND COMPANY COMPLICIT IN DEATH-SQUAD HITS AGAINST COLOMBIAN LABOR ORGANIZERS?

ATLANTA – Which side are you on? For U.S.-based companies that contract workers in Colombia, the age-old question posed by organized labor points to the stark choice they face today: they can side either with a union movement under siege – or with right-wing paramilitaries that have sworn to wipe that movement out.

The "paras," which operate with impunity in many parts of the country, frequently collaborate with the U.S.-backed Colombian military, which is battling leftist rebels in a virulent civil war. As the violence escalates, the Bush administration has pledged that it will increase military aid and training, and make Colombia a centerpiece of the new counter-terrorism.

Meanwhile, the most active terrorists in Colombia, the paramilitaries, are making good on their anti-union pledge. According to a June 2002 report by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Colombia is far and away the world's leading killing ground for labor activists.

The statistics are startling: of the 223 union members killed or disappeared in 2001, 201 of them – 90% – were Colombian. "Trade union activists are being systematically eliminated," the report says. Paramilitary units, it notes, perpetrated the "vast majority" of the killings.

In this dangerous setting, foreign corporations operating in Colombia can't simply stand on the sidelines as neutral parties. In fact, lawsuits filed in U.S. federal courts during the last year charge that Atlanta-based Coca-Cola and Alabama-based Drummond Company, through their subsidiaries and contractors, collaborated with the death squads that are decapitating Colombia's unions.

The lawsuits, neither of which has gone to court yet, are part of a new and unprecedented collaboration between U.S. and Colombian labor. Together, they are mounting a campaign to use worker protections in U.S. federal law to hold U.S.-based companies accountable for their conduct in Colombia's killing fields.

The assassinations of several union leaders at Coca-Cola bottlers set the stage for a July 2001 lawsuit, which was filed in Miami by the International Labor Rights Federation (ILRF) and the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), on behalf of Colombia's National Union for Food and Industry Workers.

According to the suit, Coca-Cola and Florida-based Bebidas y Alimentos, owner of the Coke bottling plant in Carepa, Colombia, allowed managers in their employ to support the "systematic intimidation, kidnapping, detention and murder" of union leaders.

In December 1996, for example, a paramilitary squad gunned down union leader Isídro Segundo Gil at the gates of the Carepa plant. Then the squad destroyed the union's local office and kidnapped another leader. A week later, the paras entered the bottling plant, rounded up the workers in the cafeteria, and told them they would be killed if they didn't quit the union. Forty-three union members promptly resigned.

Illustration by Ted May

Such intimidation and terror, the lawsuit says, was de facto company policy, because the Colombian plant manager was heard to say that "he had given an order to the paramilitaries to carry out the task of destroying the union." Coca-Cola and the other defendant say they have no connection to the killings.

In March of 2002, several unions filed a similar lawsuit against Birmingham-based Drummond, which operates a huge coal mine in La Loma, Colombia. Joining as plaintiffs are the Mining and Energy Industry Workers Union of Colombia, the United States Mine Workers Association, the ILRF and the USWA.

The lawsuit charges that local Drummond managers not only refused to protect union leaders who were marked for death, they also collaborated with the paramilitary unit that killed three of those leaders. In March of 2001, paras stopped company buses, pulled out the president and vice-president of the La Loma mineworker's union, and killed them. Before the assassinations, the lawsuit says, Drummond refused the union leaders' requests that they be allowed to sleep at the mine even thought they had received credible death threats. It further alleges that, according to several witnesses, the paras said they were acting "to settle a dispute" between the union and the company. Seven months later, the paras pulled the new union president off another company bus and killed him as well.

The Drummond Company, like Coca-Cola, steadfastly denies any involvement in violence against its workers.

Whether or not the lawsuits turn up guilty verdicts and sizable settlements, this novel legal approach has already generated publicity for the plight of Colombian labor and forged new solidarity between U.S. and Colombian unions.

It has also spurred Southern-based activists to action. In late July, 2002, for example, the Atlanta chapter of Jobs with Justice coordinated a weekend of educational forums, movement-building workshops and protests outside Coca-Cola's international headquarters. Participants included labor leaders from Colombia and the United States, as well as Rep. Cynthia McKinney, the progressive Georgia Democrat.

Though the Colombian conflict can seem remote to many Americans, its realities are up close and personal for some U.S.-based multinationals – and for labor activists in the South. "We got involved because it's important to take this to Coke's backyard," says Mary Beth Tschantz, a Jobs with Justice organizer. "We had to show them this is not something to be brushed under the rug."

– Jon Elliston

UPROOTING INJUSTICE

GAINS FOR FARMWORKERS SHOW THAT SOLIDARITY MATTERS

DURHAM, N.C. – The exploitative nature of farmwork in North Carolina was illustrated again this season when Mamerto Chai fell ill with acute abdominal pain on a Wayne County farm in late May. Miguel Vasquez, the crewleader, refused to take Chai to a hospital, so nine of his fellow workers pooled their own funds to call a taxi for the trip. They succeeded – Chai's life was saved by an appendectomy – but workers reported that their boss was angry that Chai could not work after the surgery, yet took up a bed in the labor camp.

Photo by Sandy Smith-Nonini

FLOC-organized protesters march from Mt. Olive to Raleigh to highlight the need for a union contract.

Relations with the crewleader worsened, according to the men, who said Vasquez refused to give them pay stubs and threatened them with a pistol. Finally, Vasquez fired the entire group, refusing to pay them for their last three days' work.

Dozens of similar incidents of abuses and unpaid wages come to the attention of farmworker advocates each summer. Most are not officially reported and go unresolved because migrants, many of whom are undocumented, fear the loss of their jobs or deportation. But this episode turned out differently. The workers visited the nearby Farm Labor Organizing

By Keith Ernst

Committee (FLOC) office, where union organizers helped them pull together a 40-person delegation of local Hispanics. The whole group paid Vasquez a visit at his home on the evening of June 19. Surprised by the demonstration of support, the crewleader, who works for an important local cucumber grower and grading station owner, quickly agreed to pay the workers the nearly $1000 they were owed. He counted out the cash on the spot.

FLOC organizer Matt Emmick, who accompanied the workers that night, reports that the farm in question produced cucumbers for Mt. Olive Pickle Company. FLOC has been asking for negotiations with Mt. Olive over farm worker wages and working conditions, for three years. "It took a collective action to get this short-term gain, but for long-term gains, we need collective bargaining," said Emmick.

This kind of local solidarity for FLOC's efforts is a product of three years of hard work, as well as a recent decision by the union to focus on the needs of thousands of Spanish-speaking residents who live and work in eastern North Carolina. In February FLOC kicked off its "associate membership" program aimed at farmworkers who are year-round residents in these rural counties. Central to the plan is the union's new worker center and field office in Dudley, N.C. (just outside Goldsboro), at "La Palmia," a popular Mexican store. The union has held well-attended monthly forums addressing worker issues, and plans are underway to sponsor a mobile free clinic, English as a Second Language classes, and worker's rights workshops.

Emmick, an organizer with the union since 1998, attributes much of the progress FLOC has made in North Carolina to the ongoing support of the religious community. Churches from a variety of denominations have joined pickets of Kroger stores and other events. Lori Khamala of the National Farmworker Ministry has helped to set up a "sistering" program that pairs religious congregations with farm labor camps. Key leadership has come from the North Carolina Council of Churches and from the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (ERUUF) in Durham, N.C. ERUUF, for instance, held a 2-week camp in Greenville, N.C., to educate activists in eastern North Carolina, and supported the creation of a professional-quality video, "Help Wanted: Farmworkers in North Carolina" (produced by Derek and Ginger Long).

"I feel encouraged overall by the progress of the FLOC campaign," said John Olson, a member of the ERUUF Farmworker Action Team. "We're getting much larger turnouts for events than a year ago."

Another key component of FLOC's efforts is to keep pressure on the Bush Administration to comply with promises to make it easier for Mexican migrants to live and work in the United States. Hopes for an amnesty bill were high last August when Bush hosted the new Mexican president Vicente Fox in Washington. In the aftermath of September 11, however, Bush took a different tack, tightening border security and stepping up INS vigilance.

But demands for immigration reform have not disappeared. Given how dependent the U.S. economy has become on migrant labor, support for reform is widespread, coming from such unlikely allies as the AFL-CIO and Alan Greenspan. On May Day, a group of FLOC members from the Goldsboro area traveled to Washington, D.C. to join delegations from across the country in a demonstration for amnesty for undocumented workers. Advocates see the amnesty campaign as critical to remove the fear of deportation migrant workers face.

– Sandy Smith-Nonini

For more information on the boycott of Mt. Olive Pickles contact Nick Wood or Lori Khamala at (919) 489-4485, or the new FLOC office in Dudley, N.C., at (919) 731-4433.

MESSING WITH JUSTICE IN TEXAS

Drug Sting Devastates Small Community

TULIA, Texas – On July 23, 1999, this tiny Texas Panhandle town of 5,000 woke to a massive and unusual drug sting operation. Forty-six people were arrested, hauled to jail under the scrutiny of TV cameras (tipped off by police), and charged with dealing cocaine. Thirty-nine were African-American, fully 10 percent of Tulia's black population; the other seven were whites with ties to the black community. Tulia's jail could not accommodate all the prisoners, so some had to be sent to neighboring towns. A county judge later announced that taxes would have to be raised to pay for the large number of prosecutions.

No evidence was seized that morning – no money, no weapons, no drugs. Yet 11 defendants were convicted and another 17 made plea bargains – all on the say-so of a single police officer named Tom Coleman, who conducted a solo 18-month undercover operation. His testimony, uncorroborated by other witnesses or surveillance tapes, put people behind bars for decades – one man, Tulia's supposed drug "kingpin," received a sentence of 99 years. Another, a white man with a mixed-race child, was sentenced to 300 years.

The local white population, led by the media, applauded the roundup. The *Tulia Sentinel* referred to the defendants as "scumbags." Despite numerous irregularities, Coleman's investigation earned him the Texas "Outstanding Lawman of the Year" award.

But after these initial successes, the defendants, together with the NAACP, the William Kunstler Fund for Racial Justice, and other groups, began to fight back. Critics raised questions about troubling aspects of the prosecution's cases, as well as Coleman's racial attitudes, unorthodox procedures, and questionable background in law enforcement.

In April 2002, charges against one woman were dropped when her lawyers proved she was in Oklahoma City on the day Coleman claimed to have bought drugs from her in Tulia. Prosecutors dropped another case when Coleman's physical description of the suspect proved to be so inaccurate it was clear he had never met him.

At one point during his undercover operation, Coleman was himself arrested on a misdemeanor charge of theft related to a previous police job in another county. When he left Tulia, Coleman went to work in Ellis County, once again as an undercover agent. But he was fired after being accused of "inappropriate contact" with a woman.

Coleman also, it turned out, habitually used racist language to describe blacks. Because the weight of the prosecutions fell so heavily and disproportionately on African Americans, as well as whites who had close relationships with blacks, suspicions have persisted that the sting operation was at best an egregious case of racial profiling, at worst a racist vendetta.

The Tulia undercover operation is part of a troubling pattern in Texas drug enforcement. According to Human Rights Watch, blacks in Texas are 19 times more likely to go to prison for drug offenses than whites.

"It is not an overstatement to describe the arrests in Tulia as an atrocity," Bob Herbert wrote recently in the *New York Times*. The town's small black community has been left devastated and fearful, as virtually everyone has felt the effects, directly or indirectly, of Coleman's accusations.

In response to the growing scandal, Governor Rick Perry of Texas has placed all drug task forces under state control, but says he must defer to the Board of Pardons and Paroles on the question of freeing those who remain in jail. The state Attorney General, John Cornyn, maintains that he can't get involved unless the local district attorney, who prosecuted the cases, asks him to.

The U.S. Department of Justice is conducting a criminal investigation of the Tulia drug sting. Meanwhile, 14 people are still behind bars.

– Gary Ashwill

Contributors to Southern News Roundup

- *Gary Ashwill is managing editor of* Southern Exposure.
- *Jon Elliston is a writer based in Durham, North Carolina.*
- *Sandy Smith-Nonini is a professor of anthropology at Elon College, and a writer based in Durham, North Carolina.*
- *Jenny Stepp is a writer based in Jacksonville, Florida.*

Do you have a news item or lead for Southern News Roundup? Please send to info@southernexposure.org or mail to Roundup, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

RUNNING FROM THE TRUTH:

How the Susan G. Komen Foundation fights health care reforms and fails breast cancer patients

by Mary Ann Swissler

Judy Brady has little use for the limelight. Yet, as someone with much on her mind, she has spent a lot of time writing, speaking, and holding up signs, to protest what she terms "the marketing of breast cancer." One of the worst examples, she says, is the Dallas-based Susan G. Komen Foundation and their annual fund raiser, the 5K Race for the Cure.

Now held year-round in 110 U.S. cities and abroad, Brady and the group Toxic Links Coalition find the festivities offensive. The races, they say, focus women only on finding a medical cure for breast cancer, and ignore the environmental conditions causing the disease, the problems of the uninsured, and the political influence of corporations over the average patient.

To drive this point home, Brady and the coalition have, since 1994, helped organize a vocal and visible presence most years at Komen's San Francisco race. Sometimes leafleting, and sometimes holding up hand-painted signs and banners, they always face stiff competition from the typically uplifting and euphoric Race atmosphere.

Pink, the chosen color of the international breast cancer movement, is everywhere, on hats, T-shirts, and ribbons. Up to 1 million participants in 2000 alone were greeted as they crossed the finishing line with live music, inspirational speakers, and acres of colorfully adorned corporate booths. A sense of community and camaraderie pervades the celebrations and their hundreds, sometimes thousands, of breast cancer survivors and friends of survivors.

What's missing is the truth, wrote Brady in a Spring 2001 newsletter article for the Women's Cancer Resource Center, a support services center located in Berkeley. "There's no talk about prevention, except in terms of lifestyle, your diet for instance. No talk about ways to grow food more safely. No talk about how to curb industrial carcinogens. No talk about contaminated water or global warming," Brady wrote.

Brady and the coalition are persistent in their message, yet the circle it travels in remains small, especially when compared with that of the Komen Foundation and its founder, Nancy G. Brinker. Now the U.S. Ambassador to Hungary, Brinker is the E.F. Hutton of the breast cancer world: when she speaks anyone who's anyone listens.

To block from public view the realities Brady and other critics cite, Brinker depends on the blockbuster PR value of the 5K Race for the Cure. The year-round calendar of cancer walks that draw grief-stricken yet hopeful patients and their loved ones, along with an eager-to-please media, preserve Brinker and her group's image as

defenders of the average American woman tragically struck with breast cancer.

But most would be shocked to find that the Komen Foundation helped block a meaningful Patients' Bill of Rights (PBR) for the women they've purported to serve since the group began in 1982.

Despite proclaiming herself before a 2001 Congressional panel "a patient advocate for the past 20 years," demanding access to the best possible medical care for all breast cancer patients, Federal Election Commission records show how the Komen Foundation and its allies lobbied against consumer-friendly versions of the Patients' Bill of Rights in 1999, 2000, and 2001. Brinker then praised old friend George W. Bush in August 2001 for backing a "strong" Patients' Bill of Rights, while most patient advocates felt betrayed.

And why wouldn't she, since Bush nominated Nancy Brinker for an Ambassadorship post less than one business quarter earlier, at the end of May 2001? Bush also no doubt helped toast Brinker's Congressional approval for the Hungary position on Aug. 3, 2001, less than 24 hours after the House version of the Patients' Bill of Rights, dubbed "the HMO bill of rights" by critics, passed on Aug. 2, 2001.

Lobbying Largesse

It's no accident that the Komen Foundation favors the Republican bill. In fact, the ideals of the Bush Administration chime with those of Komen's founders, a fact illustrated over and over again, and not only because they travel in the same polo-playing, oil-rich Texas set. On July 12, 2001, for example, they made an agreement with five companies to run a Medicare prescription program involving discount cards for Medicare patients. One of the five companies was Caremark Rx, where Nancy Brinker was on the board of directors, according to financial records. Another vendor, Merck-Medco, is one of the many drug companies found in the Komen investment portfolio. (Nancy Brinker resigned all board seats, including Komen, when she received her ambassadorship.)

Democrats meanwhile, including Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV, called the whole discount card idea "laughable, utterly superficial," since the cards, which provide up to a 10 percent discount on brand-name drugs, already exist, are widely available, and do little to resolve soaring prescription costs and even costlier medical treatments.

Photo courtesy of Jane Cleland

Toxic Links Coalition member Judy Brady has made the trek to the San Francisco Race for the Cure for the past decade to shine a spotlight on environmental causes of breast cancer.

To get their way, the Komen group relies on longtime Washington lobbyist Rae F. Evans, a self-described "corporate strategist" with little experience or interest in grassroots advocacy. Evans doubles as lobbyist for Nancy Brinker's spouse, restaurant magnate and polo champion Norman Brinker, of Brinker International. Norman Brinker made his fortune off restaurants such as Steak & Ale, Chili's, and Bennigan's, and has served on the Haggar Corporation's board of directors – along with Rae Evans – since 1994, according to the Forbes internet database of companies.

Also on board for Komen's Patients' Bill of Rights efforts is

Akin Gump, the fourth-largest lobbying firm in the country, whose roster reads like a who's who of anti-health care reformers. They have direct links to the Health Benefits Coalition, industry's leading PAC in the fight to stop a bill that would boost patients' rights over their health plans. This 30-member coalition of insurers, automakers, restaurants, and other powerful trade groups presented a united front before Congress, spending millions on lobbying and advertising.

Akin Gump clients during 1998, 1999, and 2000 included HBC members Cigna Corporation and New York Life Insurance, along with the Brinker-backed National Restaurant Association, according to FEC records. A&G also boasts a number of insurers, automakers and pharmaceutical firms as clients.

For his part, Mr. Brinker, a longtime Komen board member, was a bitter foe of a meaningful Patients' Bill of Rights, through the efforts of both Evans and the National Restaurant Association. This "other NRA" continually topped anti-PBR lobbying rosters, according to FEC records.

Norman Brinker has also lobbied against mandatory minimum wage laws and laws banning indoor smoking, especially inside restaurants. He even joined George McGovern, of all people, in condemning indoor smoking bans as Nazi-style repression in a March,1998, *Washington Times* op-ed piece.

Patient Advocates or "Bush Pioneers"?

Through the years, the Brinkers helped deliver the state of Texas to Bush, Jr., for the governor's seat and then the Presidency. Their phenomenal fund raising skills earned them the moniker of "Bush Pioneers," followed by committee positions for the Bush Inaugural Ball, which requires a minimum $25,000 donation. On her own, Nancy Brinker lists nearly $256,000 in both soft and hard money donations to Bush and the Republican Party, according to FEC records. Donations to Democrats totaled exactly zero.

Rae Evans likewise donated $500 to the Bush for President Campaign in 1999. The result is that lobbyists from Evans & Black and Akin Gump go in the doors of elected officials as important campaign contributors, not as mere constituents.

Not surprisingly, the Komen Foundation owned $162,843 in Brinker International stock during 2000 alone, the only year for which records are available. The Foundation also owns stock in several pharmaceutical companies and one of the largest makers of mammogram machines in the world, General Electric.

Furthermore, at 1998 Food and Drug Administration hearings the Komen Foundation was the only national breast cancer group to endorse the cancer treatment drug tamoxifen as a prevention device for healthy but high-risk women, despite vehement opposition by most other breast cancer groups. Its maker, AstraZeneca, has long been a Komen booster, making educational grants to Komen and maintaining a visible presence at the Race For the Cure. And in 2000, the parent company, Zeneca, Inc., employed Multinational Business Services, the lobbyist for the anti-PBR Health Benefits Coalition.

The Race for the Cure ignores the environmental conditions causing breast cancer, the problems of the uninsured, and the political influence of corporations.

Tamoxifen is one of the most widely used and successful breast cancer treatments today, but groups such as the Women's Health Care Network, Breast Cancer Action, Medical Consumers Union and San Francisco activist Marilyn McGregor all issued critical statements of the drug at the 1998 hearings. They testified about the drug's troubling links to uterine cancer and the FDA's questionable criteria used to define a woman as high-risk.

What is only slightly less surprising is the half-million dollars' worth of stock Nancy Brinker owns in U.S. Oncology, a chain of for-profit treatment centers (on whose board she sat at least from 1999 through 2001, according to company records). Their lobbying firm of Rose & Hefling is a lobbyist for the Philip Morris tobacco company, according to FEC records. Another lobbyist for U.S. Oncology in 2000, Alison McSlarrow of McSlarrow Consulting, is former Deputy Chief of Staff to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) – a chief architect of the pro-HMO version of the Patients' Bill of Rights.

In 1994, on a smaller but no less enterprising note, Nancy Brinker launched a line of breast self-exam kits through her company, In Your Corner, Inc. She sold the venture in 1998 for a profit, according to her biography on the U.S. Ambassador web site.

Incredibly, the Komen Foundation professes to enforce a conflict of interest clause. According to a written statement solicited for this article from Komen CEO Susan Braun, "Board and Committee members sign a conflict of interest form and are required to disclose any conflicts of interest, should the need arise."

View From the Trenches

The Komen group's stock portfolios and cozy relationships with the Republican leadership set them apart from most breast cancer patient groups. Even the Beltway insiders at the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC), who played a major role in creating the national research and early screening agenda that sprung up nearly overnight in the early 1990s, are austere in comparison. So when the Patients' Bill of Rights compromise was announced and the Komen group no doubt uncorked the champagne to celebrate their latest victory, the NBCC, among many others, was appalled.

"Late at night, and behind closed doors," read the Coalition's August 2001 press release, "members of Congress rewrote what would have been a strong and enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights, turning it into a sham for patients while continuing to protect HMOs."

According to the same Coalition statement, "The 'compromise' that members of Congress agreed to is worse than current law– it stacks the deck against patients and inappropriately turns external review into judge and jury. Finally, this sham of a Patients' Bill of Rights makes a cause of action in state court tougher for patients, but easier for HMOs."

Only messages that don't threaten or embarrass corporations get through to the media and Congress.

"Any corporate ties to a cancer-related industry raises huge credibility issues for a group that is trying to influence public policy," says Sharon Batt, author of a seminal book on the movement, *Patient No More: The Politics of Breast Cancer*, and current Chair of Women's Health and the Environment at Canada's Dalhousie University.

"Sitting on corporate boards and organizations that have vested interests in cancer policies is an even higher level of conflict than taking funds: a board member is expected to promote the interests of that corporation," she continued. "Even the NBCC takes money from the pharmaceutical industry, but I doubt [its leaders] sit on corporate boards," a fact confirmed by an NBCC spokeswoman in a recent interview.

San Francisco-based Breast Cancer Action (BCA) goes one step farther, refusing all donations from corporations that make money from breast cancer such as pharmaceutical companies, tobacco and pesticide manufacturers, and cancer treatment facilities. BCA also launched a campaign to expose similar sponsorship conflicts in the Avon cosmetic company's

Behind the Komen Foundation

Businesswoman, Republican fund raiser and Texas socialite Nancy G. Brinker began the foundation in 1982 in memory of her sister, Susan G. Komen, who died of breast cancer at age 36. Susan Komen was one of the estimated 40,000 women who succumb to the disease each year. Annually, at least 180,000 women are diagnosed, according to American Cancer Society figures. Likewise, Nancy Brinker's spouse, Norman Brinker, lost his first wife to breast cancer while she was in her thirties. As of 2001, The Komen Foundation has raised more than $300 million, emerging as the largest private funder in the United States of breast cancer research, mammogram screening, and educational outreach. Their net worth is estimated at $42.8 million, according to a 2000 Dunn & Bradstreet statement.

Nancy Brinker has served on government cancer panels under three Presidents. In 1986, President Reagan appointed her to the 18-member National Cancer Advisory Board. In 1990, she was appointed by President Bush, Sr. as director of the President's Cancer Panel and to monitor the progress of the National Cancer Program. Brinker was appointed in 2000 to the National Steering Committee for the National Dialogue on Cancer, and has sat on the boards of the New York University Medical School and the Harvard Center for Cancer Prevention Advisory Board.

Nancy Brinker has served on the boards of U.S. Oncology (formerly American Oncology Resources), Manpower, Inc., Netmarket, Inc., and Meditrust Corp., among other corporations.

fundraising run. Explained the group's executive director Barbara Brenner, "With the growing effort by corporations to look like 'good guys' by supporting cancer organizations, it is difficult, if not impossible, to know whether an advocacy organization's positions are based on well-thought-out policies or on who's paying the bills." (Ironically, BCA rented a $100 booth at the same San Francisco Race they were helping to picket.)

Batt said that one of the dangers of Komen's success is that only messages that don't threaten or embarrass corporations (who not so coincidentally have flocked to the Foundation), or the Republican Party, get through to the media and Congress.

For example, she said, during the 1990s the NBCC and smaller organizations may have convinced the National Cancer Institute and other government policy makers to begin addressing the health concerns of a more diverse group of women: ethnic minorities, lesbians and the poor. But the power brokers in government and the corporate world still listen most readily to the messages publicized by the high-profile Race for the Cure or, another corporate and Komen darling, the National Breast Cancer Awareness Month each October.

"The problem with those (awareness) programs," said Batt, "is that, unless you also fund treatment for those same women, you don't help them by detecting their cancers earlier; and you perpetuate the emphasis on mammography screening, rather than prevention, better treatment, and equitable care."

But it's an uphill battle, she said. "For one thing, the Komen Foundation has had more money. For another they carry friendly, reassuring messages through the media and their own programs, a phenomenon I like to term the 'Rosy Filter', meaning the public is spoon-fed through a rose-colored lens stories of women waging a heroic battle against the disease or the newest 'magic bullet'. Yet little light is shed on insurance costs, the environment or conflicts of interest.

Nancy Brinker has reached large audiences by billing herself as an objective patient advocate and signing as a "medical speaker" with Barber & Associates, a booking agency that handles broadcasters and television experts such as ABC's Dr. Nancy Snyderman, Dr. Bernie Siegel, Dr. Joyce Brothers, and Jane Brody of the *New York Times*.

The Left and Right of the Patients' Bill of Rights

Spiraling health care costs during the 1980s pushed the issue of patients' rights to the center of public debate during the 1992 presidential election. President Clinton tried unsuccessfully to increase coverage for the uninsured and to pass patient-protection legislation. "Since then, managed care reform has been resuscitated time and again on Capitol Hill without much success," according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

In 1999, 2000 and 2001, dramatically different versions of the Patients' Bill of Rights were introduced. Critics say that both versions do little to provide universal coverage for the tens of millions of uninsured. "They do not change the perverse incentives that pit economic interests of managed care companies and employers against the health needs of patients, and they do not reduce the huge overhead expenses, many of which are directed toward limiting services," wrote the former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Marcia Angell, in a *New York Times* Op-ed piece.

Patient protections proposed in the 2001 Democrat-dominated Senate bill (S. 1052), and the Republican-dominated House bill (H.R. 2563) are nearly identical, but the means of enforcing those rights are a sore spot for both parties. Backers of the Democrat version said a patient's right to appeal an HMO decision was weakened under the House bill because the HMOs control who does the review. Republicans also insist that patients, after exhausting all appeals, head to federal court instead of state court, where damage awards tend to be higher.

The GOP-backed bill caps damages at $1.5 million, compared to a $5 million cap on the Democrat side. The legislation also blocks class action lawsuits.

Litigation rights under the more liberal Patients' Bill of Rights has been used for years as an effective scare tactic by Republicans who say it will cause "frivolous lawsuits" to spiral out of control. In an Aug. 7 speech in Mississippi, Pres. Bush said doctors were being driven out of business by overzealous lawsuits. In fact, there's been no increase in litigation in states that passed their own version of the Patients' Bill of Rights, including Texas and California.

Significant provisions of both versions include: access to emergency care, access to specialists, no prior approval for access to an obstetrician or a gynecologist, access to pediatric care, continuity of care, point of service options, patient gag clauses, prompt payment of claims and medical necessity decisions. Both plans also emphasize payment of clinical trials.

The Environmental Disconnect

One topic you'll never catch either of the Brinkers addressing is the need for a cleaner environment. The reason, critics say, is that their silence is bought and paid for by industrial

sponsors whose financial support they rely on.

The most glaring example is international petrochemical giant Occidental, big Komen boosters, and the folks who brought us Love Canal. They donate 4,000 square feet of "glass and marble offices" to Komen on the premises of Occidental's Dallas headquarters.

The petrochemical industry, including Occidental, successfully lobbied in 2000 and 2001 for looser EPA air, water, and chemical regulations, while at the same time government researchers were reporting that auto and industrial emissions caused cancer. In March 2002 alone, the EPA approved a two-year delay of Clean Air Act rules that would cut toxic emissions from 80,000 industrial sources.

Karen Susag, another member of Toxic Links Coalition, said that she, along with Judy Brady, regularly picket the Race for the Cure in San Francisco to provide at least one voice on the issue. "The Race represents the idea that we can live in an unsustainable, polluted environment that makes people sick – and that it's okay because if we find a cure then we can live in this unsustainable way," she said.

"I really don't think environmental causes of cancer are acknowledged enough," said Dr. C.W. Jameson of the U.S. National Institutes of Health. Jameson directed a biennial report on cancer-causing agents published by the Institute of Environmental Sciences. "It warrants attention so people can make better, more informed choices, as to where they live or what professions they work in."

Photo courtesy of Jane Cleland

Petrochemical maker Chevron hosts one of many booths among the carnival-like atmosphere at each Race for the Cure.

Officially, the Komen group is pro-environment, and joined with a national coalition of cancer and women's groups in late 1999 to demand research on the links between breast cancer and environmental toxins. However, a subsequent Congressional bill, the Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act, went nowhere fast when it was introduced in May 2001. Komen's lobbyists made little or no effort to fight for the bill or the concepts behind it, according to mid-year 2001 lobbying records filed by Evans & Black and Akin Gump.

Perhaps not coincidentally, Occidental lobbyists also spent time in 2001 on the House version of the Patients Bill of Rights. Charles Black, one of Occidental's lobbyists, spouse of Evans & Black's Judy Black, and a leading Republican strategist, is also a consistent lobbyist for Brinker International. Charles Black is a board member of the American Conservative Union, a group that defines pharmaceutical price controls as "a bitter pill for American consumers," and criticizes supporters of controls for "beating up on the pharmaceutical industry."

The American Way?

Komen's political biases and conflicts of interest evade public scrutiny primarily because lobbyists and nonprofits like Komen are required to tell us only a few details of their work. As a Washington consumer group official quipped, "Politicians don't even want to admit talking to lobbyists, much less say which ones they spoke with, or why."

In 2001, for example, Evans & Black listed both Democrat and Republican versions of the Patients' Bill of Rights in their disclosure reports; their 1999 and 2000 reports were right out front by listing the Republican version. Likewise, Akin Gump's 2001 reports show they lobbied "pertaining to" the Senate's more liberal version. As a result it's impossible to prove which version they were lobbying for. But it's also easy to surmise, given the Komen Foundation's characterization of the GOP-backed version as "strong," its close and longstanding ties to President Bush and the Republican party, and its vested interests in the health care industry.

Komen lobbyist Rae F. Evans said that she refused to talk about which legislators were approached about the Patients' Bill of Rights and their position on it because it would be "unethical." Moreover, she said, "It's only a problem for journalists."

Indeed, despite all these shenanigans, there's nothing illegal here, and the Komen Foundation has plenty of company. According to University of Toronto researcher Allan Detsky, for example, 58 percent of writers of U.S. government clinical-practice guidelines have ties to pharmaceuticals.

And Komen's freewheeling lobbying is possible because of a little-known exemption written into the U.S. tax code a quarter century ago. In 1976, the nation's nonprofit organizations were granted the right to hire, or go toe-to-toe with, professional lobbyists on Capitol Hill – while maintaining tax-exempt status. Nonprofits can spend 20 percent of the first $500,000 of annual expenditures on lobbying, 15 percent of the next half-million, and so forth, up to $1 million per year, according to an IRS fact sheet. Spent this way, the entire amount is deductible, allowing the Komen Foundation to emphatically state – as they have whenever asked – that they spend "zero dollars" on lobbying.

Can stock ownership, directors' seats, campaign contributions, and longstanding business relationships result in any tangible effects on a nonprofit's mission? At best, it's tricky to prove any material conflict of interest, and even a cancer patient-advocacy organization is allowed by law to be right-wing, well-connected, and pro-industry. According to Bennett Weiner, Chief Operating Officer of the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, a national charity rating organization, charities can do whatever they want, "as long as they fulfill what's described in their mission statement." In Komen's case, that mission would be to "stop cancer as a life-threatening disease through research, detection and education," according to Komen's statements.

But, Weiner continued, it's wrong for Komen's literature, web site, and public statements to feature a central figure like Nancy Brinker – or Norman Brinker for that matter – while omitting relevant parts of their lives such as seats on boards of private cancer treatment corporations, stock interests, lobbying ties, or GOP political activism. Weiner said, "If a charity is making recommendations to the public regarding health care among other things, and if they have ties to the industry, then the public needs to be able to objectively use that information."

The Komen Foundation represents business as usual. But as Brady says, "Business as usual is why we have cancer."

As it stands now, even the watered-down Patients' Bill of Rights is on life support, after President Bush refused to sign it due to lingering concerns over the liability issue, according to a spokesman for U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), co-sponsor of the Senate's bipartisan Patient Protection Act. Quiet negotiations with the President continue. In late June, 2002, U.S. Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) released a statement saying, "(I) remain optimistic that negotiations with the White House will produce agreement on meaningful patient protection that Congress could pass this year."

Ideally, this article would conclude with detailed rebuttals from the Komen camp. For their part, they have issued only a dizzying number of denials to even the simplest questions or assertions. The Foundation denies, for example, that they spend money to lobby, and denies that it is solely aligned with the Republican health care and environmental agendas. In a September 2001 letter in response to questions for this article, a Komen spokeswoman defends Mr. Brinker as a devoted "volunteer." The Foundation even seemed to distance itself from Nancy Brinker by citing her new post overseas – as if her policies and political ties left Texas with her for Hungary.

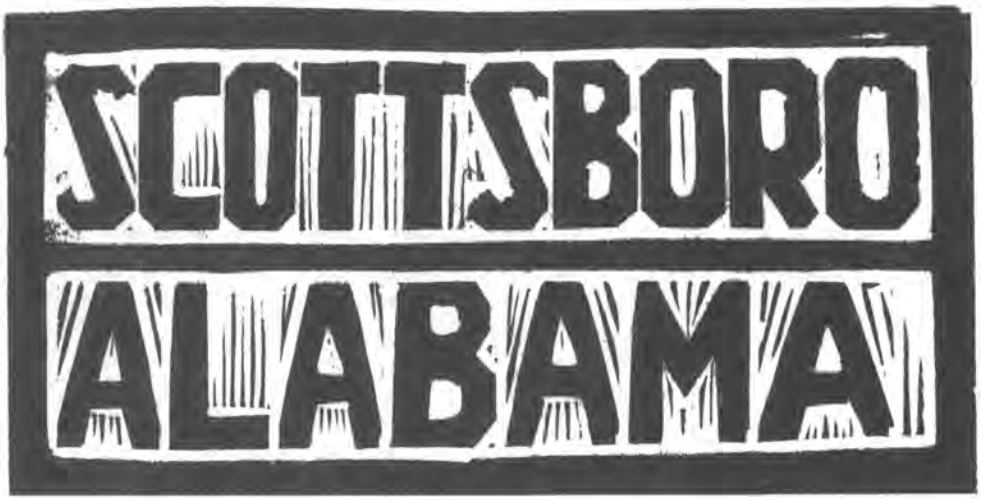
Any kind of full disclosure could be slow in coming, given the vast tangle of political, business, and personal alliances involved. Even a spokesperson in Sen. Edwards office, a staunch defender of a liberal Patients' Bill of Rights, recalls the Komen Foundation as one of his biggest clients at Fleishman-Hillard, a corporate PR firm located in New York.

But in the final analysis, as Judy Brady points out, the Komen Foundation, and the Brinkers in particular, represent the systemic corruption of business as usual in a corporate-dominated society. "It would be a mistake to demonize the Komen Foundation," Brady says.

"They have the best of intentions and I truly believe that they think they are doing good-with a capital 'G'.

"What they don't see is that 'business as usual' is why we have cancer."

Mary Ann Swissler is a writer based in northern New Jersey. She can be reached at maplemas@yahoo.com. *This article was made possible through financial support from the Fund for Investigative Journalism in Washington, D.C.*



Lost Political Art and the Recovery of a Radical Legacy

The case of nine young black men unjustly convicted of rape and sentenced to death in Alabama in 1931 sparked a worldwide campaign to free them, spearheaded by radical labor groups. One product of this campaign was a booklet of linoleum cuts illustrating the Scottsboro case and its context, printed in Seattle in 1935. We've reproduced several of these remarkable, evocative cuts on the following pages. Nothing is known about the artists, Tony Perez and Lin Shi Khan, or any other work they may have done. The only known copy of "Scottsboro Alabama" was recently discovered in the papers of Joseph North, editor of the 1930s journal The New Masses.

ROBIN D.G. KELLEY

It began on a slow-moving freight train near Paint Rock, Alabama. Nine young black men – Charlie Weems, Ozie Powell, Clarence Norris, Olen Montgomery, Willie Roberson, Haywood Patterson, Andy and Roy Wright, and Eugene Williams – were pulled off the train and arrested on March 25, 1931, for allegedly raping two white women. The women in question, Ruby Bates and Victoria Price, were also "riding the rails" or "hoboing," as they used to say in those days. Although the nine youths did not know one another – indeed, they weren't even in the same car at the time of their arrest – and most hadn't even laid eyes on the two women, Bates and Price told the police that these black men "ravished" them (an old-fashioned word for rape). In one sense, Bates and Price felt they had little choice but to cry rape in order to keep themselves out of jail. Riding the rails was crime enough, but to be two single white "girls" traveling unescorted among "hoboes" could mean an added vagrancy charge or an arrest for prostitution.

Bates and Price's troubles were nothing compared to those of the kids they accused. A few minutes before police pulled these folks off the train, a couple of the defendants had gotten into a tussle with some of the white men who, like them, were hopping freight cars in search of work. For a black man to strike a white man in the South was already a crime punishable by imprisonment, or worse. But when police discovered two young white women in the vicinity of these black men, the cry of rape was predictable, if not inevitable. It did not matter that most of the defendants were unaware of the women's presence on the train. They were taken to nearby Scottsboro, Alabama, tried without adequate counsel, and hastily convicted on the flimsiest of evidence. All but thirteen-year-old Roy Wright were sentenced to death.

Stories like this one were not uncommon in the South during the late nineteenth century and throughout the first half of the twentieth. Black men were frequently accused of raping white women, and most never even made it to trial. "Judge Lynch" usually presided over these affairs; a local white

mob would take custody of the accused (with the complicity of the local police) and save the state the costs of a trial by hanging the defendant from a sturdy tree branch or a street light or a bridge. Lynchings were more than hangings. They were public spectacles intended to punish and terrorize the entire black community. For whites who needed to prove their supremacy even as they struggled to make ends meet, a lynching was like a picnic, a celebration of their power and an affirmation of black inhumanity. Whole families often showed up – wives, children, grandparents – to watch black bodies tortured, burned, riddled with bullets, and to partake in the severing and selling of body parts. For the black people who had to clean up after this carnival of violence, a charred, mutilated body hanging from a tree served as a visible and potent reminder of the price of stepping out of line.

But these "strange fruit" hanging from Southern trees were not the only reminders of racial hierarchy. The fields, mines, and roads were dotted with black men on chain gangs whose main crime was insubordination. State executioners sometimes worked overtime to deal with the burgeoning number of black death-row inmates "fortunate" enough to escape the lynch mob for the electric chair. And then there were the cops: according to one study, during the 1920s approximately half of all black people who died at the hands of whites were murdered by the police.

The nine young men convicted of raping Ruby Bates and Victoria Price knew this history as well as anyone. Perhaps they didn't know that over five thousand people were lynched in the United States between 1882 and 1946, but they knew their days were numbered. Or so they thought. What made an ordinary Southern tragedy into an extraordinary world historical event was the intervention of an interracial group of radicals called the International Labor Defense (ILD). Founded by the Communist Party USA in 1925 to defend what they called "class war prisoners," the ILD set out to mobilize mass protest and to provide legal defense for working-class activists who they believed were being unjustly prosecuted for their political activity. The ILD was involved in the struggle to release Sacco and Vanzetti, two Italian immigrants with anarchist affiliations convicted of armed robbery and murder, despite a near complete lack of evidence. Though they succeeded in turning the Sacco and Vanzetti case into an international cause célèbre, they could not stop the execution. The ILD also defended trade union leaders Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, who were framed for a 1916 bombing in San Francisco. Their relentless campaign

to free Mooney and Billings prompted a federal investigation that eventually led to their release.

The Scottsboro case differed significantly from the ILD's previous cases. The defendants were not activists or trade union organizers; they were young black men from Tennessee desperately searching for work – hungry, anonymous, mostly illiterate. Boys and barely men, their ages ranged from thirteen to nineteen. When Communist organizers in Chattanooga and Birmingham had heard about the arrests, they visited the defendants in jail, gained their confidence and that of their parents, and initiated a legal and political campaign to win their freedom. As soon as the ILD stepped in, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), then the leading black civil rights organization, also sought to defend the "Scottsboro Boys," embarrassed by their initial inattention to the case. As the two rival organizations fought each other for control of the case, the ILD's lawyers succeeded in securing a new trial on appeal by arguing that the defendants were denied the right of counsel.

AT CAMP HILL NEGRO AND WHITE TOILERS GATHERED TO DRAW UP A BILL OF RIGHTS

The mere fact that a little-known radical organization – whose Southern rank-and-file membership, by the way, was almost entirely African American – could succeed in halting the execution of nine impoverished black youths in the state of Alabama is itself remarkable. But this was just the beginning of a series of remarkable events. A month before the new Scottsboro trial opened on March 27, 1933, Ruby Bates confessed that she had lied: there was no rape. Yet, despite new evidence and a brilliant defense by the renowned criminal lawyer Samuel Leibowitz, the all-white jury still found the Scottsboro defendants guilty. Several months later, however, in an unprecedented decision, Alabama circuit judge James E. Horton overturned the March 1933 verdict and ordered a new trial. Horton's bold decision cost him his judgeship, but it didn't change much. A new trial was called and the presiding judge, William Callahan, practically instructed the jury to find the defendants guilty. Meanwhile, Leibowitz and the Communists parted company after an ILD attorney foolishly attempted to bribe Victoria Price. With the support of conservative black leaders, white liberals, and clergymen, Leibowitz founded the American Scottsboro Committee (ASC) in 1934.

A year later, after the Communist Party adopted the position that progressive forces all over the world need to build a "Popular Front" of radical and liberal organizations to fight fascism

everywhere, they launched a tenuous alliance with the ASC, NAACP, and the American Civil Liberties Union. Calling themselves the "Scottsboro Defense Committee" (SDC), the group opted for a more legally oriented campaign in lieu of mass protest politics. After failing to win the defendants' release in a 1936 trial, the SDC agreed to a strange plea bargain in 1937. Haywood Patterson, Andy Wright, Charlie Weems, and Clarence Norris were convicted, with Norris receiving the death penalty. The other three were given prison sentences ranging from seventy-five to ninety-five years. Ozie Powell pleaded guilty to assaulting a sheriff and was sentenced to twenty years. And as a result of back-door negotiating with Alabama liberals, the charges against the remaining defendants – Olen Montgomery, Willie Roberson, Eugene Williams, and Roy Wright – were dropped. One year later, Governor Bibb Graves commuted Norris's sentence to life. Norris remained in prison longer than any other Scottsboro defendant; he was finally released in 1976.

NINE YOUNG JOBLESS NEGROES
LEFT THEIR WRETCHED HOMES

The Scottsboro case became one of the key episodes in the history of race and civil rights in America. It wasn't the legal maneuverings of the defense counsel or the actions of the defendants that invested this particular case with such historical importance. Rather, the ILD and their supporters brought this injustice before the world. Maintaining that a fair and impartial trial was impossible under white supremacy, the ILD publicized the case widely in order to expose Southern "justice" and pressure the Alabama legal system to free the nine defendants. Protests erupted throughout the country and as far away as Paris, Moscow, and South Africa, and the governor of Alabama was bombarded with telegrams, postcards, and letters demanding the immediate release of the Scottsboro Boys. The ILD's involvement in the case, more than any other event, crystallized African American support for the Communists in the 1930s. And although the "Scottsboro Boys" themselves never identified with the Party's goals, they became cultural symbols on the left – the subject of poems, songs, plays, and short stories that were published, circulated, and performed throughout the world.

One of those cultural products is *Scottsboro Alabama, A Story Told in Linoleum Cuts*, by two artists, Tony Perez and Lin Shi Khan. Its words and images not only tell the dramatic story of the Scottsboro nine, but also give us a sense of the context that made such an international campaign possible. Following the stock market crash of 1929, millions of Americans suddenly found themselves without jobs and living on donations from private and public charities. The unemployment rate for African

Americans was much higher than that of whites – as much as 30 to 60 percent higher in 1931. In some major cities, the unemployment rate for black men was as high as 50 percent; among white men it hovered between 20 and 25 percent. But percentage differences offered no comfort to the jobless, irrespective of race. In 1932 a militant group of World War I veterans marched on Washington to demand assistance in the form of a government "bonus" for defending their country. Militant challenges also came from the Communist Party, whose members organized councils of the unemployed, fought landlords who tried to evict poor tenants, built radical trade unions, and took greater interest in defending "Negro rights."

CARRYING A FEW BELONGINGS THEY TOOK TO THE FREIGHTS

As early as 1929, it seemed as if a class war had broken out in the South. When striking white textile workers in Gastonia, North Carolina, faced down armed state troopers, their militancy surprised even the Communist organizers leading the strike. The Communists who were not run out of the state discovered an equally militant group of African-American workers near Charlotte, who boldly marched to protest the lynching of a black man named Willie McDaniels. Then, in 1931, on the other side of the black belt, about five hundred sharecroppers in England, Arkansas, rose up in rebellion to demand relief from landlords to enable them to survive the winter.

Much of this Southern class struggle took place within a few miles of Scottsboro. Black Communists in Birmingham, Alabama, began organizing demonstrations of the unemployed, which found themselves in violent confrontations with the police. On November 7, 1932, they attracted a crowd of about five thousand before the Jefferson County courthouse, to demand jobs and relief and freedom for the Scottsboro Boys. Battles broke out in the countryside as well.

In nearby Tallapoosa County, a group of black sharecroppers organized by the Communist Party formed a union and presented their demands to the landlords. In order to understand their demands, we must first understand sharecropping. Sharecroppers in the Southern cotton belt were essentially propertyless workers who were paid with a portion of the crops they raised. The landlord normally rented the "cropper" or tenant a plot of land, a shack to live in, draft animals, and planting materials, and he "advanced" the tenants food and cash during the winter months. These "furnishings" were then deducted from the sharecropper's portion of the crop at an incredibly high interest rate. The system not only kept most tenants in debt, but it

reproduced slavelike living conditions. Entire families were forced to live in poorly constructed one- or two-room shacks without running water or adequate sanitary facilities, and they survived on a diet of "fat back," beans, molasses, and cornbread, which contributed to nutritional diseases such as pellagra and rickets.

To make matters worse, cotton farmers had been experiencing an economic crisis since the early 1920s. After World War I, cotton prices plummeted, forcing planters to reduce acreage despite a rising debt, and the boll weevil destroyed large stretches of the crop. Some landlords resorted to draconian measures, like refusing food and cash advances during the winter months.

The Alabama Share Croppers Union, led by brothers Tommy and Ralph Gray, Mack Coad, and a young schoolteacher named Estelle Milner, formulated seven basic demands, the most crucial being the continuation of food advances. The right of sharecroppers to market their own crops was also a critical issue because landlords usually gave their tenants the year's lowest price for their cotton and held on to the bales until the price increased, thus denying the producer the full benefits of the crop. Union leaders also demanded written contracts with landlords, small gardens for resident wage hands, cash rather than wages in kind, a minimum wage of one dollar per day for picking and chopping cotton, and a three-hour midday rest for all laborers – all of which were to be applied equally, irrespective of race, age, or sex. Furthermore, they agitated for a nine-month school year for black children and free transportation to and from school. Finally, they made one demand that had little to do with their immediate circumstances: freedom for the Scottsboro Boys.

The union won a few isolated victories in its battle for the continuation of food advances, but most landlords just would not tolerate an organization of black tenant farmers and agricultural workers. On July 15, 1931, a police raid on a secret meeting at Camp Hill led to a shoot-out between police and union members. Ralph Gray was murdered, several men and women were injured, and in the aftermath nearly fifty people were arrested and at least four lynched.

Behind the violence in Tallapoosa County loomed the Scottsboro case. William G. Porter, secretary of the Montgomery branch of the NAACP, observed that white vigilantes in and around Camp Hill were "trying to get even for Scottsboro." White mobs spread rumors throughout the county that armed bands of blacks were roaming the countryside searching for landlords to murder and white women to rape. Three days after the Camp Hill shoot-out, for example, the Birmingham Age-Herald carried a story headlined "Negro Reds Reported Advancing," claiming that eight carloads of black Communists were on their way from Chattanooga to assist the

Tallapoosa sharecroppers. In response, about 150 white men established a roadblock on the main highway north of the county only to meet a funeral procession from Sylacauga, Alabama, en route to a graveyard just north of Dadeville, the county seat. Despite the violence, the Share Croppers Union continued to grow. Its membership rose from eight hundred in 1931 to five thousand in 1933, reaching its height of twelve thousand in 1936.

Scottsboro, in other words, needs to be understood in the context of an unspoken war at home that rocked the Depression era, a war for racial and class justice, a war against starvation and second-class citizenship. For a moment, nine poor young black men and their mothers from the Deep South became celebrities, as did Ruby Bates, who, in another remarkable turn of events, went on tour for the ILD speaking on behalf of the Scottsboro defendants. But that moment in the sun set almost as fast as it rose. By the time the final defendants were released, the case had pretty much drifted into obscurity. Haywood Patterson and Clarence Norris produced autobiographies with the help of ghost writers, and Patterson died of cancer in 1952, two years after his *Scottsboro Boy* was published and four years after he had escaped from Kilby Prison. Norris, who published *The Last Scottsboro Boy* in 1979, lived the longest. However, despite his memoir and the press coverage surrounding his pardon from Alabama governor George Wallace, most people had forgotten about Scottsboro. At Norris's funeral in 1989, only about one hundred people showed up – a fact lamented by the Rev. Calvin Butts in his eulogy: "This church might be packed. But after the immediate glitter of the case has passed and been tarnished by fifty years, who thinks about it again? This church might be packed, if connections can be made between the Scottsboro case and indignities today."

Today we cannot afford to forget Scottsboro. There are still many "indignities" within the criminal justice system and many lessons to learn about the role of mass protest in bringing about justice. Moreover, Lin Shi Khan and Tony Perez's work is more than a haunting, powerful collection of linoleum cuts; indeed, it's more than a dramatic saga about the Scottsboro case. Khan and Perez have given us a sweeping context for understanding racial and class injustice. They begin their story not on an Alabama freight train as we did, but on the slave ships from Africa, in the antebellum cotton fields and the postbellum chain gangs, in the factories and prisons, in the courthouses and the streets where the battle for rights is a battle for survival. They read the story of Scottsboro on the bodies of working people, in their determined and bulging eyes, their broken necks, their manacled wrists, their raised fists. They

give us a history in indelible ink so we are able to discover it a half century later, return it to our collective memory, and never forget the lessons it holds. And if we learn our lessons well, maybe we can follow their injunction and drive the villains of this tale "into the ash heap of the bitter past" once and for all.

Excerpted from Scottsboro, Alabama: A Story in Linoleum Cuts, *by Lin Shi Khan and Tony Perez, edited by Andrew Lee with a foreword by Robin D.G. Kelley, New York University Press: New York, 2002. Robin D.G. Kelley is Professor of History at New York University. His books include* Yo' Mama's Disfunktional! Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America, Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, *and* the Black Working Class.

Ed Steele, Piper Davis, Artie Wilson of the Birmingham Black Barons, late 1940s.

Underground Pastime

The Hidden History of the Negro Leagues

By Gary Ashwill

On a warm April night in 1998, the Durham Bulls' ballpark was the scene of a tribute to the Negro Leagues. To throw out the ceremonial first pitch, the Bulls recruited Buck O'Neil, longtime first baseman, manager of the Kansas City Monarchs, and charismatic public face of the Negro Leagues ever since his appearances in Ken Burns' *Baseball* documentary (1994). The 86-year-old O'Neil stood on the pitcher's mound, and began to wind up. He stopped himself mid-stride, shook his head, and trotted a few feet closer to home plate. Again he raised the ball, aimed – but no, still too far. With impeccable timing (reminiscent of the "comedy baseball" teams he played for in his youth) he made his way closer and closer to the plate until he finally placed the ball gently in the catcher's mitt. The crowd roared.

> **"The Negro Leagues rank among the highest achievements of black enterprise during segregation."**

The Bulls and their opponents wore Negro League uniforms that night, each from a different team: Homestead Grays, Atlanta Black Crackers, Memphis Red Sox, Chicago American Giants, Nashville Elite Giants, Pittsburgh Crawfords, Birmingham Black Barons. From the stands, it was hard to distinguish between the mostly white and gray uniforms. Everybody took home a souvenir Monarchs cap.

Some sixty years earlier, a Durham Bulls ballgame was the scene of something quite different. On an August night in 1937, 4,000 spectators crammed into a much smaller ballpark, ostensibly to see the Bulls play the Rocky Mount team, but really to enjoy a rare visit by Al Schacht, the famous baseball clown. When white fans overflowed the seats normally set aside for them, team officials ordered black patrons to make room by moving into distant outfield bleachers. According to the *Carolina Times*, a local African-American newspaper, the black fans balked, argued with ushers, and demanded refunds. Most of them left the park angrily. Many said they wouldn't be back. "One thing is sure," one fan told the *Times*. "Durham colored people will not suffer for the want of seeing a first class ball game. To my [knowledge], the Durham Black Sox [the local black team] play just about as much baseball as the Durham Bulls. In fact, I believe the Bulls would be unable to defeat the Black Sox anyway."

C.I. Taylor, founder and manager of the Indianapolis ABCs, 1915. (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

The Durham Bulls still play, in a sparkling new park with plaques honoring great African-American players. The Durham Black Sox, meanwhile, have vanished into the Jim Crow past. Virtually every night on some cable channel somewhere, the Susan Sarandon-Kevin Costner film *Bull Durham* memorializes the Bulls as the quintessential minor league baseball team. And every summer, African American and Afro-Latin ballplayers take the field at the new Bulls' park to play before crowds that are still mostly (though not entirely) white – in a city that's half black.

Even non-baseball fans are aware that once, in the United States, black men weren't allowed to play in what's known as "Organized Baseball." They probably know Jackie Robinson as the quick-witted, slashing second baseman who finally jumped the color barrier in 1947, and bow-tied, bespectacled Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers as the executive who dared to sign him. Depending on their historical knowledge and political orientation, they may even class the integration of baseball with Harry Truman's integration of the armed forces as important precursors of the civil rights movement, and may

Courtesy Baseball Hall of Fame Library

Fans at a Negro League game, *Spot* magazine, 1942.

celebrate Robinson as a predecessor of Rosa Parks and other activists. "Jackie as a figure in history was a rock in the water, creating concentric circles and ripples of new possibility," Jesse Jackson said in his eulogy at Robinson's funeral in 1972. The sportswriter Grantland Rice claimed that, "[n]ext to Abraham Lincoln, the biggest white benefactor of the Negro has been Branch Rickey."

Where does this leave those who came before Robinson, those who, in the words of the late Ted Williams, "weren't given the chance?" Fans and non-fans alike may know the names Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson, great players who were tragically excluded during their primes (Gibson died before he got the chance to play in the white majors; in 1948, Paige entered the American League, at 42 the oldest rookie in history).

But Jim Crow-era black baseball consisted of much more than a few stars. And, far from unremitting tragedy, its story is one of self-determination and collective success against great odds. Black ballplayers sustained a level of craftsmanship (some might call it artistry) that classes them with the creators of jazz or the writers of the Harlem Renaissance as makers of African-American culture during a time of especially harsh oppression.

The vast and still largely unknown world of black professional baseball in the era of segregation, roughly from 1860 to 1960, has come to be known collectively (and somewhat inaccurately) as the Negro Leagues. For decades, African Americans sustained a whole alternate universe of owners, umpires, managers, coaches, and sportswriters, minor as well as major leagues, traveling and city teams that fed into the organized leagues, even a few ballparks built solely for black teams, such as Greenlee Field in Pittsburgh and White Sox Park in Los Angeles. According to the historian Donn Rogosin, the Negro Leagues "rank among the highest achievements of black enterprise during segregation." Professional baseball afforded the best players a status, a range of experience, an income, and sometimes a freedom rare for African-American men in the Jim Crow era.

The Negro Leagues: A Scorecard

MAJOR LEAGUES

Negro National League I (west and south) 1920-1931
Eastern Colored League (east) 1923-1928
American Negro League (east) 1929
East-West League 1932
Negro Southern League (west and south) 1932
Negro National League II (east) 1933-1948
Negro American League (west and south) 1937-1960

MINOR LEAGUES

Southern League of Colored Base Ballists 1886
National Colored League 1887
Negro Southern League 1920-?
Negro Western League ca. 1921
Texas Negro League ca. 1929
Texas-Louisiana League 1931
United States League 1945
Negro Florida State League late 1940s
Negro American Association late 1940s
West Coast Association (a.k.a., Negro Pacific Coast League) late 1940s

The Negro Leagues constituted one of the most important networks of a national black culture in the first half of the twentieth century, spanning the continent and prominently including Southern teams and leagues. Unlike the white major leagues, African-American baseball, of necessity, crossed color lines, class and regional boundaries, and national borders. Professional black teams took on all comers, from white college and semipro teams to major-league clubs, from industrial teams to local amateur "nines", and played before crowds of all varieties – sometimes white, sometimes black, often mixed. Teams and players traveled thousands of miles and played in many countries, from Venezuela to Canada, occasionally ranging as far as Japan. Far more so than the white majors, Negro Leaguers

"Today we must balance the tears of sorrow with the tears of joy, mix the bitter with the sweet in death and life.

Jackie as a figure in history was a rock in the water, creating concentric circles and ripples of new possibility. He was medicine. He was immunized by God from catching the diseases that he fought. The Lord's arms of protection enabled him to go through dangers seen and unseen, and he had the capacity to wear glory with grace.

Jackie's body was a temple of God, an instrument of peace. We would watch him disappear into nothingness and stand back as spectators, and watch the suffering from afar.

The mercy of God intercepted this process Tuesday and permitted him to steal away home, where referees are out of place, and only the supreme judge of the universe speaks."

– Jesse Jackson, eulogy at Jackie Robinson's funeral, October 27, 1972

experienced the lived reality of baseball as a truly national, not to mention international, pastime.

Since the 1970s, the Negro Leagues have received a sort of dutiful attention from the baseball establishment and the public at large. Yet despite the dedicated efforts of Negro League historians, the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, the organizers of "throwback" days like the one held at Durham and other ballparks, and the ex-players themselves, the general understanding of black baseball (especially that of the mostly white fan base) remains vague, condescending, and focused on a small number of mythic figures, such Gibson, Paige, or James "Cool Papa" Bell. The public's reception of the Negro Leagues revival resembles mainstream culture's attitudes toward Native Americans: the Negro Leagues can now safely be honored precisely because they have been vanquished.

Like most history, baseball history is written from the point of view of the victors, so it's no surprise that the Negro Leagues are typically seen as little more than a regrettable embarrassment, a "cruel American anomaly," as one historian has put it. That the Bulls and not the Black Sox still play seems like nothing more than progress; the natural course of history.

But the closer one looks at African-American baseball in its broadest social context, the more apparent it becomes that integration under white auspices may have destroyed far more than it created – and the more the Negro Leagues, compared with the hermetic, self-referential world of the white-controlled majors, look like the diverted and forgotten mainstream of early twentieth-century baseball history.

The 19th Century: Jim Crow on Deck

African Americans have been playing baseball for nearly as long as the sport has existed. When blacks first took up baseball, the game was played barehanded. A catch on one bounce was an out. There were no called balls: the pitcher threw the ball until the batter found a pitch he liked. No one knew how to throw a curveball, and it would have been illegal anyway: the pitcher was required to throw with a stiff, underhand motion, with no wrist snaps or twists to give the pitch movement. Playing grounds weren't enclosed, admission wasn't charged, and players weren't paid.

Charles Douglass, 1890. In 1867 the *New York Clipper* reported that the great abolitionist and writer Frederick Douglass attended a baseball game between the Washington Alerts and Philadelphia Pythians to cheer on his son, Charles, a third baseman for the Alerts. Charles, Frederick's third son, played baseball for several years afterward, and served as secretary of the Washington Mutuals until 1875. (*Cleveland Gazette*)

> Far more so than the white majors, Negro Leaguers experienced the lived reality of baseball as a truly national, not to mention international, pastime.

Modern baseball first arose in New York City in the 1840s as a strictly segregated social activity. We hear first, not about black players, but about black teams. The first confirmed game between black teams was played in 1860, but it wasn't until after the Civil War that baseball's popularity exploded, and African-American clubs sprang up in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and New Orleans. Like the earliest white clubs, black baseball teams such as the Washington Mutuals and the Philadelphia Pythians were amateur, quasi-fraternal organizations, dedicated to socializing and the promotion of middle-class values and aspirations as well as to athletics. As much care and attention were lavished on the post-game banquets as on the games themselves.

African Americans challenged segregated baseball almost from the beginning. In 1867, the Pythians, managed by teacher and community leader Octavius Catto, applied to join the amateur, all-white National Association of Base Ball Players. In response, the Association drew the first explicit color line in baseball, prohibiting "the admission of any club which may be composed of one or more colored persons." Catto's Pythians didn't last, but other clubs sprang up. And, barred from white baseball, they began to form leagues of their own.

As early as 1881, an organization of amateur black baseball clubs called the Union League was operating in New Orleans, followed in 1886 by the

From Spitballs to Scottsboro

Recollections of Negro League Pitcher Frank "Doc" Sykes

Interview and commentary by John Holway

Frank "Doc" Sykes, the "pitching dentist," was 90 years old when I met him at a Negro League reunion in Ashland, Ky., in 1982. Erect, white-haired, with a thin white mustache, he was the patriarch of the group.

In addition to baseball, I learned, Sykes played a critical role at a moment of great tension and danger in the history of the civil rights movement when he testified in the famous 1933 Scottsboro trial in Alabama.

Sykes and I met often at his Baltimore apartment, and I drove him to speak to members of the Society for American Baseball Research, an experience which delighted both him and them.

Mike Stahl of Baltimore and I spent many hours taping his memories and poring over newspaper files to reconstruct his playing record. The following is drawn from our interviews.

Frank "Doc" Sykes, ca. 1915. (courtesy John Holway)

My parents were born slaves. There wasn't much they could teach me other than truth and honesty and respect for elders. There wasn't too much I could offer to my children other than what my parents had offered me.

I was born in 1892 in Decatur, Alabama, the town that the Scottsboro case put on the map. Decatur had 16,000 people and one auto – it went two blocks and broke down.

I was the seventh child of a family of 12; eight lived to be grown. My mother was part-Indian, I don't know what tribe, Choctaw or what.

My father made money in a saloon. My favorite brother was a darn good businessman; he had a coal and wood business and an undertaking business. He died young, and my father took over his funeral business. They said, "You sold 'em liquor and got 'em ready for dying, and then you went on and buried 'em." My father told us, "Get an education, I'll help you." He could do addition in his head better than I could with a pencil and paper. He'd say, "Figure that out again, son, that doesn't sound right." He was well thought of by everyone in Decatur. In fact, the day of his funeral the white businesses closed for an hour.

Frank followed his brothers as apprentices in the funeral home. Around 1906 at the age of 14, he remembered driving a wagon carrying coffins to the jail yard, where three black men were lined up on a triple scaffold. The trap door was sprung, and the bodies fell. One noose broke, and the condemned man jumped up, shouting, "Thank God, I'm free!" Instead, as Frank watched in horror, a new rope was quickly fetched and the execution consummated.

I came from a family of five boys. Three were exceptionally good ballplayers. My oldest brother I would consider tops; I don't think he would have had a darn bit of trouble making the big leagues. And I followed him closely; I watched him and tried to act and do like he did.

In 1908 Frank enrolled in high school in Memphis.

When Jack Johnson knocked out Jim Jeffries, they announced it round-by-round at the Opera House. People said, "That black son of a bitch knocked Jeffries out!"

I went to Chicago around 1909, taking a course in embalming, and hooked up with a Sunday school league out there. I started out as an outfielder, and one Sunday the picher couldn't get off, so the coach called on me to pitch. From then on I was the pitcher. If I have to say so myself, I was a damn good pitcher.

In 1912 I went to Morehouse College – it was called Atlanta Baptist College back then. I had pretty good speed as a pitcher: in one game I struck out 16 men and [still] lost the ball game.

I played against [famous Negro League pitcher] Dick Redding when he played with the Atlanta Depins, and I ran into him again when I went back there with the Morehouse team. His home was Atlanta, and Redding umpired a game for us against Morris Brown University. Redding called a couple of bad ones on us, but we beat Morris Brown anyway. I struck out only one man – and I tried to strike out only one man. They had a short dump over in left field. By this time I knew about what college boys would hit at. You threw it on the outside, they'd reach over and hit a little slow roller to the second baseman or the first baseman. The shortstop didn't make a play in the field; the third baseman had one chance.

I entered Howard University in Washington in 1914 to study dentistry. A teacher of anatomy used to give us a lecture. He said, "Now you've come to Howard to get your medicine, your dentistry, your pharmacy. Plenty of women out there after you're finished."

I was a varsity player four years. The spitball was my best pitch because it had a sharp break away from a right-hand batter. I had excellent control of those spitballs; one game I threw nine straight spitball pitches, nine straight strikes. Sometimes I faked the spitball and threw a fastball that would shoot up. But I never threw at anyone's head. I've thrown at their feet, though.

I didn't put too much thought to playing professionally, knowing I was not gong to make my living playing ball. I had made up my mind I was going to rely on dentistry.

The fellow who got me into big league baseball was a friend of mine and a student at the dental school at Howard, Bill Wiley. The school closed, and the baseball season opened up, and he had given the owners of the New York Lincoln Stars some insight into my abilities.

The McMahon brothers owned the Lincolns. They played at 136th Street and Fifth Avenue, a little park in there. I think my pay was $75 a month; I never did know what any of the other ballplayers got. I was working another job as a redcap at the Pennsylvania Station and at Grand Central Station – those were good-paying jobs. AN old baseball player ended up being the head man at the Grand Central Station.

To my mind the Lincoln Stars were a real strong team....It was managed by a fellow, Zach Pettus, a catcher. I haven't seen any articles written about him, but he always managed a good team. I don't know if you've ever heard of Pettus or not. He was born and raised in El Paso and could speak Spanish fluently. But the Spanish players didn't know that, and we had a signal between us, so I always knew when they were going to steal.

Bojangles Robinson, the tap dancer, used to hang around the park. Had only one good eye. Pool sharks used to take advantage of him.

In 1915 Sykes pitched against Alert "Chief" Bender, a Hall of Famer then with Buffalo of the Federal League. Sykes won the game 4-3.

The next year the Lincolns went out west to play the Chicago American Giants and Indianapolis ABCs.

Rube Foster [of Chicago] was an outstanding coach. I

learned froma sportswriter, Faye Young, about his signaling. I was pitching the game, and they were getting a whole lot of infield hits. [Young] said, "You got a dumb shortstop. They been hitting slow ones to the shortstop and beating 'em out." The shortstop on our team back then always played at the same place. Rube knew it, and they hit slow ones to him and beat them out.

Sykes lost the game.

I was a strikeout pitcher until I learned better. There was an easier way to beat teams than trying to throw it by them. The next Sunday I don't think I threw one ball up there that would have broken a thick pane of glass. I lost 1-0 in 12 innings, but Rube Foster said, "Well, College, I see you're learning some sense."

I said, "Yes, Rube, I've learned that a slow ball is the best ball to use against colored teams, and if I can take off a little more [speed], I will."

[In 1917] I went over to Hilldale to play for $125 a month. We played against semipro clubs around Philadelphia and Baltimore. I played with lots of good ballplayers that never made the big leagues, but I do think that if they'd been given the chance, they could have made it – Red Ryan, Phil Cockrell. And [the catcher] Biz Mackey, I loved to pitch to him.

Then I went to the Brooklyn Royal Giants. Dick Redding was manager. Once when we were playing up in Lebanon College, Pennsylvania, we dressed at the hotel there, and Redding and I were going to the park together. Dick was really black, and we met a white lady with a little boy. The little boy looked up and said, "Mother, mother, are those niggers?" Dick was a quiet, easy-going fellow, no trouble to anyone, but sad to state, he couldn't read or write. I don't know who made out his lineup card.

I practiced dentistry a little bit here in Baltimore before I finished school in 1918. Some fans thought Doc was my real name; they didn't know I was a graduated dentist.

I used to come over to play with the Baltimore Black Sox on Sundays, starting maybe 1919, and stayed there six years. They were principally local talent, but before long they started bringing in men who developed into top ballplayers.

The Black Sox played in South Baltimore, and we were drawing bigger crowds on Sundays than Jack Dunn's Baltimore Orioles [perhaps the greatest minor league team of all time]. I'd say anywhere from 2,500 up to maybe an average of 5-6,000 people. Almost half the crowd was whites. After 1937, when the Elite Giants represented Baltimore at Bugle Field, the white attendance dropped off tremendously.

We never heard much about black players in the white leagues. No, we never heard much talk of it. It was quite a different day. I guess back in those days we were treated so damn bad, why, we discovered it was a hopeless case. Never mentioned it.

After the 1926 season Sykes returned to Decatur with his wife and family.

I took the Alabama dental board examinations in some hotel, and I had to go up on the freight elevator, couldn't go even one floor on the regular elevator, but there wasn't a damn thing I could do about it.

In 1933 the sensational Scottsboro trial rocked the town when nine black teenagers, ages 13 to 19, were accused of raping two white women in a railroad boxcar. The boys were tried and eight of them sentenced to death within a week of their arrest [see "Scottsboro, Alabama," page 18]. The appeal, which achieved celebrity nationwide, opened in an atmosphere of tension as National Guardsmen patrolled outside the courthouse.

The trial was held under Judge Horton, whom I knew personally. I had been in his court several times in murder cases, where one Negro shot another Negro. In one case I was asked to give an opinion as to whether a bullet could have been the cause of death. One of the lawyers objected, but Judge Horton said, "Your objection is overruled. Here is a man, graduated from Howard dental school and has a major in anatomy, and I feel he's competent to say whether or not the bullet was the cause of death."

Sykes testifying at the Scottsboro trial, 1933. (courtesy John Holway)

Of Decatur's 9,000 blacks, none had ever served on a jury. The defense called several prominent blacks – doctors, teachers, and others – to testify that they were qualified to serve. The prosecutor was described as "brusque" in his questions before an audience of whites, some with their feet on the bar rail, others spitting across the bar into spittoons placed there. Sykes, "a handsome man in a brush mustache," according to the* Birmingham News-Herald, *was polite but "ostentatiously self-confident" in his replies. He produced a list of 200 local African Americans whom he said were competent to serve. Judge Horton agreed and ordered a re-trial. However, the boys were convicted again.

As I've grown older, I think back on how the 12 men on the jury could bring in a verdict of guilty against nine innocent Negro boys. How could they – and I knew some of them on the jury – call themselves Christians? I suppose they didn't think any more of a Negro than they did a dog.

Sykes helped two black reporters, spiriting them from house to house when "the situation became threatening for them." When they ran into cars filled with Ku Klux Klansmen, they made a fast getaway.

After a cross was burned in front of my house, I thought it was a good time to come back to Baltimore.

After a cross was burned in front of my house, I thought it was a good time to come back to Baltimore.

Change I don't think will ever come. If it does, it will be after we're gone. A lot of people are fighting for that.

John Holway is the author of many books on the Negro Leagues, including The Complete Book of the Negro Leagues, Black Diamonds, Voices from the Great Black Baseball Leagues, *and* Blackball Stars: Negro League Pioneers, *winner of the Casey Award for best baseball book of 1988. This article is excerpted from an upcoming book,* Blackball Tales.

"Southern League of Colored Base Ballists," a professional league including teams from Memphis, Atlanta, Savannah, Jacksonville, Charleston, New Orleans, and Montgomery. The following year, newspaperman Walter S. Brown founded the National Colored League, an ambitious circuit composed of eight teams from Louisville to Boston. The League foundered after only 13 days, but even in that short time it managed to showcase the depth of African-American baseball talent across the country.

Even as all-black teams and leagues proliferated, more and more individual black professionals were slipping into white baseball. We're taught that Jackie Robinson broke the color line, but in fact he had a nineteenth-century predecessor. In 1883, Moses Fleetwood Walker, an Oberlin graduate and skilled catcher, signed with the Toledo club, which a year later joined the white American Association, then a major league. Sixty-three years before Robinson, Fleet Walker became the first black major leaguer.

Although Walker only spent one season in the majors, by 1887, 14 African Americans were playing in white baseball, seven of these in the International League, the top minor league at the time.

These weren't easy jobs to get or keep. As *The Sporting Life* admitted in 1891, "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." It was said that Frank Grant, who joined the minor-league Buffalo Bisons in 1886, was so terrorized by opposing players sliding into second with their spikes held high that he began strapping wooden shields to his shins – thus inventing shin guards, later a staple of catcher's equipment. "The runners chased him off second base," said one anonymous player to *The Sporting Life*. "They went down so often trying to break his legs that he gave up his infield position and played right field." One white player, Ed Williamson, even claimed (though he was likely exaggerating) that the feet-first slide was developed specifically to attack Grant.

Grant led the league in home runs and played a brilliant second base. Robert Higgins, a black pitcher who signed with Syracuse, overcame racist teammates' sabotage (playing poorly and intentionally committing errors when Higgins was on the mound) to win 20 games. Another African-American pitcher, George Stovey, won 35, which still stands as the International League record.

But the death knell of integrated baseball in the nineteenth century sounded on July 14, 1887. The International League's Newark team, featuring an all-black pitcher-catcher duo of Stovey and Fleet Walker, had scheduled an exhibition game against the defending National League champion Chicago White Stockings. Chicago's manager, Adrian "Cap" Anson, refused to take the field unless Stovey and Walker were removed. The Newark manager caved in, benching his star pitcher. On the very same day, the directors of the International League met in Buffalo and voted to bar the signing of any additional black players. Although African-American players lingered on minor league rosters until 1899, 1887 proved to be the turning point.

The future of black professional baseball lay elsewhere. Although all-black leagues weren't able to scrape together enough capital to survive in the late 1800s, individual black teams could. In July, 1885, the Argyle Hotel, a Long Island resort, hired a newly-formed black semipro team from Philadelphia called the Keystone Athletics, to provide entertainment for guests. A month later, the team merged with two other prominent clubs from Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., took the name Cuban Giants, and became the most famous professional African-American baseball team of the nineteenth century.

That name would reverberate throughout the history of black baseball. The team was probably named after the white New York Giants. How the black Giants, all of them U.S.-born, became "Cuban" is a bit murkier. One story has it that when the team took to the road, they decided that representing themselves as Cubans, rather than black Americans, would make them more palatable to whites in small towns. (In the antebellum era, light-complected slaves sometimes passed as "Spanish" in order to escape.) To sustain the illusion, they may have spoken a sort of mock Spanish gibberish to each other on the field.

Due in part to the popularity of the Cuban Giants and their imitators, the word "Giant" itself came to mean "black ball-player" to the sporting public. During an era when mainstream newspapers rarely printed photographs of African-American athletes and often rele-gated cover-age of black sports to brief notices or lists of scores with little detail, fans

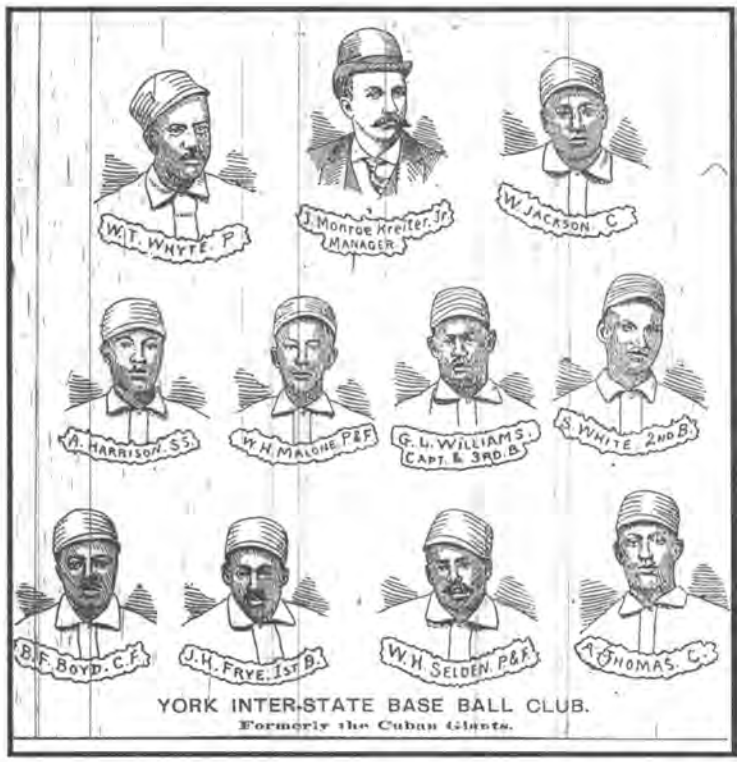
could know for certain that almost any team called "Giants" was black. In the early 1920s, Chicago's two major African-American teams were the Chicago Giants and the Chicago American Giants; meanwhile, a white semipro team had to bill itself as the "White Giants" to avoid confusion. "Stars" and later "Monarchs" also became popular names, but never could match the appeal of "Giants," which appeared everywhere from Boston and Atlantic City to Asheville and Miami.

Clowns and Minstrels

Baseball was one of the most important elements of a pre-television culture of live professional entertainment, which included vaudeville, theater, jazz and dance hall music, circuses, and other sports like boxing and horseracing. The best African-American teams were far more in touch with this everyday milieu than their white equivalents.

Frequently baseball mixed with these other forms of entertainment. James Weldon Johnson, the novelist, musician, and author of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (the Negro National Anthem), who saw the Cuban Giants in his youth, wrote that the team "brought something entirely new to the professional diamond; they originated and introduced baseball comedy. The coaches kept up a constant banter that was spontaneous and amusing. They often staged a comic pantomime for the benefit of the spectators...[and] generally after a good play the whole team would for a moment cut the monkey shines that would make the grandstand and bleachers roar."

All kinds of spectacles served to augment a team's drawing power. The Page Fence Giants, spon-sored in the 1890s by the barbed wire manufacturer and organized by Bud Fowler, the first black professional baseball player, bicycled to the ballpark wearing firemen's hats to attract a crowd. Even the Lincoln Giants of New York City, a talented team starring two future Hall of Famers (Joe Williams and John Henry Lloyd), indulged fans with pantomimed "shadow ball" routines before games. The All Nations Club, based in Des Moines, Iowa, and later Kansas City, put on jazz shows after games, featuring the famous Cuban pitcher José Méndez on cornet. Players might stage throwing contests or footraces with local athletes. In the 1930s, Olympic hero Jesse Owens attracted crowds to Negro League games by running exhibition races against (as one player put it) "cars, motorcycles, racehorses, and guys from college."



Cuban Giants, playing as the York (Pennsylvania) Colored Monarchs, 1890. (*Cleveland Gazette*)

Hall of Fame pitcher Grover Cleveland Alexander and the semipro House of David team, pictured here playing "donkey baseball," a popular comic attraction. (*Chicago Defender*)

The organized Negro Leagues discouraged such spectacles, and to many players comic routines were degrading and fueled stereotypes. "If you were black, you was a clown," recalled Birmingham Black Barons' infielder Piper Davis in *Southern Exposure* in 1977. "Because in the movies, the only time you saw a black man he was a comedian or a butler." "They had special guys for that, people who called themselves clowns," Andrew "Pullman" Porter, a Nashville Elite Giants' pitcher in

the thirties, remembered. "You ask one of the ballplayers to go out and do something like that, he'd have a fit."

In lean times, even the most successful African-American teams sometimes resorted to comedy and other stunts to bring in the crowds, as in the Depression or the 1950s, when the leagues struggled in the wake of integration. White semipro clubs noted the lure of novelty, as in the case of the House of David, a Michigan Christian sect that organized a baseball team as an advertising and moneymaking venture. The House of David teams were skilled, sometimes featuring former major leaguers such as Grover Cleveland Alexander; but most fans seem to have simply enjoyed the spectacle of longhaired men in flowing beards (which they wore as a religious obligation) playing baseball. The Kansas City Monarchs, among the proudest and classiest of Negro League teams, toured with the House of David in the 1930s, playing dozens of games through Canada, the Pacific Northwest, and the upper Midwest, and occasionally joined them in another House of David specialty: donkey baseball.

At the racially-fraught margins of the entertainment and sports worlds, early African-American baseball sometimes found itself elbow to elbow with minstrelsy, a popular and intensely racialized combination of music and entertainment in which usually white (but also sometimes black) performers caricatured African-American cultural forms. "Baseball minstrelsy" was exemplified by popular touring teams like the Tennessee Rats, who combined baseball comedy with evening variety shows, or the Louisville-based "Zulu Cannibal Giants Baseball Tribe," who wore face paint, red wigs, long hair, and grass skirts.

The most successful of the race comedy teams was the Indianapolis Clowns, a sort of baseball equivalent to the Harlem Globetrotters (who fielded their own baseball team). But the Clowns played well enough between the comedy routines that they eventually earned a place in the Negro American League, and became major-league slugger Hank Aaron's first professional team in 1952. The team survived the demise of the Negro Leagues and still operated, simply as "The Clowns," in out of the way venues into the early 1970s – the last ghostly vestige of a rich, if troubling, tradition.

On the Road

African-American players moved freely between several baseball worlds. They played for and against all-black teams in the United States, after 1920 in organized leagues that included teams from the South. They played white major and minor leaguers in wildly popular exhibition games and in integrated independent leagues. They played in winter leagues in California and Cuba, they played in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, and Venezuela. Negro League teams traveled (or "barnstormed") through the South, the Southwest, Canada and the Pacific Northwest, even Mexico and on occasion East Asia. They played college and semipro teams, both black and white. A black player in the 1920s or 1930s might play 250 or more games a year (compared to the 162-game schedule of today's major leaguers). It's fair to say that many Negro Leaguers played over a longer stretch of the year, over a greater expanse of the globe, and possibly before larger numbers of fans than their contemporaries in the white National and American Leagues.

> "In Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, shoot, I'd just as soon be down in Georgia."

Beginning in the 1890s, black teams barnstormed from coast to coast and played nearly year-round, developing a road-wise culture unique to marginalized baseball. Some teams, such as Gilkerson's Union Giants in the 1920s, lacked a home field entirely. Even organized leagues at times featured perpetual traveling teams, like the western Cuban Stars and Joe Green's Chicago Giants in the Negro National League of the early 1920s. A decade later, when the leagues collapsed under the strain of the Depression, even an established team with a supportive community, the Kansas City Monarchs, took to the road for several years.

By then, cash-strapped owners had begun to go beyond the usual weekend doubleheaders, trying to squeeze more out of their already overworked players. "We'd play three games at a time, a doubleheader and a night game, and you'd get back to the hotel and you were tired as a yard dog," Hall of Famer Judy Johnson said. Black-run hotels could usually be found in larger cities, but thanks to segregation, elsewhere Negro Leaguers were forced to find boardinghouses and families willing to put them up for a night or two.

Or teams might not find a place to stay at all. "Some places we couldn't get nothing to eat, some places you couldn't sleep, so we'd just ride all night," said

John Gibbons, who pitched in the Negro Florida State League in the late forties. "The conditions wasn't too awful good," said Ray Miller, who played for the Louisville Black Colonels. "Like you might play half the night and it'll be 12 o'clock when you get through playing and you don't know where you're gonna get to wash up. You may have to ride another hundred miles or so." Players themselves often drove the team vehicles, sometimes all night, before playing exhausted the next day.

Eating posed challenges, so players often had to take food to go, picking it up at a back or side door. When Rube Foster's American Giants toured the West Coast, an Oregon restaurant refused to serve his team; after a lengthy argument, they supplied the players some snacks to eat outside. "Rube Foster's Team Starving in Oregon," blared a *Chicago Defender* headline. "American Giants Forced to Eat Crackers and Cheese....The Mighty Rube Foster Fed on Tidbits." Nap Gulley, a pitcher for Birmingham and several other teams in the 1940s and 1950s, remembered "wondering if I can eat here or can I go in the back door there or can I sleep in this place. That's quite a burden for a ballplayer or anybody to carry around and still be able to produce without anger."

As lynchings proliferated and the Ku Klux Klan flourished, the South preserved a reputation for especially intense racial hostility. In Mississippi during the thirties, members of the Philadelphia Stars were shaken to overhear a young African-American boy evidently being tortured and killed by whites at a gas station. In 1923 John Claude Dickey (known as "Steel Arm"), a brilliant young pitcher for the Montgomery Grey Sox, Knoxville Giants, and St. Louis Stars, was stabbed to death by a white man in Etowah, Tenn. The killer fled to a town called Cooper Hill, Ga., which, according to the *Chicago Defender*, was "dangerous for any person of color to even pass through in the day time." It's uncertain whether he was ever punished. Still, segregation and racism were hardly unique to the South. As Jesse "Mountain" Hubbard remarked, "In Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, shoot, I'd just as soon be down in Georgia."

Negro Leaguers played over a longer stretch of the year, over a greater expanse of the globe, and before larger numbers of fans than their white contemporaries.

Texan Rube Foster, the best African-American pitcher of the early 1900s, founded and managed the Chicago American Giants.

The barnstorming life was tough, but it helped knit together a national (and international) baseball network. Black baseball lacked the massive hierarchy of white organized ball, with its several levels of minors feeding the big leagues at the top; instead it had touring, which enabled the best teams to come in contact with the best young talent all over the continent. The baseball historian Bill James even argues that "the networking system by which the Negro Leagues identified and developed talent...appears to have been probably more effective than the methods used by the white teams."

Barnstorming also became a vehicle for intercultural contact, bringing together unlikely combinations of teams and fans, and giving isolated locales in the upper Midwest or the Pacific Northwest a taste of cosmopolitan life. In small towns, the local amateur or semipro nine often served as a communal focal point, providing the most reliable source of public entertainment, and visits by African-American barnstormers were celebrated local events. Negro Leaguer Josh Johnson told an interviewer, "Back then – in the twenties, thirties, and forties – every town

Ad for a game between the Hilldale Club of Darby, Pennsylvania (one of the best-known Negro League teams of the 1920s), and a white semipro team, 1919. (*Chicago Defender*)

in western Pennsylvania and Ohio and Kentucky and, they tell me, Illinois had a ball club – town team. They'd go out and load up their lineups when we were going to come through. We'd play a guy here one night and the next day he's over in the next county playing for them. They were proud of their teams and a lot of times the whole town would close up; everybody would converge on the ballpark."

Underground Baseball

By the 1930s, harbingers of integration were appearing even in the small-town Midwest. North Dakota, of all places, became a hotbed for integrated semipro baseball, attracting some of the best talent, black and white, in North America. The integrated 1935 Bismarck, N.D., team assembled what might have been the best pitching staff in the world, featuring two Hall of Famers (Satchel Paige and Hilton Smith). In 1934, the Jamestown, N.D., club hired Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe as the first African-American manager of an integrated team in the United States. The *Denver Post* sponsored a semipro tournament that featured black, white, and integrated teams in the early 1930s, as did the National Baseball Congress in Wichita.

Independent baseball wasn't confined to small towns. Even large urban areas such as Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York, all of which hosted multiple major league teams, also supported thriving semipro scenes. Baseball was an unavoidable presence in everyday life: newspapers filled pages with box scores from games between business-sponsored teams, weekend amateur leagues, high school games, even company intramural leagues.

The best semipro teams reached a high level of competition, sometimes featuring current major leaguers playing in disguise or under pseudonyms.

Courtesy Baseball Hall of Fame Library

In 1918, Jeff Tesreau, one of the New York Giants' best pitchers, abruptly quit to join the semipro ranks, arguing he could make more money playing ball outside the majors. Chicago White Sox pitcher Nixey Callahan quit mid-career to found a semipro team, the Logan Squares, which became an institution for decades afterward.

Urban white semipros are often overlooked, even by Negro League historians, but they formed a crucial part of the interracial milieu of black baseball and early twentieth-century popular entertainment. In the 1910s and 1920s, the Chicago American Giants often played the semipro clubs in the Chicago City League, which frequently featured current and former major leaguers. Black teams even occasionally competed in (and won) the City League. The American Giants' games against the Logan Squares, Pyotts, West Ends, Gunthers, and other white semipro outfits were among their best-attended and most lucrative dates, leading the *Chicago Defender* to worry in 1919 that the team "depended on the other race altogether."

This was the case throughout the urban North, where white semipros furnished stiff opposition – and good paydays – for Negro League teams. Jeff Tesreau's Bears alone played at least 37 games against top African-American teams in 1921. The Bears shared a park, Dyckman's Oval in Manhattan, with black clubs. According to Bo Campbell, who pitched for the Homestead Grays in the late 1930s, "The fact of it, if you take out East [for instance] where we was making our money, it was playing semipro white clubs....That's where the Negro leagues made most of their money, playing semipro whites. We'd draw good, good crowds."

What kind of crowds? This is one of the most intriguing questions facing Negro League historians, because audiences often crossed racial lines. Crowds at all-black games were mostly African-American with a few white fans, at least according to much photographic evidence and a few references in the contemporary press. Most likely the racial composition of Negro League fandom varied from city to city. According to Donn Rogosin, games between black teams and the semipro Bushwicks at Brooklyn's Dexter Park in the thirties drew "raucous, exuberant, gambling, integrated crowds of over ten thousand." Decatur, Ala., native Doc Sykes, a pitcher in the 1910s and 1920s, remembered that Baltimore Black Sox games drew half white and half black crowds. On the other hand Billy Lewis, a sportswriter for *The Indianapolis Freeman*, an African-American weekly,

Hilldale Club vs. Cuban Stars, Richmond, Va., 1927.

estimated that when black/white games were played in Indianapolis, "from 1 to 2 percent of the audiences" was white. Lewis believed that in California and the west, the crowds were evenly divided between black and white.

The West Coast had been excluded from the white majors, although a strong minor league, the Pacific Coast League, flourished there, virtually independent until the 1950s. But the best baseball in California might well have been played from November to February. The California Winter League, based in the Los Angeles area, brought together teams of white major and minor leaguers semipros with one and sometimes two teams of African-American players. When white stars such as Ty Cobb or Tris Speaker took the field against their black counterparts such as Bullet Rogan or Biz Mackey, one could argue that southern California saw the best baseball played in the world at the time.

Several early black teams relied on sponsorship by hotels or resorts, and served as entertainment for guests, such as the Royal Poinciana Hotel team (1915-16).

Up from the South

An oft overlooked aspect of the Negro Leagues is how deeply Southern the whole enterprise was. The white majors, it's easy to forget, spent the first half of the twentieth century confined to ten cities in the northeastern quadrant of the United States, venturing no farther west than St. Louis and no farther south than Cincinnati. But the Negro Leagues included several Southern franchises, notably in Memphis and Birmingham, but also at times Atlanta, New Orleans, and Nashville, among other cities. The foremost black minor league was the Negro Southern League. Even more importantly, the Negro Leagues were largely a product of the Great Migration of Southern black labor to Northern industrial cities. The majority of Negro League ballplayers, 55 percent, were born in the South (of players born in the U.S., 69 percent were Southern), as were probably an equally large percentage of Northern fans. When the Birmingham Black Barons traveled to Chicago, they might be greeted by an "Alabama Day," as all the local migrants from that state gathered to see their old team play.

55 percent of Negro League players were born in the South.

In 1946, Eddie Klep, a white pitcher, joined the Cleveland Buckeyes of the Negro American League as the "reverse Jackie Robinson." When the team played in the South, Klep wasn't allowed to eat or stay with his teammates, and before a Negro League game in Birmingham, police not only barred Klep from the field, they wouldn't let him sit in the blacks only section near the Buckeye dugout. The necessity for white sections in ballparks during Southern Negro League games testifies to a multiracial interest in the games. Yet, in much of the South, segregation laws kept black and white teams from competing on the field.

Unfortunately, deprived of the revenues generated by white/black matchups, the rosters of Southern teams, even the Birmingham Black Barons and Memphis Red Sox, were periodically plundered by Northern clubs, and the Negro Southern League remained mostly confined to developing young talent (although when the Depression killed off the Negro National League in 1932, the Negro Southern League stepped in to serve as an indisputed major league for one season).

From the 1900s through the early 1920s (at least), two posh resorts in Palm Beach, Fla., the Breakers and Royal Poinciana Hotels, each hired a team of the best African-American players to entertain the guests during February and March. The Florida Hotel League, as it was known, often imported whole teams from the North (the Brooklyn Royal Giants, Chicago American Giants, or Indianapolis ABCs, for instance). The games were very well-attended, by the overwhelmingly black staffs of the two hotels as well as the guests, and received lengthy writeups in

the African-American press.

And Negro League spring training, which involved major Northern teams traveling through the whole region for as long as two months, wasn't quite the preliminary, practice season we associate with the term "spring training" today – it was more like yet another extended barnstorming junket, treated almost as seriously as the "regular" season. So the South was truly the epicenter of Negro League baseball for at least three months a year (February through April).

The South produced such a prodigious amount of baseball talent in large part due to a thriving culture of amateur and semipro ball. Southern black colleges, such as Fiske University in Tennessee, Tuskegee University in Alabama, Wiley College and Prairie View A&M in Texas, and Morris Brown University in Atlanta, took baseball seriously. Industrial baseball teams proliferated in the South, especially in manufacturing centers like Atlanta, Nashville, and Birmingham. Teams were sponsored by mining companies, sawmills, and textile mills. Piper Davis, for instance, started his career playing for the American Cast Iron Pipe Company (Acipco) in Birmingham.

African-American semipro baseball was big enough in the South that plenty of good ballplayers stayed semipro rather than go with league teams. Pitcher Jeff "Bo" Campbell had major-league talent, but spent only a single year in the big time, with the Homestead Grays in 1937. Campbell spent most of his career playing instead for sawmill and paper mill teams in Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. "You would always have a contract; they would pay your room and board, then about $15 a week," Campbell told an interviewer. "Then you got other little gimmies, you know, like clothing and things like that at a reduced price. The temptation to go pro wasn't that great."

Baseball permeated Southern African-American life, down to the neighborhood level. Henry Kimbro, who enjoyed a lengthy career from the 1930s through the 1950s as a centerfielder and manager for such teams as the Baltimore Elite Giants, reminisced about his boyhood days: "Every part of Nashville had a park. We played sandlot. Every community had a team and we'd play from one park to another all day in the summertime."

One state where Jim Crow was not always the rule on the field was Texas, where Mexican, Mexican-American, African-American, and white teams and players mixed and crossed the border freely. In 1930, according to Donn Rogosin, the Austin Black Senators barnstormed all the way to Mexico City. La Junta, a 1930s semipro team from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, drew players from both sides of the border, barnstormed in Mexico and the United States as far as North Dakota, and competed on an equal level with Texas League teams. Many Negro League stars hailed from Texas and this more fluid racial setting, including Hall of Famers Cyclone Joe Williams, Bill Foster, and Rube Foster.

The (Inter) National Pastime

Black baseball – more than its white counterpart – crossed racial, national, and class boundaries; in Cuba, California, and black/white all-star exhibitions all over North America, the best athletes of all races brought before integrated crowds the highest caliber of baseball in the world, and there Negro Leaguers were at the center of attention. The phrase "national pastime" begins to seem parochial in this context.

Negro League baseball in general had an international face, due largely to the very forces that kept baseball segregated in the United States. African-American ballplayers, accustomed to ranging far and wide in their search for work, soon made their way to the popular and well-paying leagues of baseball-mad countries like Cuba, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela.

BIRMINGHAM COPS 2 FROM MEMPHIS SOX

Memphis, Tenn., Aug. 2.—Birmingham came from behind and nosed out Memphis in the opening game of a three game series here this afternoon, winning by a 2 to 1 score. Glass and Dismukes allowed seven hits each, but Birmingham bunched five of their seven in the seventh and eighth frames to win. The Red Sox fielded well. Birmingham showed a real punch in the eighth and ninth when the locals filled the bases, but could not score in either inning.

BIRMINGHAM	AB	R	H	O	A	E	MEMPHIS	AB	R	H	O	A	E
McAllister 1b	3	0	1	6	0	0	Jackson ss.	4	0	2	0	6	0
Meredith ss.	3	0	1	5	1	0	Ward rf.	3	0	0	1	0	0
Thompson cf	4	1	2	3	0	0	Russell 3b.	4	0	1	0	1	0
Williams 3b	4	0	0	12	0	0	Cunham 1b	3	1	1	8	0	0
Sellers lf.	3	0	0	3	0	0	Gurley lf.	3	0	1	4	0	0
Richdson 3b	3	0	1	3	1	0	Kemp cf.	4	0	2	0	0	0
Jones rf.	4	0	1	1	0	0	*Charleston	1	0	0	0	0	0
Dixon c.	3	1	1	8	1	0	Miller 2b.	3	0	0	5	1	0
Dismukes p.	2	0	0	5	0	0	Brown c.	4	0	0	5	0	0
							Glass p.	3	0	0	4	0	0
Totals.	29	2	7	46	3	0	Totals.	32	1	7	39	8	0

*Batted for Miller in the ninth.

Negro National League game, August 2, 1924. (*Chicago Defender*)

Cuban baseball is nearly as old as U.S. baseball; the game was brought to Cuba by students returning from the United States, specifically the South, in the 1860s. According to the literary critic and historian of Cuban baseball Roberto González Echevarría, the founders of the Habana Baseball Club, the first baseball club in Cuba, learned the game at Springhill College in Mobile, Ala. The Cuban game even preserved a very old version of baseball, with ten players on a side instead of nine, into the 1880s. The Cuban League was founded in 1878, only seven years after the first organized league in the United States. And, although nineteenth-century Cuban baseball appears to have been as racially exclusive as the U.S. majors, by 1900 the Cuban League had begun to integrate.

Soon after Afro-Cubans elbowed their way onto formerly all-white rosters, black players arrived from the United States. And at about the same time, Cuban players and teams began making their way to the United States, touring during the summer months (the off-season for Cuba's winter league), and capitalizing on the connection between "Cubanness" and baseball bolstered by the Cuban Giants and their imitators. Over the next few decades, all-Cuban teams became fixtures on the black baseball scene in the United States, even as Cuban League rosters regularly featured African-American players. C.I. Taylor and Rube Foster regularly brought their teams to Cuba.

Clearly the chance to escape the oppressive racial atmosphere of the United States powerfully attracted African-American players to Latin countries. The pitcher Max Manning described playing in Cuba like this: "You know how it is when the sun comes up after night? That's pretty much what it was like. I'm saying in terms of being somebody, when you went to Latin America, you were somebody and you were treated as somebody and the newspapers treated you as somebody and the people treated you as somebody."

Courtesy Baseball Hall of Fame Library

Like many Negro Leaguers, John Henry Lloyd frequently played in the Cuban League.

The Mexican League imported more and more African-American players in the late thirties and forties. "Not only do I get more money playing here, [but] I am not faced with the racial problem," said Hall of Fame shortstop (and Texan) Willie Wells about Mexico. "When I travel with Vera Cruz we live in the best hotels, we eat in the best restaurants and can go anyplace we care to. I've found freedom and democracy here."

In the Dominican Republic, the U.S.-backed dictator, Rafael Trujillo, decided that owning a winning baseball team was a political necessity. So in 1937 he raided the roster of the Pittsburgh Crawfords for some of the most famous African-American ballplayers of the time, including Josh Gibson, Satchel Paige, and Cool Papa Bell. He kept tight control of his players. According to Paige, "If we went swimming, soldiers chaperoned us. We had soldiers on our hotel floors, too. Trujillo gave orders [that] anyone in town selling us whiskey would be shot." Chet Brewer, a Negro League pitcher recruited by opponents of the regime, even claimed that Trujillo put his players in jail to keep them out of trouble (and in the country, presumably).

But most black experiences in Latin America weren't that harrowing – in fact, quite the opposite. "It was just a marvelous experience and everywhere I went in Latin America it was the same thing," said Manning. "One of the things I think that did drive the black ballplayers was that they all wanted to go through that window and get down there because everybody would come back talking about it, so you played harder in order to get there. You had a goal that you wanted to achieve: to get to Latin America."

Reading the Hops

Those African-American men talented and hardworking enough to break into the Negro Leagues made for themselves a difficult, yet rewarding profession. In the white majors, owners controlled the labor market almost completely

through a "reserve system," whereby teams essentially owned players in perpetuity, unless they chose to trade or release them. The Negro Leagues, rather looser in structure, couldn't enforce contracts for much longer than a season at a time. Teams raided one another's rosters freely, even occasionally within the same league. Cross-border raids, by Mexican or Caribbean teams, were not uncommon. Consequently, black players were much more mobile and independent than their white counterparts. Hall of Fame shortstop John Henry Lloyd, a Palatka, Florida, native, put it succinctly: "Wherever the money was, that's where I was."

> "Not only do I get more money playing in Mexico, but I am not faced with the racial problem. I've found freedom and democracy here."
> – Willie Wells

Negro Leaguers developed their own style of play shaped by slim resources, the barnstorming life, and endemic racism, resulting in a unique blend of self-reliance, self-discipline, improvisation, and teamwork. In the white majors, Babe Ruth's emergence as the first modern slugger in 1920 marked the end of the "deadball" era and led to the dominance of home run hitters (which continues to this day). While Negro Leaguers hardly eschewed the home run, they did develop a game that relied on psychology, misdirection, and "inside baseball," as opposed to the increasingly power-oriented major leagues. Herbert Barnhill, catcher for the Jacksonville Red Caps in the late thirties and early forties, put it this way: "Baseball is not like football. Football, it takes strength; but you play baseball trying to outsmart the other fellow."

Players had to be versatile, because of small rosters (14 to 16, compared with 25 in the white majors). Everybody played multiple positions, and pitchers frequently also doubled at other positions. Small rosters also meant that substitutions had to be kept to a minimum. Pinch-hitting was usually limited to desperate, ninth-inning circumstances or injury. There were no relief pitchers, per se: all pitchers both started and relieved. Starting pitchers were expected to finish the game unless they were shelled or injured.

One of the players often acted as manager. Aside from Rube Foster and C.I. Taylor, bench managers were fairly rare on Negro League teams, though as the organized leagues became more prosperous in the 1940s they grew more common, with such men as Winfield Welch of the Birmingham Black Barons and Candy Jim Taylor of the Nashville Elite Giants (and many other teams) making careers as professional managers. Few Negro League teams could afford to hire coaches. As a result players had to rely on each other – and themselves – to make tactical decisions (whether to steal, how to pitch to a particular batter, when to bunt, when to replace a pitcher). "We practically had no coaching," said Frank "Doc" Sykes, a spitball pitcher and native of Decatur, Ala. (see "From Spitballs to Scottsboro," page 30-31). "What baseball you learned you picked up yourself, but if you were wise enough you could sit down on the bench and learn plenty of baseball right on the bench."

As Piper Davis said: "Whites wasn't calling it organized ball, but we had discipline. Your team would cuss you out for not bunting if the bunt was on; they'd embarrass you. You had to make the plays." Still, there was a lot of room for individuality. "So many Negro ballplayers had their own style of doing things," Davis remembered. "You might not think it was pretty, it wasn't all alike." In fact, Davis, who played in the white-dominated minors late in his career, thought that the intrusive coaching structure he found there hurt players by not teaching them to think for themselves.

Economics also made their mark on the game through poor and faulty equipment. "I had an old mask that would put wrinkles in my face 'cause it was so heavy," said Barnhill. "Everything was so bad. The chest protector I

25 Years Ago in Southern Exposure

"White ballplayers would have one expression and black ballplayers have another, but they talking about the same thing. Take a white ballplayer, he be keeping his eyes on the ball, but we be "reading the hops." See? The black man was throwing the slider, but we didn't call it a slider; called it a funky pitch, a horse-shit curve.,, We didn't have an expression about no slider."

Lorenzo "Piper" Davis,
Interviewed by Theodore Rosengarten
Southern Exposure, Summer/Fall 1977

Baseball and the African-American Press

The early twentieth century saw the golden age of African American weekly newspapers – the *Philadelphia Tribune, New York Age, Cleveland Gazette, St. Louis Argus, New York Amsterdam News,* and *Chicago Whip*, among many others. The most important – *Chicago Defender, Pittsburgh Courier, Indianapolis Freeman, Kansas City Call, Baltimore Afro-American* – were distributed nationally. Several established "franchise" arrangements, publishing editions in many cities with the same national news, but local coverage tailored to the particular city. The sports pages might take up two (or more) pages out of 16 or 20, and baseball dominated the section, eclipsing boxing, college football, and semipro basketball.

Rowland Porter, a fan who lived in Montgomery, Ala., in the late 1930s, remembered getting the *Pittsburgh Courier* on lunch breaks from his job at a gas station. "There were a couple of big shade trees out back behind the gas station where I ate my lunch," he said. "I'd sit down back there with whatever I was eating and turn to the *Courier* sports page. The Homestead Grays and the Pittsburgh Crawfords were the big national teams at the time, and they were both from Pittsburgh. So, I could keep up with them all through the summer." Promoted by the weeklies, baseball in general, as well as specific teams, developed a nationwide following, and become one of the ways in which African American community was sustained on a national scale.

Beyond the Negro Leagues, the black weeklies reported extensively on all kinds of "marginal baseball": white semipros like Tesreau's Bears and the House of David, women's baseball teams like the Bloomer Girls, and teams of other ethnicities, such as a Japanese team from Waseda University that toured the United States in 1921. Meanwhile they largely ignored the white major leagues, and mainstream sports in general, unless they impinged directly on African-American or other marginalized sports.

had was so thin, when the ball hit me there I could feel blood running down inside me. Man, it was rough." Andrew Porter told Brent Kelley, "Somebody hit the ball – a line drive back to you – and you try to stop it and it'd go through the webbing of your glove."

Negro League teams couldn't always afford top-notch grounds keeping, and in any case often played on bumpy, lopsided, and poorly-maintained fields. Teams were reluctant to call off games, so they sometimes played in driving rain. "We had to play in wet uniforms. We didn't have a chance to dry them ," said Herbert Barnhill. "We didn't have but one uniform." Bad fields and bad equipment meant more errors in Negro League games than the white majors.

Baseballs could be expensive; thus they were kept in play even when discolored, battered, or cut, until they were gray, soggy masses. Kansas City Monarchs' fan Milton Morris recalled, "If they knocked a ball into the stands, you got a ticket to come into a free game if you gave the ball back."

Battered and overused baseballs tend to be less lively than brand new clean ones. It seems likely that, in general, the ball didn't carry as far in the Negro Leagues as in the white majors, which in turn meant that strategies like bunting, the hit and run, and base-stealing were more attractive. Still, Negro Leaguers hit a fair number of home runs in the years after 1920. It could be that Negro League home runs were slightly inflated because balls that bounced once into the stands were counted as homers (ground-rule doubles under today's rules). There may also have been, due to field conditions and wide-open base running, more inside-the-park home runs than in the majors. Despite the home runs, it seems clear from players' testimonies and newspaper accounts that a "deadball" philosophy prevailed throughout the history of the Negro Leagues.

> "Baseball is not like football. Football, it takes strength; but you play baseball trying to outsmart the other fellow."
>
> – Herbert Barnhill, catcher for the Jacksonville Red Caps

This meant an emphasis on "place hitting," bat control, and sacrificing runners along. "I tried meeting the ball," said Shreveport, La., native Willie Simms, an outfielder for the Kansas City Monarchs in the early forties. "Never no hard cuts, just try to meet the ball and get it in there." As Piper Davis put it, "Our game was always 'run and hit', 'run and bunt'." Grant Johnson, a great, nearly-forgotten shortstop of the 1900s and 1910s, wrote a short essay on hitting in which he extolled bat control and patience, advising hitters to "seldom strike at the first ball pitched."

Yet too much patience could backfire. Barnstorming teams had to adapt to prejudiced or biased

local umpires. Newt Allen, longtime Kansas City Monarchs' second baseman, described it this way: "The hometown umpire would call a strike way out here or way low if he thought you were a good hitter. Our owner told us that's what was happening and not to be arguing about it. Just go up there and if it's close enough to hit, hit it. And when you did find a pitcher who threw the ball right down the middle, he had less trouble getting us out than the tricky pitcher."

Like Negro League hitters, pitchers relied less on power (blinding speed) than on guile, trick pitches, and control. "The three great principles of pitching," wrote Rube Foster in 1906, "are good control, when to pitch certain balls, and where to pitch them." Pitchers freely applied foreign substances to the ball. "See, nothing was outlawed in our league," said player Bill Cash. "They'd throw spitballs, they'd throw cut balls, they'd throw the shineball, everything. But in the major leagues, they had to throw straight."

Even one of the fastest pitchers in history, Satchel Paige, relied as much on control and disrupting hitters' timing with hesitation pitches and other trick deliveries as on pure speed. According to another pitcher, Max Manning, "The phenomenon of Satchel was that Satchel had a miniscule curveball and a great fastball and was one of the best pinpoint control masters of all time. He could throw the ball anyplace he wanted to throw it anytime he wanted to throw it there."

Negro League teams tried to pressure opponents and force mistakes through aggressive (though calculated) baserunning, or through identifying weaknesses in opponents and ruthlessly exploiting them. Rube Foster specialized in this sort of psychological strategy: on numerous occasions he had his team target a particularly weak opposing fielder, and bunt or hit constantly in his direction. Once, trailing late in a game, he ordered a steady diet of squeeze bunts, and the American Giants fought their way back from 10-0 and 18-9 deficits to tie it up, 18-18.

As one white sportswriter remarked about a Grays-Elites game in 1941: "There is one thing that distinguishes the National Negro League ball players from their major league brethren, and that is their whole-hearted enthusiasm, their genuine zest. They play baseball with a verve and flair lacking in the big leagues. They look like men who are getting a good deal of fun out of it but who want desperately to win. It was a relief to watch two teams as intently bent on winning as these two were yesterday."

Courtesy Baseball Hall of Fame Library

Rube Foster, founder of the Negro National League.

Leagues of Their Own

Black baseball teams played a vital role in fostering an interracial and international pastime, but they also played equally important roles in specifically African-American contexts, becoming focal points for civic pride, community life, and national cohesiveness. Local communities, along with the black weekly newspapers, were among the forces agitating for a national African-American baseball league, in place of the looser arrangements of independent baseball.

Northern African-American clubs profited from games with white semipros, but this relationship also had its costs. Both white and black owners ran African-American baseball teams; but for the most part, independent baseball in the North was controlled by white promoters and booking agents, preeminently in the teens and twenties a man named Nat Strong. It was explicitly to "keep Colored baseball from the control of whites" that Calvert, Tex., native Andrew "Rube" Foster, one of the best pitchers in the country in the 1900s, founded the Negro National League (NNL) in 1920.

The impulse to organize had a long history. After the turn of the century, series between top teams like the Philadelphia Giants and the Cuban X-Giants were beginning to be billed as "Colored World's Championships," and by the 1910s there were informal "western" and "eastern" championship honors (and sometimes "World Series" between regional champions). Several earlier attempts to

organize national black leagues had failed, but Foster managed to bring together the most important figures in midwestern African-American baseball, including his bitter rival, C.I. Taylor, owner and manager of the Indianapolis ABCs; J.L. Wilkinson, white owner of the All Nations team, who brought the Kansas City Monarchs into the NNL; and Augustin "Tinti" Molina, who operated the western Cuban Stars (there was an eastern version, too), a team of Cuban players who toured the U.S. in the summer before returning home for the winter league season. Foster also included important teams in Detroit and St. Louis, and by 1923 had expanded to Memphis and Birmingham, among other cities.

In 1923, Ed Bolden, African-American owner of the Hilldales, collaborated with Nat Strong to create an eastern circuit, the Mutual Association of Eastern Colored Clubs, usually known as the Eastern Colored League (ECL), which raided Foster's league for players. By the end of 1924, the two leagues had made an uneasy peace, and the first Black World Series was played between Hilldale and Kansas City. It turned out to be a classic. The Monarchs, led by the gutsy performance of its manager, Cuban pitching legend José Méndez, came from behind to win, five games to four.

Despite the artistic success of this first World Series, it was not a great success financially. The Black World Series would prove difficult to sustain, precisely because it was a series; most fans couldn't afford to go to two or three games in a week's time, so crowds tended to dwindle as the series progressed (the opposite of what should happen, ideally), and newspaper coverage declined accordingly. The World Series was played four times in the twenties, then lapsed when the ECL folded in midseason 1928.

Even in the best of times, the Negro Leagues walked on a knife's edge economically. The majority of African Americans still lived in the South, but these communities were relatively impoverished and dispersed through rural areas. In the North, black populations were more affluent and more concentrated in cities, but comparatively small: Pittsburgh's black population in the twenties has been estimated at about 80,000, Kansas City's at 30,000. The pressures on Negro League owners were enormous. Rube Foster and Ed Bolden both suffered nervous breakdowns; Foster was eventually confined to an asylum, where he died in 1930.

The Depression finally destroyed Foster's NNL in 1931. Many teams folded; others, like the Kansas City Monarchs, went on the road. It was gangster Gus Greenlee, operator of "numbers games" (illegal lotteries) in Pittsburgh, who rescued the organized Negro Leagues. Greenlee's team, the Pittsburgh Crawfords, joined their crosstown rivals, the Homestead Grays, along with other, mostly eastern clubs in a new Negro National League in 1933. Greenlee's NNL was followed in 1937 by a Negro American League in the west, built around the Kansas City Monarchs and Chicago American Giants, and including at various times Atlanta, Birmingham, Memphis, and New Orleans. By this time the numbers racket, as the most important source of black-controlled capital, dominated African-American professional baseball. Underworld figures such as Greenlee, Abe Manley of the Newark Eagles, Tom Wilson of the Nashville Elite Giants, and Alejandro Pompez of the New York Cubans fielded their teams as ways of achieving respectability and projecting an image of community leadership.

Greenlee and others put together the East-West All-Star Game, which became the national showcase for African-American baseball, and by 1947 attracted more than 50,000 fans, sometimes outdrawing the white All-Star Game.

The 1930s Negro Leagues were on shakier footing than in the 1920s, playing shorter schedules, and more likely to lose players to Caribbean and Mexican teams, but World War II turned everything around. The Negro Leagues lost as many players to the military as the white majors, but many of the biggest stars (Gibson, Paige, Bell, etc.) were older, and mostly not subject to the draft. Meanwhile, for several reasons (the poor quality of the wartime white majors, a dearth of entertainment options, perhaps a greater sense of communal solidarity), larger and larger crowds gathered at Negro League games. The Negro World Series was reinstituted in 1942. By the time the Kansas City Monarchs signed a UCLA football star and war veteran named Jackie Robinson to play shortstop in 1945, things were finally looking up for the Negro Leagues.

Agitation for Integration

W.E.B. DuBois declared in 1903 that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line." And as *The Sporting Life* said as early as 1891, "Probably in no other business in America is the color line so finely drawn as in baseball." Still, after the disappearance of African Americans from white-dominated baseball in the 1890s (at about the same time that Plessy v. Ferguson legitimated the "separate but

equal" doctrine), the color line kept getting blurred. White teams were constantly rumored to be interested in black players. In 1902, the famous manager of the New York Giants, John McGraw, brought an African-American second baseman, Charlie Grant, to spring training under the name "Chief Tokohoma," claiming he was a "full-blooded Cherokee." After Grant's true identity became generally known, McGraw dropped him, though there was never an official edict against Grant's presence. The major leagues, in fact, never adopted an explicit policy of exclusion toward African-American athletes, only a so-called "gentlemen's agreement."

Major league teams found another way around segregation by going outside the United States for relatively light-complexioned players of African ancestry. The Cincinnati Reds caused an uproar when they signed two Cuban outfielders in 1911, Rafael Almeida and Armando Marsans, although the team produced documentation of their European ancestry, and a sportswriter assured fans they were "two of the purest bars of Castilian soap ever floated to these shores." Cuban infielder Ramon Herrera played in the Negro National League in 1920 and 1921, then in the white National League in 1925 and 1926, becoming, long before Jackie Robinson, the first Negro League veteran to play in the white majors (Marsans went in the opposite direction, playing in the Eastern Colored League in 1923 after his career in the white majors was over).


Fans Ask End of Jim Crow Baseball

Sunday Worker

NAZI, ROME AIR FLEETS AID SPANISH FASCISTS

Fans Oppose Jim-Crow In Big League Baseball

Col. Johnson Attacks Labor

Spain Forges Ahead Despite Foreign Fascists

As this front page of the *Sunday Worker* (August 16, 1936) shows, American communists were among the first to agitate for an end to segregated baseball.

Many more Latin American players, mostly Cuban, trickled into the majors over the next few decades, especially after the Washington Senators hired a Cuban scout in the late thirties. There were always doubts about the Cubans' racial identity, but foreignness and relatively light complexions cleared the way for some, though not for their darker-skinned countrymen. It was an open secret that many of these players did have African ancestry; the sportswriter Red Smith commented snidely that there must have been "a Senegambian somewhere in the Cuban batpile where Senatorial lumber is seasoned."

> Integration only happened when white owners decided they wanted access to African-American athletes.

Despite all the racially-mixed baseball played in Cuba and California, in black/white exhibitions and the great semipro tourneys, only one attempt was made during the Jim Crow era to create a truly integrated, nationwide, summer baseball league in the United States. The Continental League was the brainchild of Andy Lawson, who had collaborated with his brother Alfred (a former major and minor league pitcher) as baseball promoters and entrepreneurs. After sponsoring some international touring teams and founding a string of minor leagues, Lawson in 1921 put together a league with clubs in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other cities, and two innovations: a base on balls would put the batter on second base instead of first, and half the teams would be all-black, the other half all-white (one of the black teams, the Boston Pilgrims, would eventually hire some white players).

"[W]e have thrown down the bars to all American players without reference to color or race," Lawson announced in the *Chicago Defender*, proclaiming that he was doing so in the interest of "true American sport." Lawson recruited a black vice president, Jamaican-born Altamont James Stewart, a former hotel manager. "[W]e urge our people to give it their best support," wrote the *Defender*. "The Continental League must be a success."

Unfortunately it wasn't. Though some of the clubs, notably Boston and Philadelphia, seem to have lasted through much of the season, playing the usual cast of opponents – semipro and college teams – little news of the league itself appeared, and it presumably expired sometime in midsummer, in almost complete obscurity. Andy Lawson

dropped out of sight thereafter. His brother Alfred, who had founded a commercial airline that flopped at the same time as the Continental League, was more successful, eventually founding both a college and a utopian religion he called "Lawsonomy.")

But increasingly, the idea of integration wasn't left to marginal figures like Lawson. In the thirties and forties, more effective agitation against baseball's color line would be provided by civil rights organizations such as the NAACP, African-American sportswriters such as Wendell Smith and Sam Lacy, politicians such as Mayor Fiorella LaGuardia of New York City, and by leftist activists. Lester Rodney, sportswriter for the Communist *Daily Worker*, commenced a campaign in 1936 to pressure the big leagues into admitting black players. Communists organized petition drives and tried to arrange tryouts for African-American players with white teams. World War II ultimately gave the integrationists a powerful rhetorical weapon: if black men could fight and die for their country, why couldn't they play major league baseball?

But integration would not be achieved under Communist auspices, nor as a product of moral suasion or even political pressure. It would only happen when the white men who controlled major league baseball finally decided, for primarily economic reasons, that they wanted access to African-American athletes. Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers made it abundantly clear when he proclaimed that "the greatest untapped reservoir of raw material in the history of the game is the black race."

The historian Donn Rogosin points out that, whatever his hagiographers would later claim, Rickey's motivations for integrating baseball were probably not primarily religious or moral. Before taking over the Dodgers, he had run the St. Louis Cardinals for decades without showing the least bit of interest in the rich tradition of black baseball in that city. According to *Pittsburgh Courier* sportswriter Wendell Smith, the stadium there, Sportsmen's Park, was under Rickey's regime "the only major league park to have a Jim Crow section." Still, Jackie Robinson came to Rickey's defense: "I have every reason to believe in Branch Rickey, and until he proves to me differently, I will always believe his reasons to be purely democratic in nature."

Rumors of integration flew thick and fast through the waning years of World War II, and it was clear that the first club to sign black players might gain a huge advantage over other teams. According to a secret report commissioned by the major leagues in 1945, certain clubs earned fortunes by renting their stadiums to Negro League teams, notably the New York Yankees, who cleared $100,000 a year. But this kind of income was not equally distributed. The Yankees and Giants rented their stadiums, but Rickey's Dodgers couldn't, as there hadn't been a major African-American team in Brooklyn for more than a decade. If the Dodgers signed black players, it might pull African-American crowds away from Negro League games in Yankee Stadium and the Giants' Polo Grounds and into the Dodgers' Ebbets Fields.

Negro Leagues player and manager Dave Malarcher argued it was no coincidence that integration was finally achieved just as the Negro Leagues' success crested. Attendance was booming, the two leagues were thriving, and the East-West Game was beginning to outdraw the white All-Star Game. The majors allowed the color line to fall, Malarcher said, when they "saw those fifty thousand Negroes in the ball park. Branch Rickey had something else on his mind than a little black boy. He had those crowds."

At the Crossroads

The Negro Leagues, then, became as much an obstacle to Rickey-style integration as the racism of white players and fans. In an unfortunate echo of the 1857 Dred Scott decision (which held that "a black man has no rights a white man is bound to respect"), Rickey told Wendell Smith the Negro Leagues were nothing more than "a booking agents' paradise. They are not leagues and have no right to expect organized baseball to respect them." Rickey backed up his words with actions, steadfastly refusing even token payments to Negro League owners for players he signed away from them.

Robinson himself agreed with Rickey, penning a devastating attack on the Negro Leagues that appeared as the cover article in a 1948 issue of *Ebony* magazine. In "What's Wrong with Negro Baseball," Robinson criticized the players' poor character and morals, as well as the low pay, exploitative owners, unruly fans, incompetent umpires, and overloaded schedule he'd had to contend with in the partial season he'd spent with the Monarchs in 1945. Due to lax rules, constant drunkenness, and a poor work ethic, he claimed, the quality of play in the Negro Leagues was quite low. His own success with the Dodgers, he hoped, "would make the fellows in the league I just left play harder, train harder,

Take Artie Wilson, he never let up. That's why he was such a good hitter. Artie Wilson was the best single hitter I've ever seen. And he hit just one way, third base, and he was a left hand hitter. He hit running, he was ready to roll when the bat made contact.

– Piper Davis

Artie Wilson, shortstop for the Birmingham Black Barons. (Baseball Hall of Fame Library)

and give the fans much better baseball."

In 1945 Rickey set up his own Negro League as a front for the scouting of Robinson and other African-American players (a team called the Brooklyn Brown Dodgers played in Ebbets Field for a season). In the view of Bill Veeck, later the owner of the St. Louis Browns, Cleveland Indians, and Chicago White Sox, Rickey really wanted to make his United States League work, thus cornering the black baseball market, and only when that failed did he decide to go the integration route.

By the mid-1950s, fewer African-American men made their living in baseball than at any time since the 1910s.

Yet the Negro Leagues weren't supposed to be obstacles to integration. Rube Foster had founded the NNL with what might seem like contradictory aims: to keep black baseball out of white clutches, and to nurture a baseball culture among black players that would prepare them for eventual integration. These two aims were reconciled by the expectation of Foster, and many others, that integration, when it occurred, would take the form most familiar to them: an all-black team (or teams) entering the white majors. Foster, Monarchs' owner J.L. Wilkinson, and others harbored the ambition of organizing such a team, and a number of African-American ballplayers, including Satchel Paige, publicly supported this option over bringing individual black players into white leagues. It wasn't just Negro League owners, either; Veeck had arranged the purchase of the Philadelphia Phillies in 1943, and planned to stock the team with Paige, Gibson, and other Negro League stars. When word of the scheme leaked out, the Phillies' owners backed out of the deal, and sold the team to a much lower bidder.

Instead, black players would enter the majors one at a time. As the Negro Leagues began to lose stars, African-American fans deserted their teams in droves; Kansas City fans took the five-hour train ride to St. Louis to watch Jackie Robinson and the Dodgers – even when the Monarchs were in town. The Newark Eagles saw their attendance drop precipitously, from 120,000 in 1946 to 57,000 in 1947. After the 1948 season, the Negro National League folded, some teams joining the Negro American League, others joining the Southern Negro American Association or just giving up. In 1949, the Monarchs made the playoffs, but had lost so many players to the major leagues they had to forfeit the championship.

Yet Jackie Robinson, Larry Doby, Roy Campanella, and the other early black players to cross the color line didn't smash the Jim Crow system at one blow. Nervous teams brought in African-American players very slowly, often in twos, to avoid forcing white players to room with them. Informal quotas kept many worthy Negro League veterans stuck in minor leagues they proceeded to dominate. Most historians agree that the New York Giants probably lost the 1950 pennant because they refused to call up future Hall of Famer Ray Dandridge to plug a gap at third base. Former Black Barons' shortstop Artie Wilson, the last man to hit .400 in the Negro Leagues, only got 22 at bats for the Giants before he was sent down to make room for his former Birmingham teammate, Willie Mays. Piper Davis was buried in the Boston Red Sox system and never made it to the majors (the Red Sox wouldn't bring up an African-American player until 1959).

By the mid-1950s, with the Negro Leagues shrunken to a four-team NAL, most of the barnstorming and semipro teams gone, and only a sprinkling of mostly young black players in the majors and minors, fewer African-American men made their living in baseball than at any time since the 1910s, possibly the 1890s. While black stars such as Mays, Hank Aaron, Don Newcombe, and Ernie Banks rose to the challenge, the African-American baseball presence was oddly top-heavy. "When they first come into organized ball," commented Piper Davis, "all of them was stars that was playing. Wasn't no black boys sitting on the bench."

No Negro League manager ever managed in the major leagues.

While the best African-American players found places in the integrated majors, a whole universe of Negro League coaches, managers, umpires, owners, and non-star players found themselves on the outside looking in. The majors didn't hire any coaches from the Negro Leagues until Buck O'Neil, after years of experience managing the Monarchs, joined the Chicago Cubs in 1962. No Negro League manager ever managed in the major leagues; in fact, the first African-American manager wasn't hired until 1975. What this disruption in continuity might have cost in terms of collective

tradition, wisdom, and expertise lost, no one has ever attempted to measure.

Integration controlled by the white major league establishment for its own benefit also spelled disaster for high-quality baseball anywhere other than the Northeast and Midwest. The Birmingham Black Barons, led by Davis and Wilson, had won three Negro American League pennants in the 1940s; the South would not see anything close to that caliber of baseball again until the major leagues expanded to Houston in 1962. While New York City with its three big-league teams thrilled to the exploits of Robinson, Mays, Newcombe, Roy Campanella, and other former Negro Leaguers in the fifties, Birmingham, Memphis, and many other cities only saw rich black baseball traditions shrivel and vanish.

The destruction of the Negro Leagues reads like a precursor of the postwar devastation of historic black communities like the Hill District in Pittsburgh or the Hayti District in Durham, N.C., bisected and demolished by highway projects, impoverished by white flight into the suburbs and the depletion of urban tax bases. Buck O'Neil said the world the Negro Leagues made was "more or less, a black world, because...we kind of owned that world. We really did. But once we started with integration, I think it took a little something from us, as far as owning things."

Candy Jim Taylor (C.I.'s brother) managed the Nashville Elite Grants, St. Louis Stars, Homestead Grays, and many other teams, and won more games in the organized Negro Leagues than any other manager. (*Chicago Defender*)

Legacies

The Negro American League played its last season in 1960. The Monarchs continued as a traveling team with no connection to Kansas City for several years thereafter. The Clowns lasted until 1973. In 1977, Hank Aaron, the last Negro Leaguer still playing professionally, retired.

Despite Rickey and Robinson's disavowals, the most obvious legacy of the Negro Leagues is the death of segregation, in baseball and beyond it. However compromised the actual path of integration has been, the success of black-run institutions made Jim Crow untenable in the long run. As Foster had intended, the Negro Leagues honed the black game and produced the players (and men) who had the character as well as the skills to handle the

tough task of integrating the white majors.

Negro Leaguers were pioneers in many other areas. Chappie Johnson might have been the first catcher to wear shinguards regularly. Willie Wells is said to have invented the batting helmet. The Monarchs pioneered night baseball in the early thirties, carrying a portable lighting system from town to town.

But for what has become a largely white baseball audience, remembering the Negro Leagues often plays itself out as a ritual of debating whether Negro Leaguers were the equals of their white contemporaries. While the overwhelming consensus of historians who study the matter is that the best black players were as good as the best whites of their day, that understanding doesn't seem to have trickled down to fans, present-day players, the media, or even more mainstream baseball historians. When *The Sporting News* recently published a list of the 100 greatest players as chosen by a panel of experts, the list included 44 men who played primarily during the Jim Crow era: five blacks, and 39 whites. When Ted Williams, who himself played a key role in getting Negro Leaguers admitted to the Hall of Fame, named the twenty greatest hitters, 13 were pre-integration whites, none were primarily Negro Leaguers. And when Major League Baseball organized a fan vote for "The All Century Team," 10 of 25 players named were pre-integration whites, but there were no African Americans from the same era.

There are two major reasons for this collective historical ignorance. First, for hardcore fans, baseball is a uniquely scriptural sport, with the statistical encyclopedia as the game's sacred book. Since the Negro Leagues aren't recognized major leagues, and because complete statistics weren't kept (largely because teams and newspapers lacked the resources), the encyclopedias have, with minor exceptions, ignored Negro League players. (Two editions of Macmillan's now defunct *Baseball Encyclopedia* did include some partial statistics for a number of players, though they were segregated in their own section at the back.) And though there have been efforts to construct a Negro League statistical record from the ground up, box score by box score, to date no one has succeeded in completing anything approaching a comprehensive encyclopedia. Historians to this point have tended, understandably, to focus instead on collecting oral histories from a steadily aging population of Negro League veterans. So, while fans can debate the relative merits of, say, Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams by looking up their stats, they have no easy way to compare them to black contemporaries like Josh Gibson or Buck Leonard.

Negro Leaguers in Japan

For decades, the standard story about the rise of professional baseball in Japan has credited a 1934 tour of Japan by major league all-stars, including Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, for sparking interest in the sport and leading to the first professional league two years later. But the Japanese baseball historian Kazuo Sayama tells a different story. He argues that more credit should go to Negro League teams that toured Japan in 1927, 1932, and 1934 (the Philadelphia Royal Giants and the Kansas City Monarchs). The white players, he says, treated their opponents and the fans with contempt, running up scores against inexperienced opponents and insulting their hosts, both on the field and off. Ruth played first base holding a parasol. Gehrig wore rain boots. Al Simmons lay down in the outfield grass while a game was in progress.

The Negro Leaguers, by contrast, appreciated their hosts' generosity, and enjoyed the respite from prejudice and discrimination. "The people were wonderful over there. I loved them, " said the Monarchs' Frank Duncan. "I hated to see them go to war. Wonderful people, the most wonderful people I've come in contact with." In Sayama's view, the Negro Leaguers' courtesy, professionalism, and sincerity may have impressed Japanese fans more than the boorish and arrogant behavior of the white major leaguers.

Even more intriguing, though, are certain parallels between Japanese and Negro League baseball, including a shared emphasis on teamwork, finesse pitching, and the sacrifice bunt, which suggest even more substantial influence. Like Rube Foster, Japanese managers emphasize avoiding mistakes while pressuring opponents to make them, and seem to put great stock in scoring first to demoralize the other side.

There's little direct evidence of Negro League influence on Japanese baseball—though in 1952, former Negro Leaguers John Britton and Jimmy Newberry became two of the earliest Americans to play in Japan. But an open letter from the Royal Giants to Japanese fans, published in a Japanese sports magazine in 1927, is tantalizingly suggestive. In it, the Negro Leaguers averred that "Japanese baseball has already got the very essence of the game," and singled out for praise the Japanese teams' "inside baseball," "crafty pitching," and "team play," all hallmarks of the Negro League style.

A second reason for public ignorance of the Negro Leagues has to do with the iconic status now accorded Jackie Robinson. Robinson's story not only validates the white-controlled major leagues as no longer racist, it also appeals to the central tenet of American individualism, repeated ad nauseum in every movie trailer: that one man, against overwhelming odds, can change the world. Liberal ideology in the U.S. is traditionally comfortable only with individual resistance, because it can always be configured as a desire to belong, to be assimilated, and because it doesn't critique the system, wishing only to join it. The Negro Leagues, on the other hand, stand for collective resistance and self-determination, for alternative institutions and a countercultural strategy of attacking injustice. Additionally, the insistence that Robinson was the best man for the job, the only African-American player who could handle the pressures of racism with grace, effectively denies the multiracial and international Negro Leagues experience, and covertly slanders the hundreds of black players who maintained high professional standards under Jim Crow conditions.

However, while the Negro Leagues might currently be regarded as a historical sideshow of sorts in the United States, theirs is a living legacy elsewhere in the baseball world. In a roundabout way this influence is making itself felt in "Organized Baseball," as ever greater numbers of Latin players enter the majors. In Latin America, the historical influence of the Negro Leagues was all-pervasive, far outweighing the influence of the white major leagues, and constitutes an overlooked contribution to pan-African diasporic culture.

In the United States, the legendary "greatest team of all time" is the whites-only 1927 New York Yankees. But in virtually every other country in the Western Hemisphere, the equivalents are multiracial teams prominently featuring Negro Leaguers as well as local stars: the 1923-24 Santa Clara Leopards in Cuba, the 1939-40 Vera Cruz Blues in Mexico, the 1937 Trujillo club in the Dominican Republic. A Negro Leaguer, Martin Dihigo, remains the only man elected to three national Halls of Fame, in Cuba, Mexico, and the United States.

Many more black North Americans played in Cuba than whites, and many more Cubans played in the Negro Leagues than in the white majors. According to Roberto González Echevarría, "Cuba's style of 'inside' baseball, consisting of bunting, slapping a grounder past a charging infielder, almost no base-stealing, and patience at the plate was derived from the pioneers of Negro leagues baseball, who had much influence in Cuba during the early part of the twentieth century."

The Japanese baseball historian Kazuo Sayama even argues that Negro Leaguers who toured Japan in the 1920s and 1930s should be credited with sparking interest in baseball in that country, paving the way for the first professional league two years later.

Fully 26 percent of major league players are now of non-North American origin, and 49 percent of minor leaguers. In a sense, the current influx of international players actually lends the majors a more direct historical connection to the Negro Leagues. But as the major leagues tighten their grip on Latin America and extend their reach to Japan, bringing the best players in the rest of the world to perform for mostly white, North American audiences; as Japanese fans begin to focus more on individual players like Ichiro Suzuki performing in the United States than on their own teams and leagues; and as Cuba loses a steady trickle of its best players to defection and lucrative major league contracts, the rich, independent baseball traditions of these countries threaten to be relegated to the same musty museums that house the once-proud names of the Homestead Grays, the Nashville Elite Giants, the Memphis Red Sox, and all the others.

When an institution like the Durham Black Sox was lost, it damaged the possibility of true racial justice, a desegregated society with shared black and white ownership of the past – and the present. Instead, in the death and resurrection of the Negro Leagues, a challenge to the white baseball establishment has been co-opted into a justification of that establishment's sorry history and sordid present.

In this context, it appears that the Rickey-orchestrated advent of Jackie Robinson, and the consequent demise of independent black baseball, didn't only represent the triumph of racial justice over intolerance, but also the triumph of paternalistic, white-controlled capital over anything that stood in its way, including collective black self-determination. Robinson's bravery dealt a blow to racism and led eventually to fully integrated major leagues; the way in which Rickey and others actually carried out integration, however, disrupted the continuity of nearly a century of African-American baseball tradition, destroyed one of the largest majority black-owned business enterprises in the United States, eliminated hundreds of

black jobs, effectively subordinated black and Latin athletes to what remains a nearly all-white ownership, and in the long run decimated the African-American fan base and uprooted a central institution of African-American communities.

Too often, integration and "color blindness" have meant only that African Americans must adapt themselves-or be subordinated-to white-originated and controlled institutions. Segregation-era black institutions such as the Negro Leagues can look from this perspective like little more than the negative results of exclusion, ash heaps of the rejected and the oppressed, best forgotten in more enlightened times.

But, just as teachers in African-American schools taught, regardless of the tough conditions, just as musicians composed and writers wrote, black baseball players didn't sit around bemoaning the fact that they couldn't play for the Yankees. They didn't wait for white redemption; they took the chance to play. And what they wrought was not merely a waiting room in history, but a positive challenge to the dominant culture, an alternative to the white leagues, a worthy competitor.

Gary Ashwill is managing editor of Southern Exposure. *He is also a member of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) and the Negro League Researchers and Authors Group.*

Women in the Negro Leagues

Women usually played stereotypical roles in Negro League baseball, appearing in the background as fans or contestants in beauty pageants sponsored by teams. Yet the marginal nature of black baseball sometimes meant interesting things for gender relations. Occasionally, Negro League teams faced female players, as in the 1930s, when the great all-around athlete Babe Didrickson pitched for the House of David team. In the 1950s, as the Negro Leagues wilted under the assaults of the integrating majors, the Indianapolis Clowns signed Toni Stone to play second base, primarily as a gate attraction. But she played a good second base and hit .243. The following year, Stone went to the Monarchs, and the Clowns picked up two more female players, Mamie "Peanuts" Johnson and Connie Morgan. Meanwhile, the All-American Girls' Professional Baseball League, immortalized in the movie *A League of Their Own*, remained off-limits to African-American women.

Perhaps more importantly, one woman achieved an unparalleled status in Negro League ownership: Effa Manley, the wife of numbers man and Newark Eagles owner Abe Manley. Though raised with mixed-race siblings and usually perceived as a light-skinned black woman, Effa was actually the child of her white mother's affair with a white man. There have been women owners of major sports franchises, but none have had the power of Effa Manley, described by one historian as "the most dominant personality in the Negro National League" after Gus Greenlee's eclipse in the late 1930s. Though her husband owned the Eagles, Effa controlled the team, handling contracts and other financial matters, and even dictating lineups and pitching rotations. Fiercely loyal to the African-American community, Manley was active in the NAACP, and held special anti-lynching days at Eagles' ballgames. Along with the owners of the Monarchs, she was the most vocal Negro League leader in resisting the white majors' assault on the Negro Leagues, demanding compensation when her players were signed.

SOURCES AND FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Newspapers consulted include Carolina Times, Chicago Defender, Cleveland Gazette, Indianapolis Freeman, Kansas City Call, New York Amsterdam News, New York Clipper, Pittsburgh Courier.

Among secondary sources consulted, this article relies most heavily on Donn Rogosin, Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues; *Brent Kelley,* Voices from the Negro Leagues *and* The Negro Leagues Revisited; *and James Riley,* Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues. *Also useful were:* SABR's Baseball Research Journal; *Janet Bruce,* The Kansas City Monarchs; *Dick Clark and Larry Lester,* The Negro Leagues Book; *Phil Dixon,* The Negro Baseball Leagues: A Photographic History, *Roberto González Echevarría,* The Pride of Havana: A History of Cuban Baseball; *John Holway,* Complete Book of the Negro Leagues, Blackball Stars, *and* Black Diamonds; *Mark Ribowsky,* A Complete History of the Negro Leagues; *Jules Tygiel,* Baseball's Great Experiment *and* Past Time: Baseball as History.

Eric Enders helped locate photographs for this story.

■ Worked to the Bone: Race, Class, Power, & Privilege in Kentucky

By Pem Davidson Buck,
Monthly Review Press,
279 pp., $18.95

Kentucky has long held a peripheral position in the national economy due to its rugged geography and relative inaccessibility. Its endemic white poverty has seemed to make it the exception to the rule of racialized exploitation in the United States. In contrast to much of the South, Kentucky's integration into the national economy has been fairly recent.

With this set of anomalies to consider, subjecting the economic systems and cultural values of Kentucky to a rigorous Marxist analysis is a riveting project. *Worked to the Bone*, published by the Monthly Review Press (a non-sectarian socialist imprint), is stunning in its scope. The author, who teaches anthropology and sociology in Kentucky, fixes a keen eye on class, race, and gender, starting with the Cherokee and Shawnee societies under British domination on the land claimed by the Virginia Company. Buck reviews 250 years of slavery, sharecropping, industrial and agricultural barony, federal intervention, and finally the onset of globalization.

At times, the text strains under the weight of academic language, but Buck has not been sheltered from the realities of poverty. Her friendships with neighbors and her own brushes with poverty's humiliations and terrors give her analysis a striking intellectual authenticity. Buck proposes that Kentucky's class structure should be considered a drainage system in which the sweat – or, in Marxian terms, the surplus labor value – is drained upwards through succeeding layers of elites.

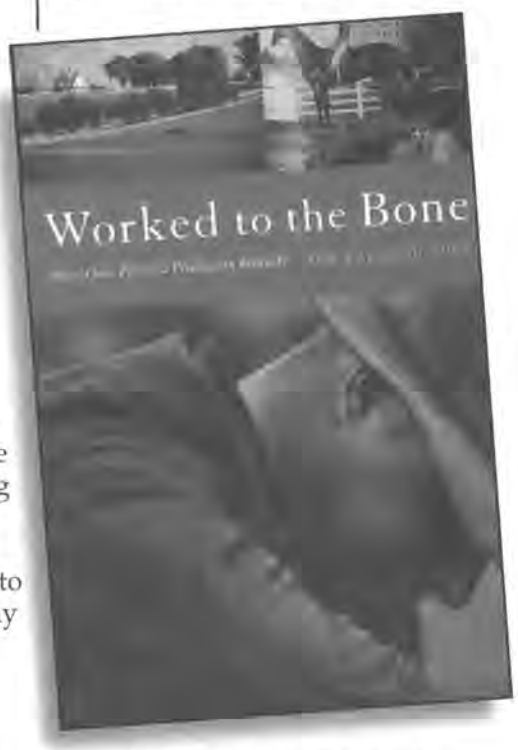
Buck chronicles a Kentucky I know well, having spent the first 18 years of my life in rural Owen County. Every Kentuckian who has ever left home has encountered outsiders' openly shared perceptions of them as lazy, feuding, and incestuous. These stereotypes create cultural explanations for the poverty created by giant national corporations like Duke Tobacco and Peabody Coal. But this accounting by Buck rings true from my experience: "Contrary to the stereotypes, workaholics are common in Kentucky. Many people rarely get enough sleep. Some rarely see their children awake. As one young mother put it, she and her husband didn't even see each other long enough to fight."

A running theme of *Worked to the Bone* is diversified subsistence farming as a strategy for resisting what Buck calls the "trickle-up" of wealth. Historically, Kentuckians have clung fiercely to a diversified subsistence economy that allowed them to resist consumerism and maintain personal dignity.

Buck reports that when she arrived in central Kentucky in the early 1970s, "there was almost no national capital visible. A grocery and the Dollar Store were the only chain stores in evidence." Change has been rapid since then.

In my hometown of Monterey, the local goods economy has been decimated. It's a matter of running discussion whether the general store, a revered community institution, will survive. Most commerce and casual socializing takes place at the Wal-Mart one county over, a development made possible thanks in part to a new superhighway cut through the hills. It's not an uncommon experience for Kentuckians to commute 150 miles roundtrip for construction and factory work. In fact, Kentucky could hardly be more globalized.

The author, like my parents, describes herself as a "hippie" who moved to Kentucky during a critical state of transition between national capital dominance and international capital dominance. By historical fluke, they secured



a welcome place in the local culture by embracing traditional subsistence skills at a time when Kentucky was undergoing a process of depopulation.

Worked to the Bone concerns itself mostly with the Burley tobacco belt, stretching from the foothills of the Appalachians in the east to the coalfields of the west. Buck shows the history of the state through the lens of three counties with which she has been intimately acquainted. One qualm I have with the book is that she refers to them as "North," "South," and "West" counties rather than by their true names,

presumably to emblematize their histories and cover a dazzling array of social developments in an efficient manner. This isn't entirely successful, as more detail on the individual participants and events of this history would enliven the story. More specific detail would also help readers compare this revisionist narrative with the dominant telling of Kentucky's history.

Buck nevertheless makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of whiteness in Kentucky. White identity in the Bluegrass State, she says, is centered on the frontier ethos of hard-scrabble independence. In reality, when the state was founded in 1792, power relations had long been defined by the vast land holdings of the Virginia planter elite. Free land was an illusory promise for most of the white indentured servants who had fled England and Scotland. The right to land was extended briefly to poor whites, so they could clear the land of its indigenous population before the planters reclaimed it through debt. The elites who wrote the state constitution, Buck tells us, extended the vote to white men in order to soften the blow of denying poor whites guaranteed access to land.

The author breaks ranks with liberal antiracists in her advancement of a startling theory of American fascism. In a chapter entitled "Brown Shirts/ White Sheets: Fascism & Middle Class Demotion," Buck describes fascist processes as those in which a new elite breaks the social contract with the middle class to intensify its grasp on power and wealth; the ascendant elite then depends on the nativism of the demoted middle class to direct its fury downward, thus curbing the potential for class-based resistance to policies of hyper exploitation.

Buck makes a clear case that we've entered a period of fascism in the United States, with the recent dismantling of the social contract to accommodate the global reorganization of capitalism. The prison buildup, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act, and the exploitation of legally vulnerable immigrant workers have all resulted in captive labor. The recent suspension of habeas corpus, the mass detention of immigrants, and the imposition of military law on citizens have locked into place this new order. This phenomenon is not unique to Kentucky, though the book could certainly benefit from more attention to how unfree labor plays out in the tobacco fields, prisons, and welfare offices in this state.

Ultimately, this book is a labor of love by an academic whose intellectual vocation is directed towards ordinary, working-class folks. It ends with a clarion call for alertness and resistance to the dangers ahead. The writer is frank about her agenda: to avert catastrophe "as drainage [of wealth by the ruling classes] is ratcheted up, the middle class is demoted, and the U.S. veers toward the exclusionary scapegoating policies that normally accompany fascist processes."

– *Jordan Green*

■ Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South

By James Sears, Rutgers University Press, 421 pp., $28.00

In *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones* James Sears deftly negotiates the back roads and main drags of queer Southern life in the post-Stonewall era. From our revolutionary visions to our misguided assimilationist dreams, Sears weaves a complex web of queer lives that define some key aspects of life in the era of disco and the rise of the anti-gay Christian right. Told in a rambling style that leaves you wondering about the relevance of any given passage, Sears's book still adds to our understanding of the development of queer consciousness, celebration, and activism.

This often-fascinating work highlights the rise of Southern drag culture, the joys and challenges of building lesbian communities, and the endless debates between left wing ideologues and martini-sipping social elites. While Sears does an excellent job of showing us how activists during this time struggled to overcome cultural predilections towards socializing and silence, we are left with scant analysis of another Southern institution: racism. While there is an absolutely invaluable chapter on the experiences of LGBT people of color, it is surrounded by a sea of whiteness, with little offered in the way of accountability for the white folks who still control most of the bars and organizations. Leather folk, youth, and transgendered people also make only occasional guest appearances on stages set by mostly middle-class white folks, radicals and career climbers alike.

The sheer volume of fascinating information Sears provides and a wry wit worthy of his gay ancestors make this an enjoyable and important read. But we're still waiting on a history that lets us know what the mass of folks underrepresented in the LGBT movement to this day contributed during the past three decades.

– *Matt Nicholson*

Nobody writes about the South the way we do.

No other magazine presents the region's people and places, its social movements and cultural traditions, with the depth and sensitivity of *Southern Exposure.*

For over 25 years, we've reported hard-to-find news and views about the South, and given readers like you compelling portraits of Southern life, to help understand the South as it is — and what the South can still become.

Nobody fights for a better South the way we do.

The Institute for Southern Studies, publisher of *Southern Exposure,* arms people with the facts they need to make lasting change — in their schools, on the job, in their communities. The Institute combines hard-nosed research with a track record of experienced organizing to build grassroots campaigns that make a difference.

To join the thousands of others who rely on *Southern Exposure* for information, ideas and inspiration, take advantage of our special offer and become a member of the Institute for Southern Studies today. You'll receive a year's worth of the magazine, discounts on Institute research – and you'll be part of a fighting organization that's a force for change in the South.

Join us today.

Join today for a special introductory rate of $21 – almost 15% off the regular price – and you won't miss the next issue of our award-winning coverage of Southern politics and culture.

And if you're already a member, sign up a friend – we'll cut your membership rate to only $16!

Sign up for a year of *SOUTHERN EXPOSURE*

❒ **YES I want to join** the Institute and receive a year's worth of *Southern Exposure* at the special introductory rate of $21!

❒ **I want to sign up ____ friends** at $24 each – reduce my subscription rate to $16!

❒ **I want to support the Institute** in its work for justice in the South. Here's my contribution of:

❒ $500 ❒ $250 ❒ $100 ❒ $50

❒ **I want these back issues/Institute reports**

Issue # or Report Name _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ Email: _____

❒Check (please tape the sides of the mailer!)

❒Visa ❒ Mastercard _____ Exp. date: _____

Card number _____

Name on card _____

SIGN UP MY FRIEND

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

SIGN UP MY FRIEND

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

SIGN UP MY FRIEND

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

SIGN UP MY FRIEND

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

(fold)

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 938 DURHAM, NC

Postage will be paid by addressee

Institute for Southern Studies
P.O. Box 531 Durham, NC 27702

Your 37¢ stamp will help us continue to fight for a better South!

(fold)

TAPE here and along sides to seal any enclosures

RESEARCH REPORTS
from the
INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN STUDIES

Voting Rights

■ **BALLOT BOX JUSTICE:** *How Selective Prosecution of Voting Laws Undermines North Carolina Elections*

By Melissa Siebert and Chris Kromm

An in-depth investigation into how voting laws in North Carolina are "selectively and unequally" enforced, drawing on election records and election board documents.

$10 Institute members
$20 Non-members

■ **RISK FACTORS FOR NORTH CAROLINA ELECTIONS:** *The Correlation of Low Voter Turnout with Race, Wealth and History*

By Stan Goff and Melissa Siebert

A study analyzing the correlation between race and income with voter turnout. Also analyzes the progress of the eight counties covered by the 1965 Voting Rights Act in North Carolina.

$10 Institute members
$20 Non-members

Corporate Welfare

■ **PAYING MORE, GETTING LESS:** *The Impact of Proposed Changes to Corporate Incentive Programs in North Carolina*

By Rania Masri, Ph.D.

A study that analyzes corporate incentive programs in North Carolina and grades them according to fairness, effectiveness and accountability to taxpayers, using best practices from across the country as a benchmark. Useful for any groups challenging corporate give-aways.

$4 Institute members
$8 Non-members

Privatization

■ **PRIVATE GAIN, PUBLIC PAIN:** *How Privatization Harms Communities*

By Kim Diehl, Keith Ernst and Daphne Holden

Privatization – the selling of public services to for-profit corporations – is on the rise, especially in the South. Using three case studies, this is the first in-depth study to investigate the impact of privatization on communities, workers and democracy. Also available with three in-depth case studies on prisons, hospitals and government programs.

$20 Institute members
$40 Non-members

Case studies: $15 each (ISS members); $30 each (Non-members)
Set of three case-studies: $30 (ISS members); $60 (Non-members)

Jobs and the Environment

■ **GOLD AND GREEN:** *Debunking the "Jobs vs. the Environment" Myth*

By Chris Kromm, Keith Ernst, and Jaffer Battica

Do jobs have to come at the expense of the environment? Or can we have a healthy environment and a healthy economy? Ranking all 50 states on their environmental record and their economic climate, this study proves that good jobs and a clean environment go hand in hand. This 114-page study contains state-by-state rankings, maps and analysis that arm you with the facts to fight for a sustainable environment!

$15 Institute members
$35 Non-members

THREE EASY WAYS TO ORDER:

- CALL (919) 419-8311 x21 and place your credit card order today
- FAX the order form inside to (919) 419-8315 for quick service
- MAIL the order form inside

BULK DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE
Contact: (919) 419-8311 x 21
or
info@southernstudies.org
FOR MORE INFORMATION

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE
P.O. Box 531
Durham, NC 27702