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### Race, Ethnicity and the Legacy of Baseball in the Americas

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Darren Zaslau  
Independent Major Honors Project  
Race, Ethnicity and the Legacy of Baseball in the Americas  
ADVISORS: Daphne John and Jay Ashby

Baseball is America's Pastime. When looking at its history in our modern day, it is difficult to imagine the racism and hate, which will always remain implanted in the roots of the game. From the Negro Leagues of 1920, to the racism surrounding Roberto Clemente, Hispanic players, and other racial minorities, the struggles of the past will never be forgotten. Although its history was filled with periods of adversity, the current inclusive state that baseball currently presents is truly remarkable. Analyzing these positive trends toward racial inclusion overtime will be the main focus of this independent major honors research project. In addition, understanding where the sport has come from, its current state, and attempting to predict the future will be extremely important aspects for deeper analysis. Individual baseball icons that opened the door for the current racial minority participants such as Jackie Robinson, Roberto Clemente, and Masanori Murakami will all be discussed in order to understand baseball's true pastime. Current events including the World Baseball Classic, the Little League World Series dominance of Asian teams, and the 2016 Tampa Bay Rays trip to Cuba are other areas of investigation to show how the culture has changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, this project will predict the future of baseball to fully process the impacts that these athletes and key events have had on the sport. As a result of the increased racial inclusion over time, will racism in baseball decrease? Will coaching staffs be primarily composed of racial minorities so they that they will be able to relate and communicate with their players? Will Major League Baseball (MLB) expand to other

countries other than the United States and Canada? With the way the sport is progressing in our modern day society, the possibilities are endless.

### Where Have We Come From?

In America's Pastime, there have been countless players who have helped pave the path for the racial inclusion the sport is currently experiencing. One of these players was actually an Oberlin College student who would eventually change the game of baseball forever, Moses Fleetwood Walker, a star catcher who played on Oberlin College's first varsity baseball team during the spring of 1881. Walker, then, would transfer to the University of Michigan to play varsity baseball for the Wolverines in 1882. This is where he would first become exposed to the harsh racism engrained within the game of baseball. He would be refused dining services at team meals due to the color of his skin and opponents would choose to not take the field if he would be in the lineup (Husman). After leading a historically losing Wolverine baseball team to a 10-3 overall record and hitting .308, Walker signed a professional contract with the Toledo Blue Stockings in 1883. Despite facing similar racism in the minor leagues, it didn't stop Walker from achieving his dreams of playing in the major leagues. In 1884, he became the first African American to play in the major leagues as a member of the Toledo Blue Stockings (Husman). While he only played for one season, he opened the door for other black players, like Jackie Robinson, into the major leagues (Husman). In addition, the color line was removed in minor league baseball as the International League modified its ban on black players during September of 1888. Without Walker proving that African Americans could transcend racism and hate, segregation in baseball could've prevailed for

countless years, as the legacies of Jackie Robinson along with others may have never been written.

By the 1880s, blacks created their own baseball leagues because they were not allowed to play on the same professional teams as whites. As a result, the Negro Leagues were created. On November 15, 1859, the first known baseball game between two black teams featured the Henson Base Ball Club of Queens and the Unknowns of Weeksville, Brooklyn (Lewis 2017). This became a sign that black baseball was on the rise. After the American Civil War in 1865, black baseball spread throughout the East and Mid-Atlantic states with Philadelphia being labeled as the “black baseball mecca.” In the 1870s, black ballplayers were regularly becoming professional and, thus, prominent teams were forming. A few years later, in 1885, the first nationally-known black professional team was created, the Cuban Giants. This helped form the first “Negro league” during 1887 called the National Colored Base Ball League, which encompassed teams from Boston, New York City, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Louisville and Philadelphia (Lewis 2017). As the sport continued to popularize with African American leagues eventually spreading to the Midwest, black baseball experienced its Golden Age throughout the 1920s. Some of the most important talks in African American baseball history were held in Kansas City, MO on February 13 and 14, 1920, which established one of the most prominent black leagues, the Negro National League (Lewis 2017). Governed by the National Association of Colored Professional Base Ball Clubs, the league was comprised of eight teams from Chicago, Kansas City, Detroit and Indianapolis. The creation of the league resulted in larger and wealthier fan bases to attend games. But, black

baseball in the Negro National League experienced a setback. After three teams from the league eventually folded, other leagues began to follow suit due to the lack of funding. Thus, at the end of the 1931 season, the Negro National League temporarily disbanded.

At that point, the Negro Leagues needed a spark in order to revive black baseball in America; little did the country know that the city of Pittsburgh, PA was there to provide it. In 1912, one of the most influential Negro Leagues teams in black baseball was created as local steelworkers from Pittsburgh formed to become the Homestead Grays. The Grays, led by Cumberland Posey, played in the eight-team East-West League, which stretched from Detroit to Washington, D.C. Posey was a ballplayer, manager and eventual owner by the 1920s. Under his ownership, the team won nine straight pennants from 1937-1945. Thus, the Grays became wealthy and formed an elite reputation (Hill 2007). The team also fostered some of the greatest Negro Leagues' players ever such as Josh Gibson and Cool Papa Bell. In total, 12 former Grays have been inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame (Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum). As the team thrived, the talents of these players became well known throughout the country, creating fan interest that the sport never experienced before.

But the Grays weren't the only team to positively change the reputation of black baseball in Pittsburgh. On the other side of the city, the Pittsburgh Crawfords were bought by one of the most impactful front office members in the history of the Negro Leagues, Gus Greenlee (Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum). Similarly to the Grays under Posey, the Crawfords received stellar ownership from Greenlee

who also had excellent insight in identifying player talent. In 1931, the team acquired Satchel Paige who is considered the greatest Negro Leagues pitcher of all time. Paige, a Hall of Fame inductee in 1971, won 100 games and struck out 1,170 hitters during his Negro Leagues career and eventually made it to the Major Leagues. Greenlee also knew how to help the team make money. In 1931, Greenlee funded "Greenlee Field", which was the first black-constructed and black-owned major league baseball stadium in the country (Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum). Greenlee Field, the new home of the Pittsburgh Crawfords, could hold 7,500 fans and created a space to highlight the talents of black ballplayers. As the Crawfords garnered more fan interest, the organization's wealth flourished. Upon Greenlee Field opening in 1932 and the team having enough money to acquire power-hitting, Hall of Fame catcher Josh Gibson from the Grays, the team's income increased to the point where it could buy a bus for their travels to away games. The team photo with the players kneeling in front of the bus with "Pittsburgh Crawfords Baseball Club" written on it eventually became an iconic Negro Leagues image. During 1935 and 1936, the Crawfords showed their dominance by winning the Negro National League title in both seasons.

Without the Pittsburgh Crawfords and Homestead Grays reviving the Negro Leagues, black baseball's legacy may have been significantly different. To further understand the importance of both of teams on black baseball, I visited the Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum at the Heinz History Center on October 20, 2016. The museum had a fascinating Negro Leagues exhibit highlighting the Crawfords and the Grays. I was able to view various media clippings about the

teams, old uniforms along with some of the actual bats and balls used by those players used. There were also countless photos of the Crawfords and the Grays featuring Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson and “Cool Papa” Bell. During my research about the Negro Leagues and Pittsburgh’s influence on black baseball, I interviewed John Gooch, a former professional baseball player for the Negro Leagues’ Birmingham Black Barons. Gooch, who eventually played in the Cincinnati Reds minor league system, grew up watching and admiring Pittsburgh’s Negro Leagues baseball stars:

“I looked up to the black players. Satchel Paige is from Pittsburgh. His son and I, I knew his son and I knew where they lived. So we would get a chance to go over to their house. But it was a different kind of worship then. Even though he was a big guy and Cool Papa Bell was out of Pittsburgh too, they were older and they knew your dad and knew your mother because they lived in the black neighborhoods. You would see them in church on Sunday. They were heroes, but we don’t look at them in the same way that we look at heroes now. They were real people,” he said.

Due to the elite talent of these black ballplayers, Negro Leagues games were well attended. While Gooch was playing for the Birmingham Black Barons in the Negro Leagues, he explained that, both, white and black crowds showed up to the ballpark in large numbers:

“We would probably have as many white people at our games as black. The stadium was always full. We never had no small crowds when we played,” Gooch said.

From the early 1900’s to the 1940s, the Negro Leagues All-Stars played against the Major League Baseball All-Stars. Despite racism in baseball being at its peak during that time period, huge crowds flocked to the games to see the world’s best black talent on display:

“Every place they played, the stadium was packed. When they played at Forbes Field, it was packed. When they played at the Chicago White Sox stadium, packed. When they played at Yankee Stadium, packed,” he explained.

In fact, most of the time, the Negro Leagues All-Stars were victorious in those games against the All-Stars from Major League Baseball. But why were blacks so successful against the whites on the diamond? Not only did they have some of the greatest players in the world, but they also had their own style of baseball. Combine talent with speed, power and pride, that's the product the Negro Leagues consistently produced on the diamond:

"Everybody wanted to see Satchel [Paige]. Everybody wanted to see Josh [Gibson] take it out of the park. Everybody wanted to see all of that speed," Gooch said.

As a result, African American ballplayers were making the game their own. After analyzing Gooch's vivid experiences playing and watching baseball during the Civil Rights Movement, it's clear that black ballplayers will always be firmly implanted within the roots of America's Pastime.

I also had the opportunity to visit the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, MO on January 24, 2017. The museum really opened my eyes about the impact black ballplayers have on baseball and how important they are to the roots of the game. What enlightened me the most about the Negro Leagues was how much the museum meant to black baseball. I had the chance to interview the President of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, Bob Kendrick, to hear his thoughts on the subject.

"Kansas City is the birthplace of the Negro Leagues. The leagues were formed here in 1920 just a block and a half away from where the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum now operates," Kendrick said.

It was fascinating to see all of the various Negro Leagues memorabilia in the museum such as game worn uniforms, balls and bats. I also was really interested in

the exhibits highlighting what life was like as a Negro Leagues ballplayer and how the players were treated like royalty in their hometowns. When discussing the importance of the museum, Kendrick mentioned it wasn't important only for representing blacks, but for remembering American history:

“It's important not only to black baseball, but it's important to the history of this country because this is the forgotten chapter of baseball and American history. You can't get this story in the pages of American history books,” he said.

The museum opened my eyes on how the game of baseball today would not be the same without its roots in the Negro Leagues. With the Negro Leagues fostering some of the world's best talent while also being the first-ever professional league to introduce night games and all-star games, America's Pastime became changed forever.

But, African Americans were not the only racial minority to enter the MLB in the 1800's. A few years after Walker's entrance, in 1897, Louis Sockalexis joined the ranks of major leaguers as the first Native American to ever play the game. Upon enrollment at the College of the Holy Cross, Sockalexis found success in various sports. He was the star running back on the football team while also winning countless events on the track team. But it was in baseball where he found his true athletic niche. He hit over .400 when he participated as an outfielder on the baseball team and was considered to be the best collegiate player in the country. Sockalexis, a native of the Penobscot Tribe, would sign a professional contract with the Cleveland Spiders in 1897 and played with the team for three years while coping with constant racial adversity. Sockalexis was the center of attention upon his arrival to Cleveland as he was an extremely athletic player with tremendous

potential. He would win footraces against teammates, handball contests, and was also quite the gymnast. But despite his extraordinary talents, fans would yell slurs, and imitate war whoops/dances during games. As national interest built around him, fans would buy tickets just to heckle Sockalexis whom the media termed as the “Red Man”. In the media, “Columns of silly poetry are written about him, [and] hideous looking cartoons adorn the sporting pages of nearly every paper” (Fleitz). He would eventually pass away due to alcoholism, which was viewed by the public as the inherent “Indian weakness” (Fleitz). But, his story still leaves its impact today on baseball and the city of Cleveland. The club’s current nickname, the “Indians”, is believed to be indirectly related to Sockalexis’ legacy and is used to legitimize the logo’s preservation. His ability to succeed in Major League Baseball during times of perpetual racism and adversity will always be remembered.

In 1902, Hispanics became a part of Major League Baseball as Lou Castro signed with the Philadelphia Athletics. Castro was born in Medellin, Columbia and moved to New York City due to the constant warfare in his home country. He began playing baseball at Manhattan College and quickly became one of the best collegiate players on the east coast by 1898. Due to his success, he was selected to play for various semi-professional teams but struggled as a pitcher. It was at that point in his career that he knew he had to change his position, as he became a utility player. He would eventually sign a professional contract with the Philadelphia Athletics in 1902. Castro played in just 42 games during one season with the team as a result of his inability to find a position in the field where he could be consistently successful. At second base, he struggled to field and often made errors, which hurt

Philadelphia's chances of winning. Despite only hitting .245 and not being an every day player, Castro's impacts off the field are most noteworthy. He was nicknamed "judge" by his teammates since he was known for having a "talkative, powerful" personality (McKenna). Often, Castro would give speeches at banquets and ceremonies, proving he was well respected by his team along with the fans. In addition, he was much lighter skinned in comparison to other Latinos, which boded well for his Americanized identity that was constantly viewed by the public. As a result, he was "clearly adopted as white, and suffered no significant racial harassment" (McKenna). In 2016, about 27% of major leaguers were of Hispanic decent (Armour and Levitt). Without Castro breaking down the Latin barrier in baseball, this number may not be as large as it is today. Castro's Americanization started this trend for the countless current Latino MLB players who are viewed as heroes and role models throughout the world for their play. In fact, many major league teams are even drafting teenagers from the Caribbean, Latin America and Central America while establishing training facilities in these countries in order to harbor baseball's next superstars.

Following in the footsteps of Moses Fleetwood Walker, in 1947, Jackie Robinson would change the world forever. Born to an impoverished family in Cairo, GA, Robinson was the youngest of five children. His mother, Mallie Robinson, would move the family to Pasadena, CA. He was an incredible athlete at a young age participating in baseball, football, basketball and track from high school through college. After playing exceptionally well with the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Leagues during the 1945 season, Robinson was scouted by the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Branch Rickey, the Dodgers' general manager, had been scouting the Negro Leagues for major league talent and wanted a black man to pioneer the movement of breaking the color barrier in baseball. But, he didn't want just any black man; he wanted someone who was "educated, sober, and accustomed to competing with and against white athletes" (Swaine). Robinson fit Rickey's desired mold as he was eventually signed on October 23rd, 1945; this move was titled the "Great Experiment". After a year of dealing with harsh racism in Minor League Baseball, he broke the color barrier in 1947 when he suited up as a Brooklyn Dodger on April 15th.

Robinson's career with the Dodgers was always filled unimaginable hate and discrimination. Racist comments/objects thrown at him from fans would probably be considered the smaller discriminatory incidents that Robinson faced on a daily basis. Often, restaurants wouldn't serve him meals along with the rest of the team, and hotels wouldn't allow him to stay with the players. But nothing would even compare to the events faced when the team traveled to Cincinnati, OH. Upon arrival into the city, Robinson received death threats, which prompted the famous picture of the white Dodger shortstop, Pee Wee Reese, draping his arm over the nervous Jackie Robinson when they took the field to show his support against the racist public. Despite the hatred and discrimination Robinson had to overcome, it is fair to say he quieted the crowd with his bat, glove, and strength to overcome adversity. He became the first African American player to win the Rookie of the Year Award, Most Valuable Player, and was the first player ever to have his number universally retired across all major league teams (Swaine). In 1962, he became the first black player

inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. But, among all accolades, he is most known for officially ending racial segregation in Major League Baseball. In addition, by Jackie breaking the color barrier, he helped other racial minorities achieve their dream in playing in the MLB.

“[Jackie Robinson] opened the door. I think for owners especially to be more open-minded that race doesn’t mean anything to talent,” said Cassidy Lent, a reference librarian in Giamatti Research Center located inside the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

To this day, every April 15<sup>th</sup> is Jackie Robinson Day across the MLB. All players wear the number 42 on their jerseys to pay tribute to Jackie’s groundbreaking legacy. Currently, the Jackie Robinson Foundation also continues his legacy. Founded by his wife, Rachel Robinson in 1973, the national, nonprofit organization provides unprivileged populations with scholarships and financial aid to achieve opportunities in higher education.

Among baseball’s most revered icons, along with Robinson, is Roberto Clemente. Clemente, a native of Puerto Rico, grew up as the youngest of seven siblings. His story was very similar to Jackie Robinson in many ways even from the start as he was a multi-sport athlete who was born to succeed in athletics at a young age. Clemente joined his high school softball team while also participating on the track and field team. His best events were the high jump and javelin, which is where his arm strength was showcased first. Some believed that he could represent Puerto Rico in the Olympics as a track and field representative, but, instead, he decided to focus on baseball (Thornley). After making a professional Puerto Rican League team at the age of 18 and boasting the sixth-best batting average in the league, he was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers to a minor league contract in 1954. Just like

Robinson, Clemente started his career with the Montreal Royals and was scouted by Branch Rickey. Clemente was immediately ready to play for Brooklyn based on his superior skill, but because of his race, the American public believed that he was being “hid” in Montreal. Due to Robinson being the first black player to break the MLB’s color barrier, if Clemente were to quickly do the same, the Dodgers believed that “too many minorities might be a problem with the white players” (Thornley). After success in the minor leagues, Clemente would be sent to Pittsburgh. The Pirates, who had the worst MLB record, drafted him from Brooklyn.

Clemente’s impact on the Pirates was immediate as he was a starter on the big league club during his rookie season. As he achieved success throughout his first few years in Major League Baseball, he was exposed to racism on and off the field. Due to his fairly frequent illnesses and injuries, he was accused of being lazy or for faking injuries. Laziness and lying about injuries were stereotypes about Latino ballplayers, which angered Clemente immensely (Roberto Clemente Museum). In fact, the prejudiced public believed that he was a hypochondriac despite having so much success on the field. In addition, Clemente was upset because he believed Latino baseball players weren’t given the proper recognition that they deserved (Roberto Clemente Museum). Given his incredible career with the Pirates, and the fact that his legacy is still at the forefront of baseball, this trend was certainly about to change. From 1955-1972, his presence on the field was known worldwide. After receiving 15 All-Star selections, the National League Most Valuable Player Award, four National League Batting Titles, and 12 Gold Gloves, he became the first Latin

American and Caribbean player to be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973.

But, Clemente wasn't just a role model on the field. His community service and charity work off the field is another reason why his legacy still impacts the world today. Clemente delivered baseball equipment and food to Latin American and Caribbean countries in his off-seasons. On December 31, 1972, he died in a plane crash delivering aid to the earthquake victims in Nicaragua. In his honor, for every season since 1971, the MLB gives out the Roberto Clemente Award to a player who honors the game, exemplifies sportsmanship on the field and is involved in community outreach off of the field (Thornley). His legacy was also carried on through his dream to create a Sports City for the youth of Puerto Rico. His wife, Vera Clemente, helped create Sports City in 1974. The organization, led by Clemente's family, built a complex that includes numerous different sports fields to provide youngsters with athletic opportunities and life lessons.

For my Bar-Mitzvah project in 2009, I wanted to carry on Roberto Clemente's legacy in order to help others through the game I love, baseball. I worked for Roberto's Kids, an organization, backed by Roberto Clemente, that collects old and new baseball equipment for donation to impoverished communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. For six months, I set up collection sites at my neighborhood's recreation center, Little League office buildings and in the basement of my house. Over that time, I collected over 600 pieces of equipment including balls, bats, gloves, helmets, and uniforms. To this day, it was one of the most

gratifying moments of my life seeing everything loaded onto the collection truck for distribution.

In order to further investigate the life of Roberto Clemente, I visited the Roberto Clemente Museum in Pittsburgh, PA on December 21, 2016. During my tour, I learned about Clemente's successful career on the field, his inspirational humanitarian efforts and how he overcame racism along with other forms of adversity to continue to further break the color barrier in Major League Baseball. I was truly enlightened about how the MLB tried to Americanize Clemente in order to strip him of his Latin identity. At the museum, I was shown various baseball cards with his picture and "Bob Clemente" written on them as opposed to "Roberto Clemente." Roberto's Americanization was also due, in part, to the media's large role in baseball. To Roberto's disgust, he was referred to as "Bob" in the news and other media publications. In addition, the museum was filled with various memorabilia and equipment that Clemente used throughout his career. It had countless clippings from newspapers, magazine covers and photos that highlighted his successes. But, I thought one of the museum's most interesting components was its ability to touch the lives of others. Near the entrance, there was the actual propeller from the plane that took Clemente's life when it was en route to Nicaragua. As I was looking at it, I could truly feel the heartbreak the world experienced during the tragic event. Despite the pit I felt in my stomach, it made me appreciate Clemente's life even more. I, then, realized how many people he impacted and how the lives of future generations will change for the better as a result of his legacy. As I walked upstairs and looked at the countless baseballs that were autographed by professional

athletes who visited the museum, such as MLB All-Stars Albert Pujols and Andrew McCutchen, I knew others felt the same inspiration as I did. Through his superior baseball abilities and humanitarian efforts, Clemente inspired America and proved to the world that a person of color could become the face that everyone looks up to.

After Hispanics and Native Americans entered the MLB, in 1964, Asians were finally represented in the sport as Masanori Murakami made his debut with the San Francisco Giants. Murakami was one of baseball's forgotten pioneers as he constantly stood in the shadows of Jackie Robinson and Roberto Clemente since Asians aren't as prevalent as African Americans and Latinos in the game. After playing for a team in a Japanese professional league, in 1964, the club sent him to a minor league affiliate of the San Francisco Giants in Fresno, CA. In August, he was promoted to the major league team, making his debut on September 1st, 1964. He worked mainly as a left-handed relief pitcher out of the Giants bullpen and finished his career with a 5-1 record, 3.43 earned run average and 100 strikeouts.

Throughout his 54-game career, he had difficulties communicating with his teammates since he could not speak English. He brought a unique pitching style to America that was based off deception as opposed to throwing a hard, overpowering fastball. Though his time in Major League Baseball was short, his impact on the game is still felt today. Murakami proved most fans and players wrong, as they believed that professional baseball in Japan was equivalent to just Double-A Minor League Baseball (Ciampaglia 2015). In addition, he paved the path for other Japanese ballplayers to have success in the major leagues as superstars. Players such as Hideo Nomo, Ichiro Suzuki, and Hideki Matsui all were eventually inducted

into the Japanese Baseball Hall of Fame for their achievements in the MLB.

Currently, there are over 40 Japanese players in the major leagues, and without Murakami's legacy, this number may be non-existent (Ciampaglia 2015).

But, race isn't only what makes baseball an extremely inclusive sport; players representing numerous religions participate in America's Pastime. In 1866, Lipman E. Pike became the first Jewish ballplayer in professional baseball when he played third base for the Philadelphia Athletics for \$20 a week in the National Association (JewishBaseballPlayer.com). When the National Association became the National League, Pike was a player for the Cincinnati Reds and led the league in home runs. Throughout his professional career, Pike batted .322 with 21 home runs and 332 RBI. Though he is not as revered as the game's other pioneers, Pike received a vote to be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. In addition, he paved the path for other future Jewish players to play in the major leagues. Sandy Koufax, a hall of famer, three-time Cy Young Award winner and seven-time all-star represents an icon for all Jewish players. His refusal to pitch in Game 1 of the 1965 World Series due to his observance of Yom Kippur drew national attention as baseball fans now understood the importance of religion to the players. Currently, there are nine active Jewish players in the MLB, and without the legacies left behind by Pike and Koufax, baseball's inclusive image may be significantly different (Jewish Virtual Library).

#### Where are we now?

Our modern day culture of baseball has completely changed due to the legacies of the icons stated above. As a result of their hard work, dedication to the

sport, and superior ability to cope with adversity, the current game is the most racially inclusive in its vast history. In the modern 20<sup>th</sup> century, the World Baseball Classic was created in order to connect professional players throughout the world. Founded in 2005, this event serves as an international tournament, which was proposed by the MLB. Modeled after the FIFA World Cup, every four years, 16 professional teams from around the globe battle head to head in order to achieve world supremacy. Japan has won two championships, while the Dominican Republic has won one. The event has sparked interest especially among international teams as the competition is what countries bond around. In the United States, though, the popularity among players and fans is yet to be desired. Jim Leyland, the current manager of the Detroit Tigers, was selected to manage Team USA in the next World Baseball Classic. For the best American players, playing for Team USA is an extreme risk for injury that could not only ruin their hopes of playing an entire 162 game season, but may also hurt their team's chances of winning a World Series title (McMann 2016). But for whatever reason, this thought process doesn't go through the heads of the superstar players from foreign countries. Leyland explains, "I think the foreign countries have really participated more and put more emphasis [than] the United States," (McMann 2016). This year, the United States won its first ever World Baseball Classic title by defeating Puerto Rico 8-0. The championship victory represents a historic moment in American baseball history.

While the World Baseball Classic unites professional baseball players from across the world, this is not the only age group where players can compete on an international level. The Little League World Series is an annual baseball tournament

for 11 and 12 year olds. Little League Baseball, founded in 1939 in Williamsport, PA, is the largest organized youth sports organization in the entire world. Founded by Carl Stotz, a Williamsport resident, it took a long time for the league to be recognized worldwide like it is today. Stotz began the league's formation in his own community's residence as he organized baseball games among his nephews along with neighborhood friends in order to teach boys fair play and teamwork (Thomas Jr. 1992). Those games helped create the first league in Williamsport, which only had three teams in it and were each sponsored by a different business. (Thomas Jr. 1992). The organization spans from all 50 states in America, to more than 80 other countries throughout the globe, with over 2.6 million participants. The first World Series was played in 1947, and in 1974, the expansion emphasis for female ballplayers became apparent as the league, then, began to cover softball. As the organization began to grow exponentially throughout the world, ESPN2 televised their first Little League World Series regional game in 1997. While the majority of baseball players are male, Little League does not ban female players who want to compete on the same field as the boys. On August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014, history was made, as Mo'ne Davis became the first girl in Little League World Series history to pitch a winning game and also was the first ever to throw a shutout. In the current format, 16 total teams, 8 from America, and 8 international teams compete in Williamsport, PA to play for the world title. For the past nine years in a row, a team from Japan or Chinese Taipei has won the International Bracket, proving the dominance of Asians within the sport.

Despite the dominance of Asians in youth baseball, this same success isn't apparent in Major League Baseball. On January 12, 2017 I visited the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY and was truly surprised that an Asian player has never been inducted. While walking around the museum, there were multiple exhibits highlighting the efforts of racial minorities on the game of baseball. Representing the Negro Leagues and the efforts of black players was an exhibit titled the "African American Baseball Experience." In addition, the Hall of Fame had a "Viva Baseball" exhibit, which was all about Latin American ballplayers and their impacts on the game. But, there were no exhibits fully dedicated to Asians players. As I was glancing at the countless pieces of baseball memorabilia, I found a jersey and pair of cleats that belonged to Ichiro Suzuki. The 10-time All-star, MLB stolen base leader and two-time batting champ, who is currently an outfielder for the Miami Marlins, is most likely to be the first Asian ballplayer ever inducted into the Hall of Fame. As I observed these pieces of equipment from one of the game's best, it really put race in baseball into perspective for me.

During my visit to the Hall of Fame, the Giamatti Research Center was an excellent resource to investigate racial trends in baseball. In this large resource and archives center located directly inside the Hall of Fame, a book, titled [A History Of Baseball In Asia: Assimilating, Rejecting and Remaking America's Game](#) explained how baseball has become Asia's most popular sport and has dominated athletic culture.

"The Japanese have done to baseball what they did to McDonald's hamburgers. They have taken something once wrongly thought to be "uniquely American" and made it "intensely Japanese" (Reaves 1998, 5-6).

This quote is a perfect explanation for how important baseball is to Asia and vice versa. Given the impact of the Little League World Series and how success on an amateur level forms the foundation for potential dominance at the professional level, baseball will always have strong roots in Asia.

With Asians being underrepresented in baseball, Latinos have made a significantly larger footprint within the game in recent years. In 2013, the Chicago Cubs, Seattle Mariners, and Colorado Rockies upgraded their baseball academies in the Dominican Republic in order to better foster the talent in the Caribbean. Countless draft picks and some of the world's best players in recent years have come from the Caribbean, which exemplifies the importance of international scouting of these players. Past academies were often blemished and criticized for the wrongful treatment of players. They were labeled as "resembling prison" and "sweatshops" due to undesirable conditions, stalling player development. Countless players would share bathrooms with no running water, bugs would conglomerate on the floors of rooms, and coaches would threaten players with guns (Drysdale 2013). Fortunately for the players, coaches and fans of baseball, this culture has drastically changed for the better. The Cubs understand the talent the country holds as the team spent \$6-8 million upgrading their baseball academy in Santo Domingo, D.R, which features "four fields, three of grass and one artificial turf, four batting cages, eight bullpens, a weight room and two locker rooms" (Drysdale 2013). As the Rockies upgraded their academy that opened in 1997 with a new multi-million dollar renovation project, the Seattle Mariners wanted to put themselves on the

Latin American map as well. Tim Kissner, the Mariners' international director supports the team's investment in a Dominican baseball academy.

He explains, "The upside to these players is unbelievable. But, they don't have the coaching, the housing, the nutrition that kids we're signing out of the States do and they don't have organized baseball" (Drysdale 2013).

Fast forward to 2017, all 30 major league teams have training academies in the Dominican Republic. According to estimations produced by the MLB office in Santo Domingo, \$90 million is given to the local economy via creating and maintaining these training academies (Rojas 2015). The most recent academies built have cost \$4 million on average while those that are more lavish cost between \$6 million to \$8.5 million. With each training academy having an average of 30 employees, it creates more job opportunities for people in the community. The creation of these academies has been extremely influential in forming the game's next stars.

"The impact of the academies has been huge. In the Dominican Republic, 450-500 players are being signed a year, and one of the reasons for this is that each team has optimal conditions to develop them" (Rojas 2015).

As Dominican players make names for themselves in the MLB, they are also helping their country. An MLB study in 2003 and updated in 2014 explained that the United States baseball industry, which includes paying players their salaries, contributes to \$150-\$170 million to the Dominican Republic's economy. Also, the academies have additional benefits in preparing the players for the life and culture that they will face in America. Of the 30 academies, 27 are located on the eastern part of the Dominican Republic (Rojas 2015). Without these training spaces, the prevalence of Dominican and Latino players in the MLB could be significantly less.

Eleodoro Arias, a pitching coach for the Los Angeles Dodgers in the Dominican training facilities, believes the academies have changed the routes for Dominicans to play in the major leagues for the better.

“The academies have been critical to increasing the number of players that get signed, accelerating and improving their development and increasing the percentage who achieve the goal of playing in the majors. In baseball, it’s all about numbers, and the academies’ numbers are extremely positive,” Arias said. (Rojas 2015).

While Latin players have dominated baseball in our modern society, their current success did not come easily. Though the average fan isn’t always aware of it, racism in baseball toward Latin players still exists today on various levels. At the Giamatti Research Center in Cooperstown, NY, the prejudice that Latin players experience every day in Major League Baseball was highlighted in the book, Speak English! : The Rise of Latinos in Baseball, by Rafael Hermoso. Former major league baseball player and ex-manager of the Montreal Expos and San Francisco Giants, Felipe Alou explained his experiences with American attitudes toward Latin ballplayers. Throughout his time in the MLB Alou articulated an important note that Latin ballplayers face every day throughout their modern day careers, “One fact that Latins must never forget is that as ballplayers, we were, are, and always will be, foreigners in America” (Hermoso 2013, 11). The reality of modern day baseball in the United States is that players from other countries are forced to assimilate to American culture when they sign with an MLB team. This has added extra stress and adversity on the shoulders of each player in addition to maintaining a successful professional career in baseball.

To help make this difficult transition easier for Latinos to adapt to the culture in the United States, American MLB players have more frequently been learning how to speak Spanish. Current Baltimore Orioles catcher, Caleb Joseph, took Spanish classes and conducted mission work in Honduras to learn more about the language and Latin culture. After Joseph played winter baseball in Venezuela, he became familiar with experiencing a language divide first-hand: "I appreciated it when some of my Spanish-speaking teammates spoke English to me over there in Venezuela. So I try to speak Spanish to them here," (Caple 2015). Following in Joseph's footsteps was Dave Valle, a former catcher for the Seattle Mariners, Boston Red Sox, Milwaukee Brewers and Texas Rangers. After playing numerous winter baseball seasons in various Latin American countries such as Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, he was inspired to learn Spanish and about Latin culture. In addition, he started a microfinance foundation called "Esperanza International", which aids impoverished families in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. From his experiences, Valle explains,

"It gave me a better understanding of the Latin culture, and as a teammate it helped me as a leader to be that bridge between the American guys and Latino guys because I could speak a little bit of Spanish and help them" (Caple 2015).

With major league baseball players learning Spanish, it is helping to decrease the divide between American culture and those from various Latin countries. Thus, Latin ballplayers will be more comfortable interacting with Americans, which could potentially decrease racism and prejudice in the future.

From the key events of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it may seem that baseball has taken steps forward in racial inclusion. During this century, the game experienced a

setback with the Native American mascot and logo uprising. Controversy surrounding the Cleveland Indians logo caused conflict among the Native American community. The issue took center stage in the world of sports as ESPN covered the debate on television and in writing. In general, the Native American community believed that the image of Chief Wahoo, illustrated by a red-skinned face, enlarged nose, pointed ears, triangular eyes and toothy smile was racially offensive. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* took to the defense of the Native Americans explaining, “Wahoo contributes nothing to the performance of the Indians on the field and makes the team hopelessly backward in the eyes of the world” (Wulf 2014). Now, the American Civil Liberties Union is involved to protect the civil rights of American Indians. Even though it may be the more logical idea to completely remove the logo and change the team’s nickname, there are many individuals who are proponents of keeping these racially offensive images and mascots. A poll was taken on Cleveland.com to further investigate the fans’ perspective on the debate in order to find out if a majority was in favor or against removing the Chief as the team’s primary logo. The results showed that 70% of fans wanted to keep the logo, putting the organization in tough spot (Wulf 2014). Among the fans who want the logo to stay, their main defense is that they are “honoring” Native Americans as opposed to racially offending them. Specifically, this honor was directed towards Louis Sockalexis, the first Native American major leaguer who played for Cleveland in 1897 (Wulf 2014). The club’s front office had to decide quickly whether it was more important to please the fans or to be racially appropriate. In recent years, the club has actually sided with the Native Americans on this issue as they have slowly tried

to decrease the production of Chief Wahoo on items associated with the team. In 2009, a block “C” logo was constructed on the Indians’ road batting helmets to replace the Chief. In addition, the image’s presence at Progressive Field and on the 2014 media guide was reduced. Also, when the team travels to Goodyear, AZ for Spring Training, the Chief is barely worn at all out of respect for the large Native American community prevalent in the area (Wulf 2014).

As it is pretty clear what direction the Indians are going in terms of removing the offensive logo, the fan base’s support is starting to follow in the club’s footsteps. From the 2011-2014 seasons, the top-selling hat during three of the four years did not have the Chief on it (Wulf 2014). Fans would rip the offensive logo off of their hats and shirts. In fact, Ohio State Senator Eric Kearney supports this movement to abolish the Chief. He wants the team to “adopt a new nickname and new mascot free of racial insensitivity” (Wulf 2014). Also, the National Congress of American Indians became involved as they called for a name change as well. The current remains of the Chief are only on the left sleeve of the player’s jersey, and occasionally appear on the front of the ball cap. It will be interesting to see if the club considers changing the team name from the Cleveland Indians to something different as Chief Wahoo’s presence continues to decline in the future.

Last year, baseball history was made as the Tampa Bay Rays traveled to Havana, Cuba to play the Cuban National Team. The Rays won 4–1 in front of thousands of baseball fans, United States’ President Barack Obama and Cuba’s President Raul Castro. The game was played in honor of the significantly improved relations with Cuba, easing 50 years of tension from the Cold War (Red 2016). It was

the second time ever that a MLB team visited Cuba, which is a positive step for the sport. Before the game, the Rays and American fans in attendance were exposed to Cuban pre-game traditions. Loud music and dancers took the field before the first pitch. Youngsters in baseball uniforms escorted the players onto the diamond. But it was the union between the countries that shared the field, which was the most breathtaking. Both countries' national anthems were performed by a white-clad choir as the United States and Cuban flags waved above the scoreboard (Red 2016).

During the game, Obama and Castro sat directly next to each other in the front row, as both were photographed waving to fans, greeting other dignitaries, and both took part in "the wave". In an interview, Obama explained how important this game was for not only the players on the field, but also for the entire countries of America and Cuba.

"For 50 years, we had no contact with this country. If our ideas and culture (are) penetrating this society, over time that gives us more leverage to advocate for the values that we care about," Obama said. (Red 2016).

The last time a major league baseball team played in Cuba was in 1999 when the Orioles took on the Cuban National Team that spring. For Tampa Bay Rays manager, Kevin Cash, this event was an honor to be a part of, "We won't experience anything like this again. So it's a very special day for Major League Baseball, the Tampa Bay Rays, and obviously all of our players, myself included" (Orsi 2016). Over the years, countless Cuban players have illegally defected from the country in order to live their lifelong dream of playing professionally in America. Orlando Hernandez, Yoenis Cespedes, along with many others, have risked their lives enduring dangerous trips to the United States. By playing this game, the hope is that

after the improved relations between the United States and Cuba, the journey will be easier for more Cuban ballplayers to play in the major leagues.

The final important current event exemplifying the racial inclusive progress baseball has made in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was observed on April 1st, 2016. The Philadelphia City Council apologized for the grotesque, racial comments Jackie Robinson received from the manager of the Philadelphia Phillies, Ben Chapman, during a game in 1947. The council made the following statement below.

“that City Council hereby recognize, honor and celebrate April 15, 2016 as a day honoring the lifetime achievements and lasting influence of Jackie Robinson, and apologizing for the racism he faced as a player while visiting Philadelphia” (Wang 2016).

The discriminatory comments were replicated in the movie *42*, which was released in 2013 to mark the legacy of Jackie Robinson. Harold Parrot, a traveling secretary and publicist for the Brooklyn Dodgers recalled this exact event, and wrote about it in his book titled, “The Lords of Baseball.” Parrot described the Phillies manager’s in-game insults as “Chapman mentioned everything from thick lips, to the supposedly extra-thick Negro skull, which he said restricted brain growth to almost animal level compared to white folk” (Wang 2016). While these words were extremely hurtful to Robinson, there were positives that came from the discrimination he faced. As Robinson constantly dealt with racism on and off the field, a strong bond was formed between him and the rest of his Dodger teammates as they united to stop the prejudice. The Dodgers’ general manager, Branch Rickey, would certainly agree with this assertion as he saw the Chapman/Robinson dispute firsthand. Rickey, an Ohio Wesleyan University alum, believes, “Chapman did more than anybody to unite the Dodgers. When he poured out that string of

unconscionable abuse, he solidified and unified 30 men” (Wang 2016). The team’s improved cohesion was definitely apparent that season, along with future years, as the club won the 1955 World Series Championship over the New York Yankees. By creating a formal statement, the city council is honoring the man that Robinson was and is celebrating his legacy that still touches the world today.

Though there have been periods of time that have decreased racism, it’s important to note that racism in Major League Baseball has not been completely eliminated even in our modern day society. At the Giamatti Research Center in Cooperstown, NY, there was a dissertation titled, Race Discrimination by Major League Baseball fans. Written by Torben Anderson, the dissertation articulates the current prevalence that racism has on America’s Pastime. Anderson’s research analyzed how racial discrimination by baseball fans was initiated through baseball card prices and all-star voting. As a result, he believes that this significantly impacts players’ salaries and has negatively affected the salaries of players who represent a racial minority. In his research with the baseball cards, the following excerpt explains how racism is observed in the card prices for black ballplayers.

“The card price analysis reveals discrimination against black hitters which is significant in two out of the three samples. The most productive black hitters are discriminated against the most severely and compared to whites, card prices for black players tend to increase less with respect to increases in playing experience” (Anderson 1988, 304).

A similar representation of racism was also seen in all-star voting. Once again, black ballplayers were negatively impacted by racism initiated by Major League Baseball fans. “The All-Star voting results corroborate with baseball card price results for hitters: compared to whites, blacks are rewarded significantly less

for additional productivity and for experience” (Anderson 1988, 304). Clearly, racism is still extremely prevalent in Major League Baseball. Even if a black player has a better season statistically than a white player, it is still likely that they will face racism or prejudice. But not only does this create additional adversity for achieving success on the field, it also affects their financial stability. In the last chapter of the dissertation, Anderson makes conclusions from his findings about the opinions fans have about players representing different racial backgrounds.

“Finally, Chapter 7 demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between card prices and players salaries, and between All-Star vote totals and players’ salaries. This provides significant support for the assumption that preferences of baseball card collectors as manifested in card prices and of All-Star voters as manifested in vote totals are reflective of preferences of baseball fans, broadly defined” (Anderson 1988, 305).

Baseball in our current society has certainly made strides from its racism-filled history. But given the findings in this dissertation and the various racist events that have surfaced during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in baseball, the game still has a long way to go in order to become fully inclusive to players of all racial backgrounds. While the potential is there for America’s Pastime to be prejudice-free, progress still must be made in baseball’s future for total inclusion to become a reality.

#### Where are we going?

Given the progress that the sport has experienced towards eliminating racism and discrimination, it is important to predict where the game may be heading in the future. With racial minorities continuing to participate, these groups may become a part of the majority, thus, reducing the “whiteness” of baseball. The current demographics of Major League Baseball indicate the probable likelihood of this transformation. As of opening day for the 2016 MLB season, whites only make

up 59.07% of all players (Lapchick 2016, 3). Racial minorities have made their presence known in the majors as Latinos represented 28.5%. African Americans represented 8.3% in 2016, as Asian players have increased by half of a percent from 2015 to 2016 at 1.7% (Lapchick 2016, 3). Additionally, the potential for this trend is certainly indicative based off of the way teams are drafting players and scouting future superstars. In the 2015 MLB Draft, nine African American players were selected in the first round, which was the most in this round since 1992. For 25% of the top drafted players in the country to be black is a truly extraordinary step for the game to take. Given the modern diversity in baseball, it is the most transnational American sport in the entire world. This is proven by the increased number of international born players on 2016 opening day rosters. Increasing 1% from 2015, 27.5% of players on major league rosters in 2016 were born internationally (Lapchick 2016, 4). In this statistic, 18 different countries and territories are represented. As a result of the game's diversity increasing, prejudice on and off the field may decrease as players from minority groups form into superstars and role models for the rest of the world.

With this progression, teams may decide to hire more racial minority coaches/front office members in order to communicate and relate to their players easier. In 2002 and 2009, there were 10 managers of color, whereas in 2016 there were just three (Lapchick 2016, 2). As a baseball player and fan, I truly wonder why this is. Even though the current direction of the trend isn't ideal, the fact that there have been seasons where one third of teams' managers are people of color is at least promising for the future. Despite the current diversity of managers in Major League

Baseball being less than desired, luckily, this hasn't impacted the racial spread that makes up the front office staff. According to Major League Baseball, people of color make up 28.9% of Central Office professional staff (Lapchick 2016, 4). The diversity is depicted, as 10.3% are African-American, 11.8% are Latino, 4.6% are Asian, whereas 2.3% are classified as Two or More Races and Native American. Even though the historical, racialized roots will never be forgotten, the positive steps baseball has made towards inclusion on and off the diamond is remarkable.

On the other side of the baseball field, given these diverse transformations, will this affect the demographics of the sport's viewers? Potentially, more racial minorities may be interested in watching or listening to games if their race is more prevalent in the game. In a 2014 analysis, 83% of baseball's viewers were white, while the remaining percentage points were split evenly between African Americans and Hispanics (Thompson 2014). Also, baseball is one of the sports most viewed by males at 70%. But, unfortunately for the game, it may be difficult for the viewers' demographics to diversify since baseball's television ratings are on a consistent downfall. From 2007-2012, ESPN's *Sunday Night Baseball* viewers have decreased from 2.75 million to 1.78 million, while Fox's audience has plummeted from 3.37 million to 2.50 million between 2003-2012 (Lepore 2013). Obviously, the key question is: why is baseball's viewership on a rapid decline? Steve Lepore, a writer for SB Nation, argues that there are a variety of reasons. The lack of big market matchups has certainly caused less interest among the largest cities in America due to, for example, the New York Yankees rarely playing the New York Mets. Also, there are a plethora of weekly baseball broadcasts unlike those of the National Football

League that are about once per week. Football fans have to wait until Sunday to watch their favorite team in action, whereas baseball fans have 162 games that take up half of their year almost every day of the week. On a similar note, baseball fans, typically, only care about their specific team. Since there are six full months of baseball, fans are more likely to just follow their team since there are 29 other clubs that could garner television spotlight on a certain day (Lepore 2013). As the viewership of the sport decreases, it certainly doesn't bode well for a positive transformation towards audience diversity.

As a result, can the race/ethnicity of desired broadcasters change? Perhaps, this might be the case in order for broadcast networks to form better relations with their minority group listeners. Since its founding in 1979, ESPN has been one of the most well-known sports programming outlets in the world. The acronym stands for the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network with the headquarters being located in Bristol, CT. Throughout its 37 year history, the company has seen drastic improvement and expansion across the entire world. With the way baseball and other sports are progressing in terms of racial inclusion on and off the field, ESPN does not want to fall behind the times in the employees they hire. John Wildhack, ESPN's Executive Vice President of Programming and Production since 2014, believes that the future of the company's on-air talent will include more women and people of color (McCarthy 2015).

"You'll continue to see us lead the way in diversity in front of the camera. We're proud of the progress that we've made there. And we're going to continue to build on that progress," Wildhack said. (McCarthy 2015).

Within the past few years, ESPN cut ties with various white, male, on-air personalities, which is a huge step for the company. Among those who lost their jobs were Keith Olbermann, Bill Simmons, and Jason Whitlock, as all were mainstays in ESPN for many years. In place of those departed on-air, white, talents, ESPN has hired females and people of color in order to provide the network with a new, diverse flavor. On ESPN2, at 12 PM on Monday-Friday, sports fans can check out a new show called “His and Hers”, co-hosted by Jemele Hill and Michael Smith. For an African American female and African American male to co-host a weekly sports show, it defines the incredible progression towards inclusion within the broadcast journalism field.

Specifically, for baseball broadcasts on ESPN, 2015 was certainly a groundbreaking year as Jessica Mendoza became the first female MLB game analyst and was also the first to handle play-by-play duties for an MLB playoff game. Mendoza was a four-time All American softball player at Stanford University and two-time Olympian. For her incredible work and her part in creating history, she was bombarded with congratulatory comments and praise. One of her major supporters is Billy Bean, the MLB’s first Ambassador for Inclusion who came out as gay in 1999. Bean believes she is paving a path for future broadcasters by making her mark in the industry. Bean says, “Jessica Mendoza is a perfect example of how baseball continues to lead the way with groundbreaking opportunities for talent” (Miller 2015). Despite all of the increased attention from the media, Mendoza stays humble and focused on succeeding at her new job. She explains, “Everybody’s been really nice, but what did I do? I just want to keep being someone that’s doing a good

job, so I'm kind of about getting right to that" (Miller 2015). With Mendoza and other women as well as people of color becoming more influential on ESPN, the future is certainly bright for on-air diversity to progress even more.

But when the network was finally starting to see racial minorities and females take center stage, setbacks in recent news have slightly marred ESPN's footprint on the integrated broadcast world. On April 20th, 2016, ESPN fired MLB analyst and former six-time all-star pitcher Curt Schilling for making an anti-transgender post on Facebook. Immediately, he fired back at the network. Schilling believes, "Some of the most racist things I've ever heard have come out of people that are on the air at ESPN. They're some of the biggest racists in sports commentating" (Curtis 2016). ESPN and Curt Schilling had previous disagreements as the company took a long time to make a decision about either keeping or getting rid of him. In 2015, Schilling tweeted a racist meme comparing Muslims to Nazis. I believe that it was the right move for ESPN to fire Schilling. On one side, people may defend him because he has the American right to the freedom of speech. But on the other hand, he must understand that he is misrepresenting what the network stands for which is equality and inclusion. In addition, he knew that the public wasn't viewing his remarks positively and that ESPN requested that he stop causing negative attention. Since he refused to obey the requests of the network, he was rightfully fired. As a result, ESPN is nationally commended for defending these minority groups, thus, promoting diversity not just for sports fans, but the entire world.

After analyzing the progression towards diversity along with racial/ethnic inclusion, an extremely intriguing final question presents itself: will Major League Baseball expand into different countries? The league is currently based in the United States and Canada, but with the new racial and ethnic backgrounds of its participants, this possibility is definitely not out of the debate. Fox Sports and many other sports media outlets have investigated this question, despite the MLB commissioner, Robert Manfred, claiming that the league's timeline for expansion is not immediate. But, the MLB has expressed interest in increasing from 30 to 32 teams in the future (Perez 2016). The last time the MLB expanded was in 1998 when the Arizona Diamondbacks and Tampa Bay Rays debuted. Among the potential locations for expansion teams are Vancouver, Montreal, Mexico City, or somewhere else in Latin America (Perez 2016). Unfortunately for the MLB and its prospective players, expansion is not a simple matter. It is one that is complex as many considerations go into making a final decision. The process is extensive because the MLB must contemplate financial/operational plans, television and marketing rights, and the biggest question of whether the city's audience is ready for such a transformation that comes with hosting a professional club. Manfred revealed that among the potential expansion cities, Montreal and Mexico City are leading the pack. With the transition baseball has seen from racial exclusion to inclusion over the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the sport's history could change its future for the better.

Montreal would be an interesting place for the MLB to locate since it is a city that isn't new to hosting a big league team. From 1969-2004, the Montreal Expos

were the premier baseball franchise of the city, competing in the National League East Division. Other than the fact that the team rarely finished with a winning record, the fan base was not ideal. In the 36-year history of the team, the Expos never averaged 29,000 fans per game (Russell 2016). For the club, it was difficult to establish a baseball town with a consistently losing team and a non-dedicated fan base. The interesting fact about the team was how they proved the prevalence of transnationalism within baseball. Of course, for Major League Baseball, it was a positive for the game to have another team in Canada. But, the team succeeded in appealing to fans who weren't necessarily American. During the 2003-2004 season, the club played 22 home games in San Juan, Puerto Rico at Hiram Bithorn Stadium. At this point, it is certainly possible that the MLB was planning their expansion to place a team outside of the United States and Canada in Latin America. With Montreal and Mexico City being the most likely landing spots for a new team, the MLB must make a tough decision. It can play it safe by locating to a city that has already proven it can handle a team like Montreal or take the risk to locate to a completely new country where the results are unpredictable, such as Mexico City.

For a team to start up in Mexico City, MLB Commissioner Manfred explains that it "...would be new ground for us obviously," (Russell 2016). The location is currently the host to the Mexican Baseball League's Mexico City Red Devils who average less than 4,000 fans per game in their stadium that only holds about 5,200 people. The Mexican Baseball League is equivalent to that of Triple-A baseball in America, which is the highest level in the minor league system before the majors. Among the 16 teams within the Mexican Baseball League, six clubs have stadiums

that hold more than 10,000 fans, whereas only one has the capacity for 20,000 spectators (Russell 2016). With those facts in mind, for a team to move to Mexico City, a stadium at least double the size of the largest in the entire league must be constructed in order for an ideal viewership market to be produced. But, it would definitely be interesting to see a team move to Mexico City. The cultural interest in baseball is easily there with a dedicated fan base, but the city must have the necessary monetary funds to create and sustain a successful franchise.

If baseball continues to expand, fans will most likely wonder which players will be the future faces of the game. Will any of them represent racial minority groups? Though the near future looks promising for Latinos, other racial minority groups have the chance to continue to make their mark. In fact, an Asian player by the name of Shohei Ohtani is a star in the making. Often referred to as “Japan’s Babe Ruth”, Ohtani is promising player on the mound and at the plate. Last year, Ohtani was the most valuable player in Nippon Professional Baseball, a league in Japan that is considered to have the best talent outside of the MLB (Wertheim 2017). During last season, Ohtani won the home run derby and threw the fastest pitch in league history at 102.5 mph. His 22 home runs in 382 plate appearances is a better home run rate than MLB sluggers Mike Trout and Bryce Harper. Ohtani was also dominant on the mound going 10–4 with a 1.86 ERA while averaging at least one strikeout per inning. For his extreme talent, Ohtani has been scouted by numerous MLB teams and was very close to signing with the Los Angeles Dodgers as a pitcher (Wertheim 2017). Only time will tell to see where Ohtani will land, but his future in making a name for Asians in America’s Pastime is bright.

With the way baseball is progressing, the possibilities are endless on and off the field. It has gone from being the most racially exclusive sport to one of the most inclusive sports on the planet. Nowadays, regardless of one's race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, they can feel comfortable on the field. While the external thrill of the game can be watched on the diamond, how the sport unites people from all backgrounds, ages, and genders across the world represents its true beauty. As a 20-year-old college baseball player, I rarely, if ever, have seen racism during the games that I have played in. The teams that I have played on have been extremely accepting of differences among players. Also, being Jewish, has really formed my identity as a player and person, since I always consider myself as a part of a minority group. What is unique about Oberlin College and the Oberlin College Yeomen varsity baseball team, here, is that diversity is encouraged. I have played with individuals of all races, religions, and sexualities, and not one difference has divided the team in any way. I believe that this school as an institution embraces these differences among students to create unification along with a support system, which is something that money cannot buy. For me, being a baseball player at Oberlin College is an honor and a privilege that very few players get to experience in their lifetime. To represent an institution that was instrumental in creating the diversity that not just the game of baseball observes, but the entire world experiences, is truly an incredible feeling. As a rising senior entering my final year of playing organized collegiate baseball, I look forward to watching the trends listed in this paper play out.

### Conclusion

After conducting research for this independent major honors project, I have concluded that though the current state of professional baseball is racially diverse with 41.2% of its players representing racial minorities, these numbers are stagnating. Thus, the future of racial inclusion in baseball looks extremely bleak. For women, given their increasing roles in the MLB, it is possible that they can even enter baseball in the future to represent a new minority in America's Pastime.

According to the Society for American Baseball Research, the racial demographics represented from 1947-2012 depict this fact. When breaking down the presence of African American ballplayers over this time period, their inclusion in baseball can be represented in a parabola shape. In 1947, 0.9% players in professional baseball were black (Armour and Levitt). But, this number would steadily increase as players broke the color barrier and were signed to major league contracts from the Negro Leagues. In 1975, the black presence in baseball peaked, as 18.5% of players were African American. However, from that point on, this number decreases. By 2000, black ballplayers made up 12.8% of professional baseball. In 2012, the percentage would decrease to 7.2%. Though the reasons for this significant decline are difficult to pinpoint, Armour and Levitt believe that African Americans are choosing to play other sports. Given that there are not as many opportunities to play baseball in urban areas, this may be the root of the decline. Additionally, very few full college scholarships are given in baseball. The majority of Division I baseball teams are allowed 11.7 scholarships to divide among approximately 30 players (O'Rourke). In football, however, Division I FBS institutions are given 85 scholarships to divide among approximately 90 players.

Even in basketball, where teams typically don't exceed 15 players, Division I schools are allotted 13 scholarships (O'Rourke). In order to be given more money to receive a college education, playing baseball isn't the most ideal sport to play for scholarship-seeking athletes.

A similar parabola shape is seen with Asian players in professional baseball. Though the Asian presence in baseball isn't as prominent in comparison to African Americans, the rise and current decline of Asian ballplayers in America's pastime is noticeable. This minority group did not appear in baseball until 1991 where they represented 0.1% of all ballplayers. In 2005, the Asian presence peaked at 2.3% before falling to 1.9% during the 2012 season. In understanding this decline, the roots are not as clear-cut as with the case of African Americans. The falling numbers could be due to a fluctuation in professional talent since there are very few Asian ballplayers in the majors. It could also be a result of scouts valuing Latin talent over Asian talent.

The Latino presence could be baseball's saving grace in regards to preserving racial diversity. With only 0.7% of players in 1947 being Latino, the immediate presence of Latino players was not extremely noticeable. The amount of Latino players would continually increase year-after-year (Armour and Levitt). Peaking in 2009 with 28.5%, the number of ballplayers from this racial minority group was still high in 2012 at 26.9%. With such a high percentage of ballplayers representing this racial minority group, Armour and Levitt's findings make sense. Given the high interest that MLB teams have in fostering talent in Latin baseball academies, the

development of Latino players should continue to grow in the future. Thus, their future presence in baseball is bright.

Not only is the rise of Latinos and decline of African Americans and Asians visible in the general demographic statistics, these trends are also apparent when broken down by position on the baseball field. For black ballplayers, they are predominantly outfielders as 55% of African Americans played this position in 2012 (Armour and Levitt). This percentage even peaked over 60% during 2004-2010. Other positions on the diamond though, black ballplayers are not seen as frequently in which 18% are pitchers and 28% are infielders (Armour and Levitt). Catchers, though, are the least used positions by black ballplayers as they are represented by approximately 1% in 2012.

For Asians and their positions on the field, the trend is difficult to read because this racial minority group makes up such a small percentage of players in professional baseball. For nearly every position on the diamond, Asians represent approximately 1% of the players. The highest percentage of Asians is seen in pitchers where they represent approximately 2% of all players in the game. Given the flat line the graphs show until the 1990's when the Asian presence in baseball was more prominent, these numbers look to be on the incline. Thus, the future for Asians in baseball is positive with the percentages per position being on the upswing.

But, the impact Latinos have had on the diamond has been the most noticeable among racial minorities. From 2007-2012, Latinos have been growing in percentage among pitchers (25%), catchers (42%), corner infielders (21%), and

outfielders (20%) (Armour and Levitt). The only position that has seen a decline within this racial minority is with middle infielders. 2004 was the peak for Latinos in the middle infield as they represent about 51% of all players at the position. Since, this number has dropped off to 40% in 2012. With the majority of positions on the diamond having an increase amount of Latinos, the potential for whites to be the dominant racial group in America's Pastime could change in the near future.

After analyzing these trends of racial demographics in congruence with positions on the field, it is apparent that Latinos are becoming the predominant minority in baseball, taking that previous role away African Americans. In the book *Raceball*, author Rob Ruck explains this exact trend and how the Major Leagues colonized the Black and Latin game. To explain how Latinos are replacing the role of Blacks as professional baseball's primary racial minority, Ruck quotes Gary Sheffield, a veteran African American ballplayer who was a nine-time all-star and five-time Silver Slugger Award winner. In 2007, Sheffield made a public statement about how Major League Baseball teams favored Latino players over African Americans because they were "easier to control." In an interview with GQ magazine, Sheffield explained his thoughts on the controversy, "[It's about] being able to tell [Latin players] what to do—being able to control them" (Ruck 2012, xi). Thus, Sheffield said black players pleaded for more respect from their teams:

"Where I'm from, you can't control us... So if you're equally as good as this Latin player, guess who's going to get sent home?" (Ruck 2012, xi).

With MLB teams thinking that Latin players are easier to control and African Americans choosing to play different sports, as analyzed above, this trend of the decreasing numbers of blacks in baseball makes sense. As MLB teams believe that

social constraints surround African American players, the future of blacks in baseball is fading.

Despite African Americans and Asians being on the decline, inclusion within baseball can be represented in other ways. When investigating gender inclusion in America's Pastime, most baseball fans assume that the sport is dominated by males on and off the field. But little do people know, in recent years, women have made their presence known too. In 2015, there were two women who held coaching roles as Celia Clark was the Performance Coach for the Cleveland Indians and Justine Siegal was a Guest Instructor for the Oakland Athletics (Lapchick 2016). Earlier this year, Justine Siegal visited Oberlin College to talk to the student-athletes about her experiences in becoming the first female coach in MLB history during the 2009 season. Two years later, in 2011, she threw batting practice to the Cleveland Indians during spring training to become the first female ever to throw batting practice to a MLB team. I had the chance to talk with Siegal about her life-story for an article published in the *The Oberlin Review*. She explained what getting the job with the Oakland Athletics meant to her,

"It was really a breakthrough moment for professional baseball and for me. Of course, it feels amazing. I got to put on an A's uniform and go coach baseball. ... I understand the significance of being the first, but that's not why I did it. I did it because I love baseball and I love to help players," Siegal said.

Despite all of the adversity she dealt with and the constant people who said a woman could never coach professional ballplayers, she proved all of the naysayers wrong. Recently, Siegal was an assistant coach for Team Israel in the World baseball Classic.

There were also seven women who had on-field operations positions in the department of Instructors and Trainers (Lapchick 2016, 5). The presence of women in Major League Baseball has been increasing over the years. While this is extremely important for total inclusion within the game, it is often debated whether women can take the next step to actually play in the Major Leagues. This question became the focal point of the new FOX drama "Pitch." The 10-episode television series, which premiered on September 22, 2016, is about a skilled female baseball pitcher named Ginny Baker, who is called up by the San Diego Padres and becomes the first woman ever in the MLB. The drama is described as "a true story on the verge of happening" (Tweedie). While women have not yet played in the Major Leagues, there are medical professionals and scientists who are optimistic about their chances in the future.

Glenn Fleisig, the research director for the American Sports Institute and medical advisor to USA Baseball, has investigated the pitching mechanical differences between males and females. Through his research, he concluded:

"A female pitcher will likely throw a fastball with lower velocity than a male pitcher," he said. "But that is not going to disqualify her from pitching in the majors. If you watch major league baseball, you will see that there is a wide range of fastball velocities among pitchers there. And there is no obvious correlation between those who pitch the fastest and those who are the most successful pitchers." (Reynolds 2016).

With baseball being based around failure as a .300 batting average represents above average offensive success, the odds show that a pitcher will succeed about 70% of the time. This bodes well for any pitcher that can throw strikes consistently regardless of their velocity.

Women also have physiological advantages that can bolster their chances of playing in the MLB. Dr. Steve Jordan, an orthopedic surgeon at the Andrews Institute for Orthopedics and Sports Medicine who has treated numerous professional and amateur baseball players, believes women are less injury-prone than males. In his findings, Jordan explains,

“Women tend to have somewhat more laxity in their tendons than men,” he said. “They are more limber.” That looseness combined with the slower overall velocity of their pitching speed “could mean that women would be less likely” to suffer the kinds of soft tissue injuries in their shoulders and elbows, he says. (Reynolds 2016).

As optimism surrounds women playing in baseball, their success on the diamond reaffirms the positive words. The United States National Women’s Baseball Team, which is associated with USA Baseball, went 6–1 in the Women’s Baseball World Cup held in South Korea during September of 2016. With their noticeable talent, America needs to address allowing women to play baseball with males. With girls being directed to softball at the high school and collegiate levels, the barrier needs to be broken in the future for women to be able to play in the MLB. With the women’s talent shown on the international level, Dr. Jordan sees potential for women to play, especially pitch, in Major League Baseball. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Jordan says, “It will take a special athlete and someone with good off-speed pitches. But, physically, sure, a woman could pitch in the major leagues,” (Reynolds 2016). Only time will tell if it will be possible for women to make their mark in the MLB. But as they increase in receiving front office and coaching

positions as well as continue their international success, it will be difficult for the MLB to ignore their presence in the future. As Justine Siegal broke the barrier for women in coaching professional ballplayers, women and the rest of the world are waiting for a player to create a similar path.

The game of baseball is currently at a crossroads. With Latinos representing the largest minority group, Asians stagnating and African Americans decreasing in baseball, fans can only hope the racially inclusive events of the past and present will have lasting impacts on the future. Given the presence of women in the game being on the rise, it is possible for the MLB to see its first female in the coming years. By conducting this independent major honors research project, it has put baseball into perspective for me. While the numbers show a game that is racially inclusive, the future of this diversity remains in question. In the coming years, it will be important for baseball analysts to continue researching these racial and gender demographics. Should the organizations, players, as well as fans respect each other regardless of skin color and gender, America's Pastime will have the power to unite the world for generations to come.

\*I, Darren Zaslau, affirm that I have adhered to the honor code on this independent major honors project.

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## **Trips**

Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum – Pittsburgh, PA – 10/20/16

Roberto Clemente Museum – Pittsburgh, PA – 12/21/16

National Baseball Hall of Fame – Cooperstown, NY – 1/12/17

Negro Leagues Baseball Museum – Kansas City, MO – 1/24/17