

# **Joe Black: Athlete, Activist, Teacher, and Executive**

**By Peter Dreier<sup>1</sup>**

Joe Black helped lead the Brooklyn Dodgers to the 1952 pennant, going 15-4 with 15 saves, and a 2.15 ERA. He won the NL's Rookie of the Year Award and became the first African American pitcher to win a World Series game. Black was the team's ace. "Let's put it this way," Dodger manager Chuck Dressen told reporters. "Where would we be without him?"<sup>2</sup> "He put us in the World Series," teammate Carl Erskine said. "He was the main cause to get us there."<sup>3</sup>

During the middle of the 20th century, Black, along with Joe Page, Jim Konstanty, and Hoyt Wilhelm, helped define the importance of relief pitching as a specialty. Managers and fans began to recognize relievers' value to teams rather than view them as failed starting pitchers.

Black didn't join the Dodgers until he was 28 years old. By 1952, only six (out of 16) MLB teams had hired their first black player. Even the pioneering Dodgers had a de facto quota on the number black athletes it was willing to put on its roster at the same time. So Black spent seven years in the Negro Leagues, then one season in the minors, before he made his major league debut.

Black damaged his pitching arm after his outstanding 1952 rookie season and was never again the same caliber of player. He was out of the majors by 1957. But

he wasn't through with baseball – or using his considerable talents to overcome social barriers and challenges.

With a college degree, he returned to his hometown of Plainfield, New Jersey to become a schoolteacher and baseball coach. In 1963, he began working for Greyhound bus lines as a “special markets representative” and soon worked his way up to become the company’s first African American vice president.

During and after his career with Greyhound, Black kept close ties with MLB. He served as an official of the Baseball Assistance Team (an organization that provides aid to needy former baseball people), as an assistant to the Baseball Commissioner (where he mentored young players about their career choices), as an advocate for former Negro League players, and as a keeper of the Jackie Robinson flame, reminding young players and the general public about his former roommate’s life and legacy, and pushing MLB to strengthen its commitment to racial integration and uplift.

Many writers describe Black’s trajectory as a player who rose “out of nowhere” to lead the Dodgers to the 1952 pennant. This is misleading. As Black told Roger Kahn: “If I’d gone into organized ball when I was 18, the way could throw...But I couldn’t go into organized ball until Jackie made it and the quotas let me, and if we want to get sad, we can think that I pitched my greatest games in miserable ball parks, in the colored league, with nobody watching.”<sup>4</sup>

But Black was not resentful. Throughout his life, he expressed appreciation for the opportunities he had to play MLB and to use that experience, plus his college education and hard work, as a springboard for his career as a teacher, a corporate executive, and a participant in the civil rights movement.

### **Early Years**

Black was born on February 8, 1924 in Plainfield, New Jersey, an industrial and residential city of slightly over 30,000 people, 13 miles from Newark. He was the third of six children born to Joseph Black and Martha Watkins Black. When Black was five, the Great Depression devastated the country, but it hit the black community particularly hard. His father was a skilled mechanic who had a hard time finding work and had to resort to various menial part-time jobs. Around 1937, he found a job thanks to President Franklin Roosevelt's Works Progressive Administration and later worked in a factory. His mother took in laundry, worked as a cook and housekeeper for white families. At nine years old, Joe began selling newspapers to help the family make ends meet. In high school, he cleaned floors at night in local office buildings. He and his siblings wore hand-me-down clothes, but they were never hungry. His parents were religious, strict and demanded respectful behavior. Joe's mother never got past third grade and could barely read or write, but she insisted that her children do well in school and made sure they did their homework. "Ain't nobody better than you" she insisted.

When he was growing up, black families represented about one-tenth of Plainfield's population. Many aspects of the city, including the movie theaters, the roller-skating rink, and the public schools, were de facto racially segregated. But Black grew up in a racially mixed working class neighborhood. Two thirds of the students in his elementary school were white, but most of their families, like those of his black classmates, were on public assistance. Black had white friends in school and in the community, including in his athletic activities. In junior high school, where most students were white and middle and upper-middle class, Black expressed his competitive instincts in the classroom as well as in sports. He and other low-income students "made a determination to provide that we were not dumb despite the fact that we were poor."<sup>5</sup> Kind teachers encouraged him and he began to read books, newspapers, and magazines beyond his school assignments.

At Plainfield High School (PHS), black students were routinely assigned to the non-college track. When Black's mother learned about this, she marched into the school principal's office and demanded that her son put placed in the college prep classes. The school official complied with her wishes.

The Black family was too poor to afford a bat, ball and glove for their son, so he practiced by throwing rocks at circles he drew on the wall of a building.<sup>6</sup> Eventually a sympathetic group of Plainfield police officers provided Black and his friends with equipment and uniforms and taught them how to play team baseball.<sup>7</sup>

By the time he reached PHS, Black was an outstanding athlete as well as an excellent student. He played first base, third base, left field, and catcher for the baseball team, but didn't pitch. He was a star on the high school football, earning All-State honorable mention as an end. He also played on PHS's basketball team.<sup>8</sup> He was named PHS's outstanding athlete for 1941-42.<sup>9</sup>

Black was fortunate that Plainfield had many amateur and semi-pro sports leagues – the Union County League, the Twilight League, the Junior Baseball League, and the Boys Club, among them -- that supplemented his high school athletic activities on weekends and during summers. Some of these teams' rosters included former and current minor league and college players. Although he didn't pitch for PHS, Black took the mound for other teams. He frequently pitched and played another position – catcher, infielder, or outfielder -- in the same game. In the summer of 1940, after his sophomore year, he pitched and played shortstop for two teams in the same league -- the Nu Blues <sup>10</sup> and the Dutch Lions.<sup>11</sup> When school resumed in the fall, he spent some weekends playing for the Colored All-Stars.<sup>12</sup> The following summer, after his junior year, he played for the Bound Brook Indians in the Twilight League and the Woody Athletic Club in the city's Recreation League, for whom he pitched a two-hitter.<sup>13</sup> During his senior year, he helped form and played for the Plainfield Black Yankees that competed against local semi-pro sandlot teams comprised mostly of white players. In a June 1942 game, Black, playing

second base and hit two homers against the Marino Athletic Club.<sup>14</sup> In addition to playing on the PHS football and basketball teams, he played on the Boys Club basketball team. A headline in the local paper, the *Plainfield Courier-News*, in March 1942 touted Black's winning foul shot for the Boys Club's basketball team.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout high school, as a result of his athletic achievements, Black's name was often in the local papers. He enjoyed the chance to "walk through the halls of the high school with the feeling that I was an important person," an "identity not usually accorded a person who came from a welfare family."<sup>16</sup>

Black dreamed of playing major league baseball. As he was nearing his high school graduation in 1942, that dream was shattered. PHS had many outstanding ballplayers, and many big-league scouts paid attention to some of Black's teammates, but not to him. He told the story of his disenchantment to Roger Kahn for his 1971 book, *The Boys of Summer*, in his 1983 autobiography, *Ain't Nobody Better Than You*, on ABC's "Good Morning America" in April 1997, in a 2000 interview with one of his college fraternity brothers, and elsewhere.

"I was batting a .400 when I was a senior in high school. The scouts were talking to other people, but they didn't speak to me. I said, "Hey, I am the captain of the team. I out-hit them all—why don't you sign me?" A scout said, "Because you are colored, and they don't play baseball in the big leagues." As Black recalled: "I got mad and hateful. I had a scrapbook of ballplayers, and I tore up all of their

pictures—they were all white. The one picture that I didn't tear was Hank Greenberg, my idol. He was big and hit home runs, and that's what I wanted to do." My mother said, 'Son you can't be mad.' I said, "But mama, white people won't let me play!"<sup>17</sup>

### **College, Army, and the Negro Leagues**

Impressed with Black's intelligence and athletic talent, three white PHS teachers, including his baseball and football coach Jack Liddy, encouraged him to apply for college scholarships.<sup>18</sup> He received a partial football scholarship at Morgan State College [now University], an historically black institution in Baltimore.

During the summer after his 1942 high school graduation, Black kept up his frenetic pace, playing on several teams in different local leagues, including the Black Yankees, for whom he pitched and played in the infield, while also working at night in a factory.<sup>19</sup> (The team took the same name as a team in the Negro Leagues but it was a different entity). In a game on May 31, Black played second base and hit two home runs.<sup>20</sup> Two weeks later, Black pitched, played second base, had two hits, and scored three runs.<sup>21</sup> A week later, the *Plainfield Courier-News* reported that "Big Joe Black, pitcher, infield, outfielder, and catcher, depending on the needs of his team, took a turn on the mound Sunday afternoon and entered baseball's mythical hall of fame by hanging up a no-hit, no-run game at the expense of the Bound Brook Indians, 12-0, at Cedarbrook Park."<sup>22</sup> That summer he also pitched for the Abbond-Royal team, a business-sponsored club in the Plainfield area Twilight League.

Black left for Morgan State in September 1942, the first member of his family to attend college.

Growing up in Plainfield, Black had felt the stings of prejudice and discrimination, but moving to Baltimore, a segregated city, was a very differently experience. As he recalled:

“When I got off the train and arrived on the campus, I walked one block that first Sunday to a Presbyterian church. The man said, ‘You can’t come in here—this is for white people.’ I replied, ‘Why? I’m a Presbyterian.’”

“You would go into a store to try on a pair of shoes, and you couldn’t try them on,” Black recalled. “You couldn’t try a coat on. You bought stuff, but you couldn’t bring it back—whether it fits or not.”<sup>23</sup>

“It was frustrating,” Black said. “Your life turns all around.” His parents, who had originally come from the South, told him, “You learn to survive.” These experiences shaped Black’s outlook. “At Morgan, I learned what it was to be colored, but I also learned that I was somebody,” he said.<sup>24</sup> In college, he learned about Black history and accomplishments that gave him a new-found pride in his race.<sup>25</sup> He joined Omega Psi Phi fraternity and made lasting friendships.

At PHS, Black had white friends and teammates and had also played for several all-black semi-pro teams, but typically they played against all-white or



integrated teams. At Morgan State, all his teammates, and all their opponents, from historically black colleges, were African American.

Although Morgan State didn't have a baseball team, Black was still a three-sport athlete in college – playing end and defensive back for the football team, playing center on the basketball team, and competing in the high jump and hurdles on the track team.

In the summer of 1943, after his freshman year, Black took a job at Morgan State working on the campus grounds. On some weekends he would return to New Jersey to visit his family and play for the Orange Triangles, an all-black baseball team based in Orange, a Newark suburb. During a weekend when he remained in Baltimore, his college friend Cal Irvin (brother of future New York Giants star Monte Irvin) suggested they attend a Negro League game between the Baltimore Elite Giants and the Newark Eagles at Bugle Field, a few miles from the campus. During the game, Vernon Green, the Elite Giants' business manager, overheard Black boasting that he was as good or even better than some of the players on the field. Green encouraged Black to try out for the team. He played a few games at shortstop and hit poorly, and asked the manager to give him a chance to pitch.<sup>26</sup> The official Negro League record book lists Black as having pitched in two games for the Elite Giants that season, but it is likely that he played in more games than that.<sup>27</sup> (Because Morgan State didn't have a baseball team, Black did not jeopardize his

amateur status playing for the Elite Giants, according to the rules of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association, the athletic conference of historically black colleges). Black also played a few games that summer for the semi-pro Abbond Celtics baseball team in Plainfield's Twilight League.<sup>28</sup>

Black's college career was interrupted by military service. The 19-year old Black received his draft notice in June and joined the Army Medical Corps on August 17, 1943.<sup>29</sup> He served for 2 ½ years in the Army, ending in March 1946.<sup>30</sup>

After a brief stint at Fort Dix in New Jersey, Black was sent to the Veterans Administration Hospital in Northport, Long Island, near Stewart Field, an air force base. He was assigned to an all-black unit in the Physiotherapy Department, trained to work with shell-shocked soldiers suffering from various mental disorders.<sup>31</sup> Sidney Poitier, later an acclaimed actor, was one of his fellow soldiers in the unit.<sup>32</sup> He was later transferred to Camp Barkeley in Texas, serving in the medical unit for seven months. In the spring of 1945, his battalion was moved to Camp Crowder in Missouri. He pitched for the military base teams in Long Island and Missouri.<sup>33</sup> "Sixteen months after I was drafted before I touched a rifle. I pitched a lot," he told Roger Kahn.<sup>34</sup>

The Stewart Field team was racially integrated but Camp Crowder, including its athletic teams, was segregated. One newspaper article described Black's squad as the "colored Camp Crowder" and "all-Negro" team with the exception of one

white player.<sup>35</sup> However Black was so good that the military brass made an exception and allowed him to pitch for the otherwise all-white baseball team. Tommy Bridges, an All-Star pitcher with the Detroit Tigers, was the team's coach and helped Black improve this pitching.<sup>36</sup> When the team went on road trips to play other military teams or college teams, Black had to stay in the bus while his white teammates ate at Southern segregated restaurants. Once, however, his white teammates insisted that he be allowed to eat with the rest of them. When the restaurant manager refused, the white players trashed the place in solidarity with their sole black teammate. When Camp Crowder's basketball season came around, however, Black was back on an all-black team.<sup>37</sup>

While stationed in Long Island, he also played with the Carters football team in Plainfield's semi-pro league on weekends.<sup>38</sup> He was also he was allowed to play for the Elite Giants during weekend passes and furloughs. He pitched nine games in 1944 (going 3-3) and one game in 1945 (0-1).

A month after his Army discharge, Black was back with the Elite Giants for the summer. He returned to Morgan State for his sophomore year, playing on the football and basketball teams. The following summer, 1947, he returned to the Elite Giants. During the fall of 1947, his junior year, Black again played football, but the idea of taking such physical punishment didn't appeal to him, so he quit after a few games and decided instead to pursue a career in pro baseball. He left Morgan State

and accepted an offer of \$800 month to pitch in the 1947-48 Venezuela winter league for the Magallanes team.<sup>39</sup> He started 10 games, finished six, relieved in seven more, pitched 94 innings, won four games and lost seven.<sup>40</sup>

Black was one of many black players who played in Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s to earn extra money, improve their skills, enjoy the music, food and culture of those societies, and escape the humiliations of America's Jim Crow apartheid system. He spent several winters playing in those leagues and became fluent in Spanish. Black served as translator for Puerto Rican Roberto Clemente when they both played for Montreal and for Cuban Sandy Amoros when the Dodgers brought him up from the minors in 1952.<sup>41</sup>

In March 1948, he rejoined the Elite Giants and played with them each spring and summer until 1950. During his years with the Elite Giants, he won 45 games and lost 37, while pitching against some of the greatest players in baseball history, including Josh Gibson, Piper Davis, and Buck Leonard as well as those who would later make it to the majors, including Monte Irvin, Larry Doby, and Luke Easter. In 1946 and 1947 he led the Negro National League in games pitched (20 and 26, respectively), but his best years were 1948 through 1950, when he was 10-5, 11-7 and 8-3, as a starting pitcher. In 1947 he was selected for the All-Star East-West game, pitching the six, seventh and eighth innings before 38,402 fans at the Polo Grounds in New York. He made the All-Star team again in 1948, allowing only two

hits in three final innings, at Yankee Stadium.<sup>42</sup> Black helped the Elite Giants win the 1949 Negro League National Championship. In 1950 he was the starting pitcher for the East team at Comiskey Park.<sup>43</sup>

Negro League schedules included games in big league stadiums like Shibe Park in Philadelphia, Wrigley Field in Chicago, and Briggs Stadium in Detroit, but it also includes lots of barnstorming, traveling on beat-up buses to small cities and towns to play local semi-pro teams. On several occasions, Black returned to his hometown to play against local teams, where he was the star attraction, his name prominently displayed on posters and newspaper ads.<sup>44</sup> But on one occasion in June 1949, Black, who was scheduled to pitch for the Elite Giants in a game in North Plainfield, skipped the game because, the *Plainfield Courier-News* noted, he was “busy with exams at Morgan State college.”<sup>45</sup>

On the road, the Elite Giants stayed in segregated hotels or with local black families. They endured uncomfortable beds and whatever food they could afford on their two dollar a day meal stipend. Occasionally, when there was no place for the team to stay, and no restaurant that accepted black customers, they slept and ate on the bus. They sometimes played an afternoon game in one city and then traveled to another town to play a night game.

During the 1949-50 off-season, he returned to Morgan State to take courses toward his degree in psychology and physical education. “At Morgan, I learned what it was to be colored, but I also learned that I was somebody,” said Black.

After graduating from Morgan State in 1950, when he was 26 years old, Black pitched for the Elite Giants during the summer and then joined a barnstorming team of Negro League players led by Luke Easter, who by then was playing for the Cleveland Indians. In the fall, Black headed for Cuba, where he joined the Cienfuegos Elefantes for the winter leagues, which stretched from early October through mid-February. In his first game, Black pitched a five hitter, giving up only one run. Playing for the worst team in the league, he pitched 92 innings in 16 games, and was 5-7 for the season, with a 4.22 ERA.

In Cuba, Black played against the best competition he’d ever faced, including many current and future major leaguers – white and black. The quality of play in the Cuban league was on a par with Triple-A baseball. The accommodations were a big improvement from the Negro Leagues in terms of the pay and schedule. Teams played only three or four times a week, giving players time to enjoy the Cuban nightclubs, restaurants, and beaches. Most players knew not to over-indulge in these pleasures, because their on-field performances were being watched by major league scouts.

During his stay in Cuba, Black met Fidel Castro several times. In 1950, Castro was a young lawyer and a budding politician who often attended winter league games. One day he asked Black why he was warming up from ten feet behind the rubber. Black explained, in Spanish, that it stretched his muscles and helped him with his control. Castro told Black, “you’re loco.” On another occasion, Black played a one-on-one basketball game with Castro. Later, when Black was with the Dodgers in 1952, Castro wrote him several friendly letters in Spanish.<sup>46</sup>

### **Making the Majors**

In October 1945, when Black was 21 years old, still in college, and pitching for the Elite Giants, Branch Rickey signed Robinson to a contract with the Dodgers’ minor league team in Montreal.

‘When Rickey signed Jackie, I was 18 all over again,’ Black recalled in the “Good Morning America” interview on ABC. “I started dreaming. And that’s what happened to most of the guys in the Negro leagues. You forgot your age. You said, ‘If Jackie makes it, I can make it.’ ”

Black desperately wanted to play in the majors, but he also felt some loyalty to the Negro Leagues who gave him a chance to play professionally. In a 1948 interview with Marion Jackson, syndicated in Negro papers, Black asked, “Why is it, when I pick up a Negro paper, there are columns of stories on Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, and Larry Doby, and only a few sentences on the Negro leagues

and players? Your sportswriters primarily get your support from the Negro leagues and you say you want them to survive, but how can they survive if they don't get the proper support."<sup>47</sup>

Black got his opportunity in 1951, when the Brooklyn Dodgers purchased his contract, along with that of infielder Jim Gilliam, from the Baltimore Elite Giants in 1951 for \$11,000.<sup>48</sup> He had been a good but not great pitcher for the Elite Giants, but his performance in the Negro Leagues and in Cuba persuaded the Dodgers to give him a chance.

The Dodgers sent him to their top minor league teams for the 1951 season. In Montreal, in the International League, he started 13 games, relieved in another 13 games, and posted a 7-9 W-L record with a 4.38 ERA. In St. Paul, in the American Association, he started 7 games (completing six of them), relieved in another two games, and posted a 4-3 W-L record with an excellent 2.25 ERA.<sup>49</sup>

During the winter he returned to Cuba to play for the Cienfuegos team. The previous winter, he earned \$600 a month, but in 1951 they upped his pay to \$1,000, the going rate for players who had made it to Triple-A.<sup>50</sup> That winter, both Ray Noble (a Cuban catcher who played for the New York Giants), and Cienfuegos manager Billy Herman tutored Black on improving his control, pitching to corners, and setting batters up. That mentoring helped improve Black's self-confidence as a pitcher, not just a thrower. "It was there," Black recalled, "that I truly learned to



combine the mental and physical aspects of pitching.”<sup>51</sup> That winter he pitched in 27 games and 163 innings, and led the Cuban League in wins (15-6) and ERA (2.42).<sup>52</sup>

Dodger brass, including vice president Buzzie Bavasi, visited Cuba that winter and were impressed with Black’s performance. Particularly notable was his victory against Havana pitcher Hoyt Wilhelm by a 2-1 margin.<sup>53</sup> (Less than a year later, the two pitchers would be battling for NL Rookie of the Year honors).

Before the end of the Cuban season, the Dodgers hired Herman as a coach. He provided the Dodgers with regular progress reports on Black’s pitching performance and encouraged the Dodgers to advance him to the big leagues.<sup>54</sup> In January, the Dodgers wired Black, inviting him to spring training in Vero Beach, Florida.

Black’s time in Cuba opened his eyes and “gave me an opportunity to recognize that all societies don’t use skin pigmentation as an evaluation tool.”<sup>55</sup> Even in Montreal and St. Paul – far from the American South – Black confronted racism, much more from opposing teams’ players than from the fans. They used the N-word and other slurs.<sup>56</sup> To retaliate, Black wasn’t afraid to brush back the opposing players with his powerful fastball, including an occasional beanball aimed at their heads -- a habit he continued in the majors.

Many of the best Negro League players were passed over by major league teams because they were too old. But even some of the first wave of black major leaguers, including Black, were older than most of their white counterparts. The racial barrier kept even the best black players in Negro Leagues and World War 2 kept many of them out of pro baseball for between one and four years. Many white players spent much of their time in the service playing baseball on military teams, but few black athletes had that opportunity. Jackie Robinson, a college athlete, Army veteran, and Negro League player, was 28 years old before he played his first game for the Dodgers in 1947.

After Robinson broke the color barrier, MLB integrated at a snail's pace. By 1951, African Americans held only 20 of the 400 spots on big league rosters. Only six of baseball's 16 major league team had a black player — four with the Dodgers (Robinson, Dan Bankhead, Roy Campanella, and Don Newcombe), six with Bill Veeck's Cleveland Indians (Larry Doby, Satchel Paige, Minnie Minoso, Luke Easter, Harry Simpson, and Sam Jones), two with the St. Louis Browns (Hank Thompson and Willard Brown), four with the New York Giants (Monte Irvin, Ray Noble, Artie Wilson, and Willie Mays), two with the Boston Braves (Sam Jethroe and Luis Marquez), and two with the Chicago White Sox (Sam Hairston and Bob Boyd). All 20 had played in the Negro Leagues.<sup>57</sup>

Black was one of several former Negro League pitchers in the Dodgers' system. Roy Partlow and John Wright never made it beyond triple-A. Dan Bankhead, who was the first black pitcher in the majors, had a brief cup of coffee with the Dodgers in 1947, returned in 1950 (with a 9-4 record), and finished his major league sojourn in 1951 with an 0-1 record). Don Newcombe, who had earned the Rookie of the Year award in 1949, was the biggest success story. In his first three seasons, he won 56 and lost only 28, including a 20-9 record 1951, when he led the NL in strikeouts. But he entered military service in 1952 and was unavailable to the Dodgers.

With seven seasons in the Negro Leagues as well as pitching in the army, Venezuela, Cuba, and a year in the minors, Black was hardly the typical rookie. Despite all that experience, he still had to earn a place on the team. He had pitched 170 innings in the minors and another 163 innings in the Cuban winter league, so his arm was sore when he showed up at the Dodgers' 1952 spring training camp in Vero Beach.<sup>58</sup> He didn't tell anyone. He had neither a contract nor a place on the roster.

The team's spring training facility, Dodgertown, was integrated. Black and white players slept, ate, and practiced together in the compound. It had its own swimming pool, basketball court, pool tables, and occasional movie nights. But the world immediately outside Dodgertown was segregated. Blacks couldn't eat in the

restaurants or get a haircut and were banned from Vero Beach's beaches, movie theaters, and golf courses. Laundries wouldn't take their clothing. If black players wanted to go to church, they had to travel to Gifford, a black community outside Vero Beach. When the Dodgers traveled to play exhibition games, black and white players had to stay in separate hotels.<sup>59</sup> In Miami, the black players stayed at the Sir John Hotel in Overtown, a black neighborhood. The hotel had a swimming pool, served soul food, and hosted black celebrities like Nat King Cole, Sammy Davis Jr., Dinah Washington, and Sugar Ray Robinson. Black became friendly with some of the celebrities.<sup>60</sup>

Although Black had experienced Jim Crow segregation before, that didn't make it easier to adjust to the humiliations and disrespect. The Dodgers assigned him to room with Robinson, whom he first met in 1946 in Baltimore. They met again when Robinson walked into the room they were sharing in Vero Beach. Looking at Black's tall powerful physique, Robinson asked, "Can you fight?" "Yeah," Black responded. "But we're not going to fight," Robinson said. He explained: "We can't allow those crazy sons of bitches to bother us. We have the ability to play, and we're going to show them that we're in baseball to stay."<sup>61</sup>

Black recalled that Robinson took the time to "impress upon me the psychological changes that must be endured by the Black ballplayers."<sup>62</sup> Black admired him for his talent, aggressive play, and willingness to endure the ugly slights

early in his career in order to make sure the “experiment” was a success. Comparing himself to Robinson, Black recalled how his friend had endured racial slurs from fans and opposing players, even years after he’d established himself as a star ballplayer: “I couldn’t have done it. I couldn’t have taken what he was taking even when I got up there to the big leagues. I might have taken it for a couple of days or maybe a week, but then I’d have grabbed one of them in the dugout runway or outside the ballpark and popped him...and right there Mr. Rickey’s whole black program would have gone down the drain.”<sup>63</sup>

Rooming with Robinson helped give Black the perspective he needed to channel his anger on the mound. Several white Dodgers extended their hand in friendship to Black, including Preacher Roe, who was the first player to greet him when he arrived at the clubhouse. Roe was an outstanding pitcher who grew up in rural Arkansas, and who, like Black, was one of the few players to have graduated from college.<sup>64</sup> Other players helped him adjust to pitching in the majors. Roy Campanella told him not to tax himself too much while warming up before games. He observed that he was “throwing your best pitches before the game.”<sup>65</sup>

Black’s teammates, sportswriters, and manager Chuck Dressen noticed both his work ethic and his fastball. The *New York Times* headlined one spring training article, “Black Impresses Dressen with Speed in his First Workout Before Dodger Pilot.”<sup>66</sup>

Black was not a cinch to make the team. The Dodgers had several pitching hopefuls who were competing for a place on the roster. Black's hopes ebbed and flowed each time he took the mound during spring training. In his first outing, against the Braves on March 7, Black gave up three hits, two runs, and a walk, and threw a wild pitch, in one inning of work.<sup>67</sup> On March 13, Dressen gave him another chance to prove himself in a game against the Phillies. The manager handed him the ball and said, "Here. You're to go nine innings." He was ahead 5-0 in the sixth inning when the Phillies got to him, including a home run by Willie Jones.<sup>68</sup>

After the game, Black approached Dressen and told him "I don't think that was a fair test. No pitcher had gone more than three innings and yet I was asked to go nine although I have had less work than any of them." That was a brazen move for a rookie who hadn't yet made the team, but it worked. Dressen apologized. "You're absolutely right. It's my fault, not yours," he said. "I'll give you another chance."<sup>69</sup>

In his next outing, Black pitched the final two innings of a game against the Dodgers' Fort Worth minor league team and allowed only two hits and no runs, while striking out three batters.<sup>70</sup> In another spring training game, on March 22, Black started against the Boston Red Sox. He pitched six innings, gave up seven hits (including a first inning double by Ted Williams), and three unearned runs, walked one, and struck out three.<sup>71</sup> On April 3 against the Braves, Black pitched six scoreless

innings, giving up only two hits.<sup>72</sup> Six days later he pitched the last seven innings in relief against the then-minor league Baltimore Orioles, scattering seven hits and giving up one run.<sup>73</sup>

His spring training outings were good but not spectacular. He pitched 26 innings in six games, giving up 26 hits and 13 runs. Two days before the season's opening game, Dressen told Black he had made the roster. The major league minimum salary at the time was \$5,000. The Dodgers offered him \$6,000.<sup>74</sup>

Earning a spot on the Dodgers 1952 roster turned out to be fortuitous. The Negro Leagues, which had thrived during World War 2, were faltering. As major and minor league teams gradually hired black players, fans' interest in the Negro Leagues declined. Some franchises turned into separate barnstorming teams. The Elite Giants folded after the 1950 season, Black's last year with the team.

### **Black's Rookie Season**

The previous October, the Dodgers had endured the heartbreak of losing the pennant to the Giants – thanks to Bobby Thomson's 9<sup>th</sup> inning walk-off home run in the third game of the playoffs – after having been 13 ½ games in first place in mid-August. The 1952 team had the same starting line-up, including Gil Hodges, Duke Snider, Pee Wee Reese, Carl Furillo, Billy Cox, Andy Pafko, Campanella, and Robinson. The pitching staff was also the same, with the exception of Newcombe, who was in the military, and the addition of Billy Loes.<sup>75</sup> In spring training and at

the start of the 1952 season, most of the players believed that they would win the pennant.

Although he made the team, manager Chuck Dressen didn't put Black into a game until May 1. After six innings, the Dodgers had used 11 pitchers and were losing to the Cubs 7-0 at Wrigley Field. Dressen brought Black to the mound to start the seventh inning. He struck out slugger Hank Sauer (who later was named the year's NL MVP), struck out third baseman Randy Jackson, and got catcher Toby Atwell (who was leading the NL in batting) to ground out to second base.<sup>76</sup> As Black recalled to Roger Kahn years later: "I reared back and fired and nobody touched me."<sup>77</sup> He was taken out for a pinch hitter in the 8<sup>th</sup> inning. The game put the Dodgers in first place, ahead of the Giants, where they would remain for the rest of the season.

Black didn't get into another game for nine days. On May 10, he came in in relief against the Philadelphia Phillies at Ebbets Field in the 7<sup>th</sup> inning with the Dodgers behind 4-0. He pitched the final three innings, faced 11 batters, gave up three hits, walked one batter and struck out one hitter, and didn't allow any runs.<sup>78</sup>

After the second outing, Dressen gained confidence in his rookie pitcher. He earned his first win on May 22 against the Reds at Ebbets Field. When he took the mound to start the eighth inning, the Dodgers were behind 7-3, but they rallied in the bottom of the eighth inning to take an 8-7 lead. Black gave up only one hit in



two innings of relief and got the win. At the All-Star break in mid-season, Black was only 3-0 with five saves in 38 and two-thirds innings, but Dressen relied on him much more in the second half of the season. Between July 16 and July 30, Black pitched ten times, winning three games, losing one, and saving three others. In seven of those games, he didn't allow a run. He pitched in 13 games in August, winning five, losing none, and saving three games.<sup>79</sup>

By the end of the season, he had appeared in 56 games with a 15-4 record and 15 saves. Black was particularly effective against the rival Giants, who nipped at the Dodgers for much of the season in second place. He pitched 29 innings in relief in nine games against the Giants, winning three without a loss, and with a remarkable 0.61 ERA.<sup>80</sup>

Dressen was testing Black to see if he could throw more innings. He started Black in his two final games of the season, thinking that he might have to use him as a starter in the World Series. He calculated the timing of Black's starts so he would be available to pitch the opening game on October 1.

On September 21, Black pitched a complete game – a three-hitter – beating the Boston Braves at Braves Field. Black even got a hit and knocked in two runs.<sup>81</sup> On September 27, the next-to-last game of the season, Dressen started Black against the Braves again, this time at Ebbets Field. His performance was not as good. He pitched five innings, gave up five hits (including two home runs) and five earned

runs, walked two batters and only struck out one hitter. He was taken out for a pinch hitter in the fifth inning. The Braves won 11-3 with Black as the losing pitcher.<sup>82</sup>

Black, who stood 6'2" and 220 pounds, with broad shoulders, long arms, and big hands, had only two pitches – a powerful fastball and a “nickel curve,” which broke like a slider. He made up for his limited repertoire by having pinpoint control. He could throw to spots, putting hitters off-balance. There were no radar guns to measure pitching speed back then, but a crude instrument called a “cathode ray oscillograph” clocked Black’s fastball at 93.2 miles per hour.<sup>83</sup> The best hitters in the National League couldn’t touch him. In 142 innings, he struck out 85 batters, walked only 41, and gave up just nine home runs.

As the season progressed, Black gained more notoriety. Toward the end of the season, Black received a letter that included a death threat from someone claiming to be a Giants’ fan. Black had to endure having a police escort to and from the ballpark for the rest of the Dodgers’ games with the Giants.<sup>84</sup> The story made news around the country.

The Dodgers ended the season with a 96-57 record, finishing 4 ½ games head of the second-place Giants.

Several key Dodger stars, including Campanella, Furillo, and Cox, had injuries during the season which limited their playing time. The 1951 Dodgers had a team batting average of .275 with 184 home runs. The 1952 Dodgers batted .262

with 153 homers. Black missed having Campanella, who played in only 128 games, behind the plate for part of the season.

Black lifted the team up to help compensate for the loss of Newcombe and for the injuries to the other mainstays of the Dodgers' pitching rotation. Roe, who had a 22-3 record the previous year, won half as many games in 1952, with an 11-2 record. Carl Erskine, who appeared in 46 games in 1951, pitched only 33 times the next year, but delivered a 14-6 record. Ralph Branca, who pitched in 42 games and was 14-12 the previous year (which ended with his giving up Thomson's homer), appeared in only 16 games and was 4-2 in 1952. Several other Dodgers pitchers had good years, including Billy Loes (13-8) and Ben Wade (14-9). Clyde King had been the Dodgers top reliever in 1951; he pitched in 48 games, 45 of them in relief, and posted a 14-7 W-L record. Riddled with injuries in 1952, King pitched in only 23 games and 43 innings, all in relief, ending with a 2-0 record.

Because of the starting pitchers' injuries, Dressen used Black as a utility reliever, rather than the kind of specialized short reliever, long reliever, or closer that we take for granted today. In his 54 relief appearances, he pitched less than two innings 22 times, two innings 17 times, three innings four times, four innings four times, five innings three times, six innings twice, seven innings once, and eight innings once. Eight of his 11 stints pitching four innings or more occurred down the stretch in August and September.<sup>85</sup>

The Dodger fans appreciated Black. On September 9, they honored the rookie pitcher with Joe Black Night at Ebbets Field. More than 1,200 fans from his hometown of Plainfield showed up. The Plainfield High School marching band played the national anthem and the city's mayor presented Black with a \$2,000 check. Black had pitched seven innings in relief the day before, so the Plainfield fans didn't get to see him on the mound that night.<sup>86</sup>

By then, many sports writers were touting Black as a possible winner of both Rookie of the Year and MVP awards. Black's teammates and sportswriters admired Black's determination, work ethic, competitiveness, intelligence, easy going personality, his sharp (and sometimes caustic) sense of humor, his way with words, his love for baseball, his appreciation for making the majors at his relatively advanced age, and the dignity with which he carried himself.

During the season, Black roomed with Robinson when they played on the road. Robinson helped Black learn the ropes. Robinson had broken much of the ground, making it somewhat easier for Black. Having Campanella, his teammate on the Elite Giants, as his steady catcher, gave Black confidence. "He has an amazing memory," Black said in 1953. "and knows what every batter in the league can and cannot hit."<sup>87</sup> Sandy Amoros, the Cuban outfielder who had played with Black in Cuba, was the fourth black player on the team.

Throughout the season, Black faced racist catcalls from fans and opposing players. When that happened, Robinson would typically walk to the mound and calm Black down. “Forget it,” he said. “Just pitch.”<sup>88</sup> In one game at St. Louis, Black faced Stan Musial for the first time. One of Musial’s teammates, sitting in the dugout, yelled, “Hey Stan, with that big black background you shouldn’t have trouble hitting that white ball.” Black stepped off the mound seething, but Robinson strode to the mound to calm him down. He got Musial to fly to center. The next night, Musial apologized for his teammates’ racist remarks. “I’m sorry that happened,” Musial said, “but don’t let things like that bother you. You’re a good pitcher.”<sup>89</sup>

A psychology minor in college, Black was willing to intimidate opposing hitters by knocking them down with his fastball. “We’re professionals,” he explained. “If I send a guy into the dirt, it isn’t personal.” But at times he used the knock-down pitch as a weapon against racism. In one game, players on the all-white Cincinnati Reds began singing “Old Black Joe” from the opposing team’s dugout, trying to rattle Black on the mound. “I was seething,” Black recalled. He quickly knocked down the next seven Reds hitters. As he recalled, “The music stopped.”<sup>90</sup>

Not all of Black’s brushback pitches had racial overtones. In a tense game against the Giants, Wilhelm intentionally hit Hodges with a pitch. In Hodges’ next at bat, Giants pitcher Monte Kennedy threw at him again. The Giants’ next pitcher, Larry Jansen, hit Billy Cox. Then Hodges, sliding into second base, spiked Giants

second baseman Bill Rigney. When Black came to bat, Jansen dusted him back. When Black went back on the mound, he retaliated, throwing a fast ball at the Giants' pinch hitter, George Wilson. According to writer Don Honig: "Black threw the ball at his head, and Wilson dropped so fast his cap stayed there and the ball went between the cap and him. There were no helmets in those days. If it had hit him, it would have killed him. Boy, I'll never forget that!"<sup>91</sup>

Although Black was aggressive on the mound, he had an easy-going personality off the field. "He didn't have it that easy," recalled Erskine, "but he kept that [dignity] throughout the years I knew him."<sup>92</sup> He got along well with reporters who covered baseball for the white and black newspapers. Reporters liked Black because he was smart, articulate, and always straightforward with them. *New York Times* sports columnist Arthur Daley wrote that Black is "far more intelligent than the average ball player, better educated (he's a graduate of Morgan State College) and has a sharper sense of humor." Black, he wrote, was "just bursting with class."<sup>93</sup>

For the most part, reporters treated him well in their stories. At the end of the pennant race, and after the *Sporting News* had named him Rookie of the Year, Black sent a bottle of scotch to each of the scribes who traveled with the Dodgers during the season as a "small token of gratitude for having written so many nice things about me this season."<sup>94</sup>

### **The 1952 World Series**

Dressen had lost confidence in his starters as the Dodgers headed to the World Series against the Yankees. A few days before the start of the World Series, Dressen announced that Black would start the first game. Because the World Series was between two New York City teams, they were scheduled to play seven games in seven days, with no travel days in between. That shaped Dressen's decision to start Black in the first game, anticipating that he would pitch the fourth game and, if necessary, the seventh game.<sup>95</sup>

Some baseball writers second-guessed Dressen's decision. Wrote AP sportswriter Gayle Talbot: "Never before in big league history has a champion of either circuit been forced to undertake such a desperate gamble....Should the gamble fail and Black take a shellacking, the National Leaguers are in bad trouble, stripped temporarily of the relief pitching which held their shaky mound staff together all season."<sup>96</sup> *New York Times* writer John Debringer wrote that Black "found himself cast in as difficult a role as ever was assigned to a rookie."<sup>97</sup>

Black wasn't intimidated by the Yankees' sluggers, including Mickey Mantle. The Yankees had banged 129 homers during the season and had a team batting average of .267, but Black thought that they weren't the same great Yankees of a few years earlier with Joe DiMaggio, Tommy Henrich and Charlie Keller. "They're wearing the same letters on their shirts, but I don't believe they frighten anybody,"

he told a reporter.<sup>98</sup> Right before the Series began, Black said he was “nervous but not frightened.”<sup>99</sup>

On October 1, as he often did during the regular season, Black took the subway from his home to Ebbets Field for the most important game of his career. (Despite his fame, no one on the subway recognized him). In the opening game, he threw a six-hitter to beat Allie Reynolds by a 4-2 score.<sup>100</sup> Black thus became the first African American pitcher to win a World Series game. Only two other black pitchers – Satchel Paige (in 1948) and Don Newcombe (in 1949) – had previously pitched in a World Series game. Neither had won a game. The next black pitcher to win a World Series game was Bob Gibson in 1964.

“Experts: Drop Dead” read the headline in the *Brooklyn Eagle*’s late edition that day, reminding the writers about their skepticism about putting Black on the mound to start the series.<sup>101</sup>

Three days later, on October 4, Black faced Reynolds again in the fourth game at Yankee Stadium. Black pitched even better than he did in the first game, giving up only three hits and one run in seven innings. But Reynolds pitched a shutout and defeated the Dodgers 2-0. (Dodgers reliever John Rutherford gave up another run in the eighth inning).<sup>102</sup>

Strapped for pitching, Dressen called on Black to start the seventh game at Ebbets Field. “Brooklyn’s Hopes for Series Honors Ride on Trusty Arm of Joe



Black Today,” read the *New York Times* headline that morning.<sup>103</sup> It was the second time that week that Black took the mound on two days rest – three starts in seven days. Despite that heavy workload, Black pitched well for three innings, giving up no hits and no runs, but then he ran out of gas. In both the fourth and fifth innings he surrendered two hits and one run, including a homer by Gene Woodling. In the sixth inning, Black gave up a home run to Mantle and a single to Johnny Mize. Dressen brought in Roe to relieve Black. Yankee starting pitcher Ed Lopat (who pitched three innings), and relievers Allie Reynolds (three innings), Vic Raschi (one-third of an inning), and Bob Kuzava (two and two thirds innings) held the Dodgers to two runs for a 4-2 victory and the World Series championship.

### **Rookie of the Year**

Toward the end of the season, sportswriters debated whether Black or Hoyt Wilhelm would win the NL’s Rookie of the Year award, selected by the Baseball Writers Association of America and announced in November. (The *Sporting News* chose Black for its version of the award in September). Both pitchers were having spectacular success and by the end of the season, their pitching statistics were remarkably similar. Wilhelm, who was almost two years older than Black, had a better W-L record (15-3 vs. 15-4), pitched in more games (71 vs. 56), and hurled more innings (159 vs. 142). Black’s 2.15 earned run average was the lowest in the league, his 142 innings were eight innings short of the threshold for the ERA title.

So Wilhelm won the title with a 2.43 ERA. Black's team won the NL pennant. Wilhelm's Giants came in second.

When the announcement was made on November 21, Black won in a landslide, with 19 first-place votes to 3 for Wilhelm. Pirates' shortstop Dick Groat and Boston Braves third baseman Eddie Mathews finished third and fourth in the rankings, each with one first-place vote.<sup>104</sup> (Twenty-four baseball writers – three each from the NL teams they covered – cast ballots. They didn't rank the candidates; each writer had only one vote).

When the news broke, Black's selection was not controversial, despite Wilhelm's outstanding season. "It was by holding together a shaky Dodger staff all season, serving as anchor man for Brooklyn's daily medley relay of the mound, that the Morgan State alumnus really distinguished himself," wrote Bob Broeg in the *Sporting News*.<sup>105</sup>

### **MVP Controversy**

Despite his two losses in the World Series, Black was widely praised for his performance during the regular season and in the series. Many sportswriters predicted he was strong shot to win the NL's MVP award. In mid-September, *New York Times* sports columnist Arthur Daley wrote that "Black is a relief pitcher who came from nowhere to carry that feeble Brooklyn pitching staff on his broad shoulders all year long. He's appeared in more than a third of the Brooks' games this

season and is directly or indirectly responsible for the winning of approximately thirty of them. Beyond question he is the most valuable player on the Brooklyn roster and maybe in the entire league.”<sup>106</sup>

But when the Baseball Writers Association of America made the announcement on November 21, 1952 – the day after they had announced the Rookie of the Year award -- Hank Sauer, the slugging outfielder for the fifth-place Chicago Cubs, who tied for the NL lead in homers (37), led the league in RBIs (121), and batted .270, was declared the winner.

The selection of Sauer was controversial. A *Sporting News* columnist called it the “Sauer-Black-Roberts controversy.”<sup>107</sup> It was evidence, the *New York Times* wrote, that “baseball has not yet run out of surprises.”<sup>108</sup>

Most baseball experts expected the award to go either to Black or pitcher Robin Roberts, who was 28-7 with 30 complete games with the fourth-place Philadelphia Phillies.

Twenty-four baseball writers, three from each National League team they covered, cast ballots. First-place votes counted for 14 points, second-place votes for nine points, down to one point for tenth place.<sup>109</sup> Sauer received 226 votes, Roberts 211, and Black 206, followed by the Giants’ Wilhelm (133 votes) and Cardinals slugger Musial (127 votes). Sauer and Black each got 8 first-place votes, followed by Roberts’ 7 first-place tallies. (The Dodgers’ Duke Snider earned the one other

first-place vote). Black got five second-place votes and five third-place votes. Sauer got two votes each for fourth, fifth, and six places, while Black got one fourth-place vote, one eighth-place vote, and one tenth-place vote.<sup>110</sup>

United Press sportswriter Oscar Fraley observed that “anybody who knows the difference between a bunt and a punt must be completely flabbergasted at the selection of Hank Sauer in the National League.” *New York Times* columnist Arthur Daley wrote: “It has become increasingly obvious – and this year’s Sauer selection proves it – that there are fundamental flaws in the writers’ system. How could anyone in good conscience disregard Black and Roberts? Roberts was a 28-game winner, a tremendous pitcher, statistically and otherwise. Without Black the Dodgers would have been lucky to finish in the first division.” Daley pointed out that Sauer had a great first half of the season but after the All-Star game he faded; in the final month of the season, he hit only three homers, batted in seven runs, and hit .213. In contrast, Black and Roberts’ performances improved throughout the season.<sup>111</sup> Associated Press writer Gayle Talbot wrote that writers from Midwestern papers had ganged up to vote for Sauer, which, according to one of Talbot’s colleagues, “made a farce of the whole thing.”<sup>112</sup>

Without knowing how each writer ranked the players, it is impossible to know the reasons for the final tally. It is possible that some writers believed that an everyday player, not a pitcher, should get the MVP award.<sup>113</sup> Between 1911 (when

the award was first bestowed) and 1951, only 12 pitchers had won that prize. Only one reliever – the Phillies’ Jim Konstanty in 1950 – had ever won the MVP. It is possible that writers divided their votes between three pitchers – Black, Roberts, and Wilhelm -- which allowed Sauer to prevail. In the American League, pitcher Bobby Shantz (24-7, 2.48), the ace of the fourth-place Philadelphia Athletics, captured the MVP. It was the first time since 1938 that both MVP awards went to players whose teams didn’t win the pennant.<sup>114</sup>

It is possible that racism played a role in denying Black the honor, even though two other black Dodgers – Jackie Robinson in 1949 and Roy Campanella in 1951 – had previously won the award. According to United Press’ Fraley, three of the 24 writers left Black’s name off their ballots entirely. Jackie Robinson approached one of those writers and accused him of racism.<sup>115</sup> How else could one account for the fact that three writers left Black off their ballots and another one gave Black a tenth-place vote? By any reasonable standard, Black should have been among the top five on every writer’s ballot.

Robert Creamer, longtime baseball writer for *Sports Illustrated*, suggested that some writers may have given Sauer the nod because he was the only top-notch player on his team. “Sauer had held the Cubs up all alone,” Creamer recalled, “On that weak team he stood out like the Eiffel Tower. One gag that year was that without Sauer the Cubs would have finished ninth.” Personal (not just racial) bias might

have influenced some writers, too. “I found him [Sauer] to be one of the nicest, pleasantest, most self-effacing and generally likable major leaguers I ever met,” said Creamer, conjecturing that the writers who voted that year may have felt the same way.<sup>116</sup>

This controversy over whether pitchers should get the MVP over everyday position players led eventually to the creation of the Cy Young award for best pitchers. From 1956 to 1966, the Baseball Writers Association of America selected one pitcher, but since 1967 the award has honored the best pitcher in each league.

### **Black’s Decline**

Black and his Dodger teammates each earned an extra \$4,200 as their share of the World Series.<sup>117</sup> Despite starting three series games and winning the Rookie of the Year award, Black accepted a contract for only \$12,500 for the next season.<sup>118</sup>

Given the low salaries at the time, players had to work during the off-season. Some players were better able than others to cash in, during and after the season, with commercial endorsements. In the 1950s, these were not as lucrative as they would become decades later. Black players had fewer opportunities to earn extra money than their white counterparts.

But after his rookie season, Black was a genuine star and celebrity. Articulate and photogenic, he earned extra money doing ads for Lucky Strike cigarettes (even though he didn’t smoke). In 1953, Tom Villante, an advertising executive with

BBDO whose clients included Lucky Strikes, approached Black with the idea of writing a short weekly column called “Lucky Strikes by Joe Black” to run in black newspapers. In fact, Villante ghost-wrote the column. He would first talk with Black, get his ideas, write the short column, and get Black’s approval. Unlike the syndicated “By the Way” column he later wrote when he worked for Greyhound, the Lucky Strikes column offered readers a behind-the-scenes look at baseball, including tidbits from and comments about his Dodger teammates, pitching tips, funny remarks by ballplayers, observations on baseball slang, and other topics. In one June 1953 column, Black described how teammates Pee Wee Reese and Jackie Robinson approach base stealing, then at the end wrote: “Yessir, base stealing adds a lot of enjoyment to a ballgame. Just like Luckies will add a lot of enjoyment to your smoking hours once you’ve made them your steady smoke.”<sup>119</sup>

To earn money, to stay in shape, and because he loved the competition, Black kept a full schedule of baseball and even basketball games during the off-season. Immediately after the 1952 baseball season ended, Black traveled with Roy Campanella’s barnstorming team, comprised entirely of black players. Black was one of the top attractions that drew fans to the games.<sup>120</sup> Over three weeks, they played 25 games in North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Alabama, and Tennessee, to crowds between 1,000 and 10,000 fans, earning Black an additional \$5,000.<sup>121</sup> In

Knoxville, Black pitched in the same game as Hoyt Wilhelm, his rival for the Rookie of the Year award.<sup>122</sup>

Black also signed on to play three games with the Broadway Colored Clowns, a barnstorming basketball team, similar to the Harlem Globetrotters, that traveled to in Boston, Washington, D.C and Norfolk, Va. at the end of November and beginning of December. The Dodgers gave him permission to join the team.<sup>123</sup>

Near the end of the baseball season, Dressen had told Black that he might need him to become a starting pitcher and that he should add a new pitch to his repertoire. Black had gotten by on his fast blaze, a short curve, and good control. During his brief barnstorming trip, he experimented trying to throw a knuckleball, without success. When Black got to Vero Beach for spring training, Dressen insisted that he learn a new pitch. He tried to learn to pitch a forkball, a change-up, and a sinker, but he couldn't grip the ball properly because of a deformity he had on his index finger. The Dodger coaches worked with Black to experiment on his stride on the mound, at times urging him to lengthen it and at other times to short it. Nothing worked, so Dressen told Black to go back to his former pitching style. But by then Black had forgotten what he'd done to achieve so much success in his rookie year. He couldn't get his old form back, and each time he took the mound – during spring training and after the season started – he had lost his form and, with it, his confidence.<sup>124</sup>



In his second season, Black was no longer the domineering pitcher he had been in 1952. He could still throw hard, but his control, timing, and pitching mechanics suffered. His teammates and even players on opposing teams offered advice, but it didn't help. By July, Dressen no longer trusted Black as the closer, when the game was on the line. Black pitched in fewer games and in fewer clutch situations. Black recalled that "I was not a pitcher. I was a thrower, without control or confidence."<sup>125</sup> The Dodgers won the pennant, but Black's contribution was nothing like his previous year's record. He pitched in 34 games and only 71 innings. His W-L record was 6-3, but his ERA skyrocketed to 5.33. He had only five saves. The Dodgers lost to the Giants in the World Series in six games. Black only pitched one inning during the series.

Some attributed Black's season to "sophomore slump," but he knew it was more than that. He'd lost his winning pitching motion, his control, and his confidence. After that season, Black barnstormed again with Campanella's team in the South, California, and Hawaii. He still felt that he was "aiming the ball" rather than pitching.<sup>126</sup>

Although Black was not the same pitcher he'd been before, some things hadn't changed, including the effrontery of segregation. By then, the Dodgers' black players were allowed to stay in the formerly whites-only Chase Hotel in St. Louis. But when the Dodgers arrived in St. Louis in April, the black players were still not

permitted to eat in the hotel restaurant; they had to take their meals in their rooms. Robinson agreed to those terms, believing that it was important to acknowledge the half-victory, but Black, Campanella, Newcombe, Gilliam and Amoros decided to stay at the black-owned Adams hotel that served black customers.<sup>127</sup>

Black performed reasonably well during the Dodgers' 1954 spring training but when the regular season started he was still not close to being the pitcher he'd been in his rookie year with a domineering fastball. The new manager, Walter Alston, used Black sparingly. He pitched a perfect inning in both of his first two appearances as a reliever, but in the next three games he was pounded by the opposing hitters. By May 26 he had pitched in five games and given up 11 hits, including three homers in seven innings, walked five batters, and struck out three, with a 11.57 ERA.<sup>128</sup>

On May 30 the Dodgers demoted him to their Montreal AAA team. Soon after arriving in Montreal, the team doctor discovered that Black had torn muscles in his right shoulder. This helped account for the loss of speed on his fastball. For the rest of the season, a doctor gave him a weekly cortisone shot to ease the pain. This improved his performance. He started 24 games and relieved in seven more. In 185 innings, he struck out 94 batters and walked 61, but he allowed 181 hits. He won 12 games, lost 10 games, and finished with a 3.60 ERA. He pitched well in six postseason games, including a two-hit shutout against Syracuse in the league

championship series. He hoped that his strong performance in Montreal would earn him an invitation to the Dodgers' 1955 spring training. "In Montreal, as well as on a post-season barnstorming tour, the big right-handed suddenly began showing flashes of the Joe Black of old," wrote the *New York Times*' Roscoe McGowen.<sup>129</sup> Alston put Black on the roster for the new season.

Black's first outing seemed to confirm McGowen's report. On April 21 he game in relief of starting pitching Russ Meyer in the third inning against the Phillies. He pitched the final six and two-thirds innings, giving up only two runs and five hits, with five strikeouts. He was the winning pitcher in the Dodgers' tenth straight victory to open the season – a major league record. In his next five relief appearances he pitched eight and two-thirds innings, allowed ten hits (and only one home run), walked four batters, struck out four hitters, and gave up only three runs.<sup>130</sup> In 15 innings he had a 2.93 ERA, but it didn't satisfy the Dodger brass. On June 9, the Dodgers traded him to the Cincinnati Redlegs for outfielder Bob Borkowski. That year the Dodgers would win their first World Series, but Black was no longer on the team.

The Redlegs used him in as both a starter (11 games) and reliefer (21 games). He pitched 102 innings, went 5-2, with a 4.22 ERA. The team finished fifth, despite having a number of major sluggers on the team, including Ted Kluszewski. At the end of the season, Black again pitched for Campanella's barnstorming team and then

played in the Dominican Republic winter league. (During the 1953 season, the team changed its name from “Reds” to “Redlegs” to avoid any identification with Communists, who were often called “Reds.” The team went back to “Reds” after the 1960 season).

In 1956, Black was one of seven black players on the Redlegs, tied with the Dodgers for the most on any big league roster. These included George Crowe, Brooks Lawrence, Bob Thurman, Church Harmon, rookie Curt Flood (who appeared in only five games at the end of the season), and rookie Frank Robinson, who would win the Rookie of the Year award and become Black’s close friend for many years. Lawrence was the team’s pitching ace (19-10) and Hersh Freeman (14-5 with 18 saves) its best reliever. The team slugged 221 homers, tying the National League record. At the end of the season, the Redlegs finished in third place, two games behind the pennant-winning Dodgers. Manager Birdie Tebbetts used Black exclusively in relief. He pitched 61 innings in 32 games, accumulating a 3-2 record and 4.52 ERA, and was uneven all season. He won his last major league game on June 24, going five and two-thirds innings without giving up a hit to beat the Dodgers in relief.

Black returned to barnstorming when the season ended, playing on a team led by Willie Mays that toured the South, Texas, and Hawaii. In January 1957, the Redlegs sold Black to the Seattle Rainiers in the Pacific Coast League. During the

Raniers' spring training in San Bernardino, Black's arm began hurting. A doctor at the local VA hospital did X rays that revealed bone chips in his right elbow and a small crack developing in his humerus, the bone from the shoulder to the elbow. Afraid of being let go, he didn't tell anyone. Manager Lefty O'Doul used Black as both a starter and reliever. In 23 and two-thirds innings he gave up 34 hits and 17 runs.<sup>131</sup>

On May 25, after going 1-1, with a 4.94 ERA, he was sold to the Tulsa Oilers, a Phillies franchise in the AA Texas League.<sup>132</sup> He made his first start on June 4 against Oklahoma City; he pitched nine innings and left with the score tied 5 to 5. At the end of June, he was put on the disabled list with a sore arm. After a few more so-so outings, Tulsa released him on July 16. By then, he could barely lift his arm.

It seemed that Black had finished his major league career. By July 26, he had rejoined the Dodgers, but only as a part-time batting practice pitcher. Newspapers around the country published the Associated Press story about Black's move, reminding readers that only five years earlier he had been the NL Rookie of the Year.<sup>133</sup> But after a week in his Brooklyn apartment, Black was restless and thought he might still have enough zip left on his fastball to be useful to a major league team. He contacted Washington Senators manager Cookie Lavagetto, a former Dodger infielder, to ask for a chance. During his tryout, his fastball and curve looked like the Black of old, so on August 1, the Senators signed him as a free agent. Black was

the team's first American-born black player.<sup>134</sup> (The team had two black-skinned Cubans in the past).

In his first game for the Senators, Black held the Yankees to one hit in one inning of relief; the *New York Daily News* reported that he "threw hard" that night.<sup>135</sup> Four days later he pitched three scoreless innings against the Boston Red Sox. He pitched five more times, but he'd lost the velocity on his fastball, and lost his confidence, and players teed off on him. His last major league outing was on September 11, 1957 against the Tigers. In two-thirds of an inning he gave up three hits and three runs.<sup>136</sup> He pitched seven games and 12 and two-thirds innings for the Senators, giving up 22 hits, losing one game, and ending the season with a 7.11 ERA.

Despite his sore arm, he joined barnstorming teams in Panama, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Texas, and the West Coast at the end of the season. While in Waco, Texas, he and his black teammates went to a segregated movie theater. Black wanted to demonstrate the irrationality of racism, so, speaking Spanish, he convinced the theater manager that he was Cuban and was allowed to sit in the all-white seating section.<sup>137</sup>

When he returned from his barnstorming tour, the Senators sent him a contract for the next season. He returned it unsigned and the Senators gave him his unconditional release on November 25, 1957. He could not endure more cortisone

shots to relieve this pain, but he was unwilling to undergo an operation.<sup>138</sup> His professional baseball career was over. He was 33 years old.

### **Post-Baseball Career**

Black was out of work and needed a job. He knew many people in high places and he started making contacts with people who might help him, but each one had an excuse why they didn't have a job for a former ballplayer with a college degree. Black recalled: "As I explained that I was retiring from baseball and was seeking employment, their facial expressions would change from 'happy to see you' to one of embarrassment."<sup>139</sup> He tried getting a job as part of the Dodgers broadcast team, but he got the runaround from the Dodgers, the sponsor (Schaefer Beer), and the radio station.

After graduating from Morgan State in 1950, he had briefly taught general science and health education at Sollers Point School near Baltimore, but he couldn't make ends meet on a teacher's salary. After three weeks, he quit. Between pitching for Cienfuegos in the Cuban winter league and for the Elite Giants, he could earn \$10,000 – far more than his modest teacher's salary.

Frustrated by his job search, he contacted Victor Podesta, superintendent of Plainfield's school system who had been a teacher and assistant coach at PHS during Black's high school days. A sixth grade teacher at one of the elementary schools had

just resigned, and Podesta handed Black the job.<sup>140</sup> He only spent a few months teaching elementary school students. For the next six years – from 1957 through 1963 -- he taught physical education and coached baseball at the junior high school and high school levels in Plainfield. Black's students were a roughly equal mix of Black and white young people, although he was one of the few black teachers in the school district.<sup>141</sup> Racial tension was a constant problem in the schools and in the community. Black was a popular teacher and a stern disciplinarian. He was well known for his after-school “happy hours.” These were not fun-filled parties, but 30-minute sessions of tough conditioning exercises and calisthenics for students who didn't take his gym classes seriously.

Black's celebrity as a well-known athlete provided some advantages in reaching students, but he had to work hard to earn students' respect as a teacher and authority figure. He encouraged black students – many of them from low-income families who lived in Plainfield's ghetto – to stay in school, work hard to do well in the classroom and on their athletic field, raise their aspirations, and go to college. His own success, he believed, was the result of his mother's insistence that he rely on his intelligence to get a good education and not use white racism as an excuse. While Black viewed himself as a “race man” dedicated to uplifting other African Americans, he was also committed to Plainfield's white students. In his gym classes, but especially on the baseball teams, he made sure that black and white students



worked together even if, when the school day ended, they went their separate ways. After he left Plainfield to work for Greyhound, Black stayed in touch with many of his black and white former students.

While teaching in Plainfield, he took several graduate classes in education at Rutgers University and Seton Hall University, but didn't complete his master's degree, as he had hoped to do.<sup>142</sup> As a teacher, Black earned about \$4200 a year. To earn extra money, he worked part-time in a local department store and sold encyclopedias. To keep his hand in baseball, beyond coaching in the public schools, he worked as a scout for the Senators in 1959 and 1960. He occasionally pitched for a semi-pro team in East Orange, and even pitched a game for the Newark team in the Negro League, then in its last gasp. He sometimes pitched batting practice for different major league clubs. He pitched for Chippy's Auto Mart team in Plainfield's semi-pro Twilight League.<sup>143</sup>

During the summers of 1959 and 1960, he organized an integrated barnstorming team, Joe Black's All-Stars, that played in towns across New Jersey and Pennsylvania, including occasional contests on Sunday afternoons in Plainfield's Cedarbrook Park.<sup>144</sup> In 1959 and 1961 he pitched in MLB's Old Timers games, showing up in his Brooklyn Dodgers uniform, which barely fit on his 250 pound body.<sup>145</sup> He also ran Plainfield's Optimist Baseball League for 13 to 15 year

old boys. He emphasized learning fundamentals over winning and insisted that every player on the team, regardless of talent level, play at least two innings each game.<sup>146</sup>

## **Greyhound**

Black enjoyed teaching, but he had alimony and child support to pay and he wasn't earning enough to provide himself and his family on his teacher's salary. Greyhound threw him a lifeline. He worked for the company from 1963 to 1987, much longer than he played professional baseball.

The timing was right. Buses had become a symbol of racial segregation. Most black Americans lived in the South, where they had to endure the daily humiliation of sitting in segregated seats. The first major civil rights campaign of the post-war era was the 1955 bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, triggered by Rosa Parks' refusal to move to the back of the bus, which was required by Jim Crow laws. In 1961, Americans watching television saw black and white activists being pummeled by white racist thugs as they exited from buses they sought to integrate as part of the Freedom Rides. One of the most dramatic images of racist violence occurred on Mother's Day, May 14, 1961. On the outskirts of Anniston, Alabama, a white mob surrounded and firebombed a Greyhound bus carrying Freedom Riders, and barricaded the door, while highway patrolmen watched and did nothing to stop them. The activists in the bus managed to escape through the broken windows just as the fuel tank began to explode, only to be further beaten by the mob outside. A

photograph of the burning bus, with the Greyhound symbol on the vehicle, was published in papers and broadcast on television across the country.<sup>147</sup>

As the nation's largest and best-known bus line, Greyhound became associated with segregation in the eyes of the black community. To address this image problem, Greyhound began a recruitment effort to hire more African American employees, including drivers and sales executives. By 1964, Greyhound had hired black drivers in some Southern cities. It also began a series of advertisements showing black and white passengers sitting in the same sections of buses.<sup>148</sup>

Like many other Americans, Black saw the images of the attacks on the Freedom Riders and felt "compassion for the battered riders and disgust for those people who were perpetuating the mayhem." But otherwise, he wrote in his autobiography, "I was indifferent to the situation. Not once did the thought cross my mind that those flaming buses in Alabama might have a direct effect upon my life."<sup>149</sup>

In 1962, Black was attending a game at Yankee Stadium when Warren Schwed, a vice president of Grey Advertising who handled Greyhound's account, introduced himself.<sup>150</sup> A few weeks later, Black was in Chicago meeting with Greyhound executives, who told him they needed someone who could represent the company to black communities, let them know that Greyhound did not condone

racist violence or segregation, and demonstrate that Greyhound did not discriminate in hiring black employees at the management level. Greyhound initially hired Black as a part-time “special markets representative,” working for the company on weekends, holidays, and summer, working out of the company’s Manhattan office. On August 28, 1962, Greyhound sponsored a lunch in his honor at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York to celebrate his new job, with some of friends from Plainfield and from the sports world in attendance.<sup>151</sup>

In September 1963, Greyhound promoted him to the full-time position of director of special markets, which required him to move to the company’s headquarters in Chicago. By 1967 he was promoted again, to vice president of special markets for the parent company, Greyhound Corporation. When Greyhound moved its headquarters to Phoenix in 1971, Black moved there as well.

From the start, Black’s job description was open-ended. During his years with Greyhound, he not only invented his job, he re-invented himself. Black was outgoing, articulate, and a good storyteller, but it took him awhile to get comfortable in his new job. He did a great deal of traveling, speaking to community groups, churches, schools, colleges, corporate seminars, and other organizations in cities around the country, from New Orleans to Anderson, Indiana, Cincinnati, Billings, Montana, and Ft. Worth.

Although his implicit message was to demonstrate that Greyhound was a good corporate citizen, he never overtly urged his audience to ride Greyhound. His explicit message was to promote his version of the American dream – encouraging parents to push their children to do well in school and to tell young people that education and hard work was the path out of poverty and into the middle class. He often used his own life as an example. He needed to overcome the suspicion that he was simply a corporate showpiece or token. He pointed out that being a famous athlete helped him get his foot in the door, but that it was his education and his perseverance that helped him work his way up the ladder.

On behalf of Greyhound, Black developed Woman of the Year and Father of the Year awards, given to people who helped improve their communities. Local people would send Black nominees for the Women of the Year award. Local children would send letters explaining why their father should get the award. Local groups would organize a luncheon, Black would arrive to deliver a speech and give out the awards. Black would also sponsor career opportunity luncheons, inviting black professionals to talk to young people about their educational and career trajectories. He also organized seminars about drug and alcohol abuse, targeting young people.

Along the way, he was able to help people get jobs with Greyhound. When civil rights groups in Atlanta accused Greyhound of not hiring enough black people, Black worked with the company's top executives to hire more blacks as drivers and

office employees. He got Greyhound to donate to black colleges and establish college scholarships, purchase goods from minority-owned businesses, and open accounts with local black banks.<sup>152</sup> He even arranged for Greyhound to sell Miles College, an historically black institution, a bus at a reduced price.<sup>153</sup> To keep his hand in baseball, he also persuaded Greyhound to sponsor an award for the players who led each league in stolen bases, which he presented every year.

Soon after he started working for Greyhound, Black was one of many athletes and entertainers who attended the 1963 March on Washington. Thanks to his star power as a former baseball player and his new job, he was on a first-name basis with many civil rights leaders. But he was not an activist like his former roommate, Jackie Robinson. In 1964 he ran into Rev. Martin Luther King at Newark Airport. He asked King why he didn't fight back when attacked by racist thugs. King explained his philosophy of nonviolent civil disobedience but told Black "I don't think you have the strength to non-violently accept that violence that we confront."<sup>154</sup> King's comment was meant as friendly advice that Black could make his own contribution to civil rights without being on the front lines of protest. But in 1966, Black did participate, as part of Rev. Jesse Jackson's Operation Breadbasket, in the pickets in front of Chicago stores that refused to hire or promote black employees.<sup>155</sup> When King was murdered in 1968, Black flew to Atlanta and served as an usher at the funeral at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

In 1972, when Jackie Robinson had become partly blind and was close to death due to diabetes, Black pressured Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn to honor Robinson for breaking baseball's color barrier 25 years earlier. Kuhn followed Black's advice by inviting Robinson to the second game of the World Series in Cincinnati on October 15. After throwing out the ceremonial first ball and accepting a plaque in his honor, Robinson used the occasion to criticize baseball for its slow racial progress. "I am exceptionally proud and pleased," he said, but "I'm going to be tremendously more pleased and more proud when I look at that third base coaching line one day and see a black face managing in baseball."<sup>156</sup> Robinson died nine days later. Black was one of the six pallbearers at his funeral.<sup>157</sup>

### **Using His Platform**

As one of the highest-level black corporate executives in the country, Black had a platform. He not only used it in his many speeches but also in a regular syndicated column, "By the Way," that, beginning in 1969, was published in *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines and in about 40 black newspapers, including the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier*. He also recorded his column for broadcast on over 50 radio stations serving black listeners.<sup>158</sup> Each column included his photograph and was always signed "Joe Black, Vice President, The Greyhound Corporation."

In his speeches and columns, Black reflected his ambivalence about the root causes of racial inequality. He acknowledged the harsh realities of racism, and expressed support for the civil rights movement in overturning barriers, but he also put much of the onus on the black community for failing to take advantage of opportunities opened up by these changes.

In an October 1974 column, Black acknowledged that for many years “I accepted the rewards of the [civil rights] Movement passively, which wasn’t exactly paying one’s dues.” After meeting King, he learned “how much greater the Movement is than the individual.” He committed himself, he wrote, “to extend my hand, to help black people understand our responsibilities, within our community, during our quest for equality of opportunity – and to help de-emphasize hate.”<sup>159</sup> Yet, five years later, he told a newspaper columnist that his message to black audiences was that “the social revolution is over. We accomplished what we set out to do. Now we must take advantage of each new opportunity that is presented.”<sup>160</sup>

As with his speeches, in his columns (each typically a few hundred words), Black was like a stern parent. He stressed the importance of education, hard work, ambition, respect for women, the responsibilities of black fathers, the problem of street crime and violence within black communities, the need for more black-owned businesses, the centrality of religious faith, the necessity for black Americans to participate in civic and community life, and the need for graduates of black colleges



to donate to their alma maters to help them thrive. He criticized black Americans for their failure to take advantage of the new voting rights law and exercise their right to vote. These values reflected mainstream attitudes in the black community, but they were out of sync with the turn toward “black power” and confrontation among black radicals. Not surprisingly, he faced criticism by that segment of the black community.

He rarely wrote about partisan politics, but he did occasionally criticize politicians for ignoring the black community and failing to enforce civil rights laws. In 1976, for example, he attacked President Gerald Ford’s administration for failing to punish corporations that violated minority hiring laws.<sup>161</sup>

In a 1968 speech to an organization of black corporate executives, Black chastised the failure of many successful black Americans to participate in the black community’s civic and community life. “Negroes who are occupied in a middle class struggle for status and prestige and are more concerned about personal aggrandizement than about the cause of justice,” he said, “are not prepared for the ordeals and sacrifices that are necessary if we are to play in making liberty, equality, and justice for all a reality.”<sup>162</sup>

In a column in November 1970, Black said he was pleased by black Americans’ growing pride, but said he was wary of black activists who called for Black Power. He wondered if his readers knew “an employer who will offer you a

job with a future because you're wearing an Afro hair style." He observed that "all of the pride and unity will go right down the drain if black youth continues to ignore reality. We've all got to recognize that success and 'sell-out' are not the same thing. That thing called 'the establishment' is not going to fade away because people call it names. We're all got to realize that the 'establishment' can pay money for jobs that most black businesses cannot afford."

Black frequently criticized black-on-black crime. "Black robbing, and extorting from Black businesses is not beautiful," he wrote in December 1972, "We need to weed out that insidious element from our neighborhoods, soon." He added: "I simply can't believe that Black crime is the result of years of deprivation and oppression. If so, why aren't we all stealing and killing?" He warned that fights and violence among black students at high school athletic events threatened funding for school sports, which he said was an avenue of upward mobility for many black youth, including himself.

In an October 1980 column, Black criticized some black women for braiding their hair, especially those whose "faces don't have the right contours" for that style. He also wondered "how often do they shampoo their hair?" White cosmeticians, he wrote, make a lot of money styling black women's hair. Rather than trying to look "cool" or "in," Black explained, black people should "think of ways whereby our

culture can result in financial gains for us, rather than sitting around lamenting the fact that White people are always stealing Black ideas and making money.”

In a 1985 column, Black discussed what he called a “growing surge of a kind of super-pride,” reflected by African-influenced clothing, jewelry, and hair styles. Although pleased by outward symbols of black pride, he argued that even more important was “community involvement.” “Yelling words and mouthing phrases like ‘Black Power,’ ‘Soul,’ or ‘black is beautiful’ can’t erase the problems in the ghetto. What can erase them are the things we can do to help our young people understand the true meaning of ‘intellectual power.’ If they learn, they’ll have a better chance to earn.” Our youngster [sic] must be encouraged in their schoolwork. They must be made to feel that there is hope and their dreams can come true.” He encouraged parents to visit their kids’ schools, talk with the teachers, get involved with the PTA, and participate in neighborhood activities.

In a 1985 speech to black youth, held at Arizona State University, Black criticized blacks who complained about President Ronald Reagan’s cuts to welfare programs. “We suffer because we have a distorted view of priority. ‘we still want to have the biggest car and the biggest house on the block. Blacks must now be concerned with a sound financial base, rather than the old ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ attitude.”<sup>163</sup>

In 1987, in the midst of a major national recession, Black lamented the spiraling unemployment rate among Black Americans, noting that it was double the jobless rate among whites. Many black families were losing their homes and many black youth were forced to drop out of college. Although he did not mention President Reagan by name, he noted that the federal government had ended anti-discrimination efforts and the affirmative action program for black contractors. Regardless of which party is in power, he wrote, cuts to domestic programs will not be reversed. Black Americans, he said, should “look inward” and rely on themselves. Blacks have a gross annual spending income of \$150 billion, Black noted, so “why can’t we build and create jobs within the black community?” – an idea he called a “self-help economic plan.”

Black was not unaware of institutional racism and discrimination. He faced much of it throughout his life. As he explained in his autobiography, “the ‘system’ is designed to allow some Black people to ‘escape’ from their socio-economic deprivation. And for reasons, not known to me, I was designated as one of the chosen few.”<sup>164</sup> These views were similar to those that Jackie Robinson had once held after he left baseball and also went into the private sector, working as an executive for Chock-Full-O’-Nuts restaurants.

After he retired from baseball, Robinson lent his name and prestige to several business ventures, including a construction company and a black-owned bank in

Harlem. He got involved in these business activities primarily to help address the shortage of affordable housing and the persistent redlining (lending discrimination against racial minorities) by white-owned banks. Both the construction company and the Harlem bank later fell on hard times and dimmed Robinson's confidence in black capitalism as a strategy for racial advancement and integration. As he got older, Robinson became more critical of the indifference of business leaders and most (though not all) politicians to the problems of racism.

Despite acknowledging the reality of structural racism and economic inequality, Black still believed that black Americans needed to work within, rather than challenge, the existing system. He believed that only those who work hard and follow the rules will be among those “chosen few” who manage to escape poverty, while others will be left behind. His main message – which both reflected his personal feelings and was in line with the ideology of big corporations like Greyhound – focused on black self-help. He encouraged black people, especially young people, to prepare themselves by getting the education needed to succeed, to channel their anger in construction ways, and to pay less attention to clothing, hair styles, and symbols of black identity. He emphasized the importance of “educational preparation, pride, initiative, loyalty, and respect.”<sup>165</sup> In his 1991 commencement address at Miles College, an historically black school in Birmingham, he said that he was proof that it is possible to rise from poverty to

prosperity. “My family was on welfare for six years, and I went to a black college and I also worked for a Fortune 500 company that pays six figures.”<sup>166</sup>

Black was not alone among prominent black figures in criticizing some aspects of black culture. But some black activists believed that his speeches and columns fit into the category of “blaming the victim.” He was occasionally labeled an “Uncle Tom” or an “Oreo” (black on the outside, white on the inside).

He responded to these criticisms in his columns and speeches. In an April 1975 column, for example, he wrote: “Seems some people think that some of the topics I discuss are inappropriate. Things like the insidiousness of Black-on-Black crime . . . To take issue with an issue like this has earned me labels like ‘White man’s Tom.’ ‘Oreo.’ ‘Advocate of the white man’s genocidal practices.’”<sup>167</sup> He continued, “That’s okay. I can take it. Just as I can turn an ear to passive philosophers, sociologists and do-gooders who spout nonsense that Black-on-Black crime is a reaction to years of suppression and denial.” He further wrote that crime undermined the black community due to high insurance rates and bank rates: “Job opportunities are dwindling because high insurance rates and fear make it unattractive, often impossible to open a business in African American communities.”

He made a similar point in a 1982 column when he criticized black youth for not understanding the “thrust of the civil rights movement.” “Too many of them have chosen to be guided by emotion and want to believe that it was to prove that

black can beat white or mistakenly think that we were to receive something just because we're black.” He challenged black adults to have the “intestinal fortitude to tell youthful blacks that they are spending too much time worrying about the word – ‘racism.’ When we were young, we called it ‘prejudice,’ ‘discrimination’ and ‘jim crow,’ but we did not spend our time worrying out it.” He added: “Too often black college students select ‘sop’ courses rather than those studies that will make them competitive in today’s labor market.”<sup>168</sup>

During his career, Black became friendly with many celebrities in show business, sports, politics, and business. In addition to one-time Olympics star Jesse Owens and Dodger teammate Jim Gilliam, one of his best friends was Bill Cosby, whose record albums and TV shows made him one of America’s most popular entertainers from the 1970s through the 1990s. Cosby invited Black and Frank Robinson to appear on a 1991 episode of *The Cosby Show*. These were not cameo roles. Black and Robinson portrayed former Negro League players reminiscing about their former teammates and rivals with Cosby’s character and his father.<sup>169</sup>

Black and Cosby were both college graduates, outstanding athletes, and, to different degrees, celebrities, and they also shared a similar outlook about civil rights and black uplift.<sup>170</sup> As an expression of their common support for education as a means of upward mobility and public service, in 2006, Cosby headed a fundraising

event at Morgan State to raise money for the Joe Black Endowed Scholarship for Aspiring Teachers.<sup>171</sup>

Despite his public pronouncements, Black's educational background, hard work, and high salary didn't immunize him from the reality of racial discrimination. When he interviewed Black for *The Boys of Summer*, Roger Kahn asked him why he lived on Chicago's far south side, a predominantly black neighborhood a long way from his job at Greyhound's downtown headquarters, when he could afford a more fashionable neighborhood. Black explained that once, while visiting white friends in suburban Lombard, he and his wife Mae Nell saw signs advertising a development with nice houses for \$32,000 that included a pool, tennis courts, and a community social hall.

Black applied and met with the sales manager, who had a list on his desk of the incomes of people who had applied for homes. "Nobody on the list was making what I am. I could tell because I can read upside down." The sales manager asked Black where he worked. "The Greyhound Company," Black answered. "What are you? A driver?" the sales manager asked. After Black handed him a card showing that he was a vice president, the sales manager asked, "What do you make?" "Put down in excess of thirty five thousand dollars a year," he said, at a time when that amount put him at the upper end of the middle class. The sales manager asked Black if his job required him to do a lot of traveling and Black explained that he was often



on the road. The sales manager said: “Well, you certainly earn enough, but if you travel, I can’t encourage you to buy. We don’t let anyone use the recreation room until they’re eighteen, and some of these seventeen-year olds pretty husky fellers by the way, are kicking up a fuss. Rebelling. Throwing stones. Acting up. Now, Mr. Black, it certainly would be a terrible thing if these white seventeen-year-olds threw rocks through the window of your thirty-two-thousand dollar house, possibly injuring your wife while you were traveling and not year to protect her.”

Black’s white friends offered to buy one of the houses and then sell it to him – a tactic that was often used by civil rights groups seeking to integrate housing developments. Black refused. “Like hell. Something like that happens to you every day if your life if you’re black.”

As Black told Kahn, “There are plenty of places where, if a black man wants to live there, he has to fight a war.” Black didn’t want to fight a war. As Kahn wrote, “he has adjusted to bigotry, without accepting it.”<sup>172</sup>

When he spoke at Virginia Union, an historically black college in Richmond, he explained his philosophy of dealing with racism. He told students that saying “we are victims of a racist society,” or calling white people “honky,” would not get them anywhere. He said he favored teaching black history but opposed self-segregation, including all-black dorms. No doubt referring to the famous photos of protesting black students who occupied a building at Cornell University while holding guns in

1969, Black said, “if the black student wants to use a loaded gun to make a point, what can we expect of uneducated blacks?”

“By now some of you may be saying I’m a Tom, a window-dressing Negro,” Black said. “But I learned two things early. A minority cannot defeat a majority in physical combat, and you’ve got to let some things roll off your back.”<sup>173</sup>

Black accommodated to racism and other forms of discrimination in different ways. He became close friends with Jesse Owens, the track star who won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics, when they both lived in Phoenix. They both loved to play golf and decided to apply to different golf clubs in the area, but they worried that they might be rejected, not on the basis of race, but on the basis of political affiliation. All the applications asked what party they belonged to. Black and Owens were both Democrats. (In 1968, Black had served on Vice President Hubert Humphrey’s task force on youth motivation).<sup>174</sup> But the pair decided to list their affiliations as Republican, given Arizona’s heavily GOP slant, and they were accepted into every club they applied to.<sup>175</sup>

Black received considerable acclaim for his work. His speeches to business, community, and college audiences received frequent and often glowing coverage in both white and black newspapers. They described Black as having risen out of

poverty, attended college, made his mark in sports, and then climbed the corporate ladder.

### **Staying Close to Baseball**

Black retired from Greyhound in 1987, at age 63, after his daughter Martha Jo graduated from high school. Greyhound asked him to stay on as a part-time consultant, which he did until his death in 2002. But he hardly retired. He spent the rest of his life working to improve the lives of past and present ballplayers, including former Negro Leaguers.

Soon after he became Baseball Commissioner in 1989, Bart Giamatti hired Black to talk with players about their futures. Most players had not gone to college. Among those who did, most did not graduate. Black knew from personal experience that you can't depend on the people who befriend you when you're a big league player to help you find a job, much less a career, after you're no longer a professional athlete. During Black's playing days, all players needed off-season jobs. He had played at a time before the Major League Baseball Players Association had freed players from the reserve clause, which gave rise to sports agents and huge salaries.

By 1990, thanks to the players union, the minimum MLB salary was \$100,000; the average was \$597,537. Players were earning more money than most of them had ever dream of, but the harsh reality was that the average player spent only five years in the big leagues. Few, however, gave much thought to managing

their money and planning for life after their playing days were over. Black visited players to discuss these matters, urging them to meet with financial planners to help invest their earnings wisely for when they are no longer making big league salaries, and to go back to school in the off-season to complete their educations. But he quickly became discouraged because players showed little interest in their futures. “Ninety percent of them don’t think about that. They all think, ‘I’m going to play until the day I die.’”<sup>176</sup>

If Black couldn’t help contemporary players plan for their futures, he could help former players who were down on their luck. In 1986, a group of former MLB players (led by Joe Garagiola and Ralph Branca) created the Baseball Alumni Team (later renamed the Baseball Assistance Team) to identify and help former players who were in difficult financial straits and couldn’t pay their rent or mortgage, utility bills, medical bills, or a proper funeral for a spouse. Black got involved with BAT, eventually becoming one of its vice presidents. He traveled to major league spring training camps, and drew on his network of retired players, to raise money for the BAT fund. He was pleased when some players made significant contributions but saddened when others with multi-million salaries refused to help. Black and other players would hear about an indigent ex-player or his widow and often make a personal visit to assess their situation and offer support. Some of them were players (or their widows) that Black had played with or against. One was Sandy Amoros,

Black's former Dodger teammate and friend, who was living in a shabby room above a garage in Tampa, had had his left leg amputated at the knee, but couldn't afford a prosthesis. BAT paid for a prosthesis and sent him \$300 a month for living expenses.<sup>177</sup> BAT kept the names of its recipients confidential although some, like Amoros, spoke publicly to thank BAT for its help.

In 1992, Black urged Commissioner Fay Vincent to compensate living Negro Leaguers, most of whom never got the opportunity to play in the majors, who also faced hard times. "These men don't want charity, but they should be included in the Players Association medical plan," Black said. "It wouldn't cost much. It only involves about 100 guys." Vincent asked Black and Len Coleman (a former football star at Princeton and former commissioner of New Jersey's Department of Community Affairs) to recommend a plan. They suggested that those who played in the Negro Leagues before Robinson joined the Dodgers in 1947 should be eligible. That criteria excluded players who had played in the Negro Leagues through the 1950s but kept out of the big leagues because of teams' slow pace in hiring black athletes. Many of them were upset with Black for drawing that line, since he had played in the Negro Leagues, but he stuck with his recommendation.

In 1993, MLB gave 39 Negro League veterans and their spouses lifetime health insurance. But it took a lawsuit to force MLB to deal with the pension problem. In March 1995, a lawyer named John Puttock filed a class action lawsuit

in federal court on behalf of Sam Jethroe and other former Negro League players. Jethroe was a Negro League star who didn't arrive in the majors until 1950, when he was 33. He had three years and seven days of major league service – less than the four full years required to be eligible for a pension. In October 1996, the court dismissed the suit – not because the judge didn't think Jethroe had a case but because he had waited too long to sue, after the statute of limitations had expired. U. S. Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, an Illinois Democrat and the first black woman in the Senate, heard about Jethroe's plight and mentioned it to Chicago White Sox chairman Jerry Reinsdorf. Reinsdorf, in turn, convinced other owners to set up a special fund to provide annual payments of \$7,500 to \$10,000 to 85 former Negro League players who had also played at least one day in the majors. By then Leonard (who was one of three black players kicked off the Princeton University football team in 1969 after they filed charges against the university for discrimination) was the NL president. He appointed Black to chair the committee administering the pension plan, which began in 1997. (It also bestowed \$10,000 annual pension payments to former white players who played before the players' pension fund was established in 1947).

In 2004, two years after Black died, U.S. Senator Bill Nelson of Florida persuaded Commissioner Bud Selig to expand eligibility for the program to athletes who played for at least four years in the Negro Leaguers but who never played in the

majors, arguing that baseball wasn't truly integrated until 1959, when Pumpsie Green joined the Red Sox, the last team to hire a black player. As a result, 27 additional former Negro League players were added on slightly different terms -- \$40,000 for four years, or \$350 per month for life.<sup>178</sup>

Black became a well-known figure in Phoenix and was in demand as a public speaker. He did a lot of charity work in the area, serving on the boards of the local Big Brothers organization, the Salvation Army, and the National Minority Junior Golf Scholarship Association, and was a member of the local Kiwanis Club. When several local groups -- including the Elks Club, the Salvation Army, the Phoenix Black Coalition, and a local tenants group -- organized an event to honor a local athlete who had won a bronze medal in the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, they invited Black to be keynote speaker.<sup>179</sup> A few years after he retired, he took several law classes at Arizona State University to keep his mind active; he had no intention to become a lawyer.<sup>180</sup>

In 1993, soon after MLB awarded Phoenix a new franchise, the new team -- the Arizona Diamondbacks -- hired Black to serve as its community affairs representative. Unlike his Greyhound job, he didn't focus on the black community, but on the entire community. He had lived in the area for over 20 years, was well-respected, and had a wide network of friends and acquaintances. Even before the team began its first season of play in 1998, Black was on the lecture circuit, speaking

to business groups, community groups, schools, and other organizations. “He was our Pied Piper,” explained Rich Dozer, the team’s first president.<sup>181</sup> For the players and the fans, Black was not only a great storyteller but also a link between baseball’s past and present. Black was a regular in the Diamondbacks’ dugout during batting practice and in the press box.

Throughout his life, Black frequently attended major league games with his friends. In 1997, he was sitting with NL president Len Coleman at the seventh game of the World Series in Miami between the Miami Marlins and the Cleveland Indians. With the Indians ahead 2-0 in the seventh inning, the Marlins’ Bobby Bonilla was in the on-deck circle, waiting to bat against Cleveland’s rookie pitcher Jaret Wright, who was pitching a one-hitter. Black, sitting near the Marlins dugout, called Bonilla over. He told Bonilla about his encounters with Mickey Mantle in the seventh game of the 1952 World Series. Black got the slugger out twice by pitching him inside. When Mantle came up to bat for the third time in the sixth inning, he adjusted his batting stance by stepping back in the batter’s box. Black didn’t notice what he’d done, and Mantle smashed a home run. Forty-five years later, Black told Bonilla, who was 4-for-26 in the series, that he was crowding the plate. He urged him to learn from Mantle’s example. Bonilla followed his advice, stepped back in the batter’s box, and hit a homer, glancing over at Black as he rounded third base. The Marlins eventually won the game, and the World Series, in the 11<sup>th</sup> inning. The story quickly



spread and has been used to illustrate not only Black's remarkable memory and generosity but also as a life lesson about learning from mistakes and helping others.<sup>182</sup>

### **Personal Life and Legacy**

To many baseball writers and fans, Black is among baseball's "one year wonders." This group includes many outstanding rookies, whose careers quickly faded after an initial excellent season.<sup>183</sup> But Black was an exception in that, despite the quick demise of his pro baseball career, he remained in the public eye for many years – as Greyhound's ambassador to the black community, a syndicated columnist, a keeper of Jackie Robinson's flame, an advocate for former major league and Negro League players down on their luck, and a baseball elder statesman always available to reporters and broadcasters for a good quote.

Although he was consistently in the public eye, especially in the black community, his public presence was especially elevated on a few occasions. One was publication of Roger Kahn's *The Boys of Summer* in 1971, which included a sympathetic and poignant chapter on Black. Another was in 1997, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Robinson breaking baseball's color line, when Black was in demand for speaking engagements, news stories, and TV interviews about his friend and former roommate. (Black served on the board of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, founded by his widow, Rachel Robinson).

In many ways, Black was conservative and traditional. He was deeply religious and a regular church goer. He didn't smoke or drink, although he ate to excess and by his 60s had ballooned to close to 300 pounds. He described himself as a "homebody" with little appetite for parties and the social whirl, despite his image as a public figure and celebrity.<sup>184</sup> He spent most of his working life in corporate America. He was very patriotic and consistently blessed America for the opportunities he had to play baseball, climb the corporate ladder, travel widely, and have a wide network of friends.

In his autobiography, Black described himself as "a Black American who was lucky enough to have parents who understood love, guidance, [and] responsibility and encouraged him as he pursued his dream."<sup>185</sup> He had two children – Joe Frank Black (known as Chico), born May 26, 1952, and Martha Jo, born on July 5, 1969. He took parenting responsibilities seriously and was a devoted father. When he and Martha Jo's mother divorced, Black fought for and won custody of his five-year old daughter at a time, 1975, when courts rarely granted custody to fathers. As his daughter wrote in her memoir, *Joe Black: More Than A Dodger*, Black "went to every PTA meeting. He'd tell my teachers, 'Hi, I'm Joe Black, I'm Martha Jo's father. If there's any problem, you call me.' My dad was very instrumental in everything that I did. I loved my mother, but my father was a great parent."<sup>186</sup> She recalled: "The best part of my dad was that he raised me as a single parent in Paradise Valley,

AZ.”<sup>187</sup> As of 2021, Martha Jo works in marketing for the Chicago White Sox. Joe (Chico) Black works for MAAX Industries in Arizona.

But despite his strong belief in family, he was a failure as a husband. He was married seven times. “My marriages didn’t work because neither party worked hard enough for them to work,” he explained in his autobiography.<sup>188</sup>

Over the years, Black received many honors and awards. While at Morgan State, he made the All-CIAA (Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association, the athletic conference of historically black colleges) football team. Later, he was inducted into Morgan State’s Sports Hall of Fame. In 1974, he received an honorary doctorate from Shaw College in Detroit.<sup>189</sup> That year, Morgan State invited Black to be the guest speaker at a ceremony dedicating the Talmadge L. Hill Fieldhouse, named for his college coach and health education professor.<sup>190</sup> In 1977, Central State University, an historically black institution in Ohio, awarded Black an honorary degree.<sup>191</sup> In 1981, Black received the Distinguished Broadcaster Award from the Academy of Professional Broadcasters for “influence on the minds and lives of young Black Americans” through the radio broadcasts of his “By the Way” columns.<sup>192</sup> Morgan State presented Black with an honorary Doctor of Professional Studies degree in 1983.<sup>193</sup> In 1987, Coretta Scott King bestowed Black with the Martin Luther King Distinguished Service Award at a ceremony in Atlanta.<sup>194</sup> That same year, he was honored by the National Association for Sickle Cell Disease for

his work as a board member and for educating the public about the disease. That year, too, he was saluted by Cong. Julian Dixon in the Congressional Record.<sup>195</sup> In 1991, he delivered the commencement address at Miles College, an historically black institution in Birmingham.<sup>196</sup> In 2001, he was inducted into the New Jersey Sports Hall of Fame.

Black died of prostate cancer on May 17, 2002 at age 78 at the Life Care Center in Scottsdale, Arizona. A memorial service was held at the Historic First Presbyterian church in downtown Phoenix. Another service was held a week later at the Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Plainfield, with Chicago White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf (who became friends with Black when he lived in Chicago), Sandy Koufax, Don Zimmer, Bill Cosby, and hundreds of other friends, family, and former students in attendance. Barbara Hill sang one of Black's favorite songs, "If I Can Help Somebody."<sup>197</sup> His body was cremated but he was interred in the Hillside Cemetery of Scotch Plains, New Jersey. He wanted his ashes spread on the Plainfield High School baseball field. City officials refused to allow it, but his son Chico visited the diamond and scattered them there anyway.<sup>198</sup>

The honors continued after he died. Morgan State created the Joe Black Endowed Scholarship for Aspiring Teachers. In 2010, the Washington Nationals created an annual Joe Black Award given to a person or group that promotes baseball in Washington's inner city. Black had enjoyed attending games in the Arizona Fall

League – where major league prospects hone their skills. In September 2002, the league named its annual MVP trophy for Black.<sup>199</sup> The Arizona Diamondbacks named a room at Chase Field in his honor. In 2010, the Plainfield school board named the Plainfield High School baseball complex the Joe Black Baseball Field.<sup>200</sup>

Black touched many lives in many ways. As a player in college, the Negro Leagues, the winter leagues, and the majors, as well as in his job traveling around the country on behalf of Greyhound, Black made many friends and kept in touch with them over many years, including his former students in Plainfield. Many people recalled his generosity and selflessness. During spring training in 1955, when Black was struggling to maintain his place on the Dodgers' roster, he befriended a young rookie, Sandy Koufax. Many Dodgers resented Koufax because, as a "bonus baby," he was guaranteed a place on the roster irrespective of his experience or talent. The fact that he was Jewish compounded their hostility. "I was shunned by every player on the team except one. Joe Black came over to me, put his arm around me, and said, 'Come on, kid, I'll show you the ropes.' We became great friends for life even though Joe was traded to Cincinnati in the middle of the season. He was there for me in my time of need."<sup>201</sup> According to his biographer, "Koufax never forgot Joe Black's kindness."<sup>202</sup>

"Baseball was the least of what he did," said his friend Jerry Reinsdorf, owner of the Chicago White Sox.<sup>203</sup> Wrote Roger Kahn: "He was a psychologist, a

humanist, a businessman and, across his 78 years, a magnificent advertisement for America.”<sup>204</sup>

## Notes

*New York Times (NYT)*

*Plainfield (N.J.) Courier-News (PCN)*

*Bridgewater (N.J.) Courier-News (BNC)*

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Dreier is the E.P. Clapp Distinguished Professor of Politics at Occidental College. He can be reached at dreier@oxy.edu. A much shorter version of this biography was published by the Society for American Baseball Research as part of its biography project: <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/joe-black>. Thanks to Cassidy Lent at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Giamatti Library and Research Center; Martha Jo Black; Larry Treadwell, Lucera Parker, David Alexander, and Paul Baker at Shaw University; Erika Gorder, Dory Devlin, Daniel Villanueva, Betsy Feliciano-Berrios, and Carissa Sestito at Rutgers University; Laurie Pine at Seton Hall University; Gary Fink; E.J. Krieger; Mike Long; Bill Nowlin; Jacob Pomrenke; and Alan Cohen. In addition to the sources shown in the notes, the author used Baseball-Reference.com and Seamheads.com.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Lundquist, “Joe Black is Brooklyn’s Hope for Keeping Nat League Lead,” *Brownwood (Texas) Bulletin*, September 9, 1952

<sup>3</sup> Martha Jo Black, *More Than a Dodger*, Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2015, 4

<sup>4</sup> Roger Kahn, *The Boys of Summer*, New York: New American Library, 1971, 264

<sup>5</sup> Joe Black, *Ain’t Nobody Better Than You*, Scottsdale, Arizona: Ironwood Lithographers, 1983, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Black, *More Than*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 28.

<sup>8</sup> “Achievement Records Set in PHS Gym,” *PCN*, March 15, 1941

<sup>9</sup> Hugh Delano, “The Inside Track,” *PCN*, June 17, 1960

<sup>10</sup> “Dukes Trounce Nu Blues in Junior Loop,” *PCN*, August 7, 1940

<sup>11</sup> “Dutch Lions Beat Trojans in Jr. Loop,” *PCN*, August 14, 1940

<sup>12</sup> “Fireman Get Two Hits But Trip Stars, 3-2,” *PCN*, September 3, 1940.

<sup>13</sup> “Joe Black Hurls Two Hitter But Woodys Lose, 5-3,” *PCN*, July 9, 1941

<sup>14</sup> “Black Yankees Trounce Marinos,” *PCN*, June 1, 1942.

<sup>15</sup> “Joe Black’s Foul Shot Decides 34-33 Tilt in Senior Semifinals,” *PCN*, March 26, 1942

<sup>16</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 49

<sup>17</sup> Richard Goldstein, “Joe Black, Pitching Pioneer for the Dodgers, Dies at 78,” *NYT*, May 18, 2002 <https://www.NYTimes.com/2002/05/18/sports/joe-black-pitching-pioneer-for-the-dodgers-dies-at-78.html>; Milton Brown, “Gentleman Joe,” *The Oracle*, Fall 2017 [http://oppf\\_web2008.oppf.org/docs/FINAL-DEC%2015-ORACLE%20Online.pdf](http://oppf_web2008.oppf.org/docs/FINAL-DEC%2015-ORACLE%20Online.pdf). This article is based on an interview Black did with Brown in 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Black, *More Than*, 36

<sup>19</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 29-30.

<sup>20</sup> “Black Yankees Trounce Marinos,” *PCN*, June 1, 1942

<sup>21</sup> “Black Yanks Beat Brunswick Nine,” *PCN*, July 6, 1942

<sup>22</sup> “No-Hit Game for the Yankees,” *PCN*, July 13, 1942

<sup>23</sup> Milton Brown, “Gentleman Joe,” *The Oracle*, Fall 2017 [http://oppf\\_web2008.oppf.org/docs/FINAL-DEC%2015-ORACLE%20Online.pdf](http://oppf_web2008.oppf.org/docs/FINAL-DEC%2015-ORACLE%20Online.pdf). This article is based on an interview Black did with Brown in 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Brown, “Gentleman Joe,” 21

<sup>25</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 34-37

<sup>26</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 61-64

<sup>27</sup> Dick Clark and Larry Lester, editors, *The Negro Leagues Book*, Society for American Baseball Research, 1994;

<http://www.seamheads.com/NegroLgs/player.php?playerID=black01joe>

<sup>28</sup> “McCue Captures Second Straight Shutout, 1-0,” *PCN*, August 4, 1943

<sup>29</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 39; “Joe Black, PHS Great, Stars with Army Nine,” *PCN*, August 22, 1944

<sup>30</sup> Black, *More Than*, 145

<sup>31</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 41-42

<sup>32</sup> Aram Goudsouzian, *Sidney Poitier: Man, Actor, Icon*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004, 39.

<sup>33</sup> “Joe Black, PHS Great, Stars with Army Nine,” *PCN*, August 22 1944; “Topeka Ball Club at Camp Crowder Sunday,” Neosho (Missouri) *Daily Democrat*, May 19, 1945

<sup>34</sup> Kahn, *The Boys of Summer*, 259.

<sup>35</sup> “Camp Crowder Defeats Fayetteville Merchants,” Joplin (Missouri) *Globe*, May 1, 1945; “County All-Stars Defeat Negroes 10-7,” Miami (Oklahoma) *News-Record*, August 5, 1945

<sup>36</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 71-73

<sup>37</sup> “Star Quintets Play in Crowder Tourney,” Joplin (Missouri) *Globe*, January 10, 1946

<sup>38</sup> “Sarcacens to Face Carters A.C. For City Independent Grid Title Thursday at Green Brook,” *PCN*, November 24, 1943.

<sup>39</sup> “Seeks Pro Career,” *PCN*, November 14, 1947

<sup>40</sup> “Former PHS Star on S. American Nine,” *PCN*, November 13, 1947. Registro Historico Estadistico del Beisbol Profesional Venezolano

<https://www.pelotabinaria.com.ve/beisbol/mostrar.php?ID=blacjoe001>

<sup>41</sup> Another Montreal player, Tommy Lasorda, told a local reporter that Clemente “didn’t speak one word of English” and claimed to also have translated for him. Black denied Lasorda’s characterization. According to Black: “I saw him [Lasorda] on the field and I said, 'Tommy, why did you tell that story?' He said, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'One: Clemente didn't hang out with you. Second: Clemente speaks English.' ... Puerto Rico, you know, is part of the United States. So, over there, youngsters do have the privilege of taking English in classrooms. He wouldn't give a speech like Shakespeare, but he knew how to order breakfast and eggs. He knew how to say, 'It's a good day,' 'Let's play,' or 'Why I don't play?' He could say, 'Let's go to the movies.’” Source: Bruce Markusen, *Roberto Clemente: The Great One*, Champaign, Illinois: Sports Publishing LLC, 2001, 20.

<sup>42</sup> Dick Clark and Larry Lester, editors, *The Negro Leagues Book*, Society for American Baseball Research, 1994, 314

<sup>43</sup> Larry Lester, *Black Baseball’s National Showcase*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001, 348 and 440

<sup>44</sup> “Colonels Face Local Hurler,” *PCN*, August 28 1948; Louie Dumont, “Rally Gives Colonels 3-2 Win Over Elite Giants,” *PCN*, May 26, 1949

<sup>45</sup> “Kurns To Face Elite Giants,” *PCN*, June 21, 1949

<sup>46</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 75-76; Black, *More Than*, 166.

<sup>47</sup> Marion Jackson, “Baltimore Elite Giant Player Says Negro Leagues Ignored,” *Alabama Tribune*, April 23, 1948

<sup>48</sup> Buzzy Bavasi, “The Real Secret of Trading,” *Sports Illustrated*, June 5, 1967 <https://vault.si.com/vault/1967/06/05/the-real-secret-of-trading>; <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/B/Pblacj103.htm>.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.baseball-reference.com/register/player.fcgi?id=black-001jos>.

<sup>50</sup> Black, *More Than*, 166.

<sup>51</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 81

<sup>52</sup> Jorge S. Figueredo, *Who’s Who in Cuban Baseball 1878-1961*, Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2007

<sup>53</sup> Black, *More Than*, 169



- <sup>54</sup> “Rookie May Make Brooklyn Fans Forget Don Newcombe,” St. Cloud (Minnesota) *Times*, February 12, 1952
- <sup>55</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 82
- <sup>56</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 76-79
- <sup>57</sup> Rick Swaine, *The Integration of MLB: A Team By Team History*, Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2009; Larry Moffi and Jonathan Kronstadt, *Crossing the Line: Black Major Leagues, 1947-1959*, Lincoln: University of Iowa Press, 1994
- <sup>58</sup> Black, *More Than*, 77
- <sup>59</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 85; Black, *More Than*, 38
- <sup>60</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 95
- <sup>61</sup> Arnold Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson: A Biography*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997, 245.
- <sup>62</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 85; Black, *More Than*, 86
- <sup>63</sup> Harold Parrott, “Inside Jackie Robinson,” *Sporting News*, February 3, 1973
- <sup>64</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 88-89; Black, *More Than*, 41
- <sup>65</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 94
- <sup>66</sup> Roscoe McGowen, “Black Impresses Dressen With Speed in First Workout Before Dodger Pilot,” *NYT*, February 24, 1952.
- <sup>67</sup> Roscoe McGowen, “Dodgers Toppled By Braves, 5 To 2: Black and King Are Pounded for All Boston Runs in Last 3 Innings of Miami Test,” *NYT*, March 9, 1952.
- <sup>68</sup> Roscoe McGowen, “Dodgers Nip Phils On Run In 9th, 8-7: Black Yields 4-Run Homer to Puddin' head Jones in 7th, but Brooks Stage Rally,” *NYT*, March 14, 1952.
- <sup>69</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 97; Arthur Daley, “Most Valuable Player?” *NYT*, September 14, 1952.
- <sup>70</sup> Roscoe McGowen, “Dodgers Conquer Forth Worth, 4-1, On 3-Hitter by Labine, King, Black,” *NYT*, March 19, 1952.
- <sup>71</sup> Roscoe McGowen, “Red Sox' 9 Blows Stop Dodgers, 5-2: Loose Playing by Brooklyn Contributes to Setback -- Black Losing Pitcher,” *NYT*, March 23, 1952
- <sup>72</sup> Roscoe McGowen, “Braves Down Dodgers on 2 Ground-Rule Doubles in 13<sup>th</sup>; Drives Into Crowd Win At Mobile,” *NYT*, April 4, 1952.
- <sup>73</sup> “Roe Pounded in First,” *NYT*, August 10, 1952.
- <sup>74</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 98
- <sup>75</sup> <https://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/BRO/1952.shtml>

- <sup>76</sup> Harold Burr, "Dressen Orders Hit Drills For Rusty Flock," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 2, 1952  
<https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1952/B05010CHN1952.htm>.
- <sup>77</sup> Kahn, *The Boys of Summer*, 255
- <sup>78</sup> <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1952/B05101BRO1952.htm>
- <sup>79</sup> Black, *More Than*, 177
- <sup>80</sup> <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1952/Lblacj1030011952.htm>
- <sup>81</sup> <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1952/B09210BSN1952.htm>.
- <sup>82</sup> <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1952/B09270BRO1952.htm>
- <sup>83</sup> Neil Lanctot, *Campy: The Two Lives of Roy Campanella*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011, 183
- <sup>84</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 114; Black, *More Than*, 198-202 "Black's Life Threatened: Dodger Ace Ordered to Stay Away From Polo Grounds," *NYT*, September 5, 1952.  
<sup>85</sup> <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1952/Kblacj1030011952.htm>
- <sup>86</sup> "Joe Black Said Thrilled By Acclaims of 1,200," *PCN*, September 10, 1952
- <sup>87</sup> Lanctot, *Campy*, 46
- <sup>88</sup> Black, *More Than*, 123
- <sup>89</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 104
- <sup>90</sup> Roger Kahn, *Into My Own: The Remarkable People and Events That Shaped a Life*, New York, St. Martin's, 2007, 281. Peter Golenbock, *Bums: An Oral History of the Brooklyn Dodgers*, New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1984, 334. In Kahn's version, Black knocked down two Reds hitters; in Golenbeck's version, he knocked down seven of them.
- <sup>91</sup> Peter Golenbock, *Bums: An Oral History of the Brooklyn Dodgers*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 335
- <sup>92</sup> Black, *More Than*, 154
- <sup>93</sup> Arthur Daley, "Most Valuable Player?" *NYT*, September 14, 1952
- <sup>94</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 135; Roscoe McGowen, "Roberts of Phils Takes 27th Game By Turning Back Dodgers, 9 to 7," *NYT*, September 25, 1952
- <sup>95</sup> Black discussed Dressen's decision and his attitude about starting three World Series games in this 2001 interview:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwcKjumM8ac>
- <sup>96</sup> Gayle Tablot, "Rookie Hurler Carries Brooklyn Hopes," *Deseret News and Telegram*, September 30, 1952
- <sup>97</sup> John Drebing, "Three Dodger Homers Beat Yanks in Series Opener, 4-2," *NYT*, October 2, 1952.

- <sup>98</sup> Roscoe McGowen, “Joe Black Unawed By Yankee Legend: Series Opener 'Just Another Game' to Dodger Set for 3d Major League Start,” *NYT*, October 1, 1952.
- <sup>99</sup> Black, *More Than*, 9
- <sup>100</sup> <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1952/B10010BRO1952.htm>
- <sup>101</sup> Lanctot, *Campy*, 282
- <sup>102</sup> <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1952/B10040NYA1952.htm>.
- <sup>103</sup> Roscoe McGowen, “Brooklyn’s Hopes for Series Honors Ride on Trusty Arm of Joe Black Today,” *NYT*, October 7, 1952.
- <sup>104</sup> John Drebing, “Black of Dodgers and Byrd of Athletics Capture Awards as Rookies of Year,” *NYT*, November 22, 1952
- <sup>105</sup> Bob Broeg, “Pitching Dominates Rookie All-Star Team,” *Sporting News*, October 22, 1952
- <sup>106</sup> Arthur Daley, “Most Valuable Player?” *NYT*, September 14, 1952
- <sup>107</sup> Roscoe McGowan, “Dodgers 4-Year Run Paced by Jackie, Peewee,” *Sporting News*, December, 3, 1952
- <sup>108</sup> John Drebing, “Sauer Chosen Over Roberts and Black As Most Valuable in National League,” *NYT*, November 21, 1952
- <sup>109</sup> [https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/1952\\_National\\_League\\_Most\\_Valuable\\_Player\\_Award](https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/1952_National_League_Most_Valuable_Player_Award)
- <sup>110</sup> Black, *More Than*, 275
- <sup>111</sup> Arthur Daley, “A Question of Value,” *NYT*, November 26, 1952
- <sup>112</sup> Gayle Talbot, “Eastern Writers Fuming Over West’s Alleged Bloc for Sauer,” *Herald-News*, November 21, 1952
- <sup>113</sup> In 1952, the Cy Young Award for best pitcher did not yet exist. It began in 1956.
- <sup>114</sup> John Drebing, “Sauer Chosen Over Roberts and Black as Most Valuable in National League,” *NYT*, November 21, 1952; [https://www.baseball-reference.com/awards/awards\\_1952.shtml#NL\\_ROY\\_voting\\_link](https://www.baseball-reference.com/awards/awards_1952.shtml#NL_ROY_voting_link) .
- <sup>115</sup> Oscar Fraley, “Fraley Sour on Sauer’s Choice as Most Valuable,” *Herald-News*, November 21, 1952; Joe Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 118
- <sup>116</sup> Personal email from Robert Creamer, March 1, 2010.
- <sup>117</sup> “Twenty-seven Yanks Get \$6,026 Each in Official Split of World Series Pool: 29 On Dodger Team Gain \$4,200 Apiece; Frick Reveals Official Split of \$500,003 Player Pool From World Series,” *NYT*, October 16, 1952
- <sup>118</sup> Kahn, *The Boys of Summer*, 255
- <sup>119</sup> Black, *More Than*, 155-56; here’s an example of Black’s Lucky Strikes column in 1953: <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lcPCN/sn83045120/1953-07-11/ed-1/seq-5.pdf>

<sup>120</sup> Lanctot, *Campy*, 299; “Campanella Team Loses, 1-0,” *NYT*, October 14, 1952; Gayle Talbot, “Sports Roundup,” Danville (Virginia) *Bee*, November 10, 1952; Dick Young, “Campy To Conduct Own Weight Campaign – Early,” *New York Daily News*, November 12, 1952; “Joe Black Big Attraction for Campanella’s Troupe,” *Sporting News*, November 5, 1952

<sup>121</sup> “Campanella Winds Up Successful Tour With Average 2,500 Paid for 25 Games,” *Sporting News*, November 12, 1952

<sup>122</sup> Bill Johnson, “Campanella Stars Defeat Carolina Aces by 5 to 1,” *Charlotte Observer*, October 11, 1952

<sup>123</sup> “Joe Black Will Play Series With N.Y. Basketball Club,” *Sporting News*, November 26, 1952; Ben Gould, “Cager Black Not Interested in Baskets,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 20, 1952

<sup>124</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 120-121. Black discussed how he lost confidence after he changed his pitching style in this 2001 videotaped interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwcKjumM8ac>

<sup>125</sup> Black, *More Than*, 296

<sup>126</sup> Black, *More Than*, 300

<sup>127</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 104-105; Lanctot, *Campy*, 308

<sup>128</sup> <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1954/Kblacj1030031954.htm>;  
<https://www.baseball-reference.com/players/b/blackjo02.shtml>

<sup>129</sup> Roscoe McGowen, “Black and Roebuck of Dodgers Accept Terms for Next Season,” *NYT*, January 6, 1955. Black spent the fall barnstorming again with Roy Campanella’s all-star team.

<sup>130</sup> <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1955/Kblacj1030041955.htm>

<sup>131</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 128

<sup>132</sup> “Kretlow, Black Sold By Raniers,” Longview (Washington) *Daily News*, May 25, 1957; Bruce Brown, “From the Sidelines,” *San Bernardino Sun*, May 31, 1957

<sup>133</sup> “Joe Black Returns to the Dodgers,” *Hartford Courant*, June 22, 1957.

<sup>134</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 130-131

<sup>135</sup> Joe Trimble, “Turley Controls Nats 4-0,” *New York Daily News*, August 7, 1957. <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1957/B08060NYA1957.htm>

<sup>136</sup> <https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1957/B09112WS11957.htm>

<sup>137</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 133

<sup>138</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 139 From his early youth, after a friend died in the hospital, Black was fearful of doctors and hospitals. He refused to undergo an operation on his pitching arm which might have helped restore his fastball. He failed to get a check-up that might have diagnosed his prostate cancer before it spread too far and eventually killed him.

- <sup>139</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 140
- <sup>140</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 140-141
- <sup>141</sup> Peter Dreier, "Riot and Reunion," *The Nation*, July 30, 2007  
<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/riot-and-reunion-forty-years-later>;  
Thomas J. Sugrue and Andrew P. Goodman, "Plainfield Burning: Black Rebellion in the Suburban North," *Journal of Urban History*, Volume 33, Issue 4, 2007: 568-601
- <sup>142</sup> In 1958, Black took a graduate course in Health Education for Teachers at Rutgers University, according to a July 22, 2020 email from Carissa Sestito at Rutgers University. Black took two graduate courses – Educational and Vocational Guidance and Study of the Individual in Personnel and Guidance – at Seton Hall University during the summer of 1960, according to a July 1, 2020 email from Laurie Pine at Seton Hall University.
- <sup>143</sup> "Black Hurls As Chippy's Wins, 13-2," *PCN*, May 11, 1962.
- <sup>144</sup> "Black's Stars Play Tomorrow," *PCN*, August 22, 1959; "Joe Black Sparkles for All Star Team," *PCN*, May 9, 1960; Hugh Delano, "The Inside Track," *PCN*, June 17, 1960
- <sup>145</sup> George Govlick, "Ex-Dodger Ace Black To Pitch in Old-Timers Game at Stadium," *PCN*, June 26, 1961
- <sup>146</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 152; Jim Peoples, "Black is Still An Optimist in Baseball League and Work," *PCN*, June 9, 1960
- <sup>147</sup> Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- <sup>148</sup> Edward Reilly, *The 1960s: American Popular Culture Through History*, Greenwood Press, 2003, 49
- <sup>149</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 167.
- <sup>150</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 168
- <sup>151</sup> "Joe Black Honored on Appointment," *PCN*, August 29, 1962.
- <sup>152</sup> Black, *More Than*, 261
- <sup>153</sup> "Miles College Buys Greyhound Bus at Price," *Jet*, May 4, 1971
- <sup>154</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 185
- <sup>155</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 192
- <sup>156</sup> Arnold Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson: A Biography*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997, 459
- <sup>157</sup> Arnold Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson: A Biography*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997, 460
- <sup>158</sup> Source: Biography of Joe Black on the program for his memorial service in Phoenix in 2002

<sup>159</sup> <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/cgi-bin/indiana?a=d&d=INR19740504-01.1.2&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->

<sup>160</sup> Bob Quincy, "Fame and Fastball Faded by Message Remains," Charlotte (N.C.) *Observer*, November 16, 1979

<sup>161</sup> "Minority Hiring Said Lax," Fort Myers (Florida) *News Press*, March 12, 1976

<sup>162</sup> Ralph McGill, "What Is Man's Cardinal Sin?" *Atlanta Constitution*, May 28, 1968

<sup>163</sup> Andy Hall, "Black Youths Applaud Call for Self-Reliance," *Arizona Republic*, March 17, 1985.

<sup>164</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 227

<sup>165</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 241

<sup>166</sup> "Cosby Tells Graduates to Advance Civil Rights," *Alabama Journal*, May 13, 1991

<sup>167</sup> In a column in May 1982, Black wrote that a (unnamed) black magazine named him "Oreo of the Year." Black took it in stride, reminding readers about Jackie Robinson's philosophy: You can call me names, but you can't change my game plan."

<sup>168</sup> Cited in Manning Marable, *Speaking Truth To Power: Essays On Race, Resistance, And Radicalism*, New York: Westview Press, 1996.

<sup>169</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0547111/>

<sup>170</sup> At a 2004 NAACP awards dinner, Cosby was highly critical of the black community. He condemned the use of so-called vernacular "black English," single-parent families, conspicuous consumption, poor parenting, criminal behavior, and high drop-out rates. Black Americans, he said, should stop blaming racism for the high unemployment rates in their communities but should look inward at their own culture and behavior. These were themes that Black had expressed many times in his own speeches and columns. But because Cosby was much better known, his speech received a great deal of media attention and criticism within the black community for blaming the victim and letting white racism off the hook. Michael Eric Dyson, a prominent Black academic and writer, accused Cosby of ignoring "white society's responsibility in creating the problems he wants the poor to fix on their own." Michael Eric Dyson, *Is Bill Cosby Right? Or Has the Black Middle Class Lost Its Mind?* Civitas Books, 2006.

<sup>171</sup> <https://vdocuments.mx/alumni-news-fall-2006.html>

<sup>172</sup> Kahn, *The Boys of Summer*, 265-266.

<sup>173</sup> Kahn, *The Boys of Summer*, 267.

<sup>174</sup> Black, *Ain't Nobody*, 187

<sup>175</sup> Black, *More Than*, 252

<sup>176</sup> Black, *More Than*, 307

<sup>177</sup> Black, *More Than*, 312

<sup>178</sup> Bill Nowlin, "Sam Jethroe," SABR biography project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/5f1c7cf9>; N. Jeremi Duru, "Sam Jethroe's Last Hit," in Ron Briley, ed., *The Politics of Baseball*, Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2010; N. Jeremi Duru, "Exploring Jethroe's Injustice: The Impact of an Ex-Ballplayer's Legal Quest for a Pension on the Movement for Restorative Racial Justice," *University of Cincinnati Law Review*, Spring 2008; Larry Moffi and Jonathan Kronstadt, *Crossing the Line: Black Major Leaguers, 1947-1959*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994; Howard Bryant, *Shut Out: A Story of Race and Baseball in Boston*, New York: Routledge, 2002; Dave Anderson, "Here's a Soda for Buck Leonard," *NYT*, June 1, 1992 <https://www.NYTimes.com/1992/06/01/sports/sports-of-the-times-here-s-a-soda-for-buck-leonard.html>; Brad Snyder, "Jethroe seeks legal victory in bid for baseball pension," *Baltimore Sun*, April 22, 1995; <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1995-04-22-1995112081-story.html>; "Lawsuit Dismissed," *NYT*, October 6, 1996 <https://www.NYTimes.com/1996/10/06/sports/lawsuit-dismissed.html>; Murray Chass, "Pioneer Black Players To Be Granted Pensions," *NYT*, January 20, 1997 <https://www.NYTimes.com/1997/01/20/sports/pioneer-black-players-to-be-granted-pensions.html>; Ronald Blum, "Negro League Players Gain Pension Eligibility," *Indiana (Pennsylvania) Gazette*, January 20, 1997; Philip Dine, "Negro Leaguers Who Played in the Majors Finally Win Pensions," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, January 24, 1997; Jim Auchmutey, "'He's Our Jackie': Sam Jethroe, The First Black Braves Player, at 79 Fights Barriers to a Baseball Pension," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 22, 1997; Richard Goldstein, "Sam Jethroe is Dead at 83; Was Oldest Rookie of the Year," *NYT*, June 19, 2001 <https://www.NYTimes.com/2001/06/19/sports/sam-jethroe-is-dead-at-83-was-oldest-rookie-of-the-year.html>; Stan Grossfield, "He's Still Game: At 80, Ex Negro Leaguer Is Raising Five Children and Hoping for a Pension," *Boston Globe*, March 31, 2004; Brady Dennis, "Pay is for Player of Bygone Era," *Tampa Bay Times*, May 18, 2004; Gregory Lewis, "Negro Leaguers To Get Their Share," *South Florida Sun Sentinel*, May 18, 2004; Doug Gladstone, "MLB Isn't Paying Pensions to Herb Washington and Other Persons of Color," *Bleacher Report*, July 17, 2012 <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1261542-mlb-isnt-paying-pensions-to-herb-washington-and-other-persons-of-color>

<sup>179</sup> "Evans Reception Set," *Arizona Republic*, September 11, 1976

<sup>180</sup> Sid Dorfman, “Hear the Word of a Grouch,” Newark (N.J.) *Star-Ledger*, September 23, 1992 ; Ross Forman, “Joe Black’s Philosophy – ‘Live and Learn,’” *Sports Collectors Digest*, April 9, 1993

<sup>181</sup> Black, *More Than*, 318.

<sup>182</sup> <https://sabr.org/latest/neyer-joe-black-bobby-bonilla-and-a-little-adjustment/>; <https://tbt.fangraphs.com/winner-takes-all-which-was-the-best-world-series-game-seven/>; <https://medium.com/the-christian-counterculture/paying-forward-our-mistakes-a5589a1df3a2>

<sup>183</sup> [https://sportscollectorsdigest.com/news/one-year-wonders-mlb-players/](https://sportscollectorsdigest.com/news/one-year-wonders-mlb-players;); <http://www.highheatstats.com/2012/08/lightning-in-a-bottle-baseballs-one-year-wonders/>; <https://us.blastingnews.com/sports/2020/04/25-man-roster-of-mlb-one-year-wonders-003119033.html>; <https://medium.com/@corymvega/a-starting-lineup-of-baseballs-biggest-one-year-wonders-outfield-ada97872190c>

<sup>184</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 232.

<sup>185</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, v

<sup>186</sup> Black, *More Than*, 220

<sup>187</sup> Personal email from Martha Jo Black to Peter Dreier, June 1, 2020.

<sup>188</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 232

<sup>189</sup> Many articles and profiles of Black say that he received an honorary doctorate from Shaw University, a well-known historically black institution in North Carolina. At my request, Larry Treadwell IV (Shaw University’s Director of Library Services) and Paul Baker (the university archivist) searched but did not find evidence that Black was honored by that institution. Source: Email from Larry Treadwell, August 7, 2020, and phone call with Paul Baker, August 6, 2020. In reality, the honorary degree was from Shaw College, a small business school in Detroit. “Shaw College to Award Honors to 4,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 9, 1974.

<sup>190</sup> Black, *Ain’t Nobody*, 36

<sup>191</sup> “On Campus,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 16, 1977

<sup>192</sup> “Joe Black to Receive The Distinguished Broadcaster Award,” *Carolina Times*, April 18, 1981

<sup>193</sup> <https://commencement.morgan.edu/honorary-degrees/>

<sup>194</sup> “Greyhound Executive Picked for King Award,” *Arizona Republic*, December 14, 1986.

<sup>195</sup> <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1987-pt22/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1987-pt22-1-3.pdf>

<sup>196</sup> “Cosby Tells Graduates to Advance Civil Rights,” *Alabama Journal*, May 13, 1991



<sup>197</sup> Kara Richardson, "Plainfield Mourners Recall Baseball Hero," *BCN*, June 2, 2002; Harry Frezza, "Extraordinary Gathering Bids Farewell to Black," *BCN*, June 2, 2002

<sup>198</sup> Black, *More Than*, 352

<sup>199</sup> Black, *More Than*, 352

<sup>200</sup> Jeremy Walsh, "Plainfield To Name Baseball Field After Joe Black, The First Black Pitcher to Win a World Series," (Newark, N.J.) *Star-Ledger*, July 15, 2020; Jeff Grant, "Plainfield Renames Field for Joe Black," *BCN*, September 26, 2010; "Joe Black Ballfield Dedication Tomorrow," *Plainfield Today*, September 24, 2010 <http://ptoday.blogspot.com/2010/09/joe-black-ballfield-dedication-tomorrow.html>

<sup>201</sup> Steven Michael Selzer, *Meet the Real Joe Black*, New York: Universe, Inc., 2010, 152; Jane Leavy, *Sandy Koufax: A Lefty's Legacy*, New York: HarperCollins, 2002, 66-67, 69-70.

<sup>202</sup> Jane Leavy, *Sandy Koufax: A Lefty's Legacy*, New York: HarperCollins, 2002, 76.

<sup>203</sup> Scott Merkin, "Black Was a Giant On and Off the Field," *MLB.Com*, February 10, 2011.

<sup>204</sup> Roger Kahn, "Hard Thrower, Soft Heart," *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 2002.