



**Omaha  
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Library**

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## **New Traveling Exhibition Tells the Story of African Americans in Baseball**

“Pride and Passion: The African American Baseball Experience” is an exciting new traveling exhibition opening **May 19 at Omaha Public Library’s W. Dale Clark Main Library, Michael Phipps Gallery, 215 S. 15th St.** The exhibit examines the challenges faced by African American baseball players as they sought equal opportunities in their sport beginning in the post-Civil War era.

In the 1880s, more than 30 African Americans were on teams in baseball’s major and minor leagues. But opportunities diminished as Reconstruction ended and segregation became entrenched as part of American culture. During the 1887 season, major league and various minor league owners agreed to make no new contracts with African American players, though some blacks played in the minors through the end of the 1898 season. From that time on, until Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in 1946 with the Montreal Royals of the International League, Organized Baseball was a segregated sport.

In response, more than 200 independent all-black teams organized and barnstormed around the country, developing a reputation for a fast-running, power-hitting game. By the 1920s, black baseball had its own successful professional leagues. Negro League baseball grew into a multimillion dollar enterprise and a focus of great pride in the African American community. Legendary figures such as Rube Foster, Buck Leonard, Oscar Charleston, James “Cool Papa” Bell, Josh Gibson and Satchel Paige thrilled audiences and helped pave the way for integration of the major leagues in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1971, Satchel Paige became the first player inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame based solely on his performance in the Negro Leagues. In the years that followed, more than 35 players and

managers from such powerhouse Negro League teams as the Chicago American Giants, Kansas City Monarchs, St. Louis Stars, Pittsburgh Crawfords and Homestead Grays have been voted into the Hall of Fame.

“We are delighted to have been selected as a site for this exhibition,” said Omaha Public Library executive director Gary Wasdin. “Players in the Negro Leagues were some of the most talented and inspiring sports figures of their day. This exhibition shows that, in spite of segregation, black players helped advance the game of baseball in many ways. The Kansas City Monarchs, a Negro League team, were the first to develop a successful lighting system for night games, five years before major league baseball played its first night game. They carried their own generators and light stands with them on the road. The exhibition tells many more remarkable stories of players and teams who were shut out of major league baseball, but persevered in a sport they loved.”

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum and the American Library Association Public Programs Office organized the traveling exhibition, which was made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH): great ideas brought to life. The traveling exhibition is based on an exhibition of the same name on permanent display at the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y.

The traveling exhibition is composed of colorful freestanding panels featuring photographs of teams, players, original documents and artifacts in the collections of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum and in other institutions and collections across the United States.

Omaha Public Library is sponsoring free programs and other events for the public in connection with the exhibition. Sponsors for the public programs and events include Friends of the Omaha Public Library, Omaha Public Library Foundation and the Nebraska Humanities Council.

“Pride and Passion: The African American Baseball Experience” will be on display at Library until July 2.

For more information on the exhibit and a complete listing of the events accompanying it, visit

[omahalibrary.org](http://omahalibrary.org).

## Schedule of Events

### OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOK DISCUSSIONS

Dr. Dennis N. Mihelich will lead a discussion of “Only the Ball Was White: A History of Legendary Black Players and All-Black Professional Teams” by Robert Peterson at various Omaha Public Library locations.

W. Clarke **Swanson Branch, 9101 W. Dodge Rd:** Wednesday, May 26, 2 p.m.

Charles B. **Washington Branch, 2868 Ames Ave.:** Monday, June 28, 4 p.m.

### SCHOLARLY HUMANITIES PROGRAM

All sessions will be held on Saturdays and will begin at 10:15 a.m. at W. Dale Clark **Main Library, 215 S. 15th St.** Each session will be followed by a guided tour of the exhibition.

#### May 22

“Where Has the Passion Gone? A Look at the Present State of African Americans and Baseball” by Dr. David C. Ogden

#### June 5

“Love Baseball, Hate Racism: How Race Relations and Segregation Have Shaped the Black Experience with the American Pastime in Omaha, 1860-Present” by Dr. Dennis E. Hoffman, with special guest appearances by local celebrities

#### June 12

“Shadow Ball in the Heartland: A Look at Black Baseball Teams from Nebraska” by Dr. Angelo J. Louisa and Professor Robert P. Nash

#### June 19

“Black Stars in the College World Series” by Dr. Jerry E. Clark

#### June 26

“Black Involvement in Baseball: Voices from the Past,” a panel discussion moderated by Professor Peggy Jones and featuring three former Negro Leaguers—William Bell, Jr., Ernest Johnson, and Arthur Pennington—and former major leaguer John Mayberry

### NEGRO LEAGUE STORYTIME AND A CRAFT ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH

W. Dale Clark **Main Library, 215 S. 15th St.:** Wednesday, May 26, 10:30 a.m.

**Florence Branch, 2920 Bondesson St.:** Saturday, June 5, 10:30 a.m.  
Charles B. **Washington Branch, 2868 Ames Ave.:** Tuesday, June 8, 10:30 a.m.  
Charles B. **Washington Branch, 2868 Ames Ave.:** Saturday, June 12, 10:30 a.m.  
Milton R. **Abrahams Branch, 5111 N. 90th St.:** Thursday, June 17, 10:30 a.m.  
**Saddlebrook Branch, 14850 Laurel Ave.:** Saturday, July 3, 10 a.m.

#### **GUIDED TOURS OF THE EXHIBITION AND A CRAFT ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH**

**Thursdays, June 3-July 1, 10:15 a.m.,** W. Dale Clark **Main Library, 215 S. 15th St.**  
Dr. Angelo J. Louisa and Omaha Public Library staff

#### **CHAUTAUQUA-STYLE PERFORMANCES**

Each show will begin with Joe Jasnowski and Graham Jewell, two high school students, reprising their History Day performance as sportswriters discussing Jackie Robinson. Then, historian and actor Jeremy Bloch will portray Pee Wee Reese, Robinson's teammate and friend, reminiscing about Robinson.

**Benson Branch, 6015 Binney St.:** Friday, June 4, 1:30 p.m.  
**South Omaha Library, 2808 Q St.:** Wednesday, June 9, 1:30 p.m.  
**Florence Branch, 2920 Bondesson St.:** Thursday, June 10, 1 p.m.  
**Willa Cather Branch, 1905 S. 44th St.:** Friday, June 11, 1:30 p.m.  
W. Clarke **Swanson Branch, 9101 W. Dodge Rd.:** Tuesday, June 15, 1:30 p.m.  
Milton R. **Abrahams Branch, 5111 N. 90th St.:** Friday, June 18, 1:30 p.m.  
W. Dale Clark **Main Library, 215 S. 15th St.:** Wednesday, June 23, 1:30 p.m.  
**Millard Branch, 13214 Westwood Ln.:** Friday, June 25, 1:30 p.m.  
**Saddlebrook Branch, 14850 Laurel Ave.:** Tuesday, June 29, 1:30 p.m.  
Charles B. **Washington Branch, 2868 Ames Ave.:** Wednesday, June 30, 1 p.m.

#### **AUTHOR TALK VIA SKYPE**

Author Larry Tye will talk about his recent biography of Satchel Paige, "Satchel: The Life and Times of an American Legend." The book was a New York Times bestseller, was widely praised by reviewers, and was the recipient of a 2009 Choice Outstanding Academic Title award, the 2009 CASEY Award for the best baseball book of the year, and the 2010 Seymour Medal for the best book on baseball history or biography that was published in 2009.

**Saturday, June 5, 2 p.m. at** W. Dale Clark **Main Library, 215 S. 15th St.**

#### **VIDEO PRESENTATION**

"Equal or Better: Reminiscences of the Negro Leagues"

Author, editor, and university administrator David Cicotello will introduce, show, and comment on a taped interview that he had with four former Negro Leaguers: Cowan Hyde, Lee Moody, Eugene Smith, and Quincy Smith.

**Saturday, June 12, 2 p.m. at** W. Dale Clark **Main Library, 215 S. 15th St.**