



# Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues

By Donn Rogosin

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In 1947 Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color barrier and became a hero for black and white Americans, yet Robinson was a Negro League player before he integrated Major League baseball. Negro League ballplayers had been thrilling black fans since 1920. Among them were the legendary pitchers Smoky Joe Williams, whose fastball seemed to “come off a mountain top,” Satchel Paige, the ageless wonder who pitched for five decades, and such hitters as Josh Gibson and Buck Leonard, “the Ruth and Gehrig of the Negro Leagues.”

Although their games were ignored by white-owned newspapers and radio stations, black ballplayers became folk heroes in cities such as Chicago, Kansas City, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, and Washington DC, where the teams drew large crowds and became major contributors to the local community life. This memorable narrative, filled with the memories of many surviving Negro League players, pulls the veil off these “invisible men” who were forced into the segregated leagues. What emerges is a glorious chapter in African American history and an often overlooked aspect of our American past.

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## **Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues** By Donn Rogosin Bibliography

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

“There are certain tales of the arena so inspiring and enraging that they need periodic retelling. And when they can be retold with fresh scholarship and from a contemporary perspective, there is cause for cheering in both the bleachers and the library stacks.”—Robert Lipsyte, *New York Times Book Review*  
(Robert Lipsyte *New York Times Book Review*)

“Enhanced by a superb selection of photographs and a useful index, this volume will appeal to the general reader as well as to the scholar, and it should find a place on many student reading lists. . . . It shows how sports history can enlighten areas of the past beyond the fields of play.”—Jim Harper, *Journal of Southern History*  
(Jim Harper *Journal of Southern History*)

“[*Invisible Men*] is still relevant, perhaps more relevant than ever as it recounts in telling detail life in baseball’s Negro Leagues.”—Sportsology.net  
(*Sportsology.net* 2007-05-09)

“[*Invisible Men*] is both highly readable and thoughtfully provocative a quarter-century after its initial publication. . . . The two main strengths Rogosin brings to his book are the comprehensive sampling of first-hand accounts, and a passion for setting the Negro leagues in the context of American culture (and vice versa). . . . Through numerous stories and vintage photographs *Invisible Men* renders visible the still-unsung heroes of the Negro Leagues and conveys the full range of life of the Negro Leagues admirably, providing insiders’ views of the rise and fall of a key African-American sports and social institution.”—*Material Culture*  
(*Material Culture* 2008-07-10)

### About the Author

Donn Rogosin has been a public television executive and an independent producer of documentaries. He wrote for the acclaimed documentary *There Was Always Sun Shining Somewhere*, a film on Negro League baseball, and is currently working on a Brazilian music program for television.

Monte Irvin played eight years in the Negro Leagues and eight years in the Major Leagues. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1973.

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