

GITTERMANGALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

Jackie Robinson and the Color Line

April 15 – May 24, 2024

Gitterman Gallery proudly presents *Jackie Robinson and the Color Line*, an exhibition of the collection of Paul Reiferson, which uses photographs and artifacts to vividly narrate the story of baseball's journey toward integration. The exhibition opens on Monday, April 15th in honor of Major League Baseball's Jackie Robinson Day from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and runs through Friday, May 24th.

Jackie Robinson, a trailblazing figure in civil rights, shattered baseball's color line when Martin Luther King was still in college, earning praise from King as "a sit-inner before the sit-ins, a freedom rider before freedom rides." The exhibition frames Robinson's odyssey within a larger one that had begun sixty years earlier, when men like Fleet and Weldy Walker, Sol White, Robert Higgins, and Javan Emory played for integrated teams in the late 19th century.

- Witness the original photographs of Satchel Paige and Jackie Robinson that were used to produce the iconic images in LIFE magazine
- Explore the telegrams establishing the first contact between the Dodgers and Jackie Robinson and arranging and planning the historic meeting with Branch Rickey
- See Jackie Robinson's journey through original photographs capturing on-field triumphs and challenges

Paul Reiferson is a dedicated collector driven by a passion for preserving American stories. "I saw that the color line transcended baseball, that it was about America struggling to solve a terrible problem, and that the stories of the people in that fight were extraordinary," Reiferson explained.

This exhibition of photographs, complemented by historic artifacts, illuminates the pervasive racism and the fervent aspirations for integration during that era. We hope everyone from collectors to students and families with children can visit this exhibition. By experiencing these powerful images together, we hope to help foster a deeper appreciation for photography as a medium of storytelling.

Nearly 500 prints from Reiferson's collection of photographs by Charles M. Conlon have been gifted or promised to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Many others have been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, Bronx Museum of the Arts, American Folk Art Museum, and Tampa Museum of Art, among others.

Gitterman Gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and available by appointment.

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Javan Emory, c. 1885
Vintage gelatin silver print

Legend has it that it was because of Javan Emory's extraordinary skills as a ball player that the color line was drawn by the National League.

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Parsons Studio

Wheeling Base Ball Club, 1887

Vintage albumen print

Imperial cabinet card with original window mat

Sol White, one of the black players banned in 1887 despite being one of the league's best hitters, is pictured in one of the few surviving photographs.

Without his book, *History of Colored Base Ball*, most of what we know about early black baseball and the color line would be lost.

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Ohio Wesleyan Baseball Team [Branch Rickey and Charles Thomas], 1903
Vintage gelatin silver print

In 1903, Charles Thomas (second row, third from left) faced an act of discrimination so searing that it haunted Branch Rickey (top row, left), then the baseball coach at Ohio Wesleyan, and inspired him to be instrumental in dismantling the color line in Major League Baseball.

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Roy Partlow after defeating Satchel Paige, San Juan, 1939
Vintage gelatin silver print

Roy Partlow replaced Johnny Wright as Jackie Robinson's roommate in Montreal, but like Wright, failed to make it to Major League Baseball. This image of Partlow is arguably the greatest image of triumph ever taken in the Negro Leagues. Partlow is carried on the shoulders of fans after defeating Satchel Paige in the Puerto Rican winter league.

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George Strock (1911-1977)
Satchel Paige in Harlem, 1941
Vintage gelatin silver print
Used in LIFE magazine, June 2, 1941

George Strock's photographic essay for LIFE depicts Satchel Paige's larger-than-life persona. The same qualities that made Paige a hero to fans made him questionable to Major League team owners.

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Tom Watson

Jackie Robinson's first Major League home run, April 18, 1947

Vintage gelatin silver print

Illustrated in Daily News, April 19, 1947, back cover

Jackie Robinson hit his first home run for the Dodgers on April 18, 1947. Tommy Tatum, the next batter, is seen shaking Robinson's hand as he touches home. This iconic image, its symbolism obvious to all, ran on the Daily News' back cover the next day.

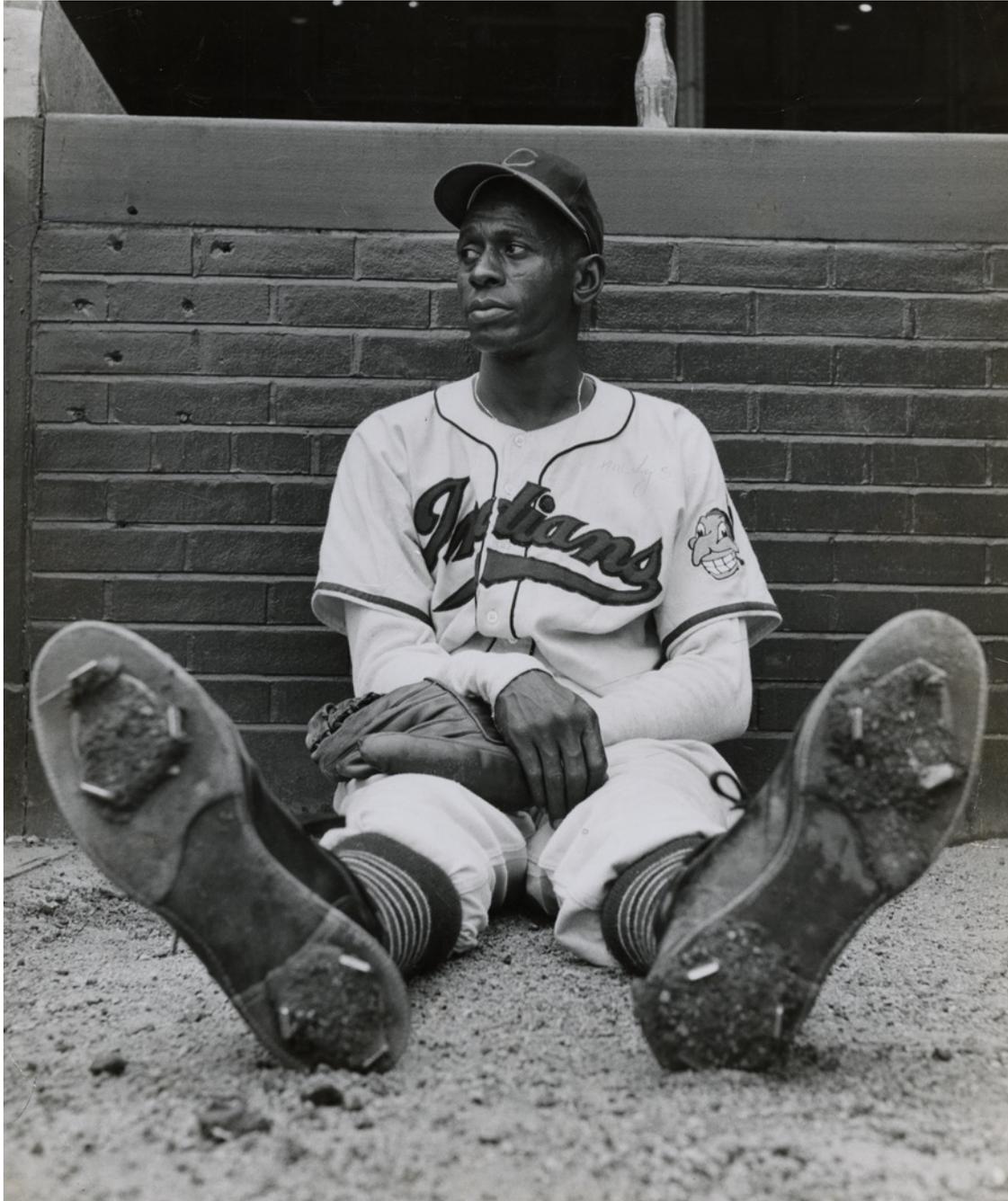
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Phillies dugout taunting Robinson, April 22, 1947
Vintage gelatin silver print

This recently discovered photograph is the only known example of any image capturing the verbal abuse Robinson suffered on the field during his rookie year. Robinson would later write that this specific experience nearly broke him.

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George Silk (1916-2004)

Satchel Paige, 1948

Vintage gelatin silver print

This iconic photograph symbolizes Satchel Paige's long-awaited breakthrough into Major League Baseball. The old Cleveland uniform, however, is a reminder that Baseball had more work to do. An example of the patch from 1947-1950, is also included in the collection.

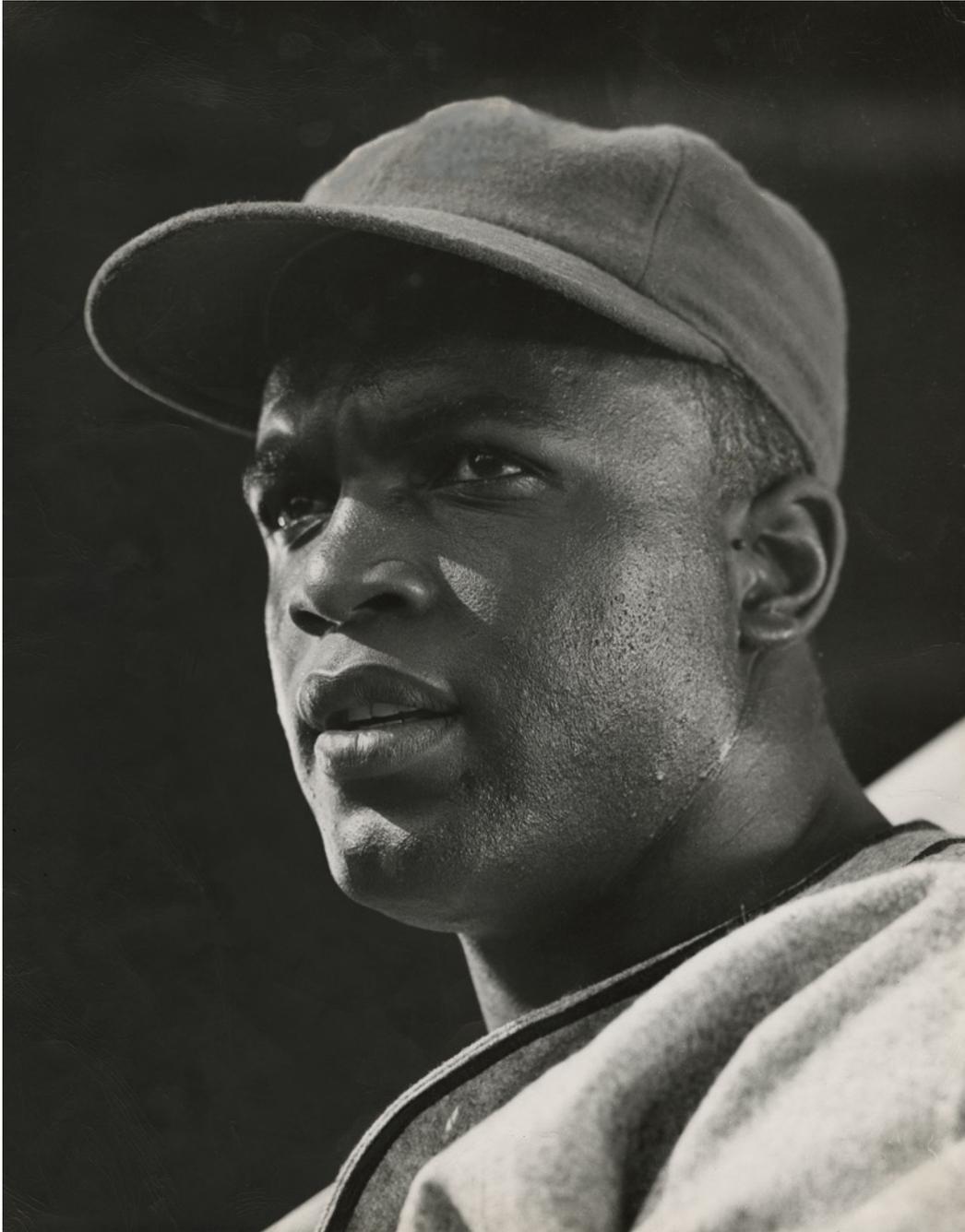
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Jackie Robinson signs his contract, January 24, 1950
Vintage gelatin silver print

This photograph, taken during a contract signing, exemplifies Branch Rickey's deliberate use of images and powerful symbolism in shaping the narrative for Jackie Robinson's integration into Major League Baseball. For this photo opportunity, Rickey removed all the other photographs on the walls except for the Lincoln portrait.

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J. R. EYERMAN (1906-1985)

Jackie Robinson, 1950

Vintage gelatin silver print

Used in LIFE magazine, May 8, 1950, cover

J.R. Eyerman's low angle photograph during the filming of *The Jackie Robinson Story* portrays Robinson as a heroic figure. This iconic image not only graced the cover of LIFE magazine but also became part of the US Postal Service's Black Heritage stamp series.

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Barney Stein (1909-1993)

Robinson and Reese hold hands, April 15, 1954

Gelatin silver print

This image of Jackie Robinson and Pee Wee Reese holding hands conveys a profound sense of affection beyond mere acceptance.

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Hy Peskin (1915-2005)

Willie Mays, Laraine Day [Mrs. Leo Durocher], and Leo Durocher, March 2, 1955

Modern color print from original positive transparency

This photograph, featured on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* in April 11, 1955, marked a historic moment as the first time a national magazine showcased a white woman and a black man touching. Some readers reacted very negatively, revealing the deep-seated racial tensions of the time.