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# Baseball and black history

## How will blacks liberate their minds?

By Michael A. Grant, J.D.  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
(The following is part one of a three-part article)

Will we begin a new year, looking forward to a new century, even a new millennium, trudging into the future burdened with the heavy and self-defeating conditioning of the past or will we, by conscious effort, change our way of thinking by arduously reprogramming our minds to become masters of our fates?

It is the dawning of a new phase of our evolution in America. The time has come for true liberation — the freeing of our minds. In many ways, this will be the most difficult challenge in our long quest for social and political equality in America. Difficult, but certainly not impossible. Difficult, but also most pregnant with potential.

At this phase of our struggle, the burden of proof has shifted. The onus of what happens to us now shifts from white America to black America and from the blanket protection of mass leadership to a vulnerable, individual initiative, individual courage and individual responsibility.

At the termination of our physical servitude, someone else was forced by political



**MICHAEL A. GRANT** and economic necessity to emancipate our bodies. Someone else removed the shackles from our ankles.

During the second major phase of our liberation in this country, messianic leadership and group cohesiveness broke the manacles on our hands, rendering them free to participate in the political process. On many levels, the civil rights movement was successful.

But now, only the individual can liberate himself or herself. For no mortal is powerful enough to free the mind of another. Freeing the mind is an individual decision. It will demand painstaking effort. It will require courage because it is fraught with uncertainty. Each individual must —

moment by moment — choose to be his or her own liberator. At best, charismatic leadership can only act as a catalyst to spark the process.

What would motivate the individual to undertake such a Herculean task? The rewards of "the mind's true liberation" are inestimable. There are virtually no limits. A re-programmed mind shifts its focus. Perception about what is possible expands exponentially. One begins to experience the awesome power inherent in the act of co-creation. The individual no longer feels helpless and hopeless. The individual no longer feels powerless in the face of unrelenting circumstances or diminished in the shadow of another's perceived superior position.

Liberating the mind steers the soul and places each of us squarely where we were destined to be: Masters overseeing the field of sowing and reaping where we alone are held accountable, but also where we will be richly rewarded for deciding to take control of our magnificent lives.

(Next: "How The Human Mind Works.")

Michael Grant is an author, motivational speaker and management consultant.

By Bernice Powell Jackson

Baseball is often referred to as our national pastime, but too often the unique contributions of African-Americans to this all-American game have been ignored or forgotten. 1997 marks the 50th anniversary of the entrance of Jackie Robinson into major league baseball, becoming the first



African-American to play in the major leagues. The Jackie Robinson Foundation, which was set up as a living legacy by Rachel Robinson, the widow of the famed baseball player, provides scholarships for African-American students across the nation. This special year will focus on the many achievements of Jackie Robinson and will include the minting of a commemorative coin by the U.S. Treasury during the summer.

But Jackie Robinson was only one of the 2,600 African-Americans who played professional baseball in the Negro Leagues, which had been formed in Kansas City in 1920. These black baseball teams joined together to bring innovative and thrilling baseball to black communities across the nation, in many cases becoming centerpieces for economic development in many African-American communities.

The Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, located at the historic corner of 18th and Vine in Kansas City, now houses exhibits which cover the history of African-American baseball from the Civil War through the 1950s. Through videos, computer games, recreations of team uniforms and timelines and written materials,

the museum tells the stories of baseball heroes like Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Sr., and John Henry Lloyd.

It tells how, for example, Josh Gibson, known as the King of Swing, once hit a home run at Yankee Stadium with one hand, as he was clowning around with the pitcher. It tells the stories of Roy Campanella, Willie Mays, Ernie Banks and of course, Jackie Robinson, who was named the major leagues Rookie of the Year in 1947, despite the discrimination and abuse he was subjected to.

It also tells the stories of the Negro Leagues teams, with names like the Kansas City Monarchs, the Cleveland Buckeyes, the Philadelphia Stars and the Baltimore Black Sox. The Negro League teams folded in the early 1960s, after many of their best players joined major league teams.

This spring the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum will move across the street to a larger space, next to a new jazz museum which is part of Kansas City's redevelopment of this historic area.

As we celebrate black history and get ready for baseball's spring training, be mindful of the contributions of Jackie Robinson and all those who played in the Negro Baseball League.

(Note: To find out more about the Jackie Robinson commemorative coin, write the Jackie Robinson Foundation, 3 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001. You can visit the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum at 18th and Vine in Kansas City or call (816) 221-1920.)

## Families

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nonprofit Urban Family Institute (UFI), which provides safe, nurturing environments for children. UFI is financed by private donations and public funds.

Kent has also spent his own money to keep the project running. At two locations in Washington, D.C., and 13 sites in Oakland, Calif., UFI has opened "Kids Houses," based on the idea that Kent started in his home.

After school each day, about 65 children, ages four to 16, pour into the basement of a building in the Park Morton housing development in northwest Washington, D.C., which houses UFI's largest Kids House.

In one room, a staff of volunteers helps children finish their homework. Story time is being conducted in another room. In yet another room, children are coloring, working with colored paper, and playing educational games.

"I love it here, because I get help with my homework," says nine-year-old Shanece Colvin.

Demetria Pelote, also nine, says that Kids House makes her feel like she can be whatever she wants to be. "I like it here because I get to draw," she says. "People say I don't know how to draw that well, but I'm gonna show them,

because someday I'm going to be an artist!"

The children at Kids House can also count on a healthy meal each night. "My favorites are lasagna, spaghetti, ribs, corn, chicken, and mashed potatoes," Demetria says.

"The easiest thing to do is to reach out to a child, because they reach back," says Kent. "You may be in a gang-infested community and forced to go through all the evil stuff that goes with that. But if you make it clear to a child that you care for him and are available to him, he'll come to you. Kids don't want what's going on out there. I haven't found one yet who won't change if you present yourself to him in a positive way. If you come at them with a speech or a lecture, then you've got a different problem. But if you really commit to them, they commit back to you."

The children are not the only ones who benefit from Kids House. Aside from the joy of working with children, virtually every volunteer has advanced his or her education since joining the Kids House staff.

Across the street from the Park Morton Kids House, D.C. Housing Police Officer Mike Padin is surrounded by a swarm of excited children. He's handing out basketball cards

and promising to have a new batch next week. "Places like Kids House are important, because most of the kids here don't have any place to go," says Officer Padin, who has been patrolling the area for the past three months. "In housing projects all over the city, children are at risk of getting shot by the neighborhood thugs or being involved in the different crews [gangs]. All of us have a responsibility to these children — police officers as well as civilians — because we are the last line of defense between them and the streets."

Officer Padin is right. We all have a responsibility to see that every child has a chance to reach his or her full potential, and that's the primary goal of UFI. Kent offers us just one example of what can be accomplished when a few committed adults make up their minds that children are important.

We all need to ask ourselves what we can do to ensure that the children in our communities are safe, healthy, and loved.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund, which coordinates the Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC). For more information about the BCCC, call 202-628-8787.



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