

Book unveils unknown heroics from Robinson

Blackout — The Untold Story of Jackie Robinson's First Spring Training

By Chris Lamb, University of Nebraska Press, 233 pp., illus., Hardcover, \$24.95
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Review by Kam Williams

"It may be difficult for us today to understand both the vastness of American racism or the rising popularity of communism [back then]. Discrimination was legal and enforced without regard to basic human rights. Whites reinforced Jim Crow laws through threats and physical coercion as well as by taking the law into their own hands. Sanford, like many southern towns, had a strong Klu Klux Klan tradition. The Klan used to meet across the street from Sanford Municipal Park. After the second day of practice, a White man approached without identifying himself... He had been sent from a gathering of a hundred townspeople to deliver a message: 'Get the niggers out of town!' There would be trouble unless Robinson and Wright were 'out of town by nightfall.'" — Jackie Robinson's first days in Florida in the Dodgers' organization

On the way to integrating Major League Baseball in 1947, Jackie Robinson quietly endured a host of humiliations, death threats and a host of other indignities almost unimaginable by today's standards.

For although he had been a standout with the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro League, Jackie was asked to prove himself all over again before he would be able to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

So, after signing a contract with owner Branch Rickey, he had to spend a year in the minor leagues with the Montreal Royals, a AAA team in the Dodgers' organization. And upon reporting to spring training in Florida 1946, he was expected to deal with a most unwelcoming situation, all without complaint, police protection, or the benefit of any coverage by the mainstream press.

While their White teammates were free to

eat, sleep and travel anywhere they pleased, Jackie and the three other Black Royals' movements were severely limited by the dictates of Jim Crow segregation. They were even prohibited from playing games in certain cities with racially-restricted stadiums. It's hard to think about leveling the playing field, when you're not even allowed to step on it in the first place.

Despite all of the above, the most upsetting aspect of the ordeal had to be the fact that everywhere they went the specter of an imminent lynching hung in the air, especially because the big city daily papers entered an unwritten confederacy of silence, refusing to report about any of the mistreatment, despite ample evidence that it was of a vile, incessant and menacing nature. This absence of coverage

sent the scary message to the prejudiced perpetrators that it would be okay to escalate their tactics in their attempts to discourage any African-Americans from participating in the national pastime.

Thankfully, members of the Black Press, especially The Pittsburgh Courier, The Washington Afro-American and the Chicago Defender, were willing to document the frightening events as they unfolded, as was The Daily World, the

prevailing Communist newspaper. Their preserved archives, in turn, have now enabled Professor Chris Lamb of the College of Charleston to compile the accounts into *Blackout: The Untold Story of Jackie Robinson's First Spring Training*.

What makes this book so valuable is that it chronicles, in a most entertaining fashion, harrowing situations and landmark cultural developments at a critical juncture in American history.

Thus, *Blackout* only serves to add to Jackie Robinson's stature by putting these previously unappreciated heroics in proper perspective, by illustrating how he risked life and limb on a daily basis just by virtue of being a Black man seeking to cross any of a number of strictly enforced color lines.

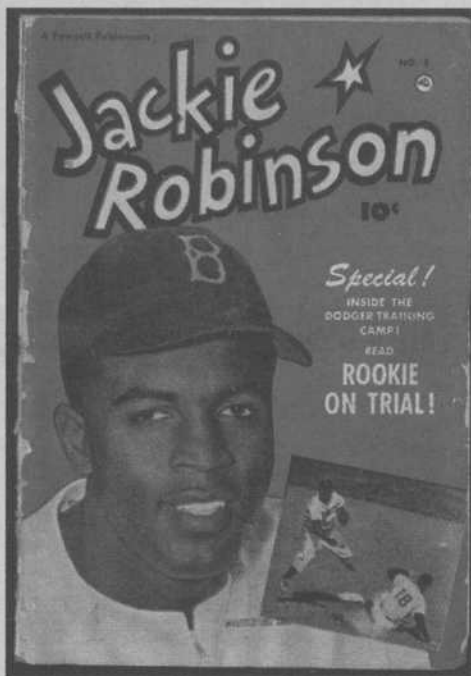
Star after star appealed to men to take responsibility and stop unsafe sex — and to women to stand up for their rights.

"I want you to use your power to stay alive," shouted Jada Pinkett Smith, Will Smith's wife.

Since stepping down as South Africa's first Black president in 1999, Mandela has championed the cause of AIDS victims.

"You may well ask, what is this old age pensioner doing here tonight, when he is supposed to have retired?" he asked.

"Yes, I would love to enjoy the peace and quiet of retirement, but I know that like many of you, I cannot rest easily while our beloved continent is ravaged by a deadly epidemic."



R&B singer Stevie Wonder and gospel diva Yolanda Adams perform together during the 36th NAACP Image Awards at Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles on Saturday.

Image Awards

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in 2002. Kanye West was named outstanding new artist for his album, "College Dropout," while Grammy-winner Usher was honored as outstanding male artist.

"American Idol" winner Fantasia was named outstanding female artist. West was humble in his acceptance speech. "I made some mistakes and I learned from those mistakes," he told the audience, characterizing the past year as "a trip."


In the new category of outstanding independent or foreign film, the award went to Bishop T.D. Jakes' drama about abuse, "Woman Thou Art Loosed." Jakes' novel,

from which the movie was adapted, also was named best literary work, fiction.

U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., received the Chairman's Award, while the Vanguard Award went to pop star Prince. Talk show host and entrepreneur Oprah Winfrey also was inducted into the NAACP Hall of Fame.

"There is an element of show business to politics," Obama said. "But I think it's important to remind ourselves that what's at stake in our politics is more than just image."


Serious problems exist, he said, including a lack of health care for all families, children who are unable to read and a lack of attention to the African continent.



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Mandela

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percent of pregnant women are infected in the worst hit province of Kwazulu-Natal.

Overall, an estimated 5.3 million of South Africa's 45 million people live with HIV, more than in any other country.

Between 600 and 1,000 are dying every day from AIDS related diseases, according to U.N. figures.

"In Africa more people are wiped out by AIDS every year than in the entire Asian Tsunami disaster," said former Eurythmics star Annie Lennox. "In this society women are powerless and vulnerable to the whims of men who refuse to practice safe sex and use condoms."