



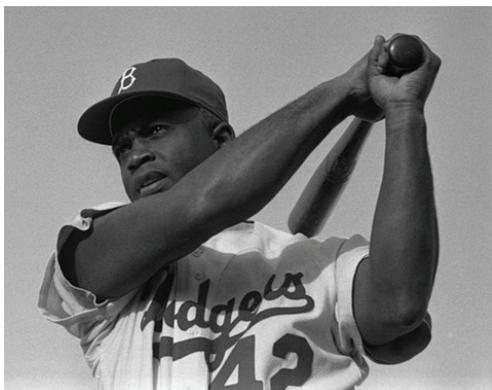
## ***Past and present converge as Sox host MLB's Civil Rights Game Aug. 24***

*By George Castle, CBM Historian  
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The White Sox would finally host Major League Baseball's seventh annual Civil Rights Game once two motivated gentlemen put their heads and passions together.

Kenny Williams, now White Sox executive vice president, believes the game and the surrounding events and roundtable panel discussions should strike a balance between history and the never-ending struggle for civil rights.

Williams had an easy sell to Sox chairman Jerry Reinsdorf, one of the top backers of diversity in sports. Reinsdorf, 77, a living witness to Jackie Robinson's break-in to the majors in Brooklyn, envisions a world where everyone has equal opportunity. Such a society does not yet exist, making the athletics and events involved in the multi-day, All Star-style Civil Rights game program necessary into the foreseeable future.



**The biopic movie "42" on Jackie Robinson should heighten interest in civil rights going into the Aug. 23-24 schedule of events.**



**Major League Baseball's Civil Rights Game has been a success in Atlanta and Cincinnati.**

The Chicago Baseball Museum supports the goals of the Civil Rights Game and will publicize all events as they are conceptualized and scheduled.

The timing for the game in Chicago is never better, and not just because of Reinsdorf's and Williams' active involvement. The biopic movie, "42," on Robinson's break-in, will no doubt be the talk of the summer among both baseball fans and history buffs, and will further draw attention to the timeline the Civil Rights Game commemorates.

The game with the Texas Rangers will begin at 6:10 p.m. Aug. 24. Other activities including the MLB Beacon Awards Luncheon, Baseball and the Civil Rights Movement Roundtable Discussion, and a youth baseball and softball clinic on that weekend.

The game itself has been a success in attendance in two consecutive seasons apiece in Atlanta and Cincinnati.

### **All-star cast of celebs in past roundtables**

The roundtable discussion has been moderated annually by Harvard Law School professor Charles Ogletree, a renowned expert on race and justice. Previous panelists included Martin Luther King III, eldest son of Martin Luther King, Jr.; Sharon Robinson, daughter of Jackie Robinson and MLB Educational Programming Consultant; Branch Rickey III, grandson of color-line breaker Branch Rickey and president of the Pacific Coast League, and Ambassador Shabazz, eldest daughter of Malcolm X and ambassador-at-large for Belize.

Other baseball celebrities involved in the roundtable have been Hall of Famers Barry Larkin, Joe Morgan, Dave Winfield and Tony Perez; former Dodgers ace Don Newcombe, a longtime Robinson teammate, and Los Angeles Angels owner Arte Moreno.

The MLB Beacon Awards luncheon will honor the recipients of the annual MLB Beacon Awards, which recognizes individuals whose lives are emblematic of the spirit of the civil rights movement.

Past recipients were Hall of Famers Hank Aaron, Willie Mays, Ernie Banks, Frank Robinson and Buck O'Neil. Others were Newcombe, Muhammad Ali, Bill Cosby, Harry Belafonte, Morgan Freeman, Spike Lee, Ruby Dee, Billie Jean King, U.S. Rep. John Lewis and Vera Clemente, widow of Hall of Famer Roberto Clemente. Keynote speakers have included Commissioner Bud Selig, former President Bill Clinton, former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young, and longtime civil-rights activists Julian Bond and the Rev. Joseph Lowery.

For tickets and more information on the Civil Rights Game and associated events, fans can visit [MLB.com/civilrightsgame](http://MLB.com/civilrightsgame) or [WhiteSox.com/civilrightsgame](http://WhiteSox.com/civilrightsgame).

Williams referred to civil-rights issues that are ongoing. In addition to the continuing struggle for racial justice, there is the marriage equality issue that has gone before the U.S. Supreme Court. Immigration reform and age discrimination are also very relevant. And there is a concept that may only partially be solved by the forthcoming Obamacare: the civil right of all Americans to 21<sup>st</sup> Century-level health care at reasonable cost.



**Bill Clinton, often called the "first black president" for his rapport with minorities, was a past keynote speaker in Civil Rights Games activities.**

## Big laundry list for historical discussions

An early backer of civil rights, Reinsdorf certainly would endorse roundtable discussion of a number of national and Chicago-area historical events. Here's a good laundry list:

- The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of nation-shaking events: the civil-rights March on Washington and King's "I Have a Dream" speech, President John F. Kennedy's televised address placing the government formally behind a "moral issue" that culminated in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the use of fire hoses and police dogs on civil-rights demonstrators in Birmingham, Ala.
- The mass migration of African-Americans from the South to Chicago, and the struggles they faced early on, such as the 1919 riots and redlining of neighborhoods to keep the domestic immigrants hemmed into the old "Black Belt" of the South Side.
- Struggles of African-American families to move into better neighborhoods in the city and nearby suburbs, where they were greeted with violent reactions by residents.
- King's year-long residency in Chicago in 1966, when he was hit with a brick while marching through Marquette Park and the empty platitudes he received about a better life for people of color from Mayor Richard J. Daley.
- Progress such as Richard Hatcher's 1967 election in Gary as one of the first African-American mayors of a sizable American city.
- The historic election of Harold Washington in 1983 as Chicago's first African-American mayor. Washington's feat corresponded with the Sox's "Winning Ugly" season, with Washington and Reinsdorf developing an interesting relationship.



**Martin Luther King Jr.'s year-long residency in Chicago in 1966 should be a topic for discussion in the Civil Rights Game's roundtable.**

The Chicago Baseball Museum encourages all baseball fans to attend and support the Civil Rights Game and the surrounding activities. In the dog days of late summer, entertainment and education will brighten up the life of the city.

The program will be a chance for those born too soon to learn about the giants who helped shape the society in which we lived. Reinsdorf cited the example of slugger Jim Thome, born in 1970. Thome was the oldest Sox player on the roster when the team visited Memphis as part of an early Civil Rights Game. Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968. Thus so many millions had no living memory of the memorable people and events.

Now history will come alive through baseball, the sport that honors its past more than any other. Two uniquely American institutions will come together.