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Memories *and Dreams*



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The Souls of the Game

NEW EXPLORATION OF THE BLACK BASEBALL EXPERIENCE TO DEBUT AT MUSEUM IN SPRING OF 2024.

The stories and impact of the Black baseball experience will be recognized and celebrated through *The Souls of the Game: Voices of Black Baseball*, the groundbreaking new exhibit opening in the spring of 2024 at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown.

From the decades-long history of Black baseball prior to the formation of the Negro Leagues, through the complexities of baseball's reintegration, to the challenges that remain today, *The Souls of the Game* will reveal the deep connections between baseball and Black America.

The exhibit is part of the Hall of Fame's Black Baseball Initiative that includes additional outreach programs, educational materials and virtual programming, and is made possible by the Yawkey Foundation with additional support from Bill Janetschek in honor of his siblings Robert and Ann, the Anthony A. Yoseloff Foundation and the Bisignano family. The new exhibit will be in the Yawkey Gallery.

"*The Souls of the Game* will share the stories of Black baseball through the voices of the men and women who lived, and still live, that history," said Josh Rawitch, President of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. "The exhibit will provide an authentic, cohesive narrative of Black baseball history while celebrating baseball through the lens of Black culture and vice versa.

"We are grateful to the Yawkey Foundation, Bill Janetschek and his family, the Anthony A. Yoseloff Foundation and the Bisignano family for their support of this exhibit, the Museum's Black Baseball Initiative and its impactful educational outreach opportunities," said Rawitch.



Hall of Fame President Josh Rawitch (left of Hall of Fame plaque of Larry Doby) and Larry Doby Jr. (right of plaque) were part of an event on June 19 at Paterson, N.J.'s, Hinchliffe Stadium to announce details of the Museum's new *The Souls of the Game* exhibit.

"The Black Baseball Initiative is meaningful and timely because there are important, complex and nuanced stories that need to be told, especially from individuals with lived experiences. The Yawkey Foundation shares the Hall's commitment to learning, understanding and courageous conversations that stem from both the painful chapters of our nation's history and from the often hard-won victories by some of the greatest players and personalities in and around baseball," said Maureen H. Bleday, CEO and Trustee of the Yawkey Foundation. "During their lifetimes, Tom Yawkey and Jean Yawkey demonstrated a love for the unique way that baseball had the power to bring together players, fans and communities, and our Trustees are certain that the Yawkeys would have invested in this critical initiative if they were with us today."

The Souls of the Game, a title that pays tribute to W. E. B. Du Bois' seminal 1903 book

"*The Souls of Black Folk*," will explore the Black baseball experience of those African-American men, women and children who were and are an integral part of our National Pastime.

"W. E. B. Du Bois' 'The Souls of Black Folk' was and remains one of the most important books by a Black person written in the 20th century," said Dr. Gerald Early, Washington University professor and one of several curatorial consultants for the Hall of Fame's ongoing Black Baseball Initiative. "One of the main messages of Du Bois' book was that, in their status as free men and women, Black people needed to use all that was around them to invent, shape and resurrect their own culture. By echoing Du Bois' book title, this exhibit emphasizes that message about the meaning of baseball for Black Americans. Baseball was not merely a sport for Blacks. It was an element, a brick, in building a culture. Baseball was about Blacks creating themselves anew as a free people, as Americans of African descent."

Subtitled *Voices of Black Baseball*, the exhibit will highlight first-person accounts by individuals whose Black baseball experiences shaped them, their community, baseball and America at large. Featuring historic artifacts, important documents and engaging photographs, and utilizing audio, video and interactive elements, the exhibit will tell a more inclusive story of baseball, shine a light on and correct misconceptions about Black baseball, and provide an authentic, cohesive narrative of African-American baseball history.

Sections will cover stories of early Black baseball, the Negro Leagues era, the complexities of reintegration, Jackie Robinson, post-reintegration progress and retrogress, and calls for change in today's game. 🏆