

Jackie Robinson Stadium

Next week the baseball playoffs begin, and millions of Americans will turn their attention to the National Pastime. But there is one baseball story every American should know. On the wall of my office hangs a cover of "Sport Magazine" signed by Hall of Fame baseball legend Jackie Robinson. It pictures Robinson, playing second base for the Brooklyn Dodgers, pivoting on a double play throw. Shortstop Pee Wee Reese is pictured behind him.

Jackie Robinson is one of America's great civil rights heroes, yet his story is fading from public view. Born in racially segregated Georgia in 1919, Robinson's father abandoned the family leading his mother, Mallie, to move the five Robinson children to Pasadena, California in search of a better life.

Jackie excelled at sports and won a scholarship to UCLA where he was an All American halfback and a superstar baseball player. Upon leaving school, he enlisted in the Army to fight in World War II. But after refusing to go to the back of the bus while training in Texas, the Army charged him with insubordination. Subsequently, he was acquitted of all charges and honorably discharged.

After playing baseball in the Negro League, Brooklyn Dodger General Manager Branch Rickey brought him to the Major Leagues in 1947. Robinson was then 27 years old, and was the first black front line player ever.

Predictably, all hell broke loose when Robinson hit the diamond that year. He was vilified on and off the field, called obscene names non-stop, and some opposing pitchers even threw at his head. Only once did he lose his cool in public. An umpire actually said to him, "Go back to the jungle, you little n—."

Robinson punched the ump in the mouth.

The Philadelphia Phillies and Cincinnati Redlegs were particularly nasty to Robinson. In one incident, the Cincinnati players were screaming at the Dodgers, stuff like "how can you play with that n—?"

Having heard enough, Pee Wee Reese, from Louisville, Kentucky, walked over to Robinson and put his arm around him.

Jackie Robinson played in the big leagues for nine years and, while things improved a bit over time, he was constantly demeaned and humiliated by fellow Americans. Yet Robinson prevailed. He compiled Hall of Fame statistics and was the National League's Most Valuable Player in 1949, the year I was born.

Try to imagine what Jackie Robinson endured in the land of the free. Just for a moment, put yourself in his cleats. Hatred is a brutal thing; personal attacks can cut right to the heart of a human being. For Robinson, they were non-stop.

How brave was this man? Because of him, the face of American society changed quickly and decisively. Opportunities for millions of black and Hispanic athletes opened up, and that changed attitudes everywhere. Suddenly, Willie Mays was a hero, and Bill Russell a role model.

Jackie Robinson died young at 52 from diabetes complications. His suffering, triumph and legacy must be remembered. In a couple of years, The New York Mets will unveil a new stadium just a few miles from where Jackie Robinson played in Brooklyn. The Mets are now considering what to name their opulent new home.

But, really, there is only one name that should be attached to that building. In bold letters, forever, in Queens, New York, the name "Jackie Robinson Stadium" should stand as a monument to one of the most courageous Americans of all time.

Number 42 deserves no less.

The Attack of the Hyper-Partisans

Are you a hyper-partisan? If so, stop it right now. These people are damaging America and I'm calling them out.

First, a definition: A hyper-partisan is a person who does not seek the truth; rather, he or she tailors information to fit a preconceived political viewpoint. What is actually happening in the world is not important to these ideological zombies; it's all about reinforcing their core beliefs.

Thus, no matter what President Bush does for example, he's wrong. There is absolutely nothing the man can do that would please the hyper-partisans who oppose him. On the opposite ideological page, Bill and Hillary Clinton are Satan's spawn. They are evil all day, every day.

How boring is this? If it were just a few Kool-Aid drinking nuts, no one would care. But now you have entire media outlets that have gone hyper-partisan. Newspapers like The Boston Globe and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution are just about entirely left wing. Yes, their circulations are in a freefall, but no journalistic enterprise should be hyper-partisan.

The infotainment industry and the internet are also full of hyper-partisans because, unlike newspapers, you can make money with that approach, at least in conservative circles. The Air America radio network, on the left, tried to imitate the conservative template but failed. That's because while the right generally cheerleads for America, the far-left fanatics often despise their country and few want to hear that kind of vitriol.

Actor Sean Penn is a hyper-partisan. Last week on the Larry King program, Penn, as usual, was hammering the Bush administration when King actually challenged him by asking what was wrong with trying to spread democracy in the Middle East.

Penn replied the Bush administration doesn't even promote democracy in the USA. I thought that was a riot. Here's Penn ripping those in power on national TV and, at the same time, complaining there's not enough freedom here. If he tried that in Iran, his tongue would be in a museum.

Tom DeLay is a hyper-partisan. Republicans good, Democrats bad. Life simply cannot be that simple, can it? But for the hyper-partisans it is. Nothing stands in the way of their belief system. Not facts, not provable truth.

To be honest, I believe there are more hyper-partisans on the left. Many conservatives are actually angry with the Bush administration over the unsecured southern border, enormous government spending, and the stalemate in Iraq. That's why the President's poll numbers remain low. Some on the right who were behind him now have doubts about his stewardship. I don't see much independent thinking on the left.

It is hard to imagine Rosie O'Donnell, for example, becoming disenchanted with the liberal agenda, no matter what. Somehow, I don't think Nancy Pelosi is going to reevaluate "taxing the rich," even if the country descended into a deep recession after more "progressive" tax laws were enacted. However, I could be wrong. And since I'm not a hyper-partisan, I can say that.

So let's start mocking all these hyper-partisans and begin to encourage critical thinking in America. It's much more interesting and it's far better for the country, because an acceptance of fact-based reality is crucial to solving problems.

And if you still don't believe me, imagine being stranded on a desert island with Howard Dean or Michael Savage. I'd hit the ocean. You'd get a fairer shake from the sharks.

Superman and the Culture War

The culture war has tugged on Superman's cape, and it is not pretty. In the new film "Superman Returns," Daily Planet editor Perry White responds this way after being told the man of steel has come back after a five year absence: "Does he still stand for truth, justice and all that stuff?"

And all that stuff?

The original line, of course, was "truth, justice and the American way." But no way the "American way" gets in the film.

That's because Warner Brothers, the studio distributing the movie, doesn't want to tee off any foreign viewers with pro-U.S. sentiment. It's bad enough Superman was raised in the Midwest; we can't be having the hero actually standing for the American way, now can we? Some jihadist in Pakistan might throw popcorn at the screen.

You don't need x-ray vision to know that things have changed drastically in America in the past five years. When Superman left to go visit the planet of his birthplace, the USA was not engaged in a terror war; the country was merrily drifting along, hoping that rap music would follow Monica Lewinsky into obscurity.

But that was then. Now, America is a divided country. We are fighting a fierce war on terror overseas, and an intense culture war at home. No longer is the "American way" something

to be proud of; today, forces abroad and at home believe we are a deeply flawed nation that is a danger to the world.

According to a Pew Global Attitudes survey, almost 30% of Americans believe that America's presence in Iraq poses a greater danger to world peace than Iran's quest for a nuclear weapon. In Turkey, 65% of the people feel that way. This kind of muddled thinking reflects the sentiment of the anti-American press worldwide and here in the USA. It is also the product of the rise of a well-funded and well-organized secular-progressive movement in America.

The secular-progressive philosophy would rattle even Superman. Led by moneymen George Soros and Peter Lewis who have bought enormous internet access, the secular-progressives are selling the theory that the USA needs radical change, a complete overhaul. Think about it: Almost every day, the secular-progressive press bombards us with messages that America violates human rights, that it is bigoted against gays and other minorities, that the rich control everything and don't pay enough tax, and that the rights of women are trampled if any restrictions are placed on abortion.

And the secular-progressive scribes are becoming increasingly emboldened. Writing in The New York Times, David Nasaw, a professor at the ultra-left City University of New York, made this comment about the charitable gifts of Bill Gates and Warren Buffett: "While we can only applaud the decision by Mr. Buffett and Mr. Gates to give away so much of their fortunes ... is society served by *permitting* (italics mine) so much capital to be accumulated by so few?"

Fifty years ago, Professor Nasaw would have received an invitation to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Today, he is a lion in the secular-progressive movement which seeks to have a large centralized government decide who can earn what.

That's not the American way Superman used to uphold. This is a brave new world that threatens even superheroes. The old ways of respect for the basic nobility of America, the capitalistic free enterprise system, and the Judeo-Christian philosophy of personal responsibility are all under siege by stealth forces more powerful than a locomotive. They can even exorcise a classic pro-American line from a movie about a traditional comic book hero.

Please tell Perry White there is no justice in eliminating the American way. And that's the truth.

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