

shape, with two parents the norm.

But genealogy is not the same as family, Wilson argues. Every child has two parents; not every child lives in a two-parent family. Yet many scholars embraced Gutman's work as foundational. In *Fatherhood in America: A History* (1993), Robert Griswold claims that the black family remained intact until the 20th century, when blacks migrated in large numbers to big cities, where the lack of jobs forced fathers "to leave their families to find work."

"Recent research shows this argument to be wrong," says Wilson. "Based on a careful analysis of census data, historian Steven Ruggles concluded that single parenthood was two to three times more common among African Americans than among whites in 1880 [before the "great migration"]. The gap widened after 1960, but it was only a widening, not a new event." While urban life probably did encourage family breakdown, Wilson says, it was not the main factor. Analyzing cen-

sus data from 1910, University of Pennsylvania scholars have shown that black children in rural areas were roughly twice as likely as their white counterparts to be raised by a single mother.

The impact of patterns of family life further back in time, in Africa, is very difficult to gauge. In Africa, kinship networks were and are more important than marriage, and the strong extended family left a smaller role for fathers in child rearing. One anthropologist observes that in West Africa the question has been not so much "Are you married?" as "Do you have any children?" Slavery hardly encouraged black men to build nuclear families.

It is important to note, writes Wilson, that about half of all black families today are middle class and, as a group, have overcome "the legacy of slavery, at least with respect to income and family structure." Nevertheless, that pernicious legacy persists. In 1997, nearly 70 percent of children born to African American women had unwed mothers.

## *Batter Up!*

"Bearing Witness to Blackball: Buck O'Neil, the Negro Leagues, and the Politics of the Past" by Daniel A. Nathan in *Journal of American Studies* (Vol. 35, No. 3), Cambridge Univ. Press, Edinburgh Bldg., Shaftesbury Rd., Cambridge, England CB2 2RU.

Thanks to documentaries such as Ken Burns's 1994 *Baseball*, and nostalgic tributes to legends such as Josh Gibson and James "Cool Papa" Bell, the Negro Leagues may be more celebrated now than at any time since they disappeared in the late 1950s. Nathan, a professor of American studies and history at Finland's University of Tampere, senses something fishy. He thinks the current nostalgic interest in the Negro Leagues is an attempt to rewrite history.

Some of the first professional baseball teams after the Civil War were integrated, and even the all-black teams of the time routinely played against all-white teams. But segregation started early. The National Association of Base Ball Players voted in 1867 to bar "any club which may be composed of one or more colored persons," and the National League, organized in 1876, "tacitly agreed to the same prohibition." All

was not lost, but "by the beginning of the 20th century there were no African Americans in the Major Leagues."

In 1920, Andrew "Rube" Foster formed the first successful all-black league, the Negro National League, but it was done in by the depression. A new Negro National League sprang up in 1933, followed four years later by the Negro American League. The Negro League all-star game often surpassed its Major League counterpart in attendance and profits, Nathan reports.

Until Jackie Robinson was signed to the Brooklyn Dodgers by Branch Rickey in 1947, breaking baseball's color barrier, Negro League players were excluded from the Major Leagues, and many great black players missed their chance for the kind of immortality achieved by the likes of Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb. Some who made it to the majors, such as Satchel Paige, arrived only in



Reputed to be the fastest player ever to play in the Negro Leagues, outfielder James “Cool Papa” Bell once stole two bases on a single pitch.

the autumn of their careers.

Nathan credits much of the current interest in the Negro Leagues to the tireless efforts of

Buck O’Neil, a “smooth-fielding first baseman” for the champion Kansas City Monarchs who won the Negro American League batting title in 1946 with a .350 batting average, and whom some may recognize as the folksy interlocutor in Burns’s *Baseball*. Many observers are amazed at O’Neil’s lack of anger over the injustices he and others suffered. Nathan believes that there is more to the story than that. Making a hero of O’Neil, deserved though that status may be, is a way of recasting history as a story of individual struggle and minimizing “a national disgrace.” There’s a bit of an edge even to O’Neil’s niceness. At Satchel Paige’s funeral, in 1982, O’Neil remarked that “everyone was saying, ‘isn’t it a shame Satchel didn’t play with all the great athletes of the major leagues?’ But who’s to say he wasn’t, playing with us?”

## The Higher Circles

“The Prep-School PC Plague” by Heather Mac Donald, in *City Journal* (Spring 2002), Manhattan Inst., 52 Vanderbilt Ave., 2nd fl., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Within the ivy-covered halls of America’s elite prep schools, such as Exeter and Andover, instructors once instilled in their young charges the high-minded WASP principles of citizenship and patriotism. But now—says Mac Donald, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute and a *City Journal* contributing editor—the emphasis, both in and out of the classroom, is on diversity. All of the top schools employ diversity professionals who specialize in what she calls “multicultural consciousness-raising,” the kind of race- and gender-based teaching that used to be confined to the universities. In the view of Mac Donald, this new prep-

school obsession is “a grievous missed opportunity to create an integrated, color-indifferent society,” and, far from enlightening students about multicultural issues, succeeds only in “creating race-consciousness where none exists.”

This education in differences proceeds whether the students want it or not. Diversity professionals such as Bobby Edwards, dean for community and multicultural development at Andover (also known as Phillips Academy), is incredulous when even “students of color” profess their lives free from racial injustice. Instead of accepting the students’ reported experience,