

Module 08: Jackie Robinson, Civil Rights Leader?

Evidence 6: Letter From Jackie Robinson to Branch Rickey, July 13, 1946

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Introduction

When the Negro League teams complained that they were not being compensated for losing their best players, Rickey sought assurances from his players that they were not under formal contract with their former teams. Robinson's letter transcribed below is similar to letters written by Don Newcombe and Roy Campanella.

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Mr. Branch Rickey
President
Brooklyn Baseball Club
Brooklyn, N.Y.
July 13, 1946

Dear Mr. Rickey,

I have just read Mr. Parker's article in the Mirror stating in effect I had violated my contract with the Kansas City Monarchs and that you had induced me to do so. The facts are as follows:

No contract of any kind was ever tendered to me by the Kansas City Monarchs and I had never signed anything in the nature of an agreement or a contract with that club. I simply received an offer in a letter and I reported to the Kansas City Monarchs as a result of that letter.

Upon reporting I asked William Dismukes, the business manager of the Monarchs, for a contract but none was ever tendered to me. I knew that I had no job at any minute they cared to dismiss me. Furthermore, at no time did I have a conversation with anyone connected with the Kansas City Monarchs or with any other club for that matter in regard to my future services.

Some time ago I read in the press a statement by Mr. Wilkinson, the owner of the Kansas City Monarchs, stating that I was under no contract with his club.

When I came to Brooklyn to see you one of the very first questions you asked me, if not the very first, was "are you under any obligation of any sort whatever as to your future services in baseball?" I told you very quickly "None whatever." You asked me to put that in writing and I did so at that time.

As I remember our first conversation you gave me to understand that if I had any agreement with my then employers you could not discuss my employment by the Brooklyn Organization.

Sincerely yours,
Jackie Robinson

Source:
Branch Rickey Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.