

# TechNews

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OPINION	2
CAMPUS	3
A&E	3-9
SLIPSTICK	10
SPORTS	11

## Shimer College, SCDI co-sponsor Negro Baseball League lecture

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COPY EDITOR

David Shiner, Professor of Humanities and the History of Ideas at Shimer College, presented a historical overview on the Negro Baseball League this past Thursday. This event was organized by IIT's Student Center for Diversity and Inclusion, and Shimer College in Galvin Library, Cherry Room.

Shiner started the presentation by giving a brief introduction about baseball history, especially Black baseball history. "The Sox have a well-deserved reputation for preserving the memories of the Black players and teams that were pioneers of the modern game, going back to the founding of the team in 1900 with the birth of the American League," Shiner said. "The Sox were generous in permitting use of its parks—South Side Grounds from 1900 to 1910, and later their longtime home field, Comiskey Park—to Black teams."

Shiner was really excited to share his knowledge with the audience. He was wearing

a great Negro League replica jersey and also had some of them on display. "Back in 1908 the [White] Sox hired a Black man, William Buckner, to be the team's trainer. He held the job for most of the time until his retirement in 1933, when he became the first African-American to draw a pension from a major league club," Shiner said about the replica. "That was very very unusual in those days. So in honor of the Sox, I've included a Sox cap with the Negro League caps."

Baseball was played in the United States, in some form, as early as 200 years ago, and many of us might know a lot about the formation and codification of the rules from about the 1840s on, but we don't know a lot about the beginnings of Black baseball. The earliest currently-known written record of two teams of Black men playing baseball is from Brooklyn in 1861, and from the outbreak of the Civil War onward we have decent if somewhat sporadic accounts of Black men playing ball, both in segregated and integrated games.

Out of many facts, the one that was really interesting was that baseball was the

sport of choice for men who could play sports of any kind during the Civil War.

"There are records of Union and Confederate armies calling a temporary halt to their hostilities, playing a game of baseball, shaking hands, and then going back to killing each other," said Shiner.

"At the end of the war baseball was being played everywhere. Amateur teams sprang up particularly in the northeast and the Midwest, including Black teams," he added. "One of the Black teams, the Mutuals of Washington D.C., included the two sons of Frederick Douglass, the famous former slave and abolitionist."

After the war, racial integration came slowly and haltingly to the nation, and the same was true of baseball. The audience were really amused when he mentioned that, "The first general baseball organization (not really a league) the original National Association of Base Ball Players, formed in 1867, banned Black athletes. Throughout the 1870s minor leagues were springing up everywhere. Sometimes Blacks were permitted to play in

them; mostly they weren't."

Shiner shared with the audiences really interesting facts about the baseball league. He also mentioned the National Baseball Colored League, which was formed in 1887 with teams from eight cities, none of which unfortunately was Chicago. The first known League of Chicago was the Chicago Union Giants, which was founded in 1887.

The knowledge that he shared with his audiences was too much to jolt down in one piece. Overall, the presentation was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. The good part of this presentation was the presence of faculty and staff, but there were only three students.

Such events are organized for students, and their presence is really appreciated by everyone around.

If you want to see such events or there are some other events which you would like to see on campus, please feel free to send an email to Lisa Montgomery, who is the director of SCDI at [scdi@iit.edu](mailto:scdi@iit.edu) and share your ideas with her. She would really love to cater to your ideas.

