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## A Tribute To Henry "Hank" Aaron

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## TRIBUTE

### A TRIBUTE TO HENRY “HANK” AARON

This issue of the MARQUETTE SPORTS LAW REVIEW is dedicated to Major League Baseball Hall of Famer Henry Louis “Hank” Aaron, who died on January 22, 2021, at the age of 86. Known for his legendary baseball career as a member of the Milwaukee and Atlanta Braves, and retiring as a Milwaukee Brewer, Mr. Aaron was recognized by the National Sports Law Institute of Marquette University Law School in 1995 as its third Master of the Game.

The Master of the Game Award honors an individual who has made significant contributions to the sports industry and who exemplifies the highest level of professionalism in his or her field. As reported in the August/September 1995 issue of FOR THE RECORD: THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL SPORTS LAW INSTITUTE, Mr. Aaron was a deserving recipient focusing on those benefiting from an educational scholarship fund in his name, and not on his own accomplishments, as he accepted the Master of the Game Award -

On September 20, 1995, the National Sports Law Institute honored Henry Aaron with the third **Master of the Game Award**. The award was co-sponsored by the NSLI, Warner Cable and Midwest Express Airlines.

Film clips showed his famous home run on September 23, 1957, that won the first National League Championship for the Milwaukee Braves. Aaron’s heroics continued that year as the Braves won the World Series against the Yankees and he was named MVP of the National League.

Before Aaron received his award, six young people were introduced to the audience. They were six of the 25 Milwaukee-area students who received college educations through the Hank Aaron Youth Leadership Fund<sup>1</sup>. . . This fund was established as a special tribute to Aaron at the time of his retirement from baseball and makes grants to the special individual needs of motivated disadvantaged youth.

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1. Current information on this fund can be found online here <https://www.greatermilwaukeefoundation.org/donors/donor-stories/hank-aaron/>.

After he was presented with the **Master of the Game Award** by Marquette University president Albert J. DiUlio, S.J.,<sup>2</sup> Aaron said that the Award provided him with an opportunity to reflect . . . “I have come to tell you about something other than hitting home runs . . . about my involvement with children . . . when those kids stood up, it did me more good than anything I can think of as far as home runs . . . I suppose I have been very fortunate that I have received many, many awards, and to be inducted into the baseball Hall of Fame . . . But . . . I think a man’s ability in what he stands for goes a little farther than how many home runs he hits.”<sup>3</sup>

Aaron’s commitment to education, Civil Rights, and his community, and his impact on those around him were evident in all that he did. In addition to the Master of the Game Award, he received many other awards including the Presidential Citizens Medal from President Bill Clinton in 2001, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush in 2002. He also returned to Marquette to deliver the graduation commencement speech in 2012.

The following pages includes tribute from many people connected to the National Sports Law Institute and Sports Law Program at Marquette University Law School who have been impacted by Henry “Hank” Aaron.

Paul. M. Anderson  
Adjunct Professor of Law  
Director, National Sports Law Institute & Sports Law Program,  
Marquette University Law School (Class of 1995)

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Henry and I were great friends – the best of friends – for more than 62 years. In my humble opinion, he was the greatest player of our generation. But more important, Henry was a great and wonderful human being. Neither fame nor fortune changed the extraordinary kindness and empathy which led to his greatness off the field. His impact not only on baseball but on all of America will never be forgotten.

I remember when Henry first came to Milwaukee in 1954. It was the Braves’ second season in our city. He made an immediate impact as a 20-year-old, hitting .280 with 13 home runs in 468 at bats. But that was only a hint of what was to come.

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2. Reverend Albert J. DiUlio, S.J., was president of Marquette University from 1990-1996.

3. *Henry Aaron Honored with Master of the Game Award*, For the Record: The Official Newsletter of the National Sports Law Institute, Volume 6, Number 4, at 1-2 (Aug./Sept. 1995).

One of my fondest and most memorable moments in baseball occurred at County Stadium on September 23, 1957. The Braves and St. Louis Cardinals were locked in a very close race for the National League pennant. That night, the Braves had the opportunity to clinch the pennant with a victory. The only ticket I could get was an obstructed-view seat in the bleachers behind a big metal post.

But, what a game. It was tied going into the bottom of the 11<sup>th</sup> inning when Henry came to the plate with one out and a runner on base. Henry swung and hit a laser to center. Cardinals outfielder Wally Moon went to the wall but had no chance. Home run! Game over. Braves win the pennant. And the Milwaukee Braves go to the World Series.

The fans went wild. So did the Braves. It was an incredible celebration. The image of the great Aaron, deliriously happy, being hoisted on the shoulders of his teammates and being carried off the field is indelibly imprinted in my memory. The next day, the New York Times published a photograph on its front page that juxtaposed the ironic contrast of white men carrying a black man off the field in Milwaukee with a photograph taken in Little Rock, Arkansas where Governor Orval Faubus' white troops were battling black citizens with nightsticks. The comparison between the ideals being shown by Henry's place in baseball compared to the reprehensible politics of race in Little Rock could not have been more clear.

Henry and I first became friends in 1958. We were both big football fans and often went to Packers games together. The only time we were on opposite sides was when the Packers played Henry's beloved Cleveland Browns. We continued our friendship after the Braves moved to Atlanta. The move was difficult for both of us. Henry loved playing in Milwaukee and the fans adored him.

Throughout my years in baseball, I often said that baseball was a social institution with important social responsibilities. And, of course, a great example of that was Jackie Robinson's entry into the game in 1947, which in many ways was baseball's most powerful and important moment. But another memorable and equally critical moment in baseball's social history occurred on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1974. That day, Henry hit his 715<sup>th</sup> career home run, breaking the all-time home run record held by Babe Ruth. But this was so much more than just breaking a revered baseball record. The imagery of a black man being given a standing ovation in the deep south was a powerful civil rights moment, but one for which there was a heavy price to be paid as Henry received horrific hate mail and death threats. Over the years, Henry showed me some of the vile mail he received. The letters were shocking and, to me, demonstrated how only a person with his great inner strength and determination could overcome the kind of hate he had to deal with.

In 1975, in the twilight of Henry's playing career, I made one of the most important decisions of my ownership of the Brewers, bringing Henry back to Milwaukee for his final two years. There, he had a significant impact on our great young player, Robin Yount, and on many other Brewers players.

Henry was beloved in Milwaukee and throughout the state of Wisconsin as he was nationwide. He had a special relationship with our fans. That became particularly evident when my daughter, Wendy, and I asked him to help us convince Wisconsin legislators to support our plan for a new ballpark to keep the Brewers in Milwaukee. It was a thrill of a lifetime for so many of them to have the opportunity to meet and chat with Henry. He signed dozens of autographs and spoke passionately about how important baseball is for the community. We prevailed and to this day I am not sure we would have without Henry's efforts and good will. The best way we knew to thank him was to expand our support for his and Billye's beloved Chasing The Dream Foundation, which provides financial assistance for underserved kids. To this day, the Brewers continue their support.

Henry was such a wonderful ambassador for the game and was always willing to do whatever he could to make baseball better and more relevant. Over the years as Baseball Commissioner, I had asked Henry to attend many events and dinners. He was always willing. One such event was a Congressional hearing ... the subject steroids. I must say the members of Congress seemed to be much more interested in spending time with Henry than they were on the subject of steroids. After the hearing, Henry and I walked back to our hotel. It was a beautiful day in Washington, D.C. We talked about the hearing, about steroids, about baseball, and about our long friendship. Along the way, he said: "Who would have imagined all those years ago that I, a black kid from Mobile, Alabama, would break Babe Ruth's home run record, and you, a Jewish kid from Milwaukee, would become Baseball Commissioner?"

Henry was a man of grace, a man of patience, a man of tolerance, and a man of great dignity, integrity and loyalty. Henry, we miss you. We will never forget you and will always be grateful for you showing us all how to chase our dreams.

Allan H. "Bud" Selig  
Commissioner Emeritus, Major League Baseball  
Distinguished Lecturer in Sports Law and Policy  
Marquette University Law School, and Member,  
National Sports Law Institute, Board of Advisors

As we mourn the loss of the legendary Hank Aaron, we celebrate a man defined by greatness. A great (in my opinion, the best ever!) baseball player and an even better person.

The next time you are confronting challenges that seem insurmountable think about what Hank said on the 20th anniversary of breaking Babe Ruth's home run record, "It really made me see for the first time a clear picture of what this country is about," he said. "My kids had to live like they were in prison because of kidnap threats, and I had to live like a pig in a slaughter camp. I had to duck. I had to go out the back door of the ball parks. I had to have a police escort with me all the time. I was getting threatening letters every single day. All of these things have put a bad taste in my mouth, and it won't go away. They carved a piece of my heart away."

Notwithstanding the hatred, prejudice and death threats Hank endured, he broke a record that many thought would never be broken. It took extraordinary talent to break this record and even greater character to do so, and to do so without becoming bitter.

It was that character that made Hank a civil rights icon and a dream maker!

Hank never stopped working to make our country better and helping kids chase their dreams. His impact cannot be overstated. My hope is we will honor Hank by using our talent and voices to chase our dreams and help others chase theirs.

Wendy Selig-Prieb  
Former President & CEO  
Milwaukee Brewers  
Strategic Advisor and Board Member  
Marquette University Law School, class of 1985

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Henry Louis Aaron was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame on August 1, 1982 and is widely regarded as one of the greatest ballplayers to ever play our nation's pastime. At the time of his induction, I was a ten (10) year old pitcher/catcher/shortstop living in Peoria, Illinois and dreaming of my beloved Chicago Cubs winning the World Series one day. Baseball was a huge part of my childhood, and I greatly admired Mr. Aaron from afar as one of the true legends of the game.

In the spring of 1995, Mr. Aaron was awarded the *Master of The Game* award by Marquette University Law School, traditionally awarded to an individual who has made significant contributions to the sports industry and who exemplifies the highest level of professionalism in his or her field. In the spring of 1995, I was a twenty-three (23) year old, second year law student at

Marquette, dreaming of a career in sports one day and an active participant in Marquette's sports law program. Mr. Aaron was highly revered in Milwaukee and at Marquette given his playing days in Milwaukee with the Braves and later the Brewers. As a law student at Marquette, never in my wildest dreams did I think for a minute I would have the opportunity to join the Braves' organization or serve in an executive role for the same team as the beloved and revered Henry Aaron.

I joined Turner Sports and the Braves in the Fall of 2000 as Counsel – Teams, Venues and Sports for all of the Turner Broadcasting sports business units, and specifically as Assistant Team Counsel for the Braves. One of my first encounters with Mr. Aaron was at Turner Field when I ran into him one day in the break room. It felt somewhat surreal and I felt like I was in an ESPN *Sports Center* commercial. Per his usual self, Mr. Aaron was polite and humble and consistent in his greeting as he would be for the twenty (20) years I had the pleasure of knowing him.

Mr. Aaron would often attend our annual Braves' executive meetings and executive dinners before the start of spring training at Disney's Wide World of Sports. After our morning meetings, many of the group would head down to the field to get a closer look at the team and catch up with coaches, players and staff. Mr. Aaron would often stay back and watch from the suite adjacent to the conference room that overlooked the field. I would frequently stay back as well and had the opportunity of a lifetime to sit and have one on one conversations with Mr. Aaron. He took great interest in my family's history in the beer business in Peoria, Illinois, and my time in Milwaukee at Marquette, while sharing his own experience in Milwaukee in the beer business and telling stories of common places of interest in Milwaukee that we both knew well.

One of my favorite memories of spending time with Mr. Aaron was one year when we were staying at the World Marriott near our training complex. We had just finished breakfast and were about to head over to our complex at the Wide World of Sports when as we were walking out of the hotel Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A, also happened to be walking through the lobby. The respect, awe and reverence that Mr. Cathy had for Mr. Aaron was noticeable, and it was as if Mr. Cathy had met one of his own childhood heroes. Both men were great examples of kindness, grace and humility as they chatted for a few minutes and were flocked for autographs.

Greg Heller  
Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer  
Atlanta Braves, and Member,  
National Sports Law Institute, Board of Advisors, and  
Marquette University Law School, class of 1996

As an eighth grader who played youth baseball, I remember watching Henry Aaron hit his 715<sup>th</sup> home run, with great admiration and awe. On many occasions I tried to imitate Hammering Hank's batting stance and powerful swing, but my results as a hitter were quite different than his. So early on in life I knew my skills as a batter (more accurately, lack thereof) posed no threat to his MLB home run record and that, if I wanted a sports-related career, it would have to be something other than as a professional baseball player. Around this time, I recall reading an informative biography about Hank. He explained his success as a hitter quite simply: The pitcher has only a ball. I have a bat. I figured I had the advantage. When I had the opportunity to meet Hank in-person during a 2015 Miller Park event to celebrate the opening of the Bud Selig exhibit, I mentioned what I had read many years ago. To my delight, he smiled broadly and said: "I remember saying that." This biography also described Hank's very difficult life as a Black person growing up in Mobile, Alabama. As a young boy growing up in Ohio, I wondered why he experienced such discrimination and hardship simply because of the color of his skin, which was particularly puzzling to me because I have adopted Black and Hispanic cousins and didn't see them as any different from myself and my white cousins. Today, I have the same question and realize there simply is not any acceptable or understandable answer to it.

Matthew J. Mitten  
Professor of Law and Executive Director  
National Sports Law Institute and  
LL.M. in Sports Law program for foreign lawyers  
Marquette University Law School

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In the 1990s as the Executive Director of the National Sports Law Institute of Marquette University Law School, I created a sports award known as the Master of the Game Award. The idea of the Master of the Game Award was actually that of my wife, Beverly Greenberg, who was an executive with Time Warner and who became the major sponsor for the Event. The Master of the Game Award was established to honor an individual who has made significant contributions to the sports industry, and who exemplifies the highest level of professionalism in their field. The very first award was given to Al McGuire in 1992, the former head basketball coach of Marquette University. Roy Firestone, the host of ESPN Up Close, was the Master of Ceremonies and over 500 people

attended a hilarious evening. Basketball celebrities such as Coach Ray Meyer of DePaul University and Rick Majerus roasted the Marquette head coach.

In 1995, Hank Aaron, of Milwaukee Braves fame, became the third recipient of the Master of the Game Award. The evening was a sell-out event and was attended by special guests including the then acting Commissioner of Major League Baseball (MLB) Bud Selig and Hank Aaron's dearest friend, Joe Kennedy.

"Hammering Hank" Aaron in a 23-year career in the MLB went on to become the Home Run King, Hall of Famer, MLB All-Century Team, an icon, and an unparalleled legend in MLB.

While Aaron broke barriers in baseball, and records too, he also fought for civil rights and racial equality his entire life. Aaron grew up in Mobile, Alabama, in a segregated neighborhood where the transgressions of the Ku Klux Klan were often experienced. In 1947, when Aaron was just 13 years old, Jackie Robinson came to give a speech in Mobile. That speech inspired Aaron to follow in the path of Robinson's baseball greatness and racial equality activism.

Aaron began his career as most African American baseball players did of that generation with independent Negro League teams, including stints with Pritchard Athletics and the Mobile Black Bears. On November 20, 1951, Aaron signed a contract with the Indianapolis Clowns of the American Negro League where he played for three months. By virtue of his outstanding play with the Indianapolis Clowns, Aaron was offered a contract with the Boston Braves, which later became the Milwaukee Braves. Aaron broke the color barrier in the South Atlantic League with the Jacksonville Braves, making the Jacksonville Braves the first integrated team in the South Atlantic League.

He endured and lived with racism and prejudice throughout his career. During his career he received relentless hate mail and death threats because of his race making it necessary for police protection at times.

There was a day in American history where African American players were not treated as equals because of Jim Crow Laws, and the color of one's skin made a difference.

Aaron utilized his baseball career as an opportunity and platform to champion civil rights. He encouraged young African American athletes to continue the pursuit of the game of baseball. He became the first African American to hold a senior management position as a front office executive with the Atlanta Braves. He supported the NAACP. He founded the Chasing the Dream Foundation to support underprivileged youth with mentoring and financial support for education.

In 2002, President George W. Bush awarded Hank Aaron the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his civil rights focus, philanthropy, and humanitarian endeavors.

I had the great honor of meeting Hank Aaron on several occasions. He was soft spoken, a gracious gentleman, who commanded respect and admiration, and who was most worthy of receiving the Master of the Game Award.

Martin J. Greenberg  
Managing Member, Law Office of Martin J. Greenberg, LLC  
Adjunct Professor of Law, and Member,  
National Sports Law Institute, Board of Advisors  
Director, National Sports Law Institute,  
Marquette University Law School, Class of 1971

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### *The Learner and Teacher*

Henry Aaron loved to learn. He loved education. He lived what he loved.

Aaron’s personal learning philosophy guided his approach to embracing change particularly during tumultuous occasions. During his lifetime, Aaron encouraged those with limited financial means to nurture their talents and pursue their aspirations. Aaron grasped that education was an organic process that occurred from within – inside a topic and surrounded by a group of people who were willing to forfeit the comfort of their individual disciplines and expertise to discover something worthwhile. In sum, Aaron believed that one was merely limited by one’s distinctive intellect and singular creativity.

Twenty-six years ago, while serving as the National Sports Law Institute’s Assistant Director, I had first personally encountered Henry Aaron while organizing the 1995 “Master of the Game” award dinner and ceremony. Prior to that time, I was solely aware of Aaron’s public persona as baseball’s “home run king.” I vividly remembered that during 1974 I watched on television as Aaron hit home run 715 off Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher, Al Downing, and observed that Aaron’s mother, Estella, gave him a most loving hug after he crossed home plate to enter record book immortality.

Nonetheless, the greater gift that Aaron bestowed upon me was my enhanced awareness and understanding of 1) his approach to servant leadership, 2) his possession of a great sense of ethics, and 3) his willingness to engage the Greater Milwaukee area to enjoy an ongoing improvement of self and that of community. Aaron’s deeds, more than his spoken words, challenged us to ask: “Should there be something more?” His response was an emphatic: YES. What was it? The opportunity to “pay it forward” with “Distinction” in the form of opportunity as guided by education.

*Pursuit of Distinction*

Distinction requires continued deviation from the norm. Aaron's distinction was further guided by his core values of "Humility," "Dignity," and "Quiet Competence." While there was a high level of satisfaction in achieving distinction, there was equally a great deal of PAIN invested. During Aaron's lifetime he met resistance. For example, while growing up in Mobile, Alabama, ongoing financial instability was always lurking for the Aaron working class family. Timely delivery of a credible forward-looking professional baseball career was yet another. If both were not attained within a reasonable time period during the late 1940s and early 1950s Aaron's chase of his "big league" dreams would have abruptly vanished. As we celebrate Aaron's life, please be mindful that during his early livelihood playing semi-professional baseball within a segregated South, along with his public introduction with the Negro League's Indianapolis Clowns in 1952, there was never any guarantee that his future achievements would ever come to fruition.

Major League Baseball distinction flourished for Aaron as he embarked on a path toward achievement of his goals while those staunch members of the status quo variety refused to engage. In this regard, Aaron embodied Marquette University's "Guiding Value" connected with "a spirit of interdisciplinary curiosity, research, innovation, entrepreneurship and application to change and improve ourselves, our community and our world."<sup>4</sup> One reached distinction by selecting a path which was, concurrently, risky, and laborious. It was, in essence, a direction that was simply not immediately appealing to others. In other words, Henry Aaron asked via deed and inquiry: What do you stand for? Do you believe in anything worthwhile? Are you willing to sacrifice in order establish a legacy in the service of others?

*The 1995 "Master of Game" Award – Aaron's Lifetime Achievement Insights*

The 1995 Master of the Game award was bestowed by the National Sports Law Institute of Marquette University Law School upon an individual who had made an outstanding contribution to either the athletic, business or legal aspects of amateur or professional sports. In addition, the award recipient was a humanitarian who had demonstrated a commitment to public service as well as possessed a great sense of ethics and integrity and who was well respected in the sports field.

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4. *Our Mission*, Marquette University, <https://www.marquette.edu/about/mission.php> (last visited May 5, 2021).

What did Henry Aaron accomplish to become the 1995 "MASTER OF THE GAME" award recipient? What follows is a partial list:

1. Aaron hit his famous home run on September 23, 1957 that won the first National League championship for the Milwaukee Braves,
2. Aaron's heroics continued that year as the Braves won the World Series against the New York Yankees and he was named Most Valuable Player of the National League,
3. Aaron helped to create the "Hank Aaron Youth Leadership Fund." This reserve was established at the time of Aaron's retirement from professional baseball and conferred grants in connection with the special individual needs of motivated disadvantaged youth and,
4. Upon his receipt of the 1995 Master of the Game award Aaron had an opportunity to reflect and said "I have come to tell you about something other than hitting home runs, about my involvement with children. When Mr. Kennedy stood here a moment ago and talked about the scholarship I left here, and those kids stood up, it did me more good than anything I can ever think of as far as home runs. In my 23 years, I suppose I have been very fortunate that I have receive many, many awards and to be inducted into the baseball Hall of Fame. But as Joe and I talked many times, I think a man's ability in what he stands for goes a little farther than how many home runs he hits."

#### *Henry Aaron's Impact Upon Milwaukee and Marquette University*

There were over 500 people gathered in the Pfister Hotel ballroom to hear and see Henry Aaron accept our NSLI 1995 "Master of the Game" award. Some in attendance were working class people who shared Aaron's Mobile, Alabama family background. The sense of pride unearthed during this event was palpable. Specifically, here was someone, Aaron, who had enjoyed baseball excellence in Milwaukee despite others who had deemed it as "Bushville" during the 1957 Braves World Series victory over the New York Yankees. Further, the Braves did not suffer a losing season during their 13 years in Milwaukee, and won two National League pennants in 1957 and 1958. These were halcyon days in Milwaukee and Wisconsin where many soaked in civic pride at that time and reveled in it during the 1995 Master of the Game award event.

My time spent with Henry Aaron's personal boyhood friend, Joe Kennedy, was yet another delightful experience for me. Kennedy was a Milwaukee Public Schools educator for more than 30 years. During our one month of planning, I was invited to Kennedy's home on several occasions to discuss the theme of the Master of the Game award dinner and ceremony. In this regard, it was enthusiastically decided by all that the centerpiece of this event was to highlight education as compared to baseball. It was crucial, for both Kennedy and Aaron, that our experience emphasized the "Hank Aaron Youth Leadership Fund," which was created by both men in 1976. This aspect of our affair reflected Marquette University's Mission Statement of "Excellence," "Faith," "Leadership," and "Service."<sup>5</sup>

As our Master of the Game award event approached "show time" disappointment suddenly was confronted. A few days before Henry Aaron was scheduled to appear at our dinner ceremony in Milwaukee a Braves emergency meeting had been hastily, and simultaneously, organized in Atlanta which required Aaron's presence. Without Henry Aaron in attendance our 1995 Master of the Game event would have been awkward at best, and disastrous at worse. Yet, a "blessing amongst blessings" had been bestowed upon us. Specifically, Beverly Greenberg, who at that time was the Vice President of Communications for Time Warner Cable of Milwaukee, was able to share some of her company's discretionary funds to hire a private jet and provide roundtrip transportation from Atlanta to Milwaukee for Henry Aaron. This was an example of Marquette's Guiding Value to "create bold, ambitious plans enacted with agility, authentic accountability and a commitment to the greater good."<sup>6</sup>

All in all, my Marquette core values based leadership lessons from the 1995 Master of the Game award ceremony included the significance of: 1) Embracing Honesty, 2) Being "Forward-looking," 3) Nurturing Inspiration, and 4) Supporting Competency. Most importantly, however, Henry Aaron encouraged all within the National Sports Law Institute of Marquette University Law School community to willingly embrace his life-long learning approach and to engage as servant leaders within the societies they reside. I am among them.

James Gray  
Associate Professor  
Sport and Recreation Management Program Director  
Marian University, and Member,  
National Sports Law Institute, Board of Advisors  
Marquette University Law School, Class of 1990

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5. *Id.*

6. *Id.*

I remember Hank Aaron for his incredible skills as a baseball player. Aaron means much more to me, however, than his successes on the baseball field. For as long as I can recall, I have drawn a connection between Aaron and the African-American men and women who were my neighbors while I was growing up in California. Many of my adult neighbors, like Aaron who was born in Alabama, were a part of the migration of Blacks from the south. They relocated to California and northern states to escape the overt racism and they had experienced in the south as they hoped to create better lives for themselves and their families. As was true of Aaron, who suffered racism throughout his career, these migrants soon discovered that while they may have experienced less overt racial discrimination in the new states that they called home, racial bias in America was not restricted to a few southern states. Although Aaron was not a vocal critic of the racial bias that was present at every juncture of his career, he did not deny it. Rather, he confidently performed his job as a baseball player. This was also true of my neighbors. Although some became activists who challenged racial bias, most took the same road as Aaron. They recognized the racial bias that they encountered but they elected to reject it by excelling at their jobs, whatever they might be. They, like Aaron, did not seek special treatment. What they did desire, however, was that the artificial barriers, which were a product of racial bigotry, not limit their opportunities. Therefore, my memories of Aaron will be forever filled not only with thoughts of his athletic achievement but also his quiet defiance and, for me, the connection between Aaron and my neighbors.

Timothy Davis

John W. and Ruth H. Turnage Professor of Law  
Wake Forest University School of Law, and Member,  
National Sports Law Institute, Board of Advisors

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I never saw Hank Aaron play live. I was too young. In fact, I was barely a year old when he hit his 715<sup>th</sup> home run, breaking Babe Ruth's record. But as I grew up, I learned about Aaron through baseball cards, old recorded footage, and stories of those who had been old enough to see him play. They spoke of a supremely gifted hitter; a once in a generation player who combined talent and hard work to become a legend. I understood that he was great, but it was not

until years later that I learned how great he truly was. In my early teen years, I developed a strong interest in studying the civil rights struggle and the horrors and humiliations to which African Americans have been subject just because of the color of their skin. And I learned that famous athletes, like Aaron, were not exempt. I learned that as Aaron pursued Ruth's record he was inundated with hate mail and death threats. I was astounded that he could be so unflappable and successful on the field while wading through daily racial abuse. It is when I contemplated the burden he carried that I recognized his true greatness, and I have been in awe of it ever since. Thank you, Mr. Aaron, for sharing your greatness with us. May you Rest in Peace.

N. Jeremi Duru  
Professor of Law  
American University, Washington College of Law, and Member,  
National Sports Law Institute, Board of Advisors

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I remember going to Braves Games – and, alas, remember when they moved to Atlanta – when I was quite young. I went with my father, a clinical psychologist, who had grown up hard in Chicago and used playing semi-pro baseball there as his springboard to play in college, the minors and later – in order to earn spending money while studying for his graduate degree – in various manufacturers leagues. He was a southpaw pitcher.

Every moment, every pitch of each Braves game was exciting as he explained to me the chess game moves between the pitcher and batter. We always arrived early. My father would point out and tell me the name of a pitching or hitting coach: I would walk over, respectfully call to the coach and ask if I could please have a ball. They always smiled, enjoying that small recognition, and tossed me a ball with a “Here you go kid”.

It is no surprise that I closely followed the great Warren Spahn (“Dad, he’s a lefty too!”). And Hank Aaron – and not just because he shared the same first name as my father. Aaron, my father explained to me, was special. Special not only for his extraordinary achievements on the diamond, but also because, he told me, I could not imagine the strength and courage Aaron must possess every single day to be a Black star ballplayer. He would tell me stories he had heard or read of the ordeals that Aaron faced just because of the color of his skin.

Those stories deeply affected me, and, although I don’t know where my baseballs went, their lessons have resonated within me throughout my life.

Godspeed Hank Aaron, forever the Milwaukee Brave (sorry Atlanta), for his extraordinary achievements as a player, but moreover for his great strength,

courage and grace which created important teachable moments and indelible lessons from a father to his son. Godspeed.

Michael Lenard, OLY  
Vice President, International Council of Arbitration for Sport  
1984 Olympian, and Member,  
National Sports Law Institute, Board of Advisors