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Back of the Bus: Race and the Integration of Red Sox Nation

Proposal Abstract:

In the fifty years since the federal courts in Boston mandated a controversial plan to racially integrate that city’s public schools in 1974, scholars have afforded us a clear vantage on the principal actors, policies, and agendas involved in a touchstone episode of New England life. What remains to be said of the “Boston Busing Crisis” is the impact that Major League Baseball’s Boston Red Sox organization had on the regional politics of race in the aftermath of the Civil Rights era. Situated at the interdisciplinary intersection of U.S. social and cultural history, my book project Back of the Bus: Race and the Integration of Red Sox Nation provides this missing chapter on the history of race relations in Boston during the late twentieth century.

My project does more than simply rehearse baseball lore. Instead, I interrogate the mutually constitutive relationship that obtained in Boston in the 1960s and 1970s between racial prejudice in the city’s public education sector and the popular cultural formation that we now know as “Red Sox Nation.” The troubles with prejudice in baseball in Boston, I argue, were both a cause and effect of the straining of racial relations in the city’s forcibly integrated schools.

Awarded: $7635.44