

# African American Player Responds to Report of Proposed Ban of Blacks in the Tri-State League (1888)

Source: *Sporting Life*, March 14, 1888

## WHY DISCRIMINATE?

### An Appeal to the Tri-State League by a Colored Player

W. W. Walker, a well-known colored player, requests *THE SPORTING LIFE* to publish the following open letter to the president of the Tri-State (late Ohio) League:

STEBENSVILLE, O., March 5—MR. McDERMITT, President Tri-State League—  
*Sir:* I take the liberty of addressing you because noticing in *THE SPORTING LIFE* that the law permitting colored men to sign was repealed, etc., at the special meeting held at Columbus, Feb. 22, of the above-named League of which you are the president. I concluded to drop you a few lines for the purpose of ascertaining the reason of such an action.

I have grievances, and it is a question with me whether individual loss subserves the public good in this case. This is the only question to be considered—both morally and financially—in this, as it is, or ought to be, in all cases that depend upon the public for success—as base ball. I am convinced, beyond doubt that you all, as a body of men, have not been impartial and unprejudiced in your consideration of the great and important question—the success of the “National game.”

The reason I say this is because you have shown partiality by making an exception with a member of the Zanesville Club; and from this one would infer that he is the *only* one of the three colored players—Dick Johnson, alias Dick Male, alias Dick Noyle, as *THE SPORTING LIFE* correspondent from Columbus has it; Sol White, of the Wheelings, whom I must compliment by saying was one, if not *the* surest hitter in the Ohio League last year, and your humble servant, who was unfortunate enough to join the Akrons just ten days before they “busted.”

It is not because I was reserved and have been denied making my bread and butter with some club that I speak; but it is in hopes that the action taken at your last meeting will be called up for reconsideration at your next.

The law is a disgrace to the present age, and reflects very much upon the intelligence of your last meeting, and casts derision at the laws of Ohio—the voice of the people—that say all men are equal. I would suggest that your honorable body, in case that black law is not repealed, pass one making it criminal for a colored man or woman to be found in a ball ground.

There is now the same accommodation made for the colored patron of the game as the white, and the same provision and dispensation is made of the money of them both that finds the way into the coffers of the various clubs.

There should be some broader cause—such as want of ability, behavior and intelligence—for barring a player than his color. It is for these reasons and because I think ability and intelligence should be recognized first and last—at all times and by everyone—I ask the question again, why was the “law permitting colored men to sign repealed, etc?”

Yours truly, WELDY W. WALKER.

Source: Dean Sullivan, *Early Innings*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1995)