

Wendell Smith: The Fight For Racial Equality On And Off The Field

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My dad has always enjoyed regaling my siblings and I with stories of our ancestors and relatives. I've seen books, articles, and even historic sites about the people who came before me but it wasn't until I watched the movie "42", did I truly understand the impact that my bloodline has had on this nation. Wendell Smith is my 4th cousin and a true inspiration to everyone in my family. When I spoke with his 1st cousin, a close relative and friend, at my grandmother's birthday party, he spoke of Wendell with the utmost respect and pride. I can remember thinking to myself, how can anyone integrate an entire sport from behind the scenes, and break through several other barriers in the process. To me, this seemed like a topic worth investigating.

My first instinct was to ask Wendell's first cousin, Cecil Smith, for any information he had to offer. He gave me a few pictures and newspaper clippings but admitted the family donated everything else they had to the National Baseball Hall of Fame. I then went online to the Hall of Fame's website and was able to find Wendell's entire life story. I went through the site and after getting a general overview I searched for websites and books that could give specific information about certain events and contributions Wendell made. This allowed me to find great sources such as *Great Black Heroes* and *The Chicago Tribune*.

I knew from the beginning that I wanted to create a website, mainly because it offered me a way to tell my story in a modern version of how Wendell did. Wendell's main ideology was to reach people through a common denominator. Rich or poor, black or white, everyone read the newspaper, and therefore were forced to give Wendell's work the attention it called for. The internet is today's common denominator and it has the ability to reach everyone. My goal was to essentially create an online newspaper.

Wendell Smith is the epitome of the theme "Breaking Barriers in History" because he devoted his entire life to breaking the color line, and was successful in doing so. On top of that, he broke several smaller barriers along the way. His mission started out with setting up tryouts for African American

baseball players, and reached completion when Jackie Robinson reached the big leagues. Wendell had broken the color line but he didn't stop there. He was put on the committee of Negro League Ballplayers and pushed to admitt Satchel Paige as the first black baseball player into the Hall of Fame. Wendell himself became a trail blazer when he became the first black journalist to work for the Chicago American. There was no stopping Wendell, from the moment he first experienced racism to the day he died. He saw a need for social reform and answered the call every time.