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## 1 Introduce the film; what is the film about?

**LONG TIME COMING: A 1955 Baseball Story** tells a timely and important story about a Little League baseball championship in Orlando, Florida. One of the first integrated Little League games, this event marked a turning point moment for racial integration in the South, and made a powerful impression on the young players on both the white and the black teams. This award-winning documentary brings the surviving players, now in their 70s, back together to revisit this critical moment in their lives, and our nation's history, examining what has and hasn't changed in the years since. **LONG TIME COMING: A 1955 Baseball Story** demonstrates the power of sports to bring people together and inspire personal and social change.

## 2 Choose from the pre-viewing discussion prompts to guide your group's focus:

(Ask the group to write short answers, and discuss)

**I. Race is a contentious subject, and racism is experienced differently by different people, further complicating efforts to build cultural bridges and help people understand one another. Perception of racism can vary dramatically, depending on cultural awareness, family background, and personal experiences.**

Ask your group to reflect about their feelings on racism. (Please see the appendix below for more learning resources about race and ethnicity.)

### Question prompts:

- When one mentions the word 'racism,' what comes to your mind, and why?
- Have you ever experienced or witnessed racism?
- What about the interaction made you believe that racism was involved? If so, how did you respond?

**II. One of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s most famous quotes is, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Dr. King was inspired by a sermon by abolitionist minister Theodore Parker.**

### Question Prompts:

- What do you think when you hear Dr. King's statement?
- Can you describe ways that racism has been reduced over time, that the "arc of the moral universe" is bending toward justice on this issue?
- Can you describe ways that racism still impacts American society?
- What can we do, as individuals, as a society, to help bend the arc toward justice?
- What is our responsibility? Can you list 3 things you can do to help heal racism?
- How can we help make life better for one another, across race, gender, and cultural divides?

**Resource:** Check out this NPR interview with Clayborne Carson – a professor of history at Stanford University and director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute – about Parker, and about King's use of favorite sayings.

[www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129609461](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129609461)



Martin Luther King, Jr (Library of Congress)

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**III.** Poll the group on who has an interest in baseball or other sports. Ask what sports figures they admire and why.

**Question Prompts:**

- There has been a lot in the news lately regarding racism and professional sports, with players using their celebrity to address issues such as Black Lives Matter.
- What do you think about players taking a stand (or a knee) for a cause?
- How could they use their popularity and celebrity to help heal racism in our communities?
- Has an athlete's activism impacted how you view a political or social issue?

**IV. LONG TIME COMING: A 1955 Baseball Story** is about one of the first integrated Little League games.

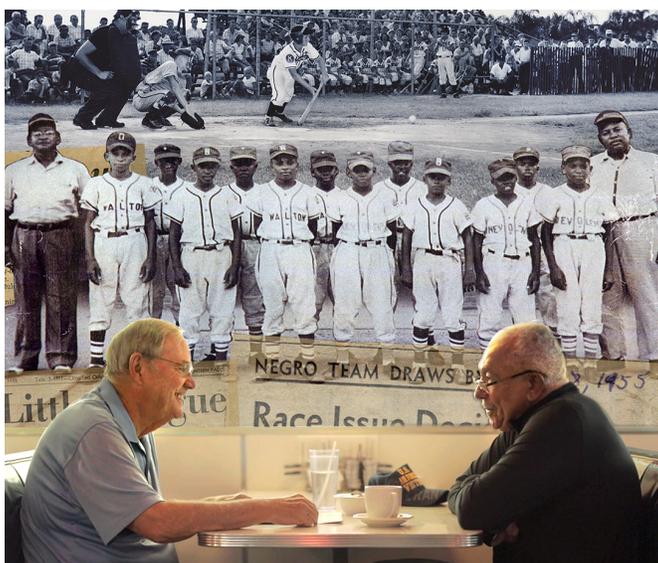
**Question Prompts:**

- What does this mean? Why might it be important?
- What do you think will happen when the two teams play each other?

**Active listening and engagement**

Have your viewers make notes on points in the film that they think are important or that fit the themes previously discussed. Ask that they keep track of moments in the story that correlate with or challenge their perception and expectations. Encourage viewers to write down quotes from the film that they find particularly meaningful.

## 3 Watch the film



## 4 Storytelling with StoryCorps

There is a unique power in storytelling. Stories awaken memory and imagination, they take us on journeys and offer lessons and inspiration. When you tell a story from your past, it comes alive again as you relive the experience, and it comes alive for the first time for those who listen.

The people featured in LONG TIME COMING believed that sharing their personal experiences would help others better understand how life was in 1955, how it was different for children of different races and backgrounds, and how they could overcome social divisions through sport. In sharing their stories they contribute to our understanding of the personal side of the civil rights movement, and to our collective social and cultural history.

We invite you, the film audience, to continue this tradition with us, to contribute to our ongoing story of civil rights in America with the StoryCorps app: [bit.ly/storycorpsdownload](http://bit.ly/storycorpsdownload)

Every story shared using the StoryCorps app will be shared on the LONG TIME COMING StoryCorps Community page, on our social media channels, and will become part of the archive of the Folk Life Collection at the United States Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

**Instructions:**

1. Download the StoryCorps App: [bit.ly/storycorpsdownload](http://bit.ly/storycorpsdownload)
2. Visit the LTC Community Page: [bit.ly/ltcstorycorps](http://bit.ly/ltcstorycorps)
3. Choose your subject (family member, elder, friend) and conduct your interview!
4. Upload to StoryCorps Page with keyword MyLTCStory, and to your Facebook and Instagram with #MyLTCStory.

**Choose from these prompts, or create your own:**

- Have you ever had any experiences with racism, either as the subject or as a bystander? How did you react? Did it have an effect on you, and if so, what?
- Are there any positive and/or negative moments or memories from that time in your life that shaped who you are today? In sports, or other community experiences?
- Is your life different than how you imagined it would be when you were young? If so, how? What advice would you have for your teenage self?
- What would you like to say to your future generations, knowing that they may hear this recording? What would you like them to know about your life, your family, that could be helpful in navigating their life challenges?

For more information on StoryCorps, go to [THEGREATLISTEN.ORG](http://THEGREATLISTEN.ORG) for a Teacher Toolkit and Handout.

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## 5 Choose from the post-viewing discussion prompts:

**“Being born in the south, I never was in control of anything other than baseball. ... We had something to prove. ... If the playing field was level, we could do as good as anybody could do.”**

**– Hank Aaron**

**LONG TIME COMING: A 1955 Baseball Story (11:55)**

### Film Review

1. Now that you’ve seen the film, have your answers changed to the question, “Can you describe ways that racism has been reduced over time, that the “arc of the moral universe” is bending toward justice on this issue?”
2. Can you give examples of how racial and cultural relations have and have not improved since 1955?
3. What about the **LONG TIME COMING: A 1955 Baseball Story** surprised you? How did the story make you feel? Discouraged? Hopeful? Why?
4. Why do you think so many people turned out to watch the game in **LONG TIME COMING: A 1955 Baseball Story**? What impression do you think this game made on the spectators? The community? How might the outcome of the day have changed if the black team had won?
5. The children involved in Little League didn’t necessarily understand the community dynamics of segregation; the parents and coaches made the decisions about whether to play or to forfeit – the kids just wanted to play baseball. How would you feel if you were in the position of the white team players? The black team players?
6. The montage of clips (44:47) shows a timeline of events in civil rights and black history. Some of those events are recent. Did you recognize any of them? How are these events connected to each other?
7. It can be easy to forget that history is being made with every passing moment. Do you feel like you are living in a period of change? What are your hopes for the future?

*“My motto was always to keep swinging. Whether I was in a slump or feeling badly or having trouble off the field, the only thing to do was keep swinging.”*

**–Hank Aaron**

## Sports and Integration

**“If we can integrate baseball, we can integrate America. You can’t get your hand around all of the racism in America, but you can get your hand around baseball.”**

**– Chris Lamb  
Baseball Historian (12:43)**

1. Has race ever played a role in a decision you, or someone you know, has made about playing or watching sports? Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your race or background when you were playing or watching sports? If it hasn’t happened to you, have you noticed others being discriminated against? How did you react?
  3. Do perceived views of a sport’s welcoming, or unwelcoming atmosphere affect whether or not you choose to play? Do they affect whether you watch games and participate as a fan?
  4. Do you think this perception of welcoming versus unwelcoming atmosphere affects professional sports today? Have relations improved in baseball? At the community level? In sports overall?
- 5. “Back in the 50’s this (baseball) was America’s game.”**
- Stewart Hall (7:55)**

Sports are competitive. If teams are coming from different communities that don’t often meet otherwise, as in the **LONG TIME COMING** story, what do you think can be done to encourage the groups to respect each other, to practice good sportsmanship? How much influence do you think racial issues in sports (setting positive examples, or showing conflict) have on the rest of society?

6. When you play and watch sports, you can interact with people from other backgrounds, some of whom you may not encounter in your daily life. What can be done to make sure this is a positive experience? If there are conflicts, how would you suggest solving them?
7. The team members share a few stories of racism, ranging from extreme (being threatened with a knife) to smaller forms of aggression (the paperboy using a racial slur and throwing the paper at their door). Have you ever experienced anything similar? Do you agree that microaggressions, such as the throwing the newspaper are “poisonous” as is suggested by the film?

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## Sports as Inspiration

**“Whatever you pursue, if you go at it, practice and work hard, you can be successful.”**

**– Admiral “Spider” Leroy  
(10:10)**

**1.** It takes time for society to change, as is implied in the statement, “The arc of the moral universe is long.” **LONG TIME COMING** brings the players to meet each other again after 60 years.

Do you think that racism has changed since their game in 1955? 60 years from now, what kind of conversation do you think you might be having about society in 2019? Do you think we will have progressed in our efforts to become more just, more civil, more integrated? Is becoming a 'post-racial' society a worthwhile goal?

**2.** The white little league members talk about how the whole town was safe to them, and they felt the community was a smaller, simpler, more peaceful one. The black team, on the other hand, was significantly less free. Not only were they not allowed in white-only areas, but they also had restrictive curfews. This also meant that the black kids and segregated communities had limited access to activities. Baseball was one of the few things the kids could engage in. How do you think this impacted their view of the game and how they played, how important it was to them? How did the film impact your view of baseball, or of sports in general?

**3.** As we see in the film with the segregated black communities, sometimes sports is all there is to do in less affluent or more isolated areas. In the time of segregation, minority and white communities alike lived in forms of isolation. How might this affect such communities? Have you ever lived in a similar situation? What other ways are we segregated in society today, besides race, and how can we “integrate”?

**4.** How well do you feel different ethnicities are represented in sports in America today? Can you name another sport that is loved and played by a minority group? A sport that is not so integrated today?

**5.** Even in the midst of segregation, the kids believed that hard work would pay off, that they could achieve their dreams. Black major league players, such as Jackie Robinson and Hank Aaron, served as heroes that proved, “There was room for me somewhere.” (Cont.)

Are there any people you look up to as being evidence that you, too, can achieve your goals? Do you have life or career goals for which you don't see models of people like you? Where can you find support?

**6.** In baseball, as in life, it's difficult to win without teamwork. What did you learn from the film, from the players looking back after 60 years, about how we can learn to appreciate, respect, and get along with others? How might we carry this message of teamwork, sportsmanship, and healing from sports to the rest of society?

## History and Memory

**“Before you know it, everything is gone.”**

**– Will Preyer at the old baseball field (4:40)**

**“Somebody'll pull it down. But I don't need to.”**

**– Will at the Confederate monument (14:30)**

The early scenes in which Will visits the old baseball field and encounters a Confederate monument exemplify one of the movie's key themes. Time inevitably brings change, but the weight of history also influences the world we live in presently.

The film also suggests that storytelling and oral history have real power to effect change. We can say that the past isn't really gone since Will remembers and can tell us about it. In a similar way, even though Will doesn't pull down the monument, his story allows us to understand what the structure represents to him.

Has a story about someone's personal experiences ever helped you see the world in a new way? What kind of legacy do you want to leave?



Jack Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson playing with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1954. Robinson was the first African American to play in Major League Baseball. (Photo by Bob Sandberg)

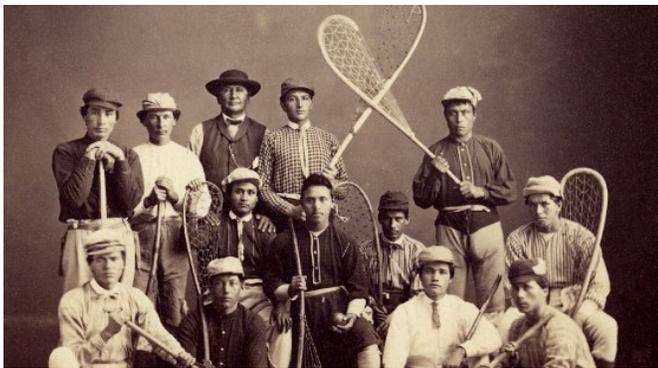
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## 6 Optional Post-film Activities

**Essay: Research the origins of your favorite sport, and who plays it today.**

For example, lacrosse was originally played by various Native American Tribes, for whom the playing field could often stretch miles, consisted of hundreds of participants, and sometimes went on for days. Today it is played around the world. Although a team from the Mohawk Nation were the Canadian Lacrosse champions in 1869, Native teams weren't allowed to participate in the World Games until the 1980s, over a century later. Unfortunately, Native American representation on the professional level is lacking, 97% of Division I lacrosse players are white. In spite of this, The Iroquois National Lacrosse Team is ranked third in the world after winning bronze at the 2018 World Championships.



Mohawk lacrosse team, 1867 (photo by William Notman)

### Active listening and engagement - REVIEW

After discussing the film, take a look back at the notes you made while viewing the film. What were the most valuable history lessons and inspirational moments for you? Did your perception of racism and today's society change at all? Share your favorite quote or moment from the film. Why did you choose this particular piece, and what is your number one takeaway from this film experience?

### Essay/Discussion

Take five minutes to tell us about a challenging racial experience you've had in your life. Then, tell an inspiring encounter you've had with someone of a different race.

Is it equally as easy to remember the good experiences as the bad? How can we encourage healthy behaviors among people in our community?

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

**Harlem**

**By Langston Hughes**

We hear this poem in the film, and also hear the players talk about the killing of their dreams as children, as something you "just don't do." Have you ever had an experience where your dreams have been affected by someone discouraging you or saying you can't do something? How did this make you feel? What did you do to counter this feeling? Were you able to move past this experience?

Where can we find support and positive reinforcement to "realize our dreams"? Where did the players in **LONG TIME COMING** find the support they needed? Do you think that experience helped them in life? In what ways?

What are some dreams you have for yourself? Is there something in your future that you are passionate about? What would you do if met with the same controversy and backlash as the little league kids? Would it motivate you to try harder, or make it more difficult for you to believe in it? *What would happen to your dream deferred?*

***“Hold fast to your dreams, for  
without them life is a broken  
winged bird that cannot fly.”***

***- Langston Hughes***

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**Activity: research one of these events and write short essay**

## **RACE AND INTEGRATION**

- 1863- The Emancipation Proclamation is issued
- 1884- Moses Fleetwood Walker integrates professional baseball
- 1908- Jack Johnson becomes the 1st black heavyweight-boxing champion
- 1910- Jack Johnson defends his title and defeats Jim Jeffries, who had been deemed the "Great White Hope"
- 1919- Fritz Pollard begins pro football, goes on to form first all-black team
- 1923- Jack Trice, an African American Iowa State football player, is trampled to death on field against Minnesota
- 1936- Jesse Owens wins 4 gold medals at the Berlin Olympics
- 1938- Joe Louis defeats Max Schmeling
- 1947- Jackie Robinson integrates the MLB
- 1948- Armed forces integrated
- 1950- NBA integrated
- 1954- Brown vs. Board of Education dismisses "separate but equal"
- 1955- Montgomery bus boycott
- 1957- Althea Gibson wins Wimbledon
- 1957- the Little Rock Nine integrate Arkansas schools
- 1963- Martin Luther King Jr. gives his "I Have a Dream Speech"
- 1963- Mississippi State plays the integrated Loyola University in the NCAA tournament after having previously boycotting the tournament in protest of integration
- 1964- Civil Rights Act passed
- 1966- Muhammad Ali claims exemption from the Vietnam draft
- 1966- Bill Russell becomes first black NBA head coach
- 1966- Texas Western defeats all-white Kentucky in the NCAA basketball championship game with an all-black starting five
- 1967- Perry Wallace integrates SEC basketball
- 1968- Tommie Smith and John Carlos launch black power salute at the Mexico City Olympics
- 1970- USC defeats Alabama behind Sam Cunningham's amazing game; the next year Alabama integrates its football team
- 1975- Frank Robinson becomes 1st black MLB manager
- 1975- Arthur Ashe wins Wimbledon
- 1989- Art Shell becomes the 1st black head coach in the NFL since Fritz Pollard
- 2008- Barack Obama becomes the first African American president of the United States

(Ref: <http://www.sportsinblackandwhite.com/2012/12/13/timeline-of-the-civil-rights-movement-through-sports/>)



Jesse Owens competing in Track and Field at the 1936 Olympics, Berlin, Germany, where he won four gold medals. (Library of Congress)

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Images from the New York City Library Collection of Ellis Island Portraits by Augustus F. Sherman, 1905-1913  
(L to R: Guadeloupean Woman, Laplander Woman, Dutch Children, Romanian Man, Algerian Man)

## 7 Glossary

**Race:** For centuries, people grouped themselves and others based on physical and biological differences (like skin color), with some claiming certain races were superior to others. However modern science has shown that race is simply a concept invented for social or political reasons without basis in actual human genetics.

Learn more about the science here: [bit.ly/LTCrace](http://bit.ly/LTCrace)

**Ethnicity:** Everyone is part of one or more ethnic groups, sharing cultural traits such as language, food or geography. Unlike with racial groups, which are often based on inherited physical traits like skin color, membership in ethnic groups can be more flexible and can be learned.

Learn more about race and ethnicity here: [bit.ly/LTCethnicity](http://bit.ly/LTCethnicity)

**Segregation:** When a society forcibly separates certain racial or ethnic groups. For example, after the Civil War, laws were passed throughout the United States that forced African-Americans to go to school, eat, travel and use public facilities separately from other Americans.

Learn more about this time here: [bit.ly/LTCsegregation](http://bit.ly/LTCsegregation)

**Integration:** For decades, civil rights proponents in the United States fought segregation through community organizing, protests and court cases. In 1954 (the year before the Little League game in the film), the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown vs. Board of Education* that segregated schools were unconstitutional.

Learn more about the fight to end segregation here: [bit.ly/LTCintegration](http://bit.ly/LTCintegration)

## Resources

For more information on the history of race and sports, go to:

<http://www.sportsinblackandwhite.com/2012/12/13/timeline-of-the-civil-rights-movement-through-sports/>

<http://www.espn.com/gen/s/2002/0225/1340314.html>

**National Education Association**

<http://www.nea.org/>

**Facing History and Ourselves**

<https://www.facinghistory.org/>

**8 Join the LTC community!**  
Visit our website, YouTube channel, Facebook and Instagram pages

[www.longtimecoming.film](http://www.longtimecoming.film)

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[bit.ly/LTCYouTube](http://bit.ly/LTCYouTube)

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