"Disrespect" would be a euphemism. Dick Allen was unanimously renamed "Richie" in 1960 by a white press wholly indifferent to the young ballplayer's protestations that everyone from his mother on down had always called him "Dick." Later, when Allen finally did insist upon his rightful name after several years of patiently accepting what he thought a vaguely racist diminutive, the press variously ignored his request, spitefully granted it ("Dick ‘Don’t Call Me Richie’ Allen"), or—worse—depicted the "name-change" as an emblem of Allen’s unstable character (as in: “in mid-career he became, adamantly, ‘Dick.’” Sports Illustrated referred to this as Allen’s "first name sensitivity.")¹ Fans in Philadelphia delighted in throwing objects at Allen—pennies, chicken bones, batteries, bolts, half pints—and when he took to wearing a batting helmet in the field, the press
intimated that he needed the protection because he was bad with a glove. Allen twice appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated:* once in 1970 under the heading “Baseball in Turmoil” (a reference to Curt Flood’s challenge to baseball’s reserve clause, but Allen was the sport’s better poster boy for “turmoil”), and once in 1972, smoking what remains the only cigarette in the history of *SI* covers.

Nor has Allen’s treatment mellowed over the years. The current entry for Allen on BaseballLibrary.com (“The Stories behind the Stats”) begins this way: “Talented, controversial, charming, and abusive, Allen put in 15 major league seasons, hitting prodigious homers and paying prodigious fines. He was praised as a money player and condemned as a loafer.” The site does duly note Allen’s Rookie of the Year season in 1964 and his MVP season in 1972; but its overall flavor tends fairly decisively toward “loafer” rather than “money player.” (The account of his stellar rookie season opens on the odd—but for Allen, familiar—note, “He made 41 errors at third base. . . .”)

In American political life, the phrase “Black Power” will always bring to mind Stokley Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, the Black Panther Party, and other black radicals who came to prominence in the latter half of the 1960s. In the too-clever parlance of ’60s- and ’70s-era baseball writing, however, its appropriation conjured figures like Hank Aaron, Willie Mays, Willie McCovey, Frank Robinson, and Richie Allen—the 1.5 generation of baseball’s integration after Jackie Robinson had broken the color bar, black sluggers whose speed and playing style and might were transforming the national pastime. (Absent its black stars, Hank Aaron points out, the National League’s stand-out player of the 1960s would have been *Ron Santo.*)

But the two meanings of “black power” were not unrelated, as Dick Allen’s career demonstrates perhaps better than most. The social drama of the Civil Rights movement constituted the inescapable context within which black ballplayers of this generation were understood and measured in the white media—most often, if tacitly, located along an imagined political spectrum of “good” and “bad” Negroes (Willie Mays at one end of the spectrum, Richie Allen, Bob Gibson, and Dock Ellis at the other). “If [Allen] had been white,” writes Gibson, “he would have been considered merely a free spirit. As a black man who did as he pleased and guarded his privacy, he was instead regarded as a trouble-maker.” It is only in the context of the wider political and social world of the 1960s, not of the club-