

COMMITTEE FOR HAL CHASE

107 Ann Arbor Dr.
Los Gatos, CA 95032
408-455-7765
Lgfire@me.com
Halchase.com

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Committee Members

Lynn Bevell
Baseball Historian
Chris Goode
Author/Baseball Historian
Mary Darling
Baseball Historian
John Smirch
Author/Baseball Historian
Hal Chase
Grandson
David Green
Baseball Historian
Cousin of Hal Chase

Major League Baseball Players Association

12 E 49th St, 24th Floor
New York, NY 10017

To the Executive Board and Members of the MLBPA,

I write to respectfully urge the Major League Baseball Players Association to lend its voice in support of the posthumous reinstatement and Hall of Fame reconsideration of Hal Chase, a player whose contributions to the sport — and to player rights — have been overshadowed by unproven accusations and a premature historical judgment.

Hal Chase was a brilliant and revolutionary talent at first base, widely regarded by contemporaries like Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth as among the greatest fielders the game had seen. But beyond his performance on the field, Chase was also an early challenger of baseball's reserve clause — at a time when no formal union existed to support him, and when defying ownership came with grave professional risks.

In 1914, after leaving the Chicago White Sox to join the Buffalo franchise of the upstart Federal League, the White Sox sued to block Chase from playing, citing the standard reserve clause. Chase responded with a countersuit, and in a decision rendered by New York Supreme Court Justice Edward R. Finch, the court ruled in Chase's favor, declaring that the White Sox's claim to him was invalid, and that the reserve clause was "too vague to be enforceable."¹

This legal victory preceded Curt Flood's challenge by over half a century, and although it did not dismantle the reserve clause system-wide, it set a clear precedent: players could, under certain circumstances, resist contractual bondage to clubs. Chase's bold defiance was met not with recognition but with quiet exile — and in the years that followed, he would become a magnet for suspicion, rumor, and innuendo.

It is worth considering whether the accusations of gambling and game-fixing that followed Chase — serious but never substantiated with hard evidence or formal charges — were in part the result of his unwillingness to

bow to management's control. Chase was outspoken, resistant to arbitrary authority, and he dared to cross the boundaries of ownership dominance. In an era without player protections or labor advocates, such behavior was punished not with hearings, but with character assassination.

Even Commissioner Landis never issued a formal ban on Chase. Instead, Chase was informally blackballed, with no opportunity to clear his name and no formal recourse — a reality that would be unimaginable under today's collectively bargained procedures.

The MLBPA has always been a guardian of player dignity, fairness, and labor rights. In his Hall of Fame induction speech, Marvin Miller made special note of those players who came before him — those who challenged baseball's injustices without support, and whose sacrifices made future progress possible. Hal Chase was such a figure. Though far from perfect, he stood alone in court against the most powerful owners in the sport and won — and paid dearly for it.

I ask the Players Association to consider supporting the formal reinstatement and reconsideration of Hal Chase's legacy, not merely as an act of historical correction, but as a statement of solidarity with all players — past and present — who risked everything to challenge unfair treatment.

He may have played before the union existed, but he lived the struggle the union was born to fight.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your enduring commitment to the players who built this game.

Yours in solidarity,

David Green
Hal Chase HOF committee
Past Union Steward/Rep.
CWA local 1120/1123
