

Union Busting at the Baseball Hall of Fame: The Blacklisting of Union Leader Marvin Miller

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In 1983, the year after Marvin Miller retired following sixteen years as executive director of the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA), a baseball executive said, “The only way Marvin Miller will ever get into the Hall of Fame [HOF] is through the janitor’s entrance.”¹

More than twenty-six years later—at its San Diego meeting on December 8, 2019—twelve of the sixteen members of the HOF’s Modern Baseball Era Committee, just enough to meet the 75 percent threshold, voted to induct Miller into the Cooperstown shrine.² The vote generated many headlines and opinion columns.³ Miller was inducted on September 8, 2021.

One could argue that this story has a happy ending. But the reality is much harsher. Miller didn’t even get on the HOF ballot until 2003, twenty-one years after he had retired. After 2003, he was on the ballot seven times but was rebuffed each time. The HOF board of directors had stacked the committees with enough owners and executives, including some whom Miller had tangled with as head of the players

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1. Ira Berkow, “Sports of the Times; The Master Bargainer,” *New York Times*, January 1, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/01/01/sports/sports-of-the-times-the-master-bargainer.html>.

2. The Modern Baseball Era committee was responsible for voting on retired players no longer eligible for election by the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA) along with managers, umpires, and executives, whose greatest contributions to the game were made during the 1970–87 era.

3. Tyler Kepner, “Marvin Miller Adds a Missing Piece of Baseball’s Story to the Hall of Fame,” *New York Times*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/09/sports/marvin-miller-hall-of-fame.html>; Des Bieler, “Union Leader Marvin Miller Is Finally Elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame,” *Washington Post*, December 8, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2019/12/08/union-leader-marvin-miller-finally-elected-baseball-hall-of-fame/>; Tom Goldman, “Marvin Miller Gets Elected to Baseball Hall of Fame Despite His Own Wishes,” NPR, December 11, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/12/11/787192584/marvin-miller-gets-elected-to-baseball-hall-of-fame-despite-his-own-wishes>; Dreier, “Baseball’s Hall of Fame Finally Admits Labor Pioneer Marvin Miller”; Peter Dreier and Steve Rosenthal, “The Baseball Hall of Fame Must Stop Its Bush-League Treatment of Marvin Miller,” *Washington Post*, December 2, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/12/02/baseball-hall-of-fame-must-stop-its-bush-league-treatment-marvin-miller/>.

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union, to guarantee his exclusion. In short, he was blacklisted by the antiunion baseball establishment. He wasn't elected to the HOF until seven years after he died in 2012 at age ninety-five.

At the Cooperstown ceremony, Major League Baseball (MLB) Commissioner Rob Manfred—appointed by the thirty team owners—stood onstage and read the inscription on Miller's HOF plaque, which described him as a “game-changing labor leader.” As the MLB's chief labor negotiator and then as commissioner, Manfred had sought to undercut the MLBPA's influence. Even as he stood on the Cooperstown stage, Manfred was stalling negotiations with the union over the next contract. Three months later, with the team owners' support, Manfred instigated a lockout—an owners' strike—designed to weaken the players union. The lockout lasted ninety-nine days and threatened to cancel the 2021 baseball season, part of the MLB's ongoing effort to take back power from the union that Miller had helped build.⁴

For years, baseball's owners and top executives on the HOF board rigged the elections to guarantee that their friends and counterparts would get a plaque on the wall at Cooperstown, while Miller would be denied the honor he clearly deserved. Indeed, the HOF inducted many mediocre owners and executives. None of them—with the possible exceptions of Branch Rickey and Bill Veeck—influenced baseball as much as Miller did.

The Hall of Fame Plutocracy

Like the Academy Awards, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the National Book Award, the Baseball Hall of Fame is a culturally iconic institution that purportedly honors achievement based on merit and thus elevates certain kinds of behaviors and ideas over others. But like these and other organizations, the Baseball HOF has always operated with a bias that may be invisible to many. Until the 1970s, for example, the HOF board opposed inducting players from the Negro Leagues, claiming that they were not truly a “major league.” Similarly, the HOF has been resolutely antiunion. For example, John Montgomery Ward, one of the greatest all-around players and managers in baseball's early days (he played from 1878 to 1894), was a key leader in the first effort to form a players union and in the formation of the players-owned Players League that challenged the existing professional leagues. The HOF didn't induct Ward until 1964, seven decades after his final professional game and four decades after he died—his penance for challenging the baseball establishment. Ward's Cooperstown plaque ignores his labor activism.⁵

The HOF is run by a self-selected board of directors, most of whom represent the Hall's founding family and team owners. Stephen C. Clark (1882–1960), wealthy heir to the Singer Sewing Machine Company fortune, founded the Hall of Fame in

4. Dreier, “Baseball's Labor Wars”; James Wagner, “Play Ball! Lockout Ends as M.L.B. and Union Strike a Deal,” *New York Times*, March 10, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/10/sports/baseball/mlb-lockout-ends.html>.

5. Elias and Dreier, *Major League Rebels*; Dreier and Elias, “Baseball Team Owners Played Dirty to Stop Players Unions.”

1936. Clark was a businessman, newspaper publisher, art collector, politician, and philanthropist. He lived in the village of Cooperstown in upstate New York, but his philanthropy extended beyond Cooperstown. (For example, he was a founder and longtime chair of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.) Clark dominated local civic life, owned much of the land in the town, constructed its ornate hotel, and donated its hospital, orphanage, museum, and other charities. He also donated the land and paid for the construction of the HOF building. Locating the HOF (which includes a museum) in remote Cooperstown helped perpetuate the myth that the sport was invented there by Abner Doubleday in 1839, although there is no evidence of this. Clark was not a baseball fan, but he recognized that locating the HOF in Cooperstown would attract tourists. Clark and baseball's corporate establishment had a shared stake in promoting the idea that Cooperstown was baseball's birthplace and that the HOF was its shrine. It was no coincidence that the HOF officially opened in 1939, the mythical hundredth anniversary of baseball's origin story.⁶

The well-connected Clark enlisted the support of the baseball establishment, thus linking the HOF permanently to the owners who controlled the teams. The HOF board has been dominated by the Clark family and its business associates, along with the owners of the major league teams. In 1959, for example, the board was composed of Clark, his son Stephen Clark Jr. (1911–92); Paul Kerr, a longtime Clark family associate and HOF president; Rowan Spaker, local newspaper editor and former Cooperstown mayor; Dr. James Bordley III, the head of Cooperstown's Bassett Hospital, one of the Clark family's charities; Clyde Becker, a Cooperstown banker; Commissioner Ford Frick; incoming American League president Joe Cronin; outgoing American League president Will Harridge; and National League president Warren Giles.

Clark served as chair of the board until his death in 1960. His son replaced him on the board but never served as chair. Instead, Kerr, who had worked for years for the Clark Foundation, served as president from 1960 until his retirement in 1977. (He also served on the Veterans Committee from 1953 to 1978.) His successor as chair, Edward W. Stack, also worked for the Clark family—including Clark Estates and the Clark Foundation—and served as Kerr's assistant. By 1961 he was on the HOF board and served as chair from 1977 to 2000. That year, Jane Forbes Clark, Stephen C. Clark Sr.'s granddaughter, who had served on the HOF board since 1992, became its chair, a position she still holds in 2024.

Over the years, the other board members—those not directly tied to the Clark family—have mostly been owners and top executives of major league teams, the baseball commissioner, and the presidents of both leagues. No former HOF player (who was not also a team executive) served on the board until 1994, when Joe Morgan, by then an ESPN broadcaster, was anointed. In plutocratic fashion, the former players who have served on the board are selected by the existing board members, not by the HOF players, much less by the MLBPA.

6. Chafets, *Cooperstown Confidential*.

The Clark family has dominated the Cooperstown area since the mid-1800s. It has extensive real estate holdings and is the area's major philanthropist.⁷ During each summer's induction ceremony, HOF players and their families stay at the Otesaga Resort Hotel, built by the Clark family in 1909. The induction ceremony takes place on the green lawn of the Clark Sports Center, owned by the Clark Foundation.

The board of directors is a conservative group. Since 2000, the nonplayers on the board donated over \$3 million to candidates for president and Congress and political action committees—two-thirds to Republicans. Jane Forbes Clark made 93 percent of her \$238,000 in political donations to Republicans. Not one of the ex-players on the board made any political contributions.⁸

The board selects the members of the committees that vote on which players, umpires, executives, managers, and others will get into the HOF. The Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA) selects the names on the ballot, but the board set the rules on how elections are conducted. The number, size, membership, and purview of the various committees have changed over the years. The committee responsible for deciding on Miller's fate has had different names, including Veterans Committee, Expansion Era Committee, and most recently Modern Baseball Era Committee.

The Veterans Committee began in 1939, when Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis formed the Old-Timers Committee to suggest players from the nineteenth century for induction. It next met in 1944 to elect Landis, who had died that year. In 1953, the name was changed to Committee on Baseball Veterans. The number of committee members, the frequency of elections, and limits on the number of people who could be elected changed several times between 1953 and 2001, when the HOF board adopted major rules changes.⁹ In the early 2000s, the HOF began announcing the number of votes that candidates received but did not reveal how each committee member voted. The board's selection of Veterans Committee members has

7. Richard Sandomir, "Cooperstown's Steadiest Hand Isn't a Hall of Famer's," *New York Times*, July 24, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/25/sports/baseball/clark-family-quiet-fame-and-wealthy-legacy-abide-at-cooperstown.html>.

8. As of 2018, there were seventy living HOF ex-players. Of the fifty-one who played while Miller headed the MLBPA, only fourteen had made campaign contributions to candidates for president or Congress, according to data in OpenSecrets.org.

9. In 1953, the eleven-member committee, which included only one former player, elected six former players into the HOF. Beginning in 1955, the committee met in odd-numbered years to elect up to two players. In 1961, the Veterans Committee was expanded to twelve members, and in 1962 it went back to holding annual elections and to electing up to two players a year. In 1971, the committee was limited to electing two players and one nonplayer each year. But the committee routinely violated these rules, often because former players on the committee pushed to get their friends and teammates into the HOF with the help of friendly sportswriters on the Veterans Committee. In 1978, the HOF board increased the committee to fifteen members and changed the makeup to include five Hall of Fame players, five owners and executives, and five sportswriters. Beginning in 1995, the Veterans Committee rules were changed to elect as many as two executives, managers, umpires, and older major league players, with separate ballots for candidates from the Negro Leagues and from the nineteenth century.

never been transparent in terms of why and how individuals are chosen to represent the three groups—owners and executives, players, and writers. Until 1966, only one former player (Charles Gehringer) served on the Veterans Committee. From 1967 through 1970, Gehringer was joined by Frankie Frisch. From 1971 through 2000, the number of players on the Veterans Committee fluctuated from three to six. Since 2000, it has remained stable at six. At no point did players have anything close to a majority of committee members.

In 1981, broadcaster Tony Kubek, a former All-Star shortstop, was under consideration to serve on the Veterans Committee. But the board nixed that idea because Kubek—who as a player and broadcaster was very pro-union and frequently critical of owners—“may have been perceived as too radical.”¹⁰ During the 1972 strike, for example, Kubek refused to broadcast an interview with Commissioner Bowie Kuhn without also interviewing Miller.¹¹

One owner whom the HOF board never appointed to the Veterans Committee was Bill Veeck. At different times from the 1940s through the 1980s, he owned the minor league Milwaukee Brewers as well as the Cleveland Indians, St. Louis Browns, and Chicago White Sox. Veeck was baseball’s greatest showman as well as a rebel. He voted several times for Norman Thomas, the Socialist Party’s presidential candidate. As Brewer owner, he challenged local segregation laws that impacted the seating in the team’s spring training ballpark in Florida. In 1947, as Cleveland’s owner, he hired Larry Doby as the American League’s first Black player a few months after Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers. By 1949, Veeck had four Black players (Doby, Satchell Paige, Luke Easter, and Orestes “Minnie” Miñoso) on the Indians’ roster, the most on any major league team, and another ten under contract. He also moved the team’s spring training site from Florida to Arizona to avoid Jim Crow laws. In 1970 he defied the baseball establishment by testifying in federal court on behalf of Curt Flood’s lawsuit against MLB to challenge the reserve clause. For these efforts and ideas, he was condemned by other owners, who sought to push him out of baseball.¹² His enemies on the Veterans Committee kept him out of the HOF until 1991, five years after his death.

Baseball’s Labor Wars

Since the HOF was founded in 1936, its leaders inherited and then maintained a profoundly antiunion culture. Professional baseball emerged in the Gilded Age, marked by the rise of corporate monopolies, an increasing concentration of wealth and power, and the proliferation of urban factory work. Baseball owners viewed themselves as magnates exploiting an increasingly lucrative industry. They colluded and incorporated the reserve clause, which bound ballplayers to teams, in every contract. Owners tripled their profits in the 1880s but nevertheless skimmed on salaries and required

10. Jack O’Connell, “Hungry for More Offense? Dig In,” *Hartford Courant*, February 18, 2001.

11. Bob Rubl, “Lack of Dedication? Don’t Accuse Tony Kubek,” *Daily Oklahoman*, April 1, 1978.

12. Dickson, *Bill Veeck*.

players to engage in unpaid duties such as taking tickets, cleaning seats, and grooming the field. Teams also charged players for meals. The leagues were no different from other industries, fighting players' attempts to organize through penalties, intimidation, blacklists, Pinkerton spies, and docking of pay.¹³

Players initially went along. But realizing their worth and chafing at their mistreatment by owners, ballplayers—galvanized by Ward, a star player with a law degree from Columbia University—began to organize. In 1885, Ward and other players organized the Brotherhood of Professional Baseball Players, the first athletes' union. In his 1887 article "Is the Base-Ball Player a Chattel?" in *Lippincott's Magazine*, Ward accused owners of "wage slavery." The reserve clause in every player's contract was "an inherent wrong, for by it one set of men seized absolute control over the labor of another," Ward wrote. "And the blacklist was waiting for any man who dared assert the contrary."¹⁴

Ward reasoned that players should share equally in the proceeds and control their destiny. In July 1889 he and other players founded the Players League. Its "Brotherhood Manifesto" observed that owners' eyes "are upon the turnstile. Men have come into the business for no other motive than to exploit it for every dollar in sight. . . . Players have been bought, sold and exchanged as though they were sheep, instead of American citizens."¹⁵

In the Players League, players owned teams' stock, divided revenues evenly, and shared in managerial duties. Their contracts ran for three years and didn't include a reserve clause. Trades required a player's consent. The top stars in both leagues jumped to the Players League.

Led by Chicago White Stockings owner Albert Spalding, owners attacked the players' revolt. They labeled the Players League "hot-headed anarchists," "socialists," and "ultra-radicals." Renowned sportswriter and Spalding employee Henry Chadwick condemned Ward as the mastermind of the "secessionists," invoking the Confederacy's treason. Sportswriters generally sided with the owners.

Labor leaders, including AFL president Sam Gompers, backed the league. Some unions even fined workers caught attending nonunion games. Although the Players League was outplaying and outdrawing the two establishment leagues, the owners had deep pockets. Spalding appealed to Players League investor-directors' avarice, promising them outright ownership of new teams in a reconfigured National League. Too dependent on outside investors, the Players League folded after one season.

13. Helyar, *Lords of the Realm*; Korr, *End of Baseball as We Knew It*; Dreier and Elias, "Baseball Team Owners Played Dirty to Stop Players Unions"; Burk, *Marvin Miller*; Elias and Dreier, *Major League Rebels*.

14. Ward, "Is the Base-Ball Player a Chattel?"; Christopher W. Schmidt, "John Montgomery Ward: The Lawyer Who Took On Baseball," Chicago Kent Law School 125th Anniversary Materials (2013): 45, https://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/docs_125/8.

15. Ross, *Great Baseball Revolt*; Burk, *Never Just a Game*; Roer, *Orator O'Rourke*; Goldstein, *Playing for Keeps*; Bevis, *Tim Keefe*.

In 1922, the owners tightened their grip, thanks to a Supreme Court ruling that exempted baseball from the commerce clause, characterizing the sport as an “amusement” rather than an interstate business. As a legal monopoly, the leagues could and did block the creation of new teams, increasing existing clubs’ value and profits. Several times players have challenged baseball’s exemption from federal laws, but courts have consistently ruled that it is up to Congress to address that anomaly.

In 1953, players formed the MLBPA to deal with pension issues. They purposely called it an “association,” not a union. At the time, few ballplayers thought that unionizing was a good idea. Most of them were simply grateful to get paid to play baseball. Few had gone to college. They didn’t want to have to return to their hometowns and work on the farms and factories with their parents and siblings. They weren’t about to cause any trouble with team owners, who had almost dictatorial control over their wages and working conditions.

As late as 1963, for example, the Mets’ Gene Woodling claimed that players “have it so good that we just don’t know what to ask for anymore.” Pirates pitcher Bob Friend described baseball’s labor-management relations as “utopian.” In 1964, Yankees shortstop Tony Kubek said that players should be awarded a share of the profits from MLB’s proposed pay-television revenues. He said that players were “closer now to a ballplayers’ union than we’ve ever been before.” This triggered rebukes from several players, including Twins outfielder Bob Allison, who claimed that relations between players and owners “have never been better” and dismissed the idea that they would resort to unionizing.¹⁶ In 1966, Los Angeles Angels first baseman Joe Adcock said, “Pro sports has no place for unions.”¹⁷

From 1953 through 1966, the MLBPA was a paper tiger, with no full-time staff, no office, a tiny budget, and no strategy. Superstars Allie Reynolds, Ralph Kiner, Sandy Koufax, and Don Drysdale helped lay the groundwork by reminding other players that the owners were exploiting their talents and that they deserved better pay and working conditions. Two superstar pitchers, Jim Bunning and Robin Roberts, persuaded players that they needed a strong union and a full-time executive director. In 1966, despite strong opposition from the owners, the players voted and selected Miller, a union veteran without any experience in baseball, to run the players association.

Marvin Miller and the MLBPA

Miller was baseball’s Moses, leading players out of indentured servitude. Under his leadership, the players won a democratic voice in their workplaces and dramatically improved their pay, pensions, and working conditions. The MLBPA is now among the most successful labor unions in the country.

As with any social movement, the MLBPA’s success depended on a combination of harsh conditions, missteps by baseball’s owners, and the presence of a handful

16. Briley, “Times Were a-Changin’” and *Class at Bat*.

17. Miller, *Whole New Ballgame*, 38.

of organizers and agitators who persuaded competitive and individualistic ballplayers that only by joining forces could they improve the conditions of their work. Baseball historian and statistical pioneer Bill James said that Miller, Babe Ruth, Jackie Robinson, and Branch Rickey form baseball's Mount Rushmore.¹⁸ Many other players, sportswriters, historians, and others have echoed some version of that sentiment.

Born in 1917, Miller grew up in Brooklyn, walked picket lines with his parents, traveled in left-wing circles, and worked as the chief economist and negotiator for the United Steelworkers union. Before accepting the job with the MLBPA, he insisted that every player vote on whether to hire him. Once he took the job, he instructed ballplayers in the ABCs of trade unionism: fight for your rights to be treated as more than property, stick together against management, work on behalf of players who came before you and who will come after you, prepare yourself (professionally and financially) for life after baseball, and don't allow owners to divide players by race, income, or their place in the celebrity pecking order. He taught players about labor history and labor law and how to outmaneuver the owners during negotiating sessions.

Before the union could seriously challenge the owners, Miller had to get the players to stand up for themselves. "People today don't understand how beaten down the players were back then," Miller recalled in a 2008 interview. "The players had low self-esteem, as any people in their position would have—like baggage owned by the clubs."¹⁹

Before Miller, players had no rights to determine the conditions of their employment. They were tethered to their teams through the reserve clause in every player's contract. Those contracts were limited to one season. The contracts "reserved" the team's right to "retain" the player for the next season. The players had no leverage to negotiate better deals. Even superstars went hat in hand to owners at the end of the season, begging for a raise. Each year, the team owners told players, "Take it or leave it."

Two years after Miller took the union's reins, the MLBPA negotiated the first collective bargaining agreement (CBA) in professional sports. In 1970, it established players' rights to binding arbitration over salaries and grievances. Disputes would be settled by independent arbitrators rather than the MLB commissioner, who worked for the owners. Players also won the right to have agents to negotiate their contracts.

In 1969, Miller and the union backed Cardinals outfielder Curt Flood in his lawsuit against MLB regarding the reserve clause.²⁰ In 1972, Flood lost the lawsuit in the Supreme Court, but by 1975 Miller found another way to overturn the reserve clause after identifying a loophole in the reserve clause language. He persuaded two pitchers, the Expos' Dave McNally and Dodger Andy Messersmith, to play the entire

18. Wertheim, "Marvin Miller Changed Players' Union—and Baseball—Forever."

19. Dreier and Candaele, "Hall of Fame Shut Out."

20. Flood with Carter, *Way It Is*; Snyder, *Well-Paid Slave*; Barra, "How Curt Flood Changed Baseball and Killed His Career."

1975 season without signing contracts. After the season, they filed grievances, claiming the right to free agency because there was no contract for their teams to renew. That December, arbitrator Peter Seitz ruled in favor of the players, ending the reserve clause.

Players also won the right to become free agents. During the winter of 1976–77, the first wave of free agents negotiated contracts with substantial salary increases. Reggie Jackson's five-year \$3 million contract with the Yankees made him baseball's highest-paid player.

The new CBA gave players the right to decide for themselves which employer they wanted to work for, veto proposed trades, and bargain for the best contract. The MLBPA also won improvements in per diem allowances, travel conditions, training facilities, locker room conditions, and medical treatment.

In 1975, before the start of free agency, MLB's minimum salary was \$16,000 (\$92,000 in 2023 dollars), while the average salary was \$44,676 (\$256,539). By 2023, the minimum salary had risen to \$720,000, although many players who move between the majors and minors during the season don't earn close to that amount.²¹ The average salary, \$4.2 million, is skewed by the huge salaries of a handful of superstars. The median salary is closer to \$1.1 million.

Miller helped the players focus on pension issues. The average stay in the major leagues is 5.6 years—and even less for pitchers.²² So increasing payments and shortening the number of years needed to qualify for a pension became critical issues. Even players who have short careers now have good retirement benefits. Duane Kuiper (a major league infielder from 1974 to 1985) said, "I don't think any of us really appreciated Marvin until we all got older."²³ "I get a check from Marvin Miller every month. That's my pension," said Bob Locker, who pitched in the majors from 1965 to 1975. "My pension is bigger than any salary I made."²⁴

"The difference between a ballplayer's being required to accept whatever a club offered him, as had been the case almost from the beginning of professional baseball, and the new system of salary arbitration was like the difference between dictatorship and democracy," Miller wrote in his 1991 autobiography, *A Whole Different Ball Game*. Miller also sought to raise players' political awareness. He explained, "We didn't just explain the labor laws. We had to get players to understand that they were a union. We did a lot of internal education to talk to players about broader issues."²⁵

That spirit of solidarity reverberated among many players. In 1982, for example, Brooks Robinson, the former Orioles star third baseman, was a color commentator for WMAR-TV when station employees went on strike, picketing outside the

21. Candaele and Dreier, "Baseball Players Can't Live on a Cup of Coffee."

22. University of Colorado at Boulder, "Average Major League Baseball Career 5.6 Years, Says New Study," *ScienceDaily*, July 11, 2007, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/07/070709131254.htm>.

23. Ron Kroichick, "Pensions in Pro Sports: An Age-Old Issue for All the Big Leagues," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 18, 2007, <https://www.sfgate.com/sports/kroichick/article/PENSIONS-IN-PRO-SPORTS-An-age-old-issue-for-all-2608929.php>.

24. Interview with Bob Locker, December 18, 2018.

25. Dreier and Candaele, "Hall of Fame Shut Out."

building for two months before the start of the baseball season. The popular Robinson, a member of AFTRA, refused to cross the picket line, which put pressure on management to settle.²⁶

Baseball owners had tried desperately to persuade players not to join a union. They warned that the union would destroy the industry. In fact, baseball became more popular and prosperous. In 1967, the year after Miller joined the MLBPA, attendance at MLB games averaged 15,005 among the twenty teams. In 1982, the year he retired, it was 21,161 among twenty-six teams. In 2019, it was 28,203, with thirty teams. In 2022, MLB gross revenues reached a record-breaking \$10.8 billion.²⁷

Revenues from television and online gambling have significantly increased the value of baseball teams. In 2022 they were worth an average of \$2.3 billion—an all-time high and a 12 percent increase over the previous year. Teams' values range from the Miami Marlins' \$1 billion to the New York Yankees' \$7.1 billion.²⁸ Among the thirty owners of major league teams, at least twenty-four are billionaires.²⁹ Rather than stifle baseball's prosperity, the union simply gave players the power to win a greater share of their employers' growing revenues.

During and after Miller's tenure, the owners did everything they could to weaken the union, but Miller and his successors outmaneuvered them and their hired commissioners. Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley once said, "Marvin Miller is making us look like a bunch of idiots."³⁰

Miller's success was due primarily to his negotiating skills and his ability to influence players' attitudes about collective action. The emergence of nationally televised games in the 1960s put the skills of ballplayers on greater public display. Fans no longer depended on local sportswriters, many of whom had close ties to owners and were initially hostile to the unionization of players. Miller recognized that fans expected owners to recruit players who could win pennants, or at least be competitive from year to year. Major league players, the best at their craft, were not easily replaced. In that sense, the MLBPA was similar to a guild of craftsmen who took pride in their skills and, with Miller's coaching, understood that they deserved to be compensated accordingly and were willing to fight for it. Miller worked hard to instill in the highest-paid players a sense of solidarity with their lesser-paid teammates. As a

26. Bill Carter, "Agreement Ends Strike at WMAR," *Baltimore Sun*, April 16, 1982.

27. "Major League Miscellaneous Year-by-Year Averages and Totals," Baseball Reference, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/leagues/MLB/misc.shtml> (accessed December 10, 2023); Maury Brown, "MLB Sets New Revenue Record," *Forbes*, January 10, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maurybrown/2023/01/10/mlb-sets-new-revenue-record-exceeding-108-billion-for-2022/amp/>.

28. "The Business of Baseball," *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/mlb-valuations/list/#tab:overall> (accessed December 10, 2023); Mike Ozanian and Justin Teitelbaum, "Baseball's Most Valuable Teams 2022," *Forbes*, March 24, 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikeozanian/2022/03/24/baseballs-most-valuable-teams-2022-yankees-hit-6-billion-as-new-cba-creates-new-revenue-streams/?sh=3110b9de600a>.

29. Mike Digiiovanna, "Here Are the Billionaire Team Owners Who Rule Baseball amid the MLB Lockout," *Los Angeles Times*, February 28, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/sports/story/2022-02-28/mlb-billionaire-team-owners-roster-2022-lockout>.

30. Gorden Edes, "Ex-Labor Chief Flattered by Hall Talk," *Boston Globe*, December 15, 2002.

trained economist, Miller could explain that owners were making large and increasing profits and that players simply wanted a fair share of those growing revenues.

Miller and the MLBPA took advantage of the inexperience and incompetence of the two commissioners—William Eckert (1965–68) and Bowie Kuhn (1969–84)—who were his chief adversaries. Eckert, a career military officer, rose to lieutenant general in the Air Force. Kuhn was a corporate lawyer who occasionally represented the National League in lawsuits. Neither had any experience with labor unions. Eckert, Kuhn, and the owners consistently underestimated Miller and the players' resolve. In 1981, for example, the owners didn't think the players would be willing to strike. After Miller toured the spring training camps to meet with the players, however, they voted 967–1 to authorize a strike. On April 1, the union's executive board voted 27–0 to cancel the remainder of spring training games and set a May 22 strike date. After the owners refused to budge during negotiations, the players walked out, in the middle of the season, on June 12, 1981. The owners and many sportswriters blamed Miller for that strike and for subsequent strikes, including the one in 1994, which occurred twelve years after Miller had retired.

When Miller retired, the union hired his top legal adviser, Donald Fehr, as its new executive director. The owners hoped that without Miller, the union might not be as formidable a foe. Under Fehr, however, the MLBPA consolidated its economic victories. During contract negotiations, the owners falsely claimed that MLB had shown a profit only once since 1972. Under the CBA, the owners had to make their financial data available to the MLBPA. Stanford economics professor Roger Noll examined the data and determined that the teams were profitable. The alleged losses, he discovered, were the result of the teams' shady bookkeeping (for example, lowballing the revenues from TV and radio, parking, and owners' other businesses) and excessive executive salaries.

Meanwhile, the owners were engaged in an illegal war against free agency and against increasing salaries. In 1984, after replacing Kuhn with Peter Ueberroth, a businessman who had organized the successful Olympic Games in Los Angeles, the owners conspired against the players, refusing to sign free agents to multiyear contracts. Not only utility players but also superstars like Tim Lincecum and Andrew Dawson received one-year offers at lower salaries than they, and most baseball experts, expected. In most cases, players received offers only from their own teams, indicating that the owners were colluding with each other to avoid bidding wars for players. In 1985, only four of the sixty-two free agents switched teams.

From 1986 through 1990, the union filed three arbitration cases charging the owners with illegal collusion. In each case, the neutral arbitrators ruled against the owners. In 1990, based on arbitrator George Nicolau's ruling, lawyers for the players and owners negotiated a \$280 million settlement for the aggrieved players.³¹ Miller was the major expert witness against the owners.

31. Murray Chass, "Baseball; Players Said to Hit Collusion Jackpot," *New York Times*, November 4, 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/04/sports/baseball-players-said-to-hit-collusion-jackpot.html>.

During the 1994 negotiations, the owners and the players both expected the other side to back down to avoid a strike, but each side misjudged the other's resolve.³² On August 12, 1994, the players went on strike. Two weeks later, the MLBPA released Noll's study reporting that "baseball is financially healthy" and "the claim of widespread disaster in the sport is pure fiction."

In September, the union sent out the first checks from its \$200 million strike fund. The players hung together. The remainder of the season was canceled, as was, for the first time since 1904, the World Series. Negotiations continued throughout the rest of 1994 and into the following year. President Bill Clinton assigned Labor Secretary Robert Reich to help resolve the strike, to no avail.

The owners threatened to hire replacement players if the strike was not settled before spring training in 1995 and began recruiting minor leaguers and former major leaguers to serve as strikebreakers. Owner Peter Angelos of the Orioles—a former labor lawyer—refused to field a team of strikebreaking players. Tigers manager Sparky Anderson announced that he'd refuse to manage a team composed of replacements. "There ain't no place in our game for replacement players," he said.³³

The union challenged the owners' strikebreaker plan. The National Labor Relations Board, and then federal judge (and future Supreme Court Justice) Sonia Sotomayor, thwarted the owners' strategy. The strike ended on April 2, 1995, after 232 days, and nearly a month after the season was supposed to begin.

In 2002, when owners and players were both bracing for another strike, Joe Morgan, a HOF player who worked for ESPN and sat on the HOF board, warned that "there still remains a group of owners that wants to break the players' union. While I think they realize it can't be broken, they still want to punish the union and push for radical change."³⁴

The two sides avoided a strike. Minimum salaries continued to increase, arbitration continued, and free agency remained intact.

In September 2022, the MLBPA dramatically strengthened its influence when, after a short organizing drive, it won the right to represent the 5,500 minor league players, an accomplishment that many baseball observers, including Miller, had once thought was impossible.³⁵ The union leaders recognized that having minor leaguers in the same union would make it easier for the MLBPA to inculcate a sense of solidarity with the players long before they reach the major leagues.³⁶ Following

32. Corcoran, "Strike."

33. Barry Petchesky, "20 Years Ago Today, Sparky Anderson Said NO to Scab Players," *Deadspin*, February 17, 2015, <https://deadspin.com/20-years-ago-today-sparky-anderson-said-no-to-scab-pla-1686368183>.

34. Joe Morgan, "Strike Is No Longer Necessary," ESPN, August 22, 2002, https://www.espn.com/mlb/columns/morgan_joe/1421081.html.

35. "The notion that these very young, inexperienced people were going to defy the owners—it's just not going to happen," Miller said in 2012. Lily Rothman, "Emancipation of the Minors," *Slate*, April 3, 2012, <https://slate.com/culture/2012/04/minor-league-union-thousands-of-pro-baseball-players-make-just-1100-per-month-where-is-their-cesar-chavez.html>.

36. James Wagner, "M.L.B. Will Voluntarily Recognize Minor League Union," *New York Times*, September 9, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/09/sports/baseball/minor-league-union.html>; Candaele and Dreier, "Union of Their Own."

that victory, the MLBPA joined the AFL-CIO (something that Miller was unable to persuade players to do) and became part of its newly formed Sports Council, comprising unions of professional football and soccer players.

In 2018, during postseason games in Boston, some major league teams reserved rooms for players in hotels where the workers were on strike. After the teams refused to switch hotels and players crossed the hotel workers' union picket lines, labor activists cried foul.³⁷ Now that the players union had joined the AFL-CIO, major league players could support these rank-and-file efforts by making statements of solidarity or even showing up on the picket lines and at union rallies.

"There's been a reawakening to the power of collective bargaining sweeping the country," said MLBPA head Tony Clark, "and it's being driven by those who, like our players, have a heightened sense of fairness and equity and are determined to effect positive change in the workplace."³⁸

The Blacklist: Hall of Fame Votes to Exclude Miller

No other figure in history comes close to Miller in terms of revolutionizing the American sports business. Pro athletes in other major team sports—football, basketball, and hockey—saw what Miller accomplished and eventually won similar bargaining rights. Not surprisingly, the baseball moguls were determined to keep him out of their sanctuary.

1982–2003

From Miller's retirement in 1982 until 2003, the Veterans Committee met almost every year, but Miller didn't appear on a single HOF ballot. During that period, a growing chorus of sportswriters and former players, including Hank Aaron, Nolan Ryan, and Tom Seaver, urged the HOF to put Miller's name on the ballot, to no avail.

The alleged reason was that Miller, a union leader, didn't fit any of the existing HOF categories, but that was clearly an excuse. In 1992 *Daily News* sports columnist Bill Madden wrote,

The Veterans Committee should be ashamed of itself for maintaining this absurd stance that he doesn't qualify under any of its non-player criteria because he wasn't a manager, umpire, or executive. Miller should be in the Hall of Fame if for no other reason than you could not write a definitive history of baseball without mentioning him prominently as the man who did more to change the game than anyone other than perhaps Jackie Robinson.³⁹

The HOF decision-makers simply didn't want him in the HOF. For example, as the Pittsburgh Pirates' general manager from 1955 to 1976, Joe Brown battled Miller and the players union. Brown chaired the Veterans Committee from 1979 through 2001.

37. Dreier and Candaele, "Yankees Players Cross the Picket Line in Boston."

38. Candaele and Dreier, "Union of Their Own."

39. Bill Madden, "O's Are Drawing Ooh, Ahs," *New York Daily News*, May 10, 1992.

Table 1. Hall of Fame Votes on Marvin Miller

<i>Date</i>	<i>Committee</i>	<i>Votes for Miller</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
February 2003	Veterans	35 out of 79	44%
January 2007	Veterans	51 out of 81	63%
November 2007	Veterans	3 out of 12	25%
December 2009	Veterans	7 out of 12	58%
December 2010	Expansion Era	11 out of 16	69%
December 2013	Expansion Era	“fewer than 6” out of 16	Less than 38%
December 2017	Modern Baseball Era	7 out of 16	44%
December 2019	Modern Baseball Era	12 out of 16	75%

Bob Broeg, longtime sports editor and columnist for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and an ally of the owners (particularly Cardinals owner Augie Busch), was on the HOF board from 1978 to 2000 and on the Veterans Committee from 1971 to 2000.⁴⁰

While blacklisting Miller, the committee voted to induct executives William Hullbert, Lee McPhail, Pat Gillick, and Bill Veeck, Commissioners Happy Chandler and Bowie Kuhn, owners Jacob Ruppert, Barney Dreyfuss, and Walter O'Malley, as well as several managers and umpires.⁴¹

February 2003 Vote

In 2001, the HOF board changed the rules, which were first used in its February 2003 election. Under those changes, the Veterans Committee would hold elections every other year for players who had been retired over twenty years and every four years for managers, umpires, and executives.⁴² They dramatically expanded the Veterans Committee from fifteen people to include all living HOF players and managers, all past winners of the Ford Frick and J. G. Taylor Spink awards, and two former members of the Veterans Committee. The revamped Veterans Committee had eighty-five members, including fifty-eight players and managers who were already in the HOF. Miller finally appeared on the ballot that year. But not a single person on the ballot received the needed 75 percent of the votes (see Table 1). Miller received only thirty-five of the seventy-nine ballots cast—44 percent.⁴³ Miller's negotiating nemesis, former Commissioner Bowie Kuhn, received only twenty votes that year.

As *Sports Illustrated* reporter Jay Jaffe pointed out, “Players who played in the pre-union days often resented the high salaries and freedom of movement that their successors enjoyed, and even the most historically-minded writers on the VC disagreed on Miller's eligibility.”⁴⁴ Even some players who had benefited handsomely

40. Chafets, *Cooperstown Confidential*, 147.

41. Wikipedia, s.v. “1984 Baseball Hall of Fame Balloting,” last updated July 12, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1984_Baseball_Hall_of_Fame_balloting.

42. Wikipedia, s.v. “2002 Baseball Hall of Fame Balloting,” last updated August 28, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2002_Baseball_Hall_of_Fame_balloting.

43. Bill Madden, “Hall of Famers Pitch Shutout,” *New York Daily News*, February 27, 2003. Among eighty-five eligible voters, seventy-nine cast ballots, so sixty votes were the minimum to elect a candidate.

44. Jaffe, “Marvin Miller's Exclusion a Mark of Shame for the Hall of Fame.”

from the changes Miller made possible didn't vote for him. Reggie Jackson said that only players should be in the Hall of Fame. Mike Schmidt also didn't vote for Miller but didn't explain why.

January 2007 Vote

Four years later, in January 2007, the Veterans Committee again failed to elect anyone to the HOF. Miller received fifty-one of the eighty-one ballots cast—63 percent.⁴⁵ That was ten votes short of the sixty-one needed to reach the 75 percent threshold. This time Reggie Jackson stated that he voted for Miller, who got considerably more votes than any of the owners, executives, and managers on the ballot. Kuhn only got fourteen.

November 2007 Vote

A few months after that vote, however, the HOF board changed the rules again, explaining their frustration that the Veterans Committee had been pitching shutouts. The board reconstituted the Veterans Committee with twelve members. At their November 2007 meeting, Miller received only three out of twelve votes—25 percent.⁴⁶

Among the committee's twelve members, seven were owners and executives, guaranteeing that Miller would not get enough votes. They included owners John Harrington (Red Sox), Jerry Bell (Twins), Bill DeWitt Jr. (Cardinals), Bill Giles (Phillies), and David Glass (Royals), along with Orioles executive Andy MacPhail and former American League president Bobby Brown. DeWitt, Giles, and MacPhail's fathers (and the latter's grandfather) were on the management side during the reserve clause era. Giles, Harrington, and MacPhail were part of management when the players union sued MLB for collusion in the 1980s. Miller was the lead witness during the trial. During the 1994 strike, Glass supported the use of strikebreaking "replacement" players, despite the court ruling that the use of replacement players violated federal labor law.

Neither of the two players on the committee, Monte Irvin and Harmon Killebrew, had played in the post-reserve clause era. Irvin worked for Commissioner Kuhn for seventeen years. Killebrew worked for the Twins as a broadcaster. There were also three media representatives on the committee.

45. Balloting was conducted by mail in January 2007, with voters permitted to vote for up to ten candidates from each ballot.

46. The 2007 rules changes split the voting into two separate ballots—one for managers and umpires and the other for executives. The committee membership, which previously included all living HOF members, was now reduced to include just a handful of those members, plus additional executives and sportswriters. Voting for both the managers/umpires and executives' ballots would now take place in even-numbered years, starting with 2008. To be eligible, executives needed to be either retired or at least age sixty-five. The committee was composed of two HOF players, seven owners and executives, and three media representatives. They voted at baseball's winter meetings in Nashville on December 2, 2007, and announced the results the following day. It was the first time since 2001 that the committee met in person; the previous three elections were conducted by mail.

The HOF board had stacked the committee with Miller's adversaries. But it also appeared to have been making sure that Kuhn (who had died in March of that year) as well as several owners (including Barney Dreyfuss and Walter O'Malley) would get in. Two other run-of-the-mill former owners—the Kansas City Royals' Ewing Kauffman and the Detroit Tigers' John Fetzer—received more votes than Miller.

After many sportswriters exposed the obvious bias against Miller, HOF chair Jane Forbes Clark felt compelled to defend the process: "There was no concerted effort other than to have very qualified committee members evaluate very qualified candidates. There was a very open and frank discussion about each of the candidates. Everyone on that committee knows Marvin and respects what he did for the game."⁴⁷

In May 2008, Miller wrote a letter to the BBWAA, saying he no longer wanted to be considered for the HOF. "The anti-union bias of the powers who control the Hall has consistently prevented recognition of the historic significance of the changes to baseball brought about by collective bargaining," he wrote. He criticized the "rigged veterans' committee whose members are handpicked to reach a particular outcome while offering the pretense of a democratic vote." He added, "It is an insult to baseball fans, historians, sports writers and especially to those baseball players who sacrificed and brought the game into the twenty-first century. At the age of 91, I can do without farce."⁴⁸

Despite Miller's letter, the HOF decision-makers kept his name on the ballot—perhaps, for some, out of spite. But as *New York Times* columnist William Rhoden wrote at the time, "With all due respect, this issue is larger than the individual."⁴⁹

December 2009 Vote

The Veterans Committee met in December 2009, using the same rules. There were still seven owners and executives on the Veterans Committee—six of them holdovers from 2007, two former players, and three media representatives. Miller received seven of the twelve votes—58 percent, below the 75 percent threshold.⁵⁰

December 2010 Vote

The HOF board revamped the rules again in July 2010. Instead of having separate committees based on different occupational categories (players, executives, managers, umpires), the board created three new committees based on historical eras, which they called Pre-integration Era (1871–1946), Golden Era (1947–72), and Expansion Era (1973 and after). Each era committee would meet every two or three years. Miller was assigned to the Expansion Era committee, which now had sixteen members. This

47. "Kuhn, 3 Others Going into Baseball Hall," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 4, 2007.

48. Baccellieri, "Marvin Miller Didn't Want to Be a Hall of Famer."

49. William C. Rhoden, "Lion Who Made Players Roar Faces the Quiet," *New York Times*, May 22, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/22/sports/baseball/22rhoden.html>.

50. Voting was conducted in person at baseball's winter meetings in Indianapolis on December 6, 2009, with the results announced the next day. Committee members included two HOF players, seven owners and executives, and three media representatives.

time, the committee included only four owners and executives (Jerry Reinsdorf, Andy MacPhail, Bill Giles, David Glass), one manager (Whitey Herzog), seven former players (Eddie Murphy, Johnny Bench, Jim Palmer, Frank Robinson, Tony Perez, Ryne Sandberg, Ozzie Smith), and four writers (Tim Kurkjian, Bob Elliott, Tom Verducci, Ross Newhan). At its December 2010 meeting, Miller received eleven out of sixteen votes—one shy of the 75 percent needed for election.⁵¹

December 2013 Vote

The Expansion Era committee met again in December 2013. The committee included four owners and executives (Reinsdorf, McPhail, Paul Beeston, Dave Montgomery), six HOF players (Rod Carew, Carlton Fisk, Joe Morgan, Paul Molitor, Phil Niekro, Frank Robinson), two managers (Herzog and Tommy Lasorda), and four historians and media representatives (Steve Hirdt, Bruce Jenkins, Jack O'Connell, Jim Reeves). Miller received “fewer than six” out of sixteen votes. (The HOF refused to release the actual figures.)⁵² Managers Joe Torre, Tony La Russa, and Bobby Cox were unanimously elected with sixteen votes. No one else got the requisite twelve votes.

December 2017 Vote

In 2016, the HOF changed the rules again. They replaced the three era committees with four era committees. Miller was assigned to the Modern Baseball Era (1970–87) Committee. Under the revised rules, committee members could vote for up to four of the ten candidates on the ballot.⁵³ In 2017, Miller was the only nonplayer on the ballot. He was no longer competing just with other executives, umpires, and managers. That meant that committee members had to make a choice: a vote for Miller meant one less vote for one of the former players on the ballot.⁵⁴

The committee met to vote under these new rules in December 2017.⁵⁵ Dennis Eckersley, who was serving on the committee for the first time, thought that a posi-

51. Frank Fitzpatrick, “Miller Should Be in the Hall,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 27, 2011.

52. “Baseball Hall of Fame 2014: Marvin Miller’s Exclusion ‘Simply Absurd,’” *Sporting News*, December 9, 2013, <https://www.sportingnews.com/us/mlb/news/baseball-hall-of-fame-2014-marvin-millers-exclusion-simply-absurd/10cg3icq8d5v91aelu7rab3v90>.

53. “Era Committees,” National Baseball Hall of Fame, <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/rules/eras-committees> (accessed December 10, 2023); “Eras: Expansion,” National Baseball Hall of Fame and Machine via Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130111222033/http://baseballhall.org/hall-famers/rules-election/eras-expansion> (accessed December 10, 2023).

54. The ten candidates on the 2017 Modern Baseball Era ballot were Miller, Jack Morris, Alan Trammell, Ted Simmons, Steve Garvey, Tommy John, Don Mattingly, Dale Murphy, Dave Parker, and Luis Tiant. Morris and Trammell were elected with fourteen and thirteen votes, respectively. Simmons had eleven, Miller seven. The ten candidates on the 2019 ballot were Miller, Simmons, Murphy, Garvey, Parker, John, Mattingly, Dwight Evans, Lou Whitaker, and Thurman Munson. Simmons and Miller were elected with thirteen and twelve votes, respectively.

55. The committee included six major league owners and executives (Sandy Alderson, Paul Beeston, Bob Castellini, Bill DeWitt, David Glass, and John Schuerholz), six former players (George Brett, Rod Carew, Dennis Eckersley, Don Sutton, Dave Winfield, and Robin Yount), one former manager (Bobby Cox), and three media representatives (Bob Elliott, Jayson Stark, and Steve Hirdt).

tive vote for Miller “was going to be a slam dunk,” he recalled. “Then I figured it out when I got into the room. There are only sixteen people there. There are six owners there. Do the math.”⁵⁶

Trying to derail Miller’s candidacy, one committee member reminded the others that Miller had said that he did not want to be in the HOF.

“Of course, he [Miller] was angry when he said that,” explained Eckersley. “But that’s a weak excuse to not vote for him. I saw through that. Baseball is bigger than that.”⁵⁷

But only seven of the sixteen members (44 percent) voted for Miller.

Players, Sportswriters, and Others Go to Bat for Miller

During the three decades that the HOF board and committees were blacklisting Miller, many sportswriters and former players, including Hall of Famers, spoke up on his behalf.⁵⁸ The crescendo of criticism didn’t have an immediate impact, but ultimately it contributed to the HOF’s reluctant decision to induct Miller.

In 1983, the year after Miller retired, the *New York Times*’s Ira Berkow raised the idea of Miller being in the HOF.⁵⁹ In 1985, player-turned-broadcaster Tony Kubek mentioned on air that Miller should be in the HOF. In 1989, columnist Blackie Sherrod of the *Dallas Morning Herald* wrote, “How can they have a Hall of Fame without Marvin Miller?”⁶⁰

In 1999, Hall of Famer Jim Bunning, who (along with Hall of Famer Robin Roberts) recruited Miller to the MLBPA (and who, as a Republican US senator,

56. Author interview with Dennis Eckersley, June 5, 2021.

57. Eckersley interview.

58. Tributes to Miller from many former players and others were posted on the “Thanks, Marvin” website, which was created in 2010 by former MLB pitcher Bob Locker but has since been dismantled. A sample of other tributes include Ira Berkow, “Marvin Miller, Hall of Famer,” *New York Times*, February 15, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/15/sports/sports-of-the-times-marvin-miller-hall-of-famer.html>; Allen Barra, “Marin Miller, Hall of Famer,” *Salon*, January 3, 2001, https://www.salon.com/2001/01/03/miller_15/; Allen Barra, “Is It Miller Time at Baseball Hall of Fame?,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 25, 2003; Allen Barra, “Runnin’ Scared: Once Again, One of Baseball’s Greatest Is Kept from Cooperstown,” *Village Voice*, November 27, 2007; Rhoden, “Lion Who Made Players Roar Faces the Quiet”; Dreier and Candaele, “Hall of Fame Shut Out”; Jerry Crasnick, “Time for Miller’s Call from the Hall,” ESPN, November 30, 2009, http://www.espn.com/mlb/columns/story?columnist=crasnick_jerry&id=4700428; Posnanski, “There’s No Worse Hall of Fame Omission than That of Marvin Miller”; Allen Barra, “R.I.P., Marvin Miller, Baseball’s FDR,” *Salon*, November 28, 2012, https://www.salon.com/2012/11/28/r_i_p_marvin_miller_baseballs_fdr; “Former Players Urge Marvin Miller Be Put in Hall of Fame”; Bill Shaiken, “Joe Torre, Union Rip Exclusion of Marvin Miller from Hall of Fame,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 2013, <https://www.latimes.com/sports/sportsnow/la-sp-sn-joe-torre-union-leader-marvin-miller-from-hall-of-fame-20131209-story.html>; Jaffe, “Hall of Fame Is Incomplete without Marvin Miller”; Peter Botte, “Marvin Miller’s Repeated Hall of Fame Snub Is Unfathomable,” *New York Daily News*, December 11, 2017, <https://www.nydailynews.com/sports/baseball/botte-shots-marvin-miller-repeated-hof-snub-unfathomable-article-1.3690463>; Rob Neyer, “Marvin Miller Is the Poster Boy for a Larger Baseball Hall of Fame Dilemma,” *Yahoo Sports*, January 23, 2018, <https://sports.yahoo.com/marvin-miller-poster-boy-larger-baseball-hall-fame-dilemma-050728433.html>.

59. Berkow, “Sports of the Times; The Master Bargainer.”

60. Blackie Sherrod, “Express Chugs on Changeup,” *Calgary Herald*, March 19, 1999.

was no friend of unions), said, “The Hall of Fame is about players, and Marvin did more for the players than anyone else.” Bunning said that his two proudest achievements in baseball were his perfect game and helping recruit Miller to lead the players union.⁶¹

At his 1999 HOF induction, Nolan Ryan paid tribute to Miller. Ryan reminded the audience that when he broke into the majors in 1966, he was earning \$7,000. He spent the winter months working at a gas station, while his wife worked at a local bookstore, to make ends meet. Because of Miller’s efforts, Ryan said, “we brought that level up to where the players weren’t put in that situation.”⁶²

In 2000, HOF pitcher Tom Seaver called Miller’s exclusion “a national disgrace.” Hank Aaron said, “Miller should be in the Hall of Fame if the players have to break down the doors to get him in.” Said Brooks Robinson, who had been a union representative with the Baltimore Orioles, “Marvin Miller taught us all to stand up for ourselves. It’s time we took the responsibility and stood up for him.”⁶³ Two years later, Red Sox owner John Henry told a *Boston Globe* reporter, “I very much agree that Marvin Miller should be in baseball’s Hall of Fame. How many individuals have played a larger role in the history of the game?”⁶⁴

That pressure led the HOF to add Miller’s name to the ballot in 2003. Four years later, when Bowie Kuhn’s cronies on the Veterans Committee voted him into Cooperstown in 2007, while excluding Miller, it provoked considerable outrage.

ESPN writer Jerry Crasnick wrote, “Given Miller’s mastery over Kuhn in labor-related matters, this was the equivalent of keeping Muhammad Ali out of the Boxing Hall of Fame and electing Chuck Wepner because his face was such a great punching bag.”⁶⁵

Jim Bouton, author of the 1970 bestseller *Ball Four*, who had been the player union representative for the Yankees in the 1960s, said, “Essentially, the decision for putting a union leader in the Hall of Fame was handed over to a bunch of executives and former executives. Marvin Miller kicked their butts and took power away from the baseball establishment—do you really think those people are going to vote him in? It’s a joke.”⁶⁶

Even former Fay Vincent, the commissioner from 1989 to 1992, expressed dismay. After the 2007 vote, he published an op-ed in the *New York Times* titled “Union-Busting at the Hall of Fame.” He wrote, “There are old men trying to turn

61. Berkow, “Marvin Miller, Hall of Famer.”

62. <http://www.mingster.org/speech.htm> (accessed December 10, 2023); “Ryan Has Miller to Thank for Raises,” *Palm Beach Post*, July 26, 1999.

63. Allen Barra, “Marvin Miller’s Fame Is Subject to Interpretation,” *New York Times*, February 20, 2000, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/02/20/sports/backtalk-marvin-miller-s-fame-is-subject-to-interpretation.html>.

64. Gorden Edes, “Ex-Labor Chief Flattered by Hall Talk,” *Boston Globe*, December 15, 2002.

65. Crasnick, “Time for Miller’s Call from the Hall.”

66. Allen Barra, “Hall of Shame,” *Village Voice*, November 27, 2007, <https://www.villagevoice.com/2007/11/27/hall-of-shame/>.

back time, to reverse what has happened. Theirs is an act of ignorance and bias. I am ashamed for them. I am ashamed that they represent our game.”⁶⁷

Asked his perspective on the matter, Miller said, “I think it was rigged, but not to keep me out. It was rigged to bring some of these in,” referring to Kuhn and the owners. “It’s not a pretty picture. It’s demeaning, the whole thing, and I don’t mean just to me. It’s demeaning to the Hall and demeaning to the people in it.”⁶⁸

In 2009, Ray Grebey, the former MLB labor negotiator who went toe-to-toe with Miller, supported Miller’s induction in a letter to the HOF board.⁶⁹ That year, Vincent reiterated the same views he had expressed in his *Times* op-ed: “It’s preposterous that Marvin Miller isn’t in the Hall of Fame. It’s an embarrassment. . . . Marvin Miller brought players out of indentured servitude. They were basically slaves. How can you argue that it was anything other than a great thing? It meant that baseball became part of the modern world.”⁷⁰

By 2009, Commissioner Bud Selig, who had tangled with Miller when he owned the Milwaukee Brewers and had fought the players union as commissioner, recognized that Miller’s exclusion posed a public relations dilemma for baseball. In an interview Selig said, “Marvin Miller belongs in the Hall of Fame, if the criteria is what impact you had on the sport, whatever way one wants to value that impact.”⁷¹ But he did nothing to translate those sentiments into action.

In 2010, to coincide with Miller’s ninety-third birthday, a group of former players—led by Bob Locker, a major league pitcher from 1965 to 1975—created a “ThanksMarvin.com” website to raise awareness of Miller’s importance in the worlds of baseball and organized labor, and to push to get Miller into the HOF. The site included statements from dozens of players, broadcasters, and baseball executives about Miller. Bob Tufts, who pitched in the majors from 1981 through 1983, also crusaded for Miller. After his baseball career ended, Tufts earned an MBA in finance from Columbia University and worked in the financial industry. He also taught business and sports marketing at New York University, and in 2014 taught a course about Miller’s role in American trade unionism.

Miller died of cancer on November 27, 2012, at the age of ninety-five. His death triggered many tributes from sports writers, players, and others.⁷² But even

67. Fay Vincent, “Union Busting at the Hall of Fame,” *New York Times*, December 8, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/08/opinion/08vincent.html>.

68. Associated Press and Jimmy Golen, “Kuhn, O’Malley and 3 Others Elected to Baseball Hall of Fame; Marvin Miller Snubbed,” *San Jose Mercury-News*, December 3, 2007, <https://www.mercurynews.com/2007/12/03/kuhn-omalley-and-3-others-elected-to-baseball-hall-of-fame-marvin-miller-snubbed/>.

69. Letter from Grebey to HOF board, December 8, 2009, <http://thanksmarvin.com/Grebey-letters.pdf>.

70. Crasnick, “Time for Miller’s Call from the Hall.”

71. Crasnick, “Time for Miller’s Call from the Hall.” Selig made a similar statement in December 2010 before the committee once again rejected Miller. Ronald Blum, “Miller Up for Hall Again after Several Snubs,” *Ottawa Citizen*, December 6, 2010.

72. Mike Lupica, “Legendary Baseball Union Leader Marvin Miller, Dead at 95, Belongs in Hall of Fame,” *New York Daily News*, November 28, 2012, <https://www.nydailynews.com/sports/baseball/lupica>

Miller's death wasn't sufficient to get the HOF to end the blacklist. After the HOF rejected Miller in December 2013, HOF manager Joe Torre said, "Marvin Miller should be in. He made an impact on the game."

In 2017, when Miller was again voted down, Peter Botte titled his *New York Daily News* column "Marvin Miller's Repeated Hall of Fame Snub Is Unfathomable."⁷³ Broadcaster Bob Costas, who had just won the Hall of Fame's Ford C. Frick Award, said, "If I had to pick one person who is missing from the Hall of Fame and I think should be there, it's Marvin Miller."⁷⁴

By the early 2000s, the MLBPA realized that to be effective it needed to educate each new generation of players about the union's history and impact. "As more players get their first taste of the big leagues, we have to make sure they know who Marvin was and what he did for all major league players. Some have more to learn about his impact on their careers whether they realize it or not," explained MLBPA executive director Tony Clark, a former major league player.⁷⁵

In 2000, the union bestowed its first Marvin Miller Man of the Year Award to a player "whose on-field performance and contributions to his community inspire others to higher levels of achievement." The union played a key role in getting the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery to include Miller's portrait, unveiled in November 2019.⁷⁶ In 2019—the fiftieth anniversary of Curt Flood's court challenge to the reserve clause—the union launched an annual award in honor of Flood, given to "a former player, living or deceased, who in the image of Flood demonstrated a selfless, longtime devotion to the Players Association and advancement of Players' rights."⁷⁷

-no-justice-miller-fails-find-fame-article-1.1209242; Jaffe, "Marvin Miller's Exclusion a Mark of Shame for the Hall of Fame"; Lithwick, "Marvin Miller, 1917–2012"; Crasnick, "Time for Miller's Call from the Hall"; Richard Sandomir, "Grudges Loomed Large in Hall of Fame Snubs of Miller," *New York Times*, November 27, 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/28/sports/baseball/marvin-miller-grudges-likely-played-role-in-hall-of-fame-snob.html?ref=baseball&_r=0; Peter Dreier, "Marvin Miller's Lasting Legacy," *American Prospect*, December 1, 2012, <https://prospect.org/culture/marvin-miller-s-lasting-legacy/>.

73. Jaffe, "Hall of Fame Is Incomplete without Marvin Miller"; Botte, "Marvin Miller's Repeated Hall of Fame Snub Is Unfathomable."

74. Phil Rosenthal, "Hall of Fame Honoree Bob Costas Calls Marvin Miller Its 'Most Glaring Omission,'" *Chicago Tribune*, December 14, 2017, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/breaking/ct-spt-bob-costas-hall-of-fame-marvin-miller-rosenthal-20171214-story.html>.

75. Interview with Tony Clark, July 29, 2021.

76. Baccellieri, "Still Waiting on Cooperstown."

77. When pitcher Gerrit Cole signed his \$324 million, nine-year contract with the Yankees in December 2019, he paid tribute to Miller, then to Curt Flood. "I just think it's so important that players know the other sacrifices that players made in order to keep the integrity of the game where it is, and so I hope everybody has that conversation about Curt Flood on the bus," he said. There is now a growing movement to get Flood into the HOF. David Waldstein, "With Nods to the Past, Gerrit Cole Embraces His Yankees Future," *New York Times*, December 18, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/18/sports/baseball/gerrit-cole-yankees.html>; Kristie Ackert, "Gerrit Cole Knows His Labor History, Thanks Curt Flood and Marvin Miller," *New York Daily News*, December 18, 2019, <https://www.nydailynews.com/sports/baseball/yankees/ny-gerrit-cole-free-agency-marvin-miller-curt-flood-20191218-sweqaznlajcudci4bhslbik43a-story.html>.

Those were important steps. But the union could also have brought together past and current players, including HOF members, to hold a press conference, issue a statement, and lobby the HOF board to put more former players on the Veterans (now Modern Baseball Era) Committee and other committees. They could have insisted that the HOF reveal how the committee members voted so they could be held publicly accountable.

Of the seventy living HOF players as of 2018, twenty-two of them started their careers before Miller joined the union in 1966 but played during his tenure, so they directly experienced the improvements that Miller helped bring about.⁷⁸ Another twenty-six HOF players entered the majors while Miller headed the union and witnessed a steady increase in players' pay, pensions, and power.⁷⁹

If some high-profile HOF players—such as Hank Aaron, Sandy Koufax, Dave Winfield, Joe Morgan, and Brooks Robinson—spoke out together on Miller's behalf, it could have put pressure on the board to appoint a Modern Baseball Era Committee not so heavily stacked with owners and executives and put pressure on the committee members to vote for Miller.

How Did Miller Get In?

When the Modern Baseball Era Committee met in December 2019, Miller received twelve out of sixteen votes—the threshold needed to win 75 percent of the vote.⁸⁰ (They also elected catcher Ted Simmons, who received thirteen votes; see table 2.)

What had changed?

The makeup of the HOF board in 2019 was not very different from that two years or six years earlier.⁸¹ It was still dominated by the baseball and corporate establishment. In 2019, the year that Miller finally was elected into the HOF, its seventeen-member board was composed of chair Jane Forbes Clark and two close associates of her family's business enterprises, seven owners and top executives of baseball teams, and six HOF former players.⁸²

78. These twenty-two HOF players started their careers before Miller joined the union in 1966 but played during his tenure: Sandy Koufax, Whitey Ford, Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, Luis Aparicio, Al Kaline, Bob Gibson, Bill Mazeroski, Brooks Robinson, Orlando Cepeda, Juan Marichal, Billy Williams, Gaylord Perry, Phil Neikro, Lou Brock, Carl Yastrzemski, Tony Perez, Joe Morgan, Steve Carlton, Don Sutton, Jim Palmer, and Nolan Ryan.

79. These twenty-six HOF players entered the majors while Miller headed the union: Tom Seaver, Rod Carew, Reggie Jackson, Rollie Fingers, Johnny Bench, Carlton Fisk, Mike Schmidt, Bert Blyleven, Goose Gosage, Dave Winfield, Bruce Sutter, Jim Rice, George Brett, Andre Dawson, Dennis Eckersley, Ozzie Smith, Jack Morris, Robin Yount, Eddie Murray, Paul Molitor, Alan Trammell, Wade Boggs, Rickey Henderson, Tim Lincecum, Ryne Sandberg, and Cal Ripken. See "Living Hall of Famers," National Baseball Hall of Fame, <https://baseballhall.org/media/living-hall-of-famers> (accessed December 10, 2023).

80. The voting results were announced on December 8, 2019.

81. "Board of Directors," National Baseball Hall of Fame, <https://baseballhall.org/about-the-hall/staff/board-of-directors> (accessed December 10, 2023).

82. The 2019 board included chair Jane Forbes Clark; Kevin Moore, president of the Clark Estates; Edward W. Stack, ex-president of Clark Estates and director of Clark family charities, who was HOF president (1977–2000) and president of the Clark-owned Leatherstocking Corporation, owner of the Otesaga

Table 2. Members of Expansion Era (2013) and Modern Baseball Era (2017 and 2019) Committee: Votes for Marvin Miller: 2013, 2017, 2019

2013 (< 6 votes)	2017 (7 votes)	2019 (12 votes)
<i>Owners (o) and Executives</i>		
Jerry Reinsdorf (o)	David Glass (o)	David Glass (o)
Andy McPhail	Sandy Alderson	Sandy Alderson
David Montgomery (o)	William DeWitt Jr. (o)	Dave Dombrowski
Paul Beeston	Paul Beeston	Walt Jocketty
	Bob Castellini (o)	Doug Melvin
	John Schuerholz	Terry Ryan
	Managers	
Tommy Lasorda	Bobby Cox	
Whitey Herzog		
<i>Writers and Historians</i>		
Steve Hirdt	Steve Hirdt	Steve Hirdt
Bruce Jenkins	Jayson Stark	Bill Center
Jack O'Connell	Bob Elliott	Jack O'Connell
Jim Reeves		Tracy Ringolsby
<i>Former Players</i>		
Frank Robinson*	Dennis Eckersley	Dennis Eckersley
Rod Carew	Rod Carew	Rod Carew
Joe Morgan	George Brett	George Brett
Phil Niekro	Robin Young	Robin Yount
Carlton Fisk	Don Sutton	Ozzie Smith
Paul Molitor	Dave Winfield	Eddie Murray

*Former MLB manager and MLB vice president (2010–15)

One factor that may have played a key role in the 2019 vote was Tim Mead, who had been named HOF president in April 2019 following a career working for the Los Angeles Angels, including twenty-two years as the team's vice president of communications. According to informed but confidential sources, Mead understood that the controversy over Miller was bad for the HOF's reputation. According to the source, Mead urged the board to replace some of Miller's harshest opponents on the Modern Baseball Era Committee with executives who would be more sympathetic to Miller.⁸³

Resort Hotel (which has a history of troubled labor relations and labor violations); baseball owners and executives David Glass (Kansas City Royals owner and former Walmart CEO); William Dewitt Jr. (St. Louis Cardinals owner); Arte Moreno (Los Angeles Angels owner); Jerry Reinsdorf (Chicago White Sox owner); Paul Beeston (former MLB COO and former Toronto Blue Jays president); Harvey Schiller (former CEO of YankeeNets, a conglomerate that owned the New York Yankees, the New York Nets, and the New Jersey Blue Devils, and former president of Turner Sports Inc.); Thomas Tull (CEO of Tulco, former CEO of Legendary Entertainment, and part owner of the NFL's Pittsburgh Steelers); Commissioner Rob Manfred; and former HOF players Brooks Robinson, Joe Morgan, Phil Niekro, Ozzie Smith, Cal Ripken Jr., and Roberto Alomar.

83. In an interview, however, Mead did not acknowledge playing any role in orchestrating Miller's election. Author interview with Tim Mead, June 4, 2021.

Four of the five executives on the 2019 Modern Baseball Era Committee—Sandy Alderson, Dave Dombrowski, Walt Jocketty, Doug Melvin, and Terry Ryan—were slightly younger and had different experiences than their predecessors. Only Alderson had served on the committee before. They were executives, not owners. They were not the sons of owners or executives who had tangled with Miller. None of them were in upper management while Miller was with the players union. Only one of the committee's six owner/executives was part of the old guard—David Glass, the former CEO of fiercely antiunion Walmart and the owner of the Kansas City Royals. Glass had been on the committee four previous times.⁸⁴

White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf—who was part of the owners' collusion scandal in the 1980s and a hardliner during the 1994 strike—was no longer on the committee. Neither was Andy McPhail, who had been general manager for several teams and was the Twins' GM during the 1994 strike. His father Lee McPhail was a longtime executive for several teams and president of the American League during the 1981 strike.

"You got fresh people in there," observed HOF pitcher Dennis Eckersley, who was on the committee in 2017 and 2019, referring to the executives in the group. "It wasn't just old school folks. It has some different thinkers. Nobody needed coaxing."⁸⁵

Only four members of the committee did not vote for Miller. Committee members are sworn to secrecy about the vote, but if all six players and all four writers voted for Miller, then at least two executives cast their ballot for Miller, giving him the twelve votes needed.

All six HOF players on the committee (Eckersley, George Brett, Rod Carew, Robin Yount, Eddie Murray, and Ozzie Smith) took part in the players' seven-week strike in 1981 led by Miller. They had benefited from the improvements in pay, pensions, working conditions, and free agency made possible by the players union.

In addition, the media drumbeat for Miller had gotten louder since his death in 2012 and particularly since his HOF rejection in 2017. The growing chorus of public support for Miller by Bob Costas and other writers and broadcasters, as well as by such unusual suspects as Fay Vincent, Bud Selig, and Ray Grebey, may have influenced at least two of the executives on the 2019 committee. In addition, during committee deliberations, the six players were more aggressive in advocating for Miller than their counterparts in previous years, according to Eckersley.

84. Alderson, born in 1947, was the Oakland A's GM from 1983 to 1997 and the MLB executive vice president for Baseball Operations from 1998 to 2005. He later worked in top positions for the Padres, Athletics, and Mets. Jocketty, born in 1951, was the director of minor league operations and scouting for the A's starting in 1980, two years before Miller retired; he then served as GM for the Cardinals (1994–2007) and the Cincinnati Reds (2008–15), and then as president of the Reds. Dombrowski, born in 1956, was GM and president for the Expos, Marlins, and Red Sox. Melvin, born in 1952 and a former minor league player, was the Orioles' assistant GM and director of player development (1987–94) and GM of the Texas Rangers (1994–2001) and Milwaukee Brewers (2002–15). Terry Ryan, born in 1953, another former minor league player, was the GM for the Twins (1994–2007 and 2011–16).

85. Eckersley interview.

One also cannot discount the growing support for labor unions. A 2019 Gallup Poll found that 64 percent of Americans said that they approved of labor unions—the highest level since 2003.⁸⁶ Mead and some members of the Modern Baseball Era Committee—even some owners and executives—may have recognized that Miller’s exclusion was problematic not only among players but also among fans.

Conclusion

Miller’s plaque on the HOF wall in Cooperstown is a triumph for social justice and workers’ rights.⁸⁷ It would be an even bigger triumph if Curt Flood, who sacrificed his career to challenge the reserve clause and the baseball establishment, paving the way for many improvements in the lives of professional athletes, was also inducted into the HOF.⁸⁸

At Miller’s induction ceremony in Cooperstown in 2021 (which was postponed a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic), Ted Simmons, a catcher and rebellious player who was also inducted that day, lauded Miller in his speech. “He made so much possible for every Major League player from my era to the present and the future. I could not be more proud to enter this great Hall with this great man.” Accepting the award on Miller’s behalf, Don Fehr, Miller’s protégé who succeeded him as MLBPA executive director, recalled, “I met Marvin first in 1975. He was quiet, soft-spoken. The man had endless reserves of patience. He was ever-willing to listen, respond and converse. It was an extraordinary set of characteristics for anyone to have. He was easily the most practical person I ever saw.”⁸⁹

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86. By 2022, the proportion of Americans who supported unions had grown to 71 percent. Gallup Poll, “Labor Unions,” <https://news.gallup.com/poll/12751/labor-unions.aspx>.

87. “Union Exec Marvin Miller, Simmons Elected to Hall of Fame,” *USA Today*, December 8, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/mlb/2019/12/08/union-exec-marvin-miller-simmons-elected-to-hall-of-fame/40784865/>; Murray Chass, “George’s Letter Good Sign for Marvin,” *Murray Chass on Baseball*, December 9, 2019, <http://www.murraychass.com/?p=12262>.

88. Snyder, *Well-Paid Slave*; Barra, “How Curt Flood Changed Baseball and Killed His CareerProcess”; Ackert, “Gerrit Cole Knows His Labor History”; Kevin Blackstone, “Baseball’s Hall of Fame Cannot Be Complete without Curt Flood,” *Washington Post*, December 25, 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/sports/mlb/baseballs-hall-of-fame-cannot-be-complete-without-curt-flood/2019/12/23/68e9a526-25b7-11ea-ad73-2fd294520e97_story.html; Dreier, “Ballplayer Who Fought for Free Agency.”

89. Anthony Castrovince, “Worth the Wait: All-Time Greats Enter Hall,” MLB.com, September 8, 2021, <https://www.mlb.com/news/mlb-hall-of-fame-class-of-2020-inducted>.

American Prospect, *Dissent*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. He has written several reports that have generated considerable media attention that document the outrageous labor practices of some of the nation's most influential and visible employers, including "Working for the Mouse," a study of working conditions at Disneyland (2018), and "Hungry at the Table," a study of working conditions of grocery workers during the COVID-19 pandemic (2022).

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