

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

**Statement on the Death of Willie H. Mays, Jr.**

*June 19, 2024*

Like so many others in my neighborhood and around the country, when I played Little League, I wanted to play centerfield because of Willie Mays. It was a rite of passage to practice his basket catches, daring steals, and command at the plate, only to be told by coaches to cut it out because no one can do what Willie Mays could do. He was an original in so many ways.

His Hall of Fame career in Birmingham, New York, and San Francisco speaks for itself. Spanning three decades, his final box score was 660 homeruns, 3,293 hits, .301 batting average, 12 Gold Gloves, the 1954 World Series Championship, and questions of how many records he could've set had he not been drafted into the Army during the Korean war after winning the National League Rookie of the Year award.

He was also an original in perhaps the most important of ways. Born and raised in Jim Crow-era Alabama, he was part of the initial wave of Black players from the Negro Leagues to integrate Major League Baseball. With his distinct style of play—in constant motion, with individual freedom, with power and grace—the world stopped to watch him play. He not only entertained, above all, he inspired millions of people of all races to help break through the color line of sports and to break through the conscience of the Nation.

He passed away last night, and today the Nation marks Juneteenth, a day of profound weight and power that reminds ourselves of the extraordinary capacity to emerge from the most painful moments with a better version of ourselves. On this day, we remember Willie Mays as part of the long line of Black patriots who have helped us see a better version of ourselves as Americans and as a nation.

Jill and I send our love to the Mays family, his adoring fans, and all those he will continue to inspire with his one-of-a-kind legacy.

May God bless, Willie Mays.

*Categories:* Statements by the President : Willie H. Mays, Jr., death.

*Names:* Biden, Jill T.; Mays, Willie H., Jr.

*Subjects:* Baseball; Deaths, Willie H. Mays, Jr.; Juneteenth; Racial equality, improvement efforts.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD202400537.