

October 20, 2003

# Professor rips baseball bosses

'Players sold like a commodity'

BY NICK SORTAL  
STAFF WRITER

Florida International University assistant professor Aya Chacar has heard James Earl Jones' soliloquy in *Field of Dreams*, the one that says "The only thing constant



Chacar

through the years has been baseball."

Maybe that was the problem, she asserts.

Chacar, who has written several papers for academia about the business of Major League Baseball, says baseball leaders stunted the sport's growth for decades and kept most of the value of the game to themselves.

"It was a cozy monopoly at the time with little competition from other sports, and baseball refused to adopt most of the 20th century innovations," she says. For documentation, she pulls out Washington owner Clark Griffith's quote in 1930, pooh-poohing night baseball: "There is no chance of night baseball ever becoming popular in the bigger cities. High-class baseball cannot be played under artificial light."

That mind-set kept most teams playing day ball until the late 1940s.

What hooked her to study baseball and labor was her research of the evolution of American labor policies. When most workers were gaining more rights, baseball players were losing theirs.

The players originally bounced from team to team, but then the game "stumbled on the idea of selling and trading players," she said.

"It seems almost un-American. They were sold like a commodity."

Chacar notes the players' recent gains have only been a re-establishing of their rights.

"And because the players are now getting astronomical salaries many people no longer feel sorry for them," she said.

Clips From:

**O'CONNELL  
&  
GOLDBERG**