

Title: "Our Game"

In This Episode:

Baseball has always had a special place in our nation's history. It's a common symbol of America's values, identity, and rural past--you might even say it's as American as apple pie.

But did you know that beyond the ballpark there is a more grittier version of the game, played mostly in immigrant neighborhoods in cities big and small?

In the first episode of season 2 of How To Be American, host Amanda Adler-Brennan talks with baseball historians and stickball players about the significance for city kids in being able to turn city streets and the sides of buildings into their very own 'field of dreams'.

We talked to:

Stanton Green

Professor Green is an archaeologist, who has led major field research projects in South Carolina and Ireland.

Since the early 1990s he has also studied The Anthropology of baseball as an American Institution and the role of the liberal arts in the transformation of American Higher Education. His most current teaching focuses on Climate Change, a topic he has researched since the 1970's. All of these interests are framed by a general anthropological expertise on culture change and a commitment to preparing today's students for their lives and careers.

Stanton likes to go by Stan. He's the son of German-Jewish immigrants who migrated to the United States in 1918. Stanton's father was born in the Lower East Side and grew up in a tenement building. In this episode, he explains the parallels between baseball, a national pastime, and the birth of a children's street game.

Riccardo Marrero

Riccardo Marrero was born and raised in the South Bronx of New York City. Marrero is the son of Puerto Rican migrants who came to the United States during the late 1940s. Like his father, Marrero grew up playing Stickball on Stickball Boulevard.

Marrero is the co-president of the New York Emperors, a New York City based Stickball league that travels throughout the boroughs, the United States, and the world.

Along with the New York Emperors, Marrero is hoping to bring Stickball to more people and share his passion for this game to bring communities, kids and adults, of all ethnic backgrounds together.

The Tenement Museum content we drew from was: The story of Jose Velez from the tour Under One Roof, our latest permanent exhibit exploring immigration to the Lower East Side in the 20th century.

Jose Velez, the youngest member of the Saez Velez family, a Puerto Rican migrant family who lived at 103 Orchard St after arriving in NYC in 1955, told the Tenement Museum about the street games he used to play as part of the research for Under One Roof. The games, ranging from stickball to hopscotch, were a way for kids with few resources to pass the time after school and on weekends.

Where we got our information:

- The idea for the episode came from two old blog posts on the Tenement Museum website: [Remembering... STICKBALL! & Batter Up! Baseball on the Lower East Side.](#)
- Our research then took us to the [history of playgrounds in parks and how the city encouraged play to reduce crimes in city neighborhoods.](#)
- You can read more about the city's 'Pal program' that allowed games to be played on the streets of New York [here.](#)
- For more on the rules of stickball visit [Streetplay.com](#)
- You can also read more about other fantastic street games, like [Skully and Ace-King-Queen.](#)
- Also, check on Stanton Green's TED Talk about [the anthology of baseball.](#)