



Jackie Robinson

"A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."

Jackie Robinson (1919-1972) is one of the most important figures ever not just in the history of sports but our nation as well. Jack Roosevelt Robinson was born in Georgia but raised in Southern California, where he became an accomplished athlete. At UCLA, he earned a varsity letter in four sports, with baseball being the least among them. In 1942, he enlisted in the army, but he was court martialed during his service when he refused to move to the back of a bus. After an honorable discharge, he began his professional baseball career, playing for the famed Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Leagues. At the same time, Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers was searching for a player to integrate Major League Baseball. Attracted to Robinson's character as much as his athletic abilities, Robinson signed a contract with the organization in 1945. After one successful minor league season, Jackie Robinson broke the MLB color barrier on April 15th, 1947. As a player, Jackie was a huge success, leading the league in stolen bases with his audacious baserunning and winning the league's inaugural Rookie of the Year award. As a person, he was subjected to an unimaginable amount of physical and verbal abuse, attacked by both rival players and fans. Through it all, Jackie never responded to the hatred he endured, earning the respect and admiration of his teammates and becoming a hero to Black Americans across the country. Jackie retired from baseball in 1957 as one of the greatest second basemen ever and having led the Dodgers to their first ever World Series championship in 1955. However, his work was not over, as he continued to stay active in the fight for equality both in baseball and beyond. He campaigned with Dr. King for civil rights and opened a bank to provide economic opportunities for others. However, the years of abuse had taken a toll on his health, and he passed away in 1972 at the age of 53.

Today, Jackie Robinson is recognized as a groundbreaking leader in the Civil Rights Movement and an American hero. His sacrifices in integrating baseball paved the way for the political gains for African Americans achieved in the years that followed. In the MLB, his number 42 is retired for all teams, except on April 15th, where it is worn by everyone to celebrate his achievements. Throughout our country's history, few can claim to have lived a life of such courage and significance as Jackie Robinson.