

Jackie robinson: breaking the color barrier

[People](#)



April 15, 1946 was an important event in not only baseball history but also in the history of America. Thousands of baseball fans crowded into Ebbits Field to see one man, the first black ever to play in Major League Baseball, and one man who would eventually put an end to segregation in baseball. That one man's name is Jack Roosevelt Robinson, otherwise known as Jackie Robinson. His struggle to break the color barrier helped set the standards for future black athletes to come.

Jackie Robinson was born on January 31, 1919, to Millie and Jerry Robinson. He was the youngest of five children and always wanted his life to be better than it was. At age five, Jackie's father left home and his mother moved the family to California. Because his father wasn't around to help, they were supported by welfare. As a result of this, Jackie had to work several jobs to help support the family. He was involved in several crimes and robberies with the Pepper Street Gang but with the help of Carl

Anderson and Reverend Karl Downs this life of crime didn't last long. Both men were able to point Jackie in a positive direction by having him focus on athletics.

After graduating high school, Jackie attended Pasadena Junior College. He then received a scholarship to UCLA where he excelled in every sport he played. He was the first black to be successful in playing all four varsity team sports. Although he was a good athlete, Jackie didn't complete his senior year of college. Instead, he joined the National Youth Administration where he played baseball to entertain campers and worked with children.

In 1941, Jackie joined the United States Army. After graduating from Officers Candidate School, he became second lieutenant in what was then a segregated army. Jackie protested the U. S. Army's mistreatment of black soldiers in his unit and was later arrested for this act. He received an honorable discharge , including the rank of first lieutenant.

Jackie began his professional baseball career in 1945 with the Kansas City Monarchs. Because of the segregation in America, black communities formed their own version of Major League Baseball. The result of this was the beginning of the Negro Leagues. From 1920, when the first national league was founded, until 1946, when Jackie first stepped across the color barrier into organized baseball, the Negro Leagues, grew , matured, overcame hardships and even flourished (Rogsin 6). In fact, the Negro Leagues became one of the largest most successful black businesses in the United States before the breakdown of segregation (Rogsin 6). The management of the two

leagues may rank among the highest of achievements in African- American History.

In 1945, Branch Rickey, the owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, was looking for a black player to break the color barrier and join the Major League Baseball Association. According to Rickey, this person had to be able to cope with insults, name-calling and abuse. He had heard of Jackie Robinson's outstanding performances in the Negro Leagues and sent out his scouts to see him. After a long meeting, Jackie decided to join

Even though agreeing to join the Dodgers seemed challenging, Jackie" s biggest challenge was yet to come. At this point in American History, it was unheard of to have a black person treated equally to a white person. It was also unlikely for a black person to play on the same baseball field as a white person. There were separate schools, separate water fountains and even separate baseball leagues. One might look at this situation as two different worlds being afraid of each other(Aaron 2). Life was unkind to blacks who tried to bring these two world together but, in Jackie Robinson" s case, it was just something that had to be done.

Breaking baseball" s color barrier was a serious challenge. Branch Rickey warned Jackie about all of the racial slurs and name calling that would go on. Throughout the season, he received several unsigned letters threatening death if he continued to play baseball. Rival players when as far as throwing pitches at his head when he came up to bat. They also spat on him when sliding into a base and even tried hurting him with the spikes on their shoes. Discriminationcontinued off the field. When the Dodgers played on the road, Jackie wasn" t allowed to stay in the same hotel as his teammates. He had to stay in a hotel especially for blacks or in private homes. Whenever he did stay with his teammates, he wasn" t allowed pass the pool room.

Toward the end of the season, things were starting to get better. Jackie finally got therespectfrom everyone including his teammates. The pitches at his head stopped, most racial slurs stopped, and Jackie was finally being treated like a baseball player(Aaron 24). It was obvious that people were

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looking beyond the color of his skin and finally realizing that Jackie Robinson was indeed a good baseball player.

Jackie contributed a lot to the Major leagues but his biggest contribution was opening the league for black players after him. It wasn't until the year Jackie retired that all sixteen major league teams had at least one black player.

Jackie retired in 1956 and began to strike back and speak out on racial issues. When Jackie Robinson spoke, every black player listened. He made it clear to them that they weren't playing just for

themselves or for their teams, they were playing for their people. According to Jackie, if they played as if they were on a mission, it was because he sent them out on one

Jackie died in 1972. When he died, a part of baseball died as well. He will always be remembered for all that he did for African-Americans. He went through many obstacles but he got through it all. He achieved his dream and went beyond all that he wanted to do. Today many African-Americans thank Jackie for doing what he did to show African-Americans are just as good as anyone else.