



## Character Backstory

It requires incredible foresight to remain faithful to an idea. To ignore what your eyes and ears tell you and imagine better. One individual - Jack Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson imagined better and ended eighty years of baseball segregation. He crossed the color line and made his debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 as the first African American in major league baseball.

One of five, born on January 31, 1919 in Cairo, GA, Robinson was raised in relative poverty by a single mother. Even though he wasn't born into a privileged environment, Jackie was destined for something infinitely larger. His professional baseball career, which spanned from 1947 to 1957, is the quintessential story of an All American Baseball hero.

Despite unmitigated racial discrimination from baseball's management, teammates and fans, Robinson possessed the courage to defy retaliation and was the consummate athletic professional. He was an outstanding base runner, stealing home 19 times in his career more than any ball player since World War I. As a disciplined hitter, a versatile fielder and an outstanding defensive player Robinson won Rookie of the Year in 1947 and Most Valuable Player in 1949 for the National League. He was the first African American inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame and became a member of the All-Century Team. He received a championship ring when he led the Dodgers to a 1955 World Series victory over the New York Yankees.

Major League Baseball retired Robinson's number 42 - never to be worn by another ball player - in recognition of his accomplishments on and off the field in a ceremony at Shea Stadium.

Robinson's historic achievements in baseball were but one aspect of his life and legacy. Quoted as saying, "I'm not concerned with your liking or disliking me - all I ask is that you respect me as a human being" he was a champion of civil and human rights. He was a staunch supporter of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Anti Defamation League of B'nai Brith. He founded the Jackie Robinson Construction Corporation to improve living conditions of Black Americans in metropolitan areas and he served as Vice President of Chock Full O' Nuts.

Robinson was a significant fundraiser for the NAACP and a major figure in national politics influencing leaders such as Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Nixon; Hubert Humphrey and Nelson Rockefeller. As a syndicated columnist, he was a civil rights movement forerunner. One of only two players in baseball Jackie received the Congressional Gold Medal and President Ronald Regan awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

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