

Jackie Robinson: Impact the Game

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By

Evan W. Busby

Dr. Bernard Duffy

Senior Project Advisor

Signature

Date

Dr. Bernard Duffy

Department Chair

Signature

Date

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Introduction

Jackie Robinson's acceptance speech is like the final brick to his monumental persona and presence. Robinson thanked his wife, his mother, and Branch Rickey in his induction speech, but the speech itself embodies a lifetime of struggle, morals, overcoming adversity, inner strength, and the power an individual contains along with his/her ability to change society.

Baseball, much like life, is a team sport played by the individual. The sport is all about how well you deal with failure. If you get a hit 3 out of 10 times, you are considered good. Life does not work that way, but the constant struggle, the un-questioned stress, and the mental strength it takes to play professional baseball is a feeling a very few know. Of those few, there are even fewer select players that truly impact the game. In baseball's 164 years of playing, I do not think there would be anyone to argue that the impact that Jackie Robinson had on the game was the greatest ever. His presence on the field couples that of his off the field. "I think I've been much more aggressive since I left baseball." (Jackie Robinson 1) His presence is still felt to this very day. Jackie Robinson day is celebrated each season on April 15th. The significance of this date comes from the opening day in 1947 where Jackie debuted on the Brooklyn Dodgers, and was the first African American baseball player to play in the major leagues.

Historical Background

Jackie Roosevelt Robinson was born January 31st, 1919 in Cairo, Georgia to Mallie and Jerry Robinson. (Rampersad 10) The doctor that helped Mallie through all five of her child births was a white gentleman named Dr. Arthur Brown Reynolds, who was a University of Georgia medical school graduate who came to practice his trade in that area around 1910. During this time period there was a “Spanish- flu” epidemic which killed millions of Americans in 1918 and 1919. Due to the poverty stricken areas and the time period, illnesses, like the flu, were devastating. Luckily, Jackie was born a healthy baby boy, who received his middle name to honor the president that had inspired many African Americans due to his stance against racism. Before the white supremacists gained social influence and forced Teddy into a more conservative power, Roosevelt condemned lynching and attacked a system called peonage. Peonage was a new form of basic slavery that had developed in the South (Rampersad 11). Roosevelt, working alongside Booker T. Washington of the Tuskegee Institute out of Alabama, appointed many African Americans to high office during his term of presidency. Born slaves, Jackie’s parents pressed hard to make a better life for their four sons and one daughter. The only difference was that Jackie’s mother had managed to complete school through the sixth grade, against all odds; which was a major accomplishment, especially for an African American girl who grew up under slavery. Due to the necessity of slavery in the mid-to late 1800’s, many of the population in this region were African American. When hostility arose from white ranchers, between 1890 and 1902 there were about 200 lynchings that took place in Georgia, which immediately made it the worst state in the United States. By 1918, Mallie and Jerry would have been around 125 lynchings just in their small surrounding areas. (Rampersad, 13) This was a hostile place to live, especially if you were African American. The effects of this violence caused widespread panic,

poverty, disease, crime, as well as cynicism and despair. Due to the increase in demand of cheap labor, African Americans were in high demand. Rich northern farmers such as the Whitneys, Vanderbilts, and Rockefellers moved into the south to take advantage of the growing popularity of the “southern hospitality” lifestyle and the extremely cheap land that was up for grabs. Each of those families acquired estates in the region and needed laborers. A brochure during that time stated that Cairo “is the Diamond Stud on Grady County’s Snow-White Front” (Rampersad 13). African American families, once again, had to hunker down and survive. Taking work where they could, and building safe homes for their families. Family, the surrounding lands, and churches became the center of all African American culture. The Robinson family share croppered land on Jim Sasser’s plantation, owing Mr. Sasser half of what they grew or made, in return for a place to live and land to farm. Life was not improving much for the African American people at this time before Jackie was born. Shortly after Jackie’s birth, his mother who was newly divorced decided that it was time to get her family away from danger and move to California. With the help of some white farmers and her immediate family, she, along with Jackie in her arms and her other children boarded the number 58 train at midnight, little Jackie was only one year and four months old.

Reaching the city of Pasadena on a June night in 1920, Mallie Robinson settled into her new home. She worked as a house maid for the Dodges for twenty years. Through hard work and determination, in 1924 Mallie finally owned her own home. 121 Pepper Street was the Robinson residence and it would be where Jackie lived until he moved out in 1941. In 1922, Pepper Street was considered the working district in what was considered the “richest city per capita in America” (Rampersad 19). Still, due to the increase in minority population, Jim Crow had become a large part of Pasadena, segregating the Whites, Chinese, Japanese, Hispanic, and

African American into different sections of the city. This was put to rest in 1917 when the Supreme Court ruled against it. Things continued to get better for the city of Pasadena in 1922 when the Rose Bowl was constructed. This was where college football teams would battle it out, which brought increasingly more people as an attraction. Along with the Rose Bowl, the Pasadena Parade of Roses and a new Civic Center were instituted between 1927 and 1932, which made Pasadena the place to be. The only problem that was continuously haunting not only the city, but the rest of the nation, was racism. Having an African American house on the block, would drive the house prices down considerably, so naturally the white inhabitants of the city were outraged at the Blacks. Everything at this time period pointed directly to segregation and racism. It oozed out of the very bricks that the city was built on, not because there was history of violence like in Georgia, but this tension came from perceived animosity among the minorities and whites. Stricken by poverty, and the harsh reality of what society was at that time, drove tensions higher and higher. “Sometimes there were only two meals a day, and some days we wouldn’t have eaten at all if it hadn’t been for the leftovers my mother was able to bring home from her job” (Robinson 23). Among the turmoil and poverty, Mallie was somehow still able to instill genuine qualities into her children. Teaching them that education was important, manners were essential, and treating people with respect and dignity was among the most important.

“She didn’t allow us to go out of our way to antagonize the whites and she still made it perfectly clear to us and to them that she was not at all afraid of them and that she had no intention of allowing them to mistreat us” (Robinson 23). Instilling these qualities, and assuring her children that they were going to be alright, was what continuously drove Jackie to become a better person. At one point when Jack was about eight years old, out of retaliation to an incident, a friend of his and he spread tar over the lawn of a white man. Mallie, the next day, walked the

boys over and made them clean up the lawn with kerosene and rags, then cut the lawn with scissors until she was content, meanwhile watching the entire process. The Robinson house quickly became accepted on Pepper Street because of Mallie. She treated people the way she thought people should be treated, and in return, the “Robinson Crusoe” house, as it came to be called, was regularly visited by the local milk service and grocery who gave leftovers to Mallie instead of letting them spoil. She then would turn right around and distribute the goods that she would receive and give them to the surrounding neighbors so that everyone could enjoy the spoils of good nature. Being a morally good person may sound simple, but in this time period, morals were put on the side burner. Mallie worked diligently to teach Jackie and the other children the key values she had learned growing up in Georgia on the plantation. “The importance of family, education, optimism, self-discipline, and, above all, God” (Rampersad 25).

Jackie started elementary school in 1925 at Cleveland Elementary. From Cleveland Elementary, he then transferred to Washington Elementary in 1926 where he stayed until he moved onto junior high in the same building. His grades were B’s and C’s mostly but between the fourth and sixth grade his notes decreased. On one transcript, instead of grades, it simply said, likely future occupation: “Gardener.” Jack’s natural skills as an athlete quickly helped him maneuver through the thick racism within his social world. One huge quality about Jackie was that he always wanted to win, no matter what sport he was playing. Whites and Blacks alike all bowed to Jackie’s athletic skills around the school yard. He soon recognized that in sports, it did not matter what color you were or where you came from, it was based on skills and heart. He played alongside White, Black, and Asian-American athletes alike. “After the democracy he had known as a boy among boys and girls in Pasadena, nothing could convince

Robinson that Jim Crow in any sport—or in any other aspect of American life, for that matter—was right or natural” (Rampersad 27).

In early February, Jackie started commuting to UCLA in 1939. After a splendid career in basketball, baseball, tennis, and football in junior college in Pasadena, he took his career to the next level at UCLA. He declared that he would only participate in football and the long-jump, instead of his usual four sports, so that he had more time to study. “I think I should study. That is why I chose UCLA. I don’t intend to coast so that I can play ball” (Robinson 62). That approach did not last long. Jack played baseball and football for UCLA and did well in both. He ended his college career prematurely because he wanted to be an athletic director for student athletes. From there he dabbled a bit and was eventually drafted for the war. He took his spritely attitude and his exceptional will to win into the army and scored higher than anyone on all his tests and tasks. Jim Crow was increasingly more apparent within the army system and he quickly figured that out. Once out of the army, he returned to Kentucky where he was passing by a baseball field where he saw some players out on the diamond. He wrote a letter to the manager of the Monarchs, which was a team in the Negro Leagues. The manager invited him to spring training in Texas and offered to pay Jackie three hundred dollars a month, if he made the team. Jackie became the shortstop for the Monarchs and continued to play and learn, but the one thing that was still troubling him was the racism and Jim Crow segregation. Everywhere the team went, they were forced to stay in Jim Crow hotels, eat at horrible restaurants, and ride on old dilapidated busses. Life was wearing on Jackie and he was ready to hang up his spikes. He had planned on going back to California to live in San Francisco with Rachel Annetta Isum, a girl who he had been in love with since he graduated high school. Those plans drastically changed when a man named Branch Rickey stepped into the picture.

On October 23, 1945, Branch Rickey signed Jackie Robinson as part of the Brooklyn Dodgers organization. As of that point, Jackie was the first African American to even consider playing baseball for a white organization. Mr. Rickey also conveyed the most important message to Jackie at that point. His message was more of a warning, a warning to Jackie that people would harass him, hit him, say horrible things, try to harm him, teammates would hate him... the list goes on and on, but the end of that message was simply, you need to do this Jackie, for all African Americans. Rickey told Jackie that he could not lose his temper, act out in any way, say anything back... because then, the fans, all the people rooting against you, and everyone else will win. "How he managed to play at all is a wonder. He was subjected to streams of filth, vicious racial taunts, and other forms of public humiliation, particularly in Philadelphia and Cincinnati. The Phillies' manager, Ben Chapman, was the worst offender. After a particularly distasteful outburst, Dodger player Eddie Stanky, who opposed integration, turned on the Philadelphia dugout, called the taunters cowards and dared them to pick on someone who could fight back. Robinson had promised Rickey that under no circumstances would he retaliate against abuse until such time as the "noble experiment" had been successfully implemented" (Henry 3). Jackie was born for this challenge. This is what his life's journey had lead up to. His morals were strong, his character had been sculpted and hardened by the world around him, and he was ready. When reading the background of Jackie Robinson, it is clear to see why he was the only man capable of these accomplishments at this time. Even though there were better baseball players in the Negro Leagues, Josh Gibson and Satchel Paige to name but two, Robinson was the clear choice. "He was intelligent, educated, proud, and articulate. He had charisma, self-respect, courage, and conviction. In addition, he had already competed against white athletes in college, had been an officer in the Army, and seemed to have the strength of character to endure the

unbearable for the advancement of his race” (Henry 5). He was the “spearhead” that lead the spear that dug into social injustice and discrimination (Tygiel 25, 26).

Breaking the color barrier, first with the “minor league” team Montreal Royals, and then making his major league debut on April 15th, 1947 with the Brooklyn Dodgers, Jackie Robinson officially became the first African American to play professional baseball. During his career, he overcame adversity, kept his head down when fans were shouting profanities, and above all else, Jackie succeeded in the largest way possible, he effectively broke down the color barrier that was in the game of baseball. Making a complete circle around back to his childhood, the rules on the field and the game don’t care what color you are. You throw the ball, you catch the ball, you hit the ball; baseball seems like a very simple game, but in reality, it is much more complex than most people think. Now just imagine, adding in another factor on top of this situation, racism. Hitting is said to be the hardest thing to do in professional sports, that means just hitting a round object with a round bat; I will tell you from personal experience that it is very difficult to do, but adding in the other factors that Jackie had to go through, almost makes this task an impossible one. Success, would be putting Jackie Robinson’s accomplishments down... Jackie Robinson soared. Once in the major leagues, his internal fire pushed him to strive for greatness. But this greatness was not for personal amusement, he had a plan, and that goal was to make such a statement that no one would ever question asking an African American to play baseball again, to end this racial tension that was hindering society, and simply... to win! “His 1946 manager at Montreal, Clay Hopper, called him "the greatest competitor I ever saw." Branch Rickey who brought him to the Dodgers named him "The most competitive man I have known since Ty Cobb." In the 50 years I have watched the game, I have seen no player more fiercely dedicated to winning” (Henry 3).

Jackie went on playing in the major leagues until 1956, where he managed to open the door for African American players in all sports and in society. “Robinson's entire baseball career was a centerpiece of the Civil Rights Movement. Wherever they went, the double-play combination of Reese and Robinson also served metaphorically as the twin killing of bigotry and segregation. The desegregation of baseball that he pioneered proved that desegregation could work in America and inspired others to try and make it work in different areas” (Henry 5). He alone, was able to smash down the color barrier wall with his athletic ability. The fans’ hatred toward Jackie turned to cheers and applause in the amazement of this man’s talents. Jackie was a six time “All-Star” from 1949 to 1954, he won the National League most valuable player award in 1949, and the most impressive was the Rookie of the Year award in 1947. What was so amazing about the Rookie of the Year award was the simple fact that those awards come from votes from acting board members who were all undoubtedly white. That award goes to the best new player in the league, and in 1947 that just so happened to be a Black man named Jackie. Winning the hearts and captivating the souls of his audience, Jackie’s humble appearance and pure talent were hard to argue against. America loves an underdog, but in this case, society was turned upside down, because their feelings went against everything they thought they knew about African American people. His career batting average was .311, with 1,518 hits, 137 home runs, 734 runs batted in, 740 walks, 947 runs scored, and 197 stolen bases. Those stats are amazing by themselves, the fact that Jackie did that well under that kind of scrutiny was the real test. Jackie Robinson was inducted into the hall of fame because of these numbers. Obviously there are other reasons to put this man in the hall of fame, but according to the Baseball Hall of Fame page, he asked for another plaque to be made of him instead of the original because the original contained

content of the happenings outside of the sport. Jackie believed that he should only be recognized for his talents and accomplishments on the field, just like everyone else.

Jackie Robinson's Induction Speech

Jackie Roosevelt Robinson was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame on July 23, 1962.

His speech was short, concise, and very heartfelt.

“Thank you very much, Mr. Frick. First let me say how much of a thrill it is to be coming into the Hall of Fame with Bob Feller, Mr. McKechnie, and Mr. Roush. I want to also let you know that I feel quite inadequate here this afternoon, or this morning. But I think a lot of this has been eliminated, because today, it seems that everything is complete.

First of all, I want you to know that this honor that was brought upon me here could not have happened without the great work and the advice and guidance that I've had from three of the most wonderful people that I know. And if any of them weren't here today, I know that this day could not be complete. But, they're all here and I just hope you don't mind if I just pay a word of thanks and a tribute to my advisor and a wonderful friend, a man who I consider a father, Mr. Branch Rickey.

And my mother, who taught me so much of the important things early in life. I appreciate no end, my mother Mrs. Robinson. And lastly, ladies and gentlemen, my wife, who has been such a wonderful inspiration to me. And the person who has guided and advised me throughout our entire marriage. I couldn't have been here today without her help.

And then I...and I must thank the baseball writers...I never thought at all that I would have this wonderful honor coming to me so early in my lifetime. And to have the writers to elect me on the first time is a thrill that I shall never forget. We have been up in cloud nine since the election. I don't ever think I'll come down. But I want to thank all of the people throughout this country who were just so wonderful during those trying days. I appreciate it at no end and it's the greatest honor any person could have and I only hope that I'll be able to live up to this tremendously fine honor. It's something that I think those of us who are fortunate again, must use in order to help others. Because it's such a tremendous honor that we should be able to go out and do things to help. I'm just grateful and I'm sorry I've taken so long, but I just wanted you to know that I appreciate it so much. Thank you.” (<http://baseballhall.org/remembering-jackie>)

Speech Analysis

Dressed in a dark suit, with his tie on, Jackie stood upon the podium in Cooperstown, New York, and delivered his speech. The occasion called for this great athlete to deliver a speech that not only conveyed this appreciation but his farewell thoughts to his audience. Although brief, Jackie's speech delivered, just like he had his entire career. The opening paragraph seemed standard, thanking the induction staff and mentioning the other members being inducted along with him. The part of that opening paragraph that interested me was the line when he states: "I feel quite inadequate here." This is just a pure example of his continued humble approach to life. From the background and upbringing of Jackie, the one thing that seemed to stick with him through all of his endeavors, was his incredible values that were pounded into his head from his mother Mallie. The cultural barrier between African Americans and white people of that time is evident here as well. It may not seem like persuasion has a place in speeches like these; but in fact, this speech would be hollow without it. Giving thanks to those important people in his life was only part of the speech. Professional sports have a very short memory, so a speech to the audience is often times the way you are remembered. Persuasion was used to once again, convince the audience that Jackie was who everyone thought he was; as a man, a civil rights leader, and as a great player. When Jackie says that line, not only does it convey the message that society made him the way he is, but standing on that podium is a sign that he had finally succeeded, not only in baseball, but in his pursuit of civil justice and the equal rights for all. Right after that sentence ends, the very next point that was made was, "But, I think a lot of this has been eliminated because today, it seems everything is complete." This statement is like saying; my life's work has actually paid off. Years and years of struggle, abuse, hatred, violence, murder, bloodshed, and racism had all been washed from his hands with that comment in a logic

based delivery. From feeling inadequate to feeling like everything is complete, is quite a drastic change, but so was the integration of society. The other aspect to this statement we must look at is the situation and how it impacts his choice on words. In acceptance speeches, there is what you want to say, and what you should say. Jackie does a bit of both to tie in his beliefs with praise to the other members in the room. Lloyd Bitzer studied rhetorical situations, and I agree with his theory on Jackie's speech. "No major theorist has treated rhetorical situation thoroughly as a distinct subject in rhetorical theory; many ignore it those rhetoricians who discuss situation do so indirectly — as does Aristotle, for example, who is led to consider situation when he treats types of discourse. None, to my knowledge, has asked the nature of rhetorical situation. Instead rhetoricians have asked: What is the process by which the orator creates and presents discourse? What IS the nature of rhetorical discourse? What sorts of interaction occur between speaker, audience, subject, and occasion? Typically the questions which trigger theories of rhetoric focus upon the orator's method or upon the discourse itself, rather than upon the situation which invites the orator's application of his method and the creation of discourse" (Bitzer 2). This theory from Bitzer really helped me break down what Jackie was trying to convey in his speech. When Robinson mentions that he feels quite inadequate, and then follows it up by a large statement like today everything seems complete, I think he is attacking his rhetorical situation in the same manner that Bitzer is describing. Controlling the rhetorical challenge, Robinson acknowledges his situation and audience, so his choice of words must be in a particular order to not only keep from offending any of the audience, but also convey a message of triumph created from his life's work; all the while, without coming off as conceited. I think the way that Jackie organized the speech was evident that he was aware of his audience and the people that he needed to include within it. Thanking the members being inducted along with him was a standard procedure, but if

not included, his humble approach would have discredited. The style conveyed throughout the entire speech was simple and humble, so Jackie could speak clearly and it would sound natural for him. Like many large speeches, speech writers are often called upon to help write them, but in Jackie's instance, it was evident that most of the performance came from his pathological appeal to the audience. He wanted to convey thanks to the people who impacted his life.

If the audience consisted of all African American people, the situation changes, but in this particular setting, the audience consisted of family, the heads of baseball, past players, managers, baseball writers, and a lot of press. The larger picture of the speech would have to be the fact that it will be looked at for decades to come, so what was said, will ultimately outlive his legend as a ball player. Jackie, even though being inducted into the hall of fame, still had to consider all of the factors of his surrounding area. The situation called for a statement like "everything seems complete". Here he is acknowledging the fact that he is standing up on that podium simply because he was strong enough to endure the struggle that was bestowed upon him. This was the speaker conveying his reputation as well as his authority on the topic. The pause after that statement brought tears to some of the audience. In one particular picture, Jackie is standing at the podium speaking to a predominantly white audience, but what I noticed was the fact that the podium was above all other people. This would have never happened when Jackie was growing up because of the segregation of races. When you are presented above all others, it is a sign of status among human beings. It is the top of the totem pole, it is the king sitting upon his throne above his subjects, and it is like an emperor looking over his kingdom; Jackie stood alone at the podium, a symbol that he had gained what he set out to do. The feeling of accomplishment, no matter how small or large it may be, is one of great magnitude. Cicero's five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery were all very easy to

pick out of Jackie's speech. Invention was the hardest to identify, but the way he chose to attack his audience with rhetoric was through a humble approach that eased into the rest of the speech. The situation presented a unique opportunity for Jackie to showcase his greatness once again. In a ceremony, accredited to his accomplishments, he could have said whatever he wanted. Things like, "I deserve this award", and "See, I told you I would do it", would be statements that you could see coming out of someone's mouth that had to endure such hardships, but that was not Jackie. He had a goal in mind since childhood, and throughout his life, he pursued his goal. The way the speech was constructed, was humble throughout, but at the beginning he chose to pay his respects to his surroundings, then as the speech went on, he direct a more straight forward approach to thanking the people that influenced his life. The arrangement of the speech was very simple and structured. You can tell that Jackie is not the best public speaker, and you must take into account that he is very emotional at this point. This epideictic speech was set up to praise the people in the room, all the while making his thoughts clear that he felt like he had an impact on the world around him. The more structured and simple the speech was, the better it was for Jackie. He used the same classic style that had gotten him through life, and it did not let him down this time either. Speaking from a printed version of the speech allowed him to get through the difficult sections, but speaking from memory came through when talking about his wife, his mother, and Mr. Rickey. Throughout Robinson's life, his delivery was always strong and powerful. He stood tall and said what was on his mind most times, whether it got him in trouble or not. With this speech, his voice boomed over the crowd which added to the delivery and overall appeal of the induction ceremony which seemed to be right on track with what the audience anticipated. The way the speech was written, tells me that he thought about why he was inducted, but being the extremely strong person that Jackie is, he simply wanted to be known for

his skills on the diamond in this particular instance. It is hard not to tie Jackie to the rest of what he accomplished during his lifetime. He goes on to talk about honor just after the last part, and in this section he mentions three people that were instrumental in his success as a person and a ball player. By mentioning these people and turning the attention from “I” into a thank you to his wife, Rickey, and his mother, you can clearly see that this man is truly an American hero, humble and strong; which, in turn, added to his speech effectively fitting the circumstances, audience, and time period. Being inducted into any Hall of Fame is one of the greatest honors. You will be immortalized for years and years by all who pass, but Jackie, instead of talking about race or his accomplishments, chose to thank the important people in his life. Here he chose to use pathos to convey to the audience his appreciation, coupled with a clear ethos because of his background and accomplishments. As far as ethos is concerned, the only thing that needs to be mentioned is simply Jackie’s name. Credibility comes with the territory when being inducted into a Hall of Fame. Looking back over his background, this doesn’t surprise me. The three people that Jackie mentioned were his Mother, Branch Rickey, and his Wife. The first mentioned was the man who came to find Jackie. “The most hidden gem” (Rickey 126). This quote was one the Branch Rickey said when he first started looking at Jackie.

Picking an individual that was strong enough to endure such a beating, that it would kill a normal man, was not an easy task, but Branch managed to find Jackie and turn him into the bullet that would bring down the color barrier. Jackie was the bullet, but Branch Rickey was the gun and baseball is what pulled the trigger. “I just hope you don’t mind if I just pay a word of thanks and a tribute to my advisor and a wonderful friend, a man who I consider a father, Mr. Branch Rickey.” A quotation from Jackie states it all. This man was an advisor, a father figure when Jackie had none, and a good friend. Mr. Rickey protected Jackie as much as possible and

showed him the light, or the darkness, if Jackie had not been so strong. Throwing Jackie to the wolves would be an understatement for what Mr. Rickey did, but through careful evaluation, interaction, and mentoring, Rickey and Jackie became the duo that ignited a nation. At the beginning of their relationship, spring training was held in Havana, Cuba, where the Dodgers, Yankees, and the Braves all met to play in the warm climate and showcase their new talent. Jackie, along with two other African American ball players, were present among the teams. They were forced to stay in a third rate hotel and segregation was very much still a part of society even in Cuba. To protect his new found “gem”, Branch Rickey allowed the black players to be segregated to not create any more tension than there already was. “The Dodgers played the Royals, an obvious ploy by the Brooklyn mastermind to showcase Robinson's major-league talents in front of his future teammates. "I want you to be a whirling demon against the Dodgers," Rickey told Robinson, according to historian Jules Tygiel. "I want you to concentrate, to hit that ball, to get on base by any means. I want you to run wild, to steal the pants off them, to be the most conspicuous player on the field." Rickey concluded, "Not only will you impress the Dodger players, but the stories the newspapermen send back to the Brooklyn and New York newspapers will help create demand on the part of the fans that you be brought to the major leagues" (Gietschier 13). This tactic helped break the ice as far as the African American player that was about to join the Dodgers, as well as show his teammates that he could actually help the ball club win. Thanking Mr. Rickey was a direct example of Robinson using ethos, but more so pathos because of the specific background that Mr. Rickey and Jackie shared that was all public information.

The second person Jackie mentioned was his mother. Emotional appeal is present whenever talking about a family member. I could also see logos here, because of the logic based

background that Jackie came from that sculpted who he was as a man. The mentioning of his mother was brief, but because of the extensive background research, we know how great of an impact Mallie had on her youngest son. Her values and morals that she taught her sons were those of any mother, but Mallie, just like Jackie, had to perform under constant stress and brutal barrages of racism and hate. The love for a mother is something every son can relate to. A mother is someone who possesses the power to bring life into the world, but if the job of a mother was just that, there would be more great mothers in this world. The job of a mother is never done; she must rear that child, sculpting the child into a person who can function in society and be a productive member. Instilling values, guiding the mind, protection when necessary, and showing how to love are just some of the tasks that are laid out by the mother of a child. When I picture Mallie, I think of a mother bear; they are kind, tender, and loving. Even when carrying their young, that mouth, full of razor sharp teeth that are used for dismantling other things, can be as soft and comforting as a child's blanket. When danger poses a threat to the mother's cub, she will stop at nothing to protect her child, death may be eminent, but fear does not cross the mind of a mother which gives the child a sense of comfort and ease. Mallie was a strong woman who created opportunity for her children, and gave them the safest alternative she possessed for a home. The best offense is a good defense, and for Jackie, Mallie was his defense. Giving her son the skills and knowledge it would take to carry him through the hostile world was the greatest gift she could have given him. Hard at times, yes, but she did what was necessary to ensure the survival of her cubs.

The third person Jackie mentioned in his speech was his wife. When soldiers advance on a battlefield they don't just run across open land into the teeth of the opposing force, they need artillery to back them up. Artillery is an essential part in the advancement of troops, without it,

soldiers would be on their own. Think about early times such as the Romans, they too had artillery to back them up in the form of archers. They provided backup and support for those in front. This is what Mrs. Robinson was to Jackie. Rachel Robinson, who is still alive today, was a huge part of Jackie's support system. Today she still carries on his beliefs and tradition through the Jackie Robinson foundation. Behind every man, is a great woman, and Rachel was nothing short of great. In fact, without Rachel, Jackie mentioned multiple times that he would not have been able to make it through all the tough times he experienced. To be able to come home and have someone waiting to embrace you is a dream that every man longs for. The saying, "my better half", is often said with a sarcastic tone, but in reality, that could not be closer to the truth. Rachel supported Jackie without fail, and in that sense, she went through everything that Jackie did. She was by his side throughout his entire career and had to deal with racist bigotry not only directed at Jackie, but at herself as well. As strong of an individual that Jackie was, Rachel was just as strong. A stick alone can be broken fairly easily, but when you put multiple sticks together, the strength increases dramatically. This is exactly what the Robinson family was all about. Strength in numbers, made up of particularly strong individuals, makes for a fearsome team. "Ladies and gentlemen, my wife who has been such a wonderful inspiration to me. And the person who has guided and advised me throughout our entire marriage. I couldn't have been here today without her help." This statement says a lot about their relationship as well. Two strong people together, working toward a common goal, can accomplish amazing things. Still to this day, a whole other time period, the work and goals that Jackie and Rachel shared are helping people, athletes, and everyone everywhere. To say that Jackie Robinson did all of this alone, would be false. He had an incredible support team that just seemed to be perfect for the time period. All of the chips had to fall in the right places for Jackie to succeed, with the guidance and

support of the three people mentioned, he was able to control where some of the chips fell, and the rest was up to society to figure out what they were going to do about this amazing person named Jackie Robinson.

Thanking the baseball writers next was an intelligent move. These men who make up the “baseball writers” are all very old baseball men who sit around and breathe, sleep, and eat baseball. The fact that Jackie was inducted into the hall of fame on the first attempt, or the first “card” is no small accomplishment either. In fact, he was the first to have completed that task as well. The baseball writers are very knowledgeable and do not normally induct just anyone. It is obvious that Jackie should be in the hall of fame, but the fact that he was inducted on the first voting ballot is just incredible. The other thing that is incredible about the same situation, is that all of those “baseball writers” were alive during the time when Jackie was playing, which tells me that they were all white men during that time period and experienced racism at its peak. Many of those men actually watched Jackie play. If you were able to go back in time and witness what was being said and done in the stands at one of the Dodgers games, I do not think anyone could stand there and thank anyone from that brutal time period. Not Jackie; and this is why he was the most influential on the sport of baseball. This brings me back to his first paragraph when he stated that he feels like everything is complete. For Jackie to see these men give him such an honor symbolizes everything he stood and fought for all his life. This also explains why these men inducted him on the first card. They actually were there to witness this extraordinary black man play the sport that helped change a nation. Not only was Jackie skilled, but his very presence in a room made people talk. The quote from the Academic Search Premier written by Patrick Henry states it perfectly; Jackie’s very motivation that focused on integrating his own team at first, then branching out to the public where ever he went: “Robinson was

ridiculed, often by *The Sporting News*, for being a crusader rather than simply a ball player. But he persisted in making integration work. In the locker room he ordered black players to spread out and not take their lockers together. At team meals he urged them not to eat together. An interesting situation arose when the Chase Hotel in St. Louis allowed black players to stay there but forced them to take their meals in their room and stay out of the lobby and the swimming pool. Robinson urged them not to go back to the Negro hotels where they could do anything they wanted. He felt it was important that they stay at the Chase and break down these barriers gradually. This is, of course, exactly what happened.” The baseball writers have spent their entire lives around baseball, so to get their approval is an accomplishment all on its own. Sports in general are all about what have you done for me lately, just like when General MacArthur said; “old soldiers don’t die, they just fade away.” Like MacArthur, Jackie was a soldier, a soldier of change who aimed his fire directly at the barriers of social injustice. Jackie was not one to be kept down by social barriers; walls and cages are only in the mind at that point, and Jackie knew this. All it took, was for one man to stand up and lead the charge; one man to be brave enough to stand against the hate and bigotry of the time period to send a message to the people of the United States of change and integration. Right after he thanked the Baseball Writers, he mentioned the people. “But I want to thank all of the people throughout this country who were just so wonderful during those trying days. I appreciate it at no end and it’s the greatest honor any person could have and I only hope that I’ll be able to live up to this tremendously fine honor.” This section was directly directed at the people of the time that made it so difficult for Jackie. Horrific things were done to Jackie by the fans. The power of a voice is many times underrated. Words hurt, and if the right things are said, an individual can become extremely disoriented. Due to Jackie’s inner strength, he wouldn’t let the fans see that what they were

saying was affecting him at all. In another sense, he is also saying thank you. Thanking the people for fueling his fire and passion for simply shutting them up. Proving the people wrong, and changing their minds was what Jackie set out to do, and accomplish this task he did. The change in mind for the fans was an honor just like receiving induction into the Hall of Fame. Jackie released their bigotry and ignorance when he hit the ball, he snuffed their racist comments when he made plays in the infield, and he won their hearts with his presence. Just to walk out on that field takes inner strength and courage, to change a person's mind takes cunning ability and persuasion. For this, Jackie had baseball. The very next line, he speaks of putting his fortune to use to help others.

Just like Mallie did on Pepper Street with the leftovers that she would bring home, Jackie said, "It's something that I think those of us who are fortunate again, must use in order to help others. Because it's such a tremendous honor that we should be able to go out and do things to help." The unselfish aspect to Mallie, shined through Jackie throughout his life. Time and time again, when Jackie had nothing, he would not think twice about helping someone out. Once Jackie retired and got older, he was obviously wealthier, so giving back to the community just solidifies that his moral compass is working extremely well. Would you be able to give anything to the very people who wanted to crucify you? Would you be able to turn the other cheek and actually take the punch? This is why Jackie Robinson's impact on the game of baseball has been the greatest thus far. His impact on society, although harder to measure, I think was equally as drastic. Due to his ability to communicate across different cultural barriers, and his unmeasured status among the community, he was able to continue trying to change the social norm of his time.

After Baseball

Once retired, Jackie became a social leader for race. "Influenced by his experiences in breaking the color line in organized major league baseball, the intense Robinson grew interested in what he could do to advance civil rights and emerged himself in fund raising and speaking for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Robinson had already received the venerable racial uplift organization's Spingarn Medal in recognition of his unique contributions to baseball and American society. He soon became an NAACP board member as well. Perhaps more than any other athlete of his time, Robinson was interested in the world beyond sports. He attempted to transfer the lessons he learned in baseball to other spheres of activity, especially the political realm where he hoped to influence federal policies that affected black Americans" (Vernon 12). He attacked the remained segregation and hatred through his ability to sit down and write letters. In the book First Class Citizenship edited by Michael G. Long, compiled 359 pages of letters and notes that were written from Jackie Robinson to a wide array of high ranking individuals that range from Branch Rickey to Richard Nixon, from Maxwell Rabb to Martin Luther King, the Kennedy brothers to Eisenhower, and others like Nelson Rockefeller, Hubert Humphry, and Barry Goldwater just to name a few. The letters were all extremely well written and surprisingly forward and honest. That is something you don't see very often in politics. People who tell others what they really think in a short blunt way usually do not last very long in that industry. However, because Jackie was who he was, people throughout the nation listened. He was an idol of success and hard work. He idolized the American underdog and gave hope to African Americans along with all other minorities within the United States. Stopping after playing baseball simply would not have sufficed for Jackie. He felt a social duty to take matters into his own hands and help however he could, the best way he

found, was to use his presence to voice the needs and opinions of the African American people. This time period was one of incredible change and reformation, which allowed people such as Jack Robinson, Martin Luther King, and other social leaders to take center stage and really voice their opinions and needs for change. Oppression and segregation was still very much a part of everyday life, and without these radical people, this time period would have gone on for much longer. Going back to what Jackie said in his induction speech about having the ability to help people, these letters were his way of letting the leaders of our country know that he was not just a ball player, but an active member of the minority race, and he wanted to be heard. Coming from where Jackie came from, I think he had more credibility so he was able to speak to people that not just anyone can talk to. For example, in a letter written back from Dwight D. Eisenhower, it shows the incredible respect that Dwight had for Jackie.

Conclusion

Taking what I learned from Jackie's past, and applying it to what I found after he retired, I saw definite similarities. His upbringing might have sounded like it put him behind the eight ball, but in reality, it just made Jackie stronger. He experienced horrific events at a very young age, but those events seemed to only get worse as Jackie went through life. Whether Robinson became immune to the world around him, or he just chose not to let it affect him, the world sculpted Jackie into what we know him as today. As much as Jackie wanted to just be recognized as a baseball player being inducted into the Hall of Fame, he symbolizes so much more than that. He was a great athlete, he spoke well, carried himself tall with his head held high, and above all else, he changed the minds of people who lived at that time period. The greatest accomplishment is what you leave behind when you pass. Jackie left behind a legacy that we compare others to. He has forever become a benchmark for the complete person, and people will forever idolize this man as a great person of his time, who took all the power invested in him to change the world around him for the better. Jackie Roosevelt Robinson summed up his upbringing, morals, goals, ideals, friends, beliefs, thoughts, and thanks within his speech. This speech of thanks was written from the heart and was very raw. He delivered it like he spoke, and embedded the messages that he thought were important. In one page, an entire lifetime of struggle and fight were ended with one humbling line: "I just wanted you to know that I appreciate it so much. Thank you." – Jackie Robinson, July 23, 1962

Letters

Letter from Eisenhower

November 30, 1953

Dear Mr. Robinson:

Thank you very much for your nice note. In answer, may I say only that you represent to me and to many Americans one more evidence that our democracy, in which we have so much pride, is indeed in our country a workable, living ideal. All of us are grateful to you for the courage on your part required to demonstrate this.

With best wishes to you and Mrs. Robinson,

Sincerely,

Dwight D. Eisenhower

(First Class Citizenship, 12)

Letter from Nixon

January 23, 1958

Dear Jackie:

I wish to express my appreciation for your letter of December 24 emphasizing the need for continued progress in the field of civil rights.

First of all, I want to assure you that there is no intention on the part of the Administration to discontinue its wholehearted efforts to achieve to goal of human dignity and equality of opportunity for all Americans.

As you know, the battle for equal rights, in which we are both so interested, has many different and yet related aspects. When Bill Rogers indicated that the Administration did not intend to press for additional civil rights legislation in this current session of Congress, his statement by no means meant that there was any intention of relaxing our efforts to reach the ultimate objective of equal opportunities for all citizens.

The civil right legislation which was adopted after long debate and much opposition during the last session was the first in 82 years. At a time when every bit of support was needed to achieve a stronger bill, there was, as you will recall, disagreement among the lack of support from many individuals and groups which previously had been most vocal in this struggle. That is one of the reasons why there appears to be little possibility that additional civil rights legislation could be enacted in the present session.

This realistic appraisal, however, does not mean that we should become discouraged. Although the Act passed by the Congress was considerably weaker than that originally proposed by the President, its passage was an important milestone in American history.

I do not believe our citizens will have an opportunity to appraise properly this epochal action until the Civil Right Commission will serve as an educational process in winning wider acceptance of civil rights legislation generally.

While all great movements of reform started slowly and encountered bitter opposition, they soon gathered an irresistible momentum and gained rapid acceptance. I fervently believe this will be the case in the battle for equal rights.

Incidentally, may I express my deep appreciation for your generous public comments on my work in this field. I hope we can continue to work together for our common objective.

With kind regards,

Sincerely,

Richard Nixon

About the Letters

The letters that I read were actually very personal. Each time Jackie wrote a letter, he made sure to sign it in ink, coupled with his individual writing style of letting you know what was on his mind, these letters actually reached the hands of their intended readers and I think they impacted the individuals in a positive light. In an early exchange between Jackie and Richard Nixon, it is easy to see the relationship that Jackie had with most of the people he wrote to. Each recipient of these letters seemed to be in good standing with Jackie, and quite frequently asked Jackie's opinion. This tells me that Jackie not only was involved in the civil right movements, but he like to be hands-on. He not only would write letters to our nation's leaders, but he would also make trips to talk with them in person. The exchange between Nixon and Robinson on pages 48 and 49 of First Class Citizenship show the relationship that Jackie had with many of the people he wrote to. In the following letter, you will clearly see that Jackie is involved in many of the civil rights movement speeches and is a constant supporter. Interacting with these high ranking people in society, Jackie was able to take stages and speak to spread the word of a person who had helped change society.

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