



## Rachel Robinson

Business leader, activist, professor, nurse, wife, mother, and grandmother, Rachel Robinson is a woman of enormous accomplishments of her own and those achieved jointly with her husband, Jackie Robinson, who broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball in 1947 when he played with the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Rachel Robinson was born Rachel Annetta Isum on July 19, 1922 to parents Zellee and Charles Raymond Isum. After graduating from the Manual Arts High School in 1940, Robinson entered the nursing program at UCLA. During this time, she met an up-and-coming baseball player named Jackie Robinson. He proposed almost immediately, but their plans were put on hold when Jackie was drafted into the Army and Robinson decided to finish her college education.

Robinson earned her bachelor's degree from the University of California and later earned a master's degree in psychiatric nursing from New York University. She worked as a researcher and clinician at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine's Department of Social and Community Psychiatry; a position she held for five years. Robinson then became Director of Nursing for the Connecticut Mental Health Center and an Assistant Professor of Nursing at Yale University.

Throughout the 1960s, the Robinsons became increasingly active in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1963, they hosted a jazz concert at their home in Connecticut to raise bail money for the student protestors jailed in Birmingham. The event was attended by Martin Luther King, Jr. and continued annually as the *Afternoon of Jazz* until 2002.

The 1970s were trying times for the Robinson family. In 1971, Jackie, Jr. died in a car accident. In 1972, Jackie Robinson, at the age of 53, died of a heart attack. Then, Rachel Robinson's mother died in April 1973. In the face of profound loss, Robinson turned her energies toward memorializing the lives and achievements of those whose lives had meant so much to her. In 1972, she incorporated the Jackie Robinson Development Corporation, a real estate development company specializing in low- to moderate-income housing, the company built and managed 1,300 units of housing. She served as president for ten years. In 1973, she founded the Jackie Robinson Foundation, a not-for-profit organization providing educational and leadership opportunities for minority students. The Foundation, now in its fourth decade, has graduated over 1,500 alumni; has maintained close to a 100% graduation rate; and has provided over \$70 million in financial assistance and extensive support services. The Foundation's most recent project is the creation of the Jackie Robinson Museum in New York City.

In addition to her tireless work with the Jackie Robinson Foundation, Robinson continues to participate in national efforts to recognize her husband. In 1996, she authored Jackie Robinson: "An Intimate Portrait," published by Abrams Publishing Company. In 1997 and 2007, Robinson participated in a series of events to commemorate the 50th and 60th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's integration of major league baseball. In 2005, Robinson accepted the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Bush on behalf of Jackie Robinson.

Over the years, Robinson earned numerous awards herself. In addition to earning twelve honorary doctorates, Robinson was awarded the Candace Award for Distinguished Service from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, the Equitable Life Black Achiever's Award and the Associated Black Charities Black History Makers Award, Unilever Global Citizens Award in 2013, Women of Power Award in 2012, Branch Rickey Award, Ohio Wesleyan University in 2011, Black Rose, League of Black Women in 2010, The UCLA Medal, Women in Action Award in 2009, New York University College of Nursing Celebration Award and Commissioners Historic Achievement Award in 2007, New York Post Lifetime Achievers Liberty Medal, Visionary Leadership Award in 2006, Giant Step Award in 2004, Baseball Assistance Team Award in 1997, Los Angeles Dodgers Award in 1970-1998 and the Associated Black Charities Award in 1989.

Rachel Robinson has two children, David and Sharon Robinson, and fifteen grandchildren.