

# EMPOWERMENT

## Definition

- To believe in someone by equipping or supplying them with an opportunity; To give power to

## Story

On April 15, 1947, Jackie Robinson played first base for the Brooklyn Dodgers to become the first Black man to play major league baseball.

Robinson was chosen not only because he could play excellent ball, but also because the general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Branch Rickey, believed Robinson could withstand the prejudice and racial discrimination he would encounter – both on and off the field.

Rickey questioned Robinson on whether he'd be able deal with the abuse without losing his cool. Robinson replied, "Are you looking for a Negro who is afraid to fight back?"

Rickey replied, "Robinson, I'm looking for a ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back."

Robinson's debut marked the beginning of an exceptional career that saw him rise to the height of baseball legend. His accomplishments include:

- Rookie of the Year in 1947
- Six time All-Star
- National League Most Valuable Player Award in 1949
- Selected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962
- In 1997, MLB retired Robinson's number 42 across all MLB teams. Robinson is the first professional athlete to receive such an honor.

By selecting Jackie Robinson, Branch Rickey empowered him to serve as the first African American to play major league baseball. Jackie Robinson's courageous actions empowered other African Americans to follow.

However, the greatest example of empowerment in the life of Jackie Robinson came in an unexpected way. May 13, 1947, in Cincinnati, Ohio, in the first game of the second road series, Robinson was playing second base. Robinson

committed an error. The crowds began to taunt and ridicule Robinson. There he stood humiliated, at second base.

Then, shortstop Pee Wee Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career. Reese said, "If I were breaking into a Black league, I'd want someone to be a friend to me."

## **Quotes**

"You are the most influential person you will talk to all day." *Zig Ziglar*

"The role of leaders is not to get other people to follow them, but to empower others to lead." *Bill George*

"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." *Eleanor Roosevelt*

## **Interaction**

1. In what ways have you been empowered as an athlete?
2. How does it make you feel to be empowered with the task of competing?
3. In what ways can you empower others outside the world of sports?

## **Main Idea**

As athletes you have been empowered by your coaches, the school, and your family to compete. Take advantage of the privileged opportunity. Not only have you been empowered to compete, but you have been given a great role in empowering others. Empower your teammates by providing ongoing encouragement, but even more importantly, empower your teammates by competing according to the rules. The question isn't, "Who is going to let me?" The real question is, "Who is going to stop me?" And the answer to that is, "NO ONE."

## **Take Away**

"Leaders become great, not because of their power, but because of their ability to empower others." John Maxwell