**PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY****Biography**

Jackie Robinson burst onto the scene in 1947, breaking baseball's color barrier as the first African American to play in the major leagues in the twentieth century. Robinson brought the Negro leagues' electrifying style of play to the majors, quickly becoming baseball's top drawing card and a symbol of hope to millions of Americans. Although there was no official ban on blacks in organized baseball, previous attempts to sign Negro league players had been thwarted by league officials and rival clubs in the past. With Robinson as a catalyst, the Brooklyn Dodgers won pennants six times during his ten seasons.

What is Mr. Robinson's profession? (circle your answer or answers)

- A. Politician
- B. Business professional
- C. Activist
- D. Athlete

Answers:

C & D – Mr. Robinson was a professional athlete and a civil rights activist.

**Vocabulary**

**Activist:** A person who practices direct action to effect changes in social conditions and governments.

Name two people (aside from Mr. Robinson) who are **Activists**:

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1.



2.



3.



4.

**Can you identify the images above?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

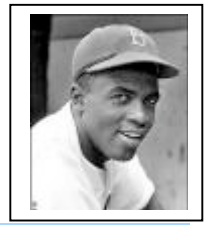
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Answers:

1. World Map 2. United States 3. New York State 4. New York state flag



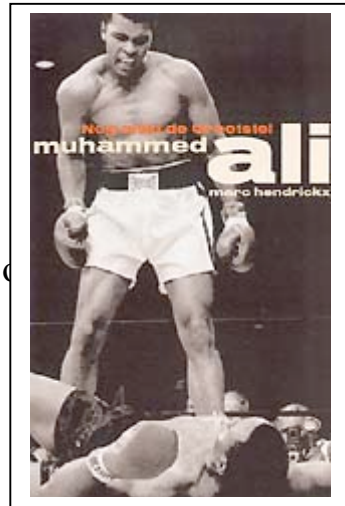
1997 Freedom Award  
National Recipient  
Jackie Robinson



**POST-VISIT ACTIVITY**

Professional sports marked an important arena in which Jim Crow segregation began to give way at a relatively early period. Baseball, basketball and football all hired black athletes. Although it was done without fanfare, professional football broke the color ban in 1946, the same year the Brooklyn Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson to a major league baseball contract. African American athletes gave blacks an opportunity to celebrate their own heroes and the accomplishments of their people. Integration of sports teams also provided hope for more difficult struggles to integrate schools and other aspects of public life.

In 1961, the Redskins were the only team in professional football without a black player. In fact, in the 25-year history of the franchise, no black had ever played for George Marshall. Elected to office on a pro-civil rights platform and eager to display its commitment to the campaign promise of equal job opportunity, the Kennedy administration moved to desegregate the Redskins. Secretary of Interior Stewart L. Udall warned Marshall to hire black players or face federal retribution. For the first time in history, the federal government had attempted to desegregate a professional sports team. Further advances came as blacks attending college launched a movement to introduce black studies into the curriculum, which resulted in better knowledge of the African American experience. A new spirit of racial assertion was especially evident in sports; in the 1960s black athletes brought into college and professional sports a distinctive, individualistic, and spontaneous style of play, often over the objections of white coaches and sportswriters.



Do athletes today play the same role as community heroes and activists for social progress? Why or why not?

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Why was it and is it important to be recognize the accomplishments of African Americans in all fields?

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Can you name some other instances when the government stepped in to order desegregation?

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