

Module 08: Jackie Robinson, Civil Rights Leader?

Evidence 7: Citation for Jackie Robinson, 41st Spingarn Medalist, December 8, 1956

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Introduction

Below is the NAACP citation for Jackie Robinson, award-winner of the 41st Spingarn Medal in December 1956.

Document

A brilliant and versatile athlete, John Roosevelt Robinson has for a decade been an inspiration to the youth of the nation and especially to Negro youth for whom denial of opportunity has been a source of frustration. The entire nation is indebted to him for his pioneer role in breaking the color bar in organized baseball.

Through sheer ability and exceptional competitive zeal he won popular acclaim of sports lovers of all races and demonstrated that there were no foreordained racial restrictions upon the ability to play the national game. He opened the doors of the major leagues for other Negro stars whose skill, zest and stamina have enlivened the national sport.

In his years as a star of the Brooklyn baseball team, he contributed significantly to the team's winning six league pennants and its first world championship in 1955.

Throughout his career, he has been keenly aware of his responsibilities as a citizen of a democracy and has been particularly helpful in efforts to avert juvenile delinquency.

In recognition of his superb sportsmanship, his pioneer role in opening up a new field of endeavor for young Negroes, and his civic consciousness, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is proud to present to John Roosevelt Robinson this 41st Spingarn Medal, awarded annually to a Negro American for distinguished achievement.

Source: NAACP Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.