

What motivated Jackie Robinson to challenge society's values and beliefs?

Jackie Robinson was motivated to challenge society's values and beliefs because he wanted equality and respect for everyone. In 1947, society valued white people more than black people and believed that whites were better than blacks. As a result, people were segregated by skin color. In the article "Hero on the Ballfield," Robert Peterson writes, "It was a tough time to be black, and not just for baseball players. In Southern states, black kids went to separate schools. Black people had to ride in the backs of buses" (Peterson 54). Such segregation created inequality and humiliated people. It sent the message that black people did not deserve the respect that white people did. Unlike society Robinson valued everyone's dignity and believed that it was the greatest quality in all humans regardless of skin color. In Jackie Robinson's autobiography he described this belief: "The most luxurious possession, the richest treasure anybody has is his personal dignity" (Robinson 842). Robinson believed that a sense of pride and self-respect was the most valuable thing "anybody"—not just white people or black people—could own. When he was offered a job to become the first black player on the all-white Brooklyn Dodgers, Robinson knew he could challenge the belief that white people deserved more respect than black people. If he could play baseball with white athletes and play it better than most white athletes, he would prove to everyone that segregation was unnecessary and everyone deserved equal respect. Robinson knew, though, that he would face a lot of racism and abuse while fighting for equality. He said, "I didn't know how I would do it. Yet I knew that I must. I had to do it for so many reasons. For black youth, for my mother... for myself." (Robinson 84) Robinson felt that he had a responsibility to fight for equality for everyone, not just himself. In the future he wanted black children to be treated just as whites were. Robinson decided to join the Dodgers and challenge racism because he knew it was the only way to make sure that everyone got the respect and equality that they deserved. Sometimes the only to create a change it to fight for it the way Robinson did.