

The Servant Leadership Dynamic between Branch Rickey and Jackie Roosevelt Robinson:
How They Changed Baseball and Our Country

Merle A. Branner

LIS 716 Leadership

Professor Brown

April 17, 2009

Edited and Updated

April 11, 2010 & June 24, 2014

Abstract:

The term “Servant Leadership” was coined by Robert Greenleaf in 1970. In his essay entitled *The Servant as Leader*, Greenleaf stressed that if one wants to be a leader, one must be a servant first. He felt that leadership starts with the desire to serve others. Then, one makes a conscious choice that takes one on a journey to leadership. Greenleaf was reacting to the turbulent times of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time during which he felt the deterioration of leadership in the United States was at an all-time high.

Greenleaf constructed ten characteristics that make up a Servant Leader: listening & understanding, acceptance and empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, building community, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, and commitment (Greenleaf, 2002). These concepts can be explored not only in organizations, but in the historical context of the integration of baseball and the relationship between Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson. What it took for both of them to stamp out segregation in Major League Baseball could only be accomplished through deep moral commitments and a need to serve others through great Servant Leadership.

Rickey’s quest for the integration of Major League Baseball did not begin in 1945 when he signed the first African-American baseball player, but began with a promise he made to himself in 1903. If the opportunity presented itself, he would try to help African Americans gain equality in this country (Mann, 1957). However, the opportunity did not present itself until 1943, when he became the President and General Manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers. On October 23, 1945, Rickey announced the signing of the first African-American ballplayer to the major leagues, Jackie Roosevelt Robinson. Jackie Robinson played one year in the minor leagues, and then on April 15, 1947, he played his first game at Ebbets Field for the Brooklyn Dodgers. This one act broke the color line in Major League Baseball, and has been commonly considered the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement (Glasser, 2003).

Greenleaf stated, “Behind every great achievement is a dreamer of great dreams. Much more than a dreamer is required to bring it to reality, but the dream must be there first” (Greenleaf, 30). Branch Rickey was a dreamer. His biographer, Arthur Mann (1957), described him as “a visionary with pioneering ideas...a family man with high regard for the truth and a stubborn person who refused compromise” (Robinson, R. 36).

The Servant Leadership Dynamic between Branch Rickey and Jackie Roosevelt Robinson: How They Changed Baseball and Our Country.

What is Servant Leadership?

The term "Servant Leadership" was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf back in 1970 in his essay entitled "The Servant as Leader." Greenleaf stressed that if one wants to be a Servant Leader one must be a servant first. He felt that true leadership begins with the desire to serve others; one makes a conscious choice to embark on a journey to lead. Greenleaf was reacting to the turbulent times of the late 1960s and early 1970s when, he felt, the deterioration of leadership in the United States was at an all-time high. His beliefs grew out of his life experiences, starting in the latter part of his senior year of college in the mid-1920s. Greenleaf was unsure of his life's direction until a lecture in a course entitled, "The Sociology of Labor Problems," hit home. The lecture was on the phenomenon of the domination of large institutions--government, business, labor unions, education, or religious--that were not serving the people well. The lecturing professor stressed that just talking about the issues would not bring about change; change would require leadership from the inside of these institutions to move them to perform for the public good. This was the foundation for Robert Greenleaf and his development of the Servant as Leader concept (Greenleaf, 15-20).

Robert K. Greenleaf believed that one must be a servant first before one can serve others coming from a similar background (2002). Greenleaf, upon graduating from college with his business degree, went to work for the then largest employer in the world, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T). There he started as a "grounds man," which was a common laborer who dug post-holes and carried tools. Greenleaf moved quickly into different training programs and leadership roles that led him to his final position as the Director of Management Research in 1964, a position held until his retirement in 1971. This position provided oversight for a loosely designed internal consulting group concerned with values, attitudes, organization, and the growth of people within the company, especially the executives.

Servant Leadership manifests itself in the care taken by the servant, first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and the most difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (Greenleaf, 2002).

This philosophy of leadership as defined by Greenleaf for his own turbulent times could very well be applied to any time in history. Backtracking through time allows identification of strong examples of Servant Leaders. One such Servant Leader is Wesley Branch Rickey. He not only transformed the profession of Major League Baseball, but he and his contemporary, Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, together transformed the United States for the better of all its people. Greenleaf stated, "Behind every great achievement is a dreamer of great dreams. Much more than a dreamer is required to bring it to reality, but the dream must be there first" (Greenleaf, 2002, 30).

Rickey's quest for integration of Major League Baseball did not begin in 1945 when he signed the first modern African American ballplayer, but was something he promised himself in 1903. If the opportunity presented itself, he would try to help African Americans gain equality in this country. However, the opportunity did not present itself until 1943 when he became the President and General Manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Rickey announced the signing of the first modern African American ballplayer, Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, on October 23, 1945. Robinson played for the Montreal Royals, a minor league affiliate of the Brooklyn Dodgers, during the 1946 season. This one act broke the color line in Major League Baseball and has been commonly considered the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement (Glasser, 2003).

Rickey and Robinson's mission to stamp out segregation in baseball could only have been accomplished through deep moral commitment and a need to serve others through great Servant Leadership. Greenleaf constructed ten characteristics that make up a Servant Leader: listening & understanding, acceptance and empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, building community,

conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, and commitment (2002). These concepts can be explored in the historical context of the integration of baseball along with the relationship between Rickey and Robinson.

- 1. Listening & Understanding:** The leader has a deep commitment to listening intently to others. Listening also encompasses getting in touch with one's own inner voice and seeking to understand what one's body, spirit, and mind are communicating. Listening, coupled with regular periods of reflection, is essential to the growth of the servant-leader (Greenleaf, 2002).

Branch Rickey did not integrate Major League Baseball on his own. He, like all great leaders, collaborated with others. Rickey knew the importance of listening to a diverse group of people who could help his cause. He worked closely with African-American community leaders in and out of Brooklyn, sociologists, ministers, and many others. Rickey did his homework when it came to every aspect of integrating baseball. He was on a quest to right a wrong: the exclusion of people of color from baseball and from various venues of society, which is sometimes, is referred to as Jim Crow segregation (Jim Crow History, n.d.). Rickey's quest began as early as 1943.

Branch Rickey had a six-step plan to integrate baseball: Step One: Winning over the owners of the Brooklyn Dodgers; Step Two: Select a player with exceptional talent; Step Three: Make sure that this player would have the character to deal with the difficulties he would be encountering on and off the field; Step Four: Lay the groundwork for positive press reaction; Step Five: Establish a relationship with the Negro community and enlist their assistance; Step Six: Work with players on the team to secure acceptance of a Negro player (Frommer, 2003, p. 96). Before Rickey set his plan in motion, he first sought the advice and assistance of many people. He conferred with two university professors: Dr. Robert M. Haig of Columbia University and Dr. Jose Seda of the University of Puerto Rico. These men visited Cuba and Mexico to do research for

Rickey on the culture and capabilities of Cuban and Mexican players.

In January 1943, at a meeting with the Dodgers' owners at the New York Athletic Club, Rickey made the casual comment that "mass scouting might possibly come up with a Negro player or two." He also laid out his six-step plan and gained support of the clubs' owners (step one), but they took it as just idle banter. They really did not take his six-step plan of eliminating segregation in Major League Baseball seriously (Frommer, 2003, 96).

Branch Rickey was a religious man; he promised his mother that he would never go to a ballgame on Sunday. He kept his word as a ballplayer (this ended his career as a player) and as a baseball executive. Rickey was known as a man of principle, one who always was a man of his word and who was well-respected in and out of baseball.

Rickey was not only a baseball executive, but had three college degrees, was a lawyer, a former college and professional baseball player and coach, and a college football player and coach. All his life experiences created the man he was. While he was attending college and coaching baseball for Wesleyan in 1903, Rickey had a profound experience on a road trip with his team. When they traveled to South Bend, Indiana, to play Notre Dame University, they booked reservations in advance at the Oliver Hotel. There was an extremely embarrassing incident, an injustice that took place at the hotel when the team tried to check in. One of Rickey's players, Charles "Tommy" Thomas, was a person of color. This young man was refused hotel accommodations because he was African American. The hotel clerk told Rickey only whites were permitted to stay at the Oliver. Rickey was extremely upset and sent his student manager Barney Russell to the YMCA to see if they would house the whole team, including Thomas, but in private Rickey was able to persuade the hotel management to let Thomas wait in his room. Thomas told Rickey that it might be best for him to go home. Rickey said "NO, no," Rickey protested. "We will be all right" (Mann, 1957, 216). When they got to Rickey's room, he ordered a cot for Thomas. Then he told his student assistant, "Forget the YMCA, Tommy stays with us" (Polner, 1982, 34-35).

Rickey privately persuaded the hotel manager to allow Thomas to sleep in his room on the cot; he was determined to keep the team together (Mann, 1957, 216-217). There seem to be a few versions of this story, but all of them agree about a subsequent event that took place in Rickey's room that night in Indiana. What he witnessed in his room that evening probably had more impact on him than anything else in his life, and perhaps moved him to become a Servant Leader. Rickey witnessed Charles Thomas sitting on the side of the cot; Thomas "cried and pulled at one hand with the other and said, 'God, Mr. Rickey! If I could only change the color of my skin'" (Mann, 1957, 215-217). Rickey said to Arthur Mann, the author of *The Biography of Branch Rickey*, "I never felt so helpless in my life" (Mann, 1957, 79). Rickey was so affected by Thomas that he determined if he ever had the opportunity to change things for African Americans, he would. Branch Rickey himself would cite this 1903 incident many times "as a key factor in his determination to break baseball's color ban and sign Jackie Robinson and other black players" (Lowenfish, 2007, 23).

In 1943 Dr. Dan Dodson was a sociology professor at New York University and a member of the New York City Committee on Unity. The purpose of this committee was to keep racial tension down and to reduce violence in New York City, but it was Dr. Dodson's intention to turn the committee to the issue of integrating major league baseball. He was unaware of Rickey's plans when he pressured Larry MacPhail of the Yankees to meet with him. (Frommer, 2003, 96-107). MacPhail was unwilling to meet with Dodson, so Dodson wrote to Rickey. Unlike the negative response Dr. Dodson received from MacPhail, Rickey responded to Dodson by inviting him for a meeting. Rickey wanted to meet with Dr. Dodson because he wished to seek his advice on his six-step plan to integrate baseball. Rickey took Dr. Dodson into his confidence and told him about Charles Thomas and the event that had haunted him since 1903. Rickey then proceeded to tell Dodson his plan and named the player he had in mind, asking for the professor's help in researching African Americans in other sports. Rickey was looking for those to whom he could turn for guidance in the African American community and the community at large. In addition, Rickey,

the sure man that he was, asked the professor “if he could get the Committee [the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee, which Rickey was convinced was Communist-inspired] out of the way until he had a chance to do something” (Frommer, 2003, 107).

2. Acceptance and Empathy: The servant-leader strives to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirits (Greenleaf, 2002).

Rickey, being a religious man of his day, was very much in favor of prohibition. As a young college student, he would travel around Ohio giving “Dry Speeches,” for which he became known in this part of the country. On one of his trips, he had a very disturbing experience in a town in which all of the hotel owners refused him lodging because of the speeches he was giving. Hotels made money on their bars, and these bars served alcohol. No wonder he could empathize with Charles Thomas who played baseball for him several years later (Frommer, 2003, 105). Rickey, too, had experienced humiliation and discrimination, and while his discrimination was related to his politics and not his color, it still must have taught him a valuable lesson (Frommer, 2003, 44).

Branch Rickey came from humble beginnings. He worked his way through college, as did Jackie Robinson. Rickey felt like an outsider when he came to Ohio Wesleyan University; he did not have nice clothes or even a high school education like his other classmates. He truly did not feel like he fit in. The same could be said about Jackie Robinson; both men started from humble beginnings and grew into Servant-Leaders.

3. Healing: Learning to heal is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant-leadership is the potential for healing one's self and others (Greenleaf, 2002).

Rickey, in trying to right a wrong that society and baseball committed in denying people of

color equal rights in this country, angered many of the white owners in baseball. Though Rickey did not care what those owners thought, Rickey vowed he would do something when he could. After he left the St. Louis Cardinals and went to the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1943, he knew that this was the time to challenge Jim Crow in baseball. He orchestrated a meeting with the owners of the Dodgers and talked about his long-term goals. At this time, World War II was in full swing. According to Fred Glennon, professor at LeMoyne College, America was fighting a bitter war to end racism in Europe while Jim Crow was still going on at home (Evans & Herzog II, 2002, 146-147). All able-bodied men were in the military, so there was a shortage of ballplayers. Rickey was signing 15 and 16-year-olds, and needed to have the scouts look at boys who were still in high school, to which the owners agreed. Then Rickey went one step further; he stated that he did not object to scouting African American ballplayers. He said in 1943: "The mass scouting might possibly come up with a Negro player or two" (Frommer, 1982, 96). George Laughlin, one of the owners, interjected that he did not see why they could not come up with a player of color. Then Laughlin added, "If you could find a man who is better than the others, use him" (Frommer, 1982, 81). What the other club owners did not know was that Laughlin and Rickey met prior to this meeting and set up the whole conversation. This was the start of Rickey's efforts to right the wrong of Jim Crow. "A Negro player or two," Rickey continued, "will not only help the Brooklyn Dodgers organization--but putting colored players in the major leagues will also accomplish something that is long overdue. It is something I have thought about and believed in for a long time" (Frommer, 1982, 81-82). Rickey not only wanted to heal baseball, but the country. He once said, "I don't like silent men when personal liberty is at stake" (Monteleone, 2004, 122). This is the statement of a true Servant Leader.

4. Awareness and Perception: General awareness and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader (Greenleaf, 2002).

In 1900 at eighteen years of age, Branch Rickey left home to attend college at Ohio Wesleyan University. Rickey arrived with only the suit he wore and carried his baseball uniform in a bag. He went through his freshman year with only one pair of pants. Rickey worked, played sports, and threw himself into school activities. However, Rickey was fully aware that he did not fit in with the other students, who were prep-school graduates. Branch Rickey did not even attend high school; he knew he was out of his league but that did not stop him. Rickey graduated Ohio Wesleyan University in three years (Flommer, 1982, 37-39).

Rickey, who grew up even poorer than Jackie Robinson, understood what it felt like to not fit in because of how others perceived him. This is just one example of what shaped Branch Rickey into a Servant Leader; he truly was aware and understood how it felt to be less fortunate. Rickey, like Jackie Robinson, started life on the outside looking in.

For all people, no matter what color their skin, Jackie Robinson represented a model for survival, of self-assurance in a crisis. "Anybody who says I can't make it doesn't know what I've gone through and what I'm prepared to go through to stay up in the major leagues," he once told a reporter (Flommer, 1982,135).

For those who grew up in Brooklyn, New York, in the late 1940s through 1957, Jackie Robinson was a hero; white or black, boys or girls, Jackie was their guy. Donald A. Statland states he was nine years old in 1947 and growing up in Brooklyn. He loved his Dodgers, and Jackie was an exciting fielder, an excellent base runner, and a great hitter. He was just exciting to watch. Don spoke about how Robinson handled himself: "He was cordial, well spoken, and a college educated guy. He was my hero. Yes, I was conscious that he broke the color barrier, but it was not about that. I loved to watch him" (Statland, personal interview, April 5, 2009). Jackie Robinson came to life for Statland at nine years old. His family did not own a television, but Statland listened to the Dodgers on the radio. Jackie Robinson was not just a leader and hero for African Americans, he

was a leader and hero for all baseball fans.

Doris Kearns Goodwin, the author of *Wait Till Next Year: A Memoir*, said that Jackie Robinson was her hero. She states that it was not until much later that she truly understood the significance of what Robinson achieved in 1947 as a pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement. She points out that after Robinson broke the color-barrier in baseball, nothing was ever the same in sports, or in the country (Kearns Goodwin, 1997, 43-44).

Jackie Robinson took his place in history as one of the first civil rights leader who promoted non-violence. Instead of violence, he used sportsmanship. Robinson took this responsibility seriously; he was fully aware that he was making history for his people, and he would not let them down. Jackie Robinson was a Servant Leader before he ever put on a Brooklyn Dodgers' uniform; this is why Rickey chose Robinson, for his character and convictions.

5. Persuasion: A servant-leader relies on persuasion, rather than using one's positional authority (Greenleaf, 2002).

Branch Rickey needed to find just the right man, one who could withstand the pressure of being the first African American player to break the color barrier in baseball. Rickey needed to convince the country that this was the right thing to do for everyone in America, which is why he went to both business and religious leaders in the African American community for their support before he announced that he had signed Jackie Robinson. Rickey did this again before he brought Robinson to the Dodgers. Rickey asked African American community leaders to encourage their people to come to the ballpark dressed in their best clothes, and to be on their best behavior. He stressed that if someone in the stands made a racist remark, the African American patrons should let it go. Rickey emphasized that for the greater good of the cause, everyone needed to be behind Robinson. Rickey stressed that it was important not to create any problems off the field, in order that Jackie Robinson could succeed on the field. Rickey showed true

leadership ability and so did the African American leaders of Brooklyn. There were no problems from the African American community anywhere that Robinson played.

According to Mal Goode, reporter for the Pittsburgh Courier and the first African American network news correspondent, Rickey had planned well. "In the churches, Goode remembers, in the professional organizations, the word was passed along. If you hear the word 'nigger,' if you hear the word 'darkie,' ignore it. This message went from city to city wherever Jackie played. We all knew if Jackie made good, the door would be opened" (Frommer, 2003, 134).

6. Building Community: Among those who work within a given institution (Greenleaf, 2002).

Jackie Robinson's first game as a Brooklyn Dodger came on April 15, 1947 at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn, New York, in front of a record crowd of 26,623. Everyone came to see the ballplayer who broke the color line (Frommer, 2003, 131-132).

The harsh racial abuse that was directed at Jackie Robinson during an early season game at Ebbets Field by the Philadelphia Phillies manager, Ben Chapman, brought the Brooklyn Dodgers together as a team. The abuse was relentless, and it united the Dodgers' players, who were compelled to speak up on Robinson's behalf. Rickey stated in his personal papers that the Chapman incident unified the team:

When Chapman and the others poured out that string of unconscionable abuse, he solidified and unified thirty men, not one of whom was willing to see someone kick around a man who had his hands tied behind his back. Chapman created on Robinson's behalf a thing called sympathy, the most unifying word in the world. That word has a Greek origin-- it means "to suffer." To say, "I sympathize with you" is to say, "I suffer with you." That is what Chapman did. He caused men like [Eddie] Stanky to suffer with Robinson, and he

made this Negro a real member of the Dodgers (Monteleone, 2004, 116-117).

Another key team-building event that took place with the Dodgers that helped unify the team was when Pee Wee Reese, the Kentucky-born team captain, placed his arm around the shoulder of Jackie Robinson early in the 1947 season game with the Reds in Cincinnati. This gesture of friendship has been interpreted as the symbol of Jackie's acceptance.

The ballpark was jammed, and thousands of country people had come down from the hills of Kentucky. The atmosphere was racially charged. When the top of the first inning ended, the Dodgers took the field. Reese stopped to talk to Robinson and placed his right arm around the black man's shoulder. The gesture triggered absolute silence in the stands (Frommer, 2003, 183).

Pee Wee Reese has always stated that he truly does not remember this event, which has perhaps become apocrypha or just another in a long line of baseball myths. However, Reese and Robinson were great friends on and off the field. Pee Wee Reese did say:

I put myself in Jackie's shoes, says Reese. I think of what it must have been like for him. I think of myself trying to make it in an all-black league. I know I couldn't have done it. I remember people in the stands calling Robinson a watermelon-eater. I never went up to get anybody for saying that because Jackie Robinson could take care of himself. I know he always talked a lot, about my putting my arm around his shoulder in Cincinnati, but I don't even remember doing it (Frommer, 2003, 183-184).

Rachel Robinson remembers how Pee Wee Reese supported Jackie publicly; she said he went out of his way to support Jack with his gesture. Rachel also pointed out that Reese was a southerner and, in 1947, it was a sentient thing if a southerner stood up for a Negro (Robinson, 1986, 75).

7. Conceptualization: Servant Leaders seek to nurture their abilities to 'dream great dreams'. The ability to look at a problem (or an organization) from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities (Greenleaf, 2002).

Branch Rickey was a dreamer. His biographer, Arthur Mann, described Branch Rickey as “a visionary with pioneering ideas... a family man with high regard for the truth and a stubborn person who refused compromise” (Robinson, 1996, 36). Rickey was able to create the minor league farm system while he was the business manager of the St. Louis Browns and later as president of the St. Louis Cardinals. Now in Brooklyn, some thirty years after his early experience with Charles Thomas, Branch Rickey was ready to change baseball and the country. He created his six-step plan for the integration of baseball. In January, 1943, Rickey set his plan in motion with step one: winning over the owners of the Brooklyn Dodgers at a meeting at the New York Athletic Club. Step two was to select a player with exceptional talent. Step three was to make sure that this player would have the character to deal with the difficulties he would be encountering on and off the field. Step four was to lay the groundwork for positive press reaction. The fifth and most important step was to establish a relationship with the African American community and enlist their assistance. The sixth and final step of the plan was to work with players in the organization to secure acceptance of an African American player (Frommer, 2003, 96).

After Rickey sent his scouts out to find the right African American ballplayer in 1943, he still had a lot of work to do. He prepared the Dodgers organization by speaking with the manager of Montreal, the first place this ballplayer would play. Montreal, Canada, is where Rickey would begin the integration process. The Montreal Royals were a minor league affiliate of the Dodgers, and Rickey knew Montreal was more

open-minded toward people of color. He wanted to place the first African American ballplayer to integrate baseball in a place that would accept him. The Royals were the Dodgers top minor league team and were in the International League, which played mostly in big cities. Rickey did this in the hope of fewer racial problems. This was the initial step before Rickey would potentially bring an African American ballplayer to Brooklyn. Rickey paved the way by talking with people in and out of baseball; he sought advice in figuring out what to do with many issues (such as spring training, which would have to be moved out of Jim Crow Florida). He was concerned about team dynamics in addition to being concerned about various racial communities of Brooklyn. Rickey's lists of concerns went on and on. He tried to prepare for everything and anything that could happen while he was trying to integrate baseball.

Once Clyde Sukeforth, the chief scout of the Dodgers, reported back to Rickey about Jackie Robinson, Rickey then researched every aspect of Robinson's life. At this time, Jackie was playing for the Kansas City Monarchs, a team in the Negro Leagues. Sukeforth told Robinson that Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers was scouting him for a new Negro League that he was starting up, that Rickey wanted Robinson for the new Brooklyn Brown Dodgers. This was the cover story that Branch Rickey devised to mask the true reason his scouts were looking and talking to African American ballplayers (Evans & Herzog II, 2002, 147).

Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey had their first meeting on August 28, 1945 in Rickey's office at 215 Montague Street, Brooklyn, New York (Robinson, 1996, 37). The two men had a three-hour meeting. This was the culmination of Rickey's three-year search for the first African American ballplayer to break the color barrier in organized baseball. Rickey knew, based on scouting reports, that Robinson could run, throw, and hit with power. The true test of Jackie Roosevelt Robinson was not only his skill as a ballplayer, however, but more importantly his character, personality, background, intelligence, and desire to succeed (Frommer, 2003, 3).

Jackie Roosevelt Robinson was college educated, unlike most of the Negro League players of his day. He went to Pasadena City College and later was a four letterman at the University of California at Los

Angeles. He was a Lieutenant in the United States Army and a man who stood up for what was right for himself and others. Robinson was a Servant Leader before he ever met Branch Rickey. Lieutenant Robinson, while stationed at Fort Riley as the morale officer, phoned the provost marshal Major Hafner to voice his complaints about the segregation at the PX. Robinson was told nothing could be done, and then Hafner said, "Let me put it this way—how would you like your wife sitting next to a nigger?" (Frommer, 2003, 9). Robinson was extremely upset; Major Hafner then realized that Lieutenant Robinson was a person of color. Robinson was transferred shortly after that incident.

Jackie Robinson stood up for others and himself; this was the type of Servant Leadership that Robinson exhibited in the military that eventually led to his court-martial and an honorary discharge. What action caused this dismissal? Second Lieutenant Robinson refused to get up from his seat on a military bus and go to the back of the bus (Frommer, 2003, 8-9). Branch Rickey already knew these things about Robinson, but he needed to hear from Robinson himself.

The first question that Rickey asked Robinson had nothing to do with baseball. Rickey asked, "Do you have a girl?" (Rickey, 1945) This was not the question Jackie was prepared to answer, but Rickey pressed. Rickey was a family man, and he knew the importance of having someone to come home to for support, which would be especially true for Robinson. In his mind, Rickey knew that if Robinson was going to be the first African American to play in the modern era of Major League Baseball, he would need the support of a good woman (Frommer, 2003, 5). This was not an isolated situation, for Rickey encouraged all of his players to get married. He was responsible for getting his manager Leo Durocher to pop the question to his girlfriend.

Branch Rickey established that Jackie Robinson had what it took to be the first African American to break the color barrier, probably before even meeting with Robinson, but he needed to be certain. Rickey simulated the type of abuse Robinson would be subjected to, both verbal and physical. He told Robinson that he could not react to the abuse; he had to be strong enough to turn the other cheek. Robinson told Rickey that he had two cheeks (Robinson, 1945). Rickey knew he had the right man and Jackie Robinson

signed a contract at that first meeting, but it was not announced until October 23, 1945.

Rickey still had a lot of work to do to prepare the community of Brooklyn and the baseball league for this event. He was a true visionary and a great Servant Leader because he always thought of the big picture as well as of individuals. Rickey knew that news like this, if not handled carefully, could backfire, so he started to prepare the African American leaders of Brooklyn, the Dodgers organization (which included players, managers, and coaches of both the Dodgers and Royals) before he went public with his big announcement. While this transpired, Jackie Robinson went home and proposed to his girlfriend Rachel, and on February 10, 1946, they were married.

8. Foresight: The Central Ethic of Leadership: The ability to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present and likely consequences of a decision for the future (Greenleaf, 2002).

Branch Rickey, through his religious and moral upbringing, knew that segregation was wrong in and out of baseball. He also knew that he needed to expand the pool of available baseball talent during World War II and that there was great talent in the Negro Leagues.

Rickey admired President Abraham Lincoln; he had a photograph of him on his wall in his office. Lincoln was a Servant Leader. The picture of Lincoln was one of the first things Jackie Robinson noticed when he walked into Rickey's office for the first time.

Rickey had the insight to share some of the knowledge he obtained through his scouts with other team owners who would be sympathetic to the cause. Due to Branch Rickey's encouragement, Bill Veeck of the Cleveland Indians signed Larry Doby, the second African American ballplayer in Major League Baseball and the first African American player in the American League (Beck, 2000, 109).

Television has been noted as a key factor in the success of Jackie Robinson. "Part of the sociological phenomenon, part entertainment spectacle, part revolution, part media event—day after day, the Jackie Robinson story played out its poignant scenes," states Dr. George N. Gordon, a noted communications

theorist. He also said that:

Jack Johnson was edited by photographs and Joe Louis was filtered by radio. But the unblinking eye of TV humanized Robinson. He was not a stereotype; he was an equal with the other players on the field. It was a lesson taught by example, like Ed Sullivan kissing Pearl Bailey. You couldn't deny his blackness. It was a visible, sustaining show day after day. Television magnified the social event and made it reflective and directed (Frommer, 2003, 141).

Branch Rickey was a man who took calculated risks. The baseball owners were aware of Robinson in the summer of 1946 while he was playing for Montreal. Rickey knew he needed the team owners' approval to bring Robinson up to Brooklyn, but he wanted to make sure he first had the Commissioner's approval. Rickey met privately with the Commissioner of Major League Baseball, Happy Chandler, originally from Kentucky. Rickey made sure he had the support of Chandler, who could overrule the team owners if they voted against integration. They did vote 15 to 1 to uphold the gentleman's agreement. The conversation between Rickey and Chandler went like this:

Rickey said, "I can't go ahead in the face of that vote. I can't do it unless I'm assured of your support." Chandler asked "Can this man play?" Rickey said, "He could make the major league today." Chandler then said, "Then the only reason he's being kept out is because he's black." Chandler continued. "Let's bring him in as just another player. I'll keep an eye on him" (Monteleone, 2004, 144).

This is all it took for Happy Chandler to push the owners aside after the 15 to 1 vote against integration in the summer of 1946. Chandler let Branch Rickey bring Jackie Robinson up to the Dodgers so he could integrate Major League Baseball on April 15, 1947.

9. Stewardship: Holding something in trust for another (Greenleaf, 2002).

Branch Rickey looked after all his ballplayers, from his early days as a college baseball and football coach to the time of his retirement from baseball. He was concerned with them all, not just Robinson or the other African American players. Rickey was concerned for the welfare of all players and their families. For instance, in 1948 Roy Campanella was sent down to the minors for a short time to play at St. Paul, Minnesota. While playing for the St. Paul Saints, his wife Ruthe gave birth to their son Roy Jr. Ruthe was home for only three days before Roy was called back up to Brooklyn. For most players, this would be great news, but in Campanella's case it was not. He expressed to his manager Walter Alston that his wife had just had a baby, and he was not sure that she could travel and did not want to leave her. Alston told Campanella he would talk to Mr. Rickey. This all happened in the midst of a Saints road trip. When Alston finally reached Mr. Rickey, his reaction was sympathetic. Rickey told Alston to tell Campanella to "fly to St. Paul at once and consult your doctor about the advisability of moving your wife and baby. If it's all right, then take a plane to New York. If not, telephone me right away, and we'll make other plans" (Campanella, 1959, 143-144). Everything worked out as the doctor told Campanella that there was no danger so off to Brooklyn they went. Branch Rickey was a family man and in this situation, he showed his concern for the welfare of the wife of one of his players.

10. Commitment to the growth of people: The servant-leader is deeply committed to the growth of each individual within his or her institution (Greenleaf, 2002)

In Branch Rickey's mind, to integrate baseball was the right thing to do; it was also long overdue.

The last time a person of color had played professional baseball was Moses Fleetwood Walker, along with his brother Welday Walker, in 1883-1884. Moses Walker, who came out of Oberlin College of Ohio and the University of Michigan, played with an all white team, the Toledo Blue Stockings of the Northern League. The following year, Toledo was absorbed into the American Association, which is part of today's Major Leagues. Therefore, in 1884 after Moses played 42 games and his brother Walday played only five games, they became the last African Americans to play in the Major Leagues before Robinson (Alexander, 1991, 50-51). This all came about because of one out-spoken racist player/manager and Hall-of-Famer Cap Anson of the Chicago White Stocking. He refused to let his team play any team that had people of color (Chadwick, 1992, 23). On two different occasions, Anson protested and refused to let his team take the field, the first on August 10, 1883 when the Chicago White Stockings were to play Toledo in an exhibition game and the Walker brothers were scheduled to play. The other was on July 16, 1887, when Moses was playing for Newark along side George Stovey, who was scheduled to be the starting pitcher" for an exhibition game (Walker was injured and not scheduled to play). Anson was successful and stopped men of color from playing partially due to a widely-read, and decidedly racist, article published by The Sporting News three days earlier. Stovey was removed from the game (Riley, 1994). "That same day the International League directors met in secret and decided not to approve future black players (Riley, 1994, 746-747)." Cape Anson was the man responsible for banning blacks from playing in the International League. The American Association and National League soon followed suit, and by 1897 blacks were excluded from all major and minor league games. Though never formally a rule, this Color Line would persist in baseball for the next 50 years. "Thus it became the "unwritten rule" or Gentleman's Agreement, that no Negro player may play Baseball on [the professional] level" (Hannon, 2009). There was not another person of color who played Major League Baseball until Jackie Robinson in 1947. Robinson is considered the first modern African American to break the Color Line in the Majors. However, one player bent the Color Line in 1916, Jimmy Claxton, a man of both African-American and Native American heritage. Claxton played one game for the Oakland Oaks of the Pacific Coast League, but as soon as his true heritage was

discovered, he was fired (Hawthorn, 2006). It took another 30 years and the likes of two true servant leaders to break the Color Line and officially take it down forever.

Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson shared the true monumental task of stamping out segregation in professional baseball, a move which is often noted as the start of the Civil Rights Movement (Glasser, 2003). Branch Rickey took a holistic approach to picking the right man to break the color barrier. He looked at every aspect of Jackie Robinsons' life and determined that Robinson was indeed the correct choice. Branch Rickey was not just concerned about what a player did on the field, but what they did off the field too.

Both Rickey and Robinson had humble beginnings, the type of origin that Greenleaf says is necessary for the Servant Leader to understand and empathize with those he or she leads. Jackie Robinson became very outspoken and extremely active in the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. told one of his aids, Wyatt Tee Walker, that he was inspired by Jackie Robinson: "Jackie Robinson made it possible for me in the first place," King told Walker. "Without him, I would never have been able to do what I did" (Falkner, 1995, 247).

Branch Rickey wrote the following in the foreword of Jackie Robinson's autobiography in 1948:

In writing this book, Robinson, I am sure, did not intend to create the impression that he has already achieved ultimate success as a player or that his advent to baseball represents any more than the first step toward equal participation by Negroes in this great American sport. I know that, above all, he intended to make good as a ballplayer when he first joined the Brooklyn organization. Nevertheless, he sensed the delicate racial responsibility, which his association with white players involved (Robinson, 1948, Foreword).

There could not be finer examples of Servant Leadership than Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey.

References:

- Alexander, C. (1991). *Our Game: An American Baseball History*. New York, NY: MJF Books.
- Beck, P. (2000). Working in the Shadows of Rickey and Robinson: Bill Veeck, Larry Doby and the Advancement of Black Players in Baseball. *The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture 1997 (Jackie Robinson)*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
- Campanella, R. (1959). *It's Good to Be Alive*. Boston, MA: Little Brown & Company.
- Chadwich, B. (1992). *When the Game was Black and White*. New York, NY: Abbeville Press.
- Davis, R. (n.d.). *From Terror to Triumph: Historical Overview Creating Jim Crow*. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from <http://www.jimcrowhistory.org>
- Dorinson, J., & Warmund, J. (Eds.). (1999). *Jackie Robinson: Race, Sports, and the American Dream. (First paperback ed.)*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Evans, C. H., & William R. Herzog II, W. R. (Eds.). (2002). *The Faith of 50 Million: Baseball, Religion, and American Culture. (First ed.)*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Falkner, D. (1995). *Great Time Coming: The life of Jackie Robinson from baseball to Birmingham*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Fortier, M. (1997). *Editor's Desk Weider History Group*. Retrieved March 17, 2009, from EBSCO. Dominican University database (9704075587)
- Frommer, H. (2003). *Rickey and Robinson: The men who broke baseball's color barrier. (Paperback ed.)*. Lanham, MD: First Taylor Trade.
- Glasser, I. (2003). Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson: Precursors to the Civil Rights Movement. *World and I*, 18(3), 257. Retrieved April 10, 2009, from Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center. Gale. Dominican University (A98571955)
- Greenleaf, R. K., & Spears, L. C. (Eds.). (2002). *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness (25th Anniversary ed. ed.)*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Greenleaf, R., & Oostinga, I., (MA MGM.) (2009). *Leading by Serving First: Explanation of Servant-*

- Leadership of Robert Greenleaf (1970). Retrieved April 4, 2009, from http://www.12manage.com/methods_greenleaf_servant_leadership.html
- Hannon, T. (2009 April 30). The gentleman's agreement. *The Baseball Pages*, Retrieved March 21, 2010, from <http://www.thebaseballpage.com/blog.php/108stitches/article/the-gentle/>.
- Harrington, D. J. (2006). Images of Servant Leadership. *America*, 195 (11), 39-39. Retrieved March 17, 2009, from EBSCO. Dominican University database (22618169)
- Hawthorn, T. (2006). The rocky saga of vagabond 'tribesman' Jimmy Claxton: First African-American depicted on a baseball card first played at 13 in a tiny Washington state town of Roslyn and Chester. *Rain Check: Baseball in the Northwest*, Society of American Baseball Research, 44 – 45, 126.
- Kashatus, W. Baseball's Noble Experiment. (1997). *American History*, 32(1), 1, 12, 32. Retrieved March 17, 2009, from EBSCO database (9704075603)
- Kearns Goodwin, D. (1997). *Wait Till next year: A Memoir*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Lowenfish, L. (2007). *Branch Rickey: Baseball's ferocious gentleman*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Mann, A. (1957). *Branch Rickey: American in action*. Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Mann, A. (1957, August 20). The life story of Branch Rickey. *Look*, 71-80.
- Manning, B. (2004). Firefighting Servant Leadership: The right medicine. *Fire Engineering*, 157(5), 6-6. Retrieved March 3, 2009, from EBSCO. Dominican University database (13126263)
- Monteleone, J. J. (Ed.). (2004). *Branch Rickey's Little Blue Book: Wit and strategy from baseball's last wise man*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Sports Media Publishing Inc.
- Negro League Baseballplayers Association [NLBPA]. (2007). *Moses Fleetwood Walker*. Retrieved April 7, 2009, from http://www.nlbpa.com/walker__moses_fleetwood.html

- Public Broadcasting System [PBS]. (n.d.). *The History of Jim Crow*. Retrieved April 7, 2009, from <http://www.jimcrowhistory.org>
- Parker, G. L. (2000). Martin W. E., Jr., & Sullivan P. (Eds.) *Robinson, Jack Roosevelt (1919-1972): Civil Rights in the United States*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2000. New York: Macmillan Reference USA. Retrieved March 3, 2009, from *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center*. Gale. Dominican University database (EJ2338131117)
- Polner, M. (1982). *Branch Rickey: A biography*. Brattleboro, VT: Atheneum.
- Reflections on Living History. (NEWS). (2009). Retrieved from Gale. Dominican University database (CJ192418530)
- Riley, J.A. (1994). *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers.
- Robinson, R., Daniels, L. & Crowley, J. K. (Ed.). (1996). *Jackie Robinson: An intimate portrait*. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers.
- Robinson, J., & Smith, W. (1948). *Jackie Robinson: My own story*. New York: Greenberg: Publisher Corporation.
- Robinson, J. (1949). *Testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee*. Essential Speeches, (2009). Retrieved March 17, 2009, from EBSCO Military & Government Collection database (51518b55d8)
- Spears, L. C. (2001). *Focus on leadership: Servant-Leadership for the twenty-first century*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Staland, D. (2009 April 5) Personal Interview.
- Stout, G., & Johnson, R. A. (2004). *The Dodgers: 120 Years of Dodger Baseball*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Vicalvi, P. L. (2006). Servant Leadership. *Army Logistician*, 38 (3), 51-52. Retrieved, from ESCO database

(20943651)

Williams, Pat. (1984). *The Paradox of Power: A Transforming View of Leadership*. United States of America: Warner Books.

Jackie Robinson's story serves as a reminder of the courage it takes for systemic change and how far baseball and the United States still have to go to unroot the systemic racism and injustice that is so deep within its laws and its culture. For more MLB coverage: MLB Faces an Uncertain Path to the Postseason.Â The Crossoverâ€™s Madelyn Burke, Rohan Nadkarni, and Howard Beck share their picks for the recent coaching hires they are most interested in. Jun 28, 2021. Video. The Crossover: Pitching Trade Ideas for Damian Lillard. The Crossoverâ€™s Madelyn Burke, Rohan Nadkarni, and Howard Beck pitch their ideas for a Damian Lillard trade for this offseason. Jun 28, 2021. Video. The Crossover: What Have We Learned from the Hawks-Bucks Eastern Conference Finals? Jackie Roosevelt Robinson was the first black man to play in modern major league baseball. After World War Two, many Americans still believed that people of different races should not mix. In some parts of the country, blacks and whites lived in separate areas and went to separate schools. Blacks who tried to change the system risked being beaten or killed.Â That began changing when Jackie Robinson played his first game for New York's Brooklyn Dodgers on April fifteenth, nineteen forty-seven. Jackie Robinson grew up in a family of five children in Pasadena, California, near Los Angeles. His father had left.Â They had three children. It was important to Branch Rickey that Jackie Robinson be married. He thought that the public would accept Robinson more quickly if he was married. Jack Roosevelt Robinson (January 31, 1919 â€“ October 24, 1972) was an American professional baseball player who became the first African American to play in Major League Baseball (MLB) in the modern era. Robinson broke the baseball color line when he started at first base for the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 15, 1947. When the Dodgers signed Robinson, it heralded the end of racial segregation in professional baseball that had relegated black players to the Negro leagues since the 1880s. Robinson was... Jackie Robinson was really, really good at baseball. He was also temperamentally well-suited to dealing with racist fans. Rickey, in addition to knowing Robinson could help the Dodgers win more games, also had the moral courage and intestinal fortitude to say â€œWell, thereâ€™s no written rule against Black players in Major League Baseball, so screw it. Thereâ€™s going to be one now!â€ And that is pretty much what it was. When Jackie Robinson changed baseball, and a country. 1yTim Kurkjian. MLB trade deadline tracker: Everything that went down before 4 p.m. ET.Â O'Neill grabbed the microphone and screamed throughout the base: "Branch Rickey has signed Jackie Robinson to an organized baseball contract." Two years later, on this date, Jackie Robinson changed the game, and the country, by becoming the first African-American to play in the major leagues. The full "On this date ..." archive. Robinson, 28, went hitless that first game, but scored a run, made 11 putouts at first base (a new position for him) as the Brooklyn Dodgers beat the Boston Braves 5-3. Hulton Archive/Getty Images. "I don't mean to be a crusader," Rickey said.