

for an individual policy, as the gentleman also knows, that is almost impossible for the average working family.

The third is parents who change jobs. Nearly half of all children who lose health insurance do so because their parents lose or change jobs. So, again, if we look at this over the 2 years that Families USA is looking at it, we can see there are times when kids are covered and not covered, that there are a lot of gaps because of the fact people are changing jobs.

And a lot of people in the lower income categories but who are working have temporary jobs and are subject to tremendous fluctuations in their job. They may change every 6 months or whatever because it is not a job necessarily that has a lot of permanence.

So it is a real problem that we have to look at the various aspects of it. And I am not saying there is an easy solution. All the gentleman and I are saying is that we want this addressed. We want the Congress and the House of Representatives to take it up.

I appreciate the gentleman's participating, again, and all the gentleman has done to speak out on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF JACKIE ROOSEVELT ROBINSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. MEEK] is recognized for 30 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to help this Congress and America understand the dignity and the grace and the illumination which Jackie Robinson, Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, brought to our wonderful country, the United States of America. I am delighted to have this opportunity to host this special order, and it is going to honor one of the true greats in American history, and that is Jackie.

Why is it relevant to the Congress to even talk about Jackie Robinson or to address a special order to the memory of Jackie Robinson? First of all, it is so very important, No. 1, so that the young people in this country will understand that we have heroes in this country, and they are heroes because they worked very hard to bring glory not only to their athletic teams but to the glory of this country and to show the dominance which great athletic prowess can bring when it is used for the good of others.

That is why it is so significant that from this well we address many of our heroes, and tonight I am addressing Jackie Roosevelt Robinson.

Fifty years ago, that has been quite a long time, Jackie Robinson broke major league baseball's color line. He broke the color line. That meant that before Jackie there were no African-Americans in major league baseball. He

broke this color barrier, and he opened up the doors that had long been closed to talented African-Americans, not only in baseball but in other activities throughout our country.

This may have been an opening through a sporting event, but it opened up many, many doors of opportunity to African-Americans throughout this country.

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Jackie Robinson was a respected athlete, a respected gentleman, a respected family man. Therefore, Mr. Branch Rickey chose him because he represented to Mr. Rickey someone who could take the taunts of the public, someone who could be yelled at, someone who could be thrown at, someone who could be talked about and still keep his dignity and still show his athletic prowess on the field of baseball. He was the first black to play major league baseball. He overcame these insults and threats. He overcame them with talent and dignity, and he won recognition as a great baseball player and great human being.

That is what is so important about Jackie Robinson. He was not just a baseball player. He was not just an athlete. He was not just someone with athletic prowess, but he was also a great human being. He established an enduring model throughout sports, and he proved to all America that character and ability are keys to success, not the color of one's skin or not one's athletic prowess. The color of one's skin or athletic prowess is not nearly as important as character and ability. Because if Jackie had not had all of that, he could not have done what he did in the baseball world in this country. No one, not even other blacks who soon followed Jackie into the major leagues, could know what Jackie Robinson endured in 1947 when he entered major league baseball.

I had the pleasure of meeting Jackie Robinson in 1947 because he came to a small college in Daytona where I worked, called Bethune Cookman College, one of the primary good colleges in America today. Jackie Robinson came to Bethune Cookman College, and it was said at that time that that was the only place in Daytona where Jackie could get living quarters or living accommodations. The team was on Daytona Beach, but Jackie Robinson had to live at Bethune Cookman, a small black college. I say to the Speaker that that is an honor to Bethune Cookman College that Jackie Robinson slept there because of what he has done and what he has brought to this country.

So, then, he took a lot of abuse, occasional physical abuse as well as mental abuse, but he absorbed this abuse. Nor was it the early hostile attitude of some of his own teammates that was shown. I understand a little guy by the name of Pee Wee Reese was very helpful to Jackie Robinson, to help him bridge this gap and that he reached out

to Jackie, because he could feel Jackie's problems as he tried to show the world that it was not all about just being a good baseball player, but being a gentleman.

Jackie Robinson was no ordinary man. He was a college graduate and one who had come from the State of California, his parents having moved from the South, and he brought a certain dignity that should have been brought. He was sort of a multi-dimensional person. He was not a one-dimensional person. You could not say that Jackie Robinson was just a good baseball player. He internalized much of the fears and much of the hate and much of the venom which was thrown after him. It takes an extraordinary man to do that and Jackie Robinson did it. He knew what he had to do. He knew what it was all about was much more than baseball.

Mr. Rickey knew that as well. That is why he chose Jackie Robinson. He knew he had to open doors which had long been closed to talented African-Americans, not only in sports but in many other activities. I think Jackie Robinson also knew that becoming a great baseball player was not his major motive as well, because he knew he was great. He had played with the Kansas City Monarchs and he knew that he could play baseball. He also knew that there were several other blacks out there who could play perhaps even better than he could, but they did not get the opportunity. So he knew he had to represent them. He knew he had to represent all of these small African-American children who would never get a chance for the kind of opportunity he was getting.

He carried the burden, I tell the Speaker, for the entire race, to show all America that blacks could compete not only on American playing fields, but also in its classrooms and corporate boardrooms.

Mr. Robinson's interest in baseball set a new tone for the country. I listened to Jackie Robinson's lovely wife on television as the entire country is paying tribute to Jackie Robinson, and they asked her did she think that Jackie would have done this even if it were not for baseball, would he have done it anyway, and she said, yes, and they also asked her how did he take the kind of poor treatment he got from the fans who were following the game, and she said that Jackie knew that he had a challenge and that he had to do this because it would help others and he had to prove this to others. So my summary of that is Jackie did this not for himself but for others.

The national sport of baseball and Jackie's interest in it made it much easier for football to continue in its integration, and it set a model for basketball as well. The glory of Jim Brown and Bill Russell are directly connected to Jackie Robinson's sacrifice and efforts.

I say to the young athletes who come around today, I wonder if you know

that you are standing on the shoulders of Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, and many of them do not understand it. So it is good that we help America understand that if it were not for the strong shoulders of Jackie Robinson, they would not be able to do the things they are doing today. That is none of them, with no exception, because Jackie Robinson handled this task at hand, Mr. Speaker, and it meant much more than simply holding his tongue and fists in check on the baseball diamond that first year, it meant more than not being able to stay in the same hotel, it meant more than that. Jackie could have walked away by saying, "I can't stay in the same hotel as the white players. Therefore, I'm going to walk away." Or "I can't say what I want to say. Therefore, I'm going to walk away." "I can't throw back the threats which they are giving to me. Therefore, I'm going to walk away."

Jackie knew, even though he could not eat in the same restaurant as his teammates, he knew that there was a greater prize that would come because of his persistence in playing baseball and opening the doors for others. He was a part of a historic task of sweeping a whole lot of mental cobwebs from the minds of millions of white Americans and many black Americans who did not realize that this could happen. Many of them were probably unaware of their own bigotry and racism, and it was not until Jackie came along and they could see and hear the taunts that he was receiving and they could see how he received it with the calmness and sincerity of a man who is a true gentleman. His discipline and restraint were as crucial to the larger cause of black advancement in that first season as his aggressive assertion of his rights was to black respect in later years.

I do not want anyone to think that Jackie was just a doormat or a carpet. He was not that kind of a man. Quite naturally his success was on the baseball diamond, but that success also reached out into the world and helped other people have opportunities to enter things that African-Americans could not before. By Jackie playing and taking those kicks and taking those taunts, he encouraged the Brooklyn Dodgers to employ other black players. I remember how we used to just run to the radio, when many of us did not have televisions during those days, just to see Jackie Robinson run, and to see him run the baselines, Mr. Speaker, was beauty in motion, and it was the kind of physical endurance and the kind of physical prowess that so few people have and how he could dance off third base and make them throw the ball and he ran beautifully into home plate.

In turn, the success of the Dodgers encouraged competing organizations to reevaluate their color lines. And when I say Jackie Robinson opened up these color lines, not only for baseball and for major league sports but he opened it up for other kinds of color lines that

were already there. Step by step, new models emerged and resistance weakened to equal opportunity. So he was Mr. Equal Opportunity and he should be recognized 50 years after the time when this happened.

I have heard the story of a baseball executive who believed that the hiring of Robinson would sink the Brooklyn Dodgers, and I remember how Mr. Rickey explained it to Jackie, as the type of person he would need to do this. Of course Jackie, being a very educated and a very articulate man, was able to converse with Mr. Rickey as to what his fears were, the fact that he had the kind of courage and behavior to do this. Soon after, Mr. Rickey agreed that Robinson would work out fine. He went to the other leaders in the Brooklyn Dodgers. But three black Dodgers people felt at that time would sink the Dodger franchise, and they thought that if three would sink the Brooklyn Dodgers, five would destroy the National League and eight would demolish the entire sport of baseball.

Now you say, "Well, Carrie, that's ridiculous, how could anyone think that African-Americans would sink a sport that was so greatly attuned in the American system as baseball"? But people did think that at that day and at that time.

By the end of 1947, the Dodgers had signed 16 black players. America understands that at that time there was a black league of baseball where very good players were there playing baseball, and they had a very good organization, and the major leagues were beginning to look at these black leagues and think of it, why not integrate some of them into major league baseball because they had the ability to play. So this opened up some of these players in the black leagues, and history is replete with stories about what happened in the black league and how good these players were also.

So then the farm teams began to look at baseball, and began to look at the black leagues and they began to bring people up. In the American League, the Cleveland Indians brought up Larry Doby, who was an outstanding outfielder at that time. He became the league's first black player, another opening brought on by Jackie Robinson.

By 1949, 56 black players had been signed by big league organizations. And by 1950, 5 major league teams had been integrated, to just show you the domino effect of a man like Jackie Robinson opening the doors 50 years ago.

By 1953, 7 teams were integrated. And by 1959, every major league baseball team had been integrated. Think of it. This was all because of the efforts, and all because of the persistence and all because of the respect that Jackie Roosevelt Robinson had.

He was liberated from passivity. Robinson assumed a very aggressive role. He was not there just to be a body or just some kind of baseball symbol but he was there to do his very best, to be

a leader. He was aggressive, and the Brooklyn Dodgers followed Jackie Robinson. He fought back, not only against opposition base runners but against old patterns of racial segregation in hotels, restaurants, and stadium facilities. At the deepest level of significance, baseball's modern movement began with Jackie Robinson's assertion of himself, not only as a participating player but as an aggressive player on field and off. He could not have done it on field alone, it had to be off.

He not only changed baseball, Mr. Speaker, he changed America. Just try imagining baseball today without athletes of color. They help to make up this sport which is so, I would think, indigenous of our great country. Think of baseball without Henry Aaron, without Mo Vaughn, the current Boston Red Sox player who wears Jackie Robinson's No. 42 as a tribute. That is saying something for Mo Vaughn, to wear Jackie Robinson's No. 42. It is a very large shirt to fill.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this special order has been one in which I have tried to help America understand the significance of Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, particularly black Americans, particularly young black Americans who may not have heard of Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, and how he broke the bounds of color in 1947. It is said that extraordinary lives often reveal extraordinary traits. Jackie Robinson had extraordinary traits. He was born in 1919 in Cairo, GA, the heart of the segregated South. His family migrated to California when he was 4 years old.

This whole legacy of Jackie Robinson is one that we can all take a lesson from. He crammed a whole lot into his 53 years, and he left a legacy of accomplishment. He left a legacy of perfection and accuracy, of acclaim, controversy and influence that has been matched by very few Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I declare that Jackie Robinson performed an historic breakthrough which has helped every American, black Americans included, to really come into what America is all about, and that is equal opportunity for all.

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana.

Mr. TAUZIN. I want to thank the gentlewoman for yielding, and I want to congratulate her for this special order and associate myself with her wonderful comments tonight.

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You spoke of the extraordinary person that Jackie Robinson was and what an extraordinary contribution he made to our country and to the more open society that we enjoy today. That legacy continues, as you know, in the beautiful performance just this weekend of a young man named Tiger Woods. The Masters is another great example of breakthroughs in our society. That young man took a moment

to think about those who preceded him and opened doors for him and the grace and skill that he exhibited at the Masters Tournament I think is also a part of that legacy you talked about tonight.

I just want to congratulate you because an extraordinary tribute to an extraordinary man was delivered tonight by an extraordinary woman, and I think this House is grateful for your special order tonight.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. I thank you for your comments, and we are so indebted to you as well. Thank you very much, so very much.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE].

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is with great joy and thanksgiving that I rise to pay tribute and recognize the contributions of a great athlete, diplomat, and gentleman, Jackie Robinson.

The American psyche has been filled with the achievements of Tiger Woods as the first African-American to win the Masters golf championship at the ripe old age of 21. Over the last few days I have seen smiles on people's faces of all ethnicities and races who may not share anything else, not even an equal appreciation for the sport of golf, but they love a winner, a young winner no matter what his race; and Tiger certainly gave us that.

Few sports fans in America today can imagine a world of segregated athletics where barriers prevent people of different races from playing together on the field of competition. This was not a policy limited to professional sports. It was the norm of the entire American segregated society, segregated, isolated from the joy that all of us have felt over the last few days at seeing a fresh faced 21-year-old American kid make good.

It is the American dream that our society was robbed of. People barred themselves from fully experiencing the pleasure of untempered excellence on the field of competition.

White-only signs littered the landscapes announcing to all who moved throughout society that there was a line that should not and must not be crossed. However, a colossal event on April 10, 1947 occurred. The sport of baseball helped to change the way America thought about the issue of race. The instrument of change for that day to this was Mr. Jackie Robinson by becoming the first black player to sign a major league contract.

Jackie Robinson was invited across the color line by Mr. Branch Rickey, the Brooklyn Dodgers' general manager. Together they made history. The Boys of Summer, as Roger Kahn's book refers to the Dodgers, made a very mature decision in inviting Jackie Robinson to join them. That decision is one that will affect the whole American society.

Mr. Speaker, they all knew that history was in the making and that some in their society may not be ready for

the new day which would dawn the first time a Negro player joined a professional, formerly all-white team.

I would like to congratulate the Houston Astros today, on April 15, for they will honor and commemorate with the entire community in Houston Jackie Robinson Day. I am told that, as I speak, throngs and throngs of inner-city young people will be going to the Astrodome to recognize Jackie Robinson and as well to understand that baseball can be more than a sport, it can take and be an opportunity to bring all together.

Unfortunately, they were all right that time when they spoke about this whole tragedy of segregation. The first game that Jackie Robinson played professionally at Ebbets Field after his name was called and he joined the other players on the field, the fans did boo him. His new friend, Pee Wee Reese, captain of the Dodger team, went over to Jackie and placed his arm around his shoulder. Spontaneously, it seemed, the rest of the team followed suit by huddling around Robinson and making it clear to all that he was a Dodger today, yesterday, and tomorrow through and through. That is the spirit that will be in the Astrodome tonight with all of the young people from our inner-city and the 18th Congressional District with our owner as well, Drayton McLane, celebrating, commemorating the first person who broke the color line in baseball.

Jackie Robinson was on the field as the first statement on affirmative action, 27 years before it became a public policy goal. It was good then, it is good now.

The pitchers did not throw slower fast balls or straighter curve balls when Jackie Robinson went to bat. He earned every one of his runs to home base. Most of all, Jackie Robinson was a gentleman. He was someone who believed that he could show better by his actions than he could by using contrary and adverse actions to rebut those who would be racists.

On June 24, 1947, Jackie Robinson stole home base against the Pittsburgh Pirates, helping the Brooklyn Dodgers to win 4 to 2. On October 6, 1949, Jackie Robinson scored the only run in the Dodgers' 1 to 0 victory over the New York Yankees in game 2 of the World Series. And on April 23, 1954, Jackie Robinson stole home on the front end of a rare triple seal, helping the Dodgers to a 6 to 5 win over the Pittsburgh Pirates.

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Jackie Robinson, with his talent, communication skills, and grit, spiced with determination, proved that indeed an African-American man had the intellectual capacity, physical capability, and spiritual fortitude to meet all challenges put before him on the field of competition. I believe that Tiger Woods, as he should have, has paid homage to the great Jackie Robinson for making that first step of American

society, for without Jackie Robinson there may not have been a Tiger Woods. Jackie Robinson, we appreciate and thank you for your efforts on all of our behalf.

I heard one commentator who said that Tiger Woods was on capability what Jackie Robinson was on politics. Both of them were on capability, both of them stand as great Americans. I pay tribute to Jackie Robinson because he first opened the door to make America great.

Mr. Speaker, with joy and thanksgiving, I rise to speak on this special order offered in recognition of the contributions of a great athlete, diplomat, and gentleman—Mr. Jackie Robinson. And I would like to thank Congresswoman CARRIE MEEK for organizing this special order.

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For without a Jackie Robinson there would not be a Tiger Woods.

Jackie Robinson we appreciate and thank you for your efforts on all of our behalf.

Baseball player Ed Charles wrote a poem about Jackie Robinson:

He ripped at the sod along the base path,
As he ran advance of a base. On his feet
were your hopes and mine. For a victory for
the black man's case. And the world is grateful
for the legacy, which he left for all human-
ity. Thanks, Jackie, wherever you are. You will
always be our first superstar.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to rise and pay tribute to a great man who not only contributed to the sport of baseball, but one who contributed to all of humanity. In both instances, the late great Jackie Robinson prevailed and taught the world an important lesson; if given the opportunity any man can excel to the greatest heights.

Jackie Robinson was many things to many people. As father, husband, writer, political activist, military man, and of course, baseball player; Jackie did it all with ease, dignity, and respect. Jackie not only challenged the gentleman's agreement of segregated baseball, but he also won a court-martial case for refusing to sit in the colored section of an army bus when he was transferred to Camp Breckenridge in Kentucky where he later received an honorary discharge.

The love of his country kept Jackie determined to be the best that he could be. In 1947, he signed for \$5,000 to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team where he led the National League with 20 stolen bases.

As we celebrate this great man, I personally had the opportunity to witness the unveiling of a roadside sign renaming the Interborough Parkway in my congressional district, the Jackie Robinson Parkway in honor of the 50th anniversary of his first major league game. This tribute is well deserved for a man who in his 10 years with the Brooklyn Dodgers helped them to win six pennants, to finish second three times, and to never finish worse than third.

Jackie Robinson rests at the Cypress Hill National Cemetery, in the 10th Congressional

District in New York; we will continue to celebrate his life by breaking racial barriers and settling our own records of achievement.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago today, Jackie Robinson played first base for the Brooklyn Dodgers. It was the first time that a black baseball player took the field with a major league baseball team in the modern era. Although he did not get a hit in four trips to the plate, he did score the game's winning run. But most importantly, Jackie Robinson paved the way for thousands of athletes to follow and gave dignity to millions of African-Americans as they struggled in a society where segregation was institutionalized in its laws and customs.

Robinson did more than just break the color barrier in major league baseball. He excelled at, and helped redefine, the sport. He was named Rookie of the Year in 1947 and had a lifetime batting average of .311. Although he played only 10 seasons, he hit 137 home runs, drove in 734 runs, and stole 197 bases. In 1949, he was named the league's Most Valuable Player, and beginning in 1949, he was elected to six consecutive all star teams.

And what makes Jackie Robinson's baseball accomplishments all the more remarkable is the fact that many inside and outside of baseball tried their best to ensure Robinson's failure. Pitchers threw at him, runners spiked him, and opposing teams shouted racial taunts at him. Crowds booed him and sportswriters vilified him. But all of this only strengthened Robinson's resolve to prove himself on the playing field. And prove himself he did.

But I don't want to focus solely on what Jackie Robinson did on the baseball diamond, because his off-field activities and accomplishments are what made Jackie Robinson a truly remarkable individual. Given the racial abuse Robinson endured as a player, it would have been perfectly understandable for him to not get personally involved in the civil rights struggle of this country. He could have viewed his breaking the color barriers as his contribution to the African-American struggle. But as Robinson said in 1964, "Life is not a spectator sport. * * * If you're going to spend your whole life in the grandstand just watching what goes on, in my opinion you're escaping your life."

So after he left baseball, Robinson continued to fight for the rights of all Americans. He preached the message that racial integration and equality would not just improve the lives of African-Americans, it would enrich the Nation. "Negroes aren't seeking anything which is not good for the Nation as well as ourselves," Robinson once said. "In order for America to be 100 percent strong—economically, defensively, and morally—we cannot afford the waste of having second-and-third class citizens."

Every American President who held office between 1956 and 1972 received letters from Robinson expressing his concerns about their failure to advance the cause of civil rights as forcefully as possible. He made no regard to party affiliation—Democrats were just as likely as Republicans to hear from Robinson. Robinson was unapologetic about his political efforts:

Civil rights is not by any means the only issue that concerns me—nor, I think any other Negro. As Americans, we have as much at stake in this country as anyone else. But since effective participation in a democracy is based upon enjoyment of basic freedoms

that everyone else takes for granted, we need make no apologies for being especially interested in catching up on civil rights.

So as we reflect on the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's debut in major league baseball, let us also reflect on what Robinson fought for off the field. African-Americans still are under represented in many segments of our society, from the front offices of major league baseball to corporate boardrooms to the U.S. Senate. Black babies still are more likely to die than their white counterparts and black motorists still are more likely to be stopped by the police.

And let's not be patient in our fight for justice and equality. Robinson realized that official calls for patience were really calls for inaction. After President Eisenhower, addressing an audience at the summit meeting of negro leaders, urged patience, Robinson wrote President Eisenhower, saying:

I respectfully remind you sir, that we have been the most patient of all people. When you said we must have self-respect, I wondered how we could have self-respect and remain patient considering the treatment accorded us through the years. 17 million Negroes cannot do as you suggest and wait for the hearts of men to change. We want to enjoy now the rights that we feel we are entitled to as Americans. This we cannot do unless we pursue aggressively goals which all other Americans achieved over 150 years ago.

There is much still to be done in the civil rights struggle. So let us follow Robinson's advice and be vigilant and aggressive in our fight.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay special tribute to the legacy of Jackie Robinson, whose monumental breaking of the color barrier in Major League Baseball 50 years ago we are celebrating this spring. I would like to thank the distinguished gentleman from Florida, Congresswoman CARRIE MEEK, for sponsoring this special order.

As many of us will recognize today, Jackie Robinson's imprint on this Nation has been far-reaching, not only as a prominent African-American but also as a man who deeply cared about the importance of integration and improved race relations in this Nation.

Jackie Robinson was a man of great courage and character, two traits which he showed when he received the call from Brooklyn Dodger President Branch Rickey and made his debut for the Dodgers in 1947. Despite withstanding the taunts and ill-will of many fans and players alike, Jackie proved his mettle and earned the Rookie of the Year Award. Over the course of 10 seasons in the big leagues, Jackie amassed a lifetime batting average of .311, and led his league in batting in 1949 and won the National League's Most Valuable Player Award in 1949. In 1962, he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY, becoming a member of baseball's most distinguished fraternity.

While Jackie Robinson will forever be remembered as a Hall of Fame ballplayer, his strongly held convictions and advocacy of civil rights and improved economic opportunities for African-Americans sets him apart as one of our Nation's outstanding citizens of all time.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. Speaker, today all of my colleagues from Brooklyn joined me to introduce legislation awarding a Congressional Gold Medal to Jack Roosevelt Robinson.

The legislation cites Jackie Robinson's "enduring contributions to racial equality, athletics,

business, and charitable causes" as the ample justification for this honor. But he would deserve 10 gold medals just for his most famous act.

On April 15, 1947, Jack Roosevelt Robinson changed America forever. All he did was walk out onto the grass of Ebbetts Field to play a game for a few hours. But those few steps were as important in our history as the moonwalk.

Like the moonwalk, Americans old enough to remember know just what they were doing that day.

And the courage he showed was just as great as the courage of those astronauts.

From the moment Jackie Robinson integrated baseball, he began to integrate America too. The next year, the Armed Forces were desegregated. The Nation's schools followed a few years later.

The last time Jackie Robinson stepped to the plate in 1956, America was a very different place—and it was on its way to even greater changes in the near future.

The path was never easy, but finally our Nation was forced to confront the legacy of racism and the challenges of creating a truly united country.

For Brooklyn, that day in 1947 is an especially treasured moment. We are bursting with pride that Jackie Robinson made history right here.

But in a lot of ways it makes sense that he took that moonwalk there, because for the 10 years that he wore number 42 for our Dodgers, he was Brooklyn's hero.

And the reason is simple enough: Jackie Robinson captured Brooklyn's heart, because he captured the spirit of Brooklyn. If you are a typical Brooklynite, Jackie Robinson represents your dreams, and your vision of how you wish you could be.

There's so much trite talk today about how modern athletes should try to be better role models for our kids. But Jackie Robinson never seemed to try. He seemed to effortlessly represent all the values that Brooklyn aspires to: steadiness and success, toughness and tolerance, chutzpah and grace.

First of all, Jackie Robinson was an all-time great baseball player. He richly deserved induction into the Hall of Fame, regardless of his role as a racial barrier-breaker.

Jackie Robinson was no token—he earned his status every day where it counted: on the field.

In that first game, on April 15, 1947, he scored the winning run.

In his first season, Robinson won Rookie of the Year, led the league in base stealing, and batted .297.

And he kept up that level of skill for a decade with remarkable consistency.

Most fans know that his lifetime batting average was an impressive .311.

But some don't realize how consistent he was. If you look at his career averages against lefties or righties, in day games or night games, at home or on the road—all these numbers vary from one another by only 16 points.

That kind of steady skill is something the typical Brooklynite always aspires to. We want to be good at what we do, day in and day out—reliable, consistent, accomplished.

If you ask most people around the country, they also think of Brooklynites as tough—and they're right. That's another quality that Jackie Robinson shared in abundance.

He faced taunts and stony silence, brush-back pitches and spikings, segregated hotels and even death threats. But none of it ever stopped him.

In his first season, he was hit by pitches nine times. But Jackie Robinson never charged the mound.

Instead, he just kept playing great baseball, and he became a hero.

These are the sorts of challenges and hostility that few of us can imagine. It took unbelievable toughness to withstand the pressure.

But Jackie Robinson had it, and Brooklyn loved him for it. Whenever you feel like you're up against the entire world—and Brooklynites feel that way a lot—you can get through it if you summon up half of his toughness.

That steely determination was matched by another Brooklyn specialty—Jackie Robinson had guts.

On the field, his audacious baserunning made every pitcher nervous and revolutionized the game.

No matter how swift you are, it takes lots of chutzpah to steal home 19 times, as he did. And it took incredible guts to step forward as baseball's racial pioneer.

He knew the challenges when he signed with the Dodgers. Many other players would have backed away from such a task. But by all accounts, Jackie Robinson accepted the assignment with hardly any reservations.

Finally, Brooklyn is also one of the most diverse places in America. What better place for Jackie Robinson to be a champion of diversity than right here?

The borough is almost 40 percent African-American and 20 percent Hispanic. Three out of ten Brooklynites were born in another country, and 4 out of 10 Brooklyn households speak a primary language other than English.

There have been some infamous, horrible times when that diversity has divided our community in ugly incidents. But much more often, it is a point of pride for Brooklyn.

Jackie Robinson showed us the way to tear down the barriers that divide us, and then to draw on that unity as a source of strength.

He did it before he played ball—as an army lieutenant—when he faced a court martial for refusing to move to the back of a military bus. He did it after he played ball, when he marched with Martin Luther King.

Ellen Roney Hughes, who is organizing this year's special Jackie Robinson exhibit at the Smithsonian, points out how "his technique of peacefully breaking down the system became a civil rights technique."

And she's absolutely right.

Jackie Robinson's greatest legacy to all of us—whether we're from Brooklyn, New York or Brooklyn Park, MN—might be the talent, the toughness, and the guts he showed in challenging bigotry with deeds rather than words.

He put it best himself, when he said: "a life is not important, except in the impact it has on other lives."

In that case, I'm sure you'd agree that Jackie Robinson's life was among the most important America has ever known.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me as a cosponsor of this proposal, and thus appropriately honor this incredible life with the Congressional Gold Medal.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, who 50 years ago today broke the color barrier in major league baseball.

Mr. Speaker, I am a baseball fan. Whether it's amateur or professional—and particularly when it's Congressional—I have loved the game of baseball my whole life.

Jackie Robinson was one of my earliest baseball heroes, and I was a Brooklyn Dodgers fan because of him. When I was a boy, I remember running home from school to listen to the Mutual radio baseball game of the week, especially for Jackie Robinson and a Brooklyn Dodgers game broadcast.

As a boy, I admired Jackie Robinson as a great baseball player. His achievements in 10 seasons with the Brooklyn Dodgers are still amazing to consider: 1947 National League Rookie of the Year, 1949 National League batting champion and Most Valuable Player, a .311 lifetime batting average, 197 stolen bases, and a 1962 Hall of Fame inductee. For baseball fans, these statistics are a marvel. But, Jackie Robinson's legacy is so much more significant than great baseball.

Today, I admire Jackie Robinson as a great man. He bore the full brunt of racial prejudice during a shameful period in our Nation's history. Robinson was vilified for being the first African-American to play and excel in white major league baseball.

While Robinson's terrific baseball skills soon quieted his racist critics, the experience of being the first African-American to integrate major league baseball was not easy for him. He suffered snubs and insults from players and fans, and endured more than his fair share of runners' spikes and brush-back pitches. But he withstood every test. And, slowly, but surely, more and more baseball fans began to see past the color of his skin and respect Jackie Robinson for the truly great baseball player he was.

Jackie Robinson had a sixth sense about running the bases. He would dance off a base, challenge pitchers and taunt catchers—daring them to do something about it.

"Daring," he once said. "That's half my game."

Jackie Robinson's daring smashed racial myths of the day and made him a baseball legend in the process. He changed the game of baseball and American society forever—leading the way for other African-Americans who wanted to play. But, more importantly, he defied racial prejudice in America with grace and courage.

Mr. Speaker, Jackie Robinson was a true American hero. We celebrate his baseball talents, but his strength of character and commitment to social justice are what we most proudly remember him for today. He has a special place in our Nation's history—and in my heart.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order today, a tribute to Jackie Roosevelt Robinson.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LUCAS). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.