

## Film Review: ‘42’ Celebrates Jackie Robinson, the Promise of America

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 12, 2013 - 3:28pm

- [42](#) [2]
- [Baseball](#) [3]
- [Branch Rickey](#) [4]
- [Chadwick Boseman](#) [5]
- [Color Line](#) [6]
- [Hamish Linklater](#) [7]
- [Harrison Ford](#) [8]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [9]
- [Jackie Robinson](#) [10]
- [John C. McGinley](#) [11]
- [Movie Review](#) [12]
- [Nicole Beharie](#) [13]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [14]
- [Warner Bros.](#) [15]

CHICAGO – It took baseball, that noble sport, to recognize in 1947 what the universe had dictated since day one – all persons are equal and all deserve an equal chance. Jackie Robinson was the first African-American to break the “color line” in baseball, and the story of that achievement is magnificently told in “42.”



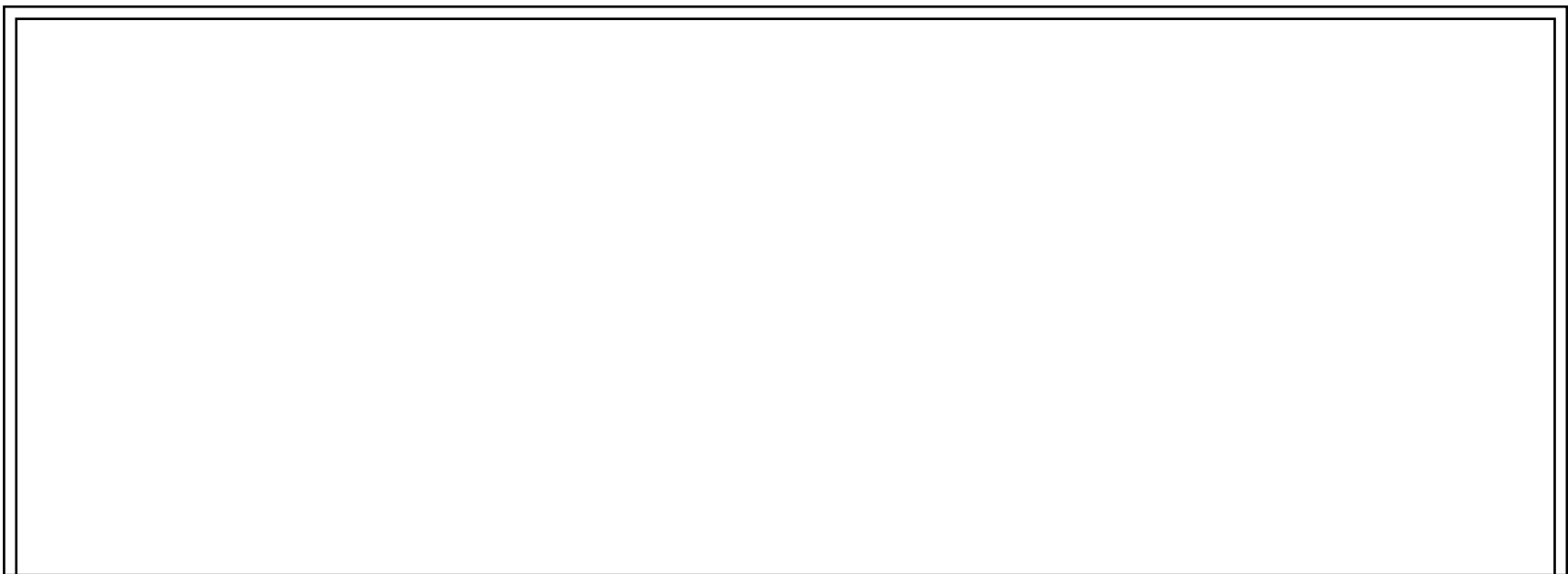
The story is more honest than previous efforts, in the sense that movie conventions can now historically show the virulent racism of that time, with casual exclamations of the “n-word” by the ignorant people that opposed Robinson. It also delves into motivations, which include the profits that Branch Rickey – the Brooklyn Dodger executive that found Robinson and put him on his team – anticipates from the move. The story is of the process of getting Robinson to the Dodgers, including the promise from the ballplayer to “turn the other cheek” when it came to his detractors. It is a story of courage, both on the side of Jackie and Rachel (his wife), plus the efforts of the African American media at the time, early civil rights advocates and American citizens of all stripes that knew segregation was wrong. The film also lovingly recreates the baseball of the era, including the legendary Ebbets Field of the Brooklyn Dodgers, a modest neighborhood diamond where history was made.

Baseball executive Branch Rickey (Harrison Ford) desires that his team, the Brooklyn Dodgers, be the first to integrate the major leagues with an African American player. Even 84 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, assimilation into general American society has been difficult for blacks, because of segregation laws. Two years after World War II, in which African Americans served nobly, Rickey recognizes the need to break professional baseball’s color line. He also realizes the profit potential, with a whole new audience for his team.

After extensive research, Rickey finds a stellar athlete – Jackie Roosevelt Robinson (Chadwick Bozeman) – who is a 26-year old playing ball in the segregated Negro Leagues. Rickey recruits Robinson to play with the Dodgers minor league club, the Montreal Royals, and his exceptional season there gets him invited to spring training in 1947. Robinson makes the starting team, and Rickey signs him to the Dodgers, only after warning the ballplayer that he cannot react angrily to the inevitable backlash. When Jackie Robinson took the field on April 15th of that year, baseball – and the American culture surrounding it – went through a profound and long overdue change.

*“42” opens everywhere on April 12th. Featuring Chadwick Boseman, Harrison Ford, Nicole Beharie, Lucas Black, Alan Tudyk and John C. McGinley. Written and directed by Brian Helgeland. Rated “PG-13”*

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Branch Rickey (Harrison Ford) Advises Jackie Robinson (Chadwick Boseman) in '42'  
*Photo credit: Warner Bros.*



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- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/42>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/baseball>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/branch-rickey>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/chadwick-boseman>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/color-line>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hamish-linklater>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/harrison-ford>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jackie-robinson>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/john-c-mcginley>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/movie-review>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/nicole-beharie>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/warner-bros>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/21836/42-celebrates-jackie-robinson-the-promise-of-america>