

## Roberto Clemente - Legends of Baseball

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Robert Walker Clemente was born in Carolina, Puerto Rico on August 18, 1934. He was the youngest of seven, (some accounts say four) children born to Melchor Clemente, a sugar mill foreman, and Luisa Walker. Roberto Clemente was a descendent of both African and Spanish ancestors.

In 1952, while still in high school, Roberto played with the Santurce Cangreheros in the Puerto Rican League. His batting average was .356 that year.

Roberto signed with the Dodgers in 1953, but was drafted as the number one pick by the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1954. He joined the team in 1955. Roberto played for Pittsburgh over his entire career of eighteen years and retired in in 1972.

Roberto married Vera Cristina Zabala on November 14, 1964. They had three sons; Roberto Walker Clemente Jr. , Louis Roberto Clemente and Roberto Enrique Clemente.

Roberto, like most minority players of the early fifties, was forced to sleep, eat and travel in segregated quarters. His refusal to humbly accept this racist treatment led to a reputation as a Hothead. In his second year with the Pirates, he batted .311 and drove in 60 runs.

Roberto was the National League Batting Champion four times and played in two World Series. He was awarded twelve Golden Gloves and was the 1971 World Series MVP. He had a lifetime batting average of .317, lifetime RBI of 1,305 and hit 240 homeruns over the course of his career.

Roberto Clemente died on December 31, 1972. On December 23, 1972 Managua, Nicaragua was hit by an earthquake that killed thousands and left many homeless. Roberto and four others gathered relief supplies and chartered a plane to bring help to the victims. The Plane crashed shortly after takeoff and all aboard were killed.

Roberto Clemente was inducted into Baseball's Hall of Fame on August 6, 1973. He was the first Hispanic inducted into the Hall.

Sources:

Encyclopedia Britannica

Encyclopedia Africana

National Baseball Hall of Fame