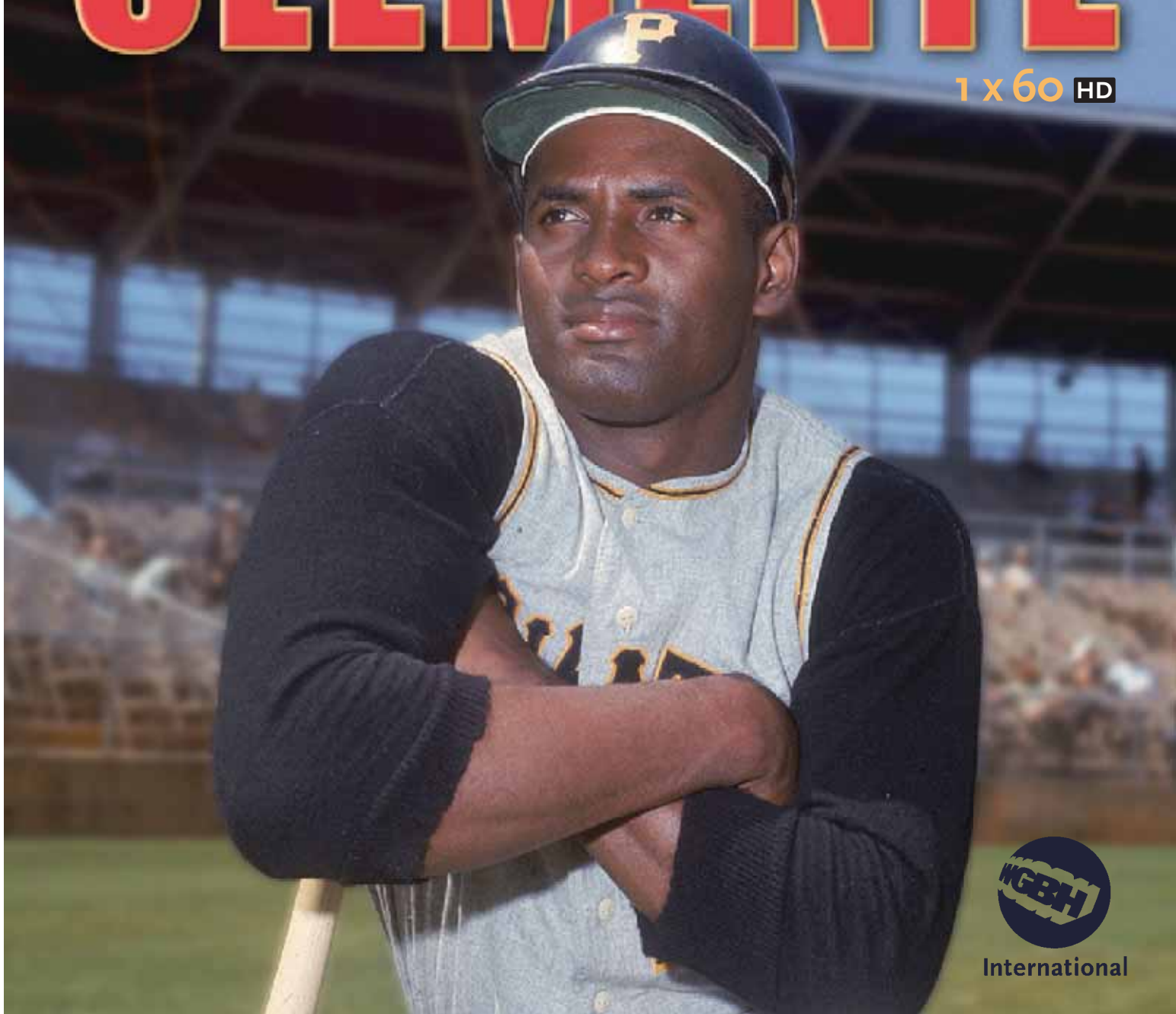


Roberto **CLEMENTE**

1 x 60 HD



International

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On New Year's Eve 1972, Roberto Clemente, a 37-year-old baseball player for the Pittsburgh Pirates, boarded a DC-7 loaded with relief supplies for earthquake victims in Nicaragua. A native of Puerto Rico, he had established a special relief fund for his devastated neighbors and chartered the plane to take the supplies there himself. Shortly after takeoff the plane crashed into the Atlantic Ocean. His body was never found.

His death brought an end to a spectacular career. In his eighteen seasons with the Pirates, he led the team to two World Series championships, won four National League batting titles, received the Most Valuable Player award and earned twelve Gold Gloves. In his final season, Clemente made his 3,000th career hit—an achievement that had been reached by only ten major league players before him. He had legions of fans, but as this *AMERICAN EXPERIENCE* reveals, he was more than an exceptional baseball player. He was also a committed humanitarian whose childhood experiences helped forge a lifelong interest in social justice and a commitment to helping the poor.

An avid baseball player throughout his youth, Clemente was drafted by the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1954—just seven years after Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in major league baseball. As a Black Latino, Clemente encountered many of the same obstacles and prejudices as the first African American ball players. During his first spring training in Florida in 1955, segregation laws meant Clemente's white teammates relaxed at beaches, swam in pools, and stayed in hotels that didn't admit blacks. Road trips in the South were also difficult. Denied service at restaurants, he was frequently forced to eat on the bus.

Clemente was offended by the racism he encountered in the United States. He railed against the negative stereotypes the press used to describe him and went on to use the podium that his fame provided to talk about human rights and his dream to help underprivileged youth in Puerto Rico. "If you have a chance to accomplish something that will make things better for people coming behind you, and you don't do that, you are wasting your time on this earth," he said just one year before his death.

Roberto Clemente traces the ballplayer's early struggles for recognition, his chronic health problems and his emergence as a leader, role model and ultimately hero to his legions of fans around the world. Through interviews with relatives, childhood friends, former teammates and the journalists who covered him, this biography presents an intimate and revealing portrait of a man whose passion, grace and humanitarianism made him a baseball legend.

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AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

CREDITS

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