

# **DIMENSIONS OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID**



**A TRIBUTE TO PAUL ROBESON  
HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL  
COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID  
(10 APRIL 1978)**



Published by the African Heritage Studies Association in cooperation  
with the United Nations Centre against Apartheid.



# **DIMENSIONS OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID**

## **A TRIBUTE TO PAUL ROBESON**

Proceedings of Special Meeting of the  
Special Committee Against *Apartheid*  
on the 80th Anniversary of the birth of

Paul Robeson — 10 April 1978

Introduction

by

H.E. Mr. Leslie O. Harriman (Nigeria),  
Chairman of the United Nations  
Special Committee Against *Apartheid*

EDITED BY

John Henrik Clarke

Chairman, Commission on Education and Research,  
African Heritage Studies Association



African Heritage Studies Association

Publications Center

2286 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard  
New York, New York 10030 USA

*First Edition – 1979*  
*Original Language: English*

*Published by the*  
**AFRICAN HERITAGE STUDIES ASSOCIATION**

*An association of scholars of African descent dedicated to the preservation, interpretation and presentation of the historical and cultural heritage of African peoples, both on the ancestral soil of Mother Africa and in diaspora in the Americas and throughout the world.*

*In Cooperation With The*  
**UNITED NATIONS CENTRE AGAINST APARTHEID**

*All material in this publication may be freely reprinted. Acknowledgement, together with a copy of the publication containing the reprint, would be appreciated.*

# Table of Contents

## Page

Introduction by Leslie O. Harriman .....	vii
MESSAGES RECEIVED .....	1
SEQUENCE OF STATEMENTS .....	7
PAUL ROBESON: A VALIANT FIGHTER FOR FREEDOM AND PEACE	
Leslie O. Harriman .....	9
HE WORKED TO ESTABLISH THE DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL	
Fred O'Neal .....	16
PAUL ROBESON: A GIANT OF A MAN	
Andrew Young .....	17
A PIONEER FOR AFRICAN LIBERATION	
Lloyd L. Brown .....	19
A FIGHTER FOR THE UNION MOVEMENT	
Cleveland Robinson .....	24
PAUL ROBESON: A GREAT AMERICAN	
Rikhi Jaipal .....	27
HE SANG FOR US ALL	
Esther Jackson .....	29
PAUL ROBESON: THE TALLEST TREE IN OUR FOREST	
Gil Noble .....	33
PAUL ROBESON: A RELENTLESS FIGHTER FOR HUMAN HAPPINESS	
Peter Florin .....	35
HIS LEGACY MUST BE PRESERVED	
Jewel Gresham .....	37
AN ELOQUENT SPOKESMAN FOR OPPRESSED PEOPLE EVERYWHERE	
Mohamed Adam Osman .....	38

OUTSTANDING FIGHTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS	
M. A. Ibragimov .....	42
PAUL ROBESON AND THE COUNCIL ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS	
Dorothy Hunton .....	43
THEY TRIED TO BREAK HIM, BUT THEY DID NOT	
Moe Foner .....	47
HIS VOICE HAS NOT BEEN SILENCED	
Alexandre Verret .....	48
A TRIBUTE FROM FIDEL CASTRO	
Luis Gomez Anzardo .....	52
AN UNSURPASSED SON OF HIS PEOPLE	
Karen Talbot .....	54
A FRIEND OF THE OPPRESSED SOUTH AFRICAN PEOPLE	
Mfanafuthi J. Makatini .....	57
A SON'S TRIBUTE	
Paul Robeson, Jr. ....	59
CLOSING REMARKS	
Leslie O. Harriman .....	61

## Appendices

A.	Selected Statements from the Writings and Speeches of Paul Robeson on <i>apartheid</i> and the Struggle in Southern Africa.	
1.	Speech delivered at Protest Meeting, Friends' House, London, 25 March, 1949 .....	65
2.	Statement issued by Paul Robeson, Chairman of the Council on African Affairs, New York, 13 April, 1953 .....	67
3.	<i>Spotlight on Africa</i> , 13 August, 1953 .....	68
B.	Selected Statements about Paul Robeson and the Nature of His Commitment to the International Struggle for Justice and Peace .....	73
1.	Reprinted from: John Killens, "Paul Robeson: Portrait of a People's Artist," (Newsletter for the Institute for Arts and Humanities of Howard University). ....	73
2.	Excerpts from <i>Robeson: Labor's Forgotten Champion</i> by Dr. Charles H. Wright .....	74
3.	Paul Robeson: A Giant Among Men by William L. Patterson (reprinted from <i>Political Affairs</i> , May, 1969) .....	75
4.	Excerpt from <i>Paul Robeson: A Living National Treasure</i> by Margaret G. Borroughs .....	76
5.	Obituary: Paul Robeson by John Henrik Clarke (reprinted from <i>Africa</i> , No. 55, March 1976) .....	77
6.	Tributes Delivered at the Funeral Service for Paul Robeson on Tuesday, 27 January 1976 at the Mother A.M.E. Zion Church, New York, New York .....	78
	Reprint from:	
a.	Tribute by Paul Robeson, Jr. ....	78
b.	Tribute by Dr. George McMurray .....	79
7.	Excerpt from a Statement of an <i>Ad Hoc</i> Committee to End the Crimes Against Paul Robeson .....	80

- C. A Chronology of Major Events in The Life of Paul Robeson. (reprinted from Ervin A. Salk, *DuBois - Robeson: Two Giants of the 20th Century: The Story of an Exhibit and a Bibliography* (Chicago: Columbia College Press, 1977) ..... 81
- D. A Selected Bibliography of Published Writings By and About Paul Robeson by Ernest Kaiser ..... 85



# Introduction

During the International Anti-Apartheid Year, it is most appropriate that the United States Special Committee Against Apartheid should pay tribute to those early heroes who dedicated their lives to the struggle against racial discrimination and colonial oppression. Perhaps for the first time in its history the United Nations, under the auspices of the Special Committee, has broken the silence that has too often shrouded the accomplishments of these militant fighters for equality. The first such tribute was dedicated to Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, who through his writings and actions has often been deemed as the father of Pan-Africanism.

On 10 April 1978, another hero of African descent, another fighter against racial oppression in Africa and throughout the world was honoured by the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid. Paul Robeson, who throughout the world has been recognized as one of the most outstanding persons of our century — as Gil Noble calls him: *The Tallest Tree in Our Forest* — must also be recognized as one of the founders of the modern anti-apartheid movement.<sup>1</sup>

Paul Robeson has today been internationally recognized as an exceptional human being. Born in Princeton, New Jersey, the son of a former slave, Robeson excelled in every endeavour. As a young athlete, Robeson became one of the few football players to achieve all-American status two years simultaneously. Robeson was a universally acclaimed actor and singer. An outstanding scholar, Robeson mastered over twenty languages. Yet what was most amazing beyond his phenomenal professional success was his consistent commitment to the freedom of his own people throughout the world.

It was while Robeson was based in London (1926–1936) that he became increasingly aware both of the richness of African cultures and of the racial oppression and exploitation suffered by African peoples as a result of colonialism. While Robeson was in London he not only studied African languages, but also began writing articles

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Noble is the producer of the ABC television programme "Like It Is." He also produced the documentary film: *Paul Robeson The Tallest Tree in Our Forest*.

"championing the real but unknown glories of African cultures."<sup>2</sup> The political significance of Robeson's cultural analyses soon became evident. Robeson later wrote:

The British Intelligence came one day to caution me about the political meaning of my activities. For the question loomed of itself. If African Culture was as I insisted it was, what happens to the claim that it would take 1,000 years for Africans to become capable of self-rule.<sup>3</sup>

It was also through his interactions with Africans while in London, that Robeson became involved in the struggle of union movements; an involvement which he would pursue upon his return to the United States. According to Robeson it was as a result of a conversation with an African that he first began to examine the transformation of traditional cultures into modern socialist societies.

Upon his return to the United States in 1939, Robeson actively undertook his responsibilities as chairman of the International Committee on African Affairs (later called the Council on African Affairs after 1941). Under the able leadership of Robeson and Dr. W. Alphaeus Hunton, who became Educational Director of the Council in 1943, the Council developed into one of the first anti-imperialist and anti-*apartheid* movements in the United States. Its monthly bulletin *New Africa* (later called *Spotlight on Africa*) became a primary source of information on Africa both within the United States and internationally. *New Africa* chronicled the resistance of Africans to colonialism and exposed the exploitative conditions caused by American and European corporations in Africa. The publication was banned by the racist and colonial authorities of South Africa and the Belgian Congo.

The Council continuously attempted to influence the policy of the United States and other countries not only through its publications, but also through forums, mass rallies and protests. The Council was perhaps one of the earliest modern day movements to demand an end to colonialism and *apartheid* in Africa.

The scope of the Council's anti-colonial activities was broad. It exposed increasing United States control of Ethiopia, the presence of United States military bases in Morocco, conducted a campaign

<sup>2</sup> Robeson, Paul, "Here's My Story: A Thousand Years? No — Now's The Time For African Freedom," *Freedom*, June, 1953, Vol. III, No. 6, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

calling attention to jailed nationalists in Kenya and supported independence for India. However, a significant portion of the Council's activities were always focused towards bringing about change in South Africa.

From its inception representatives of the South African liberation movement were closely affiliated with the Council. Through receptions and forums the Council often provided these freedom fighters with the opportunity to meet international and national leaders when they had no official voice at the United Nations. One of the major campaigns of the Council was to prevent the annexation of Namibia by South Africa and to discredit South Africa's claim to be a legitimate representative of the black people there. Robeson wrote:

The immediate task is to utilize every channel of opinion and influence in order to bring these facts forcefully to the attention of the United Nations Assembly and to open the way to freedom for the peoples of Africa. The 'white supremacy' Government of General Smuts must not be allowed to annex South West Africa and thereby secure more thousands of Africans to exploit.<sup>4</sup>

Through massive rallies the Council helped to mobilize public opinion against the annexation of Namibia by South Africa. At the United Nations the Council actively provided literature and information which influenced delegates to reject South Africa's plan to absorb Namibia. The Council not only exposed the famine which occurred in South Africa in 1946 (which was virtually ignored by the American Press) but also mounted a solidarity campaign through which funds and thousands of cans of food were collected. Similarly the Council mounted solidarity campaigns for striking mine workers in South Africa (1946) and for the participants in the Campaign Against Unjust Laws (1952).

Throughout this period Robeson not only provided dynamic leadership for the Council but also was recognized internationally as an outspoken critic of colonialism and racism and increasingly an open admirer of socialism. Robeson supported the rights of workers to organize and was a cherished honorary member of more than one major union, both in the United States and Europe. It was a result of both his outspoken commitment to the freedom of all people and his immense international popularity that a campaign was begun by his own Government to silence him. In 1947, the

<sup>4</sup> Council on African Affairs, Open Letter by Robeson, n.d.

Council on African Affairs was listed as a subversive organization by the United States Attorney-General. In 1949, the year during which Robeson spoke at the Paris Peace Congress, eighty-five concerts in which Robeson was scheduled to appear were cancelled. As Lloyd Brown indicates, the cancellation of the passports of Robeson and his wife seemed to be directly related to his advocacy for the freedom of African peoples.

The opponents of human rights attempted to separate Robeson from the people of the world whom he loved. Robeson never appeared on television. In spite of his fierce commitment to international solidarity, Robeson never addressed the United Nations. His autobiography was ignored by the American press, his name removed from accounts of black actors and musicians. For nearly seven years no major concert hall was open to him.

Yet the people of the world continued to love Robeson. In his own country he was welcomed in the Black Church and in union halls. When Robeson was denied the right to perform in Canada, tens of thousands of Canadians jammed the border to hear his concert loud over loudspeakers from the United States side. Workers in England jammed a concert hall to hear Robeson sing over a (trans-Atlantic telephone call). Nigeria bestowed on Robeson the "Champion of African Freedom" Award in 1950. Committees throughout the world were formed to demand the restoration of Robeson's passport.

It is therefore a sign of the new world that we are building that Robeson is at long last honoured by peoples throughout the world through the United Nations. Many of those who participated in this historic tribute are unheralded freedom fighters themselves. It is an honour for the Special Committee to break the silence which has too often surrounded the heroic contributions of Paul Robeson and others of African descent to the promotion of African freedom, human dignity and peace everywhere. It is also thoroughly justified that Robeson was one of the first to receive a medal from the United Nations in honour of his anti-apartheid activities in October, 1978. It is in the spirit of a new day in the world and in the United Nations, that the record of the Robeson meeting is here presented.

**MESSAGES RECEIVED BY SPECIAL  
COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID  
IN CONNEXION WITH OBSERVANCE OF  
80TH BIRTH OF PAUL ROBESON**

*Telegramme from the Revered Canon L. John Collins, Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral and President, International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, London*

"I am delighted to have the opportunity of joining with the Special Committee Against Apartheid in paying tribute to my old friend Paul Robeson on what would have been his 80th birthday. Paul Robeson was a rare and gifted man who was always ready to use his outstanding talents to help the oppressed and under-privileged. He sponsored the cause of the oppressed in southern Africa long before it became well known or popular. In the early 1950's before the Defence and Aid Fund had achieved international recognition, Paul Robeson responded with characteristic generosity to an appeal from me to come and sing in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, on behalf of those suffering political persecution in South Africa. It was one of the most memorable and moving evenings in my life. Paul Robeson was a great man and a wonderfully warm human being. We honour his memory best by redoubling our efforts in the struggle against racial discrimination."

*Telegramme from Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo, President of the South African Indian Congress*

"Our people fighting against *apartheid* tyranny recall with deep gratitude invaluable assistance rendered by him to our liberation struggle. He established the Council of African Affairs which sponsored Xuma's visit from the ANC to the United Nations. His eternal monument to this outstanding world figure for his pioneering work in mobilizing world public opinion against racism and colonialism and for peace which finds worthy reflections in the decisions of the United Nations and admirable work of the Special Committee. Best tribute we can pay him is to make this United Nations Year against *Apartheid* a tremendous success."

*Telegramme from the Paul Robeson Committee  
of the German Democratic Republic*

"On the occasion of the 80 anniversary of Paul Robeson on 9 April, 1978. The Paul Robeson Committee of the German Democratic Republic addresses itself to the United Nations Special Committee against *Apartheid*.

Paul Robeson was an outstanding fighter against racism, colonialism and imperialism and in particular against the oppression of the black people in the world. As early as in 1937, he helped found the Council on African Affairs and was its Co-Chairman. That council which worked till 1955 to mobilize a broad strata of black and white American people for supporting the national liberation movements in Africa and combating *apartheid* which gained international recognition under his leadership. Paul Robeson made excellent use of his art to fight against racism and for the liberation and equality of the black people everywhere in the world. He clearly realized that the white working man cannot liberate himself as long as the black working man remains to be enslaved.

In 1964, with the approval of Paul Robeson and his family, the Paul Robeson Committee was founded in the German Democratic Republic. Under its auspices the unique Paul Robeson Archives was established which is to preserve for future generations, the work and art of Paul Robeson. An important part of the activities of the committee and the archive is to organize academic conferences, lectures and other events related to Paul Robeson, to issue booklets and records and to maintain close contacts with workers' brigades bearing his name; and with the Paul Robeson High Schools in Berlin and Leipzig. The Paul Robeson Commemorative Medal will be first awarded on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.

We deem it particularly important to honour Paul Robeson and help fulfill his heritage in this year, the year of intensified struggle against *apartheid*."

*Telegram from Mr. Steiniger, Chairman of the United Nations Association of the German Democratic Republic*

"The United Nations Association of the German Democratic Republic welcomed the news that on 10 April the United Nations Special Committee Against *Apartheid* is to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the birth of Paul Robeson, the great American actor, singer and fervent civil rights activist.

In Paul Robeson we value above all the courageous opponent of racism and racial discrimination. As citizens of a State born of the

international struggle against the imperialist and racist Nazi régime, we are profoundly grateful for the achievements of this great humanist. He committed his noble art and his entire being to the struggle against racist ignominy and for human dignity and the achievement of human rights in his own country as in others.

Paul Robeson matched his words with action in the struggle to implement the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Today, he would of course be a champion of the right of the peoples of southern Africa to full political and material independence and an opponent of all neocolonialist solutions. The consistent anti-racist decision adopted on that issue by the most recent plenary session of the the World Federation of United Nations Associations is a tribute to the memory of Paul Robeson. As a professor of international law at Humboldt University in Berlin, I also take personal pride in the fact that Paul Robeson became a doctor honoris causa of our University, especially since I was one of the innumerable victims of the racist terror of Hitlerite fascism.

Permit us to convey to you on this occasion our best wishes for the further success of the Special Committee against Apartheid, of which you are Chairman."

*Telegramme from Mr. Alfred Nzo, Secretary-General, African National Congress of South Africa, Lusaka*

"The African National Congress of South Africa on the occasion of the eightieth birthday of Robeson pays tribute to his relentless determination to end racism, exploitation and oppression of peoples in the United States and the world over. The late Robeson's contributions towards liberation and independence of Africa made him a true champion of African freedom. Paul Robeson, Chairman of the International Committee on African Affairs drew public attention to the total suppression of the African mine labour strike in 1946 and discrimination legislation in South Africa. The African National Congress of South Africa salutes him.

His involvement in the struggle of our people of South Africa earned him his household name in South Africa. His dedication to liberation of Africa was an inspiration to all oppressed people of South Africa."

*Telegramme from Mr. Sidney Poitier, actor, Culver City, California*

"This recognition by the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid of Paul Robeson's great contribution to African

freedom and especially the struggle for human dignity in southern Africa, has earned the applause and support of countless numbers of people the world over who hope, pray and work for freedom, justice, and decency to triumph in southern Africa as indeed it must and will throughout the world. For myself and the many friends of Paul Robeson, please pass our appreciation on to the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid in this much deserved recognition of a wonderful man and a great artist."

*Telegramme from H. E. Mr. France Albert Rene, President of Seychelles*

"I regret my Foreign Minister is unable to attend the meeting of your Special Committee Against Apartheid to pay tribute to the memory of Paul Robeson who strived so long and hard for the cause to abolish racialism and colour discrimination and to his particularly invaluable assistance to the struggle for liberation in South Africa. The government and the people of Seychelles express their full solidarity and wish every success to the Committee of which you are Chairman in its endeavours to bring about the end of abhorrent apartheid."

*Message from Mr. Ossie Davis, Chairman, South African Freedom Committee, and Miss Ruby Dee*

"Paul Robeson fully recognized, as did Dr. W. E. B DuBois and many others that blacks in America and blacks in Africa are interconnected in many ways: not only are we one culturally and historically, but also because we two peoples are still joined as common victims of racism and economic exploitation. Paul taught us that neither Africans, nor Afro-Americans would ever become free until we joined in common struggle together with all those who fight the common fight against war, against poverty and ignorance, against colonialism, and most especially against apartheid. Robeson lives because struggle lives!

"We salute Ambassador Harriman, and the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid for this timely tribute to an Africanist and a scholar . . . a giant, . . . a prophet, . . . a socialist lover of all mankind, . . . and, most of all, to a fighter! — Paul Robeson."

*Message from Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Former President of Nigeria*

"One great attribute I learned from the life of Paul Robeson was his sportsmanship which gave him spiritual strength and fortitude



in spite of man-made handicaps. As an undergraduate of Rutgers University in New Jersey, he played football, baseball, basketball, and participated in boxing and athletics. These events inculcated in him the spirit to lose gracefully and to win magnanimously.

"When he graduated from Law School of Columbia University in New York, Robeson realized that legal knowledge and sportsmanship were compatible. As a lawyer he fought against man's inhumanity to man. As a sportsman he had the spunk to give and take, but he never stooped to below the belt.

"He role in Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones* helped to direct his attention to problems of race relations in Africa. Thenceforth, he joined the crusade for freedom of people of African descent everywhere. He suffered persecution and was victimized for conviction in his belief in racial equality and social justice.

"Paul Robeson then emerged as a leader who paid the price of leadership in all its implications. It is proper that we should remember him as a pearl of great price everywhere. Humanity yearns for the basic freedoms and fundamental rights.

"I with the Special Committee Against *Apartheid* success in its historic efforts to reclaim humanity and restore the dignity of man."



**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE  
AGAINST APARTHEID ON THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE BIRTH OF PAUL ROBESON ON 10 APRIL 1978**

**Chairman: His Excellency  
Mr. Leslie O. Harriman (Nigeria)**

**SEQUENCE OF STATEMENTS:**

- The Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Leslie O. Harriman (Nigeria)
- Mr. Fred O'Neal, President Emeritus of Actors Equity Association,  
and President of Associated Actors and Artists of America
- His Excellency Mr. Andrew Young, Permanent Representative of  
the United States of America to the United Nations
- Mr. Lloyd L. Brown, Afro-American writer, novelist, and editor
- Mr. Cleveland Robinson, President of the Distributive Workers of  
America, Secretary-Treasurer of District 65 of the Distributive  
Workers of America and First Vice-President of the Coalition of  
Black Trade Unionists.
- His Excellency Mr. Rikhi Jaipal, Permanent Representative of India  
to the United Nations
- Mrs. Esther Jackson, Managing Editor of *Freedomways*
- Mr. Gil Noble, Television producer
- His Excellency Mr. Peter Florin, Permanent Representative of the  
German Democratic Republic to the United Nations, and De-  
puty Foreign Minister
- Dr. Jewel Gresham, Professor of English at Nassau Community  
College
- Mr. Mohamed Adam Osman, Representative of the Sudan, First  
Secretary at the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Repub-  
lic of the Sudan to the United Nations

Mr. M. A. Ibragimov, President of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee

Mrs. Dorothy Hunton, Former Associate of the Council on African Affairs

Mr. Moe Foner, Executive Secretary, District 1199, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, AFL-CIO

His Excellency Mr. Alexandre Verret, Deputy Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations

Dr. Luis Gomez Anzardo, Chargé d' Affaires of Cuba

Mrs. Karen Talbot, Permanent Representative to the United Nations for the World Peace Council

Mr. Mfanafuthi J. Makatini, Representative of the African National Congress of South Africa, Member of the National Executive Committee, Deputy Director of the International Department for International Affairs

Mr. Paul Robeson, Jr., President of the Paul Robeson Archives

The Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Leslie O. Harriman (Nigeria)

## PAUL ROBESON: A VALIANT FIGHTER FOR FREEDOM AND PEACE

*Statement by The Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Leslie O. Harriman (Nigeria)*

I declare open the special meeting of the Special Committee against *Apartheid* devoted to a tribute to the late Paul Robeson on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.

On behalf of the Special Committee, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the delegations, all associates, and friends of Paul Robeson who have joined us today in this observance.

We meet here today to pay tribute to one of the great men of this century, a valiant fighter for freedom and peace, and a pioneer in the movement of solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa and their national liberation movement — Paul Robeson.

Robeson was a great athlete as a student at Rutgers University where he won letters in four sports — football, basketball, baseball, and track. He was one of the greatest actors and greatest singers of all time. He was an intellectual, a lawyer from Columbia, *et al.*

He was also a great scholar who mastered over twenty languages, including the languages of East and West Africa — and made a significant contribution to the study of African history, linguistics, music, and folklore.

Paul Robeson was not just a theoretician. Paul Robeson was not just an activist. Paul Robeson attempted to interrelate, and he did interrelate with the peoples of the world, be they from Africa West, from Africa East, from Asia, India, Soviet Union, and Spain, in order to salvage what was in his conscience — the liberty of man, the valiant and noble instincts of man, in order to salvage even European Spain.

A son of a slave who ran away to freedom, he rose to heights of glory, despite all the handicaps laid by the racists, as one of the most accomplished men of his time. Yet he remained, throughout his life, a loyal son of his oppressed people in the United States and in Africa. He declared:

“ . . . in my music, my plays, my films, I want to carry always this central idea: To be African. Multitudes of men have died for less worthy ideas; it is even more eminently worth living for.”

Paul Robeson thus became the living refutation of racist myths. He was a personification of the unbreakable link between Africa and the black people of the United States, a link which could not be destroyed by centuries of cruelty and inhumanity meted out to the

people of African descent. Because of him, millions of people in all continents learned to reject the prejudices inculcated by the racists and to respect black people, their culture, their identity, and dignity.

Paul Robeson dedicated his superb talents and all his energies to the freedom and human dignity of the black people; to the struggle for the emancipation of all oppressed peoples; and to the cause of peace and international cooperation.

When Paul Robeson died two years ago, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Kurt Waldheim, declared:

"Throughout his life, Paul Robeson defended with courage and dignity, basic principles of equality among all men which are at the very heart of the United Nations Charter . . .

"Mr. Robeson's career as a distinguished artist and an eloquent spokesman for human dignity contributed enormously to greater understanding among peoples and significantly advanced the human condition."

The Board of Directors of the Screen Actors Guild pointed out that "Paul Robeson exemplified in life the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

We, in this Committee, the Special Committee against Apartheid of the United Nations, have been particularly aware of the magnificent contribution of Paul Robeson as a pioneer in promoting solidarity with the struggles of African peoples for freedom.

Paul Robeson was a founder and chairman of the International Committee on African Affairs formed on 28 January 1937 — (later called the Council on African Affairs after 1941) — to inform American public opinion about freedom struggles in Africa and to encourage support for those struggles.

Wherever the colonialists tried to suppress the African people, Robeson and the Council on African Affairs raised their voice in firm and affirmative denunciation — when a strike of workers in Ghana was suppressed in 1948; when African miners seeking a living wage were killed in Enugu, Nigeria, in 1949; when the British Government plotted in 1950 to deprive Seretse Khama of Botswana of his chieftainship because he married a white woman; when the British colonialists unleashed terror against Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and his followers in Kenya in 1954; and when the French colonialists killed nationalists in Tunisia in 1952.

The Council provided humanitarian assistance to the struggling African peoples and pressed for action by the United Nations in support of freedom. The publications of the Council were an impor-

tant source of information on the colonialists manoeuvres in Africa, and on the struggles of the African workers and freedom movements.

Above all, Paul Robeson and his associates were unswerving in their solidarity with the struggling people in that bastion of racism, the Union of South Africa, and that is why we honour him today because we are a committee on South Africa and against apartheid.

As early as 1937 the International Committee sponsored lectures by Professor D. D. T. Jabavu and Dr. Alfred Xuma, two prominent leaders of South Africa.

As early as 1946, the Council on African Affairs submitted a memorandum to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, calling for an investigation of racism in South Africa, to be followed by appropriate action by the Security Council.

On 9 June 1946, it organized a massive rally of 15,000 people in Madison Square Garden to denounce the racist régime of South Africa and oppose its plans for the annexation of Namibia.

Later, in 1946, the Council hosted the first delegation of the South African liberation movement to the United Nations. This delegation consisted of Dr. Xuma, then President of the African National Congress of South Africa; Mr. H. A. Naidoo, a leader of the South African Indian Congress; and Mr. H. M. Bassner, a senator representing the Africans in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. It organized many meetings in support of the African freedom struggle. In August, 1946, the Council organized a large picket line in front of the South African Consulate to protest its racist laws and the brutal massacre of African miners during their historic strike.

It tore the mask off the then Prime Minister of South Africa, so-called Field Marshal Jan Smuts, who was being paraded in the West as a liberal when he was in fact racist. It denounced the hypocrisy of the so-called "Free World" which betrayed in professions and its promises, and allied with the racist régime of South Africa in its oppression of the black people of South African and Namibia. (We ought to recall the moves to limit the Atlantic Charter to the Caucasians, with the elimination from its scope of people across the colour line throughout the world).

In 1952, when the South African people launched a "Campaign of Defiance against Unjust Laws," the Council on African Affairs raised funds to support the liberation movement and organized petitions to the Presidents of the United States.

We have today anti-apartheid movements and solidarity movements in many countries of the world which are playing a crucial role in the international campaign against apartheid in cooperation with the United Nations. These are all fairly new, and the first of these movements, we must recall, was founded by Paul Robeson and the black people of the United States.

On this occasion, we must recall also the dedicated work of the colleagues of Robeson: Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, the father of Pan-Africanism and co-chairman of the Council on African Affairs; Dr. Alphaeus Hunton, the Executive Secretary of the Council, whose wife, Dorothy, is with us today; Mrs. Eslanda Goode Robeson who, along with Dr. Hunton, was the representative of the Council at the United Nations; and many others.

For those who doubt the coherence and continuity of this struggle, I wish to quote Paul Robeson's comments on Dr. DuBois. He said in his book *Here I Stand*:

"The stature and quality of Dr. DuBois' life and work cannot be challenged: He is the foremost scholar and sage among us. He is the father of our freedom movement today. In wisdom of mind, integrity of character and selfless dedication to humanity our Dr. DuBois is outstanding not only in Negro life: He is one of the truly great Americans of our century."

In the dedication of his book, to Eslanda Goode Robeson, Robeson wrote of his wife:

"For your untiring labours in the interests of the African peoples; for your devotion to the struggle of our folk here in America for full freedom; for your constructive analyses of the momentous events at the United Nations, which affect all manner of human societies; for the deeply shared belief in, and labours for the attainment of a lasting peace for all the peoples of the earth, and deepest gratitude for your help and guidance over many years of struggle, aspiration, achievement, and the constant awareness of a better future for our children and grandchildren."

This was a man, perhaps born ahead of his time, who had a vision like that of Dr. DuBois. Paul Robeson was not egocentric, he was not parochial. Paul Robeson first and foremost talked about the folk in America and in the Caribbean; he talked about the promise of the United Nations; he talked about his deep belief in people all over the world. I recall that Paul Robeson accepted the ten principles of Bandung as the principles of his future foreign policy and the principles of his future standards.



In the course of this year, the Special Committee intends to publicize the contribution of Paul Robeson to the struggle for liberation in South Africa, and to bestow on him a special award on behalf of the Special Committee.

But we recognize that Robeson's contribution goes far beyond the struggle of the South African people and the mandate of this Special Committee.

No words can adequately describe the personality and the life of Paul Robeson. He was a man of immense sincerity and generosity, an incorruptible leader of his people, a true internationalist, and the epitome of courage and conviction.

When the racists and colonialists were busy spreading contempt for the heritage of the black people, Robeson pointed with pride to the nobility of the African civilizations. He reminded the world that much of what was distinctive in American culture was the creation of the black people.

He had great faith and confidence in the potentialities of his people, when they broke their chains, to enrich the world culture.

He recognized the truth that the freedom and human dignity of the black people of the United States were inextricably tied up with the freedom and human dignity of the people of the continent of Africa and the Caribbean. Thus, while he was demanding a law against the criminal lynching and mob violence against blacks in the United States in 1946, he was also calling for the freedom of the people of Africa and the Caribbean.

Indeed, as a friend of many of the leaders of the revolutions in Asia, Africa and Latin America, he saw that the struggle for emancipation of the black people had become a part of the irresistible march of all oppressed peoples to freedom.

His great voice immortalized not only the songs of his people but the songs of freedom of many other peoples in many of the world's languages — Spanish, Russian, Finnish, Yiddish, German, and Chinese — in many battlefields of freedom.

When many others were overawed by the power of the colonialists and racists, he never wavered in his faith that the oppressed peoples would triumph.

He rejected so-called gradualism, which was still being advocated after repeated betrayals of the black people, and called for freedom now.

"... too long, too long have my people wept and mourned.  
We're tired of this denial of decent existence."

He was not one who would beg the oppressors for freedom nor accept the crumbs from the master's table. He recognized that there can be no freedom without a struggle, without sacrifice.

"Our freedom," he said, "is going to cost so many lives . . . When we talk of freedom we don't discuss lives."

While fighting for his people's freedom, Paul Robeson — like Dr. DuBois, Dr. Martin Luther King, and Marcus Garvey, and like many other leaders of the oppressed peoples — had a vision which encompassed not only the liberation of his own people but the building of a new world.

He believed that "the common people of all nations are truly brothers in a great family of mankind." He wrote in his book *Here I Stand*:

"This belief in the oneness of humankind, about which I have often spoken in concerts and elsewhere, has existed in me side by side with my deep attachment to the cause of my own race."

I would add that in his conviction, in his protestation, Paul Robeson, like Dr. DuBois, was never understood by most people in his own country. But he was foremost in building the links, the bridges, between East and West. I watched Gil Noble asking, in his film on Robeson, the question, "why is he not in our history books?"

We cannot but recall that petty and short-sighted men in his own homeland — steeped in the alliance with colonial powers and with racism — sought to silence this great patriot and humanist.

They tried to take vengeance on him for the advance of the irresistible movement of liberation. Paul Robeson stood up — never wavering, never compromising, and declared:

"I will never retreat 1000th part of an inch."

And he lived and died with that principle. His towering figure became the symbol of Africa and of the black man — determined to be free, determined to assert the dignity of man. The more he was scandalized by the racists the more he was revered by humanity was the "purest kind of a guy."

In his lifetime, Paul Robeson could see the defeat after defeat suffered by his persecutors and the victories of the forces of freedom. He wrote in 1955:

" . . . the verdict of history, which we are reading in the stormy events of our day, is unmistakably clear. Those forces which stand against the freedom of nations are not only wrong—they are doomed to utter defeat and disaster."

In his public statement on August 28, 1964, he pointed out:

"The issue of freedom now for Negro Americans has become the main issue confronting the nations, and the peoples of the whole world are looking to see it finally resolved.

"When I wrote my book *Here I Stand*, in 1958, that 'the time is now' some people thought that perhaps my watch was fast (and maybe it was a little), but most of us seem to be running on the same time — now."

And as I said earlier, probably Paul Robeson was born, like Dr. DuBois and Martin Luther King, Jr., the great heroes of people of African descent, ahead of their time.

In his last public message in June 1974, he said:

"It has been most gratifying to me in retirement to observe that the new generation that has come along is vigorously outspoken for peace and liberation . . . To all the young people, black and white, who are so passionately concerned with making a better world, and to all the old-timers who have been involved in that struggle, I say: *Right on!*"

This is the testament of Paul Robeson we shall cherish.

As early as 1950, Paul Robeson declared that "the little clique that rules South Africa are baying at the moon."

"For it is later than they think in the procession of history, and that rich land must one day soon return to the natives on whose backs the proud skyscrapers of the Johannesburg rich were built."

His watch was a little fast perhaps, but his confident prediction will surely come true.

To that end the Special Committee makes its pledge today in the name of Robeson, in the presence of his loyal friends and colleagues.

### *The Chairman*

I now have the honour and privilege to give the floor to the first speaker on my list, Mr. Fred O'Neal, President-Emeritus of Actors Equity Association, and President of Associated Actors and Artists of America.

A friend and comrade of Paul Robeson, Mr. O'Neal is also Chairman of the Paul Robeson Committee, which was established by Actors Equity, to commemorate the principles espoused by Mr. Robeson.

**HE WORKED TO ESTABLISH THE DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL**  
*Statement by Mr. Fred O'Neal, President Emeritus of Actors Equity Association, and President of Associated Actors and Artists of America:*

**Mr. Chairman** and guests, my remarks will be rather brief since we do have several speakers all of whom together will give us a good summary of Mr. Robeson, the man.

When he left the concert field at the height of his career, this man, more than any other in this country, could have had anything that he wanted. He left that career and he was aware at the time of the fact that his critics would be many. But I am sure that he felt there was a much greater service that he could render to his fellow man in the field of human relations. The universality of his mission was brought home to us, and to me particularly, while in London in 1947 and 1948. There we visited the student activities from time to time, and the men and women students from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, South America and other parts of the world. They would invariably enquire about Mr. Robeson and sometimes about Dr. DuBois. These were the only two Americans they enquired about. I think that they knew of his efforts against apartheid in South Africa, against colonialism in other parts of the continent and other parts of the world. They realized that his deep concern was not only for his own people but for all people. And when he was criticized rather severely by a few black leaders, I remember he simply said: "We are all brothers and sisters in adversity."

The Robeson I knew was not a vindictive person. He had the wisdom to know that all men and women were not of the same mind; that conditioning, traditions, past experiences, and fear to stray from the norm, influenced some of the men and women. It could be fear of political reprisals, religious fears, fears of social standing or financial losses, all of which could be the determining factor in shaping their reactions. Of course, today, his critics as well as his supporters, are joined in the realization of the importance of the principles that he espoused, principles that apply to all races, nationalities, etc. He worked towards the establishment and the recognition of the dignity of the individual.

In 1971, when Actors Equity Association set up the Paul Robeson Committee, one of the five principles to be considered by the judges of candidates for the Paul Robeson Award, was the dignity of the individual. The first of those awards, I am very happy to say, was given to Mr. Robeson himself and accepted by his son, Paul, Jr. I was glad that we were able to give it to him while he was still alive.

Yesterday, Gil Noble did a rebroadcast of his 90-minute documentary film, titled "The Tallest Tree in Our Forest." Of course, there are other trees in our forest: Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, Monroe Trotter, Harriet Tubman, Adam Powell, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, Frederick Douglass and many others. All of these people serve to remind us that we are born debtors to generations past, debtors to past leaders as well as followers. We cannot repay the debt to those who passed on, but we can do so for generations present and generations to come. We can and we must make every effort to do so by serving our fellow man to the best of our ability. I say this with a full understanding that we all have our weaknesses. But when we, in our own honest self-examination, determine that which must be done, then we must proceed without fear or favour, as Mr. Robeson did.

And so I say of his passing: Well done, our good and faithful servant! May he take his well deserved rest in that celestial hereafter!

### *The Chairman*

The United Nations Special Committee against *Apartheid*, and all friends of Paul Robeson here, are deeply indebted to the statement of Mr. Fred O'Neal, and we do appreciate his coming here.

The next speaker is H. E. Mr. Andrew Young, Permanent Representative of the United Nations, a good friend who needs no introduction except that he is the President of the Security Council for this month and he has some other preoccupations. We give him the floor.

### **PAUL ROBESON: A GIANT OF A MAN**

*Statement by His Excellency Mr. Andrew Young, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations:*

Mr. Chairman, let me thank you and the Special Committee against *Apartheid* of the United Nations for helping us as citizens of these United States to reconstruct a heritage that has been denied us in many respects.

I knew Paul Robeson as a child, but I knew him largely as a concert artist, as an actor. I knew him as a great football player, and I knew him as a lawyer. I knew him as an outstanding scholar. I knew him as a giant of a man who was accomplished in every conceivable way. But at no point in my childhood did anybody

make me aware of the nature of his political commitments. It was as though his political commitments had to be silenced. In a sense Paul Robeson's political life was buried alive because in his young manhood, a bold black man was intolerable.

The man who in a sense broke through this silence in our country forever was Martin Luther King, Jr., and there is a strange connection between the two. For I first began to know of the political life of Paul Robeson through my associations with Harry Belafonte. Belafonte was a link between the Robeson period when young actors were also involved politically, and that of Martin Luther King, Jr., when he was a chief fund-raiser and spokesman for the movement. There was a statement that Harry Belafonte read in the film documentary of Martin Luther King, Jr., that I would like to read in tribute to Paul Robeson, for I think it applies equally to him:

"Sometimes, yes sometimes, I say sometimes, the good Lord accepts his own perfection, and closes his eyes and goes ahead and takes his own good time and makes himself a man. Yes, sometimes that man gets the hold of an idea of what is possible for him to do, and that man lets that idea guide him as he grows and struggles and stumbles and sorrows, until finally he comes into his own God-given shape and achieves his own individual lonely place in this world.

"It does not happen very often, no, but when it does, when it does, even the stones will cry out in witness to his vision, and the hills and towers will echo his words and deeds, and his examples will live in the hearts of men forever.

"The Master does not make many men like that, because that kind of man is dangerous to the sloppy ways of the world; that kind of man loves truth even more than he loves his life, or his wife, or his children, because he has been designed to set aside to do the hard tasks that have to be done. That kind of man will do what he sees as justice even when the earth yawns and swallows him down. Even then his deeds will persist in the land forever.

"So you look at him, you look at him a while and be thankful that the Lord let such a man touch our lives, even if it were only for a little while."

Mr. Chairman, I am thankful that Paul Robeson was able to touch our lives, and that through the work of this Committee, and through the inspiration of the many people who have come here to pay tribute to him, he will continue to touch our lives and continue to inspire and enlighten generations yet unborn.

## *The Chairman*

I thank Ambassador Andrew Young for his statement.

Our next speaker is Mr. Lloyd Brown, an Afro-American writer, novelist and editor who has been closely associated with the Paul Robeson family for many years. He resigned as managing editor of *Masses and Mainstream* in 1952 to work full time with Mr. Robeson. He served as literary collaborator of Mr. Robeson's book *Here I Stand*. He is now completing a biography of Mr. Robeson to which we are all looking forward.

## **A PIONEER FOR LIBERATION**

*Statement by Mr. Lloyd L. Brown, Afro-American writer, novelist and editor:*

Mr. Chairman and friends, how wonderful it is to celebrate the 80th birthday of Paul Robeson here at the United Nations. If ever there was a man who might be said to personify the United Nation's ideal of universality, it was that great Afro-American who, as artist and man, dedicated his life to the principle he so often referred to as "the oneness of mankind." And if the United Nations is the perfect setting for this celebration, it might be noted too that equally appropriate is the sponsorship by the Special Committee Against Apartheid.

As the Muse of History picks up her pen to record today's event, she will make note of the fact that this is the second time a notable celebration of Robeson's birthday was held on New York's East Side. And as she writes, the Muse will marvel at the coincidence that the cause of African liberation was central to both occasions.

The earlier event, which occurred in 1944 on Robeson's 46th birthday, was reported in the *New York Herald Tribune* with this headline: "ROBESON URGES U.S. TO ASSIST AFRICAN PEOPLE." The subheading added: "At Birthday Party, He Calls for Pressure on the State Department." That celebration, which was held at the 17th Regiment Armory at 34th Street and Park Avenue, was attended by a capacity crowd of 8,000. It was reported that another "5,000 were turned away." Please note that the sponsoring organization then was an earlier "special committee against apartheid," namedly, the Council on African Affairs that had been established under Robeson's leadership in 1937.

The *Tribune's* readers were told that "Mr. Robeson, who hopes to see self-government for African peoples as a result of the war,

urged the audience to exert pressure on the State Department to intervene in behalf of the Africans." And his warning was quoted: "It is impossible to keep 150 million Africans in slavery and think we can be free here."

As we know, one result of that war was the establishment of the United Nations, and from the very beginning of that international body the Council on African Affairs sought to arouse American public opinion to pressure the State Department to support independence for the African colonies. Always in the forefront of that effort, waged by Robeson and such distinguished co-workers in the Council as Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, Dr. Alphaeus Hunton and others, was the goal of black liberation in South Africa.

Thus in June 1946, as Chairman of the Council, Paul Robeson published in the *New York Times* a statement entitled, "An Appeal for African Freedom — A Message to American and the United Nations." In that appeal, Robeson charged that 93 percent of the continent of Africa was still under colonial subjection. Nothing that although the peoples of Africa "are barred from the United Nations," Robeson stressed that, "they ask not for the promises of a remote freedom, but for ACTION NOW to end their enslavement and oppression."

Then Robeson posed this crucial question: "Will the Union of South Africa's legalized fascist-like practice of racial oppression be outlawed, and that state's mandate over South West Africa be revoked?"

Today, more than thirty years later, those words of Robeson still thunder their message to America, to the United Nations, and yes, to all of us: To do all that is necessary to achieve the immediate and unconditional abolition of the *apartheid* system of South Africa, and the speedy liberation of that former mandate, Namibia.

The whole world has been shocked again and again by the brutal practice of "banning" imposed by the racist regime of South Africa against those who challenge that minority rule. Well, friends, on this occasion as we recall Paul Robeson's pioneering services to African liberation, we should also remember that the despicable practice of banning was in fact imposed upon him right here in his own homeland.

The first step of that banishment, which in time became quite total, came in August 1950, when the State Department invalidated Robeson's passport. The only reason given for denying the noted artist his constitutional right to travel was that to permit him to go abroad "would be contrary to the best interests of the United



States." Exactly what those interests were was not spelled out until two years later, when, in replying to a legal action brought by Robeson, the State Department let the truth slip out.

It happened like this: Robeson's lawyers had asserted that in addition to needing a passport to practice his profession as an international concert singer and actor, he was also prevented from serving as a leader in the worldwide movement for peace and colonial liberation. In their reply, the State Department lawyers argued that the passport denial was fully justified, "in view of the applicant's frank admission that he has been extremely active politically in behalf of the independence of the colonial peoples of Africa." And they went on to say: "the diplomatic embarrassment that could arise from the presence abroad of such a political meddler, travelling under the protection of an American passport, is easily imaginable."

Now, of course, that was a serious blunder — to indicate in an official document that the advocacy of colonial liberation, which the State Department always pretended to favour, was actually considered to be against the best interests of the United States. But what good does it do for the truth to slip out if nobody knows about it?

Though that story made on big headline: "STATE DEPARTMENT SAYS AFRICAN FREEDOM 'AGAINST BEST INTERESTS OF U.S.,"' that big headline was in a very small newspaper. That paper was called *Freedom*, and it was published only once a month in Harlem, by friends of Robeson. None of our great daily newspapers that nowadays clamour about "human rights" in other lands broke their editorial silence on the banning of Paul Robeson; and not one of those papers ever told its readers that Robeson was being punished for the crime of being "extremely active" on behalf of independence for oppressed nations.

Along with the banning of Robeson, another South-African-style action was taken by the United States Government. Just as in South Africa itself, where persons and organizations are proscribed under the so-called "Suppression of Communism Act," the leading anti-apartheid group in our country — the Council on African Affairs — was similarly attacked under the McCarran Act as a so-called "Communist front." Replying to that new blow in a statement in April 1953, Robeson reviewed the sixteen year record of the Council's work for Africa, and said:

"For such work as this, the Council, I am proud to say, has received many expressions of gratitude and appreciation from

African leaders. It would appear, therefore, that in branding the Council as 'subversive' . . . . United States authorities are at the same time branding as 'subversive' all the millions of Africans who are today determined to be free of the stigma of colonialism and white-supremacy domination."

Nevertheless, to the shame of our country, the only American organization then dedicated to African freedom was forced to disband in 1955. (Ironically, that was five years before the South African régime outlawed the African National Congress in that country.)

Throughout those difficult years when Paul Robeson was a central target of the reactionary forces, he never wavered from his stand as a militant anti-imperialist. In 1953, recalling how he had once been told by some so-called "scholarly authorities" that the African peoples would not be ready for independence for a thousand years, Robeson said this to an audience of Black Americans:

"A thousand years? No, Africa's time is now! We must see that and realize what it means to us, we American brothers and sisters of the Africans. We must see that we have a part to play in helping to pry loose the robbers' hold on Africa. For if we take a close look at the hands that are at Africa's throat, we will understand it all: *We know those hands.*"

During the ten years of his banishment, and later, Robeson was overjoyed to see the steady triumph of that gloriously "subversive" doctrine of self-government for subjugated peoples. Just think: In 1952, when the State Department saw Robeson as a dangerous "meddler" for colonial freedom, there were only three independent nations in Africa. Now there are more than forty. (What a happy thought that is on Paul Robeson's birthday!)

Five years ago, in his message to the New York celebration of his 75th birthday, Robeson gave one last rousing cheer for that revolutionary upsurge. He said:

"I salute the colonial liberation movements in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, which have gained new inspiration and understanding from the heroic example of the Vietnamese people, who have once again turned back an imperialist aggressor."

Now Paul Robeson is two years dead; but his cause lives on.

In this setting it seems fitting for me to conclude with some words that Robeson sang during the great war against fascism. Though the United Nations had not yet been founded, that song was titled,

"United Nations," and was set to music composed by Dmitri Shostakovich. With all the power and beauty of his great voice and his great soul Paul stirred our hearts with these prophetic words:

"As sure as the sun meets the morning,  
And rivers run down to the sea,  
A new day for mankind is dawning,  
Our children shall live proud and free!  
United Nations on the march  
with flags unfurled,  
Together fight for victory—  
A free new world!"

### The Chairman

I thank Mr. Lloyd Brown for his statement.

The next speaker on my list is a distinguished trade union leader. Before calling on him, I must recall that Paul Robeson was a great supporter of the trade union movement and believed that with its support, the black people would destroy racism. He sang to workers struggling for their rights in many cities in the United States and in the mines of Scotland and Wales. He said in 1952:

"It has seemed strange to some that, having attained some status and acclaim as an artist I should devote so much time and energy to the problems and struggles of working men and women.

"To me, of course, it is not strange at all. I have simply tried never to forget the soil from which I sprang.

"Never to forget the rich but abused earth on the eastern coast of North Carolina where my father . . . was a slave; and where today many of my cousins and relatives still live in poverty and second-class citizenship . . .

"No, I can never forget 300-odd years of slavery and half-freedom . . ."

This Special Committee has paid great attention to encouraging trade union action against *apartheid* and racism in South Africa, and I would like to express our appreciation to the international and national trade unions for their strong commitment.

The next speaker is Mr. Cleveland Robinson, a trade union and civil rights leader for thirty years. He is now President of the Distributive Workers of America, a union of which Paul Robeson was a great friend; and First Vice-President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. A close associate of the late Dr. Martin Luther

King, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the administrative chairman of the historic March on Washington in August 1963.

Mr. Robinson had been personally associated with Paul Robeson since the early 1950's. He was one of the leaders of the campaigns to defend Robeson against attacks by his enemies.

Mr. Robinson has given generously of his time and energy in the cause of peace and freedom.

We are happy to have Mr. Robinson with us today.

### **A FIGHTER FOR THE UNION MOVEMENT**

*Statement by Mr. Cleveland Robinson, President of the Distributive Workers of America, Secretary-Treasurer of District 65 of the Distributive Workers of America and First Vice-President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists:*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your generous introduction, to guests on the platform and to friends in the audience. Let me say that it is a profound privilege for me to join with you on this auspicious occasion, the memorializing and celebrating of the 80th birthday of one of the greatest men of our century.

I hail from the Caribbean, from the island of Jamaica, where as a schoolboy I knew of Marcus Garvey. I could remember everybody running to his conventions in Kingston, and he brought to our consciousness our closeness and oneness with Africa.

I came to the country in 1944 and I was plummeted almost immediately into the trade union movement. I became a member of one of America's finest unions, if I may say so myself, District 65, and I do bring you greetings from the officers and members of that union. Paul Robeson was a very close friend and associate during those turbulent years. I can recount that as a young trade unionist, I almost sat at his feet, on formal and informal occasions, when we discussed the problems of the day; especially as it pertained to the oppression we as Black Americans were experiencing and its true relationship with colonialism and Africa. Not only did we discuss it in the halls of our Union, but in Harlem, and in the homes of our friends. I remember on Friday nights we would sit up until late hours thrashing out this question.

I got into the trade union movement as an immigrant and I was very active. Certainly, it did not escape the attention of the State

Department. Before long I found myself being questioned as to my closeness with Paul Robeson; I was being questioned as to my closeness with Dr. DuBois. For example, many of the affairs that would be held during that time in their honour were held at my union's headquarters. I asked my questioners then if they knew of any two individuals in the country who held more esteem and dignity than these gentlemen. They could not give me an answer. So I dumbfounded them and consequently I got my citizenship.

So much has already been said in terms of the greatness of this man that there is not much that I can add. We recall his close understanding of workers' problems, the many days and hours he spent in the union halls and the plant gates, the concerts that he sang for free — because we couldn't pay him — no union could pay Paul Robeson what he was worth in those days — and remind ourselves then that had he chosen a different path, a different course of action, he probably, whether alive or dead, would be worth millions today. But he chose to struggle for his people. He chose the path in which he subjected himself to vilifications and condemnations at the hands of the powerful. Racism in the United States was at its height in those days. It was not popular to fight for even what we call civil rights. Those were the days when lynching was the order of the day.

You can remember way back in the 1940's, Emmett Till, Willie McGee, the Scotsboro boys. All of these gave testimony to the kind of conditions that Black Americans were subjected to.

Coming from the West Indies, I must tell you that we had our problems. We were a colonized people, but I never had the experience that I came to find in this country. We have to remember too what was done to black Americans to get them alienated from Africa. I can remember the days when talking to Black American citizens they wouldn't want to hear about Africa. "Them savages," you know, that is what they were taught. I can remember when students started coming from all parts of Africa. When they reached here, the powers-that-be would gather them and put them into the finest homes. They would keep them away from Harlem. They would make it so that it was hard for them even to associate with us black Americans, because they did not want us to unite. They continued that same programme which they had ever since the days of slavery of dividing and conquering. It was Paul's missionary work that enlightened many of us to understand that freedom is indivisible, and that if freedom is to come to us here in America, there must be freedom in Africa.

I could go on and on speaking about those days and the kind of oppression that we experienced. Because unless we know it as it was, then we cannot even focus on the future. Remnants of those conditions still exist today in our country. We must not forget that. Not all of use are enlightened to the truth. Not every black American understands his true role as an American and as a black man, or a black person, in that he is still being oppressed. Some of us are "half free" and it is the most dangerous condition one can find himself in — one foot in and one foot out. You know there was a song which was coined by Jimmy Cliff in Jamaica in that show *The Harder They Come*, it says "sitting in limbo." Many of us are still sitting in limbo not knowing where to go. But if we will go to the lesson which Paul had taught us, and if it would be taught some more in our schools, in our churches, in our civic organizations, then we would know the truth and we would be more together.

So let us salute the 80th birthday of this genius of a man, this giant of the forest, this man amongst men. I used to say that Dr. King was the greatest in the century, but it's hard to say whether it is Dr. King or Paul. I believe that each, in his own way, has contributed to the American scene and the world scene in this struggle for decency and human dignity so much that we cannot hold them apart. I would hope that on this occasion and as we look to the future, we will try to see to it that generations today, and those yet unborn, will know the truth; So that we can stand together for that day which will make it possible for justice to roll down like water and righteousness, like a mighty stream.

### *The Chairman*

I thank Mr. Cleveland Robinson for his statement.

I would say that I was very happy he invoked the names of other great leaders like Dr. DuBois and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I am happy that this Committee has honoured both of them. We have attempted to reincarnate what seemed to have disappeared over the last few years with the independence of African States — Pan Africanism. Cleveland Robinson also invoke a few other names which are of considerable relevance, such as that of Marcus Garvey. We have always felt in this Committee that the conquerors like Winston Churchill and Cecil Rhodes are not our leaders. The leaders of the African disspora have been forgotten because we did not write the history books. They must be remembered and honoured in the interests of people of African descent throughout the world, in

the interests of the dignity of the black man. For, no black man on earth can raise his head in dignity when in southern Africa, Blacks, Indians, Coloured and what have you, are still held in a form of refined slavery.

The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Rikhi Jaipal, the Permanent Representative of India, who was one of the many Indian friends of Paul Robeson. He will speak on behalf of the Asian members of the Special Committee.

Paul Robeson was a strong supporter of India's struggle for freedom. He came to know the late Prime Minister Nehru in the early 1930's when he was in England, and that led to a life-long friendship.

A few days ago, I had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Pandit, sister of Mr. Nehru, here at the United Nations. You may recall that it was she who brought up the question of South African racism before the United Nations in 1946. She was an intimate family friend of the Robesons. I told her of our meeting today, but unfortunately, she could not stay.

In September 1942, it was a Council on African Affairs which organized a "Free India Rally" in New York to protest against the imprisonment of Gandhi, Nehru and other Indian leaders by the British colonial authorities. The rally was attended by over 4,000 people.

Robeson was highly respected in India. For his sixtieth birthday, India set up a national committee headed by the Chief Justice of the country.

I wish to recall these facts to show the close links between the freedom struggles of Africa, Afro-Americans, and Asians, and the great contribution of Paul Robeson in forging this unity.

## **PAUL ROBESON: A GREAT AMERICAN**

*Statement by His Excellency Mr. Rikhi Jaipal, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations:*

It is for me a great honour indeed to say a few words on behalf of the Asian group on this occasion.

Paul Robeson entered our consciousness at an early age, during the years before the Second World War, when Asians were struggling to regain their nationhood from Western imperialism. We remember him as a great American, great in every sense, in body and soul, larger than life. It is not only the things that he stood for, but the manner in which he said and sang about them that com-

pelled the attention of the world. He had a largeness of heart, and a loftiness of spirit which embraced the entire human race in the universal brotherhood of man. His voice, always vibrant with love and compassion, stirred the depths of one's being. It was a voice that could not be silenced. It demanded freedom and the fullness of the promise contained in the American Constitution for all American citizens regardless of race. It demanded also the right of the Negro people to take what was theirs — equality in the constitution. Paul Robeson related this American dream to the larger concept of the dream of one world in which every human being would freely enjoy equality in conditions of peace and security.

This interrelationship between him and the peoples fighting for freedom everywhere was bound in the same web of history, human suffering and human aspiration. Inevitably, he became a part, and indeed a symbol, of the world movement for freedom and liberation. His songs were the purest expressions of the essence of humanity. Like the rest of us, he too was a victim of the white man's law and the white man's world. But not for long, because the victims of yesterday have now become the children of destiny of today and tomorrow.

There is in every country a separate third world of suffering and sacrifice, of struggle and liberation, and Paul Robeson belonged to that third world. For us of the third world today, his life is a shining symbol of the collective human effort to break down the barriers that have held back the coloured people for centuries. Paul Robeson wanted very much to go to the Bandung Conference in 1955, but he was denied a passport and so he sent a message of greetings. In it he stressed the urgent necessity of preventing another world war and the common duty to humanity of the peoples of Asia and Africa to support disarmament and to save mankind and civilization from wholesale destruction. He said:

"Discussion and mutual respect are the first ingredients for the development of peace among nations and an end should be put to the policy of force and the threat of nuclear war."

He fully supported the principles of Bandung and proclaimed that he took his stand on the Bandung platform.

Mr. Chairman, I had known him and his wife, Eslanda, when I was here in the fifties. They were both frequent visitors to the Trusteeship Council and the Fourth Committee whose activities they closely followed and supported. I was always impressed by his courage, dignity, hope, and faith in the future.



I remember the Little Rock incident when Negro children bravely marched through 'Jim Crow' barriers to attend school. Paul Robeson was greatly moved by this march of the children and he wrote to them:

"You are the pride and the glory of our people and my heart sings warm and tender with love for you. Our country will never be truly great and good until you and all the rest of our young people are permitted to flower in complete fulfilment and bring your gifts to the highest levels of our nation's life."

I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and your Committee, for arranging this function to remember a man whose memory shall not be allowed to perish from the face of the earth. For he was a great and a good man who believed in the oneness of humankind, in the right of human beings to be free, to walk the earth as equals, to live without fear and to enjoy the fruits of their own toil.

I thank you.

#### *The Chairman*

I thank Ambassador Jaipal for his statement.

The next speaker is Mrs. Esther Jackson, whom we heard in this Committee on the 110th birthday of Dr. DuBois in February.

She has been an activist in the struggle for freedom for more than forty years. She was a leader of the Southern Negro Youth Congress founded in 1937, which was one of the first organizations to challenge racial segregation in the south.

She has been associated with Paul Robeson for many years. The Southern Negro Youth Congress organized the first desegregated concert in Tuskegee, Alabama, for Paul Robeson in 1942.

As a tireless fighter for freedom and civil rights, she has worked with the Civil Rights Congress, the National Urban League and many other organizations.

She has been the managing director of *Freedomways* since its founding in 1961 by Dr. DuBois and others. Paul Robeson was a great friend of *Freedomways*.

#### **HE SANG FOR US ALL**

*Statement by Mrs. Esther Jackson, Managing Editor of Freedomways:*

Honourable Chairman and members of this distinguished committee of the United Nations, you are to be congratulated on the

events today in honour of the 80th birthday year of the great Paul Robeson.

I, like many of those speaking here, have had the honour of having known and worked with the two Afro-Americans of international reputation who have been the objects of commemoration at the United Nations this year: W. E. B. DuBois and Paul Robeson. They were two titans of our century, whose works constitute a notable heritage for all the world's people.

In 1942, as our Chairman mentioned, I was among the activists in the militant but hard-pressed youth movement in the deep South, the Southern Negro Youth Congress. Paul Robeson, then at the summit of his career as a Shakespearean actor and peerless concert artist, came to our support. He journeyed into the then rabidly racist state of Alabama and gave a benefit concert at Tuskegee Institute, which for the occasion tolerated a non-segregated audience for the first time since the reconstruction period following the Civil War.

Again, he returned South at the end of World War II with Dr. DuBois. At that time, they were very active in building the Council on African Affairs, an organization which linked the cause of Afro-American liberation with solidarity to emancipation of the African peoples from colonialism. Robeson sang and spoke to a convention of thousands of youth who had assembled in Columbia, South Carolina, in October 1946, at the call of the Youth Congress.

When the neo-fascist political force of McCarthyism gained dominance in Washington and anti-democratic terrorists swept across the country, all concert halls and theatres were closed to Paul Robeson. But, as happened elsewhere, in Detroit, Michigan, where I was living at the time — the year 1949 — we filled the streets and halls with thousands upon thousands — auto workers, church groups, school children, and others to show our support to this great man so hated by the authorities.

When Paul Robeson returned home from overseas in the early 1960's from a triumphant tour of concerts and theatrical performances, *Freedomways Magazine* organized a great "Welcome Home" salute in his honour at the Hotel Americana in New York City on 22 April, 1965.

The special issue of our magazine devoted wholly to Robeson, which appeared in the spring of 1971, undoubtedly made an important and further contribution to a proper appreciation of the meaning and message of the life of Paul Robeson to an emerging generation who had been deprived of the experience of his presence. Dodd

Mead will shortly bring out a major work by the editors based on the special issue entitled, "Paul Robeson, the Great Forerunner."

Paul Robeson was magnificently endowed with exceptional creative abilities which he enriched and extended through hard work, and deep and wide-ranging scholarship. Yet Paul Robeson gave of himself to address the basic social tasks of our time. Working people, plain people, the oppressed minorities were uplifted and inspired by the beauty of his voice and the compelling logic of his mind to unite and fight for their rights.

The wonderful Chilean poet Pablo Neruda had cited Robeson as the "splendid example for the world of the indivisible unity of a man of art and a class conscious fighter." In his *Ode to Paul Robeson*, Neruda hailed him as "the guardian of our light." He wrote of his thunder, of Paul Robeson's mighty voice, that "defends man's bread, rights, hope, honour." He called on Paul to go on everlasting to "Sing, Comrade, Sing, Brother of the earth, Sing, good father of fire, Sing for us All!"

And indeed he did *sing for us all*. His success as an artist and the power of attraction of his immense prestige and towering personality were committed to the struggle against racism, poverty and oppression and for democracy, equality, and socialism. He always linked the struggle for social progress and against repression with the struggle for world peace. Similarly he linked the struggle for the freedom goals of Afro-Americans, his own people, with the cause of the working people of all countries, and particularly the peoples of Africa.

Paul Robeson gave strength to our fight to throw off past chains which yet bind our present, and to introduce us to our future. His was a life of long commitment to a better society, to a socialist society. In a speech, *It's Good to be Back* at the Welcome Home Salute in New York City in 1965, Robeson said, "The large question as to which society is better for humanity is never settled by argument . . . Let the various social systems compete with one another under conditions of peaceful coexistence and the people can decide for themselves."

Beset by multiple crises in our own country, now as never before, we need to raise high the life of this great champion and freedom voice to the world. The power of his voice, the clarity of his vision, the optimism of his goal of liberty and peace will aid us in our progress.

In closing, let me read what the editors of *Freedomways* published in 1976 at the time of Paul Robeson's death:

"On the Death of Paul Robeson:  
an Immortal Legacy

"Concrete service rendered in the interest of humankind is the true yardstick of majesty. Thus, just as the final moments of darkness are signal to the light of a new dawn, so the passing of Paul Robeson must cast a momentary darkness on the face of the world.

"Let them know — those who engineered the attempts to silence freedom's song and who boast, even now, of Robeson's "decade of seclusion" — that a great light growing out of this present gloom will strip away the shadows of deceit to leave them exposed and greatly diminished for their efforts.

"Art, when it is born of the cultural aspiration of an oppressed people and links itself to the common chain which unites all who seek an end to war, poverty, and exploitation, may never be destroyed. So it goes with the contributions of Paul Robeson. He used his art to transform every platform into a stage for the democratic theatre. His name has become synonymous, the world over, with peace and justice. The magnitude of his accomplishments in every sphere has become an international symbol challenging the lie of racial inferiority and the right of the few to dominate the many.

"Racial bias will continue to speak of Robeson as one of the 'greatest Black figures' in history — but the majority of humankind will recall a greatness that far transcends any colour line. His life record stands as a testimony to the fact that people of every race and nationality can and indeed must be united to insure a world-wide victory for peace and progress."

I thank you.

### *The Chairman*

I thank Mrs. Esther Jackson for her statement.

I am informed by the Secretariat that applause and demonstrations are not normally permitted in formal meetings of Committees of the United Nations. I myself feel like applauding now, and as Chairman of the Special Committee Against Apartheid, I will waive all such regulations and *it is so decided*.

The next speaker is Mr. Gil Noble, producer of the television programme *Like It Is*, which has been one of the best sources of information for the American public on the struggles for freedom in Africa. A fighter for freedom, and a great friend of the African

liberation movements, Mr. Gil Noble requires no introduction to this Committee.

I would only like to remind the members that he is the producer of the film, "Paul Robeson: The Tallest Tree in the Forest," which was shown at the United Nations Headquarters today. It is the quintessence of artistic and moral values in recapitulating the life of a great leader, and of a great artist by a great artist. Mr. Noble is also a sponsor of Paul Robeson Archives.

I give the floor to Mr. Gil Noble.

## **PAUL ROBESON: THE TALLEST TREE IN OUR FOREST**

*Statement by Mr. Gil Noble, Television producer:*

It is indeed overwhelming to witness what is going on here today. I only wish that the mass media in which I play a minimal role were here to record this event and broadcast it to the world. Yesterday, I could not help but note that a former President of these United States was in town and he was given headline prominence and lead prominence in the newscasts and media broadcasts. It is indeed tragic, and perhaps symptomatic of the disease from which this country suffers, that there was no mention of the fact that yesterday was Paul Robeson's 80th birthday.

In a personal sense I would like to say that Paul Robeson has played a major role in forging my own personal development. Many of the principles and standards of morality that I function under, I have drawn from Paul Robeson. In another sense, let it here and now be said, that I am convinced that were it not for the challenge and militancy of Paul Robeson, I would not hold the job that I have with the American Broadcasting Company. It is for this reason that I felt not only the mandate, but the obligation and necessity to document his story and tell it. In that research under the assistance and guidance of his son, an astounding fact came across to me that is symptomatic of the national disease form which we suffer. Paul Robeson, I found, never appeared on American television in any capacity — neither to sing nor to act; as a panelist, lecturer or linguist or in any other capacity.

As a matter of fact, Paul Robeson is one of many third world heroes who have been badly beaten and maligned by mass media. This brings me to my central concern, that is of our children on both sides of the Atlantic. I am convinced that if our struggle is to be brought to a meaningful conclusion, it must be carried by our

children. That struggle will never be properly waged by our children unless we drum into their heads who their heroes, who our heroes, are. They must be told about the likes of Paul Robeson. If they are not made aware of Paul Robeson, and if at the same time they are continually given a diet of false heroes and anti-heroes, I am convinced that there will be a deterrent factor in the struggle which must continue.

It is my feeling that the story of Paul Robeson must be told. It must be told above and beyond my limited capacities on *Like It Is*; it must be told by mass media on an international level; it must be told in our schools; it must be made available for our young people to aspire to. I feel that if children are only given lesser standards they will only reach lesser heights, but if they are shown mountains then we can expect that they will achieve greatness.

So in my particular work I have a dual mandate from Paul Robeson; not only on the part of his principles and his strength, but also because of the realities of my employment. Because he has forced me to focus on that and also direct my energies towards trying to tell that story in order that it will inspire our young people to carry on his struggle. In my view, mass media has to be pressured by those who are its consumers. We must become more sensitive and wary of the information that mass media are disseminating. We must, as a world community, begin to re-assess the role that mass media are playing. We must raise a hue and cry that true giants be properly portrayed on this instrument to serve as a standard for justice. And in that highest tradition I say that Paul Robeson stands truly as one of the tallest trees in any forest.

I thank you.

### *The Chairman*

I thank Mr. Gil Noble.

The next speaker on my list is the Deputy Foreign Minister and Permanent Representative of the German Democratic Republic to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Peter Florin, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European members of the Special Committee.

I recall that Paul Robeson is well-known in the German Democratic Republic.

In 1963, he spent several months undergoing medical treatment in the German Democratic Republic and met many friends whom

he had known in Britain and the United States as refugees from Nazism.

A Paul Robeson Committee was formed in the German Democratic Republic in 1964 and a Paul Robeson Archives was established at the Academy of the Arts in the German Democratic Republic in 1965. An extensive exhibit on Robeson was organized in the German Democratic Republic on his 70th birthday in 1968 and toured not only the cities in that country but also the Soviet Union.

Mr. Robeson was given many honours in the German Democratic Republic, including the "Star of Friendship among People"; an honorary degree by the Humboldt University; membership in the German Academy of Fine Arts; and the Medal of Peace of the German Democratic Republic.

When this Special Committee held its session in the German Democratic Republic in 1974, it had the opportunity to meet with the Paul Robeson Committee.

I have great pleasure, therefore, in inviting Ambassador Florin to address the meeting.

## **PAUL ROBESON: A RELENTLESS FIGHTER FOR HUMAN HAPPINESS**

*Statement by His Excellency Mr. Peter Florin, Permanent Representative of the German Democratic Republic to the United Nations; and Deputy Foreign Minister:*

Mr. Chairman, very special feelings prompt me to speak today at the solemn meeting of the Committee devoted to the 80th birthday of Paul Robeson.

I would like, on behalf of the group of Eastern European Socialist countries, to pay tribute to that great artist and warrior for peace, social progress, and human rights.

It is difficult to find words to describe that great person. The name of Paul Robeson is forever linked with his just and selfless battle, the battle of all peoples, against oppression, exploitation, colonialism, and racism. He was persecuted by the enemies of progress who hated him and who made him a victim of discrimination. But he was loved by millions for whom he became a symbol of a relentless fighter for human happiness. His beautiful inspired voice is unforgettable and remains with us. That voice sounded not only in concert halls, but in automobile factories in Detroit, in the cotton plantations in North and South Carolina, and amongst doc-

kers in California. He gave inspiration to those fighting in the international brigades in Spain, and during the battle against fascism; that voice stirred the hearts of those living in Moscow and Berlin.

Paul Robeson devoted his entire life to this struggle for the liberation of peoples from oppression and humiliation. He was the son of a former slave, and in his youth he saw social injustice and racial discrimination. He became convinced that the real reason for that tragedy of mankind was the striving of monopolies for material gain. He wrote of his first visit to the Soviet Union in 1934: "For the first time in my life I felt myself to be a man, without the racial prejudices that I felt in Mississippi; without the racial prejudices that I felt in Washington." Obviously, from that time Paul Robeson felt himself closely linked with the Soviet Union, the first country which destroyed exploitation of man by man. He spoke unswervingly against any form of anti-Sovietism.

Together with the progressive forces of his own country and those fighting in the national liberation movements of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, he tirelessly defended the rights of the oppressed. In 1957, Paul Robeson was one of the authors of the historic petition submitted to the fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, exposing the crimes against the black population in the United States. His courageous speeches for the liberation of peoples were part and parcel of his participation in the movement for maintaining peace throughout the world. His firm conviction that the struggle for peace is an essential part of the struggle for the right of peoples to self-determination was one of the most important principles of his whole life. The reactionary policy of the régime of *apartheid* in South Africa, the hankering of that régime to possess atomic weaponry, reminds us of how important this link is.

Neither slander nor the ban on travel, which he suffered during the cold war, stopped Paul Robeson from raising his voice in the struggle for peace and freedom of peoples.

During his visit in 1959 to the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, and other Socialist countries, he was enthusiastically welcomed by millions of people. His heritage firmly imbues our thoughts and feelings. Revering his memory is tantamount to supporting his ideas — expressing fraternal solidarity with the peoples of Africa in their struggle against racism, *apartheid* and colonialism.



## *The Chairman*

I thank Ambassador Peter Florin for his statement.

The next speaker is Dr. Jewel Gresham, professor of English at Nassau Community College. A long-time civil rights activist, she is executive director of the Coalition of Concerned Black Americans.

She will be speaking also on behalf of Dr. Carlton Goodlett, the Black newspaper publisher, who was unfortunately unable to attend this meeting because of urgent duties in his medical practice.

## **HIS LEGACY MUST BE PRESERVED**

*Statement by Dr. Jewel Gresham, Professor of English at Nassau Community College:*

I am honoured to be among those to be invited to this hall to pay tribute to Paul Robeson on the occasion of his 80th birthday. As you have indicated, I am wearing two hats. I bring you greetings from Dr. Carlton Goodlett, who is President of the National Newspapers Association of America, the black press association, and I shall report these proceedings quite fully to Dr. Goodlett. I bring you greetings also from the Coalition of concerned Black Americans, a very small group of lawyers, academics, clergymen, and grassroots organizations concerned with the critical issues that affect black Americans, black Africa, the third world, and indeed the world itself.

I want to speak, if you do not mind, Mr. Chairman, also in regard to a matter on which Dr. Goodlett joins me, others at this table join me, and that is in regard to the perpetuation of the legacy of Paul Robeson in our country. Some of you may be aware that there is now appearing on Broadway, in this great cultural city, the play "Paul Robeson," and a number of distinguished Americans have joined in a statement of conscience which has declared that this is not the image of Paul Robeson which, we can agree, will be left to our children. Gil Noble has already indicated why we feel compelled so very strongly to take this stand.

It is an enormous thing when a land feels compelled to take action so strongly against one of its sons or daughters as to try to remove them from the legacy of history itself. To go to the extent even in those accounts which carry the annals of a man, to try to remove the fact that a man actually existed. Because this is done to Paul Robeson, perhaps alone, in American history, we find it necessary, in view of the technological might of this country to

magnify images and project them to the world, to fasten them firmly in time and space, not to the myth, that account to go forward which trivialises, distorts, corrupts and betrays what this man has done for us, for our children, and for the world.

Thus, we as black Americans have been savagely attacked on WNBC and through the television critic of the *New York Times*. I want to say before this Committee, because I think it is appropriate, that black Americans feel that legacy much too strongly to yield to any such attack. So we will be presenting on 12 May in New York City at Hunter Auditorium, a public forum that will talk about what Paul Robeson is and what art is in our times. Our speakers will be Julian Bond, the Georgia State Legislator who is one of our signatories; and James Baldwin, who is one of the finest essayists among Western intellectuals. Moderating that forum will be Gil Noble, who has already spoken here today. We invite you to come and hear us try to make a part of the record, that which has been so dismally neglected.

I thank you Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to come here and to pledge that black Americans who are conscious of who we are and what we are and what Africa is, and what the struggles of oppressed people are everywhere, do not plan to betray Paul Robeson in this time, or in any other.

I thank you.

*The Chairman*

I thank Dr. Jewel Gresham for her statement.

The next speaker is the representative of the Sudan who will speak on behalf of the African members of the Special Committee.

I may note that the next session of the OAU Summit will take place in the Sudan in July this year and makes the statement of the Sudan even more appropriate.

## **AN ELOQUENT SPOKESMAN FOR OPPRESSED PEOPLE EVERYWHERE**

*Statement by Mr. Mohamed Adam Osman, Representative of the Sudan, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan to the United Nations:*

We meet here today to pay a special tribute to an eminent personality — an outstanding singer, a talented actor par excellence,

a prominent athlete a great civil rights activist, an intellectual lawyer and above all, a very magnificent man, a man who dedicated his artistic talents for the promotion of peace and good will among all people, particularly the oppressed masses of the third world and North America. Paul Robeson, a most celebrated and a most admired individual of his time, has contributed a lot towards the advancement of the cause of black people, not only in America but in the whole world. His firm denunciation of racial injustice and exploitation everywhere, the way he devoted his so many different faculties and gifts to highlight the suffering to which black people are exposed, has made him an eloquent spokesman for the oppressed people everywhere. His rich communicative baritone voice was an inspiration for those oppressed people to pursue their struggle for the attainment of freedom and equality. His beautiful Negro spirituals and songs have bolstered the morale of freedom fighters in their resistance to fascism and racism throughout the world.

Paul Robeson, an African in the diaspora and a son of a runaway slave, has always been totally committed to Africa and African people and to their struggle for liberation. His tremendous and valuable activities in the Council on African Affairs have shown beyond no limits his devotion towards the benefits and the well being of all African people, whether inside Africa or in the diaspora.

Paul Robeson lived as a great man and died as a hero. His contribution towards the welfare of humanity never stopped till the moment he died. As he said himself in the taped record he sent to the organizers of his 75th birthday salute in April, 1973, only two years before his death:

"I want you to know that I am still the same Paul, dedicated as ever to the worldwide cause of humanity for freedom, peace and brotherhood."

I conclude by what Dr. Cowly, the President of Hamilton College, said to Paul Robeson when the Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters was conferred upon him:

"Honouring you today we don't however express our enthusiasm for your historic and musical achievement alone, we honour you chiefly as a man, a man of tremendous stature and energy, a man of brilliant mind, a man whose sensitive spirit makes possible his penetrating interpretations and a man who above all else travels across the world as an example of that humanity."

## *The Chairman*

I thank the distinguished Representative of the Sudan for his statement on behalf of the African members of the Committee.

At this stage, I must take the liberty of making special reference to the great attachment of Paul Robeson to Nigeria and the respect in which he was held in Nigeria; because we are now back to the African continent with the statement of the Representative of the Sudan.

Paul Robeson learned several Nigerian languages. He strongly supported Nigerian freedom and became a great friend of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who became President of Nigeria. He called Nigeria "the land of our forefathers" because of the vast majority of American Negro slaves who were brought here from Africa's West Coast, then known as the slave coast by the mapmakers of the last century.

On the other hand, when Mr. Robeson was attacked in the United States, the National Church of Nigeria bestowed on him the award of "Champion of African Freedom" on January 29, 1950, and thereby honoured him along with the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who were soon to become Heads of State of their countries.

Paul Robeson was known in Africa and the rest of the world. As an Afro-American writer concluded:

"If there is a mystery about Paul Robeson it is this: By singing spirituals he can be popular and wealthy; by fighting for his race he becomes despised and doors are closed against him. For the answer as to why he made this choice, you will have to search the deep recesses of his soul.' "

We knew him, we understood him, and we are all here, expressing this understanding.

I wish to say a few words in a special welcome to the delegation of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee which has arrived here to participate in this tribute to Paul Robeson and to hold consultations with the Special Committee on further action against *apartheid*.

Paul Robeson, as we all know, loved the Soviet Union which he visited on many occasions since 1934.

He loved the Soviet Union because there he experienced respect for human dignity, because there he saw that so-called backward nations could catch up and become equals of their erstwhile oppressors — not in some distant future, but in one generation, because he saw that the Soviet Union in the United Nations and

elsewhere, had constantly defended the fight of African nations to freedom and independence.

He was loved and respected by the Soviet people. The Soviet Union even named a mountain summit in Central Asia after his towering figure.

Because of his friendship with the Soviet Union, because of his proclamation that the black people in the United States, in Africa and in the Caribbean would not go to war against the Soviet Union to defend the interests of their oppressors — but would fight for their own freedom — Paul Robeson suffered cruel persecution in his country.

Africa, which was then still under colonial domination, recognized that he spoke for the African people.

The African people who gave their lives in two world wars — only to be betrayed by the colonial powers after the wars were over — were not prepared to join them in the third world war — especially against the Soviet Union.

As I mentioned earlier, the National Council of Nigerian Churches gave Paul Robeson an award soon after he made his declaration in Paris.

Every African nation which struggled against colonial slavery has enjoyed support of the Soviet Government and people — not only political support but indispensable material support whenever an armed struggle had to be launched against oppressors.

Africa will never forget this solidarity.

At this time, when Africa is engaged in its final and most crucial battle for emancipation, we are making every effort to persuade all countries — including the United States of America and other Western countries — to align themselves with the forces of freedom.

But let it be perfectly clear that Africa will not desert its true and trusted friends — whether it is the Soviet Union, or China, or Non-aligned States — in order to entice the Western Powers. The Western Powers must join the concert for freedom because it is their duty, not because it is their convenience.

At this stage, we expect more support from all forces of freedom to the national liberation movement in South Africa. We expect more support even from the Soviet people and their Solidarity Committee which have given generously in the past.

For that purpose, we look forward to serious consultation with them later this week.

I now invite the leader of the delegation of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee to make a statement.

## OUTSTANDING FIGHTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

*Statement by Mr. M. A. Ibragimov, President of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee:*

Thank you Mr. Chairman for the very warm words you said to me and about the Committee I represent.

First of all, let me express on behalf of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, on behalf of millions of participants in the solidarity movement in the Soviet Union, deep gratitude to the Special Committee for the kind invitation to our delegation and for the honour bestowed on us to address the meeting dedicated to the 80th birthday of Paul Robeson, that outstanding fighter for human rights, for freedom and equality for all people irrespective of race and skin colour. The name of Paul Robeson became the symbol of struggle for freedom of the oppressed masses both in the United States of America and throughout the whole world.

Neither threats, nor provocations of the racists and their patrons could make the great singer, artist, public figure, renounce his convictions or actions against political and racial repression.

Paul Robeson enjoyed the ardent and sincere love of all Soviet people. He was a sincere and unfailing friend of the Soviet people. His great talent was enjoyed at many social meetings which took place in Moscow during April this year. His unfailing friendship with our country was shown by visits to our country when he spoke to workers, farmers and students. He sang very warm songs about our country, particularly the song which begins with these words:

"Soviet land so dear to every toiler  
Peace and progress build the hope on thee;  
There's no other land the wide world over  
Where man walks the earth so proud and free."

Today, at the meeting of the United Nations Special Committee against *Apartheid*, we would especially like to note Robeson's services in the struggle against racism and *apartheid* in Southern Africa.

Today, revering the memory of that great man, a fighter for peace, solidarity and friendship; winner of the Lenin Prize, we once more turn our eyes to Southern Africa, to the Arab territories occupied by Israel, to all areas of the world where the struggle against racism and racial discrimination is still going on.

In paying tribute to the memory of Paul Robeson, the Soviet public participants in the solidarity movement assure the fighters against racism of their unfailing support.

The Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee and other Soviet public organizations, following the Leninist internationalist policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, render moral, political and practical aid to the national liberation movements of southern Africa. We supply them with foodstuffs, clothes, medicines, and means of transportation, and train hundreds of activists from these movements in the USSR.

We call on all those who cherish freedom and human dignity to unite in the struggle against racism, to implement the historic declarations of the United Nations Organisation, aimed to fully eradicate that evil. That would be the best way to revere our great friend, that great singer, artist and man, Paul Robeson.

I thank you.

#### *The Chairman*

I thank Mr. Mirza Ibragimov, President of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, writer and member of Parliament, for his statement.

The next speaker is Mrs. Dorothy Hunton who knew Mr. Robeson for many years. Her husband, the late Dr. W. Alphaeus Hunton, served as Educational Director and then Executive Secretary of the Council on African Affairs between 1942 and 1955. She was herself associated with the Council during that period.

Subsequently, she went with her husband to Africa to work in Guinea, Ghana and Zambia where her husband passed away.

She has been an active member of "Sojourners for Truth and Justice," and other organizations concerned with the freedom of black people.

#### **PAUL ROBESON AND THE COUNCIL ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS**

*Statement by Mrs. Dorothy Hunton, Former Associate of the Council on African Affairs:*

Mr. Chairman, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Paul Robeson, this giant of our age, when an entire generation of Americans have matured without knowledge of his existence, brings a warm glow of appreciation for those who made this memorable event possible. I thank you.

My comments are confined to one facet of his remarkable contributions, the Council on African Affairs.

A small group of concerned individuals appalled by the disquieting news of Africa, met in 1937 to see what steps could be taken to obtain a true picture of that last continental stronghold of colonialism. Paul Robeson, one of the members, became Chairman. The group expanded, the Council on African Affairs emerged and Robeson remained chairman for eighteen years, until McCarthy harrassment forced the organization to disband in 1955.

World War II, precipitated by the reign of terror and international lawlessness, was at its height in the early forties, and meetings and rallies were much in evidence. Robeson chaired the Council's meeting on "The Significance of Africa in War and Peace," held in 1941. Together with Pearl Buck, he was featured at a mass rally in New York in 1942 on "The Role of Afro-Americans in the War." The same year the Council held a "Free India Rally" with emphasis on an "Indian National Government," and the opening of the second front.

During those early years, the Council stood alone in its activities. Few people had knowledge of the highly organized culture and well integrated systems of African life prior to the European's arrival. Among Blacks there was a very curious division in attitudes towards their own history and progress. They were at once ashamed and proud. To many, Black did not appear beautiful. Scarcely a voice was heard concerning the strivings and desperate plight of Africa's millions.

It was an uphill struggle to promote the African peoples' welfare, develop a better understanding among Americans and mobilize public support for the Council's programmes. As a non-profit organization, it obtained its finances entirely by voluntary contributions and subscriptions to its publications.

The most devastating war was still raging by 1944. And after a discussion with the officials of the State Department regarding the government's policies with respect to Africa, the Council called together a representative group of Black and white leaders in a conference on "Africa—New Perspectives," in April the same year. The participants endeavoured to define and present solutions to some of the more urgent problems of colonial peoples and territories in the post-war period. As presiding officer, and in his opening speech, Robeson reminded them of the danger of emphasizing in their discussions what *has been* rather than *what can be*.



I recall more than thirty years ago, South Africa was as much in the news then as now. Little has changed. Prime Minister Vorster clearly adhered to General Smuts' ideas, who in addressing the House of Assembly of the Union on 24 March, 1945, remarked that everybody "except fools" was agreed on "our fixed policy to maintain white supremacy in South Africa."

The Council not so fooled, maintained an accredited observer in the United Nations and was in close touch with developments in South Africa, particularly with the African National Congress. Smuts was sharply challenged to make public the true facts concerning the proposal to annex South West Africa, when he addressed the General Assembly in 1946. This intervention played no small part in circumventing Smuts' ambitious scheme.

In many respects the Council's role was in the nature of a liaison agency between the United Nations and the public here and abroad, especially Africa. The importance of that role was inestimable because no other organization directly concerned with Africa or colonial questions in general, maintained a regular observer at the United Nations proceedings. It was the country's leading authority on African problems and it sought to secure a comprehensive and effective United Nations programme for the emancipation and advancement of African and colonial peoples.

Two outstanding affairs remain vivid in my mind.

First, the overflow mass meeting to launch the famine relief programme for Africans at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem in January 1946. The urgent appeal sent to the Council for help for the starving South Africans whose meagre crops were wiped out by the worst drought in history, was answered by nearly 5,000 people bringing several thousand cans of food and money. Many could not get in the door, but many of those who did characterized it as one of the greatest meetings ever held in Harlem. This expressed the sentiments of both Marion Anderson, and Robeson, whose stimulating speeches added immeasurably to its success.

On 6 June of the same year, Robeson headed a group of distinguished citizens, singers, actors, dancers and others in a great mass meeting for "African Freedom," in Madison Square Garden. 15,000 Americans roared their greetings as the tall, heroic figure of Paul, towering over everybody else, sounded the call for "Four Freedoms for Africa." "Let us not forget," he told the audience, the largest ever assembled in the United States at a meeting on Africa, "that the very process of helping others adds to our strength and brings nearer full freedom for ourselves."

By 1947, the "Cold War" reactionary pressures continued to soar in the United States. The squeeze was put upon Robeson's activities. A particularly nasty one occurred in Peoria, Illinois, where the Mayor sent out extra police to prevent Robeson from entering the city to give a concert. He was the principal speaker one week later at a rally attended by several thousand people commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Council on African Affairs in the cause of African freedom. He received a tremendous ovation when he declared that the fight against imperialism and fascism right here in America, was the top concern of all freedom-loving people. "Unless we see the fight for democracy in South Africa, China, and the whole world of colonialism as part of our struggle," he told the hushed audience, "we'll never defeat reaction here in America."

Messages of support to Robeson and the Council came from leaders in many fields in the United States, Africa and elsewhere — Albert Einstein, Pandit Nehru, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, to name a few.

Time does not permit me to give any more expressions of the things that Paul Robeson did in the Council on African Affairs. The people of South Africa are still walking in poverty, without freedom, in their own country. But the light that Paul Robeson shed, as Chairman of the Council on African Affairs, still reverberates in the hearts of all those who remember and love him, including the people of Africa.

### *The Chairman*

I thank Mrs. Dorothy Hunton for her statement.

The next speaker is Mr. Moe Foner, Executive Secretary of the Associated Hospital Workers' Union.

I had the honour a few weeks ago to address the Conference of this great union which counts Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as one of its founders.

The Foner brothers are all active trade unionists.

Mr. Henry Foner, head of the Fur Workers' Union, could not attend this meeting due to unavoidable commitments, but has sent his best wishes.

The Fur Workers' Union had a close relationship with Paul Robeson for many years and provided an honour guard when he sang at a concert at Peekskill in 1949 in defiance of hoodlums. It was also one of the contributors to the fund launched by Paul Robeson and

the Council on African Affairs in support of the Defiance Campaign in South Africa in 1952.

I give the floor to Mr. Moe Foner.

### THEY TRIED TO BREAK HIM, BUT THEY DID NOT

*Statement by Mr. Moe Foner, Executive Secretary, District 1199, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, AFL-CIO:*

On behalf of the members of our union, and I might add of the members of my family, on the basis of the Chairman's statement, I am honoured to participate at this meeting and to speak very briefly.

It is clear from this meeting in itself that Paul Robeson has dwarfed those who villified and attacked him in his lifetime; the people of power in this country. But let us not forget that these powerful interests tried to break Paul Robeson. They seized his passport for eight years and kept him a prisoner in his own country. They closed the concert halls to him. They tried to physically harm him at Peekskill. They banned his biography from the public libraries. They withdrew his recordings. They kept him out of *Who's Who in America*. They removed his name from the All-America football team. They hauled him before investigating committees. They hounded him day and night. They tried to break him, but they did not. It is to the credit of Paul Robeson and to everything that he represented, and represents today, that they could not break him despite unprecedented attacks upon him.

We in the Hospital Workers' Union are proud to have identified with him. We are proud that when our Headquarters, the Martin Luther King Labour Centre, was opened seven years ago, we, with the assistance of Paul Robeson, Jr., staged one in a series of annual tributes to Paul Robeson to do what Gil Noble said must be done; to try in our own modest way to bring the story of Paul Robeson to the members of our union.

Paul Robeson identified with the poor, with the working class, with oppressed people everywhere. He sang about working men and women to audiences of working men and women. Over and over again he sang about Joe Hill, the union organizer. He sang those songs and others like them to the auto workers in Detroit; to the packinghouse workers in Chicago; to the mine and smelter workers in Alabama; to the steel workers in Ohio; to the longshoremen in San Francisco; to the miners in Pittsburgh; to tobacco workers in North Carolina; and to the maritime workers in Cleveland. To

everyone he sang, and yes, to the workers in the Koganovitch ball-bearing plant in the Soviet Union.

Speaking for our union, I would like to close by paraphrasing from the song that Paul Robeson sang to hundreds and thousands of workers all over the country, the famous song "Joe Hill." As far as we are concerned, wherever workers organize and go on strike, that's where you will find Paul Robeson.

### *The Chairman*

I thank Mr. Moe Foner for his statement.

The next speaker is Ambassador Verret of Haiti, the first black Republic in the Caribbean.

I may recall that Paul Robeson was a great admirer of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the liberator of Haiti.

### **HIS VOICE HAS NOT BEEN SILENCED**

*Statement by H. E. Mr. Alexandre Verret, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Haiti to the United Nations:*

The delegation of Haiti, on behalf of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, is very pleased to join in this celebration by the Special Committee, over which you are presiding with so much skill and tact, of the 80th anniversary of the birth of the great artist, singer, linguist and activist, the famous Paul Robeson. He is immortal because of his outstanding achievements which have had a tremendous impact on everyone everywhere.

Paul Robeson fought relentlessly against racism. He was born on 9 April 1898 in Princeton, New Jersey. He was the son of Maria Louisa Bustill Robeson — whose African, Indian and European forefathers probably made it possible for him to appreciate the feelings of various ethnic groups all over the world — and of Reverend William Drew Robeson. At the time, the segregation of blacks and whites in Princeton was almost as rigid as it was in the south of the United States. Paul's father, Reverend William Robeson, was a former slave who escaped from North Carolina plantations and later became a pastor after working his way through Lincoln University.

Pastor Joseph C. Bustill, the other grandfather of Paul Robeson, founded the first Presbyterian Black Church in Harrisburg. His great-great grandfather, Mr. Cyril Bustill, was born in New Jersey

in 1732 and bought his freedom before the American Revolution. He supplied the rebels with provisions and received the thanks of George Washington for having supplied bread to his troops. In 1787 he was a founder of the Free African Society in Philadelphia.

This family background makes it possible to understand Paul Robeson.

During his youth, Paul Robeson studied at Rutgers College where he distinguished himself as a result of his intelligence. When he received his diploma, the notables in New Brunswick offered a banquet to express their regret to see him leave the town.

The rich personality he had, the impassioned and dramatic language he used, his magnificent voice, and the warmth of his humanism made of this young man endowed with an athletic stature an exceptional person. Because of his culture and the multiple gifts nature had endowed him with, he forced everyone's admiration, whether black or white. In a hostile environment this man of African descent in his bronze masque seemed to move about as the noblest of Romans in a Shakespearean set-up.

Admired and respected, he could have gone on happily without caring for the rest of the world. Given his family relationships and his own, he could have enjoyed without worry the advantages which accrued to him from his privileged position. But Paul Robeson had not a servile soul. His life, he used to say, had to be a tribute to the legacy of his father. He felt he had to help his race to wrest a better fate, to obtain recognition in its environment, to obtain a decent life with equal civil and political rights and to win the respect of the entire community.

He did not know where his thoughts were to lead him, but this determined resolution he had made when starting his career was to oppose him someday to the very system which had so much favoured and honoured him.

In the course of his studies, during the school year 1914-1915, Paul Robeson entered a state-wide oratorical contest in New Jersey. To this effect he had chosen to recite the famous speech made by Wendell Phillips in which the black general Toussaint l'Ouverture, an illustrious son of Haiti, was described as one of the great giants of humanity. Peerless among all men Robeson's recitation was taking place at a time when President Wilson of the United States had just given the order to occupy Haiti.

Before an audience composed essentially of whites, Robeson repeated the revolutionary statements made by Toussaint l'Ouverture among which were the following:

"My children France comes to make us slaves. God gave us liberty; France has no right to take it away. Burn the cities, destroy the harvests, tear up the roads with cannon, poison the wells, show the white man the hell he comes to make."

Naturally, in spite of his talent and brilliance he did not win the competition. Dorothy Gilliam in her brilliant biography of Paul Robeson states that Toussaint l'Ouverture, Dessalines and King Henry Christophe, symbolized the dream of freedom to black Americans. This was why Paul Robeson had to fail in quoting these Haitian heroes.

The attitude adopted by this young man was quite revealing of his intimate feelings. This is why later on, remembering the teachings of his father, he spoke of the brotherhood amongst men because, he asserted, humanity was one all over the earth. He spoke of social justice in favour of black Americans and black people in colonial territories. He spoke in support of the oppressed people of the world. He wanted to free them from the miserable fate. Like his contemporaries, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he loved mankind.

His artistic temperament was intimately linked with the struggle he led against racism. Imbued with his African origins, Paul Robeson made his contribution to the cause of freedom in Africa and the struggle against *apartheid* in South Africa.

He identified easily with black heroes whom he impersonated on stage. Othello, the moor of Venice, whom he impersonated in grandeur and beauty, was for him, as he himself was, a stranger among white people. It is in this spirit that Robeson was one of the founding members in 1937 of the International Committee on African Affairs. In so doing he sought to awaken public interest in the lot of peoples of the black continent and to mobilize public opinion for the liberation of Africa. At the same time he wanted to provide a forum for representatives of the South African liberation movement in order to sensitize the public to the struggles waged by blacks against the white racist minority in South Africa for the elimination of racial discrimination and the recognition of their rights of citizenship. Later this Committee was called the Council on African Affairs.

This organization proved to be very active. Through numerous representations made to the United States Government and the United Nations, it drew attention of the leaders of the world to the hideous and cruel facts of *apartheid*.

For all this, Paul Robeson is entitled to our admiration. This man whose whole life is full of success and glory, adulated as he was by the crowds, honoured by the princes, the kings and the emperors was not always understood in his own country, in which he was subjected to some restrictions.

Paul Robeson has not lived to see the new city in South Africa and the end of *apartheid*. He died in 1976. The roses of South Africa have not yet covered the proud heads of the valiant fighters of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the South West Africa Peoples Organizations (SWAPO). The struggle goes on. The work done by Robeson, however, has not been in vain.

Paul Robeson will remain for all of us a star of the first magnitude which shone on our planet. His deep voice has not been silenced. It will go on until the final victory of good over evil in the uphill fight for freedom. That voice will live forever so that right, justice and equality prevail for all in the world. The peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, still vibrant to the chant of Paul Robeson, will always remember this great artist and leader who has given so much of himself to the cause of man's emancipation regardless of race, colour or religion.

### *The Chairman*

I thank Ambassador Verret of Haiti for his statement.

Before calling the next speaker, I would like to inform members that we have received messages on this occasion from:

1. H. E. Mr. Albert Rene, President of the Seychelles
2. The Reverend Canon L. John Collins, Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, and President of the International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, London
3. Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo, President of the South African Indian Congress, and a friend of Paul Robeson for many years
4. The Paul Robeson Committee of the German Democratic Republic
5. Professor Steiniger, Chairman of the United Nations Association of the German Democratic Republic
6. Mr. Alfred Nzo, Secretary-General of the African National Congress of South Africa, and
7. Mr. Sideny Poitier, actor

The texts of the messages have been circulated to members and will be published in the proceedings of this meeting.

I have also received a letter from the Honourable Mr. Coleman A. Young, Mayor of the City of Detroit, who was unable to participate in the meeting today because the City of Detroit is itself observing a week in tribute to Paul Robeson. He has sent his best wishes to this meeting.

Dr. Carlton Goodlett, black newspaper publisher, and Professor Kenneth Dike of Nigeria, professor at Harvard University, were unable to join us because of unavoidable commitments. They have also sent us their best wishes.

Although we are not reading messages today, I must make an exception, and the next speaker is Dr. Luis Gomez Anzardo, Chargé d'Affaires of the Republic of Cuba, who will read a message from Comrade Fidel Castro, the Prime Minister of Cuba.

### TRIBUTE FROM FIDEL CASTRO

*Statement by Dr. Luis Gomez Anzardo, Chargé d'Affaires of Cuba to the United Nations:*

May I, on behalf of my delegation congratulate you, Sir, and the Committee which you Chair, on the organization of this well-deserved tribute to the champion of the struggle against racism and apartheid. It is now my honour to read out the message which as you mentioned, comes from our Prime Minister, Comrade Fidel Castro.

"It gives us particular pleasure to join in the commemoration, under the auspices of the Special Committee against Apartheid, of the eightieth anniversary of the birth of Paul Robeson. The life and artistic work of Paul Robeson constitute in themselves a response to the brutality of discrimination, of which, in our times, apartheid is perhaps the most repugnant form.

"Paul Robeson dedicated the greater part of his activities to the struggle for the equality of all men, the rights of black people in the United States — of whom he was one — the cause of countries suffering from imperialist oppression and the struggle against fascism, and to protesting the plight of the American masses, white and black, for whom human rights have never been anything more than a promise by the founders of the United States and a term used in the United States Constitution.

"The name of Paul Robeson will be remembered by all who believe in the necessity and urgency of freeing mankind from inequality, discrimination, national oppression and apartheid.



"We therefore associate ourselves not only with this tribute to the great representative of progressive forces and of the black people of the United States, the great fighter who expressed his international solidarity during the decisive days of the struggle of the Spanish people against the Falangist movement and racism, but also with the spirit which presides over this act of commemoration."

### *The Chairman*

I thank the distinguished Chargé d' Affaires of Cuba.

The next speaker is Mrs. Karen Talbot, Permanent Representative to the United Nations for the World Peace Council.

Paul Robeson was one of the founders of the World Peace Council in 1949. It was at the founding Conference of the World Peace Council in Paris that Paul Robeson made the declaration that it was unthinkable that the oppressed black people of the world would abandon their struggle against their oppressors and become mercenaries in a war against the Soviet Union. He made this statement on behalf of the "Coordinating Committee of Colonial Peoples" which had met in London the previous day. It was used by some people in the United States to attack and persecute Robeson.

But a study of the record shows that the attacks against Robeson had begun long before 1949 and the reasons were deeper.

The little men were afraid of Robeson because of his great popularity among the black youth who were ready to join battle to end lynchings and enforce the promises made in the Second World War.

They were afraid of his efforts to build a powerful alliance of the black people with the trade unions and all decent white people to destroy and bury racism.

They were afraid because he demanded that the United States of America be required to account to the United Nations and to the world for its violations of the human rights of the black people.

They were afraid that he would mobilize the support of the American people to the revolutions in Asia and Africa, and shatter the unholy alliance of colonialists.

They succeeded in silencing his voice by a black-out and defamation in all media. They were able to intimidate even some blacks to desert him.

But they could, at best, only retard the liberation of the black peoples, and increase the blood that had to be shed in that process.

History has marched despite them, and Paul Robeson has been vindicated.

I invite Mrs. Karen Talbot to address the meeting.

## UNSURPASSED SON OF HIS PEOPLE

*Statement by Mrs. Karen Talbot, Permanent Representative of the World Peace Council to the United Nations:*

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Special Committee against *Apartheid*, permit me on behalf of the World Peace Council to thank you for the privilege of participating in this celebration of the 80th birthday of Paul Robeson. Paul Robeson, unsurpassed son of his people was beloved by multitudes the world over for his humanism, for his unswerving dedication to peace, to national liberation, to equality and human dignity.

It is appropriate, as we pay tribute to Paul Robeson, that we draw strength from the powerful legacy he has left us. The contributions of this life continue to have profound relevancy in the struggles against *apartheid*, against racism, for national liberation, for social progress and human emancipation. There are those who seek to distort, or to totally eradicate his memory just as they sought to silence him during his lifetime. But his wondrous voice will resound through the centuries. The ideals for which he stood, expressed so superbly through his artistry and through his intellectual and athletic achievements, will continue to inspire generations to come.

Paul Robeson, whose legendary voice has been described as the finest instrument wrought by nature in our time, was the embodiment of, and indeed sprang from, the heritage of Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth and all the other noblest Americans. He sprang from the bosom of his people, from all oppressed and toiling people of his country and of the world. Like the peak bearing his name in the Kirghiz Pamir Mountain, his immortality will stand like a mighty monument from which the rich baritone voice, as thunderous as the roar of the ocean and as gentle as the whispering breezes, will continue to be the voice of the poor, of the suffering, of the struggling and triumphant masses.

Robeson was an outstanding champion of the cause of peace. He participated in the founding of the World Peace Movement in 1949. The World Peace Council is proud of Paul Robeson's association with it and has on many occasions paid special tribute to him. There has been no great international meeting of the Peace Movement at which his name was not honoured, and in which his words were not quoted, or his songs sung. In 1976, the World Peace Council declared April 9th International Paul Robeson Day, and throughout the world on that day, the love and great respect for Robeson among vast reaches of humanity has been expressed in

concerts and meetings, in television and radio broadcasts, newspaper articles and special publications. The World Peace Council is proud to have announced the presentation of our highest cultural award, posthumously, to Paul Robeson, an award which has gone to other artistic giants, such as Pablo Neruda.

Paul Robeson's incredible gifts, his brilliant mind, his artistic and social genius are exemplified in so many ways. To speak of all of them would require volumes, and they have been spoken of so very eloquently today. Yet, in spite of these unsurpassed accomplishments, men of small minds, blinded by racism, tried and are still trying, to erase them from the view of oppressed and struggling people, particularly in his own country and from young people who would learn such valuable lessons from Paul Robeson's life.

In his book *Here I Stand*, which has been quoted so often today, Robeson said:

"I speak as an American Negro whose life is dedicated, first and foremost, to winning full freedom, and nothing less than full freedom, for my people in America."

His profound hatred of oppression, exploitation and the virulent poison of racism led him to take leadership in solidarity with the struggles of African peoples for their liberation and the elimination of the bestial system of *apartheid*. He was one of the first Americans to speak out on behalf of the Vietnamese struggle for independence, condemning the shipments of armaments to be used against the Vietnamese patriots. He participated in the first Stockholm campaign to ban nuclear weapons organized by the World Peace Council.

As a result of Robeson's efforts for peace, his unfailing commitment to the struggle for liberation from colonial bondage in Africa, his consistent denunciation and leadership in the struggle against racism, he was harrassed and persecuted unmercifully in his own country. And it was during the Cold War years that he was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee where he told his hostile interrogators:

"My father was a slave and my people died to build this country, and I am going to stay right here and have a part of it just like you. And no fascist-minded people like you will drive me from it."

Encouraged by official government harrassment, a racist mob attacked him at a large outdoor concert in Peekskill, New York. Hundreds were injured, but the people who loved him linked arms

and prevented the thugs from reaching Robeson. Paul Robeson was undaunted in the face of the brutal attacks he suffered because, as he said:

"these forces oppose my views on colonial liberation, my resistance to oppression of Negro Americans and my burning desire for peace with all nations."

Robeson gloried in the uniqueness of each nation finding special identification with the peoples of Africa. He stood resolutely for black-white unity and spoke of the oneness of mankind constituting a rich and varied fabric. He accomplished the most perfect blend of mind, body and spirit. His art could never be separated from his political and humanitarian commitment. His art became a tool for unifying people and for raising their consciousness and aspirations.

Lloyd Brown, whom we have had the pleasure and privilege of having heard today, spoke these eloquent words at the memorial meeting in New York at the time of Robeson's death:

"Like Shakespeare's noblest Romans, the elements so mixed in him that nature might stand up and say to all the world 'this was a man.' Nature herself must feel that something uniquely wonderful has departed from the earth. How fortunate we were to have had Paul Robeson walk among us. As artist and man, he was a prophetic vision of how wondrously beautiful the human race can become. Now he belongs to the future."

The struggles and ideals to which Paul Robeson devoted every last measure of his strength are today coming to glorious fruition. Scores of countries have won their national independence. Vietnam is free, the peoples of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia are on the march as never before and victory shall soon be theirs as surely as the sun rises.

The legacy of Paul Robeson inspires us to multiply our efforts for world peace, on behalf of the national liberation of South Africa, for the total and rapid eradication of the scourge of racism and *apartheid*, for social progress and human emancipation. Inspired by the magnificent memory of Paul Robeson, the World Peace Council rededicates itself to these noblest of humanity's aspirations.

### *The Chairman*

I thank Mrs. Karen Talbot for her statement, and in the spirit of her statement I wish to recall what Robeson wrote in his book *Here I Stand*, concerning his visit to Spain in 1938. He said:

"... in Spain I sang with my whole heart and soul for these gallant fighters of the International Brigade. A new, warm feeling for my homeland grew within me as I met the men of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion — the thousands of brave young Americans who had crossed the sea to fight and die that another 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.' "

He continued:

"My heart was filled with admiration and love for these white Americans, and there was a sense of great pride in my own people when I saw that there were Negroes, too, in the ranks of the Lincoln men in Spain."

I quoted this to further elucidate the grandeur, the scope and the magnanimity of Paul Robeson's vision, a vision which was misunderstood by the Jim Crows of the United States.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mfanafuthi J. Makatini of the African National Congress.

## **A FRIEND OF THE OPPRESSED SOUTH AFRICAN PEOPLE**

*Statement by Mr. Mfanafuthi J. Makatini, Representative of the African National Congress of South Africa at the United Nations, Member of the National Executive Committee, Deputy Director of the International Department for International Affairs.*

Our statement has to be short because the time is too short. I myself am too short to measure this evergreen and extraordinarily tall tree that Robeson has been; as correctly described by you, the speakers who have preceded me, and our brother Gil Noble.

To the African people throughout the length and breadth of the continent, the peoples of the Third World in general, and the oppressed and struggling people of South Africa in particular, Paul Robeson was more than a legendary artist whose unparalleled talent always inspired the downtrodden blacks with confidence, pride, and the spirit of self-assertion. To our people, Paul Robeson was also an outstanding and selfless freedom fighter, political leader, whose single-minded dedication to the cause of the black man throughout the world, and human and social progress in

general, made him a target of the most vicious persecution by the reactionary forces in the United States; the forces that were committed to the perpetuation of exploitation of man by man.

In his extensive travels and professional performances abroad, Paul Robeson won himself unparalleled fame, respect and influence. If he had sought personal growth and wealth, if he had remained unconcerned and silent over the sequels of slavery and the plight of the blacks in the United States, the plight of the colonized people in Africa and the world, he would have been acclaimed by the dominant group in this country, through its powerful media which it owns and controls, the greatest roving American Ambassador of the time. But Paul Robeson was made of finer and sterner stuff. He spoke out. He clearly and unequivocally declared his stand, and the virulent campaign conducted against him only served to temper and steel his commitment and immensely increased his fame and prestige.

Any appraisal of Paul Robeson shows that his internationalism, his all-embracing humanism, was developed through his deep communion with the Afro-American heritage. To the African National Congress, this day is of special significance because of his close association with our struggles. As you recalled, Paul Robeson attended the meeting of the Coordinating Committee of Colonial Peoples in London in 1949 — at which the African National Congress was represented — and travelled from London to Paris, with Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, to represent the Coordinating Committee at the World Peace Congress.

In South Africa, Paul Robeson is considered an outstanding champion of the emancipation of the country, no doubt, when the time comes, since victory in South Africa is now as certain as sunrise, he will be one of the first to be honoured by our people.

Mr. Chairman, you have correctly recalled the historic event of 1946 when for the first time, this august body, the United Nations, discussed the problem of South Africa at the insistence of India, in the form of a complaint concerning maltreatment of the people of Indian origin in South Africa. I have no doubt that Paul Robeson, a friend of Pandit Nehru and many African leaders was associated with that event. I wonder if it is not one of the best tributes that we can pay to this great leader to consider the possibility of the African countries following this precedent and considering the presentation to the United Nations of the question of the treatment of the peoples of African origin in the United States.

## *The Chairman*

I thank Mr. Mfanafuthi J. Makatini, for his statement on behalf of the African National Congress of South Africa.

I would like to announce that there will be a brief concert between 7 and 8 in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium with Pete Seeger, the great American folk singer. Mr. Seeger has appeared in many concerts and picket lines with Paul Robeson, and like Robeson, has sung the freedom songs of many nations. A few weeks ago the Actors Equity presented him with the Paul Robeson award at the Martin Luther King Auditorium of the Associated Hospital Workers in recognition of his "concern and service to fellow humans, respect for the dignity of the individual, freedom of expression, universal brotherhood and the artist's responsibility to the profession and the greater society." After the concert, there will be a reception in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

It is with great honour and pleasure that I now give the floor to the last speaker, Mr. Paul Robeson, Jr.

## **A SON'S TRIBUTE**

*Statement by Mr. Paul Robeson, Jr. President of the Paul Robeson Archives:*

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, members of the Special Committee against *Apartheid* and friends. It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here and indeed a very moving experience. I must say that listening to a message to my father from the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cuba, Fidel Castro, is a wonderful experience, because one of the brightest days in my father's life was when the Cuban people freed themselves, once and for all, from imperialist domination and took into their hands their own destiny. Secondly, there is perhaps, some irony, in my presence here only in the sense that my father, in his active years, had no opportunity ever to address any body of the United Nations, and perhaps the reason for that is, that then there were only three African countries in the United Nations; today there are over forty.

I would like to speak briefly about several things. One, about my father's moral principles, the things that made him the man he was. First, there was dedication to what is right, not what is expedient. Second, there was dedication to excellence, to be the best that he

could be, to extend his talents, his capacities to the utmost, so he never stopped studying and he never stopped learning. Third, there was the concern for the masses of his own people and for the masses of people all over the world. He did not believe that his personal success meant anything if his people were oppressed. Indeed, he felt that because of his great success, he owed an even greater debt to help the oppressed in his own country and everywhere else in their struggles. And he believed that the culture of a country, its essence, flows from the great mass of the people. He said:

"I will never forget that the ultimate freedom and the immediate progress of my people rest on the sturdy backs and unquenchable spirits of the coal miners, carpenters, railroad workers, domestic workers, bricklayers, sharecroppers, steel and auto workers, cooks, stewards, and longshoremen, the vast mass of Negro Americans from whom all talent and achievement rise in the first place."

He also, as a young man, discovered his cultural roots. He came to understand that he came from a great African tradition thousands of years old, and as a man in his thirties, he said:

"Meanwhile, in my music, my plays, my films, I want to carry always this central idea, to be African. Multitudes of men have died for less worthy ideals, it is even more eminently worth living for."

So he found the base, the roots, of his own great cultural tradition, and for that reason, as he drew strength from that, he was able to embrace the cultures of peoples all over the world.

He understood and participated in the struggle against colonialism. So it is indeed fitting that this Committee is honouring my father on his 80th birthday. He believed, and I emphasize this fact, that the issue in South Africa, specifically, was not just one of civil rights, but one of political and economic power, of sovereignty of a people taking command of their own destiny and their own land, and that the precedents were those of countries such as the Republic of Cuba, let us say, and of the African countries which have taken their own future into their own hands.

Finally, if today it is unthinkable that American troops would go to South Africa to suppress the liberation movement in that country, it is in no small measure due to the trumpet voice of my own father whose voice will echo for a long time down the corridors of history, saying once again, in 1952, the following, and I close with this quote:



"Now I said more than three years ago that it would be unthinkable to me that Negro youth from the United States should go thousands of miles away to fight against their friends and on behalf of their enemies. You remember that a great howl was raised in the land . . .

"Well I ask you again, 'should Negro youth take a gun in hand and join with British soldiers in shooting down the brave peoples of Kenya?'

"I talked just the other day with Professor Z. K. Matthews of South Africa, a leader of the African National Congress . . . Professor Matthews' son is one of those arrested in Capetown for his defiance of unjust laws. I ask you now, 'shall I send my son to South Africa to shoot down Professor Matthews' son on behalf of Charles E. Wilson's General Motors Corporation?'

"I say again, the proper battlefield for our youth and for all fighters for a decent life is here; in Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia; is here in Cleveland, Chicago and San Francisco; is in every city and at every whistle stop in this land where the walls of Jim Crow still stand and need somebody to tear them down."

## CLOSING REMARKS

### *The Chairman*

We are indeed grateful to Paul Robeson, Jr. for joining us this afternoon and for his eloquent statement.

Permit me, ladies and gentlemen, to thank you all again, on behalf of the Special Committee, for being present with us and to make a few concluding remarks.

In the past few weeks, the Special Committee has had occasion to pay tribute to four great leaders who have made significant contributions in support of the struggle for liberation in South Africa: Mahatma Gandhi on the thirtieth anniversary of his assassination; to Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, on the 110th anniversary of his birthday; to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on the tenth anniversary of his assassination; and to Paul Robeson today on the 80th anniversary of his birthday.

These prophets of a new world order and leaders of people deserve our eternal gratitude. They deserve to be honoured by monuments in the United Nations and around the world.

They dedicated their lives to the welfare of humanity. None of them tried to enrich himself or to seek comfort from his genius. All of

them remained loyal to their peoples and gave generously for the redemption of the humble and oppressed peoples. They have all suffered grievous persecution but remained undeterred.

Humanity owes them a debt which it can never repay except in terms of carrying forward their ideals, and building a new world order of freedom and human dignity, of peace and international cooperation.

What a contrast between them and the selfish economic interests which would rather make a little more profit from the slave labour of the African people of South Africa, like they did of the African people for 500 years, than help to build a just and peaceful world order!

Our present and immediate concern has been to learn from the lives of these great leaders and draw inspiration from them for the final stage of the struggle to eradicate *apartheid* and racism — during this mid-point of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, and the International Anti-Apartheid Year.

These observances have enabled us to become acquainted with many organizations and individuals, and we look forward to their continued association with the Special Committee.

I will not attempt at this time to recall or to sum up the legacy that these great men, we have honoured, have left to us. But I would like to point out that these leaders were not fighting for the freedom of their peoples alone but looking beyond, with a broad vision, to the future of the entire human race.

The millions of people, who have laid down their lives in this century in struggles against colonialism and racism, have sacrificed not only so that their peoples would be free — but also that the people of metropolitan countries and the privileged groups, presently poisoned by racism, would themselves become free.

They gave their lives for the future of *all* humanity. The oppressed people who constitute the great majority of mankind — who were blessed with such great visionary leaders — have become the trustees of all humanity.

It is with that vision that we must, and we will, carry on the struggle for the emancipation of Africa and of the black people.

We invite all decent men and women to join us in this struggle — because it is not fair that the oppressed people alone should shed all the blood in this struggle which is for *all* humanity.

The oppressed people must fight their own battles, under *their* own leadership, but there is always room for those who wish to join

the battle in full loyalty to the oppressed people though not for detractors and self-seekers.

It is somewhat of an accident that three of the four leaders whom we had occasion to honour this year were black leaders from the United States of America.

As an African, I am very conscious that the blacks of this country — blood of our blood — have carried with them the spirit of Africa.

They were the first to see the vision of a united Africa, from north to south and from east to west.

We want them at the head of the table when we celebrate the emancipation of Africa — the whole of Africa — in the not too distant future.

In the name of Dr. DuBois, Paul Robeson and Martin Luther King, Jr., I invite them to join us and guide us.

The last days of the struggle are hard — in southern Africa where the racists have built mighty walls against the winds of freedom.

But, as the Negro spiritual said:

"Joshua fought the battle of Jericho

And the walls came tumbling down."

The forces of liberation are on the ramparts of the walls of Jericho — and the walls will surely come tumbling down!

I thank all of you again, ladies and gentlemen, for making this a memorable observance.

*The meeting is adjourned.*



## **Selected Statements From the Writings and Speeches of Paul Robeson on Apartheid and the Struggle in Southern Africa.**

Excerpted from Philip S. Foner, (editor) *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings — Speeches — Interviews 1918–1974*, New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1978.

Speech delivered at Protest Meeting, Friends' House, London, 25 March, 1949.

We are living today in a world in which those forces which have up to now enjoyed the fruits of the labour of others are feverishly engaged in retaining a hold on their privileges fast slipping from their grasp.

We are confronted with a situation in which the citadels of reaction are being bolstered up to meet the mounting challenge of the oppressed and the down-trodden for their right to live as free men.

The great new era of social change which was ushered in with the victorious conclusion of the war against Fascism, involves not only the peoples of Europe, but also those peoples struggling to throw off the yoke of colonialism.

In China, the forces of liberation are bringing freedom to millions of people in that ancient land, freedom such as they have never known throughout the course of their long history.

The whole of South-East Asia is in a state of ferment. Burma, Malaya, Indonesia and Viet Nam are in the throes of a desperate struggle for emancipation. And the peoples of Africa, their traditional cultural and social standards in a state of ruin as a result of the impact of imperialism, are also striving to build anew on the ruins of the old. It is because of this developing struggle that the imperialist forces have been thrown into a state of near panic and are striking out in every direction in order to survive.

We are often reminded of the "cold war," said to exist between the two great sections of the world, the capitalist section led by the United States, and the socialist section at the head of which stands the Soviet Union. But little is said of the cold war of racial hatred, malice and intolerance, which is being waged with an intensified fury in an attempt to hold millions of people of non-European race in permanent subjection. At the head of the aggressive forces in

this cold war, too, stands the United States. But occupying a prominent place by its side is the Union of South Africa. They are at once agreed in their policies of racial discrimination, but they differ in their practical approach.

A Negro may be lynched in the Southern States of America if he attempts to use his vote. In South Africa he is in no such danger, only because he has no vote.

In the States since the ending of F.E.P.C. a Negro whose skilled labour was valued in time of war, now finds it hard to get a job even below his capabilities. In South Africa an African may be driven, even at the point of a gun, as we learned last week, to persuade him to sell his labour.

South Africa is now the stamping ground of all the evil forces which many decent, progressive people believe the war was fought to destroy. The disciples of Streicher and Goebbels are unashamedly and insolently boasting about their foul creed. They are brazenly persecuting three quarters of the population. They degrade mankind by their policies and practices and consequently they are deserving of the severest censure of decent men and women everywhere.

I find it difficult to understand the mentality of these racialists of South Africa. Their entire wealth rests upon non-European labour. The functioning of their everyday life depends largely on the services rendered by the very people from whom they are withholding the right to live a normal life.

The picture South Africa presents today recalls the Germany of the years before the war. The pogroms against the Jews in those years lead inevitably and inexorably to the horrors of Auschwitz and Belsen. Can that be the intention of the present rulers of South Africa? Are they preparing by their present acts to commit finally the act of genocide?

They are talking of expelling the Indian minority from the country, but have not the Indians just as much right there as have the other minorities?

On the question of the treatment of the Indian subjects and on the issue of the future of South-West Africa, the South African Government has up to now successfully defied the authority of the United Nations. Although decisions have been adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations which, as a member state and a signatory to the Charter, she is bound to respect, South Africa has stubbornly pursued her own undemocratic way. It is clear that she would not have been able to keep up this defiance of world opinion,

were it not for the active support and encouragement forthcoming from certain powerful States. We demand that this support be withdrawn forthwith. A vigorous campaign must be conducted to arouse the conscience of the world to do away with what a Negro writer has rightly described as a cesspool which needs no advertisement.

To allow the present situation in South Africa to continue means the preservation of one of the world's gravest danger spots. It is as necessary for the forces of progress to secure victory there as it is in Greece and Spain.

We in America have good reason to be alert to the danger that South Africa represents. We know that it is impossible to compromise with Jim Crowism and Anti-Semitism.

We cannot afford to tolerate the advocates of White Supremacy in South Africa, any more than we can agree to the activities of the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia or Mississippi.

We know that racialism of this kind must either be stamped out or it will spread.

*Statement issued by Paul Robeson, Chairman of the Council on African Affairs, New York, 13 April 1953.*

Americans of African descent are fighting for our full rights as citizens, and must keep fighting until we achieve these rights. In this fight it will be well to remember that as American citizens we have interests and responsibilities abroad, as well as at home.

Our Government is very interested and active, and very busy, in Europe, Asia and Africa. We as black and brown people are especially interested in what our Government is doing in Asia and Africa, because Asians and Africans are Colored Peoples like ourselves. In Africa our Government is actually supporting and doing business with the white colonialists, not the African people. It is supporting Malan in South Africa and the British in Kenya and Rhodesia.

We Colored Americans will especially want to support our African brothers and sisters in South Africa who are now being jailed by the Malan Government for peacefully resisting segregation and discrimination. We will especially want to support our African brothers and sisters in Kenya who are being tried and imprisoned for insisting upon the return of their land.

We know that sending leaders to prison who fight for our just demands does not in any way solve our problem, but rather in-

creases our resentment, thereby aggravating the problem. We know that trying to send to prison respected and responsible leaders like Dr. W. E. B. DuBois and William Patterson; sending men and women like Benjamin Davis, Claudia Jones, and Jomo Kenyatta to prison; and murdering men like Harry T. Moore, will only serve to unite Americans of African descent and the African people.

Imagine all sections of our people in the United States, their organizational and programmatic differences set aside, joining together in a great and compelling action to put a STOP to Jim Crowism in all its forms everywhere in this land, and to further the struggle for land reform in the deep South. Think how such an action would stir the whole of America and the whole world. Think what support we would receive from the colored peoples and advanced white peoples of the world — literally hundreds of millions — strengthening in untold measure the struggle for freedom and peace.

Let us protest the jailing of the black leaders of Kenya. Let us call upon our Government this week to stop helping the Ku Kluxer Malan and help the South African people who are marching irresistably toward freedom. Let our voices be heard in thousands of telegrams and letters to the President in Washington and to Ralph Bunche at the United Nations in New York City.

## Spotlight on Africa, 13 August 1953

### *I. Apartheid*

Speaking in the South African Parliament on March 14, 1945, Dr. Malan's predecessor, Prime Minister Jan Smuts, remarked that everybody "except fools" was agreed on "our fixed policy to maintain white supremacy in South Africa." He was answering a charge from Opposition Leader Malan that the Government was not using the proper measures to "keep the Natives in their place." Nevertheless, Malan and the Nationalist Party won power in 1948 by out-doing the United Party in posing as the white electorate's only true saviour against "the black menace." They retained power in the 1953 election by repeating their performance.

Although the system of racial discrimination and segregation in order to maintain domination by the white minority was firmly established in all spheres of South African life long before Malan came to power, it may be said that during the five years of his



administration the South African way of life which Malan calls *apartheid* has been made immensely more rigid, circumscribed and cruel for the non-white population. The spate of Malan-sponsored "apartheid" legislation enacted since 1948 includes:

- The Asiatic Laws (Amendment) Act, repealing the limited Indian franchise;
- The Mixed Marriages Act, making the marriage of whites and non-whites a criminal offense;
- Amendment of the Immorality Act, making sexual relations between "Colored" and white persons, as well as between Africans and whites, a criminal offense;
- The Population Registration Act, intended to establish the racial identity of every person over 16 years of age, so that there shall be no question of who is subject to the various *apartheid* measures;
- The Group Areas Act, empowering the Government to delimit areas in which only members of a particular racial group or sub-group may reside or own property (this Act is being enforced despite repeated recommendations of non-implementation by the U.N. General Assembly in 1950, 1951 and 1952; at the present writing 146,000 Indians in Durban face eviction from their homes, businesses and institutions, and 75,000 Africans face imminent removal from the Western Areas of Johannesburg, with no alternative housing accommodations whatever afforded);
- The Bantu Authorities Act, which seeks to establish puppet tribal councils and foster tribal division of the Africans (the present limited representation of Africans — by white members — in the South African Parliament to be abolished);
- The Separate Representation of Voters' Act, which would strike some 48,000 "Colored" voters in the Cape Province from the common list of voters and establish a system of separate representation for them such as the Africans now have (declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, but the Government continues to seek to have it upheld).

The subservient status of non-white labor, which is the foundation of South Africa's economy, has been established in law through such measures as the Industrial Conciliation Act, No. 36 of 1937, excluding African trade unions from authorized collective bargaining and strike procedures, the Masters and Servants Act, and the Riotous Assemblies Act.

The Malan Government's policy of tightening still further the shackles on African labor is reflected in the statement by Dr. Theo Wassenauer, a Nationalist Party leader, made in the House of Assembly, September, 1948: "Africans must be re-tribalized: Zulus must remain Zulus, Swazis must remain Swazis and Xosas Xosas — this is one of the ultimate objectives of *apartheid*. We cannot allow the development of a mass black proletariat which would be able to muster against the whites." (*Guardian* [Cape Town] 23 September 1948). It is reflected in the Government's reply to a question from Senator W. G. Ballinger, June, 1949, acknowledging that a Departmental circular of 28 March, 1948, "reaffirms the policy outlined in its circular of the 31st October, 1924 which enjoins Departments and Provincial Administrations wherever possible to substitute civilised [white] labour for uncivilised [African] labour. The former circular also modified this Department's circular No. 8 of 1948, which authorises the employment of Natives as messengers, to the extent that Natives should only be employed as messengers where the services of a European youth are not available."

Under the Malan régime the great majority of Africans have been excluded from the benefits of the Unemployment Insurance Act, and Africans have been legally barred from skilled labour in the building trades by the terms of the Native Building Workers Act. The Native Laws Amendment Act was passed providing for the removal of an African from an urban area, even though he may have been born and lived there permanently, if he is unemployed for 72 hours. Legislation now pending would abolish independent African trade unions altogether and establish Government-approved "company unions" in their place. Minister of Labor B. J. Schoeman, reported *N.Y. Times* correspondent Albion Ross from Pretoria, April 18, 1953, was prepared to secure Parliament's approval of "something close to a system of concentration camps for the black proletariat."

"... the Natives must be made clearly to understand and to realize that the presence and predominance of the white race will be preserved at all hazards, and that all attempts to destroy its hegemony, whether overt or covert... will be promptly punished...."

The quotation is from page 5 of the Report of Natal Native Affairs Committee for the year 1906-7. The idea enunciated has remained the chief principle of South African statecraft down through the decades. The present Nationalist Government has observed and applied it with exceptional persistence and severity. "Any organi-

zation that does not want to acknowledge the color bar has no right to exist in South Africa," Malan's Minister of Economic Affairs, Eric H. Louw, said in 1949. The Government's record of victimization of individuals and organizations supporting democratic rights for all South Africans shows Mr. Luouw's statement to be in fact state policy.

To silence opposition to its policies the Malan Government was at first content to use the expedient of having a magistrate issue an order banning a scheduled meeting. Thus, for example, Mr. Sam Kahn, Member of Parliament representing Africans and a bitter opponent of the Nationalists' *apartheid* program was served with the following magistrate's order dated 17 March, 1949: "Whereas in terms of Section 1(4) of Act 27 of 1914, as amended, there is reason to apprehend that feelings of hostility between Europeans and Non-Europeans would be engendered by the assembly of a public gathering in any place in this town to which the public has access to hear an address by Mr. Sam Kahn M.P. on the subject of *Apartheid* or Equality," acting under the special authority of the Minister of Justice, I do hereby prohibit such assembly in the municipal area of Springs for the purposes aforesaid." African and Indian critics of Malanism were similarly muzzled. The Riotous Assemblies Act and other measures were also invoked to curb free assemblage and free speech.

Then, in 1951, with mammoth public demonstrations against the Separate Representation of Voters' Bill taking place in Cape Town, the Nationalist Government pushed through Parliament, by the narrow margin of 69 votes to 62, the so-called Suppression of Communism Act, the first of its own laws for silencing and punishing its opponents. As noted by even anti-Communist newspapers and leaders in South Africa, this law marked the establishment of police-state fascism in the country.

The Council on African Affairs appeals to the United Nations to take such measures as may be necessary to halt the present oppression of the ten million non-white people of the Union of South Africa, and to avert the danger to international peace and harmony arising from the pursuit of the South African Government's policy and practice of racial discrimination and oppression. We are confident that with the aid and support of the United Nations, the people of South Africa, white as well as non-white, will willingly strive to achieve equal civil liberties, equal political rights, equal economic opportunities, and equality of social status for *all* South Africans.



**Selected Statements About Paul Robeson  
And The Nature of His Commitment  
to the International Struggle  
For Justice and Peace.**

*Reprinted from: John Killens, "Paul Robeson: Portrait of a People's Artist," OIH News, (Newsletter for the Institute for Arts and Humanities of Howard University) Vol. 3 No. 1, Spring, 1978.*

I will never forget the winter of 1947, a winter not unlike the one just past, with blizzards leaving 24 inches of snow in their wake.

I was a union organizer. The Cafeteria Workers Union, a group of militant black women workers, as on strike in Washington. It had been a long strike and the strike fund was exhausted. A young black woman and I were sent to New York to raise funds and organize other types of aid for strikers. We would address many trade union meetings to rally support but our main objective was to ask Paul Robeson to give a benefit performance in Washington for the strike fund.

After a couple of days in New York, we found ourselves in the Robeson apartment, where he treated us graciously, serving us refreshments and making us feel completely at home. He agreed to come to Washington and give the concert. When we said we could foot the cost of transportation and lodging, he said, "Oh don't worry about that. I'll get down there on my own, and there are plenty of places where I can spend the night." We were overwhelmed by his generosity. The young woman with me said, "Mr. Robeson, how can we ever thank you?" He seemed almost embarrassed when he said, "Oh don't thank me. I'm doing this for myself." And he meant it.

I did not understand the words at first. But after some reflection, I realized that Robeson meant that when you fight in the interest of your people, you are fighting for yourself in the profoundest sense.

**ROBESON'S COMMITMENT**

During the 1930's, Paul Robeson said: "An artist must elect to fight for freedom or slavery." He added, "I have made my choice. I had no alternatives." This was the commitment Robeson made to himself, his art, and most of all, to his people. He lived by his commitment, never backed away from it, even though the awesome might of the United States government galvanized itself against him. Concert stages were closed to him, the most gifted and the highest paid performing artist in the country. He was denied his

passport and his right to travel and perform abroad. Why was the powerful United States establishment in such craven fear of one solitary black man? Part of the answer lay in the Robeson commitment.

Even as far back as August 4, 1933, the London Daily Express revealed that Robeson had evolved a personal five-year plan to educate the consciousness of the Afro-American to the greatness of his black heritage. He was quoted in the London Express as saying: "The modern white American is a member of the lowest form of civilization in the world today. My problem is not to counteract the prejudice against the Negro. That does not matter. What I have set for myself is to educate my brother, the Negro, to believe in himself. All American Negroes want to be exactly like the white man. If they succeed in the next generation, they will destroy themselves. We are a greater people in tradition and culture than the American white. Why should we copy something that's inferior?" In the '30's he also said, "I may be the only Black man in the U.S.A. who does not want to be white."

*Reprint from Charles H. Wright, Paul Robeson: Labor's Forgotten Champion, Detroit; Balamp Publishers, 1975, p 13.*

"Robeson saw the struggle of the working classes of Spain in the same terms that he saw the struggles of the black man in the United States. He made this clear after he left Spain and embarked on a series of public appearances on behalf of the Republicans, both on the continent and in England. It was from the continent, probably the Spanish Embassy in Paris that he issued what became known as his Manifesto against Fascism."

The Manifesto reads, as follows:

"Every artist, every scientist must decide, now, where he stands. He has no alternative. There are no impartial observers.

Through the destruction, in certain countries, of man's literary heritage, through the propagation of false ideas of national and racial superiority, the artist, the scientist, the writer is challenged. This struggle invades the former cloistered halls of our universities and all her seats of learning.

The battlefield is everywhere. There is no sheltered rear. The artist elects to fight for freedom or slavery.

I have made my choice! I had no alternative!

The history of the era is characterized by the degradation of my people. Despoiled of their lands, their culture destroyed, they

are denied equal opportunity of the law and deprived of their rightful place in the respect of their fellows.

Not through blind faith or through coercion, but conscious of my course, I take my place with you. I stand with you in unalterable support of the lawful government of Spain, duly and regularly chosen by its sons and daughters."

*Excerpted from William L. Patterson, "Paul Robeson: A Giant Among Men," Political Affairs, May, 1969, Vol. 28, No. 5, p. 17.*

Those who rule the country and in their political madness seek world domination made the goal of stopping his magnificent voice a national project. They did not want Paul to have an African, Asian, or European audience. They denied him a passport and his constitutional right to travel. The leaders of the "free world," through John Foster Dulles, "America's misguided missile," publicly declared from the shelter of the State Department that it was not in the "best interests of the United States." But a voice like Paul's could not be stilled by the edict of a brink-walker like Dulles.

Paul Robeson's 70th birthday fell on an immeasurably tragic day. On the 4th of April the assassin's bullet — fired, as the late Mr. Dulles's associates might hold, "in the best interests of the USA" — sent that giant of American humanism, Dr. Martin Luther King, to a premature grave. The funeral of this black immortal came on Paul's birthday. Yet on every continent, in every country of the world where men and women mourned the terrible loss of Martin Luther King, there were those who sent their greetings to Paul Robeson, citizen of the USA and of the world — of all seeking human freedom.

The late Mr. Walter White, while Secretary of the National Association of Colored People, said of Paul Robeson as the NAACP gave him the Spingarn Medal for his activities in behalf of freedom for all men: "No honest American, white or Negro, can sit in judgment on a man like Robeson unless and until he has sacrificed time, talent, money and popularity in doing the utmost to root out the racial and economical evils which infuriate men like Robeson."

But Paul Robeson has never seen his magnificent contributions to the fight "to root out the racial and economic evils of his country" as a sacrifice. On many occasions he expressed the view that what was needed was a profound and fundamental change — a change to socialism. Thus, he wrote:

On many occasions I have publicly expressed my belief in the principles of scientific socialism, my deep conviction that

for all mankind a socialist society represents an advance to a higher stage of life — that it is a form of society which is economically, socially, culturally, and ethically superior to a system based upon production for private profit. (*Here I Stand*, p. 47.)

At the same time, he declared that it was unthinkable to him "... that any people would take up arms in the name of an Eastland to go against anybody."

Three score and ten years, most of them spent in the greatest cause in all the world — the freedom of mankind! We salute Paul Robeson, Afro-American, American, citizen of the world and one of its greatest humanists. Millions of American youth will find in the life Paul Robeson has led heroic deeds to emulate. He has helped to make history at a moment when the demand was for giants. Our country has produced few that are his peer.

Salute!

*(Presented at the Du Sable Museum of Afro-American History, Chicago, Illinois, 1976)*

*Excerpted from: Margaret G. Burroughs, 1978 "Paul Robeson, A Living National Treasure"*

Paul Robeson, however, was unique in that he had in his character a different goal than the one which characterized most of his contemporaries. His dedication to freedom was total. He was obsessed with a fierce determination to do all within his power to free his people. He translated his socialist humanism into internationalism and his human experience led him right in the direction of Marxism. The Marxist thinking artist plays a diametrically opposed role to that of the artist who serves capitalism. The Capitalist oriented artist prostitutes his talents to throw sand in the eyes of workers and to keep them confused. Paul Robeson appreciated the vital role that one artist of the people had to play in the struggle of the workers against capitalist exploitation. Early in his career he made a conscious decision to use his art as a weapon for liberation. In his welcome home speech at New York in 1949, he stated, "I belonged to working people. I struggled as a boy in the backyards, on the docks, in the hotels to get a living and an education. Ninety-five (95) percent of the Negro people are workers. So I said that my talents would henceforth belong to my people in their struggle. And I did act on this."

Robeson even earlier delineated his philosophy in 1938 when he was interviewed in Spain by Nicolas Guillen the Cuban Poet. When



Guillen asked him why he came to Spain, Robeson answered, "My devotion to Democracy, as an artist, I know it is dishonorable to put yourself in a place above the masses, without working at their side, participating in their anxieties and sorrows, since we artists owe everything to the masses, from our formation, our well being, and it is not only as an artist that I love the cause of democracy in Spain, but also as a Black. I belong to an oppressed race, discriminated against, one that could not live in fascism triumphed in the world."

*Excerpted from: John Henrik Clarke, "Obituary: Paul Robeson," Africa, No. 55, March 1976.*

*"One watches with restrained anger as a nation of hypocrites grudgingly acknowledges the passing of a twentieth century phenomenon, Paul Robeson, All American Athlete, Shakespearean Actor, Basso Profundo, Linguist, Scholar, Lawyer, Activist. He was all these things and more." - L. Clayton Jones, New York, January 1976.*

Paul Robeson was indeed more than an artist, activist and freedom fighter. The dimensions of his talent made him our Renaissance man. He was the first American artist, Black or White, to realize that the role of the artist extends far beyond the stage and the concert hall. Early in his life he became conscious of the plight of his people, stubbornly surviving in a racist society. This was his window on the world. From this vantage point he saw how the plight of his people related to the rest of humanity. He realized that the artist had the power, and the responsibility, to change the society in which he lived.

He was born, April 9, 1898, at a time of great crisis for his people. When he died, January 23, 1976, his people were still in a crisis, partly of a different nature, and partly the same crisis that they faced in the closing years of the nineteenth century, when Paul Robeson was born. He was born three years after Booker T. Washington made his famous Atlanta Exposition address, 1895, and two years after the Supreme Court announced a decision in the Plessy versus Ferguson Case, in which the concept of "Separate but Equal" facilities for Black Americans became law. Of course the separateness never produced any equalness. The time and the decision did produce some of the problems that Paul Robeson would address himself to in later years.

He grew to early manhood during the Booker T. Washington era. He made his professional debut at the Harlem YWCA in 1920, in a play, "Simon The Cyrenian," by Redgely Torrence. This was the same year the Jamaican Black Nationalist, Marcus Garvey, convened the historic First UNIA International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World at Madison Square Garden. The cry "Africa for the Africans, those at home and those abroad" became part of the folklore of Black America. The convention of 1920 was a monumental achievement in Black organizations. About the same time the intellectual movement called The Harlem Literary Renaissance, was beginning.

The circumstances of Paul Robeson growth into manhood made him mature beyond his years by 1920.

*Tributes delivered at the funeral service for Paul Robeson on Tuesday, January 27, 1976 at the Mother A.M.E. Zion Church, New York City.*

#### **PAUL ROBESON, JR.**

I cannot speak today of the full measure of the family's personal grief and overwhelming sense of loss. There are no words for that. My father's immense power and great gentleness, his intense spiritual force and great intellect, his unbending courage and his deep compassion have left each one of us with special memories that will always sustain us, for each was touched by him in a special way.

To me, his son, he gave not only his love but also the freedom and encouragement to think my own thoughts, to follow my own inner convictions, to be my own man. To all of us he gave by example a set of standards to guide our own lives, each of us in our own way.

But I speak today not only because I loved him as a father. I loved him as a friend and as a great and gentle warrior with whom I worked and fought side by side.

And so I come to speak of both the disappointments and the triumphs of Paul Robeson's last years — disappointment because illness forced him into complete retirement — triumph because he retired undefeated and unrepentant.

He never regretted the stands he took, because almost 40 years ago, in 1937, he made his basic choice. He said then, "The artist must elect to fight for Freedom or for Slavery. I have made my choice. I had no alternative."

He knew the price he would have to pay and he paid it, unbowed and unflinching. He knew that he might have to give his life, so he was not surprised that he lost his professional career. He was often called a Communist, but he always considered that name to be an honorable one.

Paul Robeson felt a deep responsibility to the people who loved him and to all those to whom he was a symbol. When he felt that he could not longer live up their expectations he chose to retire completely. When he could no longer raise his voice in song to inspire and to comfort, he chose silence. Because Paul Robeson's views, his work, his artistry, his life, were all of one piece.

But there was also gratification in retirement. In my father's last public message in June, 1974 he said:

It has been most gratifying to me in retirement to observe that the new generation that has come along is vigorously outspoken for peace and liberation; . . . To all the young people, black and white, who are so passionately concerned with making a better world, and to all the old-timers who have been involved in that struggle, I say: Right on!"

#### **DR. GEORGE McMURRAY**

We have come this evening to memorialize an Ambassador of Justice and Equality. An Ambassador who stood as a giant in a society rocked by social prejudice. He possessed a universal philosophy which transmitted a kinship among all peoples. Through this he drew his basic concern for mutual respect and universal brotherly love.

Mr. Robeson was one hundred years ahead of the chronological eras in which he lived. There were those who attempted to silence him during his life. They were not aliens, but his own countrymen. They tried to silence him not because he was an enemy to America — nor was he a friend to any country who sought to destroy his native land. Mr. Robeson has stated: "My father was a slave and my people died to build this country, and I am going to stay and have a piece of it just like you. And no fascist-minded people will drive me from it, is that clear?" He loved America. However, his passion for human dignity transcended the hypocritical concepts of patriotism when he saw the "have-nots" denied the opportunities of the "haves." He stood fast in maintaining his character and dignity as a son of a just God. "I will never retreat 1000th part of one inch."

Paul, your legacy in history will be immortal. You did fight racism which is still a cancer today in America's society. We are proud of you.

I am happy this evening that America has matured enough in race relations to the extent that we can gather together here in this ecumenical service and pay homage to you — a great American.

*(Dr. McMurray is pastor of the Mother A.M.E. Zion Church, New York City)*

In December 1977, an Ad Hoc Committee to End The Crimes Against Paul Robeson was formed to protest the inaccurate portrayal of Paul Robeson in a new play by Philip Hayes Dean. The Committee's statement read, in part:

"The essence of Paul Robeson is inseparable from his ideas — those most profoundly held artistic, philosophical and political principles which evolved from his early youth into the lifelong commitments for which he paid so dear and from which he never wavered down to his final public statement in 1975.

In life, Paul Robeson sustained the greatest effort in the history of this nation to silence a single artist. He defied physical and psychological harassment and abuse without once retreating from those principles and the positions to which he dedicated his life. We believe that it is no less a continuation of the same crime to restore him, now that he is safely dead, to the pantheon of respectability on the terms of those who sought to destroy him.

Robeson is the archetype of the Black American who uncompromisingly insists on total liberation. His example and his fate strike to the very heart of American racism.

For the nation to confront him honestly would mean that it confronts itself — to begin at last the process of reclamation of the national soul."

## A CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF PAUL ROBESON

Excerpted from: Erwin A Salk, *DuBois-Robeson: Two Giants of the 20th Century: The Story of an Exhibit and a Bibliography*, Chicago: Columbia College Press, 1977.

- 1898: April 9, born in Princeton, N.J., to William Drew Robeson and Maria Louisa Bustill.
- 1915-18 Wins scholarship to Rutgers University. Receives 15 varsity letters: football, basketball, baseball, track. Phi Beta Kappa, debating champion, valedictorian of his graduating class.
- 1919 Enters Columbia Law School.
- 1921 Marries Eslanda Cardozo Goode (1898-1965), the first Black analytical chemist at Columbia Medical Center.
- 1923 Graduates from Columbia Law School. Has brief law practice.
- 1924 Stars in O'Neill's **Emperor Jones** and **All God's Chillun Got Wings**. In Oscar Micheaux's film **Body and Soul**.
- 1925 Lawrence Brown and Robeson give their first concert on April 19 at the Greenwich Village Theatre.
- 1926 Stars as prize fighter in the film **Black Boy**.
- 1928 Plays role of Joe in Jerome Kern's **Showboat**, London production.
- 1930 Famous Savoy production of **Othello** in London. Robesons appear together in film **Borderline**.
- 1932 Receives Honorary Degree, Master of Arts, Rutgers University.
- 1933 Appears in New York production of **Emperor Jones**.
- 1934 Stars in film **Sanders of the River**. Travels to the Soviet Union.
- 1935 Appears in film version of **Showboat** made in Hollywood; Herbert Marshall's play **Stevedore** in London.
- 1936 Has leading role in film **Song of Freedom**, produced in London.
- 1937 Visits Spain to support and entertain the Spanish Loyalist Government. Sings for the International Brigade. Appears with Lawrence Brown in film **Jericho**, produced in Egypt and London. Appears with Eslanda Robeson in film **Big Fella**. Appears in film **King Solomon's Mines**, British production.

- 1938 The Robesons travel to Spain. Robeson appears in play **Plant in the Sun** for benefit of workers theatre, London.
- 1939 Performs in world premiere of Earl Robinson's **Ballad for Americans** at CBS Radio Studios in New York City, Nov. 5. Appears in film **Proud Valley**, British production. Awarded Badge of Veterans of Abraham Lincoln Brigade (Spanish Civil War).
- 1940-43 Many concert appearances.
- 1940 Receives Honorary Degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, Hamilton College.
- 1943 Receives Honorary Degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, Morehouse College, June 1.
- 1944 Receives Donaldson Award, Best Acting Performance, **Othello**. Awarded gold medal, National Institute of Arts and Letters.
- 1945 Presented with 30th Spingarn Medal of the NAACP by Marshal Field. Gives concert tour for USO. Makes over 30 appearances in Germany, Czechoslovakia, and France.
- 1946 Performs **Ballad for Americans** with CIO chorus, June 6. Awarded Honorary Degree, Howard University.
- 1947 Famous concert at University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Announces he will no longer give concerts for entertainment; will perform benefits instead.
- 1949 European concert tour, including Soviet Union. Attends Paris Peace Conference, makes statement, "... It is unthinkable that American Negroes could go to war on behalf of those who have oppressed us for generations against the Soviet Union, which in one generation has raised our people to full human dignity." Gives concert at Peekskill, N.Y.; violent mob attacks Robeson supporters.
- 1949-50 85 concerts cancelled by music promoters attempting to silence Robeson.
- 1950 Receives "Champion of African Freedom" Award from National Church of Nigeria.  
Passport revoked by State Department "... in view of his frank admission that he has been for years politically active in behalf of the colonial people of Africa." Edits monthly journal **Freedom**. Receives Afro-American Newspapers Award.
- 1952 Awarded Lenin Peace Prize.

- 1955 Speaks at meeting of the Council on African Affairs.
- 1956 Appears before House Committee on Un-American Activities, June 12. "My father was a slave and my people died to build this country, and I am going to stay here and have a piece of it just like you. And no fascist-minded people will drive me from it. Is that clear?" Paul Robeson.
- 1957 Concert ban lifted. Robeson performs first concert in seven years, Oakland, California.
- 1958 Passport returned under worldwide pressure and protest. Robesons leave for London. European concert tour, including the Soviet Union. Famous concert at Carnegie Hall, New York City. Book **Here I Stand** published. Guest of Honor at Ersteddfod Cultural Festival, Wales.
- 1959 Performs in **Othello** at Stratford-on-Avon, England. Honorary Degree, Professor of Music, Moscow State Conservatory.
- 1960 Last concert tour, Australia and New Zealand. Speaks on behalf of the Aborigine Civil Rights Movement. Awarded German Peace Medal, German Democratic Republic. Receives Honorary Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Humboldt University, Berlin.
- 1961 Retires from singing and acting due to illness.
- 1963 Returns to U.S.
- 1965 Appears at "Freedomways Salute to Paul Robeson," April 22, New York City. Eslanda Goode Robeson dies.
- 1969 Celebrates Nigerian Independence with Nnamdi Azikiwe.
- 1970 Receives Ira Aldridge Award from Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History; Civil Liberties Award from American Civil Liberties Union.
- 1972 Dedication of the Paul Robeson Campus Center, Rutgers University. Receives Whitney M. Young, Jr., National Memorial Award from the New York Urban League. Elected to Theatre Hall of Fame.
- 1973 Lawrence Brown Memorial Concert. Seventy-Fifth Birthday Celebration at Carnegie Hall, New York City, April 15. "Warmest thanks to the many friends here and throughout the world who have sent me greetings on my 75th birthday. Though I have not been able to be active for several years, I want you to know

that I am the same Paul, dedicated as ever to the worldwide cause of humanity for freedom, peace and brotherhood. Here at home, my heart is with the continuing struggles of my own people to achieve complete liberation from the racist domination, and to gain for all Black Americans and the other minority groups not only equal rights but an equal share . . . " Receives Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree, Rutgers University, May 17, on his 75th birthday anniversary.

1976

Paul Robeson dies, January 23. Funeral services at A.M.E. Zion Church, New York City, January 27.



# A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE PUBLISHED WRITINGS BY AND ABOUT PAUL ROBESON COMPILED BY ERNEST KAISER

## Books, Pamphlets, Theses, and Dissertations.

Brown, Lloyd L. *Lift Every Voice for Paul Robeson*. New York, Freedom Associates, 1951. 14 pp. (pamphlet).

*Paul Robeson Rediscovered*. New York, American Institute of Marxist Studies, 1976. 23 pp.

This paper was presented at the National Conference on Paul Robeson under the auspices of the Africana Studies and Research Center, Purdue University, Indiana, 21-23 April, 1976.

Dent, Roberta Yancy, assisted by Marilyn Robeson and Paul Robeson, Jr. (editors). *Paul Robeson: Tributes and Selected Writings*. New York, Paul Robeson Archives, Inc., 1976, 112 pp.

Fast, Howard. *Peekskill, U.S.A.: A Personal Experience*. New York, Civil Rights Congress, 1951. 124 pp. (photographs).

A book about the mobs of whites who attacked those who attended two of Paul Robeson's outdoor concerts in Peekskill, New York on 27 August and 3 September 1949, while police ignored the mob or protected it. New York State accused and tried to indict the victims of the mob. See also a review of this book: Wilkerson, Doxey A., *Masses and Mainstream*, Vol. I, No. 5, (May, 1951) pp. 87-89.

Foner, Philip S. ed. *Paul Robeson Speaks*. New York, Brunner/Mazel, Inc., 1978. 650 pp. (cloth and paper).

Virtually all of Robeson's writings, speeches, and interviews from his school days to his death in January, 1976.

Georgiady, Nicholas P., Louis G. Romano, and Robert L. Green. *Paul Robeson: American Negro Actor*. Milwaukee, Franklin Publishers, 1969. 16 pp. (pamphlet).

A biographical sketch of Robeson. One of a variety of sixty pamphlets about outstanding Blacks in history, living and dead.

Gilliam, Dorothy Butler. *Paul Robeson: All American*. Washington, D.C., New Republic Book Company, 1976. 216 pp. (cloth and paper).

Here a Black woman journalist writes a politically inept and amateurish biography of Robeson. She accepts all of the premises and lies of the anti-Communist Cold War period. So Robeson, not his persecutors, is condemned as the Cold War Warrior in error. This book is almost a rewrite of Edwin P. Hoyt's Red-baiting book.

Gorochoff, Viktor. *Ich Singe Amerika: Ein Lebensbild Paul Robeson*. Berlin, Verlag Neues Leben, 1955. 190 pp.

Biography with many photographs.

Graham, Shirley. *Paul Robeson: Citizen of the World*. New York, Julian Messner, 1946. 264 pp; 1971, 280 pp.

This is a biography of Robeson for young people. It was reissued in 1971 after being out of print for many years.

Greenfield, Eloise. *Paul Robeson*. New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975. 33 pp.

A book for children by the outstanding Black women writer.

Hamilton, Virginia. *Paul Robeson: The Life and Times of a Free Black Man*. New York, Harper and Row, 1974. 217 pp.

A book for young people and adults by the well-known Black woman author.

"Paul Robeson in Film." *Perspective*, New Brunswick, Paul Robeson Film Retrospective, 1973.

"Paul Robeson: The Great Forerunner." *Freedomways* Editors. New York, Dodd, Mead, 1978. 383 pp. Photos.

Robeson, Paul. *Here I Stand*. Boston, Beacon Press. 1971. 121 pp.

Salk, Erwin A. *DuBois-Robeson: Two Giants of the 20th Century; The Story of An Exhibit and a Bibliography*. Chicago, Columbia College Press, 1977. 20 pp. (booklet).

The exhibit described here was prepared by Professor Salk and his assistant Richard Cooper in the Chicago meeting of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History in 1976. It

includes a profile, chronology, and bibliography of Paul Robeson. The bibliography is particularly valuable as it includes books, recordings, tapes, films and videotapes about Robeson. DuBois is treated similarly. It is a valuable source book.

*Salute to Paul Robeson: A Cultural Celebration of his 75th Birthday; at Carnegie Hall, New York City, 15 April 1973.*

A beautiful 44 page brochure telling the story of Robeson's life with texts and many pictures. His birthday greetings, Pablo Neruda's "Ode to Paul Robeson" (translated into English from the Spanish by Jill Booty), etc.

Wright, Charles H. *Robeson: Labor's Forgotten Champion*. Detroit, Balamp Publishing Company, 1975, vii. 171 pp.

The author is a Black medical doctor who has written for the stage and television.

Yeakey, Lamont H. *The Early Years of Paul Robeson: Prelude to the Making of a Revolutionary, 1898-1930*.

Unpublished Master's thesis Columbia University, 1971.

### Chapters, Parts of Books, and Dissertations

Adams, Russell L. *Great Negroes: Past and Present*. Chicago, Afro-American Publishing Co. 1964-1969.

In the 1964 edition see pages 148-149. In the 1969 edition see pages 182-183.

Black Titan: "W. E. B. DuBois: An Anthology" by the Editors of *Freedomways*. Clarke, John Hendrik, Esther Jackson, Ernest Kaiser and J. H. O'Dell. Boston, Beacon Press, 1970.

See "Tribute to W. E. B. DuBois" by Paul Robeson, pp. 34-38.

Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks; An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*. New York, Viking Press, 1973.

See *Paul Robeson: The Black Colossus*, pp. 94-100, plus twenty references.

Fuller, Thomas O. *Paul Robeson and Negro Music is Pictorial History of the American Negro*. Memphis, Tennessee, Pictorial History, Inc., 1933.

Hare, Maud Currey. *Negro Musicians and Their Music*. Washington, D.C., Associated Publishers, 1936. 439 pp. New York, Da Capo Press, 1974, xii - 439 pp.

Ovington, Mary White, *Portraits in Colour*. New York, Viking Press, 1927. See pages 205-217.

Stuckey, Sterling. *The Spell of Africa: The Development of Black Nationalist Theory, 1829-1945*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1973.

See Chapter entitled "I Want to Be African": Paul Robeson and the Ends of Nationlist Theory and Practice, 1914- 1945, 11 (also published in the *Massachusetts Review*, vol. 17, no. 1, Spring 1976), pp. 81-138.

#### **Magazine and Newspaper Articles, Book Review, Radio and Television Programmes**

Audrey, James. "The Real Forerunner in Civil Rights (Paul Robeson)." *National Scene* (Magazine Supplement), 1:13:3-4, November-December 1972.

Photos and front cover drawing of Robeson by the Black artist and Robert S. Pious.

Clarke, John Henrik. "Paul Robeson-Obituary" — *Africa: International Business, Economic and Political Magazine*, 55: 68-69, March 1976.

Gornick, Vivian. "Harlem Bids Farewell to Paul Robeson." *Village Voice*, 73-75, 9 February 1976.

Photo.

Gresham, Jewel Handy. "Paul Robeson: Another View." *Amsterdam News*, 18 March 1978.

Also see the editorial on the Paul Robeson play controversy in the same issue. Dr. Gresham is the Executive Director of the Coalition of Concerned Black Americans.

La Guma, Alex. "Paul Robeson and Africa." *African Communist*, 46: 113-119, Third Quarter, 1971.

Alex La Guma, the South African writer, read the paper published here at a symposium on "Paul Robeson and the Afro-American Struggle" which was held between 13-14 April, 1971 at the Academy of Arts in Berlin, German Democratic Republic.

Neal, Steven. "The Resurrection of Paul Robeson." *Today* (Philadelphia *Inquirer*), : 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 10 March 1974.

Photographs. The Subtitle is: "Behind the drawn curtains of a dingy West Philadelphia Row house lives a Great Black Man: A Victim of Anti-Communist Hysteria."

Patterson, William L. "A German Tribute to Paul Robeson." *American Dialogue*, 6:1: 15-16, Autumn 1971.

Discusses a two-day international symposium in April 1971 which was held in Berlin, German Democratic Republic to honour Robeson on his 73rd birthday.

Robeson, Paul. "African Culture." *African Observer* 2:5, 19-21, March 1935.

"The Culture of the Negro." *Spectator* 152:916-917, 15 June 1934.

A very important pioneering essay on African culture in Africa and throughout the world.

LeRoy. "The New Idealism." *Rutgers Daily Targum*, 50:30: 570-571, June 1919.

Also see page 566 about Robeson's career.

Stevens, Hope R. "Paul Robeson — Democracy's Most Powerful Voice." *Freedomways* 5:3 : 365-368, Third Quarter, 1965.

This is Mr. Stevens' speech at the "Salute to Paul Robeson" which was held at the Hotel Americana in New York, 22 April, 1965.

White, Walter. "Paul Robeson: Wrong," *Negro Digest*, 8-18, March, 1950. DuBois, W. E. B. "Paul Robeson: Right" *Negro Digest*, 8-18, March, 1950.

Wright, Charles H. "Paul Robeson of Peekskill." *Freedomways*, 15:2: 101-11, 1975.

## Films and Portable Exhibits

*Paul Robeson, Beleaguered Leader.*

A panel discussion held on 19 October 1973 at the 58th annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History held at the Commodore Hotel in New York City 18-21 October 1973. The participants were Herman Brown, C.L.R. James, Harold D. Weaver Jr., and John Henrik Clarke.

## Poetry Inspired by Paul Robeson

Brierre, Jean F. "To Paul Robeson." Translated from the French by Frances Waldman — *The Negro Quarterly*, 1:4. 363-64, Winter - Spring, 1943.

Harper, Michael S. "Paul Robeson." *Black Scholar*, 8: 8: 34, April, 1977.

Johnston, Percy Edwards. "To Paul Robeson" Opus No. 3. *Dasein: A Journal of Aesthetics, Literature and Philosophy*.

Mbari, Antar Sudan Katara. "Suite of the Singing Mountain: A Blues/Jazz Canata for Paul Robeson." *Daily World*, 1, 14 May 1976 and 20 May 1976, 8.

A long poem with subtitles such as "Deep Within Us a Volcano Burns," "We are gathering in your light, Big Paul," and "Erect as the Sun at high noon, you rise like a Mountain."

Percikow, Henri. "For Paul Robeson." *Freedomways*, 5: 3: 411, Third Quarter, 1965.

Wright, Sarah E. "Until They Have Stopped (dedicated to Paul Robeson, Sr.)." *Freedomways*, 5: 3: 378-379, Third Quarter 1965.

A poem by the well-known Black woman poet and novelist.



Published by the  
AFRICAN HERITAGE STUDIES ASSOCIATION

*An association of scholars of African descent dedicated to the preservation, interpretation and presentation of the historical and cultural heritage of African peoples, both on the ancestral soil of Mother Africa and in diaspora in the Americas and throughout the world.*

In Cooperation With The  
UNITED NATIONS CENTRE AGAINST APARTHEID