

Paul Robeson: The Artist as Revolutionary

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Featured image: Paul Robeson (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Paul Robeson was larger than life. He was a giant in every sense of the word. The brilliant Gerald Horne has written a biography attempting to tell the amazing story of Paul Robeson "Paul Robeson: The Artist as Revolutionary." Paul Robeson was an athlete, lawyer, singer, scholar, actor, but above all he was a revolutionary. His true passion was the study of languages and he hoped to unite humanity through his studies he knew Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, German, Spanish and Russian, he taught himself to read Chinese in 3 months, he studied the languages of Africa.

Fleeing apartheid America for Britain Robeson was catapulted into stardom, wealthy, his company desperately sought by monarchs and aristocrats. Yet unlike so many celebrities he sacrificed everything on behalf of the common man, the working class. He preferred the cause of the Welsh miners, of black sharecroppers living under American Jim Crow apartheid, the peasant of China, the workers of the Soviet Union.

He gave up his film career rather than appear in roles that reinforced racist stereotypes. He gave up his singing career to help spark the civil rights movement. He enraged his fellow Americans by refusing to give up his friendship with the Soviet Union at the height of McCarthyism. Even with his career destroyed he gave what money he had left to the cause of African liberation playing a pivotal role in that struggle. Paul Robeson was far ahead of his time even as he battled apartheid at home he was battling apartheid in South Africa. He was one of the world's great Internationalists. In his time he was not only the world's most famous black man he was the world's most famous American. Everywhere they played his records he was beloved. In India, in the Soviet Union, in Britain, Canada, and Australia, in Latin America where Pablo Neruda was among his admirers, in Africa, in the Caribbean, in China, and Japan everywhere he was a superstar.

Even more revealing were his enemies, he angrily confronted **President Truman** demanding an end to lynching and the mutilation of black soldiers as he pounded on the President's desk, Truman turned purple with rage. He defied the House Un-American Activities Committee calling them fascists to their faces. **John Foster Dulles** and the State department were terrified of his every move and took his passport preventing him from traveling. The FBI kept him under constant surveillance believing he had the potential to become a "Black Stalin." The CIA launched propaganda campaigns worldwide to try to counter and discredit him. The New York Times and the mainstream media attempted a complete press blackout on the subject of Paul Robeson. He survived multiple attempts to assassinate him. Huge mobs of homegrown fascists attempted to lynch him. People were paid small fortunes to denounce him. Others had their careers ruined merely for knowing him. He was one of the harshest critics of the Truman Doctrine and the Cold War.

He was speaking out against the war in Vietnam back in 1954. He was an enemy of imperialism and colonialism. He was an enemy of capitalism. He was an enemy of fascism at home and abroad. He was an enemy of racism and sexism. He was an enemy of war. An enemy of censorship and lies he was hated for speaking the truth in a world dominated by American propaganda. He exposed to the whole world to the ugly reality that underlay the American exceptionalist myth bringing the United States to trial before the United Nations and charging it with genocide. The international pressure he was able to bring to bear played a major role in ending American Jim Crow Apartheid although for Robeson this represented only a tentative first step. Paul Robeson believed only Communism could truly bring true equality to America and the world.



Paul Robeson wrote of his childhood in his autobiography "Here I Stand" which I also highly recommend Robeson quickly turns the book from an Autobiography to a platform where he can describe his political struggles and his blueprint for the future of the civil rights movement. Paul Robeson's father was born a slave but managed to escape to freedom becoming the **Reverend William Drew Robeson**. He instilled in Robeson a lifelong love of learning. Paul Robeson was born April 9 1898. His mother **Maria Louisa Bustill Robeson** was a school teacher who came from a long line of free blacks. She was known for her charity work, but died in a fire when Paul was only a child. Later Robeson would be famous for his rendition of the song "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child" Robeson had 5 siblings. His father was a well respected as the leader of the local black community who managed the difficult task of maintaining his dignity when negotiating with the white community while at the same time avoiding provoking them into lynching him. It was from his father that he learned his love of languages and inherited his powerful baritone voice.

It was from his brothers that a rebellious spark was lit in him. His brother Bill Robeson advised him if attacked "Stand up to them and hit back harder then they hit you" Paul sang in the church and was a star pupil at school. Robeson spent his early childhood in Princeton New Jersey and levels harsh criticism of **Woodrow Wilson** Dean of Princeton University and a strict segregationists who barred blacks from the University then went on to further expand and intensify **Jim Crow** nationwide after becoming President. Robeson would go to Rutgers where he was the only black student. Before heading for university he won 3rd place in a statewide speaking competition giving a fiery oration penned by the Abolitionist

Wendell Phillips in praise of the Haitian Revolutionary Toussaint L'Ouverture that must have terrified his audience with its talk of fire, poison and total war in resistance to the French imperialists attempt at invading Haiti to reinstall slavery. Later in Robeson would play the role of Toussaint on the stage in a play by C.L.R. James based on his classic book "Black Jacobins".

It was at Rutgers that Robeson would achieve nationwide fame as a football star. When he first joined the team his racist team mates hated the idea of having a black player and brutally attacked him at practice beating him so badly that he was hospitalized for a week. Robeson wanted to quit but his father and brother convinced him to return. When he returned a team mate stomped on Paul's hand ripping out his fingernails and Paul went on a rampage knocking down his team mates and lifting one above his head. His team mates learned not to mess with him and Paul went on to be the greatest defensive end of his time. He was also a star at basketball, baseball and track and field. At the school Robeson also acted and sang and picked up a love of Shakespeare from a sympathetic professor.

Paul Robeson studied law at Columbia University and got his degree but gave up on being a lawyer when a secretary at his law firm refused to take orders from a black man and his firm barred him from handling important cases. It was at Columbia that he met his wife **Eslanda Goode Robeson** who deserves a biography of her own. Like Robeson she spoke multiple languages and she shared his radical politics and would help manage his career. She would go on to become a journalist who specialized in the liberation of Africa. After Robeson quit the law firm he turned to professional football to make a living. His star continued to rise and it was even widely believed at the time that if he had wanted he could have become the world heavy weight boxing champion. Instead he capitalized on his celebrity by winning a starring role in a play. He didn't have much confidence in himself as an actor but trained intensively. Strangely he would one day become one of the first famous method actors thanks to his Russian friends.

It was while in the play that the director upon hearing Robeson sing had songs added to the play. The play "Voodoo" would take Robeson to London and it was there that he became a superstar. Characteristically on the boat ride over he would befriend the Welsh passengers after dropping by to listen as they sang their folk music. Robeson felt a special connection to Celtic peoples and never tired of pointing out the connections between black and Celtic culture like the impact of Irish folk music on Negro spirituals. Because of his love of languages he was no ordinary singer but a cultural theorist always seeking to unite humanity through his study of the languages and folk music of various cultures. In London due to his powerful physical presence, his charisma, and his deep baritone voice he became a superstar. Soon he was sought after by the cream of London society while back in America despite his fame he wasn't even allowed to eat at the New York restaurants. In Britain by contrast he was welcome in the homes of the aristocrats and could stay at the finest hotels. Had he been an ordinary celebrity this meteoric success would be enough. The son of a slave now kept the company of kings he was rich and famous.

However it was not fame and riches that interested Robeson. His true passion was the liberation of his people. So long as they were subjected to Jim Crow back home he could not feel truly free. It was in London that he would undergo a radical political awakening. Because of his love of languages he decided to take some courses at the School of Oriental and African studies. He learned Yoruba, Efik, Benin, Ashanti, and other African languages and was stunned by the cultural sophistication they revealed. There he met many African students including future African Revolutionaries **Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikwe,**

and **Jomo Kenyatta**.

He would become lifelong friends with them and would found and fund the Council on African Affairs that would play a vital role in the liberation of Africa. More and more Robeson realized the similarities between the struggles against colonialism and the struggle against Jim Crow. He also loved to talk to African sailors to learn more about life in Africa. Because of his love of the ordinary working man Robeson was always willing to sing for Unions giving inspiration to striking workers. This is how he became introduced to communism and **Gerald Horne** believes he likely joined the CPGB the British communist party. He befriended the famous Indian born communist **R. Palme Dutt** and other leading British communists like **Harry Pollitt**. Robeson read Marx and Lenin in German and Russian. He sang for the Jewish refugees of Nazism. He also befriended the leaders of the Indian independence movement and would be a lifelong friend of Nehru. It was his interest in Africa that would lead him to visit the USSR he was struck by the similarity of the Yakuts a people in Central Asia who Robeson believed had much in common with the people of Africa. He wanted to see how the Revolution and the Construction of socialism had affected them and saw the progress and modernization socialism had brought them in so short a time as further proof that colonial peoples were ready for self rule. Thus when an audience member challenged him to visit the Soviet Union he accepted.

Robeson already spoke Russian and always felt a deep spiritual connection to Russia because they were a nation of serfs while his people were slaves. His favorite author was the Russian poet Pushkin who was of African descent. One of Robeson's heroes was **Ira Aldridge** a former slave who escaped to England and became a star shakespearean actor like Robeson and also like Robeson would make a second home in Russia.

However before arriving in the USSR Robeson made a stop in Nazi Germany where he was harassed by Fascists nearly getting himself killed by standing up to a pack of Nazi storm troopers. It was his second trip to Germany and he had received a much warmer reception during the Weimar republic needless to say. This brief stop in Germany further cemented Robeson's commitment to Anti-Fascism and he would become one of the leading Anti-fascists of his day. In the Soviet Union in contrast Robeson was mobbed by people who were stunned by his flawless Russian. Everywhere he went in the soviet union people begged him to make his home there.

He met with the film maker Eisenstein and the two would spend years trying to come up with a film project they could both work on. Robeson claimed that it was in the Soviet Union that he felt for the first time that he had finally escaped racism and was truly free. Just as the Soviet Union fell in love with the Paul Robeson so Robeson fell in love with the Soviet Union. He was amazed at the rapid progress being made in turning the country from backwards feudalism to the worlds first modern Socialist state. He was relieved to finally be in a country where racism was a crime and being black wasn't. Unlike so many others he would refuse to betray the Soviet Union no matter how loudly the politicians and media tried to demonize it.

He would also meet with his black friends and comrades **William Patterson** and **Ben Davis** while in Moscow and the three of them would fight for both an end to Jim Crow and for the cause of Communism for decades to come. Ben Davis was Robeson's best friend a Communist who would win election to New York's city Council before being illegally kicked out of office and then imprisoned for years during the McCarthy Era. William Patterson was

the communist attorney for the Scottsboro boys, and International Labor Defense and then worked with Robeson on “The We Charge Genocide campaign” and many other causes he was imprisoned during the McCarthy era. Horne also wrote biographies of William Patterson and Benjamin Davis if your interested in learning more. All 3 were civil rights pioneers erased from mainstream history because they were communists.

As I discussed in my article “Black Bolshevik: Harry Haywood” Communists were at the forefront of the Civil Rights movement for decades a fact erased from our history. As Horne points out **Malcolm X** and **Martin Luther King** would rise to prominence due to the vacuum left by the marginalization of Paul Robeson and other Communists in the 1950’s. Robeson and W.E.B DuBois shared a deep mutual respect and their struggles often paralleled one another. Throughout the 20’s and 30’s Robeson would travel back and forth from Harlem to London and his worldwide fame boosted his reputation in the United States. He would work with the NAACP (which would later turn on him in the McCarthy era) and with his communist comrades in the cause of civil rights. He also lent his support to the Unions and to Roosevelt’s new deal. He would work for African liberation.



Seated before the microphones (L. to R.) were David Jenkins, a young New Zealander who was working in the US and who asked the questions on behalf of the listeners; Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, then America’s First Lady; Paul Robeson, great American actor and singer; Mr. Deems Taylor, distinguished American music critic and author; Hon. Walter Nash, New Zealand’s Minister to the US and later Prime Minister; and Mr. George Palmer, the Superintendent in charge of maintaining the Statue of Liberty.

(Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Robeson was also a prominent anti-fascist. He traveled to Spain during the civil war to sing for the loyalist troops battling fascism. He risked his life by traveling to the front lines and he and his wife got used to life in the war zone. He also joined in solidarity with the resistance in Ethiopia which the Italian fascists had invaded. With British anti-fascists he joined mass demonstrations against the appeasement of Hitler. At the same time he lent his support to

those resisting British imperialism in Africa, the Caribbean, Ireland, and India. His council on African Affairs was one of the worlds most important Pan-African organizations counting Nkrumah, Azikwe, and Kenyatta as members and allied to the ANC in Africa. However it was the start of World War 2 which would force him to leave London and return to the US which would have tragic consequences after the war when Robeson would be trapped in his racist and reactionary homeland. However during the war Robeson's main concern would be the struggle with fascism at home and abroad.

Horne has written a couple books on the topic of the attempts of Japan to woo black Americans to their side. Throughout history black Americans have been forced to seek alliances with America's enemies against their true enemy namely America itself. This a theme that runs through Horne's work in books like the Counter Revolution of 1776, Negro Comrades of the Crown, and Black Jacobins on how black alliances with Britain and Haiti ended slavery. Just as Robeson looked to Russia many blacks like the future Malcolm X looked to Japan as the first non-white superpower. Of course as their many war crimes revealed the Japanese were brutal fascists and imperialists who killed tens of millions in China and the rest of Asia. However Ironically by setting up native run puppet governments in the countries it seized from from the European imperialists like Indonesia Japan did hasten the collapse of Colonialism although their actual goal was to build an empire of their own. Thus Robeson provided a valuable service during the war by producing pro-American propaganda and siding against Japan although Robeson was doubtless also motivated by his love for China and Russia. Throughout the war he would use his talents to support the war effort and to support President Roosevelt performing patriotic songs on nationwide radio.

However at the same time he continued to battle fascism at home by refusing to perform before segregated audiences. At some locations the local police showed up to attempt to force the halls to segregate harassing the concert goers. Other shows had to be cancelled. Robeson also helped found the Civil Rights Congress which would lay the groundwork for the civil rights movement. While supporting the war effort he did not abandon his quest to transform America by ending Jim Crow segregation. He also continued to fight on behalf of the union movement always ready to lend his talents on the front lines of the labor struggle. Thus for the FBI and the House Un-American activities and other American fascists he remained an enemy and doubtless during the war they were already plotting their revenge. Robeson little suspected the dangerous forces that were building in his homeland where reactionaries were boiling with rage over Roosevelt's new deal and secretly wished the US was fighting on the side of Hitler and not against him. The leading anti-communists were also the leading fascists and racist segregationists. During World War 2 Robeson was tolerated but before it had even ended FDR was dead and the new President Truman a KKK member was launching the "Cold War" against the Soviet Union and the people of the whole World.

Most sensed the new direction things were going and decided to conform with the new cold war hysteria similar to the revived anti-Russian hysteria gripping the United States as I write. Paul Robeson possessed a quality rare in American political life namely integrity. He was not going to give up his struggle simply because the people of his country had gone insane. He would remain a friend to the Soviet Union, he would continue his struggle to end Jim Crow, and he would continue to work for the liberation of Africa. He would also battle the McCarthyite purges refusing to abandon his friends like Ben Davis in the Communist Party which the government had outlawed. Gerald Horne sees Robeson's confrontation with Truman as the pivotal moment when Robeson brought down the wrath of the American

empire. Leading a delegation of protestors demanding the government intervene to stop a wave of lynchings many aimed at returning black soldiers Robeson confronted Truman in his office demanding action. As he pounded on the president's desk demanding federal intervention Truman turned purple with rage. How dare a black man (in private Truman always referred to blacks with the N-word) speak to him like this.

Robeson quickly became public enemy number one. The FBI followed his every move and believed because of his close ties to the USSR that he was one of the most powerful leaders in the American communist party. They believed he planned to become a Black Stalin. The state department was terrified of his support of African Liberation and Anti-Imperialism worldwide. Robeson continued to maintain contact with men like Nkrumah and Nehru. The government was equally worried by the damage he was doing to America's reputation by exposing the murder and oppression blacks faced in the so called "land of the free" or what Horne more accurately calls the "former slaveholders republic." Robeson would outrage the empire again when he would tell a Paris Peace conference that he did not believe American blacks would ever fight a war against the Soviet Union where racism was illegal in defense of America where they were still treated as second class citizens. Worse instead of recanting he continued to repeat this statement even in front of the House Un-American activities where he also lectured them on the history and theory of Marxism which he pointed out was created in London not Russia.

The government recruited ungrateful black celebrities like **Jackie Robinson** to denounce Robeson despite the fact that it was only because of Robeson and William Patterson that major league baseball was forced to let Jackie Robinson play. Robeson would later be avenged by Malcolm X who would later mercilessly mock Robinson for his treachery to Robeson. If only blacks and other Americans had listened in Robeson they could have avoided dying on behalf of the American empire in Korea and later Vietnam both wars opposed by Robeson. Robeson would also be a major backer of **Henry Wallace's** campaign for president. Wallace a champion of civil rights and of friendly relations with the Soviets had been removed from the Vice Presidency in a soft coup in 1944 that had allowed Truman to take his place as VP and become president. The Wallace campaign became the focus of those forces who wanted to end the cold war, advance the new deal, and battle racism and sexism. It ended of course in complete failure as Wallace was bashed as a communist. If only Robeson had succeeded in creating a viable third party back then we might have avoided the political bankruptcy of our own time where both parties fight over who more slavishly serves the cause of capitalism and endless war.

Robeson had defied the empire again and again and the empire did not just sit idly by. A massive Anti-Robeson propaganda campaign was launched black leaders were bribed to denounce him while his former friends in the NAACP sought to distance themselves from him. A secret deal was made with the black misleadership class that if they avoided criticizing America's insane and racist foreign policy which sought to keep Africa, Asia, and Latin America in chains and to destroy the Socialist world, the black misleaders would be rewarded with gradual reforms. Of course they also had to avoid any association with communism or socialism so these gradual reforms would leave blacks under poverty, oppression and low intensity warfare as history has since shown. Jim Crow would be replaced by mass incarceration and brutal police drug wars. The black community and other minorities relegated to America's ghettos would be flooded with guns and drugs like some third world country Mexico or Jamaica for example targeted for destabilization. During the 1960's and 1970's the Black Panthers would revive Robeson's more radical vision of

communism and opposition to the American empire. In the 1960's Robeson would again be hailed as a hero by a new more radical generation but they would be crushed murdered or imprisoned. They would be replaced by cowardly opportunists yet again. We can only hope that somewhere out there are men and women with the courage integrity and vision of a Paul Robeson who will demand the radical changes our society needs today.

Like the Black Panthers Robeson was also targeted for destruction in fact not only was he demonized and spied upon but he would survive several assassination attempts. Once someone sabotaged his car in the hopes that he would die in a fatal car crash. He was also attacked by angry mobs intent on lynching him on at least 3 occasions. The most infamous was in Peekskill New York where Robeson was scheduled to sing before 10,000 union members and left leaning concert goers. The local GOP elites saw a chance to kill Robeson. They recruited an angry mob of fascists and the right wing Veterans of Foreign Wars that was 15,000 men strong and launched an attack on the audience chanting "Hitler was Right" and shouting of their intent to lynch Robeson. Instead of protecting the crowd the police and state troopers joined in the mayhem mercilessly beating the concert goers. Only the heroic defense organized by union members who defended the concert goers prevented a blood bath. Many were brutally beaten and Robeson barely escaped with his life.

The next attack on Robeson came from the State department which removed his passport claiming that Robeson's criticism of Jim Crow, friendship with the Soviet Union, and support for African liberation were a threat to national security. Although Robeson's popularity had plummeted at home where he was widely hated he was still beloved around the world. Even Britain which had been waging a cold war since 1917 and which had played a major role in sparking the postwar cold war with Churchill's Iron Curtain speech still loved Robeson the singer and actor even if they did not approve of his politics. The whole world still loved Robeson and he had become wildly popular in China after the revolution as well. In Africa in, India, in Latin America, in Russia, in Europe Robeson was a major star. By taking away his passport the US sought to cut him off from his supporters around the world and to destroy his career which he used to fund his support of many causes. In 3 years Robeson's income dropped from over a \$100,000 dollars (worth millions today) to a mere \$2000 dollars. When Robeson tried to book concerts in the US they would be cancelled due to threatened riots. Most people might have reconsidered their uncompromising stance but of course Robeson remained defiant. He announced that he would dedicate himself full time to the struggle for Civil Rights working with William Patterson and others in the Civil Rights Congress and starting his own newspaper called "Freedom" to give a voice to the struggle. Nelson Mandela would be on the cover long before most Americans had heard of him while in South Africa the ANC played Robeson's songs at their marches.

Robeson of course continued his struggle for African Liberation through the Council on African Affairs before it was later banned as a subversive organization along with the Civil Rights Congress. Robeson and Patterson would bring the US up before the UN on charges of genocide. Their "We Charge Genocide" petition was translated into many languages and read around the world. It helped pressure the empire into ending Jim Crow. Robeson was right to link the struggle against Jim Crow to African Liberation as once African nations became independent their diplomats began to arrive in Washington where experiencing Jim Crow for themselves they became disgusted at the treatment they received. The empire realized it would have to end Jim Crow or risk alienating all of Africa which was their real motive for the end of Jim Crow not any moral awakening on the part of the ruling class as Horne points out. Robeson also continued his support for American Communists and the

return of his passport was long delayed by Robeson's refusal to answer whether he was a communist party member because he believed it violated people's right to privacy. During this period Robeson's career was only kept alive by his concerts at black churches. He was also always ready to sing for free for a worthy cause like opposition to the fascist coup in 1950's Guatemala.

In 1956 despite 12 years of demonization, marginalization, harassment, surveillance, and attempted assassination Robeson remained defiant. He was called before the House Unamerican Activities committee or HUAC again. During their earlier confrontation he had explained that revolutions emerge from poverty and exploitation explaining how Marxism was a byproduct of the poverty and exploitation resulting from the industrial revolution to a bunch of racist southern congressman who weren't sure who they hated more blacks or "commies." This time he would be even more shockingly honest. They asked him about his remarks in Paris about Black Americans refusing to fight the Soviet Union. He told them he had not meant merely black Americans but the entire third world reminding them that at Bandung the third world had declared they would not be foot soldiers for the American empire and it's War on China and Russia. He explained again that the Soviet Union was the first country where he had felt free of racism and bragged of sending his son to school there. He pointed out yet again that the State Department had admitted they had taken away his passport to prevent him from fighting for civil rights. The enraged racist congressman could take no more

ROBESON: I stand here struggling for the rights of my people to be full citizens in this country and they are not. They are not in Mississippi and they are not . . . in Washington. . . . You want to shut up every Negro who has the courage to stand up and fight for the rights of his people. . . . That is why I am here today.
. . .

MR. SCHERER: Why do you not stay in Russia?

MR. ROBESON: Because my father was a slave, and my people died to build this country and I am going to stay here and have a part of it just like you. And no fascist- minded people will drive me from it. Is that clear!

This was Robeson's famous response to Racism, Fascism, and McCarthyism a moment of heroism that still has the power to inspire defiance 60 years later. In the end it was Robeson's Internationalism that would free him from the cage that was apartheid, anti-communist, America. Through his love of languages and his love of liberation Robeson had made friends around the world. A world wide campaign was mounted to force the State Department to return Robeson's passport. Robeson still had friends at the highest levels in Britain and they campaigned for many years on his behalf. Russia, Africa, and India also kept up the pressure on the United States. In Canada he teamed up with Mine Mill and Smelters Workers to give a yearly Peace Arch concert where Robeson sang across the border which was both a protest against McCarthyism and it's travel ban and an effort to fight anti-communist purges in Canada's labor Unions.

It is still fondly remembered there as a Canada's 50's version of Woodstock. Finally Robeson was allowed to travel and his career again took off. He was mobbed by adoring crowds in London and then Moscow. Horne believes that ill health and overwork were responsible for the breakdown that followed. Robeson's Son and I however believe that he was dosed by the CIA with an MK-Ultra drug like BZ. In any case Robeson had a mental

breakdown and when he had recovered from that the death of his wife from cancer in 1965 turned him into a recluse. Robeson would spend the final years of his life shunning the spotlight although his life and legacy would inspire a whole new generation of radical activists like **James Forman** of SNCC as well as black celebrities like **Sidney Poitier** and **Harry Belafonte** who Robeson privately mentored. Robeson would live quietly with his family until his death in 1976.

Today Paul Robeson is more relevant than ever. He is a hero for our times. His courageous stand against McCarthyism should inspire us to oppose this current wave of anti-Russian hysteria and cold war 2.0 insanity. His internationalism should inspire us to oppose the American empire around the world. Robeson would have been a voice for peace. Robeson would have opposed both the rise of fascism in Ukraine and its ugly return to America in Charlottesville. He would have been an inspiration to the Black Lives Matter movement, and the movement to end mass incarceration and the war on drugs, Robeson would advise them to seek support worldwide. He would demand an end to the murder of black people. He would oppose America's war on the planet from Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine, DR Congo, Colombia, and everywhere else. With the rise of the internet and his talent for languages he would have mobilized the whole world against imperialism, racism, war and capitalism. Robeson would teach us all how to dream big a better world is possible than this where 62 people have more wealth than 3.5 billion. He would have continued to fight for communism, for socialism, for national liberation. Although Robeson is gone his example continues to inspire the world.

Sources

A special thanks to @Zaganashikwe for sending me valuable information on Robeson.

Gerald Horne has written yet another masterpiece on Paul Robeson the culmination his years of work on Black communism and black internationalism. His book Paul Robeson: The Artist as Revolutionary is a must read. I also highly recommend "Here I Stand" by Paul Robeson nearly every page of which is as relevant today as it was in 1958 and every page is full of the defiant spirit of Paul Robeson.

A Gerald Horne lecture on Paul Robeson

<https://youtu.be/-7A2rL51jxY>

Ranjeet Brar of the CPGB-ML on Paul Robeson

<https://youtu.be/cGvzu9LHCLA>

My article on Gerald Horne's book Counter-Revolution of 1776

<http://anti-imperialist-u.blogspot.com/2016/02/the-counter-revolution-of-1776.html>

My Article on Gerald Horne's book Confronting Black Jacobins

<http://anti-imperialist-u.blogspot.com/2017/03/confronting-black-jacobins.html>

My article on Black Bolshevik by Harry Haywood revealing the vital but forgotten role of communists in the civil rights movement. Paul Robeson also helped fund Haywood's work.

<http://anti-imperialist-u.blogspot.com/2015/11/black-bolshevik-harry-haywood.html>

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