
PAUL ROBESONâ€™S BIRTHDAY â€“ A DAY AND CELEBRATION

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PAUL ROBESONS BIRTHDAY A DAY AND CELEBRATION OF SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE TALLEST TREE IN OUR FOREST



Paul Robeson, born April 9, 1898, was one of the most magnificent human beings to walk the planet Earth. This statement flies in the face of the opinion of him that was popularly accepted during his lifetime, wherein he was politically, economically and socially targeted for assassination by none other than the government of the United States of America for his willingness to remain gregarious in his gestures of peace with nations considered enemies with The U.S. Places like Russia where a mountain was named for him. His greatness is hardly an opinion, but his own achievements speak for themselves from beyond his own grave. The man was an abolitionist and child of abolitionists, who not only spoke (and sang in) upwards of 17 languages, but was championed and cheered throughout the lands of Earth, everywhere and least

of all in his own nation.

Not only is the performing arts theater in Seattle's own Rainier Beach High School named for the statuesque man of character, spirit, philosophy and magnanimous talent He still had more. Here are some highlights and achievements of one of the African-American/Black heroes whom could not be shaded by any person or government agency though they tried, hard.

PAUL ROBESONS CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE.

Paul Robeson was the youngest of the five children born to Reverend William Drew Robeson and Maria Louisa Bustill. His father served as a minister at Princeton's Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church.

Upon the resignation of his father from the duties of the rector and the death of his mother in a house fire, young Robeson lived a life of poverty and hardship.

Robeson attended Somerville High School, Somerville, New Jersey. Gifted with an athletic bod and being a sports enthusiast, he excelled at various games such as football, basketball, baseball and track. Here, he also performed in Julius Caesar, Othello and sang in the chorus.

He won an academic scholarship to Rutgers University and in 1915, became the third African-American to study at the prestigious university. At the college, he excelled in extra-curricular activities by joining the debate team, the Glee Club and collegiate athletic team. He was recognized for his academic, singing and athletic talent.



In 1919, he graduated from the university with four annual oratorical triumphs and varsity letters in various sports. He served as a class valedictorian. Both athletically and academically, he excelled with top scores/grades.

In 1919, he enrolled at the New York University School of Law. To survive a living, he took up the position of an assistant football coach in Lincoln. However, his stay at NYU was cut short as he moved to Columbia Law School in 1920.

After much coaxing from his girlfriend and future wife, Eslanda Essie Goode, he made his theatrical debut with the role of Simon in Ridgely Torrence's *Simon of Cyrene*.

While continuing his law studies, he took up acting projects and starred in various plays such as Mary Hoyt Wiborg's *Taboo* and NFL's *Akron Pros*. He also sang in the

chorus of an Off-Broadway production, Shuffle Along.

He returned to Columbia to play for NFL's Milwaukee Badgers. With this, he ended his footballing career in 1922. The same year, he graduated from the law school with a degree in legal studies.

PROFESSIONAL LIFE & CAREER OF PAUL ROBESON

After the completion of his degree, he took up a job in law but gave up the same due to extensive racism prevalent in law firms. He switched to take up acting as his profession.

His early roles include that of Jim in Eugene O'Neill's All God's Chillun Got Wings and as Brutus in the revival of The Emperor Jones. Both the roles received positive critical comments and were very well received.

The early success brought him to instant limelight and fame. The stardom further amplified as his wife quit her job to serve as his agent. She earned him his first movie role in the silent film, Body and Soul

Other than working as an actor, he sang spirituals in charity concerts. It was due to this performance that he clubbed with Lawrence Brown and Roland Hayes to ad-lib a set of spirituals. His soulful renditions earned him a contract by Victor Records.

In 1928, he returned to acting, playing the role of Joe in the American musical, Show Boat at the Theatre Royal. The show lasted 350 performances, thus becoming the most profitable venture

Meanwhile his song, Ol Man River gained much popularity. His widespread popularity led him to perform for a Royal Command Performance at the Buckingham Palace.

In the early 1930s, he appeared with his wife in the experimental classic, Borderline. He then returned to West End to star in Shakespeares Othello, starring opposite Peggy Ashcroft. His portrayal of Othello brought mixed response from the public who appreciated his talent but did not like his lack of style.

In 1932, he revived his character of Joe for the Broadway play, Show Boat which was bestowed with immense acclamation and appreciation both critically and popularly.

He then reprised his role of Brutus in the film adaptation of The Emperor Jones. The film was one-of-its-kind as it was the first time that an African-American starred in the main lead.

In 1934, he enrolled himself at the School of Oriental and African Studies to learn 20 different languages. This multi-lingual yearning was followed by writing an essay titled, I Want to be African in which he desired to take up every minute cultural heritage of his ancestry.

Next, he starred in the film, Sanders of the River which was released in 1935. The movie had him play the role of Bosambo. Though the movie established his reputation as an international star, it stirred a lot of controversy as well for his character of a colonial African.

Following this, he appeared in a number of films such as Song of Freedom, Show Boat, Big Fella, My Song Goes Forth, and King Solomon's Mines. His works granted him a popular status amongst the British actors.

With the beginning of the Spanish War, he turned into a political activist and started using his concert performances to advocate the Republican cause. In 1938, he travelled to Spain to provide a morale boost to Republicans. He then reworked on his career to work for the plights that common man faced

With the outbreak of World War II, he returned to the U. S. to serve as an entertainer. He came up with successful films and radio broadcasts.

However, after appearing in *Tales in Manhattan* he de-routed from films for the demeaning roles available to blacks. Instead, he indulged in tours

In 1943, he reprised his role of Othello at the Shubert Theatre and became the first African-American to play the role with a white supporting cast on Broadway. Meanwhile, he became an active civil rights speaker and voiced his opinion against segregation and lynching.

In 1946, he founded the American Crusade Against Lynching organization. He called upon people demanding the Congress to pass civil rights legislation. His anti-colonial activities and black racial class led him to be classified as a threat to American democracy.

After several attempts to persuade him to give up on his activism, his passport was annulled, thereby disallowing him to travel abroad. He indulged in legal battles that took the better part of the next decade.

It was after eight years of struggle that he finally managed to reinstate his passport. Following this, he indulged in travelling yet again and started giving concerts in England and Australia. However, the anguish led him to drug dependency, suicide attempts and nervous breakdown. He was hospitalized in London.

Returning to the United States, he gave up on his concerts and performed negligibly. Slowly, she stepped out of his public life, due to his weak health condition and lessening power as a singer and orator. He spent much of his later life in seclusion.

PAUL ROBERSON AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

In 1952, he was conferred with the International Stalin Prize by the USSR. Posthumously, he received a number of awards such as an Academy Award, Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award, Donaldson Award, Springarn Medal and so on.

He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1995

If you desire to know what courage sounds like and is Listen to Paul Robeson standing accused before the House UnAmerican Committee on June 12, 1956. In the face of power, accusation and racism [This is how the man held his head.](#)