

Paul Robeson and the Battle for the Soul of America

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"Every artist, every scientist, every writer must decide now where he stands. The artist must take sides. He must elect to fight for freedom or for slavery. I have made my choice"

Paul Robeson, 1937

America today stands at a crossroads. Where an entrenched oligarchy strives desperately to keep hold of those military, intelligence, financial and federal institutions which it spent decades infesting, while attempting to overthrow a nationalist president who has worked to end the "forever wars" while cooperating with both Russia and China.

This fight within the heart of America has been confusing for many people who accustomed themselves to interpret world history from the distorted lens of the age in which they live.

Such confused people cannot fathom HOW America could possibly be anything but an imperialistic nation infested with self-contradiction: A nation founded on Liberty but relying on exploitation, usury and institutional racism.

This confusion can easily be resolved by taking off the distorted glasses of "the present" and look at history as a process defined by the clash between two opposing views of mankind: a creature born free or enslaved.

Where the oligarchical system defines humanity as simply a mass of enslaved apes controlled by higher 'alpha' apes, the humanist system defines humanity as a species made in the image of a creator with inalienable rights. Abstract notions of "law, value, goodness, purpose, beauty, creativity or even potential" flow equally as *words* from each system, but with definitions that stand in stark opposition to each other.

Paul Robeson lived his remarkable life according to this knowledge and gave everything to awaken what he understood as the real America as a force of opposition to the racist, imperialistic machine that had made its move to take control of the republic on the eve of President Roosevelt's early death in 1945.

Who was Paul Robeson?

Paul Robeson is a man who defies categorization. Although famous as a great African American baritone and actor born of an escaped slave, Robeson was so much more. While his life's work should be basic knowledge and pride of every American today, the deep state which ran America for over 70 years has done all but erase him from existence labelling him a "communist crackpot" and Soviet spy. Why is the oligarchy so afraid of his memory?

Robeson is a cultural warrior of the highest caliber who knew over 20 languages including Russian, Chinese, Arabic and several African dialects, he early on became a cultural ambassador expressing the universality of mankind as he sung folk songs around the world and created institutions to enhance the best of each cultures development. He combined the anti-imperialist fight to liberate all former colonies with the combat for racial equality in America. He was the most vocal opponent to the Wall Street takeover of America and was recognized internationally as the leading figure and founder of America's Civil Rights movement.

Music as a Weapon

Robeson famously called "music his weapon", and used it masterfully to build spiritual bridges with all cultures by absorbing their languages, stories and folk songs. He wrote: "folk songs are, in fact, an expression of a peoples' innermost nature, of the distinctive and multifaceted conditions of its life and culture, of the sublime wisdom that reflects that peoples' great historical journey and experience.

In Russia, Robeson sang numerous patriotic pieces like Song of the Plains in perfect Russian:

In China, he sang popular folk songs and was the first western singer to sing Chi Lai (Arise) in 1940 which later became China's national anthem:

He even learned Yiddish and sang the anti-fascist Warsaw Ghetto Uprising ballad:

Nothing more powerfully conveys the insight Robeson had into the universality of mankind when one hears his incredible description of the universal harmonies, and patterns underlying world languages and folk music conveyed during his 1958 Carnegie Hall concert featuring international folk music:

Political Freedom as the Highest Art

Counted among his close friends and allies were Albert Einstein, Vice President Henry Wallace (who Robeson campaigned vigorously for in his 1948 bid for the presidency), Jawaharlal Nehru, Jomo Kenyatta, and Kwame Nkrumah. Kenyatta and Nkrumah became leaders of the powerful Pan African movement and were members of an organization called the *Council on African Affairs* founded and chaired by Robeson in 1937.

Presiding over the 1944 Council on African Affairs conference alongside emerging Pan African leaders and American workers of all colors, Robeson oversaw the resolutions defining the conferences' objectives:

- *To Give concrete help to the struggle of the African masses*
- *To disseminate accurate information concerning Africa and its people; in that, to wake up Americans to what is happening in Africa; the one continent where undisguised colonial slavery is still practiced.*
- *To influence the adoption of governmental policies designed to promote their advancement and freedom and preserve international peace.*
- *To smash the iron curtain of secrecy and double talk surrounding the schemes*

for imperialist exploitation of Africa and its people.

- *To prevent American loans and guns from being used to crush the freedom struggle of Africans and other subject peoples.*
- *To strengthen the allegiance of progressive Americas, black and white, with the peoples of Africa and other lands in the struggle for world peace and freedom.*

Albert Einstein who also suffered under McCarthyism, co-chaired the *American Crusade Against Lynching* founded and chaired by Robeson in response to Truman's failure to enforce anti-lynching legislation in 1946. Between 1945 and 1946, well over 100 black war veterans were lynched and many more "disappeared" as the south re-asserted their hegemony through terror.

It is not always appreciated today, but the fascist takeover of America in the wake of FDR's death saw the resurgence of the southern establishment which Lincoln sought to destroy 80 years earlier. African American servicemen returning from WWII expecting to find equal rights, encountered a newly empowered Ku Klux Klan and racist Jim Crow laws- now protected by Hoover's FBI and a racist little President who was working hard to undo all of FDR's accomplishments.



Einstein, Wallace and Robeson in 1948

Reviving the Anti-Colonial America

As the founder of the *Civil Rights Congress (CRC)*, Robeson not only fought for racial equality at home but united this new movement with the international anti-colonial struggle saying at a CRC meeting:

"The guarantee that our day of liberation is not far off is that this is a time of colonial liberation. It is a time when dark men and women in Asia and Africa are pulling off their shackles of exploitation which have kept them bound for centuries... As they succeed in Asia and soon, you may be sure, in Africa- as more than half the world escapes the clutches of the Dulles, Rockefellers and Firestones, they lend a powerful stimulus to our freedom struggle here at home."

In describing the American corporations moving into controlling positions in Africa, Robeson made sure to differentiate the deep state from the real America when he asked:

"Are these financial big boys America? No! They are the former enemies of Roosevelt. They were the ones who were glad when Roosevelt died. They are the same ones who Roosevelt said were the core of American fascism. They are the allies of the remains of the Hitler entourage- they are the friends of Franco, the living representatives of the Spanish conquistadores who enslaved us and still enslave us in Latin America. They are the ones who hate American democracy as did the enemies of Jefferson and Lincoln before them. They are no part of America. They are the 'would-be' preservers of world fascism and the enemies of progressive America!"

It is no wonder then that Robeson became enemy #1 for Hoover's FBI, Dulles' State Department and Red hunters like Joe McCarthy who did everything in their power to destroy

his life by labelling him a “Black Mussolini” and “Soviet agent”. In truth, they were afraid that he was more of a “Black Solon” who would destroy their usurious power hold over the republic and free the bond slaves at the first opportunity.

Resisting American Fascism

Speaking at a rally at Madison Square Garden, Robeson identified the real evil agenda lurking behind the Anglo-American Cold War:

“The ‘Stop Russia’ cry really means- stop the advance of the colonial peoples of Asia and Africa toward independence; stop the forces of the new democracy developing in Europe; stop the organized workers of America from trying to hold their ground against their profit-greedy employers; stop the Negro people from voting and joining trade unions in the South- ‘Stop Russia’ means- stop progress- maintain the status quo. It means- let the privileged few continue to rule and thrive at the expense of the masses. We must indeed win the peace- but we can do it only by using methods exactly the opposite of those pursued at present by the British Foreign Office and our own State Department. To win total peace there must be total freedom”.

The highest leading official in America who stood up to this agenda was “the man who should have been president” Henry Wallace (Vice President 1940-1944), who was fired from his position as Commerce Secretary by Truman in 1946 for the crime of demanding Russia-US friendship. Speaking to thousands on September 21, 1946 Robeson stated: *“We are shocked by the forced resignation of Wallace. We join with the overwhelming majority of Americans who want peace and democracy for this country and the world, in fully supporting Wallace’s criticism. We cannot avoid the painful conclusion that Truman’s action represents a complete capitulation to the reactionary minority in our country who seek world domination”.*

When Wallace announced his presidential bid in 1948, Robeson was asked to run as his Vice-presidential running mate, but declined feeling that he could do more good on an international level but dedicated his every waking hour campaigning for Wallace and the Progressive Party in 1948.

In a March 1948 campaign speech for Wallace, Robeson said: *“Either we get along with the Communists, jump in the ocean or blow up the whole world. Saying you can’t get along with Communists is like saying you can’t get along with the birds”.* In that speech Robeson described himself as *“an advanced New Dealer”* and said he supported Wallace because *“if anybody continues the new deal traditions of Franklin Roosevelt, it is Wallace.”* Robeson’s concept of an “advanced New Dealer” and Wallace’s fight against the deep state was elaborated on in [Wallace’s Vision for the Post-War World Order](#). (1)

Image on the right: Wallace and Robeson at the Progressive Party Convention in 1948



Robeson vs the Deep State

Sadly the entire force of the deep state came down on Wallace resulting in his defeat in 1948 bringing Truman in for another 4 years.

Robeson was punished by John F. Dulles who revoked his passport in 1949, preventing him from travelling while the FBI ensured that he was un-hirable, his records unplayable and his words unprintable. The singer's revenues collapsed and he relied heavily on the kindness of friends during this time. In 1956, Robeson said *"there is a deliberate policy of attempting to prevent me from making a living by practicing my profession as an artist."* In a famous 1956 testimony to the House of Un-American Activities, Robeson courageously called out the fascist nature of the proceedings.

International pressure resulted in an end to his "imprisonment" and he began a new world tour where he sang, performed Othello in Shakespeare's play in Stratford England, wrote his autobiography [Here I Stand](#) and campaigned against neo-colonialism. In a 1960 Australian ABC interview Robeson eloquently laid out his thoughts on the freedom struggle:

In 1961, Robeson began another world tour and let it be known that he would go to the Soviet Union, then to Africa and finally to Cuba where he was scheduled to meet with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara putting into jeopardy Dulles' plans for a Cuban invasion. After this, Robeson intended to return to America to lead the Civil Rights movement that he had, in large measure began. Sadly, Robeson made it no further than Moscow. Dulles' invasion of Cuba occurred three weeks later.

MK Ultra and the Deconstruction of Robeson

Much has been written on the topic of Robeson's victimization under MK Ultra. The most pioneering work having been done by his son Paul Robeson Jr. who spent over 30 years investigating the matter. In short, Robeson had found himself at a surprise party in a Moscow hotel hosted by CIA-funded Soviet dissidents. According to reports, Robeson fell into a paranoid hysteria, hallucinating and locking himself in a room where he tried to commit suicide.

He was quickly sent to London's Priory hospital where he was put through 54 electro shock therapy sessions and huge doses of psycho-active drugs. Robeson's son proved that three doctors performing these "treatments" were CIA contractors while MI5 operatives oversaw the entire process. Robeson Jr. wrote that his father was *"subjected to mind de-patterning under MK Ultra"*.

It took two years for Robeson's family and friends to get him out of Priory and into a German clinic before returning him home in August 1963 where doctors were shocked to discover the scale of drugs and electro shock he suffered in London.

Although he recorded a handful of messages in support of the Civil Rights movement after 1963, which had thankfully found competent leadership under Martin Luther King Jr., Robeson never recovered, living as a recluse and passing away at 77 years of age in 1976.

Today, as America is again forced to decide whether it wishes to go down the road of fascism and self-annihilation or renew its proper heritage as a defender of liberty, it is worth listening to the wise words of Robeson who gave his last recorded speech in January 1961:

"Despite common suffering, an even greater responsibility lies upon us to guarantee our children and all children everywhere that we shall do everything in our collective power to refrain our 'would-be' world dominators, our 'would-

be' new masters of the century. They must understand that while we are uttering these very words, a new day has dawned in Africa, in Latin America, in Asia and this light awaits just beyond the horizon."

*

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Note

[1] For anyone doubtful of Robeson's characterization of FDR, believing the singer to be naïve, I invite them to read my previous article documenting [Roosevelt's war with Wall Street and London](#).

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