



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Paul Robeson collection

1925-1956 [bulk 1943-1956]

Sc MG 170

Processed by Andre Elizee.

Summary

Creator: Robeson, Paul, 1898-1976

Title: Paul Robeson collection

Date: 1925-1956 [bulk 1943-1956]

Size: 0.56 linear feet (9 reels)

Source: Gift, Patterson, William L, 1957

Abstract: Correspondence, texts of speeches, articles, columns and statements written by Paul Robeson and his wife, Eslanda Goode Robeson, photographs, news clippings, and press releases documenting Robeson's artistic and political activities. Correspondence pertains to Robeson's artistic career, and includes letters written by Eslanda Robeson regarding her husband's difficulties as a result of his association with the Soviet Union. Additional correspondence, reports, news clippings, contracts, and printed matter were generated by Robeson's national tours from 1952 to 1956. Included are materials about the concert and riot which took place in Peekskill, N.Y. during one of Robeson's performances, 1949; correspondence and legal papers referring to Robeson's difficulties in his effort to have his United States passport restored; and letters by William Patterson and W.E.B. Du Bois. Also included are files on various organizations associated with Robeson in the 1950s, including the Council on African Affairs, the National Negro Labor Council, and the World Peace Council.

Conditions Governing Access:

Researchers are restricted to microfilm copy.

Preferred citation: [Item], Paul Robeson collection, Sc MG 170, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Andre Elizee; machine-readable finding aid created by Apex Data Services; revised by Terry Catapano.

Creator History

Born in Princeton, New Jersey, on April 9, 1898, Paul Robeson was a multitalented man whose artistic and political career spanned over four decades, from the 1920s to the 1960s. Known worldwide during the 1930s and 1940s, he fell from prominence in the 1960s because of the political controversy that surrounded him during the McCarthy era.

Robeson was a talented dramatic actor whose performance of Othello in this country in 1943-44 once held the record for the longest running show on Broadway. He was the first professional concert singer in history to use Negro spirituals as his unique vehicle. He broadened his repertoire in the 1940s, however, to incorporate folk songs from other countries -- Chinese, Russian, Welsh, Jewish, among others -- in order to illustrate the linguistic, artistic and human unity among different cultures. Robeson was a linguist who studied over twenty languages.

Although he never received any formal training in singing, Robeson was imbued with the "music of his people" from his early childhood in the small Presbyterian and African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches where his father served as a minister in the New Jersey towns of Princeton, Westfield and Sommerville. His father, William Drew Robeson was an ex-slave who ran away from Virginia at the age of fifteen in 1860, through the Underground Railroad. A man of great conviction and dignity -- he was always a model to his son -- he worked his way to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, and later to the pulpit. The father of nine children, he was fifty-three years old when Paul was born. Paul Robeson's mother, Maria Louisa Bustill, died when he was six years old. The Bustill family is one of the oldest black families in America. During the Revolutionary war, her great grandfather, Cyrus Bustill, baked bread for the Continental troops in Philadelphia, and was a co-founder of the Free African Society for free blacks in 1787. The family was also actively involved in the Underground Railroad.

Paul Robeson graduated from high school with distinction in Sommerville, and won a scholarship to Rutgers University. During his junior year there, he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He was also a star athlete at Rutgers, earning twelve athletic letters in baseball, basketball, football and track, and was chosen during his senior year, in 1918, for the Walter Camp All-American team. He graduated the same year. In 1973, Rutgers University awarded him an honorary degree, and in addition held a week long program of concerts, films and exhibits of his work.

After graduation from Rutgers, Robeson moved to Harlem and enrolled in the Law Department of Columbia University. His father had died in 1918, and while at Columbia, he supported himself by working as a professional football player and once as a postal clerk. He graduated with honors in 1923 and worked for a few months in a New York law firm. In 1921, while still at Columbia, he married a biology and chemistry major, Eslanda Cardozo Goode, who was to become a writer and anthropologist. Early in the marriage, Eslanda played a decisive role in changing the course of her husband's career: according to his own reminiscence, it was she who urged him to accept the title role in Ridgely Torrence's play *Simon the Cyrenian* performed at the YWCA in Harlem in 1921.

Though this first experience with the stage meant little to him at the time, it proved to be a turning point in his life. The following year, Robeson appeared on the professional stage in a production of *Taboo*, a play by Augustin Duncan later retitled *The Voodoo*. He also appeared in *Shuffle Along*, singing with a quartet. In 1924, he joined the Provincetown Playhouse in Greenwich Village for the production of Eugene O'Neill's play, *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. By then, he had resolutely given up the legal profession. During the following years, he appeared in several plays, including: *The Emperor Jones* (1925), *Black Boy* (1926), *Porgy* (1928), *Show Boat* (1928), *Othello* (1930), *The Hairy Ape* (1931), *Stevedore* (1935) and eleven films, including: *Body and Soul* (1924) by Oscar Micheaux, *Borderline* (1929), an experimental film directed by Kenneth McPherson, *Song of Freedom* (1937), *Proud*

Valley(1939), produced in England, and *Tales of Manhattan*(1942).

Robeson began his professional singing career in 1925, at a highly successful concert in New York. In October 1927 he left for a two-year tour of the major European capitals. In 1928 he settled with his family in London, pursuing careers as both an artist and scholar. In the years following, he commuted between the United States and Europe.

According to his biographers, politics began to play a major role in Robeson's life and career following a visit to the Soviet Union in 1934, on an invitation from the Soviet film maker Sergei Eisenstein. This first encounter with the Soviet Union laid the basis for a profound love and friendship for the "land of socialism." Before departing Robeson commented that in the Soviet Union, he for the first time felt he was treated, not like a "Negro," but with the full dignity of mankind.

Robeson himself denied such a dramatic turning point in his political life. Rather, it was the reality of segregation and racial discrimination in the United States and the class struggle between the British aristocracy and the laboring masses in England and its colonies that shaped his political consciousness. "The artist must elect to fight for freedom or for slavery... I have made my choice," he said in 1937.

With the rise of fascism, particularly in Germany and in Spain, Robeson was greatly inspired with the idea of an anti-fascist united front of "all freedom loving people". In 1938, during the Spanish Civil War, he travelled to Madrid, where he entertained the International Brigade at the front with battle songs in Spanish and other languages. The following year, he decided to return to the United States to contribute to the war effort and particularly to join in the struggle for equality in the United States and for African independence. He made famous, on the radio and in concert halls, such patriotic songs as "Ballad for Americans" and "What is America to Me." He also participated in U.S.O. tours with his accompanist, Lawrence Brown. During this period, he received many awards for both his artistic and political contributions: the Abraham Lincoln Medal for notable and distinguished services in human relations (1943); the Donalson Award for Best Acting Performance (1944); the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Gold Medal for having the best diction in the American theater (1944); an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta (1943); and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Spingarn Medal for Outstanding Achievement (1945).

The war's end, however, and the subsequent anti-communist attitudes in the United States led to difficult times for Robeson. Because of his progressive views, he was labelled subversive, and a pervasive campaign to silence and discredit him was launched.

As early as 1946 Robeson had appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in California. Although he swore that he was not a communist, he voiced his admiration for communists who were fighting for democracy. From the 1930s on, Robeson had maintained a close relationship with progressive labor unions, both in the United States and in Great Britain. In 1947 for example, he joined the picket lines in St. Louis to protest segregation of black actors in the theater. Also in 1947, he gave a series of concerts in Panama, on behalf of the United Public Workers of America (CIO) in their attempt to organize the predominantly black Panamanian workers, and addressed the National Maritime Union Convention back in the United States. It was around this time that censorship of Paul Robeson in the United States began. In April 1947, he was prevented from performing in Peoria, Illinois after a contract to use a local mosque was abruptly cancelled and after the mayor of that town had refused to let him use the city hall. The following month, the Board of Education of Albany, New York denied him permission to hold a concert at a local high school auditorium. It is also in 1947 that he decided to leave the professional stage in the United States for an unspecified number of years in order to devote his

time to the struggle for justice and civil rights.

The campaign to silence Robeson began to focus in 1948. In June of that year, he appeared before a Senate committee to protest a bill drafted by the HUAC that called for Communist Party members and so-called "Communist Front" organizations to register as foreign agents. Robeson declined to answer the question of whether he was a communist or not. He further antagonized the committee by telling them that his loyalty to the United States in a war against the Soviet Union was conditional. Shortly after, he began receiving death threats from the Ku Klux Klan while campaigning for Henry Wallace, the Progressive Party candidate for the 1948 presidential election.

The year 1949, however, proved to be a turning point in the campaign against him. While touring Europe during the first half of the year, he gave a speech at the World Peace Conference in Paris in which he declared that, "It is unthinkable that American Negroes will go to war in behalf of those who have oppressed us for generations... against a country [the Soviet Union] which in one generation has raised our people to the full dignity of mankind." This statement was greatly distorted in the United States and provoked a storm in the media, the State Department and among several "respectable Negro leaders," including Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and Walter White, national secretary of the NAACP. White explained that Robeson did not speak for "the overwhelming majority of the Negro people" and cast doubt on his loyalty as an American citizen. Various other prominent black figures, such as folk singer Josh White, Jackie Robinson and Max Yergan were induced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to issue similar statements condemning Robeson.

The lines of battle were now sharply drawn. While Robeson was in Europe, the United States government jailed eleven communist leaders, including New York City Councilman Benjamin Davis, a personal friend of Robeson's, under the Smith Act. Many artists and former activists were coerced into submitting to HUAC lists of names of colleagues alleged to be communists under the threat of having their career destroyed and themselves thrown in jail. The State Development Commission of Connecticut went to Court to prevent Robeson from visiting his family home in Enfield, Connecticut. Robeson denounced these repressive measures through two militant organizations, the Council on African Affairs which he had helped to found, and the Civil Rights Congress, where he held the office of vice-president. These two organizations were subsequently investigated by HUAC and labelled subversive.

Despite these pressures, Robeson continued to speak out. On August 27, 1949, he was scheduled to give a concert in Peekskill, New York on behalf of black and Jewish trade unionists and pacifists. A mob of rioters led by members of the KKK and the American Legion stoned the gathering. The concert was cancelled but Robeson pledged to return, determined to sing "wherever people want me to sing." "My people and I won't be frightened by crosses burning in Peekskill or anywhere else," he declared in a public statement. The following week Robeson went back to Peekskill along with 25,000 people who travelled from New York City and other places in the Northeast to hear him. About 2,500 black and white trade unionists and veterans made a human wall around the concert area while Robeson sang. The mob got its revenge, however, after the concert, as groups of people on their way home were ambushed, stoned and beaten on the highway while the police and New York State troopers stood by in full view.

After the Peekskill concert and riot, the campaign of repression and intimidation against Robeson intensified. Both private and public institutions in the United States joined in the process. In March 1950, he was barred from appearing on a television program with Eleanor Roosevelt on the National Broadcasting Company on the pretext that his appearance "would probably result in diverting the discussion from the subject scheduled to one which revolves around Robeson's personal views." The whole of the white media, with the exception of the progressive press, imposed a thorough censorship

on Robeson's activities and statements. All major concert halls across the country were closed to him. His records disappeared from stores, and recording and advertising agencies kept him at arm's length. Then, in August 1950, the State Department, using its "discretionary powers" cancelled Robeson's passport, after he refused to sign an affidavit in which he would pledge under the Smith Act that he was not a communist. His income dropped from many hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to a mere \$3,000, until he had to resort to the sale of his family house in Connecticut. Again called before the HUAC, he proudly confronted his interrogators and was cited for contempt for having shouted at them "You are the real un-Americans and you should be ashamed of yourselves." This campaign of harassment from the FBI and other forces lasted for over twenty years. Yet he would not yield "one thousandth of an inch."

Robeson's appeal was never simply limited to the Afro-American community. He had performed many times in European capitals, had toured England and the British provinces (he enjoyed a close relationship with the Welsh miners), and was admired by the Russian people. His records were popular all over the world. He had worked or knew Sergei Eisenstein whom he had met in Harlem in 1931; Kwame N'krumah and Jomo Kenyatta whom he met in England in the 1930s; Pablo Neruda and Nazim Hikmet, Chilean and Turkish poets, respectively; Alexandr Fadeev, famous Soviet novelist and theoretician of socialist realism and Kuo Mo-jo, Chinese historian and statesman; Frederic Joliot-Curie, French nuclear physicist and president of the World Peace Council; Bertolt Brecht, German playwright, and Dmitri Shostakovich, Soviet composer, with whom he collaborated in the production of the film *Song of the Rivers*. In the United States, he was associated with the leading personalities in the fields of art, literature, politics and sports. And, most important to him, he was always in close communion with his people and his culture.

The black community in the United States and progressive organizations on four continents supported Robeson, demanding an end to the political persecution against him and the return of his passport. Petitions were signed enthusiastically and letters of support were sent in great numbers from Europe, Africa and the West Indies. Defenders felt that the real focus of these attacks were the civil rights movement, the political left and the growing solidarity of black people in the United States with the anti-colonial movement in Africa. Robeson sued the State Department and hired Leonard Boudin to present his suit to the Supreme Court. Following repeated challenges by Robeson and his lawyers, the State Department acknowledged that, "even if the complaint had alleged, which it does not, that the passport was cancelled solely because of appellant's recognized status as a spokesman for large sections of Negro Americans, we submit that this would not amount to an abuse of discretion in view of appellant's frank admission that he had been for many years extremely active politically in behalf of the independence of the colonial peoples of Africa." After eight years of an international outcry, Robeson finally won -- his passport was restored in 1958, toward the end of the McCarthy era.

Robeson had resumed touring the country in 1952 in a series known initially as the Paul Robeson Birthday Tours, because they were usually centered around his birthday. The tours included over twenty-five cities and were organized by the United Freedom Fund, a group closely associated with Robeson. The UFF was an umbrella group designed to raise funds for its three member organizations, the Council on African Affairs, founded in 1937, the National Negro Labor Council and the magazine *Freedom*. In contrast to his earlier concert career, these tours were organized through various grass roots sources. In each city, local chapters of the participating organizations of the UFF would join with local trade-unions, black churches and progressive individuals to "sponsor" a Robeson concert. The committee thus formed would coordinate the event with John Gray, National Field Representative of the UFF from 1952 to 1955. These concerts were usually held in high school or college auditoriums, in union halls, in civic and religious centers. The membership of many local trade-unions throughout the country played a significant role in publicizing and selling tickets to these events, which were as a rule boycotted by the mainstream media.

In January 1952, Robeson was invited by the International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union of British Columbia in Canada to address their annual convention in Vancouver. He agreed to attend, since American citizens did not, by law, require a passport to travel to Canada. He was stopped at the border, however, with the threat of a five-year jail sentence and a \$10,000 fine. United States border patrols were further instructed to stop him "by any means necessary." Robeson resigned himself to address the meeting by telephone. In May of the same year, he returned to the border where he sang to a crowd of over 40,000 people gathered in the Peace Arch Park. The Peace Arch concerts were thereafter held in May of each year, in defiance of United States government censorship, from 1952 to 1956, when the travel ban to Canada was lifted.

In similar acts of defiance, Robeson often sang over the telephone and sent recorded messages to gatherings he could not attend: The World Peace Council annual meetings; the Soviet Writers Conference (1954); the Bandung Conference (1955); the Welsh Miners' annual celebration (1957); and a conference of over one thousand people organized in 1957 by the Let Paul Robeson Sing Committee in London. This latter occasion drew the following comment from the *Manchester Guardian*: "American Telegraph and Telephone and the General Post Office in London last night helped Paul Robeson make the U.S. State Department look rather silly."

In the United States, Robeson felt the need for a regular medium to counter the press censorship and the campaign waged against him. He launched a weekly newspaper called *Freedom* in Harlem in 1950. Under his byline the paper carried a regular column "Here Is My Story," until it ceased publication in 1955. The Othello Recording Corporation established by him in 1952 served a similar purpose. Two albums of his songs were released under this label, *Paul Robeson Sings* (1952) and *Solid Rock* (1953). His autobiography, *Here I Stand*, was also published by Othello Associates in 1958, but was not widely reviewed in the press. As a result, the book did not enjoy the wide distribution it deserved.

During his first concert in ten years at Carnegie Hall in May 1958, Robeson announced to a cheering audience that his passport had finally been renewed. Two months later, he left the United States for a European tour which included England, France, East and West Germany, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. In 1959, he was welcome at the Kremlin by Nikita Khrushchev, and performed *Othello* for the last time in Stratford-on-Avon in England. The following year, he toured Eastern Europe for the last time, and in November went to Australia and New Zealand.

In April 1961, Robeson, who had been suffering from a severe disease of the circulatory system since 1959, entered a hospital in Moscow. He was to remain there for more than two years. Meanwhile, President N'krumah offered him the History Chair at the University of Ghana, but he was too ill to accept. In any event the State Department intervened to block his appointment.

Robeson came back to the United States through London the following year; he had decided to retire from public life. His last appearances were at the occasion of the death of his friend Benjamin Davis in August 1964 and at a celebration given in his honor by the journal *Freedomways* in April 1965. His wife Eslanda had died of cancer in December of that year at the age of 68, and he went to live with his sister Marion Forsythe in Philadelphia. Although he received many awards and honors in the next twenty years, they were as a rule accepted by his son Paul Robeson Jr. Visitors were politely but firmly turned away, and the people in Philadelphia were oblivious to his presence among them. Paul Robeson died quietly on December 28, 1976. His funeral service was held at the Mother African Methodist Church of Zion in Harlem, his brother, Rev. Benjamin Robeson's parish for many years.

Scope and Content Note

The Paul Robeson Collection (1926-1956) documents Robeson's artistic and political career from 1949 to 1956. Divided into four series: *GENERAL*, *PROFESSIONAL*, *PASSPORT CASE* and *ORGANIZATIONS*, the collection consists mainly of correspondence, manuscripts and printed matter, and represents for the most part office files of the United Freedom Fund, established in 1952. Manuscripts by Robeson include typed letters, handwritten drafts of letters, speeches and articles.

Key Terms

Occupations

African American actors
African American singers
Civil rights workers

Subjects

African Americans -- Civil rights
African Americans -- Political activity
African Americans -- Soviet Union
African Americans in the performing arts
Labor movement -- United States -- Societies, etc
Peace movements -- United States
Peekskill (N.Y.) -- Social conditions
Performing arts -- United States
Riots -- New York (State) -- Peekskill
Working class -- United States -- Societies, etc

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photoprints

Geographic Names

United States -- Social conditions -- 1945-1960
United States -- Social life and customs

Names

Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963
Patterson, William L. (William Lorenzo), 1890-1980
Robeson, Eslanda Goode, 1896-1965
Robeson, Paul, 1898-1976
Council on African Affairs
National Negro Labor Council (U.S.)
World Peace Council

Container List

General

The series contains four sub-series: *Biographical* files for Eslanda and Paul Robeson; *Correspondence*; *Writings*; and *Printed Matter*.

Biographical

- r. 1 Robeson, Paul 1942-1956
- r. 1 Robeson, Eslanda 1954

Correspondence

The sub-series includes incoming letters and copies of outgoing letters. The incoming mail primarily concerns his artistic career, invitations to perform, letters of appreciation and support, hate mail, requests for financial assistance, and business proposals. With a few exceptions, these letters were answered by Louis Burnham, John Gray, George Murphy, Edith Roberts or Thomas Richardson, all of whom who served, at one time or another between 1949 and 1956 as secretary to Robeson or the UFF and its participating organizations.

Although not voluminous, Eslanda Robeson's correspondence reveals many interesting items, including an eight page letter to William Patterson, chairman of the Civil Rights Congress, (5 April 1938) in which she details the difficulties of travelling through Nazi Germany with her husband, and her encounter with one of the Soviet physicians implicated in the "Trial of the White Blouses" on charges of plotting to poison Stalin. Another of Eslanda's letters in this file was sent to her Delta Sigma Theta sisters (4 Aug. 1949) to "set the record straight", regarding the negative distortions generated in the United States by her husband's famous speech at the Paris Peace Conference in April 1949.

Also included in the sub-series are: a copy of a letter from Paul Robeson to Norman Manley (21 July 1951) soliciting his participation in the legal defense of Benjamin Davis, one of the eleven Communist leaders arrested under the Smith Act, and a letter to Carl Murphy, Editor of the *Afro-American* (9 Aug. 1951), in reference to an editorial claiming that racial discrimination in the United States armed forces was no longer an issue. Other correspondents in this series include: R. Palme Dutt, editor of the British *Labour Monthly* and officer of the Cominform (n.d.); Gaston Monmousseau, editor of *La Vie ouvriere*, the organ of French Confederation generale du travail (CGT); Arnaud d'Usseau, Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis and Peter Lawrence; Hope Foye (1953); Mary McLeod Bethune (1954); Boris Plevoy and Alexandr Fadeev, two well-known Soviet writers (1954).

- r. 1 1943-1950
- r. 1 1951
- r. 1 1952-1953
- r. 1 1954-1955
- r. 1 Robeson, Eslanda 1938-1956
- r. 1 Burnham, Louis 1952-1953
- r. 1 Gray, John 1952-1955, n.d.
- r. 1 Stalin Peace Prize 1952-1954
- r. 1 n.d
- r. 1 Birthday greetings 1950-1956
- r. 1 Invitations 1950-1955

Writings

The sub-series consists of drafts and typescripts of speeches, articles, columns and statements written by Paul and Eslanda Robeson. They are arranged chronologically by type and therein by author. Some unfinished works by Paul Robeson, as well as a statement from Josephine Baker and speeches by W.E.B. Du Bois are filed in separate folders. Different versions or fragments of a given work are kept in the same folder.

Robeson, Paul

General (cont.)

Writings (cont.)

Robeson, Paul (cont.)

Speeches

- r. 1 1937-1949
- r. 1 1950
- r. 2 1951-1953
- r. 2 Stalin Peace Prize 1953
- r. 2 1954-1956, n.d.
- r. 2 Articles and Columns 1951-1955
- r. 2 Statements and Messages 1941-1955
- r. 2 Unfinished Works 1952, 1956
- r. 2 Robeson, Eslanda 1943-1955, n.d.
- r. 2 DuBois, W.E.B 1950, 1951
- r. 2 Baker, Josephine 1954

Printed Matter

The sub-series includes press releases, a large selection of programs and playbills, and an extensive clipping file (1942-1956) arranged chronologically. The articles are by or about Paul and Eslanda Robeson, W.E.B. Du Bois and others. Various large items in this sub-series have been transferred to the poster collection. (See Separation record.)

- r. 2 Press Releases 1952-1954
- r. 2 Programs and Playbills 1924-1956, n.d.

Clippings

- r. 2 1942-1950
- r. 2 1951-1952
- r. 2 Stalin Peace Prize 1953
- r. 2 1953-1956
- r. 2 DuBois, W.E.B 1955
- r. 2 Robeson, Eslanda 1949-1954
- r. 2 *Freedom magazine* 1952
- r. 3 House Un-American Activities Committee 1956
- r. 3 Miscellaneous magazines 1940-1953

Professional

The series consists mostly of correspondence, reports, clippings, contracts and printed matter generated by Robeson's national tours, from 1952 to 1956. Manuscripts written for or acquired by Robeson form a separate group at the end of this series. The material is arranged chronologically and therein by type. Files for the years prior to 1952 are sketchy and consist mostly of clippings documenting Robeson's singing and acting careers in London and the United States from 1925 to 1951. The Peekskill concert and riot and subsequent lawsuit, however, produced a great deal of documentation, much of which is in this collection. This file includes: two copies of a fundraising letter signed by Paul Robeson to finance the suit that he and the Civil Rights Congress brought against the State Department; correspondence between Bella Abzug, a lawyer for the case and William Patterson, and between Patterson and others involved in the case.

Documents related to the national tours are arranged from the general to the specific. Schedules, correspondence, financial papers and mailing lists precede a city-by-city arrangement. Material related to the Othello Recording Corporation and Robeson's participation in the production of the film *Song of the Rivers* can be found at the end of the years 1952 and 1953.

- r. 3 1925-1944
- r. 3 *John Henry* 1939

Professional (cont.)

- r. 3 1945-1947
 - Peekskill 1949
- r. 3 Correspondence 1949-1952
- r. 3 Clippings 1949
- r. 3 Post-Peekskill - Los Angeles Concert 1949
- r. 3 1950
- r. 3 1951
- 1952
 - r. 3 Correspondence
 - r. 3 Schedule
 - r. 3 Contracts
 - r. 3 Financial Papers
 - r. 4 Press releases
 - r. 4 Programs and playbills
 - Concert Tour
 - r. 4 Boston
 - r. 4 California
 - r. 4 Canada
 - r. 4 Colorado
 - r. 4 Connecticut
 - r. 4 Cleveland
 - r. 4 Denver
 - r. 4 District of Columbia
 - r. 4 Illinois
 - r. 4 Massachusetts
 - r. 4 Michigan
 - r. 4 Milwaukee
 - r. 4 Minnesota
 - r. 4 Missouri
 - r. 4 New Jersey
 - r. 4 New Mexico
 - r. 4 New York
 - r. 4 Ohio
 - r. 4 Oregon
 - r. 4 Pennsylvania
 - r. 4 Utah
 - r. 4 Washington
 - r. 4 Wisconsin
 - r. 4 Recordings - Othello Recording Inc
- 1953
 - r. 4 Schedule

Professional (cont.)
1953 (cont.)

- r. 4 Correspondence
- r. 4 Financial Papers
- r. 4 Mailing list
- Concert Tour
- r. 4 Boston
- r. 4 Canada - Peace Arch Concert
- r. 4 Chicago
- r. 4 Cleveland
- r. 4 Denver
- r. 4 Detroit
- r. 4 Los Angeles
- r. 4 Norfolk, Virginia
- r. 4 North Carolina
- r. 4 Oakland, California
- r. 4 Philadelphia
- r. 4 Portland, Oregon
- r. 4 Richmond, Virginia
- r. 4 St. Louis
- r. 4 San Francisco
- r. 4 Seattle
- r. 4 Youngstown, Ohio
- r. 4 Film - Song of the Rivers
- r. 4 Recordings - Othello Recording Inc

1954

- r. 5 Correspondence
- Schedule
- Financial Paper
- Programs
- Press releases
- Clippings
- Concert Tour
- California
- Canada - Peace Arch Concert
- Chicago
- Cleveland
- Denver
- Detroit
- Minneapolis
- Philadelphia
- Portland, Oregon
- Rhode Island

Professional (cont.)
1954 (cont.)
Concert Tour (cont.)
Seattle
Washington
1955
Correspondence
Swathmore College Concert
Financial
Scripts
Film - ;*The Pigment Pigmy*
Plays
Poems, short stories
Sheet Music - A-L
Sheet Music - M-Z
Program and Playbills
Passport Case

The series is divided into Correspondence and Legal Papers. The former contains individual, legal and foreign correspondence. The latter includes memoranda, court orders, passport applications and various documents from the Committee to Restore Paul Robeson's Passport, among them petitions, mailing lists, fact sheets, press releases and financial records.

Correspondence

The Robeson correspondence file in this series consists mostly of brief handwritten notes and typed copies of replies to letters from Europe, Asia, Africa and the West Indies. In a typewritten letter to the editor of the *Amsterdam News* (12 Sept. 1955), Robeson responded to its editorial upholding his right to travel but condemning his political views. In his reply, Robeson underlined the constitutional gravity of the passport ban and upheld his right to speak out on Africa, the conditions of black people in the United States and the issue of peace. The foreign correspondence includes letters to the State Department protesting the illegality of the ban, and messages of support for Robeson. Letters in several languages are signed by government officials from the socialist block, trade-union leaders in England, France and Australia, and individuals such as Rene Maran, the negritude poet and author of *Batouala* (1922). Part of his correspondence is addressed to and answered by Maude Greene, then coordinator of the passport committee.

Other important letters can be found in the files of William Patterson and W.E.B. Du Bois. In a letter to an unidentified participant at the 1955 Bandung conference, an international conference of black and Asian leaders on colonialism and Third World Economic and cultural cooperation, Patterson succinctly outlined the reasons for the persecution of Robeson and some of the basic international issues involved: freedom and independence of the colonized people, equality of opportunity for black people in the United States and cultural exchange. Other correspondents in this series include Jean Laffitte, Secretary of the World Peace Council, Rockwell Kent, an American author, and Llyod Brown, a close associate of Robeson and Patterson. Although not voluminous, the Patterson correspondence is very informative and reveals his important contributions to the passport case, his close association with Robeson and his involvement in civil rights activities.

- r. 6 Robeson, Paul 1954-1955
- r. 6 Robeson, Eslanda 1954-1956
- r. 6 Patterson, William 1955-1956
- r. 6 DuBois, W.E.B 1954

Legal Correspondence

Included in the legal correspondence are Robeson's passport applications submitted to the State Department (1952-54), letters to and from the law firms of Witt and Kramer (1951-52) and Leonard Boudin who presented the passport case to the Supreme Court (1954-56).

- r. 6 Department of State 1952-1954
- r. 6 Witt and Crammer 1951-1952

Passport Case (cont.)

Legal Correspondence (cont.)

- r. 6 Boudin, Leonard 1954-1956
- r. 6 Wright, James T 1954-1956
- r. 6 Committee to Restore Paul Robeson's Passport 1951-1954
- r. 6 Tribute to Paul Robeson 1954-1955
- r. 6 Domestic Correspondence 1950-1956
- r. 6 Foreign Correspondence 1954-1956
- r. 6 Foreign Greetings 1954-1956
- r. 6 Foreign Invitations 1951-1955

Legal Papers

- r. 6 Passport application 1951
- r. 6 Brief, memoranda and court orders 1951-1956
- r. 6 Petitions 1955
- r. 6 Agenda and planning 1954, n.d.
- r. 6 Financial 1954
- r. 6 Mailing list
- r. 6 Fact sheets 1954-1955
- r. 6 Press releases 1950-1955
- r. 6 Clippings 1950-1956
- r. 6 Printed matter 1951-1954

Organizations

The series is composed of files of the various organizations associated with Paul Robeson in the 1950s. They are arranged alphabetically, and where the volume permitted, they have been separated by types of documents and arranged chronologically. In the case of the Civil Rights Congress, the arrangement follows the names of the various committees and projects of the organization.

- r. 7 American Labor Party 1952, 1954

Council on African Affairs

The file for the Council on African Affairs consists of correspondence, reports, resolutions, press releases and clippings. Correspondents in this sub-series include: Lord Halifax, British ambassador to Washington (1944); Edward Stettinius, chairman of the United States delegation to the United Nations on the subject of colonial trusteeship, then under consideration in regard to the United Nations charter; the Natal Indian Congress in South Africa, founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1894; Oliver Tambo, General Secretary of the African National Congress in South Africa (1954), and Mrs. Funmi Ransome Kuti, a Nigerian school teacher and mother of the "Afro-beat" band leader Fela Anikulapo Kuti. Also included are two different drafts of Robeson's message to the Asian-African Conference in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955 and related correspondence.

- r. 7 Correspondence 1944-1955, n.d.
- r. 7 Speeches 1943-1946
- r. 7 Petitions and resolutions 1949-1955
- r. 7 Bandung Conference 1955
- r. 7 Spotlight on Africa newsletter 1952-1954
- r. 7 News Releases 1946-1954
- r. 7 Newspaper clippings 1942-1953
- r. 7 Printed matter 1951-1954

Civil Rights Congress

- r. 7 Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born 1951-1955

Organizations (cont.)

Civil Rights Congress (cont.)

- r. 7 Committee on Latin-American Affairs 1954
- r. 7 Committee to Defend Negro Leadership 1953-1954
- Committee to Win Amnesty for the Smith Act Victims
- r. 7 Correspondence 1953-1955
- r. 7 Printed matter 1950-1955
- r. 7 Davis, Benjamin n.d.
- r. 7 Till, Emmet 1955
- r. 7 Legal papers
- r. 7 William Patterson Case 1952-1955
- r. 7 The Trenton Six 1950
- r. 7 Communist Party - USA 1947, 1949
- r. 7 Emergency Civil Liberties Committee 1955
- r. 7 Freedom newspaper 1950-1954
- r. 7 Jefferson School of Social Science 1954
- r. 7 Labor Unions 1954
- r. 7 Lincoln Brigade 1952-1954
- r. 7 National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions 1953
- r. 7 National Council on American-Soviet Friendship 1953-1954
- r. 7 National Negro Labor Council Correspondence 1951-1955
 The NNLC was founded in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1951 to lead black workers and trade-unionists in the campaign for the enactment of the fair employment practices law, and against racial discrimination in industry and Jim Crow practices in the South. It had 35 local councils and was affiliated with locals in the United Automobile Workers union (UAW), the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), Packinghouse Workers and other independent trade-unions. The NNLC led many successful campaigns for the hiring and upgrading of black workers in railroads and industries. It was accused, however, by various black trade-unionists of splitting black workers and was labelled a "communist front" by the Executive Board of the UAW. The NNLC was dissolved in 1956 after years of harassment and after the United States Attorney General ruled in 1954 that it must register as a communist front organization under the Subversive Activities Control Act of 1950. The organizational file of the NNLC consists of correspondence, transcripts of Robeson's addresses to its 1952 and 1953 conventions and some printed matter. As one of the participating organizations and beneficiaries of the UFF, the NNLC played an important role in the coordination of Robeson's national tours from 1952 to 1956. Material related to the role of its local chapters in the preparation of these concerts can also be found in the PROFESSIONAL series.
- r. 7 Third national convention, Chicago 1953
- r. 8 Printed Matter 1951-1955
- Progressive Party
- r. 8 Correspondence 1950-1955
- r. 8 The War in Indochina 1954
- r. 8 Printed Matter 1950-1954
- r. 8 Provisional Workers and People's Committee for May Day 1953-55
- r. 8 Spanish Refugee Appeal 1951-1955
- United Freedom Fund
- r. 8 Constitution, Minutes 1952
- r. 8 Correspondence 1950
- r. 8 Schedules - Paul Robeson National tour 1952, 1955
- r. 8 Mailing list

Organizations (cont.)
United Freedom Fund (cont.)

r. 8 Financial 1952-1954

World Peace Council

The World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace was created in 1948. Its first congress in Worclow (Poland) attracted many influential scientists and writers from around the world to its campaign against the Cold War and the threat of a nuclear war. The organization altered both its name (becoming the World Peace Council) and its orientation in 1949 in an effort to broaden its appeals. Its influence became considerable in the 1950s, and its petitions were endorsed by millions of sympathizers throughout the world. The United States government, however, was hostile to the goals of the World Peace Council, and required the WPC's American branch, the American Peace Crusade, comply with the Subversive Activities Control Act. The files for the WPC (1950-56) reflect both Robeson's participation in it and the broad scope of the organization. Among the papers are correspondence between Robeson and the staff of the UFF, Jean Laffitte, General Secretary and other officers of the WPC; copies of messages read by Willard Uphaus and Paul Robeson on behalf of the WPC to the United Nations Security Council (incomplete, 1951); statements by various delegates to the second congress of the WPC in 1950, and selected copies of the *Bulletin of the World Peace Council*.

Correspondence

- r. 8 1950-1952
- r. 8 1953-1955
- r. 8 Speeches 1952, 1954
- r. 8 Messages 1951 - 1955
- r. 8 Reports 1950, 1951
- r. 8 Resolution 1952 - 1955
- r. 8 Press release 1951 - 1954

American Peace Crusade

- r. 8 Correspondence 1951-1954
- r. 8 Printed Matter 1950-1954
- r. 9 Asian Pacific Peace Conference 1952
- r. 9 International Economic Conference, Moscow 1951
- r. 9 International Youth Conference 1954
- r. 9 Subject file 1951
- r. 9 Newspaper clippings 1950-1954

Printed Material

- r. 9 1950
- r. 9 1951-1953
- r. 9 1954
- r. 9 1955
- r. 9 Fragments n.d.