A PAUL ROBESON CHRONOLOGY



A Paul Robeson Chronology

1898

April 9—Paul Leroy Robeson born, youngest of five children of William Drew Robeson and Maria Louisa Bustill Robeson. In Princeton, New Jersey, where father is pastor of Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church.

1904

Mother dies of burns in accidental household fire. Father raises family.

1906

Father loses ministerial post in church dispute, becomes coachman for southern college students.

1907

Family moves to Westfield, New Jersey, where Paul attends integrated public school.

1909

Family moves to Somerville, New Jersey, where Reverend Robeson has been appointed pastor of St. Thomas A. M. E. Zion Church.

1911

Paul enters Somerville High School, one of two blacks enrolled. Plays title role in Shakespeare's *Othello,* sings in glee club, and plays football—all in spite of principal's opposition.

1915

Takes competitive examination for four-year scholarship at Rutgers College, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Graduates from Somerville High School as honor student at age of seventeen. Participates in statewide oratorical contest delivering "Toussaint L'Ouverture" by Wendell Phillips. Comes out third but learns he has won scholarship to Rutgers.

Summer—Works as waiter in Narragansett, Rhode Island, with brother Ben.

Fall—Enters Rutgers. Tries out for varsity football and meets racist hostility. Nose broken and right shoulder dislocated by players who don't want Negro on team. Returns to try-out after visit from brother and makes varsity.

1917

Walter Camp, foremost authority on football, lists Robeson first on roster of college stars. No official All-American team picked because of war.

1918

May 17—Father dies at age of seventy-three.

Chosen by Walter Camp for his All-American team.

Awarded (through 1919) twelve varsity letters in sports at Rutgers, including basketball, baseball, discus, shot put and javelin as well as football. Also elected member of both prestigious Phi Beta Kappa Society and Cap and Skull, honor society of Rutgers seniors.

1919

May 29—Submits senior thesis, "The Fourteenth Amendment, the Sleeping Giant of the American Constitution."

June—Wins Ann Van Nest Bussing Prize in Extempore Speaking.

June 10—Delivers graduating class oration, "The New Idealism," at Rutgers 153rd Commencement. Graduates with high honors and receives wide attention in New Jersey press for accomplishments in athletics and scholarship.

July—Moves to Harlem in New York City.

1920

February—Enters Columbia University Law School, working at odd jobs and playing some professional football to earn tuition money.

Makes acting debut playing lead role in *Simon the Cyrenian,* one of *Plays for a Negro Theater* by white poet Ridgely Torrence. Congratulated by members of Provincetown Players in audience at Harlem YMCA.

1921

August—Marries Eslanda Cardozo Goode, then studying chemistry at Columbia and soon to become first black woman to head a pathology laboratory. Eslanda, called Essie by her friends, is granddaughter of Francis L. Cardozo, distinguished black Secretary of State of South Carolina during Reconstruction.

1922

April—Plays role of African in Mary Hoyt Wiborg's play *Taboo.*

Summer—While still student at Columbia Law School, goes to England to appear in production of *Taboo* (renamed *Voodoo*) with Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Meets Lawrence Brown at Regents Park Road flat of John Payne, American Negro singer. Tours British provinces with Mrs. Campbell.

1923

Spring—Graduates from Columbia Law School, and seeks work in law firms. Meanwhile works as singer in Harlem's famed Cotton Club.

1924

Offered lead in two plays by Eugene O'Neill—*All God's Chillun Got Wings* and revival of *The Emperor Jones.* Accepts roles, having quit position at downtown law firm because secretary refused to take dictation from him.

May 5—Threatened by Ku Klux Klan if he appears in *All God's Chillun,* in which a white woman will kiss his hand.

May 15—Opens in *All God's Chillun* in role of Jim Harris and is immediate success.

June—Stars in *Rosanne* in Philadelphia.

Fall—Makes silent movie *Body and Soul* for Oscar Michaux, independent black film-maker.

1925

Stars in *The Emperor Jones* as Brutus Jones, role made famous by Charles Gilpin. Alternates with playing in *All God's Chillun.*

March—Goes with Lawrence Brown to Greenwich Village home of James Light, director of Provincetown Players. Sings arrangement of Negro spirituals by Brown; Light suggests a concert.

April 19—Gives concert with Lawrence Brown, made up solely of Negro music—three groups of spirituals and one group of secular and dialect songs. Concert is resounding success and brings Negro spirituals to prominent place in music world.

September 11—Opens in *The Emperor Jones* in London to critical acclaim.

October—Victor Records advertises recording of Negro spirituals.

1926

January 5—Launches tour with Lawrence Brown under auspices of James B. Pond, singing Negro spirituals to packed audiences across U. S.

March 3—Tribute by Elizabeth S. Sergeant appears in *New Republic.*

October 6—Opens in *Black Boy* in New York to rave reviews for performance though play about black prizefighter is not well received.

1927

October—Returns to Europe to give concerts with Lawrence Brown.

November 2—Son Paul, Jr., (called Pauli), born in New York.

Voted in "All Time All-American College Eleven."

Included in books about famous Americans and famous Negroes such as Mary White Ovington's *Portrait in Color.*

1928

March—Plays role of Crown in *Porgy*, play by DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, replacing Jack Carter.

April—Opens in *Show Boat* by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd, and becomes overnight sensation singing "Ol' Man River."

April—Gives recital with Lawrence Brown at Albert Hall in London. Also sings spirituals at Sunday afternoon concerts at Drury Lane.

September 29—*New Yorker* magazine publishes "Profile of Robeson" by Mildred Gilman in which he is called "the promise of his race," "King of Harlem," and "idol of his people."

1929

Tours Central Europe and the British provinces. Despite invitations by top London society, encounters racial discrimination and is refused admission to London hotels (through 1930). Creates furor and major hotels state they will not refuse admission or service to Negroes.

November 5—Returns to U.S. to sing at jammed Carnegie Hall.

1930

May 29—Opens to great acclaim in role of Moor in Shakespeare's *Othello* at Savoy Theatre in London and has twenty curtain calls. Is first American Negro since Ira Aldridge to play role.

June—Performs in *The Emperor Jones* in Berlin.

Philadelphia Art Alliance refuses permission to display Tony Salemme statue of nude Robeson in Rittenhouse Square.

Appears in film *Borderline* with Eslanda, made in Switzerland.

First biography, *Paul Robeson, Negro* by Eslanda Goode Robeson, published in New York by Harper & Brothers.

Head sculpted by Jacob Epstein, leading British sculptor.

Appears in British *Who's Who* (never listed in *Who's Who in America*).

Separates temporarily from Eslanda and they live apart.

1931

May 11—Opens in *The Hairy Ape* by Eugene O'Neill at Ambassador Theatre in London.

1932

Receives Honorary Master's Degree from Rutgers University.

Eslanda plans to sue for divorce, but problems are resolved and couple is reunited.

1933

May—Returns to New York to star in movie of *The Emperor Jones.*

August—Returns to England and studies singing and languages. Becomes acquainted with African students in London, among them Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta. Paul and Essie made honorary members of West African Students' Union.

August—Plays benefit of *All God's Chillun* for Jewish refugees at urging of Marie Seton, British writer who is later to write biography of him. In retrospect Robeson is to state that this benefit marked the beginning of his political awareness.

September—Asked to speak at Socialist Club of Cambridge University.

1934

May—Plays role of Bosambo, a tribal chief, in film version of Edgar Wallace's *Sanders of the River.* Is enraged by addition to film, without his knowledge, of scenes praising British colonialism.

Extends repertoire beyond Negro spirituals to include Mexican, Scottish, and Russian songs. Continues to study languages and eventually masters 25, from Chinese to Arabic.

Alexander Woollcott, well-known essayist and raconteur, extols Robeson in *While Rome Burns.* In chapter called "Colossal Bronze" Woollcott says: "Of the countless people I have known in my wanderings over the world, he is one of the few of whom I would say that they have greatness . . . by what he does, thinks and is, by his unassailable dignity, and his serene, incorruptible simplicity, Paul Robeson strikes me as having been made out of the original stuff of the world. In this sense he is coeval with Adam and the redwood trees of California. He is a fresh act, a fresh gesture, a fresh effort of creation."

Takes course at London School of Oriental Languages and starts studying West and East Coast African languages.

Invited to Soviet Union to discuss with Sergei Eisenstein making film, *Black Majesty,* dealing with rebellion leading up to establishment of Haiti. En route to Soviet Union with Essie and Marie Seton, has chilling experience in Nazi Germany when they are threatened by Storm Troopers. At entrance to Soviet Union, officials at first refuse to allow party to cross border because

visas are not in order, but recognize Robeson from his voice and enthusiastically allow them to enter.

In Moscow, meets William L. Patterson, black lawyer, who tells him of struggle involving Scottsboro Boys in U.S. and urges him to return home to help in fight for Negro causes.

Has discussions with Eisenstein. Is deeply impressed by fact that all schoolchildren in Soviet Union are educated against racism. *Black Majesty* not produced, but Robeson determines to return annually.

Goes back to London to continue work in films and theatre. Begins study of writings on Marxism and socialist system in the Soviet Union.

1935

May 9—Opens in *Stevedore*, play on black-white labor unity by Paul Peters and George Sklar which had appeared in New York in 1934 under auspices of Theatre Union.

September 25—Sails for United States to make film of *Show Boat*.

1936

Receives rave reviews for singing of "Ol' Man River" in *Show Boat*.

March—Performs role of Toussaint L'Ouverture in play by C. L. R. James.

August—Appears in *The Song of Freedom*, film about Africa which he feels is first true one he has done about that continent. It portrays a black singer who, after discovering his aristocratic African origins, returns to take over leadership of his people.

September—Films *King Solomon's Mines*, based on book by H. Rider Haggard.

December (through January 1937)—Visits Soviet Asia and Caucasus and is deeply impressed by great progress made by so-called backward people in these areas, especially racial minorities.

December 31—*New York Times* reports from Moscow that Robeson will place his nine-year-old son in school there "instead of America so the boy need not contend with discrimination because of color until he is older and his father can be with him."

1937

Co-founder (with Max Yergan) and chairman of Council on African Affairs, formed to aid national liberation struggles in Africa.

January—Stars in *Big Fella*, film based on Claude McKay's novel *Banjo*.

February—Plays in film entitled *Jericho* (released in U.S. as *Dark Sands*), about an American soldier, Jericho Jackson, who remains in Africa after World War I. Goes to Egypt for shooting, his first visit to Africa.

May—*Song of Freedom* opens and receives praise even from previously critical American Negro press.

June 24—Sings and speaks at benefit concert for Basque refugees at Albert Hall in London. Declaring stand on side of Republican Spain, states: "The artist must elect to fight for freedom or slavery. I have made my choice. I had no alternative."

August-September—Sings at numerous concerts for Spanish Republican cause.

October—Polls first place as singer most popular with British radio listeners. Announces intention of retiring from commercial entertainment.

December 19—At rally in support of "arms, food and justice for demo-

cratic Spain," changes words of "Ol' Man River" from "I'm tired of livin' and feared of dyin'" to "I must keep fightin' until I'm dyin'."

To reach working-class and less affluent audience, starts singing in large music halls and cinemas in provinces, with admission prices from 6d.

1938

January 23—Goes to Madrid to sing in hospitals for troops of International Brigade.

February—Returning from Spain, announces intention to produce film in which he would play Oliver Law, a Negro commander of the Lincoln Battalion in the International Brigade, who was killed in battle. Film never produced.

June—Appears in *Plant in the Sun,* a play by Ben Bengal dealing with sit-down strikes and union organizing in U.S., produced by Unity Theatre under auspices of British Labour Party.

June—Sings for International Peace Campaign, and for Memorial Meeting for Welsh members of International Brigade in Spain.

November—After almost two years of refusing roles from major film companies, announces he will play in *Proud Valley,* film being produced by small independent company, Ealing Studios, about life of Welsh miners.

1939

January—Sings at great mass meeting at Empress Hall in London to greet survivors of two British battalions that had fought for Republican Spain.

June 3—Returns to U.S. and appears in short run of revival of *The Emperor Jones.*

July 1—Gives first song recital after return at Mother A. M. E. Church in Harlem where brother Reverend Benjamin Robeson is pastor.

August—Refuses to open in *John Henry* in Washington, D.C., because theater is segregated. Opens in New York instead.

October—Arriving for tea to which he has been invited at leading New York City hotel, is told to use freight elevator.

October 27—Signs contract with Columbia Artists for role in *Ballad for Americans,* based on *The Ballad of Uncle Sam* by John Latouche (renamed by Norman Corwin), with music by Earl Robinson.

November 5—Premiere on CBS Radio of *Ballad for Americans* with Earl Robinson's American People's Chorus leads to greatest audience response since Orson Welles' famous Martian scare program. Studio audience cheers for twenty minutes after performance.

Through 1942—Crosses country many times, appearing at regularly scheduled concerts, except in deep South or before segregated audiences.

1940

January—Criticized by some newspapers for refusal to participate in fund-raising affair for Finns in Russo-Finnish War.

February—Appears in twenty-minute opera version of *The Emperor Jones* by Louis Gruenberg with Eugene Ormandy and Philadelphia Orchestra.

March—Buys house, "The Beeches," in Enfield, Connecticut, after inquiries show there will be no difficulties with neighbors.

Receives honorary degree from Hamilton College.

July—Refused service in fashionable San Francisco restaurant; sues owner for $22,500 under California Civil Code barring discrimination in public places on basis of race or color.

July 23—Sings *Ballad for Americans* to 30,000 people jamming Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles.

August—Called by *Collier's* magazine "the favorite male Negro singer" of concertgoers and "America's No. 1 Negro entertainer."

September—Appears with pianist Hazel Scott and novelist Richard Wright at benefit for Negro Playwrights Company before 5,000 people at Golden Gate Ballroom in Harlem.

Active throughout year in Committee to Aid China, Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee to Aid Spanish Refugees, and Council on African Affairs.

1941

May 19—Speaks at United Auto Workers rally in downtown Detroit to aid Ford organizing campaign.

July 7—Made honorary member of National Maritime Union.

September 29—Sings and speaks at rally of Citizens Committee to Free Earl Browder, head of American Communist Party, before 20,000 at Madison Square Garden.

1942

Devotes time and talent to war effort, touring war plants, performing at War Bond rallies, and recording programs for American and Allied soldiers. Gives recitals, many at no fee, for such groups as Washington Committee for Aid to China, Russian War Relief, Ford Workers Victory Chorus, Labor Victory Rally at Yankee Stadium, Concert for Negro Soldiers.

February 20—Headline in *Kansas City Call* reads, "Paul Robeson Stops in Middle of Concert to Protest Municipal Auditorium Jim-Crow. Famous Baritone Blasts Segregation in Public Building." Has discovered he is singing before segregated Kansas City audience and announces before second half of program that he is continuing only under protest.

March 7—Speaks at Bethel A. M. E. Church at St. Antoine and Kirby in Detroit on behalf of black families of Sojourner Truth Housing Project at request of Sojourner Truth Citizens Committee. Urges fighting back against Ku Klux Klan elements.

April 8—Addresses mass meeting in New York City's Manhattan Center called to "mobilize Negro and colonial people in the fight against Fascism".

May—Narrates documentary film *Native Land,* dealing with 1938 findings of La Follette-Thomas Senate Civil Liberties Committee supporting union organizing.

May—Addressing Yankee Stadium meeting of 51,000 workers, calls for second front to shorten war.

June—Appears at Lewisohn Stadium, New York City, at Interracial War Bond Rally.

August 10—Opens in his first U.S. *Othello* at Brattle Hall in Cambridge, Massachusetts, under direction of Margaret Webster.

August—In last commercial film, appears with Ethel Waters as sharecropper in final episode of *Tales of Manhattan,* six stories connected through travels of a dress coat.

September 15—Speaks and sings for workers at Englewood, California, plant of North American Aircraft at invitation of Local 887, UAW-CIO.

September 18—At Los Angeles press conference, praises CIO unions for being "in the forefront of the fight to smash barriers of social discrimination in hiring. . . ."

Earl Schenck Miers publishes novel *Big Ben,* based on life of Robeson.

1943

January—Receives Abraham Lincoln Medal for notable and distinguished service in human relations in New York.

June 2—Receives honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia.

June 7—Speaks and sings at Negro Freedom Rally at Madison Square Garden.

October—Opens on Broadway in Theatre Guild production of *Othello* to tremendous critical and audience acclaim.

November 12—Honorary lifetime membership in International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union conferred by union president Harry Bridges after action by convention.

November 16—Speaks as chairman of Council on African Affairs at first session of New York *Herald-Tribune* Forum on Current Problems.

December 3—As part of Negro delegation, presents plea for removal of ban against Negroes in major leagues at Hotel Roosevelt in New York before Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis and league officials.

1944

January—Made honorary member of State, County and Municipal Workers of America, CIO.

March—Cancels recital in Baltimore because Lyric Theatre is refused for unsegregated audience.

April—7,000 persons attend 46th birthday party at 17th Regiment Armory in New York City given by Council on African Affairs.

April 14—Chairs Conference on "Africa—New Perspectives," under auspices of Council on African Affairs.

May—Jerome Beatty, in article "America's No. 1 Negro" appearing in *American Magazine,* says: "Paul Robeson broke the back of prejudice to command recognition as a football star, lawyer, concert singer, and actor. Today he has won top triumphs for his magnificent portrayal of Shakespeare's Othello."

May 8—State, County and Municipal Workers, CIO, establish Paul Robeson Scholarship Fund at New York University to train black students in business management.

May 19—Receives Medal for Good Diction on the Stage from American Academy of Arts and Letters.

June 30—*Othello* closes in New York after record run of 296 performances and 494,839 paid admissions.

July 4—Receives *Billboard's* first annual Donaldson Award for Outstanding Lead Performance for role in *Othello.*

September—Begins cross-country tour of *Othello,* with Southern states omitted except for Negro colleges and unsegregated audiences.

1945

April 25—Ends 45-city tour in Chicago, where *Othello* opens for month's run at Erlanger Theatre.

June—Receives Doctor of Humane Letters honorary degree from Howard University, Washington, D.C.

June 25—Speaks at Madison Square Garden Rally for a Permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), against poll tax, and for elimination of other obstacles toward equality for Negro people.

August—Goes to Europe as part of first recially-mixed overseas USO-sponsored camp show for troops, accompanied by Lawrence Brown and violinist Miriam Solovieff. Sings for troops in Germany, France, and Czechoslovakia. Is deeply moved and upset by visits to Nazi concentration camps, also disturbed by growing hostility to Soviet Union in Allied High Command.

October—Awarded NAACP Spingarn Medal, highest honor given each year to a black man.

November 25—Addressing Central Conference of American Rabbis, declares that United States has taken over role of Hitler, and now "stands for counter-revolution all over the world." Urges United States to share secrets of atomic bomb with Soviet Union, predicting it would be "the greatest guarantee against another war."

1946

January 7—Appears with Marian Anderson at rally for South African famine relief held under auspices of Council on African Affairs at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem.

June 6—Speaks at mass meeting "for African freedom" at Madison Square Garden sponsored by Council on African Affairs.

July 17—Marches on picket line in support of Dodge workers' strike in Windsor, Ontario.

September—Joins in sponsoring Crusade Against Lynching, representing coalition of some 50 organizations. As delegate to Washington, asks President Harry F. Truman to issue "formal public statement" that would make clear his views on lynching, and urges him to establish a "definite legislative and educational program to end the disgrace of mob violence." Addresses mass meeting and speaks on radio against lynching.

October—Elected vice-president of Civil Rights Congress of which William L. Patterson is executive secretary.

October 7—Appears before California Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities (Tenney Committee) as co-chairman of National Committee to Win the Peace. Asked if he is member of Communist Party, says he is not but praises Communists as fighters for democracy and declares "I characterize myself as an Anti-Fascist."

October 10—Speaks at waterfront strike meeting in San Francisco under auspices of Committee for Maritime Unity, as co-chairman of National Committee to Win the Peace.

1947

January—Testimonial dinner in Robeson's honor sponsored by Local 600, UAW (Ford Motor Company local), in Detroit.

January—Stands on picket line in St. Louis to protest segregation of Negroes in American theater.

March—After singing "Joe Hill" by Alfred Hayes and Earl Robinson at University of Utah, Salt Lake City—the city where Joe Hill was executed in 1915—announces, "You have just heard my final concert for at least two years, and perhaps for many more. I'm retiring here and now from concert work. I shall sing now for my trade union and college friends. In other words, only at gatherings where I can sing what I please."

April 3—Prevented from appearing in Peoria, Illinois, when Shriners cancel contract for use of Shriner Mosque and mayor refuses to allow use of City Hall for concert.

May 9—Board of Education of Albany, New York, denies permission for

Robeson concert at Philip Livingston Junior High School. Supreme Court Justice Isadore Bookstein orders school be made available and concert is held.

June—Gives four concerts in Panama for United Public Workers of America, CIO, who are trying to unionize Panamanian workers, predominantly blacks. Ten thousand turn out.

June 29—Speaks for Local 22, Food and Tobacco Workers, mainly blacks, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

September 22—Speaks at National Maritime Union convention, last to which he is invited, as union leadership under Joseph Curran turns anti-Communist and supports Cold War.

October—Receives award from Artists, Writers, and Printing Workers Congress of Bucharest, Rumania.

December 20—Announces support of Henry A. Wallace as independent candidate for President of the United States in opposition to Cold War policies of Truman Administration. Later attends meeting to form Wallace for President Committee out of which emerges Progressive Party.

1948

January 1—James Hicks, editor of *Amsterdam News,* tears up negative of photograph of Robeson shaking hands with Ralph Bunche at New Year's assembly at Renaissance Ballroom in Harlem so that Bunche will not be compromised politically by having picture published. (Later, in the 1960s, Hicks admits that Robeson was saying what the Negroes as a group would not begin saying for another five years, not saying loudly for another decade.)

February-March—Max Yergan, secretary of Council on African Affairs, tries to align Council with American Cold War policies and is forced out, but charges Communist domination of Council.

March—Transport Workers' Union for first time in ten years withdraws invitation to have Robeson attend its convention despite his honorary life membership.

March—Tours Hawaiian Islands for International Longshoremens' and Warehousemens' Union accompanied by Lawrence Brown and Earl Robinson.

April—West Virginia authorities ban *Paul Robeson: Citizen of the World,* a young people's biography by Shirley Graham, from public libraries.

April—At meeting held in Chicago to form Progressive Party, is proposed for Vice-President but refuses.

April-July—Barnstorms for Progressive Party and its presidential candidate, Henry A. Wallace.

May-September—Seeks appointment with President Truman to confer on anti-poll tax, anti-lynching, and fair employment legislation but repeated requests rejected.

June—Appears before U.S. Senate Committee holding hearings on Mundt-Nixon Bill drafted by House Un-American Activities Committee which calls for registering of Communist Party members and "Communist Front" organizations. Opposes measure as violating rights of American citizens. When asked if he would fight in a war with Soviet Union, replies, "That would depend on conditions." Also refuses to answer question as to Communist Party membership.

June 23—Speaking at Manhattan Center dinner sponsored by *Masses & Mainstream* magazine, urges all artists and writers to oppose Mundt-Nixon Bill. (Bill is not brought to vote in Senate.)

July—At Progressive Party convention in Philadelphia, which nominates Henry A. Wallace for President and Senator Glen H. Taylor for

Vice-President, pledges to help ticket with all his power. In course of speech says: "What mockery! Our high standard of living for a minority in the richest country of the earth! Absentee ownership still rules supreme. One per cent of the population owns as much wealth as one-third of the ill-housed, ill-fed whom Roosevelt so feelingly described. The spectacle of the Pews and Grundys, the Sullivans and Dulles' in full view on the Republican side, and the Du Ponts, House of Morgan, Dillon-Reed, Forrestal on the Democratic side shows the contempt of big business barons for the great majority of the American people."

July-August—Touring South with Henry Wallace, is threatened with lynching but speaks out for racial equality.

November—Election results disappointing to Wallace supporters, but continues to support Progressive Party and its program against Cold War and for rights of labor and minorities. (In 1950 Wallace leaves Progressive Party, and voices regret for having criticized Truman on Cold War.)

1949

January 28—Tells protest meeting called by newly organized Negro Youth Builders Institute, Inc., that "the suppression of the Negro in the United States varies only in degree in New York, New Jersey, Georgia and Alabama," that the public must be "aroused" to poor school conditions in Harlem and Brooklyn, inadequate housing, "police brutality in the North, generally," which would include "the railroading to the electric chair of six Negro youths in New Jersey (the Trenton Six)." Comparing what he terms "children in cotton fields in the South, children on tobacco plantations and exploited children all over," with the "neglected children of the North," says conditions are "of the same pattern—evidence of a colored minority in a hostile white world."

February—Starts concert tour in England.

March 25—Leads protest against racist policies of South African government organized by South African Committee of India League in cooperation with League of Coloured Peoples, West African Students Union, and East Africans Students' Union, attended by 3,000 at Friend's House, London.

April 20—At World Congress of Partisans of Peace in Paris, with delegates from 60 countries including Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois from the United States, delivers speech in which he says, "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 full human dignity of mankind." Speech is distorted and quotation reported out of context by news reporters in dispatches to their papers in the U.S.

April 23—Chairman of State Development Commission of Connecticut requests that State Police Commissioner keep Robeson out of Connecticut if he should try to visit his home in Enfield, but request is denied.

April 30—Walter White, Executive Secretary of NAACP, attacks Robeson for Paris speech.

May—Visits Poland's Warsaw Ghetto, which makes deep impression.

June 14–16—Three-part series, "Two Worlds," published in *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, Journal of Communist Youth in USSR. In "First Joy," he describes impressions of first visits to Soviet Union in 1934 and 1936. In "My Name Is Robeson," relates some episodes of his life. In "Ten Years of Struggle," talks of fight for peace, against war, and for better life for American people.

June 16—Returning to New York from four month tour of Europe and Soviet Union, calls trial of eleven Communist leaders "a type of domestic fascism" and denounces Wall Street's "war policy."

June 19—Speaks to 5,000 New Yorkers at Welcome Home Rally held at Rockland Palace in Harlem under auspices of Council on African Affairs.

June 19—Paul Robeson, Jr., is married to Marilyn Paula Greenberg, a white student also studying at Cornell.

June 27—*Time* magazine publishes interview in which he praises beauty of Moscow, is confident from Soviet experience that Africans will liberate themselves in near future, and emphasizes "that the Negro people must come to identify themselves with the workers. . . ."

June 29—Speaks at protest rally in Madison Square Garden held by Civil Rights Congress.

July 13-14—Negro spokesmen testifying before House Un-American Activities Committee declare Robeson did not speak for his race at Paris. Witnesses include Manning Johnson, who testifies Robeson dreamed of becoming a "Black Stalin" but is so incoherent even reporters concede he has said nothing truly meaningful. NAACP announces it opposes hearings.

July 18—Jackie Robinson, first Negro major league baseball player, tells Committee that Robeson's statement in Paris sounded "very silly to me," but also says U.S. Negroes "were stirred up long before there was a Communist Party and they'll stay stirred up long after the party has disappeared—unless Jim Crow has disappeared by then."

July—Baltimore *Afro-American*, one of America's leading black newspapers, advises Jackie Robinson to stick to baseball and stay out of politics.

August 4—Pickets White House with members of CIO United Public Workers to protest employment discrimination by Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

August 27—Peekskill riots begin when Robeson concert is attacked and Robeson prevented from singing as many in audience are injured by rock throwers. Robeson announces, "I'm going to sing wherever the people want me to sing. My people and I won't be frightened by crosses burning in Peekskill or anywhere else."

August 28—Jackie Robinson bitterly attacks Peekskill riot in interview in Brooklyn Dodgers dugout.

September 4—Second concert held successfully but turned into nightmare as lawlessness breaking out after concert results in injuries to at least 140 persons, some serious, while state troopers either do nothing to prevent attacks or, in some instances, encourage mob. Robeson denounces attack as "fascist."

September 9—Cancels trip to Mexico City Continental Congress for Peace. Eslanda Robeson speaks instead to 1,000 delegates.

September 12—National Maritime Union convention considers motion that name be stricken from union's honorary membership list; motion withdrawn.

September 20—All-China Art and Literature Workers Association and All-China Association of Musicians of Liberated China protest Peekskill attack on Robeson.

September 20—Appears at trial of eleven Communist leaders but is barred from saying anything other than that he knows the defendants.

September 25—Starts singing and speaking tour sponsored by Council on African Affairs, often at considerable personal risk since American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars picket concerts and stir up crowds.

October—Soviet Union names Mount Robeson in his honor.

November 10—Speaks out in favor of peaceful relations with Soviet Union at banquet sponsored by National Council of American-Soviet Friendship at Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City.

1950

February—Visits Chicago for meeting of Progressive Party leadership.

March 13—NBC bars appearance on Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt's TV program scheduled for March 19. Charles R. Denny, NBC Executive Vice-President, declares "no good purpose would be served in having him speak on issue of Negro politics."

May 6—Selection announced for *Afro-American* 1950 National Honor Roll, sponsored by Afro-American Newspapers. Citation reads: "Actor, singer extraordinary, who has chosen to leave these peaceful arts in which he gained fame in order to throw himself into the political fight in which he hopes to win human dignity and equality for the common people."

May 27—In *Nation* article, Earl Schenck Miers writes: "As a product of his times, Robeson today is perhaps more All-American than he was as member of his college."

June 10—Speech to meeting of National Labor Conference for Negro Rights, attended by 900 delegates in Chicago, later published as pamphlet entitled *Forge Negro-Labor Unity for Peace and Jobs.*

June 28—Speaks out against U.S. participation in Korean War.

July 28—On advice of attorneys, refuses to hand over passport as demanded by agents of State Department. At the time had completed arrangements for trip to Europe to attend several meetings and to fulfill speaking engagements in a number of countries, as well as to give several concerts in Italy and England and to make recordings.

August 1—Robeson's lawyers write to State Department asking for explanation of order.

August 7—Chief of Passport Division replies: "The action was taken because the Department considers that Paul Robeson's travel abroad at this time would be contrary to the best interests of the United States."

August 28—Visits State Department and demands to see Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Offered passport back if he will sign statement that he will not make any speeches while abroad. Refuses.

August 29—Madison Square Garden refused to Council on African Affairs for rally.

September—Convention People's Party in Ghana selects Robeson's films, *King Solomon's Mines, Jericho,* and *Native Land* for showing on occasion of second Anniversary.

October 11—Mayor James B. Hynes bans exhibition of Robeson's portrait anywhere in Boston.

November—First column in Robeson's monthly newspaper, *Freedom,* appears. (Paper continues publication in Harlem with column, "Here's My Story," appearing in most issues until August 1955.)

December 19—Sues Secretary of State Dean Acheson in Washington, D.C., to prevent cancellation of passport.

1951

January 31—Is sponsor with Thomas Mann and others of "American Peace Crusade," which issues statement in New York announcing a "Peace Pilgrimage" to Washington on March 1.

February—Walter White, NAACP executive secretary, bitterly attacks Robeson in *Ebony* in article entitled "The Strange Case of Paul Robeson."

April 20—U.S. District Court for District of Columbia rules against Robeson by asserting it has no power to act in his case, but also denies government's motion that he be compelled to turn in canceled passport. (In the summer, Paul Jr.'s application for passport to attend 1951 Youth Festival in Berlin is denied.)

June 29-July 1—Speaking at "American Peoples Congress for Peace" before 7,000 people in Chicago, criticizes U.S. action in Korea.

August 16—Appeals April dismissal of passport suit.

November 5—Addresses opening session of Conference for Equal Rights for Negroes in the Arts, Sciences, and Professions held in New York City.

November 15—With Soviet Ambassador Alexander S. Panyushkin and Corliss Lamont, addresses "world peace rally" sponsored by National Council of American-Soviet Friendship in New York City.

November—*The Crisis,* official organ of NAACP, publishes "Paul Robeson—The Lost Shepherd" by "Robert Alan." (Later revealed that article resulted from request from U. S. Vice Consul in Accra, Ghana, for special story to lessen Robeson's influence in Africa.)

December 17—Heads New York delegation presenting petition to UN by Civil Rights Congress charging genocide against Negroes of United States on ground that "15 million black Americans are mostly subjected to conditions making for premature death, poverty, and disease."

1952

January 31—Attempts to cross American border to Canada, where he has been invited to speak to meeting of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union in Vancouver, B. C., but is advised by State Department representative that if he leaves United States, he will be subject to five years' imprisonment and $10,000 fine. Speaks and sings to meeting by telephone from Seattle.

April 6-June 2—Makes birthday tour to raise $50,000 to aid National Negro Labor Council, Council on African Affairs, and *Freedom.*

May 16—Senior Bishop William J. Walls of AME Zion Church, at 34th quadrennial conference, comes out for return of Robeson's passport.

May 18—Sings to estimated 40,000 listeners at Peace Arch Park on U.S.-Canadian border.

October 15—Becomes vice-chairman of newly-created Peace Liaison Committee for Asian and Pacific Peace chaired by Madame Sun Yat Sen.

November 11-18—Civic and "patriotic" groups protest Hartford, Connecticut, concerts scheduled as part of People's Party presentation at public school.

December 22—Awarded 1952 Stalin Peace Prize.

December—Othello Recording Corporation issues album "Robeson Sings," which includes "Wandering," "Four Rivers," "Witness," "My Curly-Headed Baby," "Night" (in Russian and English), and "Hassidic Chant." With recording companies refusing to issue his records or record new ones and all concert halls, theaters, etc., closed to him, Robeson, who had been listed among top ten highest paid concert artists of 1941, sees his income dwindle from a high of over $100,000 in 1947 to about $6,000 in 1952.

December—Concert scheduled in Chicago is called off because mortgage holders on church where it is to be held threaten that if he sings, they will demand immediate payment or foreclose. Some Negroes holding federal jobs have been threatened with firing if they attended.

1953

January—*First Book of Negroes—A child's history of the Negro*, by Langston Hughes, published by Franklin Watts, does not mention either Paul Robeson or W. E. B. Du Bois.

January 29—National Church of Nigeria names Robeson "Champion of African Freedom." Award granted for "selfless service to Africa."

February 11—Joins with six others in appeal to parole board for freedom of Benjamin J. Davis, black Communist imprisoned under Smith Act.

April—Sings and speaks to 6,000 in Detroit at Sacred Cross Baptist Church under sponsorship of Freedom Associates of Detroit.

April 13—Issues statement urging protest against jailing of black leaders in Kenya.

May 23—Sings at religious concert at Calvary Baptist Church in Detroit sponsored by Mrs. Vera Smith, chairperson of the Church's Evangelistic Commission.

May 31—Begins second nation-wide concert tour with appearance at Greater St. Peter's Baptist Church in Detroit. Sponsored by Freedom Associates, tour spans five months and takes him to West and Deep South.

August—Applies for passport to travel to England, France, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Request denied by Passport Office.

July 5—Sings at concert in Washington Park, Chicago, before 25,000 under auspices of Freedom Associates of Chicago.

September 23—Presented with 1952 Stalin Peace Prize by Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois at ceremonies at New York's Theresa Hotel.

December—Sells home in Connecticut.

1954

June 1—All-India Peace Council circulates plea for return of passport.

November 27—Denied passport to attend Soviet Congress of Writers Conference in Moscow.

1955

March—Gives two sold-out concerts in auditorium of First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles.

April—Sends message to Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia.

April 30—Sings and talks at Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, under sponsorship of Forum for Free Speech.

June—Council on African Affairs disbanded because "continuing Government harassment made it work impossible."

July 10—Pays farewell tribute to Leslie McFarland, Negro member active in work of International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union in Oakland, California.

August 16—Federal Judge Bunita S. Matthews refuses to order State Department to issue passport to Robeson. Implies one can be issued if he signs non-Communist oath. Robeson refuses.

1956

February 18—Sings in Massey Hall, Toronto, to packed audience.

March 11—Taped message read to "Let Paul Robeson Sing" meeting at Lesser Free Trade Hall in Manchester, England.

July 13—Appears before House Un-American Activities Committee and tells them, "You are the Un-Americans."

November—Name omitted from 1956 edition of *College Football and All-American* list of players on 1918 Walter Camp All-American team.

1957

April 28—British Actor's Equity Association votes to "make representation in whatever quarters may have influence in allowing him (Robeson) to perform in this country."

May 4—*Manchester Guardian* reports letter signed by 27 members of Parliament and British Actors' Equity Association joining campaign to invite Robeson to England to sing.

May 17—Appears at Prayer Pilgrimage for Negro rights in Washington, D. C., celebrating court desegregation decision of 1954.

May 26—Sings on new co-axial cable to audience of 1,000 in England at conference sponsored by National "Let Paul Robeson Sing" Committee. *Manchester Guardian* reports: "American Telephone & Telegraph and the General Post Office in London last night helped Paul Robeson make the U.S. Department of State look rather silly."

August 1—Robeson Comeback Concert at Third Baptist Church in San Francisco packed.

September 23—Urges U.S. government to defend Constitution against racists in Little Rock, Arkansas.

October—Quoted by Carl Rowan in *Ebony* magazine article, "Has Paul Robeson Betrayed the Negro?" as saying: "I am honestly convinced that China and Ghana would not be free today, that Negroes in Montgomery would not be so near freedom, had the Communists not come to power in Russia."

December—Invited by Welsh miners to be honored guest at 1957 Eisteddfod. Appeal to Supreme Court for passport turned down, but is able via trans-Atlantic hookup between New York and Porthcawl, Wales, to sing on schedule.

1958

February 7—Delivers Negro History Week Oration before Local 6 of International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union.

March 17—Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker of American Embassy in New Delhi, India, informs U.S. State Department that Prime Minister Nehru's daughter, Indira Ghandi, is organizing national committee to sponsor a "Paul Robeson Day" in Delhi. State Department fails in frantic effort to prevent celebration of Robeson's birthday in India.

March 30—American Actors' Equity Association, a year after British Actors' Equity Association, passes resolution to consider assisting Robeson in passport fight.

April 9—60th birthday celebrated in Berlin, German Democratic Republic, in Moscow, in Peking, and in many African nations.

May 10—Gives first New York concert in ten years at sold-out Carnegie Hall. At end tells cheering audience passport battle has been won. Critics acclaim his singing.

June 25—Announces plans for trip to London and concerts in Prague, Berlin, and Soviet Union, but makes it clear he is not "deserting the country of my birth."

July 11—Arrives in London, and signs for TV concert series.

August 4—Sings in National Eisteddfod in Ebbw Vale, Wales.

August 15—Hailed in Moscow and begins Soviet tour.

August 17—Appears on Moscow TV.

August 18—Sings at Moscow sports palace.

August 26—With Premier Nikita Khrushchev near Yalta in Crimea.

August—*Here I Stand* published: London, Dennis Dobson; New York, Othello Associates; Bucharest, Editura Politica; Berlin, Congress-Verlag; Moscow, Molodaia Guardiia; Moscow, Pravda. No leading American publisher would publish Robeson's autobiographical work.

September 14—Made Honorary Professor, Moscow State Conservatory of Music.

September 17—Starts tour of German Democratic Republic.

October—Presented with Miners Lamp by miners of Wales. Will Paynter, president of South Wales area, tells large audience they are "honoring a great man and great artist."

November—Climaxes English concert tour with appearance at St. Paul's Cathedral. First black person to stand at lectern of Cathedral, he sings to 4,000 persons seated inside and 5,000 standing outside.

1959

January 1—Welcomed at Kremlin New Year's Ball by Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

January—Falls ill, is confined to Moscow hospital. During next four years is in an out of hospital many times because of deteriorating disease of circulatory system. Doctors say "absolutely no" to idea of stage appearance.

February—Permitted by doctors to appear in *Othello* in London if he keeps physical activity to minimum and performs fewer than customary eight performances weekly.

February 14—Wins tax fight of several years to avoid paying $9,655 in federal income tax on $25,000 Stalin Peace Prize received in 1953. Internal Revenue now takes position that prize belongs in same category as Nobel and Pulitzer prizes.

February 22—Performs in Moscow in first appearance since illness.

April—Appears in *Othello* at Stratford-on-Avon.

May 11—Elected Vice-President of British-Soviet Friendship Society.

August 4—Speaks in Vienna at International Youth Festival attended by 17,000 from 82 countries. Criticizes U. S. foreign and domestic policies.

October 29—Model of Othello is presented "To Paul Robeson with grateful thanks from the Tyler Street Boys Club, Stratford-on-Avon."

1960

January 24—Sings and speaks to plant workers in Moscow.

January 30—Attends theatre production with Premier Khrushchev marking 100th anniversary of Chekhov's birth in Moscow.

May 1—Guest of honor at Miners Gala on May Day in Edinburgh, Scotland, acclaimed as Paul Robeson's Day. In short speech says: "My people were hewers of wood and drawers of water all over the Western World. Today on the Continent of my forefathers, we are saying it is time for us to live a new life, time to be free. The struggles of Labor and the struggles of my people have always, in my mind, been joined." Receives Scottish Miners Lamp inscribed: "From the Scottish Miners to Paul Robeson."

October 12—Given honorary degree by Humboldt University, German Democratic Republic.

November—Last concert tour takes him to Australia and New Zealand. In Adelaide, Australia, tells reporters: "I sing folk music because it covers the whole world. I am interested in all peoples. I am deeply concerned in the

problems of the people who were here before you—the indigenous people of Australia. I don't call them the aborigines. I call them indigenous peoples."

1961

April 15—Reenters hospital in Moscow. Spends much time in hospitals and nursing homes. When news comes he is being considered by Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah as lecturer at University of Ghana's Institute of African Studies, U.S. State Department fails in attempt to block appointment but is too ill to accept.

1963

January—Paul Robeson Choir established in Berlin, German Democratic Republic.

July 25—Close friend Harry Francis, denying Robeson is disillusioned with Socialist countries, calls report "sheer nonsense."

August 27—Interviewed at London airport in connection with March on Washington, declares: "The turning point has come for the American Negro people."

September 15—Paul, Jr., denies report that father has become disillusioned with communism and is being involuntarily detained in East Berlin.

December 1—Brother Reverend Benjamin C. Robeson, pastor for twenty-seven years of Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Harlem, dies at age of seventy.

December 20—*New York Times* announces "Robeson Will Return to U.S. to Retire."

December 22—Arriving in New York after five years and five months absence from U.S., is met by Paul, Jr., and daughter-in-law, Marilyn. Asked by reporters "would he take part in the civil rights program," replies, "Yes, I've been part of it all my life." *New York Times,* without slightest evidence, headlines story, "Disillusioned Native Son: Paul Robeson."

1964

February—Welcomed back to America by *Freedomways,* quarterly review of "the Negro Freedom movement," which calls him a great voice for freedom over many years.

March—Issues first public statement after returning, on anniversary of 1963 March on Washington: "We're moving."

August 27—Speaks at funeral of Benjamin J. Davis, Communist leader in Harlem and close friend.

October 25—Issues statement praising German Democratic Republic on 15th anniversary of its founding.

1965

Winter—Publishes "The Legacy of W. E. B. Du Bois" in *Freedomways.*

April 22—*Freedomways* Salute to Paul Robeson at Hotel Americana, chaired by Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, packed with admirers. James Baldwin notes that "in the days when it seemed that there was no possibility in raising the individual voice and no possibility of applying the rigors of conscience, Paul Robeson spoke in a great voice which creates a man."

October—Found lying unconscious in clump of weeds near Highbridge Park in Washington Heights section of New York City and rushed to hospital.

December 13—Eslanda Robeson dies of cancer at age of sixty-eight.

1969

April 2—Paul Robeson Music and Arts Lounge dedicated in new student center at Rutgers University.

1970

April—Paul, Jr., speaks at affair in honor of father sponsored by Eastern Region of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and Rutgers Student Center.

November—*Black World* publishes "Paul Robeson: Black Star," a tribute by C. L. R. James.

November 15—Presented with Zhitlovsky Award by Zhitlovsky Foundation for Jewish Education. Accepted by Paul, Jr., at New York Hilton ceremonies.

November 29—Local 1199, Martin Luther King, Jr., Labor Center, celebrates opening of new 15-story headquarters with cultural program entitled "A Tribute to Paul Robeson" produced by Moe Foner. Hosts for evening are Ossie Davis and Mary Travers. Paul Robeson, Jr., delivers tribute and Dizzy Gillespie closes show. Two auditoriums needed because of great response.

December—Head football coach and president of Rutgers University criticize failure of National Football Foundation to select Paul Robeson, twice All-American, for its Hall of Fame.

1971

Beacon Press reissues autobiography *Here I Stand* with preface by Lloyd Brown.

April—First Quarter of *Freedomways* devoted to "Paul Robeson, The Great Forerunner."

April 8–9—Two-day Paul Robeson symposium held in Berlin, German Democratic Republic. Speakers from U.S. include William L. Patterson and Lloyd Brown.

April 9—Dr. Edmund J. Blaustein, president of Rutgers University, delivers dedication speech at Newark-Rutgers student center named after Paul Robeson.

December 27—Lawrence Brown, noted black composer and vocalist, famous recreator of Negro spirituals and folk songs, and Robeson's accompanist and companion for many years, dies in Harlem Hospital.

1972

April—Receives Black Psychiatrist Association's Annual Award.

August—Proclaimed by *Ebony* magazine one of "ten most important black men in American history."

August 6—Sunday Arts and Leisure Section of *New York Times* features article by Loften Mitchell entitled, "Time to Break the Silence Surrounding Paul Robeson?"

September—Receives National Urban League's Annual Whitney M. Young Memorial Award.

1973

April 15—"Salute to Paul Robeson" on 75th birthday packs Carnegie Hall, New York City.

April 16—Salute to Paul Robeson Exhibition opens at Gallery 1199 of Drug and Hospital Workers' Union.