Paul Robeson Speaks

$17.50

"THE ARTIST MUST TAKE SIDES. HE MUST ELECT TO FIGHT FOR FREEDOM OR SLAVERY. I HAVE MADE MY CHOICE. I HAD NO ALTERNATIVE." These words, which were to become his epitaph, epitomize the decision made in the 1930s by one of America's greatest artists—a decision that was to put him on a collision course with the establishment.

Many remember Paul Robeson for his magnificent singing voice and for his stirring interpretation of Othello. But how many are aware that *40 years before* Roots *Paul Robeson wrote and spoke about African culture; 30 years before "black is beautiful" he wrote and spoke about his pride in being Negro; 20 years before "detente" he wrote and spoke against the Cold War; and 10 years before the anti-Vietnam protest movement he wrote and spoke against American involvement in Indochina?*

Paul Robeson—all-round athlete, All-American football player, Phi Beta Kappa Rutgers University scholarship student, graduate of Columbia University Law School, internationally acclaimed actor and singer—made his choice. Leaving "the heights of purely individual achievement to enter the day-to-day, the rank and file struggles of my people," he placed himself squarely on the side of those who fought against fascism, imperialism, and racial discrimination and for self-determination, socialism, and—above all—world peace.

Because he chose to write and speak about these beliefs, Paul Robeson was, as Andrew Young recently put it, "buried alive"—concert halls barred to him, his passport withdrawn, his name removed from the All-American records. But like John Brown and Joe Hill, of whom he so often and so movingly sang, "his soul goes marching on" and he "never died."

In this volume, Professor Foner has brought together the first representative

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selection of Robeson's speeches and writings, as well as interviews and newspaper reports. They range in time from his account of the 1917 Rutgers football season to his 1974 message to Actors' Equity acknowledging the establishment of an award in his name; in subject matter, from music, the theater, and African culture to Jim Crow, labor unity, the Soviet Union, African liberation, and peace.

The volume includes press coverage of Robeson's confrontation with President Truman on anti-lynching legislation, his participation in a delegation to get Negro baseball players into the major leagues, and his attempt to testify at the Smith Act trial of twelve Communist Party leaders; his testimony before the Tenney Committee of California, the House Un-American Activities Committee, and at the Mundt-Nixon Bill hearings; his articles in newspapers and journals on such topics as Negro music and Apartheid; forewords to books by Richard Wright, Du Bois, and others; speeches and remarks at rallies, conferences, and conventions of labor, youth, black, and peace groups; and press releases and statements in behalf of the Council on African Affairs, of which he was co-founder and chairman.

Of particular interest are 38 columns, "Here's My Story," from the monthly *FREEDOM*, the periodical Robeson published from 1950 to 1955—columns Professor Foner describes as representing "the voice of Negro protest in a period which has usually been neglected in historical accounts of the Negro protest movement."

Supplementing Robeson's own words, Professor Foner has provided an analytic *Introduction*, a *Chronology* of Robeson's life, 90 pages of readable and fascinating *Notes*, and a selected *Bibliography* of writings about Robeson.

This is PAUL ROBESON SPEAKS. Now let him speak for himself.

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