

The Paul Robeson—Jackie Robinson Saga and a Political Collision

*Ronald A. Smith**

Time: October 21, 1947, nearly two years before the collision
Locale: Washington, D.C., U.S. House of Representatives
Scene: Hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry

Main

Performers: Congressman Richard M. Nixon (R), California
Actor Adolphe Menjou

Nixon: (Questioning his Committee's subpoenaed guest) Other than belonging to a communist-front organization, do you, Mr. Menjou, have "tests which you would apply which would indicate to you that people acted like communists?"

Menjou: "Well, I think attending any meetings at which Mr. Paul Robeson appeared and applauding or listening to his Communist songs in America. . . ." ¹

Time: One and one-half years later, April 19, 1949

Locale: Paris, France

Scene: World Congress of the Partisans of Peace

Main

Performer: Singer, actor, and ex-athlete Paul Robeson

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Robeson: (Standing tall and addressing the Congress) “It is unthinkable that American Negroes would go to war on behalf of those who have oppressed us for generations against a country [the USSR] which in one generation has raised our people to the full dignity of mankind.”²

Time: Three months later, July 18, 1949

Locale: Washington, D.C., U.S. House of Representatives

Scene: Hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee Regarding Communist Infiltration of Minority Groups

Main Performers: Congressman Morgan Moulder (D), Missouri
Professional baseball player Jackie Robinson

Moulder: Mr. Robinson, this hearing regarding communist infiltration of minority groups is being conducted “to give an opportunity to you and others to combat the idea Paul Robeson has given by his statements.”

Robinson: Thank you Congressman Moulder for this opportunity. “Paul Robeson’s statement in Paris to the effect that American Negroes would refuse to fight in any way against Russia . . . sounds very silly to me. . . . I’ve got too much invested for my wife and child and myself in the future of this country . . . to throw it away because of a siren song sung in bass.”

Moulder: “I think you have rendered a great service to your country and to your people and we are proud of you and congratulate you upon being the great success that you are in this great country of ours.”³

Two Afro-American performing heroes, Paul Robeson and Jackie Robinson, collided politically during the turbulent anti-communist days of the early Cold War era. The House Un-American Activities Committee erected a stage for star athletic performer Jackie Robinson, the twentieth century desegregator of professional baseball. At the same time it attempted to construct the political gallows for ex-athletic great and premier singer and actor, Paul Robeson, who was praising the Soviet Union’s race relations as he fought for the rights of blacks in America. The political collision of two black heroes tells us much about the nature of American society and of the place of sport and the performing arts during the precipitous years of the communist-hunting post

World War II era. For symbolic reasons, Jackie Robinson was asked by government officials to help obliterate Paul Robeson's leadership role among Americans. So successful were Robinson and others that for a generation Paul Robeson remained for most Americans a non-person.

It is ironic that Paul Robeson (1898–1976), who had been involved himself in the desegregation of professional baseball, should have the desegregator, Jackie Robinson (1919–1972), play an important role in Robeson's departure from the public forum. Robeson, who was over fifty years old when the confrontation occurred, was a product of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fact that Robeson's early life and career took place in the depths of Jim Crowism in America may help explain why he developed certain racial and political positions perceived as radical and became a target for Robinson and others in the desegregation movement of the Cold War Years.

Robeson and Jim Crow

Paul Robeson was born the same decade that baseball, then the unquestioned national pastime, rid itself of all blacks playing the professional game. At about the same time, the League of American Wheelmen, a key amateur bicycle association, inserted a whites-only clause in its constitution; John L. Sullivan, the first great American boxing champion, refused to fight blacks; and the newly formed Jockey Club of New York began to restrict the licensing of black jockeys. Two years before the birth of Robeson, the historic 1896 Supreme Court *Plessy v. Ferguson* "separate but equal" decision judicially sanctioned the segregation of blacks from whites. This was followed during Robeson's first year by Supreme Court decisions to uphold literacy tests and poll-tax qualifications for voting; policies devised to keep the Negro out of politics. Justice Henry Brown rationalized these decisions when he wrote in the *Plessy* decision: "If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them on the same plane. . . ."4 It would have been natural for blacks born at the time to be socialized in believing that they were inferior. Even the evolutionary theory of natural selection, struggle for existence, and survival of the fittest indicated to many Americans that blacks were placed low on the evolutionary ladder.

The belief in the racial inferiority of blacks at the time of Robeson's birth influenced the racial question in at least two important ways. First, Jim Crow laws multiplied greatly so that in the leisure domain, recreational facilities such as swimming pools, playgrounds, and public parks were segregated, though almost never equally. Especially in the South, laws mandated separate entrances, ticket windows, and seating arrangements and created such curiosities as an Oklahoma ban on blacks and whites fishing together in the same boat and a Birmingham, Alabama ordinance prohibiting racially mixed play at

dominoes or checkers.⁵ Second, the hue and cry of voices proclaiming racial superiority of whites affected the way blacks thought of themselves. Increasingly, Negro leaders and masses turned toward an accommodation with the Jim Crow system rather than protest against it. The dominant Negro leader of the turn-of-the-century America, Booker T. Washington, led the way toward accommodation with the whites. In his famous Atlanta Compromise speech in 1895, Washington held up his hands, fingers outstretched, to a mixed crowd of blacks and whites, and proclaimed that “in all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers. . . .”⁶ Washington believed that it was more valuable for blacks to prove their worth by their own productivity than to demand either political or social rights.

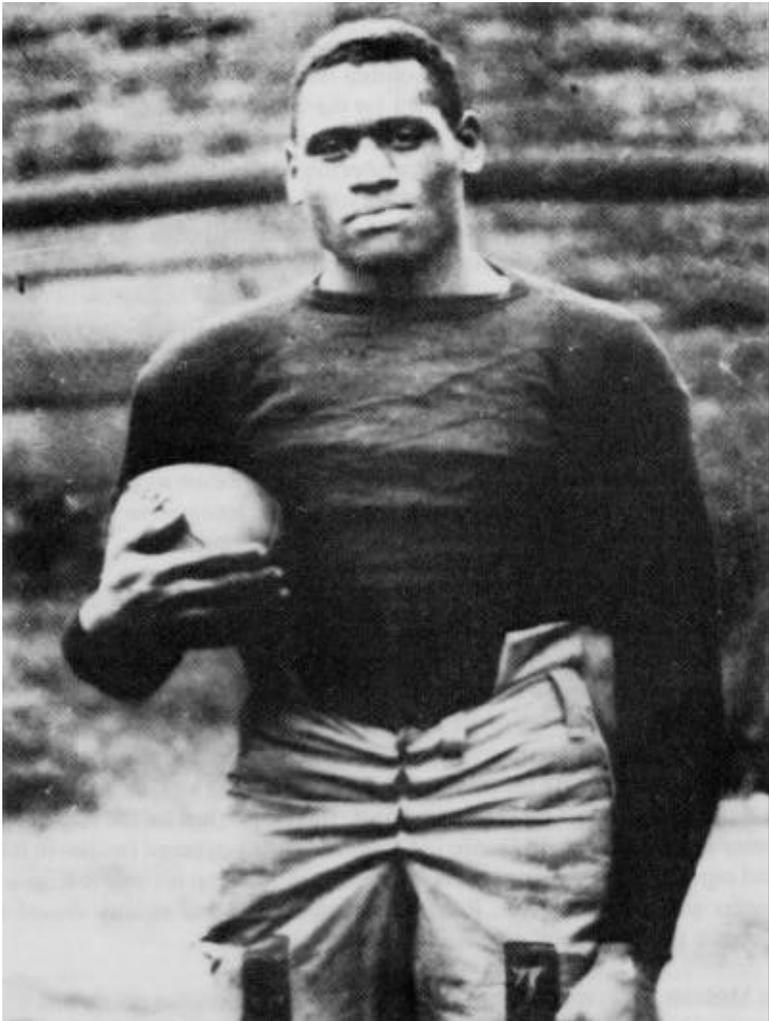
If most blacks became accommodated to the unjust system, some, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, the historian and social critic, attacked racial prejudice where they found it. Du Bois criticized Booker T. Washington’s views arguing that they represented “in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission . . . [which] practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races.” Du Bois called for “work, culture, liberty,—all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race. . . .” Said Du Bois: “All that makes life worth living—Liberty, Justice, and Right, [should not be] marked ‘For White People Only.’ ”⁷

Paul Robeson was raised with beliefs more in sympathy with Du Bois than with Washington. From an early time, his preacher-father, a former runaway slave, ingrained in the boy a sense of pride and worth as a black man. He soon found that in mental and physical qualities he was superior to most whites. As one of only three blacks graduating from his high school in Somerville, New Jersey, Robeson scholastically headed his class of 250 students. He was a skilled debator in his high school, was a soloist of the glee club, acted in the drama club, and excelled in several sports. During his senior year he achieved the highest score on a statewide examination for a scholarship to attend Rutgers College. From that day on, he later recalled, “Equality might be denied but I knew I was not inferior.”⁸

Robeson and Robinson in the 1920s and 1930s

Indeed, Robeson was not inferior physically or mentally, and he showed remarkable abilities during his college years and after. He was an all-American football player at Rutgers in 1917 and 1918, and was called the greatest defensive end of all time by Walter Camp, the so-called father of American football. Robeson won twelve varsity letters in football, basketball, baseball,

and track and field. He led his class academically and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year. After college, he played professional football on the first championship team of what today is the National Football League. He took a law degree at Columbia University, before becoming a Shakespearean actor and a world renowned singer. Yet, by the 1960s and 1970s, he had become for most, a forgotten man. While Jackie Robinson was generally recognized for desegregating professional baseball, Robeson was not widely remembered even among blacks.⁹



Twice all-American football player at Rutgers, Paul Robeson went on to receive world-wide acclaim as a singer and actor before his demise for his political stands. Courtesy of Rutgers University.

Jackie Robinson was born on a share-cropper farm in Cairo, Georgia in 1919, the year Babe Ruth was sold to the New York Yankees and the Black Sox scandal took place. The same year saw Jack Dempsey winning the heavyweight boxing championship and immediately announcing that he would pay “no attention to Negro challengers.”¹⁰ Both Robeson and Robinson grew up in a Jim Crow society in which social and legal separation was readily apparent.

While Jackie Robinson moved to southern California with his mother and older brothers and sisters in 1920, Paul Robeson attended Columbia Law School. On weekends, he traveled to Ohio and played football with another black, Fritz Pollard, on the championship Akron Pros. Later, as he was completing his law degree, he competed for the Milwaukee Badgers in the fledgling National Football League. Upon graduation from Columbia, the American Bar Association denied him membership, and he suffered other severe limitations on his chosen profession. He soon withdrew from law practice and launched an acting and singing career. The summer before his last term at Columbia Law School, he had toured Great Britain singing and acting in a play titled *Voodoo*. By the mid-1920s, Robeson starred in Eugene O’Neill’s plays, *The Emperor Jones* and *All God’s Chillun Got Wings*. Robeson portrayed a black man who married a white woman in *All God’s Chillun*. Reaction to his involvement in a racially mixed drama in Jim Crow America included hate mail and threats to both Robeson and playwright O’Neill from the Ku Klux Klan and individuals with equally harsh racist feelings.¹¹ Favorable audience reaction and reviews, however, brought Robeson recognition among both whites and blacks. He gained further public recognition from musical concerts featuring his rich voice singing Negro spirituals.

Robeson spent increasing periods of time in Europe and England in the 1920s and 1930s. Especially in London he found less racial hatred and greater personal freedom than in America. Becoming more politically aware as areas of the world moved toward fascism during the 1930s, Robeson began to question the imperialistic policies of European nations and America toward colonial Africa, of fascist Italy toward Ethiopia, and of Nazi Germany toward the Spanish Civil War. By the mid-to-late 1930s, Robeson took the side of those who favored freedom for blacks in Africa. He campaigned for the Republican cause against totalitarian Franco in Spain, and deeply opposed fascism in Italy and especially in Germany. In Nazi Germany in 1934, on his way to Russia to confer with a film director, Robeson was threatened and racially abused by German storm troopers near Berlin.¹²

In Moscow, Robeson was greatly impressed with the Russian people and what he considered their lack of racial prejudice. He wrote: “I, the son of a slave, walk this earth in complete dignity.”¹³ From that point on, Robeson continued his praise of the Soviet Union while speaking out against fascist thought

wherever he found it. He found much to criticize in America. Two decades later he would testify before the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities, stating:

I would say in Russia I felt for the first time a full human being, and no colored prejudice like in Mississippi and no colored prejudice like in Washington and it was the first time I felt like a human being, where I did not feel the pressure of color as I feel in this committee today.¹⁴

In September, 1939, Paul Robeson returned to live in the United States after spending most of the previous twelve years abroad. This was the same month that Jackie Robinson began attending college at UCLA after first going to Pasadena Junior College. Unlike Robeson who attended Rutgers as the only black on campus and the first to participate in athletics, Robinson had as a teammate on the football squad the Negro Kenny Washington, possibly the most outstanding football player in America that year. Like Robeson, Robinson lettered in each of four sports, football, basketball, baseball, and track and field. Besides being an outstanding back in football, he led his team in scoring in basketball and won the Pacific Coast title in the broad jump. In baseball, he played shortstop while displaying exceptional speed and daring on the base paths.¹⁵

During the time Robinson starred in athletics at UCLA, Robeson was attaining new heights of popularity as a singer and actor. When the United States entered World War II as an ally of the Soviet Union, little was said about Robeson's praise of life in the Soviet Union—most saw him as a strong opponent of fascism. He helped conduct war bond drives as he continued to sing Russian folk songs and speak out for black rights everywhere. Like a number of civil rights leaders, he saw World War II as having a positive effect in breaking down Jim Crow laws and customs. Robeson even had a part in the attempt to desegregate professional baseball in the midst of the war.

World War II and Robeson's Involvement in Baseball Desegregation

Segregation existed in professional baseball during World War II as it had for more than a half-century when it had first drawn the color line. It seemed hypocritical to Robeson and others that America would fight to end the myth of Aryan supremacy in Germany while the nation preserved its own myth of racial supremacy at home. A movement to end baseball segregation began soon after Pearl Harbor. It is not surprising that the American Communist Party took a lead in the agitation for integrating baseball and in accepting any role Paul Robeson would play in it.

The American Communist Party organ, the *Daily Worker*, had called for breaking the color line in the 1930s, but in early 1942 its sports editor, Lester Rodney, began attacking the Commissioner of Baseball, Kenesaw Mountain



Paul Robeson flanked by Soviet singer, Sonia Trembach, and conductor of the Balalaika Orchestra, Paul Kouriga, at the Russian War Anniversary Benefit in June, 1942 at the Watergate in Washington, D.C. Following World War II, he was highly criticized for supporting Russian culture. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Landis, for not eliminating Jim Crowism in America's most visible sport.¹⁶ After the great black pitcher Satchel Paige and his Kansas City Monarchs defeated a group of Major Leaguers, who were in military service and headed by pitcher Dizzy Dean, Rodney wrote contemptuously:

Can you read, Judge Landis? . . . The Stars could get only two hits off Satchel Paige in seven innings of trying. Why does your silence keep him and other Negro stars from taking their rightful place in our national pastime at a time when we are at war and Negro and white are fighting and dying together to end Hitlerism?¹⁷

The *Daily Worker* quoted Jimmy Dykes, manager of the Chicago White Sox, as saying to Jackie Robinson, the young Negro shortstop: "I'd love to have you on my team and so would all the other big league managers. But it's not up to us. Get after Landis."¹⁸ To a similar statement, Commissioner Landis replied that if any managers "want to sign one, or 25 Negro players, it is all right with me. That is the business of the managers and the club owners."¹⁹ Arguing against the entry of blacks in baseball was Larry McPhail, president

of the Brooklyn Dodgers. He stated that the lack of Negroes in organized baseball "is not due to racial discrimination," but rather that "Negro baseball leagues might be wrecked if the major leagues raid these clubs and grab a few outstanding players."²⁰ This argument of ruining black baseball by desegregating white baseball was likely more economically than altruistically derived, for Major League owners profited from the existence of Negro teams which rented their parks.

Pressure to change baseball's six decades of segregation continued to be exerted during the first summer of America's entry into World War II. There was one report of a heated discussion of club owners over blacks in baseball at the time of the Major League All-Star game and of the meeting transcripts being ordered destroyed.²¹ That same summer the president of the Pittsburgh Pirates announced that blacks would be given tryouts for his team. There is, however, no evidence that blacks of the stature of Josh Gibson, a catcher, or Sammy Bankhead, an outfielder, of the nearby Homestead Grays Negro team—or any other—were given the opportunity.²² Thirty-five year old Satchel Paige, the best known and highest paid black player of the times, indicated that he would only come into white baseball if it were on a team of all blacks because the racial tension in both the South and the North would be too high if a white team were desegregated.²³ A writer from Los Angeles mocked the scene: "Let the Negro have his name in the casualty lists of Pearl Harbor or Bataan or Midway. But, for heavensakes, let's keep his name out of the boxscores."²⁴ Indeed, the old argument of possible race riots, as had occurred after the Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries Great White Hope fight of 1910, was still brought up in discussions of desegregation in American sport.²⁵

Agitation continued into 1943, eventually involving Paul Robeson. A resolution was introduced in the New York State legislature protesting the unwritten ban against blacks in baseball, and Brooklyn's communist councilman, Peter V. Cocchione, introduced a resolution calling for desegregation of baseball.²⁶ The Negro Publishers Association became involved and requested Commissioner Landis to discuss the question of blacks in organized baseball at the annual meeting of Major League teams. The Commissioner agreed, and for the first time in its history professional baseball officially examined the desegregation issue in its December meeting. Eight black newspapermen²⁷ and Paul Robeson attended the meeting. Robeson's presence dominated the session.

Robeson was one of three blacks to address the club owners. He was introduced by Landis who said that he had brought Robeson to the meeting "because you all know him. You all know that he is a great man in public life, a great American"²⁸ Robeson told the owners: "I come here as an American and former athlete. I come because I feel this problem deeply."²⁹ He ex-

pressed his belief that the time had come for baseball to change its attitude toward the Negro and told them he had become the first black actor to play in Shakespeare's *Othello* on Broadway less than two months before. He declared that if he could be a black in an otherwise all-white play, then a Negro in a white cast should no longer be incredible to baseball owners. Robeson said that though he understood the owner's fears of racial disturbance if baseball were desegregated, "my football experience showed me such fears are groundless."³⁰ When he finished, the owners gave him what a black writer called a "rousing ovation," but the owners neither questioned Robeson nor the other two speakers. Landis did reiterate a previous statement that "each club is entirely free to employ Negro players to any extent it pleases and the matter is solely for each club's decision without any restrictions whatsoever."³¹

One club owner, Philip K. Wrigley of the Chicago Cubs, did not believe that the middle of World War II was the time to hire blacks in baseball, but said that he would consider hiring a scout to pursue a talent search for future Negro players. Wrigley showed his understanding of baseball when he observed that the sport was not progressive and only accepted something new after everyone else had already adopted it. "Baseball hesitates to break a custom," Wrigley told a Chicago delegation for baseball integration in late 1943, "whether it is using Negro players or removing the traditional sleeve out of uniforms."³² Whether baseball was conservative or not, there was great social pressure to keep the "National Pastime" free of blacks. The problem of bringing blacks into baseball was enormous when one considers that in the midst of World War II, both the American and National League teams from St. Louis prevented black spectators from purchasing tickets for any section of their stadiums except the bleachers.³³ Allowing blacks to sit in the grandstand seemed minute compared to allowing them to play on the field. To this sentiment Robeson countered that the temper of the Negro had changed, that the Negro was fighting "a world-wide war for the right of people to be free, and he will resist any attempt to keep him tied down to a reactionary status quo."³⁴

Robinson Desegregates Baseball

Blacks did not break the color barrier in baseball during World War II, but there is little doubt that the war was a catalyst in bringing about black entry into both professional baseball (closed to Negroes since the 1880s) and professional football (closed to Negroes since 1933). Near the close of the war, the *New York Times* editorialized: "If we are willing to let Negroes as soldiers fight wars on our team, we should not ask questions about color in the great American game."³⁵ Economic and political pressure as well as moral pressure was being exerted. In Boston, city councilman Isadore Munchnick threatened to cancel Sunday permits to the Boston Red Sox and the Boston Braves Major

League teams unless both clubs agreed to end discrimination against Negroes.³⁶ Munchnick agreed to withdraw his motion after the Boston clubs verbally assented to give equal opportunity to blacks.³⁷ In mid-April, Jackie Robinson and two others were given “tryouts” by the Red Sox although all three blacks agreed that there was no intent by the Boston team to sign any of them. After the tryouts, one of the three, Sam Jethroe, told black sportswriter Wendell Smith of the *Pittsburgh Courier*: “We’ll hear from the Red Sox like we’ll hear from Adolph Hitler.”³⁸ The Secretary of the Negro National League said the tryouts in Boston were a travesty, “the most humiliating experience Negro baseball has yet suffered from white organized baseball.”³⁹ Jackie Robinson was more circumspect. “We can consider ourselves pioneers,” commented Robinson. “Even if they don’t accept us, we are doing our part and, if possible, making the way easier for those who follow. Some day some Negro player will get a break. We want to help make that day a reality.”⁴⁰

Pressure to desegregate baseball was occurring elsewhere, mostly in the state of New York. Vito Marcantonio, the only U.S. Congressman of the left wing American Labor Party, asked the Interstate Commerce Committee to hold a hearing on discrimination in baseball. He also conferred with the New York baseball clubs asking them to break the color line.⁴¹ One club owner, Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers, voluntarily gave a tryout to two Negroes. The tryout of these well-travelled Negroes, Terris McDuffie (thirty-six years old) and Dave Thomas (thirty-nine years old), could not be seen as highly promising for blacks as neither had had a good record in the Negro league the previous year. McDuffie had a losing record as a pitcher, and Thomas batted only .248 in 1944.⁴² It appeared that voluntary tryouts such as Rickey’s might become mandatory in the near future. The New York state Fair Employment Practices Bill had recently passed and had forbidden discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, or creed. If this were applied to baseball, it might be shown that baseball owners in New York City had not given equal opportunity to blacks. Larry McPhail, by then owner of the New York Yankees, rhetorically asked to “name me the colored players today who have the qualifications for a career in the major leagues, or in the minors, for that matter!”⁴³ The same day Jackie Robinson opened the season at shortstop for the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro American League. Several months later and just two days before Japan surrendered ending World War II, Branch Rickey was appointed by Mayor LaGuardia of New York City to a Committee of Ten which was established to study racial discrimination in baseball.⁴⁴ The little publicized Committee of Ten worked rapidly and concluded in November of 1945 with two special points. The report emphasized that no racial differences in baseball skill existed between blacks and whites and that action, not silence, was needed to end sixty years of segregation. “The time is never ripe for social reform,” the report stressed, the Major Leagues must act soon.⁴⁵

Branch Rickey had already begun to act by quietly beginning his quest to find the right player to break the discrimination policy. He had done this before the LaGuardia Committee of Ten had been announced. Using subterfuge to accomplish his desegregation plan, Rickey announced in the spring of 1945 the formation of a six team, black baseball league including his own team, the Brooklyn Brown Dodgers.⁴⁶ The Brown Dodgers were used as a front to cover his talent search—a quest which determined that Jackie Robinson should be the first black to enter organized baseball in the twentieth century.⁴⁷ Robinson had been chosen because he was an outstanding athlete, and it was done with the knowledge that his highly competitive nature would make him stand up and fight for his rights as an individual. Robinson had stood up against racism as a young boy, during his college career, and while he was in military service during World War II. While stationed at a Southern military camp, Robinson was court-martialed and later acquitted for challenging the Jim Crow tradition which dictated that blacks should sit in the rear of a military bus.⁴⁸

While Jackie Robinson endured the torture of desegregating organized baseball, Paul Robeson entered the post-World War II era criticizing American racial policies and praising those of the socialistic Soviet Union. Robeson had noted during the war the influence that he believed would be brought on the United States' racial policies from abroad. "We in America," Robeson said, "criticize many nations. We know that international conscience has great influence in spite of wars. One important part of the solution of the Negro problem here will be the pressure of other countries on America from the outside."⁴⁹ These were prophetic remarks in light of the effect of the Cold War politics on breaking down America's Jim Crow policies in the 1950s and 1960s. After World War II, Robeson was much involved in that external influence, probably giving it more visible support than any other black American. His outspoken stance for black rights and his pro-communist ideology created a furor wherever he went as America turned to a hate-Russia campaign in the post-war era.

Jackie Robinson, unlike Robeson, was restrained from certain actions for the first several years in the Brooklyn Dodger organization as Branch Rickey believed that his venture in race relations would fail if Robinson reacted outwardly to racial slurs. Robinson gave his assurance that he would not retaliate against insults from players nor complain to umpires; he promised not to make public endorsements, write newspaper or magazine articles, frequent night spots, or accept social invitations from whites or blacks. He was also warned by heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, who himself had been cautioned, not to get cocky so that whites might call him an "uppity nigger."⁵⁰ During his first year with the Dodgers he received death threats against himself and his family while he stoically took verbal abuse, the worst from man-

ager Ben Chapman and his Philadelphia Phillies. A challenge by the St. Louis Cardinals to boycott the Brooklyn Dodgers if Robinson played was cut short by league president Ford Frick who warned the Cardinals that those who took part would be suspended, and Frick added bluntly: "I don't care if it wrecks the National League for five years." Later, the Cardinals Enos Slaughter and Joe Garagiola spiked Robinson, maliciously, Robinson believed. Nevertheless, he became Rookie of the Year and helped Brooklyn reach the World Series.⁵¹ Thus, Robinson came into the Major Leagues under rules created to make him more acceptable to whites, something Robeson would not have done at that time in his life.

As Jackie Robinson attempted to make his impact in baseball with his base hits and effective fielding, Paul Robeson plowed forth on his own crusade. The day after Robinson made his first Major League base hit, Robeson's scheduled concert appearance in Peoria, Illinois, was unanimously banned by the city council. Not long after that incident, the Albany, New York Board of Education withdrew permission previously granted to Robeson for a concert in its school auditorium. Said a board member: "The color of Paul Robeson's skin has nothing to do with this case, but the color of his ideologies has." Retorted Robeson: "Whether I am a communist or a communist sympathizer is irrelevant. The question is whether American citizens, regardless of their political beliefs or sympathies, may enjoy their constitutional rights."⁵² The Albany case was eventually taken to the New York Supreme Court, which granted Robeson the right to sing in the Albany school. Robeson gave his concert, and that same day Jackie Robinson revealed hate letters written to him threatening his life if he did not quit baseball.⁵³

The Robeson-Robinson Political Confrontation

It was in context of Robinson's desegregation of baseball under white terms and Robeson's stand for human rights under free political terms that a collision arose between Robinson and Robeson. The catalyst was the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) of the United States Congress. In the late 1930s, HUAC had been established principally to investigate fascist and communist activities.⁵⁴ It became an inquisitorial committee which ferreted out political deviants for public exposure and ridicule. Organizations and individuals which HUAC considered heretical were singled out to be destroyed or at least immobilized. Extended hearings were conducted in which accused and accusers were questioned at length. One historian has written that the accused would leave HUAC hearings "with a mark of Cain," while the accuser would depart "the tribunal with a halo of potential market value."⁵⁵ Another has concluded that HUAC's "endless harassment of individuals for disagreeable opinions and actions has created anxiety, revulsion, indignation, [and] outrage. . . ."⁵⁶

Paul Robeson was one of HUAC's targets. He had been chastised previously by HUAC,⁵⁷ but in 1949 the Committee, representing American fear of and hysteria over the Cold War political left, attacked Robeson violently. This vendetta came as a result of a comment made by Robeson at the World Congress of Partisans held in Paris, France on April 20, 1949. Robeson, along with W. E. B. Du Bois, directed the American delegation to the communist-led meeting. Both men spoke to the 1800 delegates from about sixty nations, and both condemned America's international actions. It was Robeson, however, whose rhetoric drew the attention of the American press and the ire of governmental officials. One of Robeson's unwritten statements caught the ear of the press:

It is unthinkable that American Negroes would go to war on behalf of those who have oppressed us for generations against the Soviet Union which in one generation has raised our people to full human dignity.⁵⁸

The next day the nation's newspapers reported Robeson's remarks indicating that blacks would never fight against the Soviet Union. As one Negro leader, Lester B. Granger, commented: "A nation-wide 9-day sensation was manufactured."⁵⁹ Most black leaders were quick to castigate Robeson for his Paris speech. "We American Negroes," declared Max Yergan, a black who had once led the Council of African Affairs with Robeson, "can be deeply grateful Mr. Paul Robeson did not speak for us in Paris a few days ago."⁶⁰ Exclaimed Walter White, head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: "We will not shirk equal responsibilities. . . . We will meet the responsibilities imposed upon all America." Robeson is "an ingrate" chided Dr. Channing Tobias, a member of the NAACP board of directors. Wrote Mary Mcleod Bethune, President of the National Council of Negro Women: "I am chagrined at his presumption. . . . I think he has missed his cue and has entered the stage during the wrong scene." Edgar G. Brown, Director of the National Negro Council, went further by calling Robeson's speech communist propaganda while quoting Stephen Decatur's "In peace and war—my country, right or wrong."⁶¹ To all of this a black columnist stated that "we all know that our professional leaders had to say officially that Paul does not speak for Negroes as a group." He then criticized others for joining the bandwagon which he believed was essentially saying, "Deed, Boss, that bad old Paul ain't speaking for me and you know I'll fight for democracy, if I ain't been lynched first."⁶²

Newspapers intended for a Negro audience were almost as unequivocal in their stands against Robeson as were white newspapers and black leaders, and their immediate reaction to Robeson's Paris statement clearly showed that Robeson did not speak for all American blacks, probably not even most blacks. The Pittsburgh Courier editorialized that Robeson's declaration that blacks would never fight the Soviets was a "pathetic statement."⁶³ The *Chi-*

cago Defender snapped “Nuts to Mr. Robeson,”⁶⁴ and the less hostile *Philadelphia Afro-American* stressed that “Robeson does not speak for us and millions of other colored people.”⁶⁵ Some black columnists, though, sided with Robeson. This was only natural, for at the time Robeson spoke in Paris, lynchings were still prevalent in the South while anti-lynching bills before Congress died; Jim Crow conditions existed in the nation’s capital; segregation continued in the military; and the Ku Klux Klan persisted in America. One writer, while condemning Robeson’s “fat-headed” statement about fighting the Soviets, nevertheless commented that the “racial consciousness of Americans sorely needs to be stirred up.”⁶⁶ Another believed that the “fear of Russia and of communism, as well as outside criticism of the United States, have been the Negro’s greatest benefactor in recent years.”⁶⁷ Few took the stance of Robeson’s friend, W. E. B. Du Bois, who praised Robeson and condemned the “sheep-like disposition, inevitably born of slavery” which Negroes showed in following white leadership.⁶⁸

Most reaction by both blacks and whites was hostile to Robeson, but there was an uneasy feeling exposed in the American press that there was some truth to what Robeson was saying. Would blacks fight for America in a war against the Soviet Union? In a sample of whites in several Northern cities, over 50 percent questioned Negro’s loyalty to America.⁶⁹ Members of HUAC, who had used Robeson previously as a favorite target, believed that they could attack the problem positively and leftist Paul Robeson negatively at the same time. They would conduct a hearing on the communist infiltration of minority groups and invite prominent blacks to testify about Negro loyalty and Robeson’s disloyalty. Invited to testify before HUAC, among others, were Lester Granger, National Urban League head; Dr. Charles S. Johnson, President of Fisk College; Thomas W. Young, Negro publisher; and Clarence Clark, a disabled Negro veteran of World War II.⁷⁰ Of greatest importance because of his popular stature as desegregator of America’s “National Pastime,” was the invitation sent to Jackie Robinson. Chairman of HUAC, John S. Wood of Georgia, telegrammed Robinson asking him to testify before his Committee “to give the lie” to statements by Paul Robeson.⁷¹

By 1949, Jackie Robinson was probably the best known black in America with the possible exception of Joe Louis and Paul Robeson. At the time of the HUAC hearings on communist infiltration of minority groups, Robinson was leading the National League in batting with a .360 average and was also the top vote getter in the annual all-star balloting in his league. It was not unexpected that HUAC would ask a black of Robinson’s public exposure to testify against another prominent black.⁷² According to Alvin Stokes, a black investigator for HUAC, the Committee felt it was necessary to get someone of the popular stature of Robinson to discredit Robeson.⁷³

The decision to speak out against Robeson was not an easy one for Robinson.

He recounted his dilemma. If he testified he might merely be the black pawn in a white man's game which pitted one black against another, and he might be considered a "traitor" to his own people. If he did not testify he feared that Robeson's statement might discredit all blacks in the eyes of whites. At that time, Robinson had faith that whites would ultimately render justice to blacks.⁷⁴ He chose to testify before HUAC. With advice from Branch Rickey and Lester Granger, Robinson prepared a statement which he delivered before HUAC on July 18, 1949.⁷⁵

Seated before the Committee, Robinson testified, rather naively but with good effect, that baseball was "as far removed from politics as anybody can possibly imagine." Referring to Robeson's statement which he had been called upon by HUAC "to combat," Robinson said:

I can't speak for any 15,000,000 people any more than any other one person can, but I know that I've got too much invested for my wife and child and myself in the future of this country, and I and other Americans of many races and faiths have too much invested in our country's welfare, for any of us to throw it away because of a siren song sung in bass.

Robinson continued:

But that doesn't mean that we're going to stop fighting race discrimination in this country until we've got it licked. It means that we're going to fight it all the harder because our stake in the future is so big. We can win our fight without the Communists and we don't want their help.⁷⁶

With those strong words he closed his testimony. Earlier in his statements he had qualified his harsh remarks by stating that Robeson should have a "right to his personal views, and if he wants to sound silly when he expresses them in public, that is his business and not mine." Acknowledging that Robeson was "still a famous ex-athlete and a great singer and actor," Robinson said that "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 as well." Robinson saw progress, though slow, in black rights, pointing out that there were only seven blacks out of 400 Major League players and that only three of the sixteen Major League teams were desegregated. "We're going to keep on making progress," Robinson told the probers, "until we go the rest of the way in wiping Jim Crow out of American sports."⁷⁷

Robinson's testimony against Robeson was predictably praised by HUAC, which for the first time that year allowed motion and still photographers free access in the room during Robinson's testimony.⁷⁸ The Committee obviously knew the publicity value of a sports performer well-known to Americans. Major newspapers emphasized the anti-Robeson comments of Robinson while giving little space to the pro-civil rights statements of the all-star second base-

man. Newspaper accounts accomplished HUAC's objective of discrediting Robeson's Paris statement. Headlines of "ROBESON SILLY, JACKIE ROBINSON TELLS RED QUIZ" and "DODGER STAR RAPS ROBERSON 'SIREN SONG' " appeared in leading Chicago and Philadelphia newspapers.⁷⁹ The *New York Times* editorialized: "Jackie Robinson scored four hits and no errors" testifying before HUAC, while the *Washington Post* editor praised Robinson and denigrated Robeson for his "insulting libels."⁸⁰

Opinions expressed by blacks were not as consistent. First, some blacks were suspicious of HUAC, questioning why it had never thoroughly investigated the Ku Klux Klan or any other American fascist group. They also distrusted HUAC because its committee chair had been held by Southern racists of the likes of Martin Dies (Texas) and John Rankin (Mississippi). Commented one black writer: "How come your committee can investigate everything from Reds to second basemen, and can't investigate the Ku Klux Klan?"⁸¹ Second, one of their own black heroes Paul Robeson, even though tainted, was being attacked by the white establishment. However, questionable were some of Robeson's beliefs, he was one of their own. While major white newspapers were cheering Robinson for castigating Robeson, black papers were generally cheering Robinson for advocating black civil rights and criticizing HUAC's investigation for dividing blacks against each other. "LYNCHERS OUR CHIEF ENEMY JACKIE TELLS 'RED' PROBERS" headlined the *Philadelphia Afro-American*.⁸² One of its writers claimed that the hearings were a "witchhunt."⁸³ Meanwhile a Pittsburgh writer asserted that Robinson had been a "stooge" for HUAC and had put Negroes on the defensive, hamstringing the civil rights movements.⁸⁴ Others, too, criticized Robinson. A woman from the west coast chided Robinson claiming that "the habit of 'bad mouthing' is a slavery trait and should have been outgrown ere this time."⁸⁵ An angry individual from Boston wrote that "Paul Robeson was fighting for his people's rights when Jackie Robinson was in knee pants."⁸⁶ If HUAC had been successful in creating a negative climate around Robeson's name, it had also created division among blacks over two of their heroes.⁸⁷

A Postscript to the Robeson-Robinson Saga

The Robeson-Robinson confrontation added to the mounting pressure in America to cleanse itself of any sympathy for the Soviet Union. Robeson soon began his rapid decline to near oblivion. A Robeson concert in Peekskill, New York later in the summer of 1949, brought about a united effort by several military veterans groups to stop it. Concert-goers were prevented from attending the first concert attempt, and after it was given a week later, a riot resulted with hundreds injured, numerous autos and buses wrecked, and crosses burned as if it were a Ku Klux Klan rally.⁸⁸ Concert managers soon refused to book him, and his recordings were often taken out of record shops. There was

even a move by Rutgers University alumni to remove his name from the college rolls. The *American Sports Annual* deleted Robeson's name from its list of football all-American selections for the years 1917 and 1918.⁸⁹ The Federal Bureau of Investigation continually harassed Robeson, and the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, had his passport cancelled—two methods used by the federal government to deny Robeson personal freedom and economic independence.⁹⁰ The vicious attacks upon Robeson were part of the hysteria created out of the Cold War ideology of the post-World War II era. It was the same hysteria which gave rise to the demagogic character of Joseph McCarthy, who as Senator used character assassination involving the issue of communism in his rise to prominence around 1950.⁹¹

By the mid-1950s, the anti-communist excesses diminished considerably. Though HUAC was still active, the Senate's censuring of McCarthy helped to control the most outrageous charges of communism in America. Robeson was still effectively blacklisted in America, however, and the denial of a passport for almost a decade placed him in a difficult economic position.⁹² He, like the Communist Party which had been legislated out of existence, was successfully silenced. But the question of equal political and social rights for blacks, for which Robeson had been active for a generation, was beginning to come to a head. The landmark Supreme Court decision of 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education*, overturned the earlier "separate but equal" decision. Other court actions and federal legislation soon brought resistance and physical confrontation as America faced the proposition of equal rights for all its citizens regardless of race.

Jackie Robinson increasingly spoke out for black rights and, like Robeson before him, was classified by some as an "uppity nigger."⁹³ Unlike Robeson, Robinson kept his remarks within a more conservative framework. When Robinson announced publicly after the 1956 baseball season that he was retiring from baseball, he wrote:

I don't regret any part of these last 10 years. There's no reason why I should. Because of baseball I met a man like Branch Rickey and was given the opportunity to break the major-league color line. Because of baseball, I was able to speak on behalf of Negro Americans before the House Un-American Activities Committee and rebuke Paul Robeson for saying most of us Negroes would not fight for our country in a war against Russia.⁹⁴

Robinson soon joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and he contributed effectively as a fund raiser. A decade later he withdrew as a protest against its inflexible and conservative nature. Yet Robinson actively campaigned in the 1960 presidential election for Richard Nixon.⁹⁵ Nixon had no strong civil rights record, and he had, like Senator Joe McCarthy, used character assassination and the communist issue to promote his popularity.⁹⁶ Robinson eventually became disillusioned with Nixon. He also became more pessimistic about the status of American race relations.

Although Jackie Robinson never became reconciled to the beliefs of Paul Robeson, he saw something more positive in Robeson shortly before his own death. Writing in his autobiography published in 1972, titled *I Never Had It Made*, Robinson stated that he never regretted his statements about Robeson made two decades before. "But," Robinson wrote:

I have grown wiser and closer to painful truths about America's destructiveness. And I do have increased respect for Paul Robeson who, over a span of that twenty years, sacrificed himself, his career, and the wealth and comfort he once enjoyed because, I believe, he was sincerely trying to help his people.⁹⁷

When Jackie Robinson died on October 24, 1972, his place in history was almost assured. Paul Robeson died on January 23, 1976. Because he had tied the black rights movement in America to what he considered was a positive Soviet racial policy, he had become a political leper and was in almost total eclipse in the 1950s and 1960s. There was, indeed, a curtain of silence surrounding him. By the 1970s and especially after his death, a growing number of individuals began to see greatness in Robeson. Even politicians, who often fear to speak out on controversial individuals and issues, began to speak of Robeson's historic concern for humanity. One of the outspoken was Congressman Andrew Young, a black who later became Ambassador to the United Nations under President Jimmy Carter. He wrote:

Paul Robeson was the hero of my youth. . . . I can never forget the strength of conviction that helped strengthen our backs and set our feet in the path of self-liberation as a people. Paul loved people of all colors and of many nations. He loved justice, freedom, and compassion. He had no tolerance for injustice, oppression, or tyranny. Few men in their lifetime bequeath a legacy to the living.⁹⁸

If both Paul Robeson and Jackie Robinson, as performers, were on the cutting edge of racial reform in America, it appears that they were approaching change from different directions. Robeson wanted reform on his own terms, not necessarily those of white society. Robinson was more willing to compromise with white society for a time to accomplish positive racial goals and his own advancement. Robeson was more idealistic and unyielding, and because of it he was politically, economically, and socially alienated from the greater American society. Robinson was more realistic and pragmatic, and he fared far better socially and financially than did Robeson. What was common to both Robeson and Robinson was that they were both black performers, one an ex-athlete and an actor and singer and the other solely an athlete, who in their own ways fought for equal rights for blacks. Robinson's position as desegregator of professional baseball seems assured. Robeson's status as a crusader for black rights everywhere seems likely to rise with time. If "men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins,"⁹⁹ as W. E. B. Du Bois advocated in the early twentieth century, it appears that both Paul Robeson and Jackie Robinson, despite their acknowledged differences, will be judged not only as athletic and performing champions¹⁰⁰ but as leaders in race relations as well.

Notes

1. "Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry," *Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities*, House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, 1st Session, 21 October 1947, p. 104.
2. *New York Times*, 21 April 1949, p. 6.
3. "Hearings Regarding Communist Infiltration of Minority Groups," *Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities*, House of Representatives, Eighty-First Congress, 1st Session, 18 July 1949, pp.481-482.
4. "Plessy v. Ferguson, May 18, 1896," in Rayford W. Logan, *The Negro in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand, 1957), p. 133.
5. C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 84.
6. "Booker T. Washington's Atlanta 'Compromise' Address, September 18, 1895," in Rayford W. Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro from Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Collier Books, 1965), pp. 126-130.
7. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1903), p. 50, 11, 206.
8. Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1958), p. 33.
9. Eugene H. Robinson in "A Distant Image: Paul Robeson and Rutgers' Students Today," *Paul Robeson: The Great Forerunner, The Editors of Freedomway* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1978), p. 178, notes that at least three-quarters of Rutgers' black students of 1969 did not know who Paul Robeson was.
10. *New York Times*, 6 July 1919, p. 17.
11. Dorothy Butler Gilliam, *Paul Robeson All-American* (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Books, 1976), pp. 27-33.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.
13. Cedric Belfrage, *The American Inquisition, 1945-1960* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), p.23.
14. "Investigation of the Unauthorized Use of United States Passports—Part 3," *Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities*, House of Representatives, Eighty-Fourth Congress, 2nd Session, 12 June 1956, p. 4504.
15. Milton J. Shapiro, *Jackie Robinson of the Brooklyn Dodgers* (New York: Julian Messer, 1966), pp. 28-32.
16. Sportswriter Fay Young of the *Chicago Defender* believed that the *Daily Worker* forced the issue in 1942. See *Chicago Defender*, 26 September 1942, Section II, p. 18.
17. *Daily Worker*, 25 May 1942, p. 8. See also, 4 May 1942, p. 8; 5 May 1942, p. 8; 27 May 1942, p. 8; 2 June 1942, p. 8; 5 June 1942, p. 8; and 6 June 1942, p. 8.
18. *Ibid.*, 26 May 1942, p. 8.
19. *Chicago Defender*, 25 July 1942, p. 20.
20. Larry McPhail, letter to Father Raymond Champion, Brooklyn, 28 July 1942, as quoted in *Ibid.*, 8 August 1942, p. 20.
21. *Ibid.*, 1 August 1942, p. 19.
22. *New York Times*, 29 July 1942, p. 20, and 21 August 1942, p. 22; *Chicago Defender*, 15 August 1942, p. 19, 21; and "Negroes and Baseball," *Newsweek*, XX (10 August 1942), pp. 58-59.
23. *Chicago Defender*, 15 August 1942, p. 21.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, 26 September 1942, Section II, p. 18.
26. *New York Times*, 3 February 1943, p. 25, and 1 December 1943, p. 28.
27. The eight were: John Sengstacke, Association president and manager of the *Chicago Defender*; Ira F. Lewis of the *Pittsburgh Courier*; Howard H. Murphy, business manager of the *Philadelphia Afro-American*; Louis E. Martin, editor of the *Michigan Chronicle*; Dr. C. B. Powell, publisher of the *New York Amsterdam Star-News*; William O. Walker, publisher of the *Cleveland Call Post*; Wendell Smith, city editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*; and Dan Burley, managing editor of the *New York Amsterdam Star-News*. Sengstacke and Lewis spoke at the meeting. See the *Chicago Defender*, 11 December 1943, p. 1.4.
28. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 December 1943, p. 1.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
30. *Chicago Defender*, 11 December 1943, p. 1 and *New York Times*, 4 December 1943, p. 19.

31. *New York Times*, 4 December 1943, p. 19.
32. *Chicago Defender*, 25 December 1943, p. 1, 4.
33. *New York Times*, 4 May 1944, p. 23.
34. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 December 1943, p. 11.
35. *New York Times*, 20 November 1945, p. 25.
36. Isadore H. Y. Muchnick, letter to Tom Yawkey, President of the Boston Red Sox, in *Ibid.*, 10 March 1945, p. 22.
37. *Ibid.*, 24 March 1945, p. 21.
38. Shapiro, *Jackie Robinson*, pp. 44-47 and *New York Times*, 17 April 1945, p. 26.
39. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 May 1945, p. 12.
40. *Ibid.*, 21 April 1945, p. 12.
41. *Ibid.*, 28 April 1945, p. 1, 4, and 5 May 1945, p. 12.
42. *Ibid.*, 14 April 1945, p. 12.
43. *Ibid.*, 12 May 1945, p. 12.
44. *New York Times*, 12 August 1945, p. 1, 41.
45. *Ibid.*, 19 November 1945, p. 1, 15.
46. The other five teams were to be the Pittsburgh Crawfords and teams from Hilldale, Pennsylvania; Detroit; Chicago; and Toledo. See *Ibid.*, 8 May 1945, p. 22.
47. *Ibid.*; Jackie Robinson, *I Never Had It Made* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1972), pp. 41-47; A. S. Young, "The Black Athlete in the Golden Age of Sports," *Ebony*, XXIV (April 1969), p. 104; and Robert Rice, "Profiles: Branch Rickey," *New Yorker*, XXVI (3 June 1950), pp. 30-47.
48. Robinson, *I Never Had It Made*, pp. 17, 24-35.
49. *New York Times*, 12 April 1944, p. 7.
50. "Rookie of the Year," *Time*, L (22 September 1947), pp. 72-73.
51. *New York Times*, 10 May 1947, p. 16; "Sermon to St. Louis Baseball Players," *Nation*, CLXIV (17 May 1947), p. 559; "Rookie of the Year," pp. 70-76; Robinson, *I Never Had It Made*, pp. 66-83; and Shapiro, *Jackie Robinson*, pp. 94-108.
52. *New York Times*, 18 April 1947, p. 28 and 19 April 1947, p. 10 and 3 May 1947, p. 10; and "Pastors Support Robeson's Rights," *Christian Century*, LXIV (14 May 1947), p. 631.
53. *New York Times*, 7 May 1947, p. 29 and 10 May 1947, p. 15, 16.
54. HUAC was more concerned with communism than with fascism even when it was formed in the late 1930s. See Robert Griffin and Athan Theoharis (eds.), *The Specter* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), p.7, and William F. Rickenbacker, "A Short History of the Committee. . . ." in William F. Buckley, Jr., *The Committee and Its Critics* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), pp. 90-117,
55. Belfrage, *The American Inquisition*, p. 29. Others such as Buckley, *Ibid.*, have challenged the statement that HUAC operated to expose political deviants.
56. Walter Goodman, *The Committee* (New York: Ferrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p. 494.
57. For instance, in 1946, Robeson denied under oath that he was or had ever been a communist when asked by a fact finding committee under Senator Jack Tenney of California. He never again answered the question before an investigation committee. See *New York Times*, 8 October 1946, p. 13; Gilliam, *Paul Robeson All-American*, p. 127; and Belfrage, *The American Inquisition*, p. 56.
58. As quoted by Marie Seton, *Paul Robeson* (London: Dennis Dodson, 1958), p. 196. For similar quotes see *New York Times*, 21 April 1949, p. 6; and "Hearings Regarding Communist Infiltration of Minority Groups," *Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities*, House of Representatives, Eighty-First Congress, 1st Session, 13 July 1949, p. 427. The *Daily Worker*, 26 April 1949, p. 9, quoted Robeson: "It is certainly unthinkable for myself and the Negro people to go to war in the interests of those who have oppressed us for generations."
59. HUAC, "Hearings Regarding Communist Infiltration of Minority Groups," 14 July 1949, p. 464.
60. Max Yergan, a writer and publicist, was a founder of the Council of African Affairs in the 1930s with Paul Robeson as its first chairman. The Council was dedicated to the liberation of the African colonies from European domination. When the Council was labeled a subversive organization by the U.S. Attorney General in the 1940s, Yergan and Robeson broke apart. See Mabel M. Smythe (ed.), *The Black American Reference Book*

(Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 667 and John P. Davis (ed.), *The American Negro Reference Book* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 688.

61. *Chicago Defender*, 30 April 1949, pp. 1-2, 6; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 May 1949, p. 14.

62. Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 7 May 1949, p. 6.

63. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 April 1949, p. 14.

64. *Chicago Defender*, 30 April 1949, p. 6.

65. *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 30 April 1949, p. 4.

66. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 April 1949, p. 3.

67. *Ibid.*, 7 May 1949, p. 15.

68. *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 28 May 1949, p. 4.

69. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 July 1949, p. 4, and HUAC "Hearings Regarding Communist Infiltration of Minority Groups," 13 July 1949, p. 428.

70. A letter from General Dwight D. Eisenhower regarding "the irrefutable proof of the loyalty of our Negro troops" during World War II was read into the testimony. HUAC "Hearings Regarding Communist Infiltration of Minority Groups," 13 July 1949, pp. 425-426.

71. *Ibid.*, 454 and 18 July 1949, p. 482; and *New York Times*, 8 April 1949, p. 8.

72. Sensational testimony rather than expert testimony, had been the trademark of HUAC since its origin in the 1930s according to Goodman, *The Committee*, passim.

73. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 July 1949, p. 2.

74. Robinson, *I Never Had It Made*, p. 98.

75. *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 23 July 1949, Section II, p. 8.

76. HUAC "Hearings Regarding Communist Infiltration of Minority Groups," 18 July 1949, pp. 479-483.

77. *Ibid.*

78. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 July 1949, p. 1.

79. *Chicago Tribune*, 19 July 1949, p. 5, and *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 July 1949, p. 1.

80. *New York Times*, 20 July 1949, p. 24, and *Washington Post*, 20 July 1949, p. 12.

81. Langston Hughes, "Old Ghost Appears Before the Un-American Committee," *Chicago Defender*, 6 August 1949, p. 6.

82. *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 23 July 1949, p. 1.

83. *Ibid.*, 13 August 1949, p. 4.

84. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 July 1949, p. 4.

85. Mrs. W. B. Newman, Seattle, letter to the editor, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 August 1949, p. 4.

86. Arthur S. James, Boston, letter to the editor, *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 6 August 1949, p. 4.

87. Following Robinson's HUAC testimony, Robeson held a two hour press conference which was not generally reported in the white press. Robeson made it clear that "I have no quarrel with Jackie. . . . I am not going to permit the issue to boil down to a personal feud between myself and Jackie. To do that, would be to do exactly what the other group wants us to do. . . . The real issue is whether Negro people would permit themselves to be divided by a group such as the Un-American Activities Committee. . . ." Quoted in Philip S. Foner (ed.), "Let's Not Be Divided," *Paul Robeson Speaks, Writings - Speeches - Interviews, 1918-1974* (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1978), pp. 219-221.

88. Charles H. Wright, "Paul Robeson at Peekskill," *Paul Robeson: The Great Forerunner*, pp. 130-141, and Howard Fast, *Peekskill: USA* (n.p.: Civil Rights Congress, 1951), passim.

89. Seton, *Paul Robeson*, p. 231.

90. Robeson, *Here I Stand*, pp. 71-81.

91. Character assassinations were not new to Senator McCarthy or HUAC in the 1940s and 50s for Martin Dies' HUAC of the 1930s "pioneered almost all of the techniques that would later be associated with Senator McCarthy." See Griffin and Theoharsis, *The Specter*, p. 7.

92. Robeson's income dropped from over \$100,000 to about \$6,000 per year by 1950. See Darlene Clark Hine, "Paul Robeson's Impact on History," *Paul Robeson: The Great Forerunner*, p. 142. Philip S. Foner notes that Robeson's income dropped from \$150,000 annually to \$3,000. See his *Paul Robeson Speaks*, p. 4.

93. Robinson, *I Never Had It Made*, p. 108.
94. Jackie Robinson, "Why I'm Quitting Baseball," *Look*, XXI (22 January 1957), p. 92.
95. Robinson, *I Never Had It Made*, pp. 141-143, 150-151.
96. David Caute has shown that "just as McCarthy red-baited his way into the Senate, so Nixon did into the house [in 1946, and in] the Senate in 1950." *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 27, 37.
97. Robinson, *I Never Had It Made*, p. 98.
98. Gilliam, *Paul Robeson*, quoted on the book jacket.
99. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 261.
100. Paul Robeson continues to be denied a place in the National Football Hall of Fame (Kings Mills, Ohio) which is devoted to college football. Robeson is the only two-time all-American missing from its list. He is also missing from the honored at the College Football Hall of Fame (part of the Citizens Savings Hall of Fame, formerly the Helms Hall of Fame, the oldest and largest hall of fame in the world). It is located in Los Angeles.

