

Freedom is a hard-bought thing and millions are still in chains,

Robeson continued his concert success but a few concerts were cancelled. In March of 1947, in Salt Lake City, he sang a ballad about Joe Hill, a union organizer who had been executed in Utah's state prison. Joe Hill had become a martyr to the labor movement. The Salt Lake City audience was shocked to hear the song sung there.

Robeson then announced to the crowd, "You've heard my final concert for at least two years, and perhaps many more. I'm retiring here and now from concert work—I shall sing, from now on, for my trade-union and college friends; in other words, only at gatherings where I can sing what I please."

A few days later police were dispatched to keep him from entering Peoria, Ill., and he was labeled an "avowed or active propagandist for un-American ideologies."

In 1948 the Mundt-Nixon Communist Control Bill was proceeding through Congress. The House Un-American Activities Committee was in continuous session; ten Hollywood writers were on their way to prison for refusing to discuss their political affiliation. Called to testify before HUAC on the bill, Robeson refused to answer the question, "Are you an American?" "Some of the most brilliant and distinguished Americans are about to go to jail for failure to answer that question, and I am going to join them, if necessary. I refuse to answer the question."

During the election campaign of 1948, the Progressive Party was formed and former vice-president Henry Wallace was its presidential nominee. Robeson was the first black person to play a major role in the formation and political platform of a major party. During that year he travelled the country campaigning for the Progressive Party. Death threats came and some meetings were held under armed guard.

World Peace Conference

Robeson's most controversial speech was made to the World Peace Conference in Paris in April, 1949. He was asked to address the crowd on behalf of thousands of Third World delegates. He gave a brief talk on the contribution of the colonized nations have made to the industrial nations and their desire to share the wealth more equitably. He expressed a strong desire for peace, saying:

"We colonial peoples have contributed to the building of the United States and we are determined to share in its wealth. We denounce the policy of the United States government which is similar to that of Hitler and Goebbels. We want peace and liberty and will combat for them along with the Soviet Union, the democracies of eastern Europe, China and Indonesia. . . .

"It is unthinkable that American Negroes could 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."

In the United States Robeson's remarks were distorted and headlines charged him with treason. Robeson sang in Denmark, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, then returned to the U.S.

Robeson spoke to a home-coming rally of more than 4,000 in Harlem. "The so-called western democracies—including our own . . . can find no answer before the bar of world justice for their treatment of the Negro people. . . . We must have the courage to shout at the tops of our voices about our injustices and we must lay the blame . . . where it has belonged for over 300 years of slavery and misery, right at our own doorstep—not in any far away place . . . We do not want to die in vain any more on foreign battlefields for Wall Street and the greedy supporters of domestic fascism. If we must die let it be in Mississippi or Georgia! Let it be wherever we are lynched and deprived of our rights as human beings!"



Testifying at Senate hearings on Mundt-Nixon bill, 1948



"The struggle today is one of peace, not war with anyone. The people will never lose their courage and strength to shout for peace at the top of their voices, to fight fascist persecution and death, to labor diligently every moment to save themselves and mankind for the constructive building of new and rich cultures for the universal attaining of full equality and full human dignity."

World Peace Conference, Paris, 1949



With Lena Horne and Progressive Party presidential candidate, Henry Wallace, 1948.



"The NAACP is organized to agitate, to investigate, to expose, to defend, to reason, to appeal. This is our program and this is the whole of our program. What human reform demands today is light—more light; clear thought, accurate knowledge, careful distinctions."

—W.E.B. DuBois, 1921

Portland Branch, NAACP

March 20th Meeting:
Allen Temple Church, 4236 N.E. 85h

April 18th Meeting:
Vancouver Baptist Church, 3138 N. Vancouver

May 15 Meeting:
Antioch Church, 5935 N. Minnesota

2752 N. Williams Ave. • 284-7722
Hazel G. Hays, President



Rosa Parks

"Actually, no one can understand the action of Mrs. Parks unless he realizes that eventually the cup of endurance runs over, and the human personality cries out, 'I can take it no longer.' Mrs. Parks' refusal to move back was her intrepid affirmation that she had had enough . . . She was anchored to that seat by the accumulated indignities of days gone by and the boundless aspirations of generations yet unknown."

—Martin Luther King

Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church

3138 N. Vancouver Avenue
Dr. O.B. Williams, Pastor



Ida B. Wells Barnett

For many blacks, the threat of lynching was ever present, and organizations were formed to eliminate the practice. One of lynching's most outspoken antagonists was Ida B. Wells Barnett. Born in Mississippi in 1862, she attended a local school until the death of her parents in 1878. Not old enough to teach, she changed her name and age and took a teaching job to support her orphaned brothers and sisters. In 1884 she moved to Memphis where she enrolled at Fisk while still teaching. An opportunity arose to become part owner of the newspaper *Free Speech*, and she became its editor. Her never-diminishing hatred of injustices caused her to write scathing editorials about the rampant racism in the area. When three of her close friends were murdered, i.e., "lynched" for being too successful in business, she wrote the first expose on lynching. In 1895, her pamphlet *The Red Record* offered the first statistics on lynching. In it she proved that lynching was politically and economically motivated rather than sexually, since fewer than 50 percent of those lynched were accused of rape or attempted rape. Statistics five years later indicated that less than 15 percent of those lynched were so charged.

Barnett and her husband, Ferdinand, became active in the National Rights League. She was Chairman of the Anti-Lynching Bureau of the National Afro-American Council. She was involved in the founding of the NAACP in 1909.



SAFEWAY