

Paul Robeson sound recording collection

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1955



Title Statement

Paul Robeson sound recording collectionGuide to the Paul Robeson sound recording collection C0097

Subtitle: Paul Robeson sound recording collection

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Publication Statement

Publisher: George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Fenwick Library, MS2FL
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Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Business Number: 703-993-2220
Fax Number: 703-993-8911
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2006

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-01-27 07:02:43 -0500.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

C0097

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/53

Unit Date

1955

Mixed Materials

1 (box)

Language

English

Abstract

This collection contains reel-to-reel tapes, as well as duplicates of these reels on cassette and CD of Paul Robeson's 1955 concert performance at Swarthmore, and his 1955 speech, "America to Me, Waterboy."

Creator

Lofland, John

Extent

1 Linear Feet 1 box

Repository

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no access restrictions.

Use Restrictions

The copyright and related rights status of this collection have not been evaluated (See <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/CNE/1.0/>)

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by John Lofland in 1998.

Processing Information

Processed by Special Collections Research Center staff. EAD markup completed by Eron Ackerman and Jordan Patty in August 2009. Finding aid updated by Amanda Menjivar in August 2022.

Preferred Citation

Paul Robeson sound recording collection, C0097, Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries.

Historical Information

Paul Robeson was a famous African American singer, actor, athlete, and civil rights advocate. Robeson made a name for himself in the 1930s performing Black spirituals, which he merged with various folk and national styles to champion the labor and social movements of his time. He sang for peace and justice in 25 languages throughout the U.S., Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa. The quintessential cosmopolitan, Robeson became known as a citizen of the world, mingling effortlessly with the people of Moscow, Nairobi, and Harlem. Among his friends were future African leader Jomo Kenyatta, India's Nehru, historian Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, anarchist Emma Goldman, and writers James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway.

In the late 1940s, when dissent was scarcely tolerated in the U.S., Robeson openly questioned why African Americans should fight in the army of a government that tolerated racism. Because of his outspokenness, he was accused by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) of being a Communist. The accusation nearly ended his career. Eighty of his concerts were canceled, and in 1949 two interracial outdoor concerts in Peekskill, N.Y. were attacked by racist mobs while state police stood idly by.

In 1950 the U.S. revoked Robeson's passport, leading to an eight-year battle to resecure it and to travel again. During those years, Robeson studied Chinese, met with Albert Einstein to discuss the prospects for world peace, published his autobiography, *Here I Stand*, and sang at Carnegie Hall. Two major labor-related events took place during this time. In 1955 Robeson was invited by the Forum for Free Speech to speak and perform at Swarthmore College. It was at this event that the tapes featured in this collection were recorded. Paul Robeson retired from public life in 1963 and died on January 23, 1976, at age 77, in Philadelphia.

Scope and Content

This collection contains reel-to-reel tapes, as well as duplicates of these reels on cassette and CD of Paul Robeson's 1955 concert performance at Swarthmore, and his 1955 speech, "America to Me, Waterboy."

Related Material

The Special Collections Research Center also holds many other collections and materials on musicians, the performing arts, and the civil rights movement. It also holds the [San Francisco Poster Brigade collection](#), which contains [an illustrated poster of Robeson](#).

Keywords

African Americans

African Americans -- Civil rights -- History -- 20th century

Music

Sound recordings

Robeson, Paul, 1898-1976

Arrangement

This is a single box collection.