

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 511

To provide for the issuance of a commemorative postage stamp in honor
of Paul Robeson.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 2, 1996

Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois (for herself, Mr. CLAY, Ms. NORTON, Miss COLLINS of Michigan, Mr. STOKES, and Mr. TOWNS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight

RESOLUTION

To provide for the issuance of a commemorative postage
stamp in honor of Paul Robeson.

Whereas Paul Robeson is perhaps the only true Renaissance man our century has known;

Whereas Paul Robeson was an African American scholar, actor, singer, and athlete who blazed a trail of accomplishment across American arts and letters and sports in the first half of the 20th century;

Whereas Paul Robeson was born in Princeton, New Jersey, on April 9, 1898, to William Drew Robeson and Marla Louisa Bustill;

Whereas Paul Robeson won a four year scholarship to attend Rutgers University, where he became the first black All-

American football player in 1917; he also received 15 varsity letters in football, basketball, baseball, and track;

Whereas Paul Robeson was a debating champion, member of Phi Beta Kappa, and valedictorian of his graduating class, he went on to attend and graduate from Columbia Law School, subsequently playing professional football on weekends to support himself;

Whereas Paul Robeson abandoned law and joined the Provincetown Players in New York, where he caught the eye of Eugene O'Neill, who gave him the lead in "All God's Chillun Got Wings" and "The Emperor Jones"; his untrained bass-baritone voice landed him the part of Joe in "Showboat", where he was widely known for his performance of "Ol' Man River";

Whereas Paul Robeson's most spectacular dramatic triumph was the portrayal of Othello, on the Shakespearean stage. "Othello" ran for 295 performances on Broadway in 1943;

Whereas Paul Robeson espoused the principles of scientific socialism and accepted the Stalin Peace Prize in 1952;

Whereas Paul Robeson was a vigorous opponent of racism, picketing the White House, refusing to sing before segregated audiences, starting a crusade against lynching and urging Congress to outlaw racial barriers in baseball;

Whereas Paul Robeson was summoned before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, where he refused to say whether or not he was a Communist;

Whereas Paul Robeson, in fighting for the rights and dignity of all Black Americans, saw the Department of State revoke his passport: he was subsequently blacklisted by concert managers;

Whereas the indignities which Paul Robeson suffered during the McCarthy era are the types of actions the Constitution of the United States was designed to prevent, Paul Robeson was denied this protection and sacrificed his fame, fortune, and endured personal hardship to stand for the principles he believed in; and

Whereas the “Paul Robeson 100th Birthday Committee”, spearheaded by Dr. Margaret Burroughs, founder of the DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago, Illinois, has targeted Robeson’s centennial birthday on April 9, 1998, for the publication of a commemorative stamp by the United States Postal Service: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that a commemorative postage stamp should
3 be issued by the United States Postal Service in honor
4 of Paul Robeson; and the Citizens’ Stamp Advisory Com-
5 mittee of the United States Postal Service should rec-
6 ommend to the Postmaster General that such a postage
7 stamp be issued.

