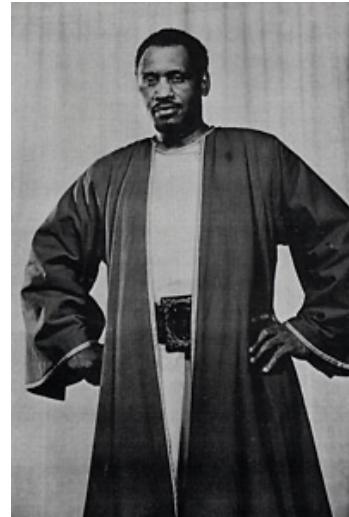


**RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICANA STUDIES AND  
THE OFFICE OF RESIDENCE LIFE**

Byrne Seminar – Fall 2023  
01:090:101:47  
5:40pm to 7pm  
Scott Hall Rm 219

**PAUL ROBESON AS A GLOBAL CITIZEN**



**Seminar Instructors**

Susan Robeson  
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Edward Ramsamy  
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**Course Description**

The life and legacy of the esteemed Rutgers alumnus Paul Robeson embodies the idea of “global citizenship.” A towering figure in the African American struggle for human dignity and democratic rights, he connected this struggle with those of other peoples around the world who were also fighting for political rights, cultural recognition and economic justice. For example, among many other social justice movements that he embraced, Paul Robeson pioneered the global solidarity movement against racial segregation and white supremacy in South Africa and supported and marched with various British union movements in the United Kingdom struggling for better

working conditions. The seminar introduces students to the life and legacy of Paul Robeson, especially with respect to how he integrated “home” and “world” into his civil rights activism.

### **Instructor Biographies**

**Susan Robeson**, granddaughter of Paul Robeson, incorporates unpublished materials from the Robeson family collections, including Robeson’s handwritten notes and spoken word recordings. Her family experiences and extensive knowledge about the life and times of her grandfather bring a level of intimacy and storytelling to the seminar.

Susan Robeson is a longtime documentary filmmaker, producer and writer. She has produced extensively for public television and network television affiliates. After co-founding Third World Newsreel, Robeson produced for LIKE IT IS with Gil Noble on WABC-TV, co-producing long and short form documentaries and programs on the local and global Black experience, and giving a voice to global liberation movements. She has been executive producer of the PBS station in Minneapolis/St. Paul, producing documentaries and overseeing a documentary unit, while also managing a second channel which she transformed into a model for community empowerment and development. She also worked extensively with street gangs around the nation involved in organizing peace treaties. Robeson’s feature-length documentary, *Don’t Believe the Hype*, on socially conscious hip hop, premiered on Channel 4/UK and screened at numerous film festivals. Her work has also screened at Lincoln Center and the Museum of Modern Art. Robeson harnessed her experience in filmmaking and community engagement to design a nationwide citizen video initiative for the President of Timor-Leste, to foster civic engagement and help build democracy in this first new nation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She has also been a visiting professor in film, American studies and African American studies at Carleton College, Colorado College and Macalester College, and is currently teaching in film and communications at William Paterson University. Robeson is the author of the award-winning book, *The Whole World In His Hands: A Pictorial Biography of Paul Robeson*, and a children’s book, *Grandpa Stops A War*. She is Director of the Robeson Family Trust.

**Edward Ramsamy**, Edward Ramsamy completed his undergraduate education at the University of Durban Westville in South Africa and his Ph.D. in Urban Planning and Policy Development at the Bloustein School at Rutgers University. He has had a life long interest in the life and legacy of Paul Robeson and was intimately involved in the Paul Robeson Plaza Project at Rutgers – New Brunswick. His research interests include examining the influences Paul Robeson had on the global anti-apartheid movement.

Edward Ramsamy is Associate Professor and Chair of the Africana Studies and member of the graduate faculty of Geography, and the graduate faculty of Urban Planning and Policy Development at the Bloustein School. He is the author of the book *The World Bank and Urban Development: From Projects to Policy* (Routledge, 2006). In addition to his research in international development planning and geographies of globalization, Dr. Ramsamy’s fields of study include the political economy of transition and nation-building in post-colonial/developing societies, as well as the comparative politics of identity and race relations in South Africa and the United States. He has edited the *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia and Africa: an Encyclopedia* (Africa Volume, Sage 2021) and *The Black Experience in America* (with Gayle T. Tate, 2006/2011,

Kendall Hunt) He has published numerous articles on regional integration in southern Africa, as well as racial, ethnic, and national identity in post-apartheid South Africa.

### **Learning Goals:**

The seminar has a fourfold focus:

- (1) to explore Paul Robeson's formative years as a student at Rutgers and the challenges he faced as the only Black student in his graduating class;
- (2) to examine some of his artistic achievements as an actor on the stage and screen, especially his role in promoting African-American folk songs on the concert stages of the world;
- (3) to study his efforts to connect anti-fascism, anti-racism, and anti-imperialism together; and
- (4) to examine his controversial associations with communist movements and the former Soviet Union.

### **Academic Integrity**

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community.

Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.

The complete academic integrity policy can be found at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.

Rutgers academic integrity site: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

Guide to proper citation: [https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid\\_plagiarism](https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism)

### **Absence Policy:**

Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason

for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Because Byrne seminars are only one credit, students should not miss more than two class meetings.

### **Course Requirements – Read each required activity**

The assigned readings and other resources for the class are available on Canvas. Canvas portal:

1. ***Participate*** in class discussions and activities
2. ***Engage*** with the reading material
3. ***Complete*** a final presentation and written assignment

### **Final Assignment**

The final project consists of a 5-page paper (double-spaced) and a 2-3 minute presentation. The paper is due prior to the final class on Tues. Nov. 14. It must be posted on Canvas before the final class begins. Presentations take place during the final class on Tues. Nov. 14.

Both the paper and the presentation are a response to the following question: IF PAUL ROBESON WAS ALIVE AND WELL TODAY, HE WOULD...

The PAPER:

Discuss your ideas about an issue, movement, or activity you think Paul Robeson would be involved with today. Give specific examples of what you think that would look like – what he would be doing, who he might be working with, etc. Support your ideas with a discussion of how this connects to Robeson's experiences, beliefs and contributions. Be specific and go into detail.

The PRESENTATION:

The presentation CANNOT be a reading of your paper or excerpts of the paper. The presentation is a creative expression that captures the essence of your paper or a particular aspect of your paper. It can be in any form (spoken word, video, music, etc.) and it may include any media or combination of media.

## **Schedule and Topics**

Discussion questions for each week posted on Canvas

### **WEEK 1 (Sept 12) INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

Discussion questions:

1. What do you know about Paul Robeson and his significance coming into this seminar?
  2. What about Paul Robeson interests you most?
  3. Who are some of the men and women you most admire? Why?
- Visit the Paul Robeson Plaza on the Voorhees Mall, College Avenue Campus. What achievements of Paul Robeson does the Paul Robeson Plaza highlight? See: <https://www.rutgers.edu/news/rutgers-dedicates-plaza-paul-robeson-renaissance-man-ages>
  - *The Whole World In His Hands: A Pictorial Biography of Paul Robeson (The Prologue)* by Susan Robeson

### **WEEK 2 (Sept 19) EARLY YEARS AND THE RUTGERS EXPERIENCE**

- *The Undiscovered Paul Robeson: An Artist's Journey* by Paul Robeson, Jr.  
Chapter 2: "In His Glory: Robeson at Rutgers (1915-1919)"

### **WEEK 3 (SEPT 26) THE SINGER**

- "On My Journey: Paul Robeson's Independent Recordings" CD liner notes by Paul Robeson, Jr. and Robert H. Cataliotti

### **WEEK 4 (OCT 3) THE ACTOR**

- "Some Reflections On Othello and the Nature of Our Times" by Paul Robeson, *American Scholar*, Autumn 1945
- "Paul Robeson: A Modern Man" by Clement Alexander Price (essay in the Criterion Collection booklet on Robeson's film career)

### **WEEK 5 (Oct 10) STUDENT SUCCESS WORKSHOP**

## **WEEK 6 (OCT 17) THE ANTI-FACIST ACTIVIST**

- "Hitler's Rise to Power (1933-1934): How Germany Became a Nazi Power" (7 min. video)  
Watch the video here: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/hitlers-rise-power-1933-1934>

- Introduction and excerpt from Conclusion, *HITLER'S AMERICAN MODEL: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* by James Q. Whitman

## **WEEK 7 (OCT 24) THE RED SCARE**

- "Chapter 7: "Into the Eye of the Storm AND Chapter 8: "Peekskill" (1949), From *Undiscovered Paul Robeson: Quest for Freedom, Vol.2* by Paul Robeson, Jr.

- Re-enactment of Paul Robeson's HUAC Testimony (YouTube)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmFjjaFNHko&ab\\_channel=mahirali](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmFjjaFNHko&ab_channel=mahirali)

- "Our Right to Travel", from *Here I Stand* by Paul Robeson

## **WEEK 8 (OCT 31) ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLES**

- *Letters to Change the World*, Open Letter to Jackie Robinson from Paul Robeson, 1953

- Edward Ramsamy (2016) "The International Community and Transformations in South Africa: From Protests to Engagement", in Sandra M. Tomlinson-Clarke and Darren L. Clarke (eds.), *Social Justice and Transformative Learning*, New York: Routledge, pp. 24-39.

## **WEEK 9 (NOV 7) PAUL ROBESON'S RELEVANCE TODAY**

- Introduction from "*We Charge Genocide*"; petition presented to the United Nations, 1952.

- Paul Robeson's Senate Testimony (1948) on proposed "Communist Registration Bill / Control of Subversive Activities Act" (audio). Posted on CANVAS

## **WEEK 10 (Nov 14) STUDENT PRESENTATIONS AND FINAL PAPER DUE**