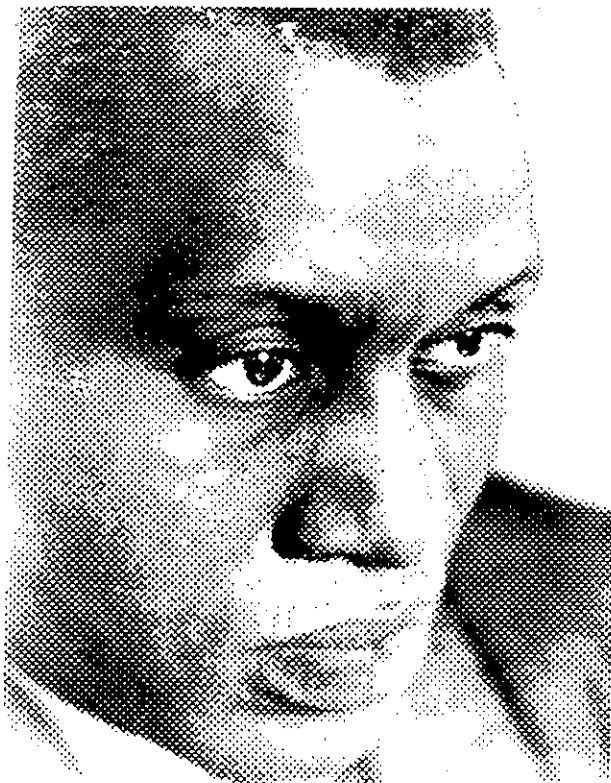


STAND
YOUR
GROUND



The Life and Accomplishment
of Paul Robeson
(1898-1976)

For Kindergarten through 8th Grade

*Written by First-day teachers in
Princeton Monthly Meeting*

Published by the Religious Education Concerns Group
of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
February, 1999

For Display Only
Religious Education
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
1515 Cherry St.
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Standing Your Ground

This is a 3-unit curriculum which could be taught in three to five weeks, depending on the activities chosen. The materials in this curriculum are aimed at the 5th grade reading and developmental level, but parts of each lesson are appropriate for younger as well as older children and youth. In reality, this curriculum can be used from kindergarten through 8th grade.

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This curriculum was created by a group of First-day school teachers in Princeton Meeting in the weeks leading up to the celebration of the centennial of Paul Robeson's birth on April 9, 1898. It was designed to be used by the First-day teachers prior to the 1998 centennial to honor the life of an extraordinary African American who lived in Princeton, NJ and went to college at Rutgers University. Even though Chapter 2 talks about the Quakers in Paul Robeson's mother's family, the authors did not intend to imply that those were the most important influences in Robeson's life. The authors realize that Robeson's mother, Louisa Bustill, died when Paul was young and that he was not very close to his mother's family. Instead, Robeson was close to his father, William Drew Robeson, whom Paul tried to emulate throughout his life.

The writers were Joy Smith, Candice McCoy, Susan Juliano, Lynn Scheffley and Edy Nolan. Meredith Swift, clerk of the Curriculum Working Group, facilitated the development of this curriculum.

Introduction for Students

To the teacher: The following is an overview of what children can expect to learn in three to five weeks. The purpose of talking to the First-day classes about this is to pique their interest and to motivate students to come back to learn more about Paul Robeson.

The one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Paul Leroy Robeson was April 9, 1998. Why do we celebrate the memory of this person so long after his birth and life? We do because Paul Robeson was a genius who recognized his incredible talents in spite of considerable opposition, worked hard to develop them and let them shine forth, and resisted, with great dignity, the people who wanted to silence him.

Paul Robeson was a great singer in the 1930s and 1940s, a linguist, a poet, playwright, athlete, and humanitarian. He was all these things in an age when America was basically separated into two societies — one white, one black. As an African American, Robeson not only had to develop his talents in spite of racial discrimination, but he had to find a way to live out his strong convictions without letting racial prejudice diminish his spirit. He did his work in both societies, white and black, and today we are all better because of the example he set.

But Paul Robeson was not just born being smart, athletic, musical, or socially conscious. He had to learn how to see the great things inside himself and to lift them out. Everyone has “that of God” inside, and we spend our lives learning how to show it. The choices we make when we are young define who we will be when we grow up. We all must find out what we are good at doing — in other words, what our talents are. Then, like Paul Robeson, we can use our talents to serve God and work for justice for all people.

Here is what we will do: In the first chapter, there are stories about Paul when he was a boy and when he was a student in high school and university. We will hear his wonderful music and think about what we might have done if we had faced what he faced. In the second chapter we learn about Paul’s family and how the things they thought and taught him helped him grow proud and strong. Paul’s mother and father had ancestors who were enslaved. We don’t know a lot about Paul’s father’s family, but we do know that Paul looked up to and emulated his father whose academic accomplishments were extraordinary for his time. Members of his mother’s family were, at one time, Quakers, teachers and famous abolitionists, even though Paul barely knew his mother and was not especially close to that side of the family. In the third chapter we talk about what Paul Robeson did with his music and acting talents so that working people and African Americans could be treated fairly. We will learn: 1) how people rioted in the streets to prevent him from singing, 2) how the United States government tried to stop him from speaking and traveling, and 3) how he pressed for equality and justice for all.

Chapter One

Paul Robeson's Early Life: A Tale of Many Talents

Themes:

1. Recognizing one's talents and using them
2. Confronting and stopping racism

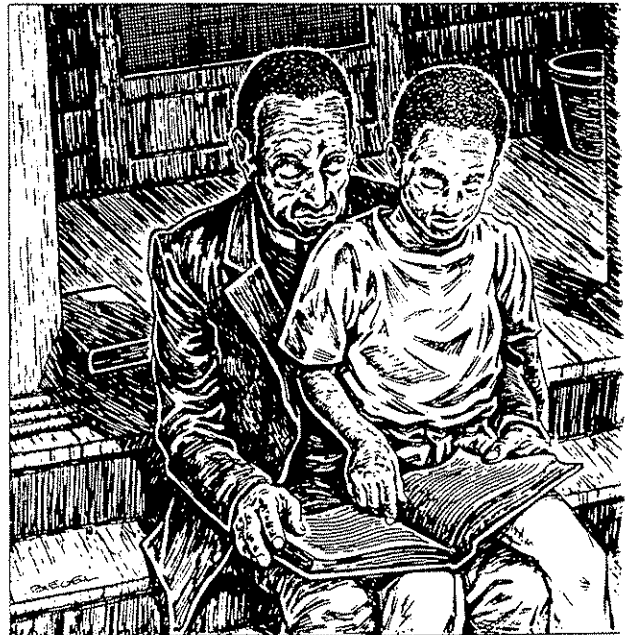
Introduction for all ages:

The life of Paul Robeson is full of interesting facts. Today, we are going to hear some stories from when he was a boy and a teenager. These stories show how he tried many things, like singing, playing sports, and being a very good student, even though, in the 1920's and 1930's many people thought African Americans were not supposed to excel at those things.

For the teacher: If possible, use the first 10 minutes of a video available from many public libraries, titled *Paul Robeson*, produced by Morehouse College. You may also wish to tell the stories which follow about his family, childhood and teenage years, and how he realized his singing talent. You can show the enclosed pictures to illustrate the stories as you tell them.

His Family, Childhood, and Teenage Years

Paul was the youngest of seven children, and his father was a minister in the Witherspoon Presbyterian church in Princeton, NJ. His mother was a schoolteacher before she became a minister's wife. What do you think their life was like? It must have been very busy! Paul was very close to his brothers and sisters, especially his brother Ben. The family lived in Princeton, where neighborhoods and jobs were segregated by race. Such conditions still exist in many communities today. African American men and women in Princeton worked as crafts people, laborers, professionals, and entrepreneurs. They were not permitted, however, to be part of the white social scene. Black and white children went to different, segregated schools. If Paul had stayed in



Princeton, he would not have been allowed to go to high school or college there. When he was six years old, his mother, Marie Louisa, died in a tragic accidental fire, and he became even closer to his father and his brothers and sisters. When Paul was eight years old, his father left the church where he had been preaching because, it was said, he opposed the opinions of white people in the church's governing body. They moved to Westfield, NJ, and later Somerville, NJ, where Paul went to high school. Unlike Princeton, Somerville High School had both black and white students.

Singing: Realizing His Talent and Becoming a Singer

As a boy, Paul sang in his father's church. The congregation of that church was mostly African Americans who carried the tradition of spirituals in their culture. So Paul learned spirituals as well as traditional hymns. In his family, Paul became known as the one with a good singing voice.

When Paul went to Somerville High School, he participated in all the classes and social activities, but he was considered different because his skin was dark. The white students generally accepted him in classes but did not accept him as part of their clubs. Even though he was an excellent football, baseball, and basketball player on the Somerville teams, he, too, did not expect to be part of the social clubs. One day, a teacher heard Paul sing, and asked him to try out for the Glee Club, which was the school chorus. The rest is history! Paul had not known he could do it, but he quickly learned all the songs as if he had studied music all his life — and in a way he had in his father's church. He led the Glee Club and was recognized as the strongest singer anyone had ever heard. He became so good he would serenade his class, solo, at social events.

After the video has been shown and/or the stories told, break into age groups and talk about the stories or do one of the suggested activities:

Kindergarten and 1st Grade

Recall Question: Who were the people who recognized Robeson's singing talent?

Discussion questions:

1. What talents did Paul Robeson have?
2. What talents do you have?
3. How are your talents like Paul Robeson's? How are they different?
4. Are you able to use your talents?
5. Are you trying to improve your talents? How?

(Make the point that we need to recognize and develop our talents, just as Robeson did.)

Activities:

Color in the pictures enclosed (at the end of the chapter) or listen to one of Robeson's recordings appropriate for this age.

(Compact discs of Robeson's music are available at most libraries and music stores.)

3rd Grade through 5th Grade

Recall Questions:

1. Who were the people who recognized Robeson's talent?
2. Why did African American children not live in the same neighborhood as whites?

Discussion questions:

1. What talents did Paul Robeson have?
2. What talents do you have?
3. How are your talents like Paul's? How are they different?

4. Are you able to use your talents?
5. Are you developing the talents you have?

Tell the following story about Paul Robeson's athletic ability:

Paul got excellent grades at Somerville High School. He took a test and won a scholarship to Rutgers University in Princeton, NJ. When he arrived at Rutgers, he became good friends with the very few other African American students. (Most of the students at Rutgers were white.) Paul continued with his singing and was an excellent student.

One other talent he used in college was his athletic ability. The coach of the Rutgers football team had seen Paul play when he was in high school and asked him to try out for the college team. When Paul first came to the football team, the white football players beat him up. They did not want to play with a African American on their team. He had a broken nose and terrible bruises, but after he recovered, the coach asked him to try again.



When Paul went out on the football field, and the white players who had beaten him up came after him, he defended himself. He picked one of them up over his head and was ready to throw him to the ground. That is when the coach stopped everything and said, "Robey, you are on the team. And if anybody tries to hurt Paul, I will throw him off the team." The Rutgers University football team went on to win the national championship. In 1917 and 1918, Paul was named an All-American football player — even though the teams of some universities would not play Rutgers because they had an African-American player.

Paul's father died when he was a student at Rutgers. Paul was very sad. His coach tried to help him out and support him through rough times. Even after Paul graduated and left Rutgers, he came back to help coach the team, and was a paid tutor to the coach's children.

Factual question: Look up the meaning of *segregated* and *racism*.

Discussion questions:

1. Why do you think Paul sought out the company of other African-American students at Rutgers?
2. Paul showed great courage in continuing to play football. What might have happened to him if he had not kept trying to make the team?
3. Read or tell the story up to the point when Paul is asked to try out, and he lifts the white player above his head. Then ask the children: What would you do if you were the coach?

Discuss this in terms of recognizing and stopping racism or any situation where a group of people tries to hurt another person.

4. Have you ever been in a situation like this where you had to 'prove' yourself? What did you do?
5. Have you ever witnessed a situation where someone was being teased or bullied? What did you do?

Activities:

1. Ask the children to create a different ending to the story by acting out the ending or drawing what might have happened.
2. Listen to one or two of Robeson's recordings which are appropriate to the age. The CD *Paul Robeson, Live at Carnegie Hall, Historic May 9, 1958, Concert* by Vanguard Records is available in many libraries and music stores.

6th through 8th grade

Discussion questions:

1. What talents did Paul Robeson have?
2. What talents do you have?
3. How are your talents like Paul's? How are they different?
4. Are there people at school who have given you a chance to show what you can do?
5. Do your friends and family recognize your talents?
6. Are you developing the talents you have?

Tell the following story about Paul Robeson's scholastic achievement and the speeches he gave for civil rights:

At Rutgers University, Paul worked hard and learned about philosophy, math, literature, and government. He joined clubs for people interested in these things. In 1918, his senior year, Paul was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, the national honor society for people who have achieved excellence in their studies. For his senior thesis, Paul wrote about the United States Constitution. He learned all about the Fourteenth Amendment, which said that "no person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws." Paul wrote about how the courts should use that Amendment to be sure that all people have equal rights in voting, housing, and jobs. This was an unusual thing to say at the time, but fifty years later, that is exactly the argument lawyers used in front of the United States Supreme Court and as the legal basis for the civil rights movement.

When he was ready to graduate in 1918, Paul had the best grades of any senior in the university. The dean of Rutgers did not want a black man to be named valedictorian (the person with the highest grades in the class who gives a speech at the graduation ceremony) or to give the speech. But six days before graduation, the dean called Paul and said that if he had some speech written already, Paul could give it at the ceremony. Paul delivered a speech that is still amazing! It had ideas about the future of African Americans and their fight for equality. Fifty years later, Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream" speech which has many similarities to Paul's graduation speech.

Factual Question:

Define or ask the students to look up the meaning of *racism*, *Fourteenth Amendment*, *equal rights*, *Supreme Court*, and *civil rights movement*.

Discussion questions:

1. What dreams do you have for the future?
2. How would you like the world to be?
3. What future did Paul Robeson see for African Americans?

Activity:

Ask students to take turns reading the graduation speech which is at the end of this chapter. If necessary, define the underlined words before they begin. Talk about oratory and have the children practice different ways of saying the words and delivering them as if they were making a speech. When all ages of children gather back again together, the Middle School children might present their orations. Ask: What did Robeson say that African Americans, white people, and young people should do? or, listen to a recording of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. What are the common points of the two speeches?

Resources with particularly good pictures to illustrate the previous stories:

Burnham Holmes, *Paul Robeson: A Voice of Struggle*, Raintree Steck-Vaughn, Austin, TX, 1995. "American Troublemakers" series.

Patricia McKissack and Frederick McKissack, *Paul Robeson: A Voice to Remember*, Enslow Publishers, Hillside, NJ, 1992. Illustrated by Michael David Biegel.

Scott Ehrlich, *Paul Robeson: Singer and Actor*, Chelsea House Publishers, New York, 1988, with an introduction by Coretta Scott King.

The New Idealism

Oration delivered by Paul Robeson at Rutgers graduation, June 10, 1919—*The Targum*, June 1919

Today we feel that America has proved true to her trust. Realizing that there were worse things than war; that the liberties won through long years of travail were too sacred to be thrown away, though their continued possession entailed the last full measure of devotion, we paid again, in part, the price of liberty. In the fulfillment of our country's duty to civilization, in its consecrating of all resources to the attainment of the ideal America, in the triumph of right over the forces of autocracy, we see the development of a new spirit, a new motive power in American life.

...It will be the purpose of this new spirit to cherish and strengthen the heritage of freedom for which men have toiled, suffered and died a thousand years; to prove that the possibilities of that larger freedom for which the noblest spirits have sacrificed their lives were no idle dreams; to give fuller expression to the principle upon which our national life is built. We realize that freedom is the most precious of our treasures, and it will not be allowed to vanish so long as men survive who offered their lives to keep it.

...But unity is impossible without freedom, and freedom presupposes a reverence for the individual and a recognition of the claims of human personality to full development. It is therefore the task of this new spirit to make national unity a reality, at whatever sacrifice, and to provide full opportunities for the development of everyone, both as a living personality and as a member of a community upon which social responsibilities devolve.

We of the younger generation especially must feel a sacred call to that which lies before us. I go out to do my little part in helping my untutored brother. We of this less favored race realize that our future lies chiefly in our own hands. On ourselves alone will depend the preservation of our liberties and the transmission of them in their integrity to those who will come after us. And we are struggling and attempting to show that knowledge can be obtained under difficulties; that poverty may give place to affluence; that obscurity is not an absolute bar to distinction, and that a way is open to welfare and happiness to all who will follow the way with resolution and wisdom; that neither the old-time slavery, nor the continued prejudice need extinguish self-respect, crush manly ambition or paralyze effort; that no power outside of himself can prevent man from sustaining an honorable character and a useful relation to his day and generation. We know that neither institutions nor friends can make a race stand unless it has strength in its own foundation; that races like individuals must stand or fall by their own merit; that to fully succeed they must practice their virtues of self-reliance, self-respect, industry, perseverance and economy.

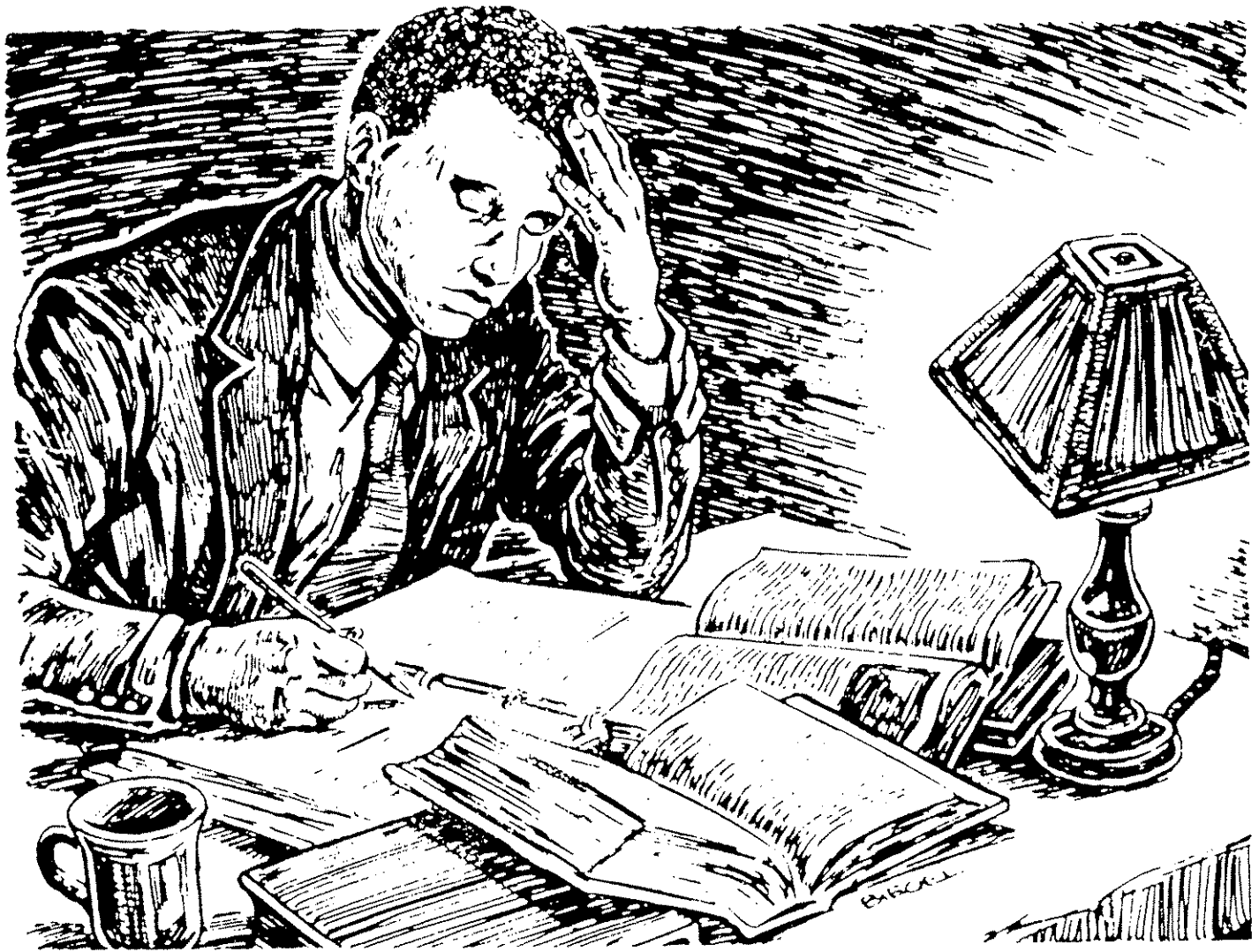
But in order for us to successfully do all these things it is necessary that you of the favored race catch a new vision and exemplify in your actions this new American spirit. That spirit which prompts you to compassion, a motive instinctive but cultivated and intensified by Christianity, embodying the desire to relieve the manifest distress of your fellows; that motive which realizes as the task of civilization the achievement of happiness and the institution of community spirit.

Further, the feeling or attitude peculiar to those who recognize a common lot must be strengthened; that fraternal spirit which does not necessarily mean intimacy, or personal friendship, but implies courtesy and fair-mindedness. Not only must it underly the closer relations of family, but it must be extended to the broader and less personal relations of fellow-citizenship and fellow-humanity. A fraternity must be established in which success and achievement are recognized, and those deserving receive the respect, honor and dignity due them.

We, too, of this younger race have a part in the new American Idealism. We too have felt the great thrill of what it means to sacrifice for other than the material. We revere our honored ones as belonging to the martyrs who died, not for personal gain, but for adherence to moral principles, principles which through the baptism of their blood reached a fruitage otherwise impossible, giving as they did a broader conception of our national life. Each one of us will endeavor to catch their noble spirit and together in the consciousness of their great sacrifice consecrate ourselves with whatever power we may possess to the furtherance of the great motives for which they gave their lives.

And may I not appeal to you who also revere their memory to join with us in continuing to fight for the great principles for which they contended, until in all sections of this fair land there will be equal opportunities for all, and character shall be the standard of excellence; until men by constructive work aim toward Solon's definition of the ideal government—where an injury to the meanest citizen is an insult to the whole constitution; and until black and white shall clasp friendly hands in the consciousness of the fact that we are brethren and that God is the father of us all.

From: Foner, Philip S. *Paul Robeson Speaks*, Bruner/Mazel Publishers, 1978, pp. 570-71.



from: Patricia McKissack and Frederick McKissack, *Paul Robeson: A Voice to Remember*,
Enslow Publishers, Hillside, NJ, 1992. Illustrated by Michael David Biegel.



from: Patricia McKissack and Frederick McKissack, *Paul Robeson: A Voice to Remember*,
Enslow Publishers, Hillside, NJ, 1992. Illustrated by Michael David Biegel.

Chapter 2

Robeson's Family (the Bustills) — Leaders in the Struggle for Equality

Themes:

- Cyrus Bustill's legacy: equal rights and the Quaker connection
- Robeson's mother's family (the Bustills): their work in the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movement

Kindergarten through 5th Grade

Background for the Teacher:

It may not be easy to say to the children that Quakers did not always uphold the testimony of equality. Some Quakers thought holding slaves was OK until they "saw the Light" or were persuaded otherwise.

Cyrus Bustill — Robeson's Great-Great Grandfather

Samuel Bustill, Paul Robeson's great-great-great-grandfather, was a white lawyer and a Quaker in Burlington, NJ, who came from England; Paul's great-great-great grandmother, Parthenia, was a slave to Bustill. It was said that she came from Africa. Although some Quakers had spoken out against holding slaves for nearly 40 years, Sam Bustill ignored them. Parthenia gave birth to a son, Cyrus, by Sam Bustill in 1732, even though Sam was married to Grace Bustill.

One day in 1742 when Cyrus Bustill was ten years old, a sad thing happened. His father, Sam Bustill, died. Until then, Cyrus had been part of a big family. He and his four step-sisters helped at home until they were big enough to go to school. Sundays they all went to Quaker meeting. Cyrus had two step-sisters whose skin was very light and two who were very dark, because they had different fathers. His skin was in-between, but it had never made a difference until now. His big family did not seem unusual. At school, when he had learned to read the Bible he found stories of other big families, especially Joseph and his brothers.

But now that Sam Bustill had died, everything was different. For the time being, Cyrus and his mother, Parthenia, would stay 'in trust' with Grace, because they were Sam's property and Grace was his wife. But his wife, Grace, could give Cyrus to one of her daughters, or sell him, as she wished.* Cyrus had learned in school that Quakers believed in equality. How could this be happening to him? He remembered that in Bible times slaves were freed after seven years of work for their masters.

* Did you know that even some northern states like New Jersey allowed slavery in colonial times when the United States were still colonies of Britain? Most New Jersey residents agreed with the *Compromise of 1850*, which required them to return run-away human property to their owners. In spite of the threat of punishment, a few businesses, homes and churches became safe havens for thousands of slaves who escaped through the Underground Railroad. Quakers owned slaves until, slowly, Friends agreed in 1775 that slavery was wrong and that Friends should free their slaves. Many Quakers freed slaves before then or decided not to purchase them. Friends at Stony Brook, near Princeton, agonized over the manumission (freeing) of their slaves, wanting to be sure that their slaves could provide a livelihood for themselves and their families. Even though there were very few slaves in New Jersey by the time of the Civil War (1861), slaveholding was not officially outlawed until after the Civil War.

So ten-year-old Cyrus spoke up: "When I am grown I would like to be apprenticed to someone who will teach me a trade so that I can earn money and buy my freedom." The plan worked. A friend of Sam Bustill's took Cyrus into his home. Cyrus continued going to school and meeting, but he learned about the bakery business at the same time. Someone came to help him with his school work while the bread was baking.

Time passed and Cyrus earned his freedom. He bought his own bakery and a horse and wagon. He baked bread for General Washington's troops at Valley Forge in 1782, and Thomas Falconer, who supplied food for Washington's troops, thanked him personally.

Cyrus never stopped thinking about equality. One day he was driving down a dusty road behind another carriage. The dust was awful and the carriage was slow. Cyrus knew the driver — the city judge and a good customer — and he knew that the custom was to let important people stay in front.

"Why should I poke along in the dust when I'm as good a man as he is?" Cyrus thought, and he galloped past the judge who was furious.

"Cyrus! Bring me no more bread!"

"Very well, Judge," said Cyrus, and he rode on.

Neither man apologized. But the judge missed his daily bread. He decided that Cyrus had not been rude — just "equal." He stopped by the bakery, ordered bread again, and became Cyrus's friend.

Cyrus found other ways to work for equality. He helped slaves who had run away, and he protected people like himself from being kidnapped and enslaved all over again.

In 1790 when he was too old to run his bakery business, Cyrus (Paul Robeson's great-great-grandfather) opened a school for black children in his own home. He knew that education could lead to equality for them, as it had for him.*

**This story was written and told to the Princeton Meeting's First-day School class by Joy Smith, based on the research of Lloyd L. Brown: The Young Paul Robeson, The Westview Press, 1997.*

Questions for recall:

1. Who was Cyrus' father?
2. Who was his mother? *If the question arises, explain that children were sometimes 'fathered' by the slave master, which partly explains the variation in skin tones in Cyrus' family.*
3. Where did he learn about equality?
4. Why did Cyrus refuse to slow his wagon for the judge?
5. What were the consequences of his actions?

To think about: African American children of white slave holders were not given the same opportunities and rights of inheritance as their white brothers and sisters. Do you have any idea why?

Activities:

- **Children can bake bread using the following recipe, taking turns adding ingredients and kneading the bread.** To save time, bring bread to class ready to be kneaded. It can be baked during class, so children can appreciate the smell and then give the loaves to food banks or homeless shelters. Or, just before class starts, the prepared bread can be put in the oven to bake and then eaten as a snack at the end of class.

White Bread

Makes 2 5" x 9" loaves:

Scald 1 cup milk

Add:

1 cup water

1 tablespoon shortening/lard

1 tablespoon butter

2 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon salt

In separate large bowl, combine: 1/4 c. water, at 105-115° and 1 pkg active, dry yeast and let dissolve 3-5 minutes. If using compressed yeast, crumble cake yeast into 1/4 c. 85° water and let stand 8-10 minutes. Add the lukewarm milk mixture to the dissolved yeast. Have ready: 6 1/2 cups sifted all-purpose flour.

Stir in 3 cups flour, beat 1 minute, then stir or work in remaining flour by tossing the dough on a floured board and kneading well until it is smooth, elastic and full of bubbles. Place the dough in a greased bowl, turn the dough over once and cover with a cloth. Let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, at least 1 hour. Punch it down to its original size and, if time permits, allow the dough to rise until double in bulk. Otherwise, skip second rising; shape the dough lightly in 2 loaves, and place in greased pans. Cover and let the dough rise again until almost double in bulk.

Preheat oven to 450°. Bake the bread 10 minutes; then reduce heat to 350° and bake about 30 minutes longer. Test for doneness by tapping (should sound hollow). Remove loaves at once from pans and cool on rack before storing.

From *The Joy of Cooking*, 1985, p. 602

- **Read a story from "Stories of the Underground Railroad"** by Anna Curtis, Island Workshop Press Co-op, Inc., 1941, available on loan from PYM or RE library. Contains excellent non-fiction stories told in interesting manner for elementary aged children; good for acting out. The stories inform us about people who were involved in the Underground Railroad, many of whom were Quakers.
- **Take a field trip to Stonybrook Settlement** next to Princeton Friends Meeting. This house has been occupied over the years by a Quaker School Master, toll keeper, farm manager, and a succession of African American families who were formerly slaves. It is very likely that Stonybrook Settlement House was a stop along the Underground Railroad. It is on the Historic Register in New Jersey. Make arrangements ahead of time by phoning 609-921-6189 or 609-924-9244.

For 6th - 8th Grade

You may wish to tell the preceding story of Cyrus Bustill and ask the questions that follow. Then tell about the legacy of Paul Robeson's mother, Maria Louisa Robeson, which follows. Using the Bustill Family Tree (at the end of this chapter) and showing pictures of Robeson's forebearers (located in Chapter 1) might enliven or make the stories clearer.

Questions for discussion on the story of Cyrus Bustill:

1. Did it take courage for Cyrus not to slow down for the judge?
2. Do you think Cyrus thought about the consequences of his actions before he drove by?
3. Why do you think the judge came back to buy bread?
4. Were you surprised to learn that Quakers held slaves?
5. Why do you think some Friends didn't want to free their slaves? Even after PYM asked Friends to free their slaves in 1775, it didn't happen quickly. Do you know why? (It didn't happen quickly because Friends were under the weight of providing training, food and lodging for the freed slaves until they were able to provide for themselves.)

The Legacy of Paul's Mother's Family and his Father

Background for the Teacher:

It may not be easy for young people to hear that prejudice and racism existed in the Society of Friends in the 1800s. Friends did not talk openly about or acknowledge its existence. (Today, if there is prejudice and racism against people of color within Friends, do we talk about it more?)

Tell the story of Robeson's family's struggle for equality: Cyrus Bustill married Elizabeth Morey, whose mother was a Delaware Indian and whose father was an English Quaker. They moved with their eight children to Philadelphia and started a very successful bakery on Arch Street. The family attended Arch Street Friends Meeting. Cyrus was a founding member of the Free African Society, whose purpose was to "agitate anti-slavery action, prevent Negro kidnapping, and cooperate with other emancipation groups." * He helped found the Free African Church, even though he remained a Quaker. After his retirement in 1790, Cyrus opened a school for black children.

Cyrus and Elizabeth had a son, David, who was the great-grandfather of Paul Robeson and an abolitionist. Their daughter was Grace Bustill, who was also an abolitionist. Grace's daughter, Sarah Mapps Douglas, taught several generations of African American children in Philadelphia, but left Arch Street Meeting in 1833 because there was a separate back row for African Americans in the Meetinghouse. Sarah's brother Robert was a portrait painter who was asked to go across the Atlantic to make a portrait of Queen Victoria. But, just like his grand-nephew, Paul Robeson, Robert Bustill was denied a passport because of his color. In 1839 the Secretary of State said that people of color were not citizens and could not get passports to travel abroad. David Bustill remained a Quaker, but his children later left the Society of Friends and joined the First African Presbyterian Church, an all-black congregation because of racial prejudice they encountered with Friends. Sarah Mapps Douglas, Robeson's great-aunt, was a good friend of the Grimké sisters, who worked tirelessly for the abolition of slavery and the equal treatment of African Americans in the Society of Friends. The Bustill family also worked very hard in the movement to abolish slavery. But by 1855

* from Lloyd Brown, *Paul Robeson: On My Journey Now*, Appendix A, "The Proud Bustills"

the Bustills worked mostly with other African Americans to abolish slavery, while the Grimkés worked to change the minds of white people.

Another of David's children was Charles Hicks Bustill, the grandfather of Paul Robeson. As a leader of the Underground Railroad, with the General Vigilance Committee, he helped 465 people flee to safety from slavery. He and his wife Emily had two daughters, Gertrude and Maria Louisa. Maria Louisa, like many of her family before and after her, was a schoolteacher. She married William Drew Robeson, an ex-slave who ran away from North Carolina in 1860 at the age of fifteen and became a scout and spy for the Union army. William was a man of dignity and integrity. Although self-educated William was admitted to Lincoln University where he met Maria Louisa and they fell in love. In his senior year he had high marks and was accepted in the Divinity Program. Upon graduation, he and Maria Louisa were married and moved to Princeton, New Jersey, where William became the minister of Witherspoon Presbyterian Church. They raised seven children, of whom Paul was the youngest. The glory of Robeson's boyhood years was his father, whom Paul describes as a man who was widely respected in both the aristocratic white and hard-working African American communities in Princeton. Paul said that his father had the greatest speaking voice that he had ever heard.



Maria Louisa was a hard-working woman who helped her husband William with the duties of running the church, keeping a household with seven active children, and teaching her children and the church children on Sundays. Her family says she was also a poet and writer. She died when Paul was almost six years old, but his brothers, who along with his father raised him to be strong and smart, remembered her well and told Paul many stories about her. Unfortunately, Paul himself did not remember his mother and later in life was not close to her family, the Bustills.

(Photos: left: Louisa Bustill Robeson; right: William Drew Robeson. Taken from Duberman, Martin B., "Paul Robeson", Knopf Publishers, 1988).

Questions for recall:

1. Why did Robeson's great aunt, Sara Mapps Douglas, leave the Quaker meeting?
2. Which of Robeson's ancestors were teachers?
3. Who were the abolitionists?

Activity:

Make a timeline which begins in 1732 with the birth of Cyrus Bustill and includes David, Grace, Maria Louisa and William Drew Robeson, with their significant contributions included in each time frame. The time line can be added to in the next lesson, where Robeson's life is covered in more detail. See directions for timelines which follow.

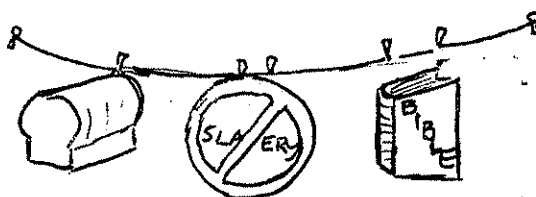
Resources:

Lloyd L. Brown, *The Young Paul Robeson: "On My Journey Now"*, Westfield Press, Boulder, CO, 1997.

Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1988.

How to Make a Timeline:

A timeline can start with this lesson and be added to through Chapter 3. The main timeline can be made of accounting machine tape spread across one wall. Or large sheets of shelf paper can be taped to a wall so pictures can be drawn in sequence to depict the main people, events or symbols of the Bustills' accomplishments. The simplest kind of timeline is a piece of heavy string on which dates are marked and from which two- or three-dimensional symbols are hung with clothespins clipped to the proper place along the line. The symbols which hang from the line can show what the person did, looked like, or accomplished:

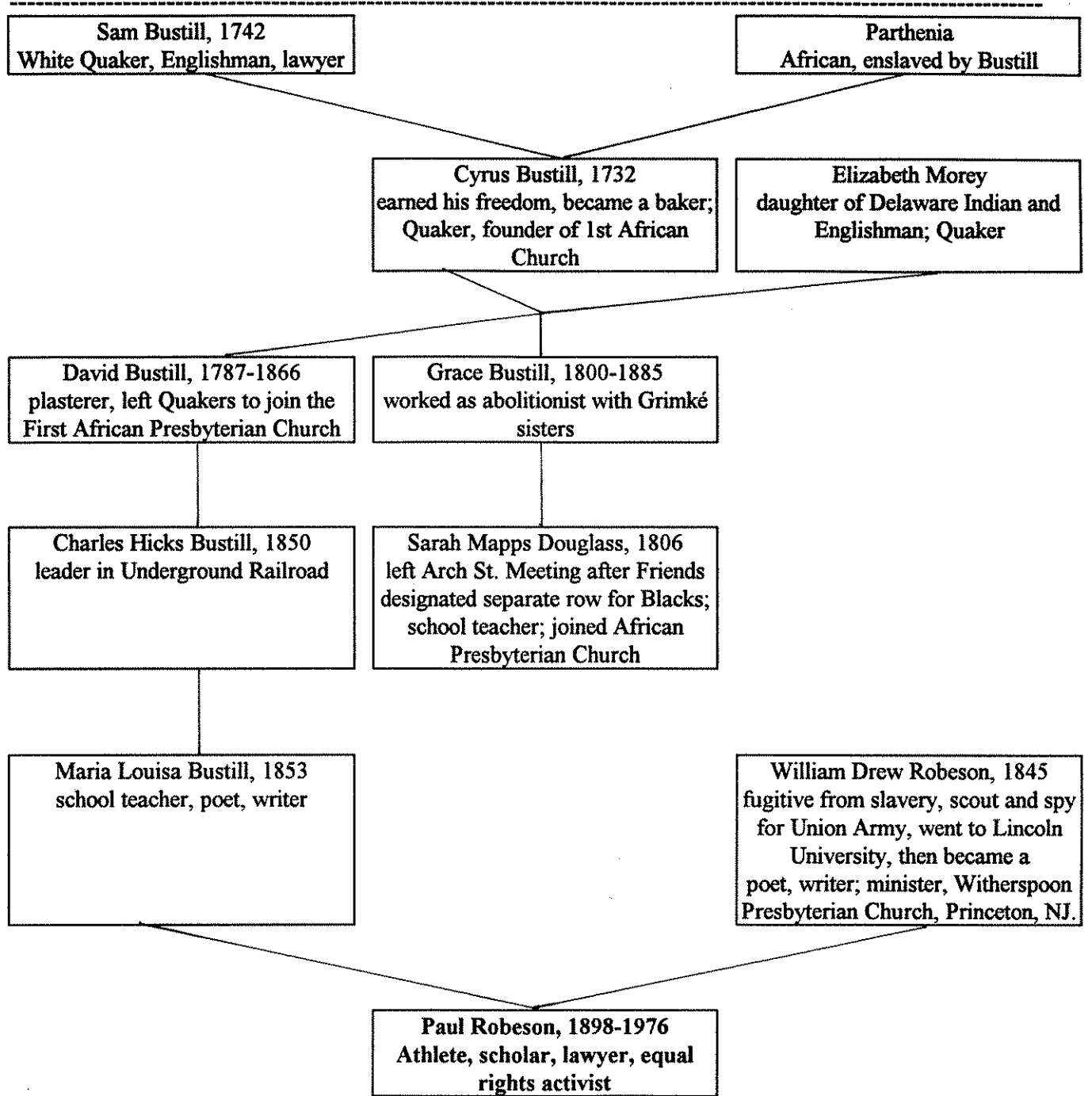


Time Line for Paul Robeson's Mother's Family and his Father

Cyrus Bustill 1732	David Bustill 1787	Grace Bustill 1800	Charles Hicks Bustill, 1850	Sarah Douglass 1806	Maria Louisa Bustill 1853	William Drew Robeson 1845	Paul Robeson 1898
1700s	1800s						1900s

Paul Robeson 1898-1976: Athlete, Scholar, Artist, Linguist, Equal Rights Activist.

The Bustill Family Tree



Chapter 3

Standing Your Ground

Themes:

- Recognizing injustices and deciding what to do about them
- Using your talents for social justice in the face of people who disagree with you

Review: One way to make sure all of your First-day students are “on the same page” is to ask these recall questions:

1. What is the name of Paul Robeson’s great-great-great grandfather?
2. Where did Cyrus grow up?
3. What did Cyrus do for a living?
4. Which of Paul Robeson’s parents’ ancestors were Quakers: his mother’s or his father’s?
5. List some of Paul Robeson’s talents.
6. What were some situations where Paul Robeson was discouraged from using his talents?

Another way to review is to ask each person to say one fact they remember from the First-day class they last attended.

Kindergarten - 8th Grade

Tell the following story about the obstacles Paul Robeson faced due to racism and his outspoken views for equality.



After graduating from Rutgers University, Paul Robeson went to Columbia Law School where he was the third African American to graduate. He worked as an attorney only for a short time because a secretary in the firm would not work for him, very few people wanted an African American to defend them, and jurors would not listen to him.

He left the law firm and, with the encouragement of his wife, Essie, became an actor and singer. He loved to travel. He traveled to London to perform and seemed to be accepted there for his talent rather than being hated because of his race. He lived in Paris and London for a long time because he felt accepted there. He traveled to the Soviet Union and sent his son to school there because he thought they did not discriminate against people because of their race.

In the United States, people were unhappy with him because of his support for the Soviet Union. At that time, in the 1950s, many people in the U.S. did not like communism - which was the way the Soviet Union ran its government. They felt that the people in the Soviet Union were trying to take over the United States and to “bury us”. Later, Paul came to see that the Soviet Union treated the Jews poorly and he spoke out about that. Whenever he saw people treated unfairly because of their race or economic status, he spoke up.

He spoke at many places against racism and inequality. The words of the songs he sang at concerts expressed in unforgettable ways his own feelings about America. In some places he couldn’t give a concert because no African Americans were allowed to perform. In other places, since no one would publicize his concert, no one came. In 1949 Robeson set out to perform in Peekskill, NY, but

local anti-communists and eight thousand members of the Associated Veterans group rioted against the views he reflected in his songs. So Robeson did not make it to the concert but took refuge in a friend's house. However, 8 days later, he returned again to Peekskill. This time there were 2,500 volunteers including many union workers in place to protect the 20,000 concert-goers from the protesters. Nonetheless, when thugs got rough, Robeson left the concert on the floor of a car covered by a blanket so he would not be killed.

In order to receive a passport, Robeson was expected to sign a loyalty oath saying he was not a member of the Communist Party. In those days, there was a committee of the U.S. House of Representatives which investigated and harassed anyone who said good things about the Soviet Union. He refused to sign the loyalty oath — not because he was or wasn't a communist. Paul said it shouldn't matter; he was an American entitled to a passport no matter what group he belonged to. Because he didn't back down, he was not allowed to travel until the U.S. Supreme Court said in the late 1950s that what a person believed should not keep them from traveling to another country.

Not only was Robeson prohibited from traveling to perform abroad, he couldn't perform in America. He was blacklisted, so he had no way to earn money in the U.S. In this country at that time people were so afraid of Communism, that if people thought you were a communist or a friend of a communist, you were not allowed to perform or might not be hired. His name was also taken off of sports record books from his days at Rutgers. He must have gotten discouraged during this period. Imagine how strong he had to be to keep going for 30 years in spite of adversity. How do you think you would feel?

In 1961, illness caused Robeson to retire. He entered a hospital in Moscow and was in several nursing homes. When he recovered he performed publicly on occasion but continued to speak out against inequity. After his wife Eslanda died in 1965, Paul Robeson went to live with his sister in Philadelphia, PA, seeing only his closest friends, relatives and supporters. To this day if you ask an older person about Paul Robeson, many will remember him as a Communist but little else. Yet he was a singer most famous for "Old Man River" and an actor who was unforgettable as the Shakespeare character Othello. Only after he died did Robeson receive the recognition he deserved in this country. In 1998 Paul Robeson was given a Grammy award posthumously (after he died) for outstanding achievement. Even though Robeson died in 1976 in relative obscurity and not wealthy by materialistic standards, for many people his life, based on principles, stands as an example of the life we should all strive to follow.



Kindergarten through 8th Grade

Questions for recall:

1. Why did Robeson stop being a lawyer?
2. Why did Paul Robeson feel more accepted in Paris and the Soviet Union?
3. What does 'blacklisted' mean?

4. Which part of Robeson's upbringing contributed to his singing talent?



To think about:

Paul Robeson encountered two huge obstacles in his life: *prejudice* and *racism*.

1. *Prejudice* is defined as judging a person by their physical appearance or behavioral attributes or an adverse judgment or opinion formed beforehand or without knowledge or examination of facts; a preconceived preference or idea (American Heritage).

2. *Racism* is defined as using the color of someone's skin and the other racial characteristics to determine how smart or what kind of human being they are (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition), or a belief that human races have distinctive characteristics which determine their respective

cultures, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has a right to rule others; a policy of enforcing such a right (Random House).

3. A *union* is defined as something formed by a combining or coalition of parts or members as a confederation of independent individuals for some common purpose (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition).

Discussion questions:

1. Have you ever been judged by others because of the way you looked or dressed or acted? How did you feel?
2. Have you ever made judgments about someone else? When you got to know them, were they the kind of person you originally thought they were?
3. Have you ever seen a person being put down because of the color of their skin or a physical or mental handicap? What did you do? What were the consequences?
4. What talents do you have that no one has seen or heard?
5. What talents did Paul Robeson possess, early in his life, that he couldn't use in this country? Later in his life?
6. Are there things about which you have very strong beliefs? What are they?
7. Are there things going on in your community which you would stand up for if you had the opportunity? The courage?
8. Why do you suppose union workers protected Paul Robeson during his concert? What had Robeson done for union workers?

Activities:

1st and 2nd Grade:

Sing *This Little Light of Mine* - which represents what Robeson stood for. See *Rise Up Singing*, p 69, by Peter and Annie Blood-Patterson, A SingOut Publication, and *Worship in Song, A Friends Hymnal*, p. 266, by Friends General Conference. The second verse, especially, "nobody can blow it out; I'm going to let it shine," reminds us that even when Paul Robeson was young, he stood out and shone and nobody, not even the government, could silence his voice.

Watch one of the Veggie Tales® called "Rack, Shack and Benny" by Big Idea Productions, Inc., 1995. This animated video, available at many religious bookstores, is about 3 boys who try to do the right thing even when all of their friends are pressuring them to do the wrong thing.

3rd and 4th Grade:

Sing *Old Man River* which comes from a musical called *Showboat*. Paul Robeson starred in it and made the song famous. When he sang it in concerts and not as part of the musical, he changed the words to suit his own concerns about racial and social injustice. He sang these new words for the troops in Spain who were fighting against the fascists. This was very controversial since the U.S. government was neutral and later backed the fascist government of Spain. He sang "show a little grit and you land in jail" instead of "get a little drunk and you land in jail." This is probably how he felt: that if you spoke up and showed a little dissatisfaction something bad would happen. Robeson also sang "I keeps on laughing instead of crying" about how he kept his sanity by keeping his sense of humor. Finally he changed the last sentence to "I must keep fighting until I'm dying," and that's what he did. When the US gave him back his passport and he was able to travel again, he changed the words when he sang *Old Man River*, once again, for laborers at the Sydney Opera House in Australia.

The two songs which follow and the Othello monologue are found on the compact disc *Paul Robeson, Live at Carnegie Hall, Historic May 9, 1958, Concert*, available in music stores and libraries so children can hear Paul Robeson's magnificent baritone voice as well as sing the songs.

Old Man River

Chorus

Old man river, that old man river,
He must know somethin', but he don't say nothin'
He just keeps rollin', he keeps on rollin' along

He don't plant 'taters and he don't plant cotton
And them what plants 'em is soon forgotten
But old man river, he just keeps rollin' along

You and me, we sweat and strain,
Bodies all achin' and racked with pain
Tote that barge, lift that bale
You show a little grit* and you land in jail.

Original Words:

Get a little drunk and you land in jail.

I'll keep smilin' instead of cryin'*
I must keep fightin' until I'm dyin'*
And old man river, he just keeps rollin' along.

I get's weary and sick of tryin'
I am tired of livin' and feared of dyin'

*These were Paul Robeson's altered lines.

J.Kern, O.Hammerstein, D. Heyward
from *Showboat*

Fifth and Sixth Grades:

Sing *The Ballad of Joe Hill*, a song about not being able to kill the truth which lives in spite of people. The chords and lyrics for this song are on p. 256 of *Rise Up Singing*. It's a song about Joe Hill, a union organizer, who was framed and convicted of a murder in Utah. He was executed by the

state. This has now become a folk song that many people sing, but back then no one sang it. Paul Robeson sang it and even sang it in Utah which made some of the officials there quite angry.

The Ballad of Joe Hill
as sung by Paul Robeson at the Sydney Opera House

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill Last night
Alive as you and me
Says I, "But, Joe, you're ten years dead!"
"I never died," says he,
"I never died," says he.

"In Salt Lake City, Joe," says I
Him standing by my bed,
"They framed you on a murder charge!"
Says Joe, "But I ain't dead."
Says Joe, "But I ain't dead."

"The copper bosses killed you, Joe.
They shot you, Joe," says I.
"Takes more than guns to kill a man!"
Says Joe, "I didn't die."
Says Joe, "I didn't die."

And standing there as big as life
And smiling with his eyes
Says Joe, "What they can never kill
Went on to organize;
Went on to organize."

From San Diego up to Maine
In every mine and mill
Where working folks defend their rights
It's there you'll find Joe Hill.
It's there you'll find Joe Hill.



7th and 8th Grade:

Monologue from *Othello*. Paul Robeson starred in this Shakespeare play. He said that he would draw from his own rage and sense of how he was wronged when he was performing this speech. It starts by talking about being an honorable man and doing service for the state and how Othello wants to be remembered that way and not by the lies which were being told about him. This section is from Act 5, Scene 2.

LODOVICO [to Othello]:
You must forsake this room, and go with us.
Your power and command is taken off,

And Cassio rules in Cyprus. For this slave,
If there be an cunning cruelty
Than can torment him much and hold him long,
It shall be his. You shall close prisoner rest,
Till that the nature of your fault be known
To the Venetian state. Come, bring him away.

OTHELLO:

Soft you; a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know't.
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought
Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum. Set you down this;
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turbanned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him, thus.
[He stabs himself]

LODOVICO

O bloody period!

GRATIANO

All that's spoke is marred.

OTHELLO [to Desdemona]

I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee: no way but this,
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.
[Falls on the bed and dies]



Hagen and Robeson in Desdemona's death scene.

Note: If you would like to hear the magnitude of Robeson's voice firsthand, Othello is on the CD "*Paul Robeson, Live in Carnegie Hall, Historic May 9, 1958 Concert*", available at most music stores.

An Activity for All Ages:

A way that Americans honor a person is to design a postage stamp and have it approved by the Postal Service. Before that happens, the design needs to be submitted to the Citizen Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC), a voluntary group of 15 appointed by the Post Master General. They meet four times a year and make recommendations to the Postal Service which makes the final decision. Knowing what you know about Paul Robeson's character, his talents, and courage, design a stamp which would keep his memory alive (see design page which follows).

For more information about submitting a stamp design write:

US Postal Service
Stamp Development
Attention: Stamp Design
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Room 4474E
Washington, DC 20260-2437
(202) 268-6338

Resources:

Paul Robeson in Philadelphia and Beyond: A Centennial Exhibition, 1898-1998, the Free Library of Philadelphia and The Charles L. Brockson Afro-American Collection, Temple University, April-July, 1998.

The Paul Robeson Collection, by the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, University Publications of America, 1991.

