

CRITICS RAVED ABOUT PAUL'S PERFORMANCE IN THE

SEPT. 1923

NEW YORK WORLD

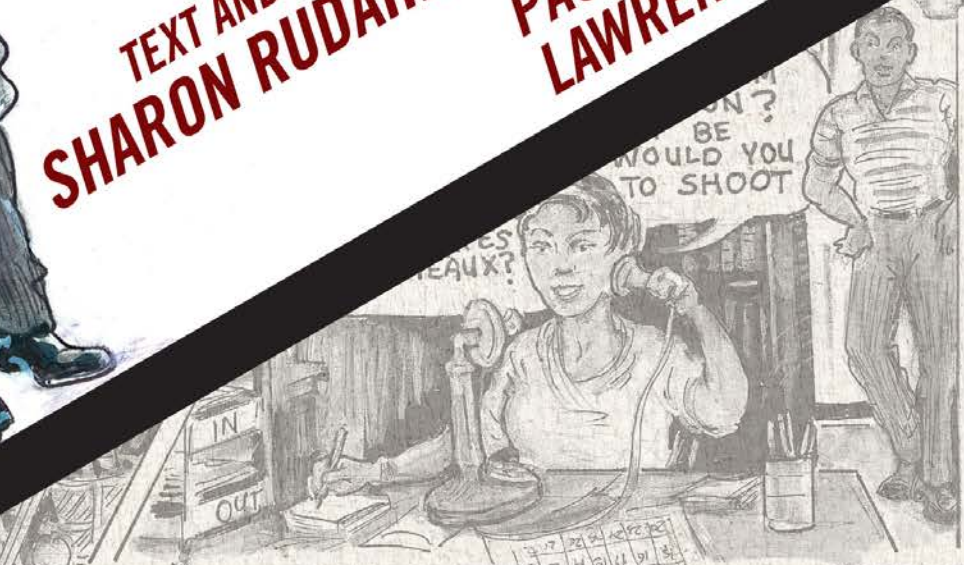
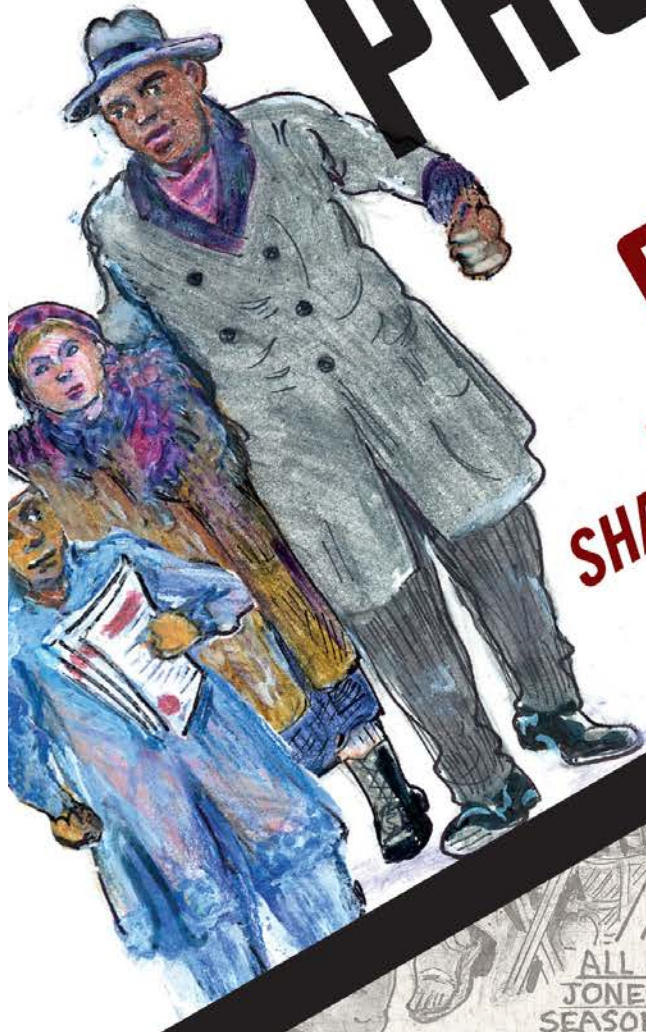
"Paul Robeson was an artistic genius, moral titan, and courageous freedom fighter whom we must never forget!"

DR. CORNEL WEST
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

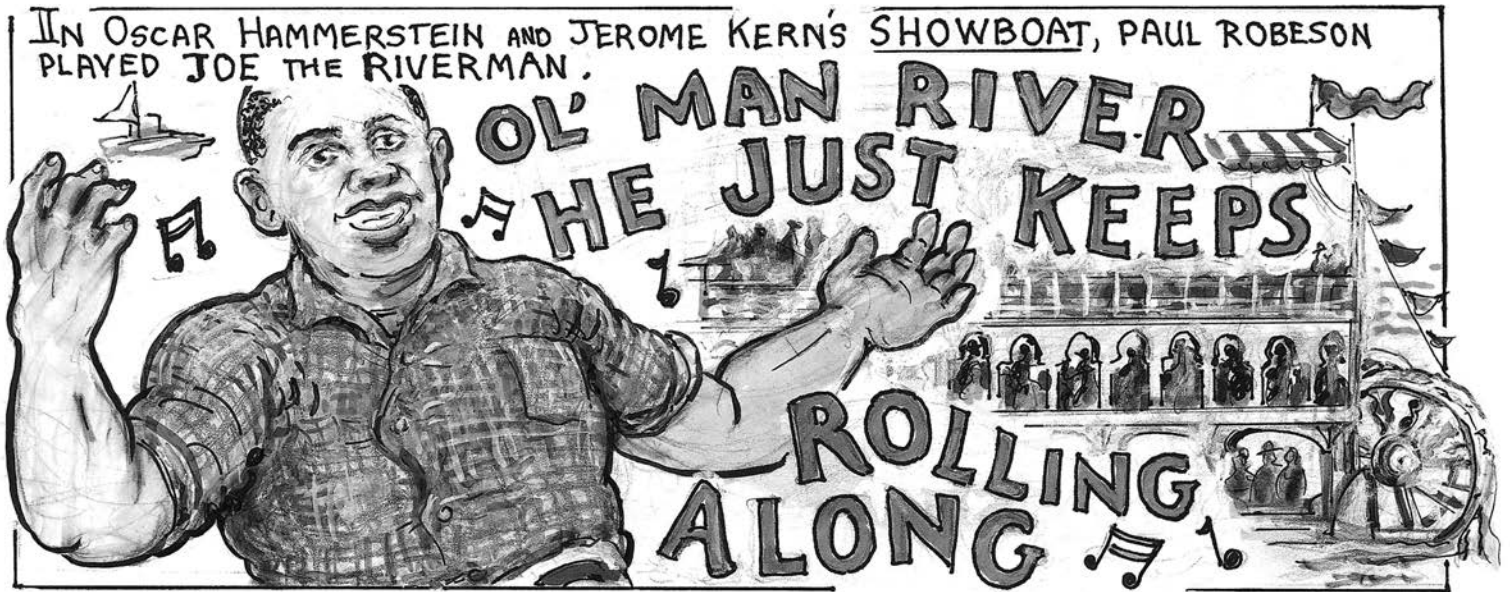
A GRAPHIC BIOGRAPHY OF PAUL ROBESON

TEXT AND ART BY SHARON RUDAHL

EDITED BY PAUL BUHLE & LAWRENCE WARE



ALL GODS CHILLUN GOT WINGS ALTERNATED WITH EMPEROR JONES UNTIL OCTOBER STORMS ENDED THE PROVINCE TOWN SEASON. ESSIE GAVE NOTICE AT THE LAB, AND DEVOTED HER CONSIDERABLE ABILITIES TO MANAGING PAUL'S CAREER.



Ballad of an American A Graphic Biography of Paul Robeson

Text and art by Sharon Rudahl
Edited by Paul Buhle and Lawrence Ware

The first-ever graphic biography of Paul Robeson, *Ballad of an American*, charts Robeson's career as a singer, actor, scholar, athlete, and activist who achieved global fame. Through his films, concerts, and records, he became a potent symbol representing the promise of a multicultural, multiracial American democracy at a time when, despite his stardom, he was denied personal access to his many audiences.

Robeson was a major figure in the rise of anti-colonialism in Africa and elsewhere, and a tireless campaigner for internationalism, peace, and human rights. Later in life, he embraced the civil rights and antiwar movements with the hope that new generations would attain his ideals of a peaceful and abundant world. *Ballad of an American* features beautifully drawn chapters by artist Sharon Rudahl, a compelling narrative about his life, and an afterword on the lasting impact of Robeson's work in both the arts and politics. This graphic biography will enable all kinds of readers—especially newer generations who may be unfamiliar with him—to understand his life's story and everlasting global significance.

Ballad of an American: A Graphic Biography of Paul Robeson is published in conjunction with Rutgers University's centennial commemoration of Robeson's 1919 graduation from the University.

Paul Buhle, retired Senior Lecturer at Brown University, is the authorized biographer of Pan-African giant, C.L.R. James and has written or edited many books on the Left in the US and the Caribbean. He has, in recent years, devoted himself to nonfiction graphic novels, including those on Emma Goldman, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eugene V. Debs.

Lawrence Ware is a professor of philosophy and co-director of Oklahoma State University's Center for Africana Studies. He writes widely on race and culture for *The Root*, *Slate*, and *The New York Times*. He has been a commentator on race and politics for Huffington Post Live, National Public Radio, and Public Radio International.

Sharon Rudahl marched with Martin Luther King as a teenager and began her career as a cartoonist with anti-Vietnam War underground newspapers. She was one of the founders of the 1970s-era feminist *Wimmen's Comix*. Rudahl has participated in scores of publications and exhibitions in dozens of countries over the last fifty years. She is best known for her graphic biography, *Emma Goldman: A Dangerous Woman*.

October 2020

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"Paul Robeson was an artistic genius, moral titan, and courageous freedom fighter whom we must never forget!"
—Dr. Cornel West, Harvard University

"Sharon Rudahl's graphic biography of Paul Robeson is vivid, well-informed, and deeply moving—a compelling account of a towering American hero, whose courage is more inspiring than ever at this fraught historical moment."
—T. J. Jackson Lears, Board of Governors Distinguished Professor of History, Rutgers University

"With powerful drawings, meticulous attention to historical detail, and deep appreciation for his wife, Eslanda Goode Robeson, Rudahl, Buhle, and Ware provide us with a deeply moving tribute to the enormous talent, courage and genius of Paul Robeson."
—Bettina Aptheker, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Feminist Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz

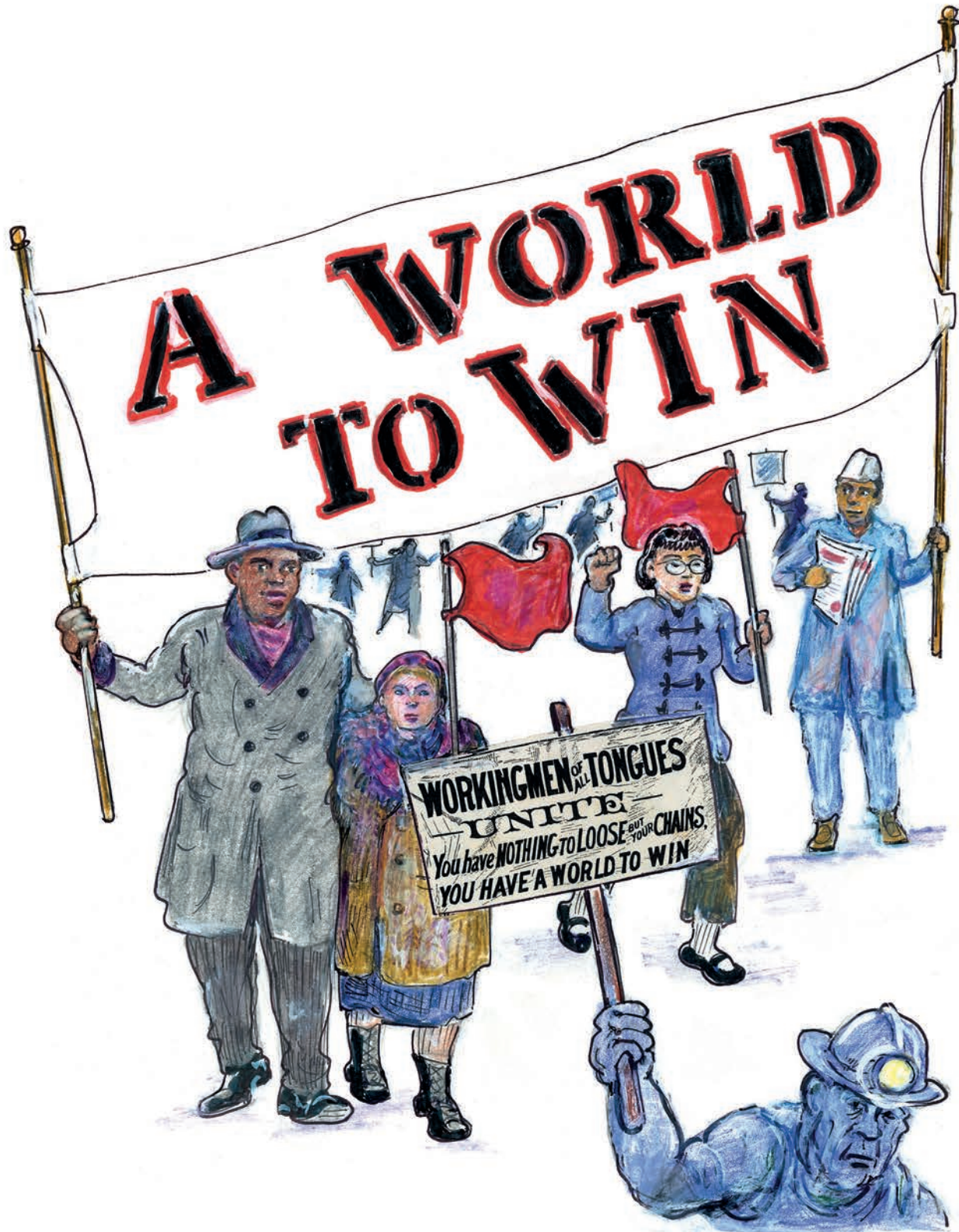
"With extraordinary rhythm, these arresting drawings and captivating words seamlessly weave insights from critical race theory, global politics, Marxist theory, cultural studies, and historical criticism to narrate the inimitable life of Paul Robeson. Robeson's story is as much a meditation on black aliveness in the face of systemic racism today as it is an insightful history of one man's fortitude against government persecution of yesteryear. This graphic biography captivated me from the first page—I couldn't put it down! It will be a classic in the genre."
—Andre C. Willis, Associate Professor of Religion, Brown University

"*Ballad of an American* takes a creative and thoughtful approach to sharing the life story of the great artist-activist. It is a welcome addition to the body of literature on Paul Robeson."
—Lindsey R. Swindall, author of *Paul Robeson: A Life of Activism and Art*

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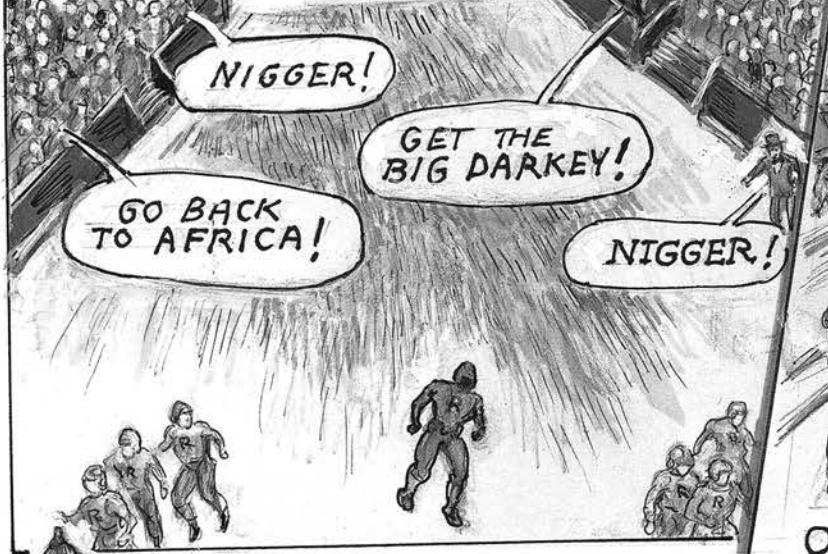


SHARON RUDDYK 2019

BY HIS SOPHOMORE YEAR AT RUTGERS PAUL ROBESON WAS 6 FEET 3 INCHES, OVER 200 MUSCLED POUNDS. HE WAS THE MAINSTAY OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM. NEW YORK NEWSPAPERS HAILED HIS EXPLOITS ON THE GRIDIRON...



BUT SOMETIMES RACISTS BELLOWED FROM THE STANDS ~



ON THE ROAD, SEGREGATION FORCED PAUL TO LIVE APART FROM HIS TEAMMATES.



WHEN RUTGERS PLAYED SOUTH OF THE MASON-DIXON LINE, PAUL ATE ALONE ON THE BUS.



SOME SOUTHERN COLLEGES REFUSED TO PLAY A TEAM WITH A BLACK ATHLETE,



BY THE TIME SHOWBOAT CLOSED IN LATE 1929, ROBESON WAS SUCH A COMMANDING STAR THAT HE WAS OFFERED THE ROLE OF OTHELLO AT A RECORD £300 PER WEEK.

IN 1603 SHAKESPEARE WROTE A CHARACTER OF AFRICAN DESCENT MORE BELIEVABLE THAN ANY WRITTEN BY WHITE AUTHORS IN ROBESON'S LIFETIME.

BUT NO BLACK ACTOR HAD PLAYED OTHELLO SINCE IRA ALDRIDGE IN THE MID - 19TH CENTURY.



IRA ALDRIDGE AS OTHELLO



VIENNA

THE FEW MONTHS BEFORE OTHELLO BEGAN REHEARSALS WERE A WHIRLWIND OF TRAVEL AND PERFORMANCES ~



A TRIUMPHANT U.S. TOUR OF THE SPIRITUALS, WITH LARRY BROWN ON PIANO...

A CONCERT TOUR ACROSS EUROPE, INCLUDING SINGING WITH A FULL ORCHESTRA IN PARIS...



AUDIENCES ALL OVER THE WORLD KNEW PAUL FROM HIS RECORDS. AT EACH STOP HE WAS MOBBED BY AUTOGRAPH SEEKERS.

♪ HE'S GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN HIS HANDS ♪

1937's KING SOLOMON'S MINES, FROM THE RIDER HAGGARD BEST SELLER, WAS AN ESPECIALLY LAVISH PRODUCTION. SCENIC BACKGROUNDS WERE FILMED IN AFRICA.

ROBESON AS CHIEF UMBOPA



IN BIG FELLA, ESSIE AND LARRY BROWN HAVE PARTS. PAUL PLAYS ANOTHER SINGING DOCKWORKER. HE FINDS A LOST BOY AND HELPS RAISE HIM.



BIG FELLA IS A BREAKTHROUGH IN SHOWING BLACK BRITISH CHARACTERS AS ORDINARY PEOPLE GETTING ALONG IN LIFE.

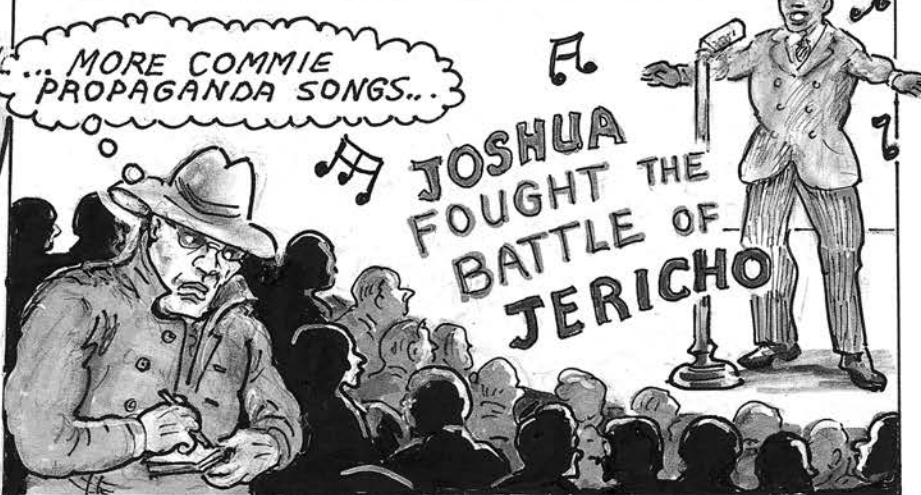


BETWEEN WORK ON KING SOLOMON'S MINES AND GOING ON LOCATION IN EGYPT FOR THE MOVIE JERICHO, PAUL ROBESON WENT ON A MONTHLONG CONCERT TOUR IN THE SOVIET UNION, PERFORMING FOLK AND PROTEST SONGS FROM MANY LANDS.

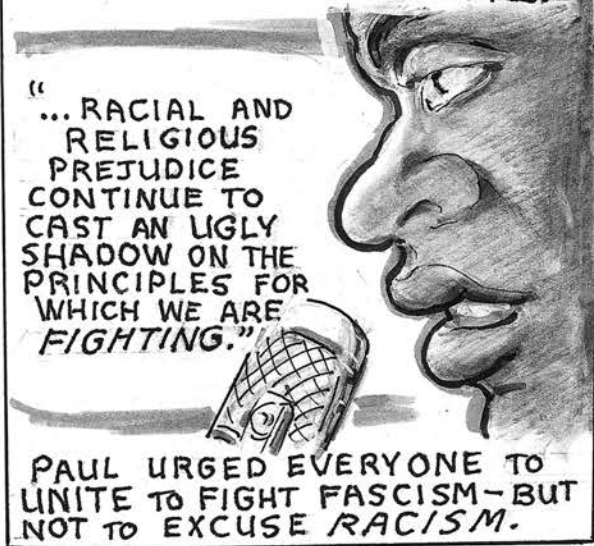
AS ROBESON'S FAME GREW, SO DID HIS F. B. I. FILE.



BY 1941, J. EDGAR HOOVER WAS SENDING AGENTS TO SPY ON PAUL'S PUBLIC APPEARANCES...



DECEMBER 7, 1941—THE JAPANESE BOMBED PEARL HARBOR. THE U.S.A. OFFICIALLY ENTERED W.W.II.



ROBESON SANG AT WAR BOND RALLIES AND FOR U.S. TROOPS SHIPPING OUT FOR COMBAT.



HE WAS EVEN INVITED TO JOIN FIRST LADY ELEANOR ROOSEVELT ON THE PLATFORM AT A CONFERENCE FOR HUMAN WELFARE.



SHARON RUDAHN 2019

CHAPTER V
**BLOODIED
BUT
UNBOWED**



SHARON RUSKINE 2014

CHAPTER II
**FIRST STEPS
ON
THE STAGE**



CHAPTER I

**SON of a SLAVE ~
STAR of
RUTGERS**



SHARON RUSKINE 2014

CHAPTER III



SHARON RUSKINE 2014

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