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## **PAUL ROBESON HONORED ON NEW BLACK HERITAGE SERIES COMMEMORATIVE POSTAGE STAMP**

PRINCETON, N.J. – A first day of issue ceremony for the Paul Robeson commemorative stamp took place today at Princeton University. The Paul Robeson stamp is the 27th stamp in the Black Heritage series issued by the U.S. Postal Service.

“I am particularly pleased to be honoring Paul Robeson here today in Alexander Hall in his hometown of Princeton—a very appropriate location for this event. This place symbolizes genius, knowledge, study and fame, a perfect description of Paul Robeson’s life,” said Murry E. Weatherall, vice president of Diversity Development for the Postal Service, who dedicated the stamp. “The Postal Service is extremely proud of the Black Heritage series and are honored to add Robeson’s name to the distinguished list that makes up this stamp series.”

The Paul Robeson stamp is available at Princeton Post Offices today and will be available at Post Offices nationwide starting tomorrow.

Joining Weatherall at the first day ceremony were Amy Gutmann, Provost, Princeton University; the Honorable Rush Holt, U.S. Representative; the Honorable Regina L. Thomas, New Jersey Secretary of State; Shirley Tilghman, President, Princeton University; Avery Brooks, Theater Artist; the Rev. Judson M. Carter, First Baptist Church, Trenton, N.J.; Henry Foner, President, Paul Robeson Foundation; and Paul Robeson, Jr.

Honored guests included Vito Cetta, Central New Jersey district manager, U.S. Postal Service, and Henry Foner, president, Paul Robeson Foundation.

“The U.S. Postal Service commemoration of Paul Robeson in the Black Heritage postage stamp series is a fitting tribute to a man who symbolized excellence,” said Tilghman. “Princeton University is honored to host this celebration of a distinguished resident of the Princeton community whose legacy as an artist, activist and intellectual continues to be recognized worldwide.”



Robeson achieved worldwide fame as an actor, singer, athlete and activist. He joins 26 other outstanding African-American activists, theorists, educators and leaders honored by the Black Heritage series, including Martin Luther King, Jr.; Benjamin Banneker; Dr. Carter G. Woodson; Madam C.J. Walker; Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz); Patricia Roberts Harris; Roy Wilkins; Langston Hughes; and Thurgood Marshall, who was honored in January 2003.

Born in Princeton, N.J. on April 9, 1898, Robeson broad range of talents was evident as early as high school, where he was an outstanding student and athlete. In 1915, he entered Rutgers College (now Rutgers University) on a scholarship and became the third African American to attend the school. He graduated as class valedictorian in 1919. Robeson was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and an All-American football player.

From 1920 to 1923, Robeson helped pay his way through Columbia Law School in New York City by working as an athlete and a performer. He played professional football, served as assistant football coach at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and starred in the 1922 play "Taboo" in New York and in London (where it was renamed "Voodoo"). Robeson was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

After graduating from law school, Robeson briefly worked in a law firm, but he resigned after a white secretary refused to take dictation from him. By 1924, he had devoted himself to his career as a performer, playing the lead roles in productions of two Eugene O'Neill plays: "All God's Chillun Got Wings" and "The Emperor Jones." He played numerous stage roles during his career, but he was best known for his interpretation of the title character in Shakespeare's "Othello."

Robeson was renowned worldwide for his talents as a singer. He helped establish African-American spirituals as a legitimate American art form. In addition to his famous repertoire of spirituals, Robeson became well-known for performing and interpreting folk songs from around the world. "Ol' Man River," from the musical "Showboat," became his signature song.

Between 1925 and 1942, Robeson also appeared in several American and British movies, including the "The Emperor Jones," "Show Boat," "King Solomon's Mines," "Jericho," and his favorite, "The Proud Valley." His image became the personification of human dignity. Discouraged by the limited roles available to black actors in Hollywood, Robeson announced in 1942 he would no longer appear in films.

Well known as an activist, Robeson was an outspoken participant in labor and peace movements, and his public appearances were infused with his strong political beliefs, especially his principled stand against racism in the U.S. and around the world. He was opposed to colonialism in Africa and worked to assist and support African liberation

Movements. Alarmed by the spread of fascism in Europe, Robeson was also a prominent supporter of the Allied war effort during World War II. In 1945, the NAACP awarded him its highest honor for achievement among African Americans, the prestigious Spingarn Medal.

Robeson died on Jan. 23, 1976, at the age of 77. His posthumous honors reflect his wide range of accomplishments: In 1978 he was honored by the United Nations for his opposition to apartheid in South Africa, in 1995 he was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame, and in 1998 he received a Grammy Award for Lifetime Achievement. Many schools, community centers and theaters have been named for him, as well as numerous academic and cultural institutions.

Richard Sheaff of Scottsdale, Ariz., was the designer and art director for the stamp. The stamp art is a detail of a circa 1943 photograph of Robeson. Although the photographer is unknown, an inscription by Robeson in the lower left corner of the print suggests that Montreal-based photographers Annette and Basil Zarov made the original photograph.

One hundred thirty million Paul Robeson self-adhesive 37-cent stamps were printed. To see the Paul Robeson stamp, locate the online version of this press release at [www.usps.com/communications/news/stamps/welcome.htm](http://www.usps.com/communications/news/stamps/welcome.htm).

Current U.S. stamps, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free telephone order at 1 800 STAMP-24. A selection of stamps and other philatelic items are available at the online Postal Store at [www.usps.com/shop](http://www.usps.com/shop). In addition, custom-framed art prints of original stamp art are available for purchase at [www.postalgallery.com](http://www.postalgallery.com).

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits more than 141 million homes and businesses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$68.9 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mailing and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume — some 202 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year — and serves seven million customers each day at its 40,000 retail locations nationwide.

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