

Arts and Recreation Committee
ETHNIC ARTS SUB-COMMITTEE
ETHNIC MINORITIES COMMITTEE

Report (25.1.85) by

Principal Race Relations Adviser
Director of Recreation and the Arts

Item	
11	AR 1944
PAUL ROBESON - EXHIBITION, CONCERT AND FILMS AT THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL AND QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL - APRIL/MAY 1985	

This proposal is covered by the
terms of FGP 881 (see para.21)

RECOMMENDATIONS -

- (1) In the light of their consideration of the contents of FGP 881, and the decisions reached by Finance and General Purposes Committee, this committee regards the proposal as being of over-riding urgency and need.
- (2) That Finance and General Purposes Committee be asked to approve additional revenue resources of £28,346 in 1984/85;
- (3) That, subject to (2) above approval be given to gross expenditure of up to £31,447 (£21,027 net) for:-
 - (a) the Paul Robeson Exhibition to be held at the Royal Festival Hall between 23 April and 16 May 1985;
 - (b) a programme of films made by and with Paul Robeson to be shown at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on 4 May 1985;
 - (c) a Paul Robeson Memorial Concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on 6 May 1985.

DG/EMU/PV/1273
RA/GR/IG/1713

(a) Paul Robeson - ~~the~~ Communist
(b) Positive / Negative images of blacks
in Hollywood Film
(c) CLR Jones - Exhibition

331/S175

PAUL ROBESON EXHIBITION

1. It is proposed to organise an exhibition which pays tribute to Paul Robeson and his varied facets of life. The exhibitions will be held at the Royal Festival Hall in the Upper Foyer between 23 April and 16 May 1985. The Paul Robeson Exhibition is a documentation of his life through hundreds of newspaper articles, photographs, books and memorials. The main sections of the exhibition will present Paul Robeson as the sportsman, stage actor, freedom fighter, civil rights campaigner and singer. In addition a concert of some of his most famous songs, screening of selected films and a continuous showing of a video on the life of Paul Robeson will also be organised.

2. Paul Robeson

Paul Robeson was one of the greatest men who ever lived. He was born in Princeton, New Jersey in 1898. He died in Philadelphia on 23 January 1976. Paul Robeson was not simply an actor and singer, two roles for which he is well known, but a political activist, freedom fighter, campaigner for civil rights, sportsman and a film-maker. During the course of his life he was imprisoned for his beliefs, his passport confiscated and his right to work taken away. He was branded as a communist because of his relationship with Russia.

3. For many Paul Robeson is a well known figure while for others he is unknown. In Russia for instance there is a mountain named after him, in Berlin a museum, in Pennsylvania a film festival and in Poland, a street.

4. He was a gifted scholar and qualified as a lawyer. While living in London he influenced the thinking of many African students. Two in particular were very close to him, Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah became the Presidents of their own country (Kenya and Ghana). Indira Gandhi was also fond of him and celebrated a Paul Robeson day in Delhi.

5. Through this exhibition we hope to present the rich and varied life of this great man. The idea for this exhibition has come from Mrs Martha Edwards who met Paul Robeson when she was just a few years old during his visit to Wales. Paul, during one of his tours was so moved by the struggle of the coal miners and their march from Wales to London to present a petition for continued work that he went to Wales to see for himself. He stayed, singing to raise money for the families of the miners and thereby build up a relationship with the community which was to last a lifetime.

6. Over the years Mrs Martha Edwards has been collecting text, newspaper cuttings, old photographs, books and memorials and Paul Robeson's personal writings. A highly successful, albeit a small exhibition, was organised at the Wandsworth Council Library to which some 1,000 people came, including well known personalities like Dame Peggy Ashcroft, Marie Seaton. However, due to the limited amount of space, lack of resources and security it was only possible to mount a small exhibition displaying only a limited amount of material. The exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall will be fuller and with its central location will, we hope attract a wider audience.

Exhibition

7. The exhibition will be presented under the following sections and will attempt to paint a picture of Robeson and his life.

(a) Beginning

This section will focus on Paul Leroy Robeson's father and mother and contains rare photographs, some of which go as far back as 1845. Paul's father, William Drew Robeson, was born into slavery on 27 July 1845. In 1860 at the age of 15, William Robeson 'freed' himself from slavery, three years before Abraham Lincoln was coerced into producing the Emancipation Proclamation. By 1876 William Robeson had managed to work his way through university.

(b) Sports

Before he showed any ability as a singer or actor, Robeson had proved himself as one of America's best ever football players. This part of the exhibition deals with Robeson the sportsman mainly from a pictorial point of view. There are team photographs of Robeson when he made both the basketball and baseball teams at Rutgers University in 1917. As an outstanding athlete he also canvassed for the rights of black Americans to participate in sports. He fought and won the rights of negroes to participate in organised basketball.

(c) Stage Actor

Paul Robeson is best known for his acting and singing abilities. This part of the exhibition presents photographs of Paul Robeson in Eugene O'Neill's plays (All God's Children Got Wings and Emperor Jones). C.L.R. James has supplied newspaper reviews of his play Toussaint in which Robeson appeared in March of 1936. These include the Glasgow Herald, 18 March 1936, The Daily Mail, 17 March 1936 and the April issue of Drama London 1936.

The most famous role played by Paul Robeson was Othello. He was the second black actor to play this role, the first was Ira Aldridge in 1860s. Paul played this role three times in 1930, 1943 and 1959.

(d) Robeson and Wales

Robeson's association with Welsh people began back in 1928 when he was appearing in the stage musical 'showboat'. Robeson went to Wales to see for himself the plight of striking miners and developed a close relationship which is reflected in the film 'Proud Valley'. The film was shot in the Rhondda Valley in 1938/39 and during the shooting Robeson lived with the miners.

This section of the exhibition contains photographs of Robeson in Wales and pictorial documentation of his famous broadcast from his home in America to the Welsh people.

(e) Freedom

From 1950-1958 the American State Department refused to grant a passport to Paul Robeson. He was not even allowed to travel to Canada. For a man who was known as a Citizen of the World the implications were obvious. A "Let Paul Robeson Go Committee" was formed and in the House of Commons over 50 Labour MPs organised a committee to put pressure on the American Government. The Welsh miners also played a prominent role in the fight to get Paul his passport.

The pride of place in this section is a photograph showing Robeson holding his passport which was returned after eight years. The section also contains information and photographs about the International Campaign mounted to get him his passport and thereby the freedom to travel again.

(f) Civil Rights

Robeson understood the dynamics and mechanics of racism in America and he spoke out against the injustices that he saw in his country. He spoke out against America's involvement in other countries' internal affairs and against black Americans going to fight in Vietnam.

This section will contain photographs and newspapers and will feature extracts from the transcripts of Paul Robeson's appearances before the Committee on Unamerican Activities.

Robeson was the first black performer to take a stand on not playing to segregated audiences.

(g) Robeson and India

Paul Robeson believed in the 'coming together' of those who bore the brunt of imperialism and racism. Robeson had deep rooted connections with India, especially the Gandhi family. Robeson was a speaker at a welcome meeting organised for Jawaharal Nehru by the Indian League in June 1938 in London. This historic meeting eventually led to the formation of the South Africa Committee of the Indian League, the League of Coloured People, the West African Students Union and the East African Students Union, forming a huge protest march in 1949 against the racist policies of South Africa.

Nehru also played a prominent role in the campaign to restore Paul's passport to him.

This section of the exhibition will contain photographs of the many meetings between Paul and Nehru and Krishna Menon whose political views Paul shared.

(h) Other Sections

While the above are the main sections other sections will include Robeson at Home, the Singer, Lover of Children and Tributes.

8. Books

Through the years an important channel of discovering Paul Robeson has been books written about him and by him. Martin Luther King is the only other black individual about whom more works have been written. As part of the exhibition it is proposed to display some of these books. Examples of some of the titles are:-

Paul Robeson, Negro, written by his wife Eslanda Goode Robeson (1930)

Labour's Forgotten Hero Dr Wright on Paul's work as a union activist

A Pictorial History of Paul Robeson by Susan Robeson

Paul Robeson: The American Othello by Edwin P. Hoyt

Paul Robeson by Marie Seton

Paul Robeson: The Life and Time of a Free Black Man by Virginia Hamilton

Paul Robeson: All American by Dorothy Rutler

Big Ben by Earl Schenck Miers

Paul Robeson: Biography of a Proud Man by Joseph Nazel.

9. Exhibition Programme

It is important to produce a detailed catalogue which not only gives details about the exhibition but is also a lasting record of the exhibition. The programme catalogue will contain an introduction to the exhibition from Paul Robeson Junior and possibly Mr. Neil Kinnock. The catalogue will be an important source of information for those who want to find out more about Paul Robeson. The text will be illustrated with black and white photographs.

10. Films

Paul Robeson was not only an actor in films but he also made some of his films and as part of the exhibition it is proposed to organise a screening of selected films. A film programme consisting of titles like Proud Valley, Song of Freedom, Emperor Jones, Jericho, Big Fella and a documentary narrated by Sydney Potier on the life of Paul Robeson will be presented at the Queen Elizabeth Hall during the course of the exhibition. Since many of the films are only distributed in the USA, freight and hire charges will be incurred in bringing these films for the programme.

11. Concert

It is proposed to organise The Paul Robeson Memorial Concert which would be part tribute, part salute and entertaining. The artists for the concert will be personal friends and fellow workmates of Paul Robeson. The singer/actress Elizabeth Welsh (who played the female lead in his films) and the actress Dame Peggy Ashcroft who appeared with him in Othello. Dame Peggy will read poems as part of the evening.

Because of Paul's love for the Welsh people, a Welsh group will sing some of his favourite songs. As a reminder of what Paul Robeson sounded like the opera singer Willard White will sing three of Robeson's best known songs. In keeping with Robeson's belief in Africa and the liberation of its people, the group African Dawn will perform a selection of their work. The actor Joe Marcell will narrate/compere the concert and Larry Adler has also agreed to take part. The concert will take place in the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the 6 May at 7.30 pm.

The above is the core of the concert. It is proposed to invite Paul Robeson Junior for the concert and that he will be also to say a few words on the night of the concert.

12. Feasibility Study

A great deal of research has already been done in preparing for this exhibition. The team of four people, namely Maxine Taylor who was responsible for compiling the research, Robert Hearne responsible for exhibition sections, Steven Bourne responsible for film and book sections and Junior Douglas responsible for the overall co-ordination have researched the background material. This has entailed researching new sections; visiting exhibitions; putting together and producing mounted boards; budgeting putting together concert programme; contacting agents and locating the films. The cost of the research conducted by these four people is approximately £2,500.

13. Programme Organisation

The Royal Festival Hall does not have in-house expertise to organise this exhibition and the related programme. It is therefore necessary to employ the services of those people who are not only familiar with the proposed exhibition and who also have detailed knowledge about Paul Robeson.

Such expertise lies with the people who conducted the initial feasibility study for this exhibition and it is proposed therefore to pay these people nominal fees for their services in assisting the GLC to present this exhibition.

- (a) Exhibition: This section will be coordinated by Maxine Taylor who also put together the final feasibility study. She will be responsible for the general compiling of the information which would include photography material, photocopying material, collating information, assisting in the laminating and mounting of the exhibition at the Festival Hall. Maxine Taylor's services and expertise would be invaluable in assisting the GLC to present this exhibition. Due to the background research already conducted by her, she is able to locate the material which is scattered and often very difficult to locate. It is proposed to pay Maxine Taylor a consultancy fee, which is larger than the fees for the consultants for the concert and the films (see paragraph 15(6)) in recognition of the much larger amount of work - 3 months at about an average of 2 days per week - in organising the exhibition than the other two elements of the programme (see (b) and (c) below.

(b) Concert

Much of the work of contacting artists and planning of the artistic programme has already been done by Junior Douglas also a member of the team responsible for the feasibility study. He has approached artists like Dame Peggy Ashcroft, Joe Marcell, African Dawn, Willard White and Welsh Choir who have all expressed their keen interest to participate in a memorial concert for Paul Robeson. Junior Douglas will be responsible for the finalising of the artistic programme and the stage management of the concert on the day. He will be responsible for liaising with the Queen Elizabeth Hall to ensure the smooth presentation of this very important concert. He will be paid a nominal fee for his services.

(c) Films

Steve Bourne, the third member of the feasibility study group, has done extensive research into the films made by and with Paul Robeson. He was responsible for the organisation of a highly successful season of Paul Robeson films at the National Film Theatre. He has also researched the films and their availability for a one day screening of films during the exhibition period at the Festival Hall. Steven Bourne will assist the GLC in obtaining these films, from the different distributors, programming and helping with the publicity. He will be paid a nominal fee for his expertise and services.

Without the help of these three people who have already done much of the ground work in preparing the feasibility study, it would be very difficult if not impossible to present this programme. The overall coordination of the programme will be the responsibility of the Ethnic Arts Adviser.

14. Finance

The Council approved an Anti Racists Arts Programme (AR 1422 14.3.84) as part of the activities for Anti-Racist Year. It was stated that there was no specific provision for £470,000 out of the £847,500 programme estimate and that each initiative should be subject of separate reports. The overall net cost of the Paul Robeson project has now been estimated at £21,027. There is no provision in the 1984/85 revenue estimates or reserves to meet expenditure of £28,346 falling in 1984/85 and it will be necessary to ask the Finance and General Purposes Committee to allocate additional financial resources. A small proportion of the expenditure (£3,101 for artists' fees for the concert) will fall in 1985/86, but net income will accrue to the Council in 1985/86 as this will be offset by the income arising from the project in that year (estimated as £10,420 - see paragraph 6).

15. Budget Expenditure

(a) <u>Exhibition</u> (RFH Foyer 23.4.85 - 16.5.85)	£
1. Exhibition Materials: photographs, & newspaper cuttings to be laminated, mounted on hardboard and heat sealed. Approximately ten pieces of articles mounted on one panel. 100 boards (28" x 30" each) with approximately 500 pieces.	2,500
2. Hire/Construction of Exhibition Furniture (boards, paints, lights, glass cases for books etc.	2,500
3. Exhibition Catalogue (2,500 x 36 pages with black and white photographs)	2,500
4. Advertising/Leaflets (10,000)/Posters (2,000 Double Crown)	3,000
5. Insurance/security	1,000
6. Travel from USA and hotel expenses for Paul Robeson Jnr to open exhibition (he will also appear at the concert - see para.11)	1,000
7. Reception for exhibition at £3 per head for 300	900
8. Feasibility Study Cost	2,500
9. Consultancy Fee	1,500
Sub-Total	17,400
(b) <u>Concert Expenditure</u> (Queen Elizabeth Hall 6.5.85 - 7.30 pm)	£
QEH Hire Charges	1,192
Artists' Fees	3,101
Publicity	2,962
Security/Staffing/Stage Management	500
PA/Lighting	500
Catering	100
Consultancy Fee	500
Sub-Total	8,855

(c) Film Expenditure (Queen Elizabeth Hall 4.5.85 - 11 am to 10 pm)

Hire of films	£ 2,000
Approximately five films from USA distributors	
Freight and hire charges	
Publicity	1,500
QEH Hire Charges	1,192
Consultancy Fee	500
Sub-Total	<u>5,192</u>

Total Expenditure

(a) Exhibition	£ 17,400
(b) Concert	8,855
(c) Film	<u>5,192</u>
Total	<u>31,447</u>

We consider the costs to be necessary and reasonable.

16. Estimated Income

(a) Exhibition

The entrance to the exhibition will be free, but the programme catalogue will be sold at £1 each. It is estimated that approximately 50,000 will see the exhibition over the four weeks. Estimated income derived from the sale of the programme catalogue is £2,500.

Income £2,500

(b) Concert

Ticket prices of £2.50, £4, £5, £6 and £8 are proposed, with £6 and £5 seats available at £5 and £4 respectively for parties of twenty or more. This would bring an income of £3,920 on the basis of 75% capacity attendance. If the exhibition arouses sufficient interest, a 100% capacity audience could well be achieved.

Income £3,920

(c) Film Show

It is proposed to charge £2 for an all day screening of films in the Queen Elizabeth Hall. It is estimated that approximately 2,000 people will see the films during the course of the day.

Income £4,000

<u>Estimated Income</u>	
	£
Programme Catalogue	2,500
Concert	3,920
Films	4,000
	10,420
Estimated Expenditure	31,447
Estimated Income	10,420
Deficit	21,027

The overall subsidy per attendance for the proposals as a whole is 40 p per head which I consider a very reasonable level. Following discussions with the organisers the publicity budget for the concert has been reviewed and the artists' fees reduced, but we consider it would be self-defeating to reduce the level of publicity proposed which is considered necessary to draw a good attendance, and a very low level of artists' fees is proposed in relation to the international stature of the individual artists' taking part: we cannot see any scope for further significant reduction if a proper standard for a concert commemorating someone of Paul Robeson's stature is to be retained, and in all the circumstances I consider the subsidy per attendance of £6 is justified in this case.

17. Women's Considerations

Paul Robeson Exhibition is open to men and women to attend.

18. People with Disabilities

Disabled people will have equal opportunity to attend the exhibition.

19. Ethnic Minority Considerations

The exhibition will attract many people from the black and ethnic minority communities who want to find out more about one of our heroes.

20. Legal Powers

The appropriate powers are in the Local Government Act 1972 Section 145(1)(a) and (e).

21. Considerations relating to the decisions on FGP 881

The Committee will need, in arriving at their decision, to bear in mind the contents of FGP 881, and additional revenue resources in 1984/85 for which Finance and General Purposes Committee approval is necessary, will be required for the proposals. The urgency of and need for the proposals is set out in the Ethnic Arts Adviser's comments in paragraph 22.

22. 'Apart from the simple fact that the RFH exhibition space has been booked for the exhibition, and Queen Elizabeth Hall for an early exhibition, there are other more fundamental reasons why this exhibition is important and why it should be organised as part of the Anti-Racists Arts Programme initiatives.

Paul Robeson himself was a fighter against racism injustice and campaigner for human rights and world peace. A man of phenominal stature, his talents and energy expanded the full range of human activity.

An exhibition of this nature is not only urgent but important and should be presented as part of the Anti-Racist Year programme. The exhibition is intended to educate both black and white communities about the very valuable contributions Paul Robeson made to many facets of life and the struggles of the people of the world.'

23. Conclusion

We consider that these proposals will constitute a fitting commemoration of, and tribute to, Paul Robeson's life and work and are likely to arouse wide interest, and we recommend accordingly.

Item 11 AR 1944

PAUL ROBESON EXHIBITION, CONCERT AND FILMS AT THE RFH AND QEH

Report (28.1.85) by the Director of Finance

1. This proposal is covered by the terms of the Finance and General Purposes Committee decision on FGP 881. It seeks approval to gross expenditure of up to £31,447 (£21,027 net) for an exhibition, including a concert and films, as a tribute to the life of Paul Robeson.

2. The proposed budget for the event, detailed in paragraphs 15 and 16 of the main report, covers 1984/5 and 1985/6 as follows:-

	1984/5	1985/6	Total
	£	£	£
Gross expenditure	28,346	3,101	31,447
Income	-	10,420	10,420
	-----	-----	-----
Net expenditure/(income)	28,346	(7,319)	21,027
	=====	=====	=====

The only expenditure expected to fall in 1985/6 is the £3,101 in respect of artists fees for the QEH concert. With all the income of the event accruing in 1985/6, there will be net income of £7,319 accruing in that year.

3. From the individual budgets and estimated attendances of each element of the programme, it has been possible to calculate the subsidies arising:-

	Expenditure	Income	Net	Attendances	Subsidy pr. Head
Exhibition	£17,400	£2,500	£14,900	50,000	30p.
Concert	£8,855	£3,920	£4,935	820	£6
Films	£5,192	£4,000	£1,192	2,000	60p.
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
	£31,447	£10,420	£21,027	52,820	40p.
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

At £6, the subsidy per head for the concert is higher than for previous events held in connection with Anti-Racist Year. The Director states in paragraph 16 of the report that he considers this to be justified in view of the significance attached to the event. I understand that reductions had already been made on the budget as originally proposed.

4. Paragraph 22 of the report quotes the comments of the Ethnic Arts Adviser in regard to the urgency and need of the proposal.

5. There is no provision for expenditure of £28,346 falling in 1984/5 in the base budget or revenue reserves and it will be necessary to ask the Finance & General Purposes Committee to allocate additional resources. Net income of £7,319 will accrue in 1985/6.

6. If approved, this proposal utilises sums in 1984/5 (£28,346) which would otherwise be available to abate the 1985/6 precept.

7. This report requires the approval of the Finance & General Purposes Committee in accordance with the terms of FGP 881



Item 11 AR 1944

Concurrent report (10.1.85) by

Head of Legal Branch

APPLICATION FOR GRANT: PAUL ROBESON EXHIBITION

Section 145(1)(a) and (e) of the Local Government Act 1972 states that the Council may do, or arrange for the doing of, or contribute towards the expenses of the doing of, anything necessary or expedient for the provision of an entertainment of any nature or of facilities for dancing and any purpose incidental to the matter aforesaid, including the provision of refreshments or programmes and the advertising of any entertainment given or dance or exhibition of arts or crafts held by them. In my view, the application comes within the Section.

In deciding whether to exercise this power and incur the proposed expenditure, the Committee must act reasonably and must comply with the Council's fiduciary duty to its ratepayers fairly to balance those ratepayer's interests against the interests of those likely to benefit from the expenditure. The Committee should therefore take into account all relevant considerations (and no irrelevant ones) and should be satisfied in the light of those considerations that in respect of any grant decided upon:-

- (a) the benefits to London or its inhabitants expected to be derived from the expenditure warrant and are commensurate with the expenditure;
- (b) it is financially prudent for the Council to incur the expenditure.