

Salute to Paul Robeson

When the curtain at Carnegie Hall parts once again and Paul Robeson steps on-stage, countless memories and images of him will be evoked. People from all climes and of all cultures will be present, but many millions more who could not be there, will yet be joining in a salute to this supreme artist and courageous champion of the poor and the oppressed.

His powerful voice, whether raised in song or in the cause of justice and humanity, has been heard in the far corners of the earth. Those who tyrannised over their fellow men -- and there are many, in his own country and elsewhere -- feared his eloquence and his boundless compassion for all who suffered privation.

In a most complete sense the world was his stage, and once, for a time, he was denied entrance to it when his passport was withheld. He became, paradoxically, an exile in his own land, but protests came from all parts of the world, and freed him.

Along with his many other admirers, I met him first at London Airport, after the State Department had been forced to give him back his passport, and soon after at a reception in his honour at home in Hampstead. Later, I saw him on the stage at Stratford-on-Avon.

One thing has left an indelible imprint on my memory -- wherever and whenever I met him, his sincerity always shone through, bright as the flame of a welder's torch.

On this anniversary celebration of his birth 75 years ago, he should know that his life-long fight for liberation and against poverty and prejudice, has not been in vain, and that his well-wishers and friends salute him not only as one of America's greatest actors and singers, but even more as a benefactor of mankind.

It is a 'Salut d'amour' from the world to Paul Robeson.

45 Connaught Square, London, W.2 Feb. 5, 62

Dear Janet:

It was very good seeing you in London lately, and to see you looking well and to know that you and Cheddi are continuing with the good fight.

Over the holidays Paul and I read our accumulation of THUNDERS, and enjoyed them very much. As they come in the mail, if we don't have time to read them at once, we save them, and read them during a clam spell. I was particularly glad to have Cheddi's full text of the address to the UN. We found it statesmanlike, informative, very forceful and dignified. Congratulations. We also read the scripts of yours, and his, and Benn's pre-election broadcasts, and found them very interesting and they gave us a good idea of the conditions and problems, and also of the accomplishments thus far, which are very fine indeed. A proud record for the PPP. Again, congratulations.

Oddly enough, I found something, in the Jan. 4th issue, which I've been looking for a long time: in the column signed by 'Watcher': A mention, in print, about Max Yergan's and George Schuyler's disgraceful activities. Also, your editorial comment on the current West Indian Federation problems was very helpful.

Paul is back in the Nursing Home for a short stay. He spent 10 days home at the flat for Christmas, and enjoyed it very much. But it is very hard here to avoid callers and telephone calls and everlasting requests to do this and do that, so he is back there for a bit of rest and quiet until the demand dies down again. He continues to improve, but slowly, and they assure us that he will be well and completely recovered soon now, IF he takes it easy. So.

Be warned, both of you. You have lots to do, and are well on your way, so don't over - do!

Love from us both,
to you both. Selanda Roberson

P.S. Tell Cheddi there are two especially brilliant bits in his U.N. address before the 4 th Committee which are just gems, and nail the situation right down where it belongs, better than has ever been done before:

- I. "Some people are obsessed with the fear of intervention by external Powers in the affairs of the American Republics. But they ignore the three European countries which still subject people in this hemisphere to the degrading status of colonials...." This is one of those terrific and obvious facts which has never been so neatly and briefly focussed before. As we say in our journalistic slang: "It's for the quotes".
2. "We are victims of imperialism and the cold war like the Callegos Government of Venezuela, the Mossadegh Government of Iran, and the Arbenz Government of Guatemala which were overthrown by force in 1948, 1953 and 1954 respectively. The usual campaign of slander and witch-hunt were unleashed against us....."
3. And this is really classic in its simplicity and forcefulness and right on the button for our times:
 "As regards defence, we do not think it is sound or prudent to fritter a large part of our limited financial resources in defence in these days of mass weapons of destruction like nuclear bombs and inter-continental missiles. We do not

3.

We do not believe that the arms race is the way to international peace and security. We look to friendship with all countries and our membership in the United Nations to offer us the collective security required to protect our national sovereignty....."

It might seem to you a bit silly for me to quote bits of your own speeches back to you, but when they hit one squarely between the eyes as exactly right, so that we keep on using them, it is only fair to tell you so.

Greetings greetings to you both, to the children, and to your people. I hope all goes well, and above all, BE WELL.

Sincerely,

Islanda

Cheddi Jagan Research Centre



Janet and Cheddi Jagan with Islanda Robeson