



HR0053

LRB098 10256 MST 40421 r

1

HOUSE RESOLUTION

2           WHEREAS, Nobel Prize-winning physicist, Albert Einstein is  
3 well-known for his contributions to the various fields of  
4 science; a much-less known aspect of his life was his deep  
5 aversion to racism and the manner in which African Americans  
6 were treated in the United States and his friendship with Paul  
7 Robeson, a famous African-American athlete, singer, actor, and  
8 advocate for the civil rights of people around the world; and

9           WHEREAS, Paul Robeson was born on April 9, 1898, in  
10 Princeton, New Jersey, the youngest of 5 children born to a  
11 runaway slave; the Robeson family knew both hardship and the  
12 determination to rise above it; in 1915, he received a 4-year  
13 academic scholarship to Rutgers and despite racism and violence  
14 from teammates, won 15 varsity letters in sports (baseball,  
15 basketball, track) and was twice named to the All-American  
16 Football Team; he received the Phi Beta Kappa key in his junior  
17 year, belonged to the Cap & Skull Honor Society, and graduated  
18 as Valedictorian; he attended Columbia Law School from  
19 1919-1923, where he met and married Eslanda Cordoza Goode; he  
20 took a job with a law firm, but left when a white secretary  
21 refused to take dictation from him; he left the practice of law  
22 to use his artistic talents in theater and music to promote  
23 African and African-American history and culture; and

1           WHEREAS, Albert Einstein was sensitized to racism by the  
2 years of Nazi-inspired threats and harassment he suffered while  
3 in Germany; after coming to the U.S., although grateful to find  
4 a safe place, he did not refrain from criticizing the ethical  
5 shortcomings of his new home concerning the treatment of  
6 African Americans; and

7           WHEREAS, While in London, Raul Robeson earned  
8 international acclaim for his roles and won the Donaldson Award  
9 for Best Acting Performance in 1944; his travels taught him  
10 that racism was not as virulent in Europe as in the U.S; at  
11 home, it was difficult to find restaurants that would serve  
12 him, theaters in New York would only seat blacks in the upper  
13 balconies, and his performances were often surrounded with  
14 threats or outright harassment; in London, his opening night  
15 performance of Emperor Jones brought the audience to its feet  
16 with cheers for twelve encores; he used his deep baritone voice  
17 to promote black spirituals, to share the cultures of other  
18 countries, and to benefit the labor and social movements of his  
19 time; he sang for peace and justice in 25 languages throughout  
20 the U.S., Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa; he became known  
21 as a citizen of the world, equally comfortable with the people  
22 of Moscow, Nairobi, and Harlem; and

23           WHEREAS, Albert Einstein's response to the racism and  
24 segregation he found in the U.S. was to cultivate relationships

1 in Princeton, New Jersey's African-American community; he paid  
2 the college tuition of a young man from the community and  
3 invited the singer Marian Anderson to stay at his home when the  
4 singer was refused a room in town; and

5 WHEREAS, During the 1940s, Paul Robeson continued to  
6 perform and to speak out against racism, in support of labor,  
7 and for peace; he was a champion of working people and  
8 organized labor; he spoke and performed at strike rallies,  
9 conferences, and labor festivals worldwide; in 1945, he headed  
10 an organization that challenged President Truman to support an  
11 anti-lynching law; in the late 1940s, when dissent was scarcely  
12 tolerated in the U.S., he openly questioned why African  
13 Americans should fight in the army of a government that  
14 tolerated racism; because of his outspokenness, he was accused  
15 by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) of being a  
16 communist; he saw this as an attack on the democratic rights of  
17 everyone who worked for international friendship and for  
18 equality; the accusation nearly ended his career; eighty of his  
19 concerts were canceled, and in 1949, 2 interracial outdoor  
20 concerts in Peekskill, N.Y. were attacked by racist mobs while  
21 state police stood by; and

22 WHEREAS, Albert Einstein began a 20-year friendship with  
23 Paul Robeson when he met the singer when he came to perform at  
24 Princeton's McCarter Theatre in 1935; the shared a concern

1 about the rise of fascism and worked together on the American  
2 Crusade to End Lynching, in response to an upsurge in racial  
3 murders as black soldiers returned home following World War II;  
4 and

5 WHEREAS, In 1950, the U.S. revoked Robeson's passport,  
6 leading to an 8-year battle to reacquire it and to travel  
7 again; during those years, he studied Chinese, met with Albert  
8 Einstein to discuss the prospects for world peace, published  
9 his autobiography, 'Here I Stand', and sang at Carnegie Hall;  
10 and

11 WHEREAS, State law mandates that all elementary and  
12 secondary schools incorporate black history into their  
13 curriculum and a renewed focus should be put on this  
14 little-known aspect of Albert Einstein's life; therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
16 NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
17 we commemorate the friendship and partnership formed by Paul  
18 Robeson and Albert Einstein around the issue of Civil Rights  
19 and for it to be an example that we are more alike than we are  
20 different and should be used as an example of how we can work  
21 together to improve the lives of all citizens in Illinois; and  
22 be it further

1           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be made  
2 available to all elementary and secondary schools in the State  
3 of Illinois.