

Paul Robeson played a key role in reshaping America's perception of African Americans. An All-American football player, a valedictorian, a lawyer and an actor, Robeson was essentially a modern renaissance man. His selection to play Othello in Shakespeare's *Othello* marked a ground-breaking achievement for African Americans in the theater world. Robeson infiltrated a predominantly white industry: the images show Robeson next to only white actors, rather than African Americans. Robeson's casting proved not only that he was capable of reaching the expected level of actors, but that he could surpass most and become a superstar. His successes on the stage cemented his legacy and impact. He became such a pillar in African American history that in 1979, the still majority-white Hollywood chose to create a film in his honor titled *Paul Robeson*. The film casted James Earl Jones, a popular modern African American actor as Robeson. In a sense, Jones portraying Robeson was a perfect fit, since without Robeson's work, Jones could not have gone nearly as high in the acting world as he did. Jones playing Robeson is the greatest form of flattery and tribute: imitation. However, Jones is not alone in his tribute, the entire film, as well as Robeson's biography are a sort of "thank you" to Robeson, for paving the way for African Americans to participate in the theater industry, and for illustrating the talent and culture African Americans can bring to the United States.