

Daniel Barnett

Synthesis:

Paul Robeson was an acclaimed 20<sup>th</sup> century performer known for “The Emperor Jones” and Othello. Robeson spoke out against racism and was a world activist but became blacklisted in the 1950s due to McCarthyism. Paul Robeson gained popularity by making room for African Americans in plays normally played by white actors. When Paul Robeson played Othello who is usually played by a White Male in blackface opened this spot for African Americans in the future such as James Earl Jones. James Earl Jones appeared in Othello twice, once in the sixties the other time in 1982. After that he appeared in Hamlet and King Lear which are dominantly white plays. Due to Paul Robeson he was able to make strides to change the idealistic appearance of Shakespeare. In 1978 he played Paul Robeson, the same man who made room for African Americans in the theater during the Harlem Renaissance. This indicates a full circle, that one event such as starring in one play in a time where it was frowned upon caused a chain reaction which led to plays with an all black cast and crew such as Fences by August Wilson.