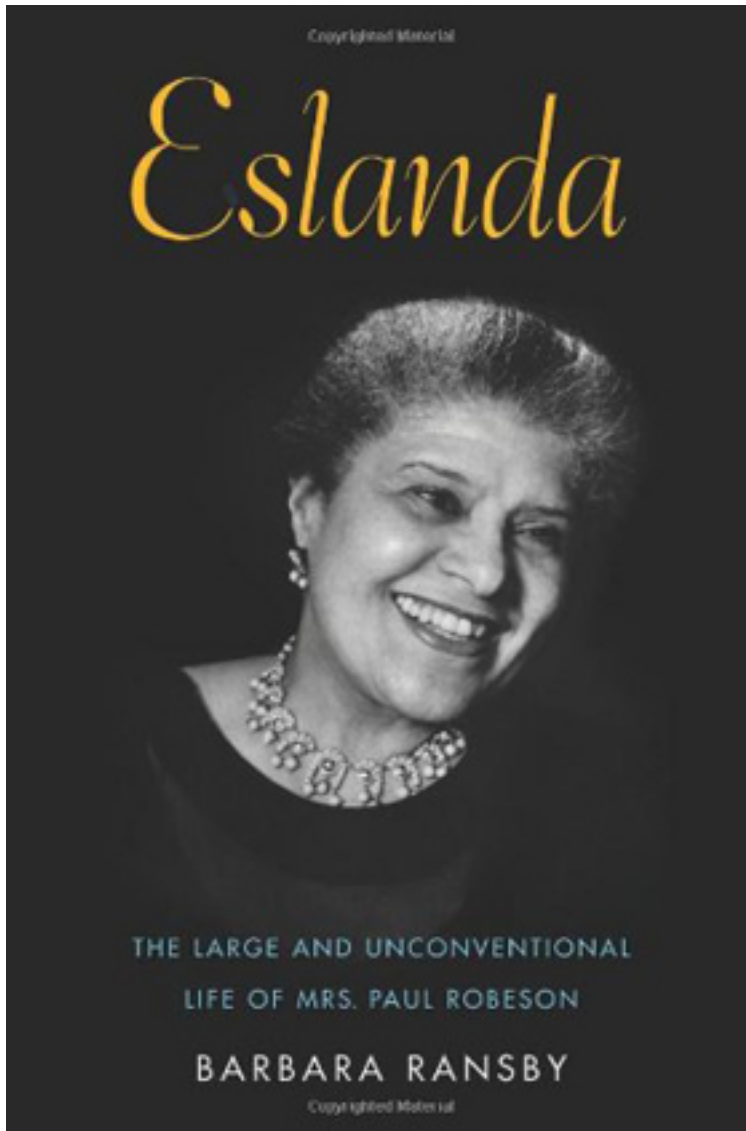


Eslanda The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson

Written by Kam Williams



Barbara Ransby
Yale University Press
Hardcover, \$35.00
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"At a time when most Black women suffered painfully circumscribed lives, Eslanda Robeson enjoyed enormous mobility... For most of her life, Essie was a traveler, both literally and metaphorically.

She transcended class and cultural boundaries and crossed international borders; she conversed in multiple languages and traveled to nearly every corner of the globe. Essie Robeson's story is about one woman's journey across the vast and volatile landscape of 20th Century world politics and culture...

But it is not a singular story. It is a story of a marriage and a partnership that was fraught with complications, but which ultimately endured."

-- Excerpted from the Introduction (pg. 1)

Born in Washington, D.C. in 1896, Eslanda Cardozo Goode Robeson was a descendant of

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slaves and Sephardic Jews. Although there were enormous barriers encountered by African-Americans during the early 20th Century, she somehow managed to gain admission to an Ivy League school, Columbia University, at a time when most Black women worked as domestics and most Black males had to settle for menial labor.



After earning a B.S. degree, Essie landed a job as a chemist at a Columbia Presbyterian Hospital. In 1919, while still living in New York City, everything changed the day she met Paul Robeson, who was then a law student at NYU. The two fell madly in love, married a couple of years later and eventually had a child together.

Blessed with a powerful, bass-baritone singing voice, Paul opted to pursue an entertainment career over the practice of law, with Essie serving as his business manager. Everyone knows that he went on to become an international icon, first as an entertainer, then as a blacklisted civil rights advocate.



However, his wife was every bit as interesting, and her compelling life story is the subject of this fascinating biography by Barbara Ransby. For, despite the trials and tribulations of a rocky

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marriage and of having Paul, Jr. to raise, Essie remained a fiercely-independent trailblazer in her own right, whether attending graduate school, writing books, or railing against racism, sexism and colonialism.

Above all, Eslanda Robeson was an outspoken peace pilgrim with an enviable, global network of friends and supporters, even if she would become a pariah in the United States because of being an outspoken advocate of progressive politics. This fact is reflected in the book's 30+ pages of photographs, in which we find her in the company of such luminaries as Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, Dr. Martin Luther King, novelist Pearl Buck, U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, playwright Eugene O'Neill, Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah and poet Langston Hughes.

A poignant portrait of a peripatetic, human rights activist willing to challenge oppression of any form wherever she could find it.

To order a copy of *Eslanda*, visit:

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