

“We Charge Genocide”: Paul Robeson Presents Anti-lynching Petition to U. N.

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The noted African-American singer and civil rights activists Paul Robeson, on behalf of the Civil Rights Congress, presented a petition to the United Nations, charging that the U.S. violated Article II of the U.N. Genocide Convention by failing to prevent the lynching of African-Americans. The Genocide Convention was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on December 9, 1948, and became effective in January 1951. The United States, however, did not ratify it until November 4, 1988.

The NAACP, meanwhile, had submitted a petition, “An Appeal to the World,” to the UN on October 23, 1947, accusing the United States of systematic racial discrimination.

Both Robeson and the Civil Rights Congress came under heavy attack during the Cold War because of their left-wing political views. The CRC disbanded in 1956. Robeson’s singing career was virtually destroyed because he was blacklisted in the U.S. and also unable to sing overseas — the U.S. government denied him a passport because of his political views (August 4, 1950). Unable to travel overseas, on May 26, 1957, he gave a concert in London by telephone from the U.S.

“We Charge Genocide” (excerpt): *“We maintain, therefore, that the oppressed Negro citizens of the United States, segregated, discriminated against and long the target of violence, suffer from genocide as the result of the consistent, conscious, unified policies of every branch of government.”*

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Read the historic petition: <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=we-charge-genocide-historic-petition-united-nations-relief-crime-united-states-government-against>

Read the UN Genocide Convention:

http://www.oas.org/dil/1948_Convention_on_the_Prevention_and_Punishment_of_the_Crime_of_Genocide.pdf