

## LIFE IN THE U.S.

Sam Silver

## MEDIA

# Pacifica volunteers win Peabody

By Sam Silver

SAN FRANCISCO

**T**WO UNPAID, VOLUNTEER workers for the Pacifica radio station here have won one of the most prestigious awards in broadcasting, the Peabody Award for Excellence in Radio Journalism.

Adi Gevins and Laurie Garrett won the Peabody award for a series of documentaries on topics ranging from the social history of LSD to the dangers of recombinant DNA research, under the general title of "Science Story."

The Peabody judges were amazed that neither woman gets paid for her work, obviously unfamiliar with media professionals who work more for the message than the dollars. The award itself has no monetary value, although it has led to job offers for the two broadcasters.

"Science Story" grew out of the desire of Gevins and Garrett to blow the whistle on the religious-like devotion normally paid to the pronouncements of scientists by the media.

"A lot of things that you learn as you are initiated into the world of science are given to the public as though they were truth when they are usually one side of a controversy," says Gevins. "People have this concept that scientists are these wonderful superior beings who work in white coats and are really into research and love to work and study. Well, that's a lot of bunk. We know that it's a job and an industry. The reasons scientific research goes in particular directions in this country is because the funding is controlled

Outraged over the Swine Flu fiasco, Gevins and Garrett decided people had to know about science.

by the government and other economic interests that often merge with the federal government."

The event that propelled Gevins and Garrett into action was Gerald Ford's re-election device, the Swine Flu inoculation program. Their first show, "Swine Flu Fiasco," aired within weeks of the beginning of the vaccination drive in late 1976.

The show is filled with blaring trombones, irreverent comments and quotes from "experts." The Peabody committee cited the irreverence of the program as one of the reasons for the award.

"I was a graduate student in immunology and I was really appalled by the entire [Swine Flu] program," explains Garrett. "I knew enough about the flu as a virus and also knew enough about immunology to realize the public was being sold a bill of goods."

Gevins and Garrett realized that the way to communicate the alarming nature of the flu effort was not to bore listeners with a dry compendium of facts. Instead they chose to entertain. "We did a whole thing on 'Welcome to the Flu Season,'" says Garrett, "just like a baseball game—the President throwing out the first syringe and the crowd roaring."

The response was instantaneous and



Laurie Garrett (left) and Adi Gevins (right) receive no payment for their show "Science Story," a fact that amazed the Peabody Award committee.

important. The show sold to over 40 other radio stations. It also gave the intrepid scientific researchers the energy to continue in spite of the rigors of non-profit radio life.

At the heart of Garrett and Gevins' approach is their concern to educate the public. "The thing that we learned is the value of doing your basic journalism," Garrett comments. "If you have the actualities of one person saying cancer is like a common cold, and you can't possibly get it from asbestos and another saying 99 percent of all cancers are environmentally caused; if you put these voices back to back, you come up with an entertaining program even if you do not use all the gimmicks we used in the Swine Flu program."

Garrett and Gevins went on to produce "A Visit to the Stanford Primate Center," "Discoveries of the Galapagos Reef," and, most popular and newsworthy, "Recombinant DNA and the Corporate World."

The DNA story helped bring the issue to national attention. More than 60 copies were sold to other radio stations and medical schools.

Gevins and Garrett have gotten the big prize for doing an amazing job. They did it without the help of big media or big money and with their audience foremost in their minds. Congratulations are surely in order.

Sam Silver is a frequent contributor to IN THESE TIMES, and a writing partner to Adi Gevins.

## SPORTS

# Good coaching and teamwork make the difference

By Mark Naison

**F**OR DISAPPOINTED LOVERS, sentimentalists and aficionados of good coaching, this year's NBA playoffs were an uplifting experience. The Washington Bullets, a veteran team that previously seemed to crumble when it reached the finals, came from behind to defeat a young, quick Seattle club in a series that went the full seven games.

Nobody expected these clubs to reach the finals. Their regular season records were slightly over .500 and they each seemed to have glaring weaknesses: the Bullets' best starters were aging and slow, and the Seattle team lacked experience and physical strength.

But the playoffs demonstrated that the talent in the NBA is so evenly matched that it's very hard to predict the outcome of a short series. (Though some of us try!) It's easy to get taken in by the cult of the superstar, but the difference between the benchwarmer and the all-star is often little more than playing time, luck and the right use of a player's talents.

Both Seattle and Washington got to the finals largely on the strength of "unknowns" and players who were deemed "over the hill."

Among the key players for Seattle were Dennis Johnson, a second-year guard from Pepperdine that most fans had never heard of before he was inserted in the lineup; Marvin Webster, a highly touted college player who had been a bust at Den-

ver; and Jack Sikma, a 6'11" rookie who had impressed scouts as a center, but had never before played forward.

Among Washington's best performers were Wes Unseld, a talented but overweight center, crippled by leg injuries; Bobby Dandridge, a small forward who'd seen his best moments playing with Jabbar in Milwaukee; and Charley Johnson, a six-foot guard who had been released by several NBA teams when the injury-riddled Bullets signed him to a ten-day contract.

That these players could go up against the likes of Abdul Jabbar, Adrian Dantley, Maurice Lucas, Dr. J. and George Gervin and hold their own seemed improbable, but that's exactly what happened.

The Washington-Philadelphia matchup, in the Eastern semi-finals, was symbolic of the whole playoffs. The Philadelphia team, coming off a 4-0 thrashing of the New York Knicks, seemed invincible; they had talent, physical strength, and overwhelming confidence.

But the Sixers had won many of their games by physically intimidating other teams and the Bullets, despite other weaknesses, were one squad that could not be bullied (as the Celtics found out in 1975). When the Sixers discovered this, it appeared to confuse them; they lost sight of their game plan and tried to humiliate the Bullets individually. The veteran Washington team, ignoring the bad-mouthing of the Sixer players, kept their cool, ran their offense, and won the series in six games.

The Seattle-Washington series had a totally different ambience. Both teams displayed well-disciplined offenses, tight defenses, and an ability to stick to game plans. In addition, the teams demonstrated a respect for one another's health and well-being that has been all too lacking in the NBA this year. Although the games were very physical, there were no fights, no arguments, and little "woofing" of opposing players.

Coaching strategy played an important role in the series. Lenny Wilkens, the Seattle coach, seized an early advantage by inserting Paul Silas, an aging rebounder and defensive specialist, to front Elvin Hayes and deny him the ball. Hayes, who destroyed the '76ers with turnaround jumpshots and scored easily on Jack Sikma, had trouble getting his shots off during the rest of the series. Only his extraordinary effort on the offensive boards enabled Hayes to score near his average.

The other key defensive matchup for Seattle was Dennis Johnson on Kevin Grevey. Johnson, blessed with excellent size, timing and leaping ability, repeatedly blocked Grevey's shots, and used his superior quickness to score easily on Grevey on offensive rebounds.

In the sixth game of the series, Bullet coach Dick Motta began to make adjustments. He put Grevey on the bench and inserted Bobby Dandridge, a small forward with good ball handling ability, at the guard position opposite Johnson. In Dandridge's place at forward he placed Greg Ballard, a talented rookie who had

seen little playing time during the year. Ballard displayed a fine shooting touch, excellent rebounding skill, and added much-needed floor speed to the Bullet attack. While Ballard and Mitch Kupchak, the other Bullet front court sub, crashed the boards on both ends of the floor, Dandridge kept Dennis Johnson from getting offensive rebounds and harassed him effectively when he took short jumpshots. The lineup changes helped the Bullets control the backboards, and use a fast-breaking attack that got them many easy lay-ups.

Though the series was enjoyable for knowledgeable fans, it proved disappointing to the TV moguls. The ratings for the playoffs were much lower than last year, due to the absence of "glamour players" like Bill Walton, Julius Erving, and George McGinnis, whose personalities and playing styles commanded widespread attention.

But to coaches around the league, the playoffs provided yet another indication that tight defensive play, well-drilled offenses, and players who complement one another's skills are more important than individual scoring punch in producing winning teams. On some ball clubs, a Dennis Johnson is more valuable than a Pete Maravich; a Wes Unseld more important than a Bob McAdoo, and a Jack Sikma better than a George McGinnis.

But the big glamour players sell tickets and when players get traded and drafted, it may be the owners, not the coaches, who have their way.



## ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

# Robeson play provokes sharp conflict

*The People's Almanac* calls Paul Robeson "a Renaissance man born too late for the actual Renaissance and too soon for his own country's recognition of the black race." In recent months, a new biographical play, *Paul Robeson*, has embroiled the black political, intellectual and cultural community in a strident controversy in which the only thing on which everyone agrees is that Robeson, who died in 1976, was, indeed, a great man.

Because he was black, an articulate and outspoken opponent of racism and a supporter of communism and Soviet society, his life story was suppressed in the U.S. Now, as it emerges for the first time, what is really being debated is how Paul Robeson will be seen in history.

For the last five months, statements, counter-statements, open meetings, radio and TV shows have all addressed the issue. The subject first became public one week before the play opened in New York in January, after a 15-week pre-Broadway tour. In a two-page statement in *Variety*, the New York show business daily, the National Ad-Hoc Committee to End Crimes Against Paul Rob-

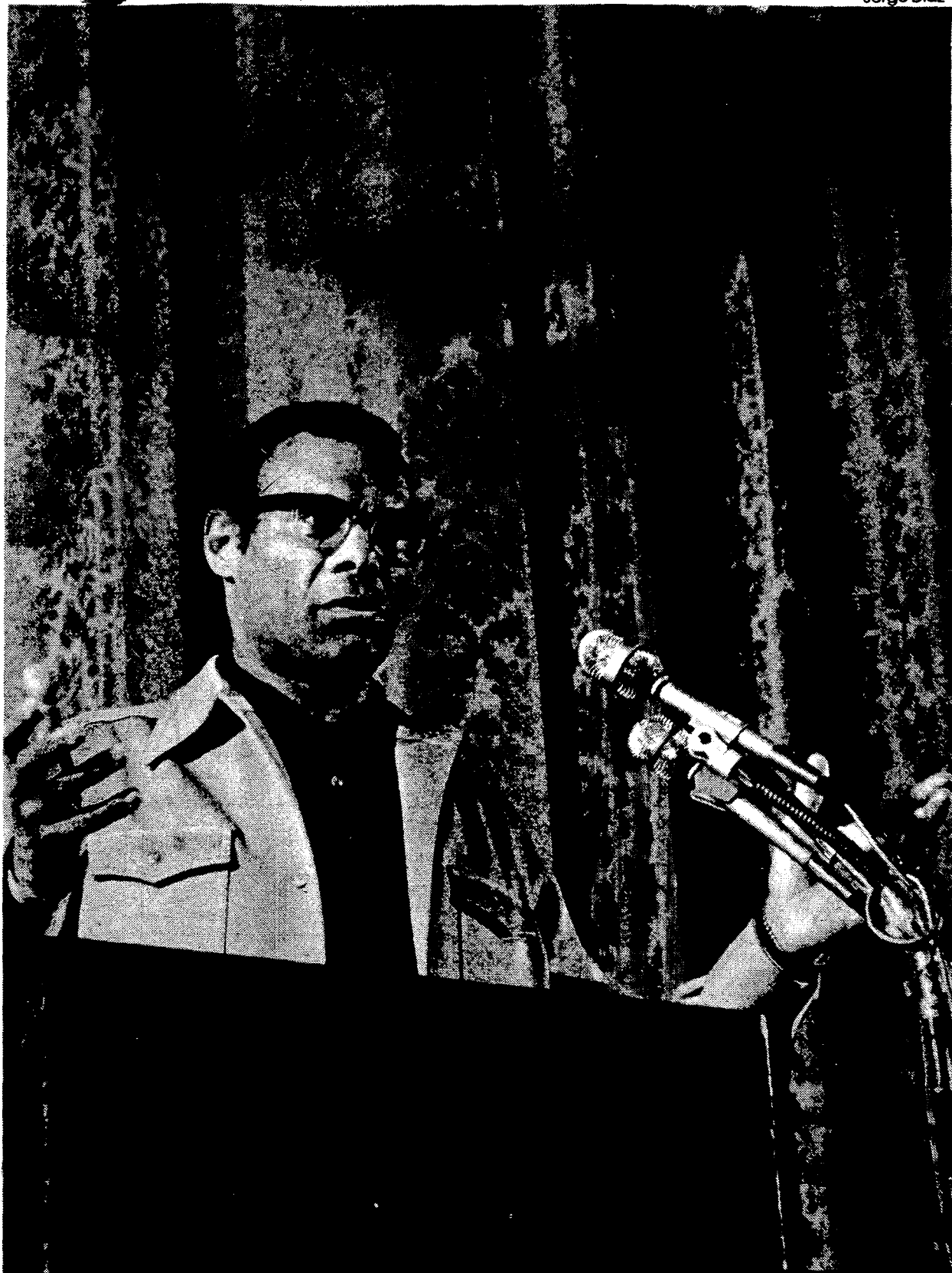
eson denounced the play as "however unintended, a pernicious perversion of the essence of Paul Robeson."

The play, a one-man monologue starring James Earl Jones, has now closed its original 45-day run and a brief revival by Joseph Papp, but the controversy continues. The division of opinion has so cut across predictable ideological lines that Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, a couple whose names have been paired on innumerable petitions and statements for social justice, found themselves on opposing sides.

Written by the black playwright Phillip Hayes Dean, the play attempts to portray Robeson's life from youth to old age. Although almost nothing in the play is in Robeson's own words, many of the incidents and events alluded to are real. Others are not.

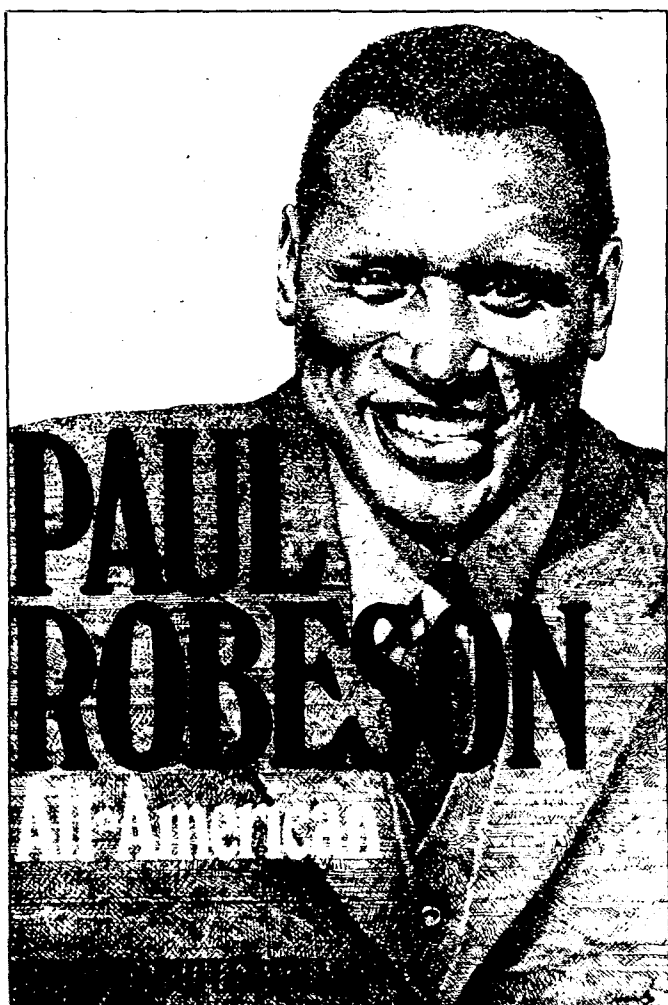
## A rewriting of history.

The Ad-Hoc Committee's "Statement of Conscience" calls *Paul Robeson* "a rewriting of history as perverse in its own way as the original attempt to erase [him from] history." After praising Jones' acting and noting that the portrait that emerges is sympath-



Paul Robeson Jr. addressing an audience of nearly 1,000 people at Hunter College in New York City on the subject of Paul Hayes Dean's play, *PAUL ROBESON*. "There's only one problem," said Robeson Jr. "It's not my father."

## Black by birth, red by choice



**PAUL ROBESON: All-American**  
By Dorothy Butler Gilliam  
New Republic Books, 1978, \$3.95

When Paul Robeson died in 1976, amidst the self-satisfied hoopla of the Big Bicentennial, few of his fellow-citizens seemed aware that he had ever existed. His meteoric career—in sports, theater, music and politics—had been carefully expunged from public consciousness, just as the man himself had been systematically crushed by America's anti-Communist crusade.

Robeson was born in Princeton, N.J., the son of a poor black preacher who hauled ashes for the well-to-do. When he was still a child, his mother died in a household fire. But despite the straitened circumstances of his youth, Robeson was not raised in a ghetto environment.

He attended a nearly all-white high school in Somerville and then moved on, as a scholarship student, to Rutgers, where his academic and extracurricular prowess established him as a local hero. Although he was denied a dormitory room at Rutgers, savagely assaulted when he tried out for the football team and excluded from the glee club, by his junior year Robeson had become an all-American football player, a baseball and track star and a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

In February 1920 he went to New York to enter Columbia Law School. Moving to Harlem ulti-

mately proved more significant than his legal studies, for it was there he mingled with the rising stars of the "Harlem Renaissance" and married Eslanda Cardozo Goode, a member of the small black upper class.

Graduating in 1923, Robeson looked about for an appropriate position and found the opportunities for black lawyers narrowly circumscribed. (The American Bar Association, for example, excluded them from membership.) His wife was prodding him to turn his talents to the theater, and suddenly work opened up as an actor in the plays of Eugene O'Neill.

Despite racist threats, which caused O'Neill to hire burly steelworkers to guard the Provincetown Playhouse, Robeson was an immediate success. This success grew even more phenomenal when he teamed up with folklorist and pianist Laurence Brown to perform concerts of black "spirituals." By the late 1920s, when he moved with his wife and young son to London, Robeson was an international celebrity.

## Only gradually political.

Only gradually did he turn political. Indeed, during the '20s and early '30s he accepted a number of stereotyped roles that were criticized at the time by black activists and later by Robeson himself. When a close friend, Marie Seton, asked him to do a benefit concert for Jewish refugees in 1933, he said, "I'm an artist. I

don't understand politics." Seton retorted that as a black man he could never be simply an artist. Robeson was shaken enough to agree to give the performance. He also enrolled in courses on African and Asian culture at the University of London and began to consider the broader meaning of the colonial experience.

In 1934 Robeson went to Russia where he walked among admiring throngs and conferred at length with Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein. Impressed by the atmosphere of racial tolerance and the example of "a nation leaping from tribalism to modern industrial economy," Robeson underwent a deeply personal conversion. "Maybe you'll understand," he told Eisenstein. "I feel like a human being for the first time since I grew up."

Convinced that the commercial cinema would never let him portray blacks as full human beings, he abandoned his lucrative film career and began to experiment with concerts in theaters frequented by the lower classes. He gave benefit performances for left-wing unions and Republican Spain and championed the development of Pan-Africanism. Although Robeson apparently never joined the Communist Party, he was clearly (as one associate recalls) "ideologically committed."

His artistic career continued to flourish, reaching a zenith with his 1943 performance in *Othello*