CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Darrius Willrich, Piano Bing CrosbyTheatre, Spokane. Wednesday, February 6, 2013.

Greetings and Welcome. I hope Spokanites will forgive me when I confess to not having heard of their fair city until relatively recently. I have however done some research and understand that it was the land of Spokan Indians who, like the majority of the surviving Native Americans are now confined to reservations. I also find out that the Colville Flathead reservation was discovered to contain large deposits of uranium, and was extensively mined between 1956 and 1982. There is no doubt that a lot of blood was shed in the area as the Spokans were driven off their land, and then as it was plundered for precious metals, with little benefit to the original occupants. This was one of the causes championed by the American-Indian Movement (AIM) who from the 1970s concerned themselves with the welfare of their people around the country. One member from Seattle went across to North Dakota on AIM business and found himself framed for the murder of an FBI agent and was jailed in 1973. Leonard Peltier shockingly remains in jail today, forty years later, and is sadly one of many Americans who have suffered such injustice at the hands of the government over the years, but has amazingly held on to his spirit and dignity. Today, many people continue to be subjected to such treatment for seeking truth and justice for their fellow Americans and for ordinary citizens of the world: Paul Robeson, whose message of love, peace and justice caused him to be branded a dangerous anti-American revolutionary, also suffered, and it is similarly instructive to recall that Nelson Mandela was regarded a terrorist in Apartheid times. This causes one to be cynical about blanket descriptions of Muslims in Mali and elsewhere as terrorists when one considers that the fighting is taking place in a region rich in uranium, which the French mine and use to generate their nuclear-powered electricity. With any luck, Robeson's story will inspire many of us to look for the real truth behind local and international stories, and fight for freedom and justice, in whatever large or small ways we can, even just by educating ourselves. The brave fighters from the past and present deserve no lesser honour. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked until recently as an architect and property developer, with a special but as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. As a baritone, he has sung as soloist in British concert halls accompanied by orchestra, and has also sung in Germany, Ireland and Nigeria. He has performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as Nabucco, Kiss Me Kate and Anything Goes. CALL MR ROBESON won the Argus Angel Award for Artistic Excellence and Best Male Performer Award at the 2008 Brighton Festival Fringe, two Merit Awards for Excellence in London in 2010 and three awards at the London Ontario Fringe last June. He has performed the play around the UK, the United States of America, Canada and Nigeria, and at New York's Carnegie Hall in February 2012 for his 50th birthday. His other piece titled FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with Spirituals has also been performed in three continents. He researched, wrote and narrated to camera a piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which forms part of the permanent exhibit at Liverpool's International Slavery Museum. A song from his CD, RECALLING ROBESON is featured as the July 2008 song of the month on the Labor Notes website.

Darrius Willrich, Piano. With a degree in jazz piano, Mr. Willrich is also a soulful singer and songwriter, with a love for hip-hop, He is recognised for his tuneful voice and his songwriting rich in sensitivity. He has many years of experience as an instrumentalist, sideman, leader, producer and recording artist, with three albums to his credit.

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Olusola Oyeleye, Director and Dramaturge. Olusola is an award winning writer, director and producer working in opera, music theatre, visual arts and dance. Theatre includes: Tin (The Lowry), Ti-Jean and his Brothers (Collective Artistes & Sustained Theatre, Cottesloe), Resident director on Trevor Nunn's West End production of Porgy and Bess (Savoy Theatre), staff producer at English National Opera, Spirit of Okin and Sankofa for Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, (National & International tours), Coming Up For Air (The Drum & UK tour), The Resurrection of Roscoe Powell (Soho Theatre), The Shelter (RSC Barbican Theatre), Medea (Ariya, Royal National Theatre Studio), The Playground (Polka Theatre, Time Out Critics' Choice Pick of the Year), High Life, (Hampstead Theatre), Maybe Father, (Talawa, Young Vic), Twelfth Night (British Council Tour, Zimbabwe) and Ella, a monodrama about Ella Fitzgerald (Rich Mix). Opera includes: Akin Euba's Orunmila's Voices: Songs from the Beginning of Time (Jefferson's Arts Centre, New Orleans) and Chaka: An Opera in Two Chants with the St. Louis African Chorus, Dido and Aeneas (Tricycle/BAC), God's Trombones (Fairfield Halls) and the second cast revival of Jonathan Miller's production of The Mikado (English National Opera). Olusola has also worked in Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. She has been a visiting lecturer and Artist at Universities in South Africa and London, and was Head of the Acting Studio at Morley College. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba and performed at both Harvard and Cambridge Universities. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Phil Newman, Designer, Assistant Director and Dramaturge. Phil's Set & Costume Designs have featured in productions by companies as diverse as Ladder to the Moon, Trestle, Ariya, Full House Theatre, London Shakespeare Workout, Rouge28 Theatre and Impetuous Kinship. Recent design credits include: Peter Pan (Tickled Pink Productions), Dance or Die (contemporary dance performance choreographed by Avant Garde's Tony Adigun), Cinderella (Library Theatre, Luton), Voices in the Alleyway and Yes, I Still Exist for Spread Expression Dance, Faith Drama's The Fiddler (Unicorn Theatre) & Next Door (Cockpit Theatre), The Famous Five (Tabard Theatre), Chalkfoot's acclaimed The Riddle of the Sands and Laurel & Hardy (Jermyn St Theatre, London & UK tours) as well as tours of Queen Elizabeth's Elephant and The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, Hansel & Gretel (UK tour incl. Greenwich Theatre), Stockholm (BAC), and open-air tours of The Merchant of Venice and The Railway Children (Heartbreak Productions). Phil also designed the award-winning UK & international touring production of John Retallack's Hannah & Hanna (Time Out Critics' Choice). Other productions in collaboration with Olusola Oyeleye include The Security Guard, Ella (RichMix), High Life (Hampstead Theatre), Coming Up For Air (UK tour), Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour (Edinburgh Fringe 2010 & Oval House Theatre) and The Playground (Time Out Critics' Choice/Polka Theatre, London).

Sound Design: David Darlington & Liam McDermott. **Sound Engineering:** Derek Murray. **Lighting Design:** Gareth Starkey. **Recorded Percussion:** Oludele Olaseinde **Voices:** Shamus Maxwell, Paul O'Neill. Felix Pring, Kat Bishop, Suzanne Goldberg, Harry Arkwright, and from the original HUAC hearing of June 12 1956, "Honorable" Senators Walter, Arens and Scherer. **Male Voice Choir:** Liverpool Male Voice Choir

Forthcoming Performances include:

Feb 8, 9: Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute, Seattle, WA; Feb 10: From Black Africa to the White House. At Langston Hughes Performing Arts Centre, Seattle; Feb 16: ArtSpring, Salt Spring Island, BC; Feb 20: Intrepid Theatre, Victoria, BC; Feb 23: Douglas College, New Westminister, BC. Feb 24: East Bay Center for Performing Arts, Pichmond, CA; Feb 26: Claflin University, Orangeburg, SC; Feb 28, Mar 1: Theatre on San Pedro Square, San Jose.

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