

**FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE**  
**A Journey in Resistance, Triumph and Spirituals**  
**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Charles Usun, Piano**  
**Kolanut Centre, Calabar. Sunday, 4 November, 2012.**

**Greetings and Welcome.** I am proud to be a member of the Kings College Old Boys, 1973/78 set, and to be meeting so many of my classmates again; some for the first time since 1978. For me to have come here from Liverpool has an added poignancy, because that city is the one from which most slave ships sailed during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, stopping on countless occasions on the Calabar Creeks to take our ancestors to the New World. Liverpool's history and character are inextricably linked to her involvement in the trade, though many of her citizens are either unaware of the fact, or refuse to admit it. It was therefore interesting to see, on a visit to the Calabar Slavery Museum yesterday, some references to my adoptive city. It was also interesting to see photographs of King Eyo Honesty, the foremost Calabar trader, whom I believe was one of those who started the trend, as far back as the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, of members of African elites sending their children to Europe (in his case, Liverpool) for education. Today, that trend continues, not because we don't have enough western-style educational institutions here in Nigeria, but because the ones we do have continue to be starved of fundamental resources, despite our vast natural wealth and brainpower. I was also reminded yesterday of how inadequate (and often inaccurate) the education we received (even at the elite KC) was, in relation to African History, and to the struggles that led to the abolition of the slave trade. It was good to learn some more at the museum, and to hear that their displays will be being updated in due course. I commend their work and wish them continued success and support. It is a great honour to be able to make this modest contribution, here in Calabar, as an artist, to the re-education we all so desperately need - even those of us who may be or may have been a part of the elite of society. It is my firm belief that a reconnection to our past is one of the most crucial ingredients necessary for an African Renaissance, and I hope we can all contribute in our own way. I hope you enjoy the performance.

**Tayo Aluko. Writer, Baritone.** Tayo was born in Ibadan, the youngest child of the late civil engineer and writer, T.M. Aluko and Janet Adebisi Fajemisin. He worked in Liverpool until a few years ago as an architect and property developer, with a special but as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. He has sung as soloist in British concert halls accompanied by orchestra, as well as in Germany, Ireland and America. His play CALL MR ROBESON, about the African-American actor, singer and activist Paul Robeson has won awards against international competition at Fringe Festivals in Brighton UK and London, Ontario. He has performed it around the UK, Canada, in Lagos, and in America, including at New York's famous Carnegie Hall in February 2012, on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, when he also performed a song he wrote titled "Rise Up, Mother Africa!" He researched, wrote and narrated to camera a piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which now forms part of the permanent exhibit at Liverpool's International Slavery Museum. As a writer, Tayo has had articles published in several national newspapers and magazines in the UK, including The Guardian, and one in tribute to his late brother in Nigeria's ThisDay..

**Charles Usun, Piano.** Charles Usun trained as a mechanical engineer, but has been a musician all his life. He is a music producer par excellence, a singer, song writer and composer. He is a music consultant and is the Cross River State Music Director.

**Future performances of Call Mr. Robeson include:**

**November 18:** Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester; **January 10, 2013:** Square Chapel, Halifax

**January 17:** Headgate Theatre, Colchester; **January 18:** Fisher Theatre, Bungay

**January 19:** Tristan Bates Theatre, London

**Late Jan – early March:** Black History Month tour of USA and Canada

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