

# **CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.**

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko**

**With Dennis Nelson, Piano**

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**Greetings and Welcome.** The riots that started in London recently also hit Liverpool, my home city, mirroring events there thirty years ago. What seems to have been left out of the general media coverage is the fact that the whole thing was ignited by the apparently needless killing of a Black man by the police, and the subsequent insensitive handling of a peaceful protest by the community. British politicians and commentators are blaming variously gang culture, materialism, irresponsible parenting and other things, but not the racism and the inequalities in society that cause resentment to simmer daily, waiting for a spark to cause an inevitable explosion. I attended the Millions March in Harlem yesterday where it was clear from the speeches made and the atmosphere on the ground that millions of Americans are growing increasingly angrier by the day at the injustices and inequalities in US society too. It seems that the hope that greeted your President's ascension four years ago has dissipated significantly, even (or especially) among many Black people. This suggests that race is not the issue that needs to be focused on, but class, justice, gender, peace, fairness and equality. Paul Robeson was one of the first people to recognise and sing this tune from the rooftops, but was branded a communist and a traitor for his troubles. Thousands more have suffered and been marginalised for holding such views, but the truth remains the truth: we live in a system that exploits most people, regardless of race, for the benefit of a few, and the injustice of it all seems to be becoming clearer and more blatant by the day. It is also clear, be it from the streets of London, Liverpool, the Middle East, and even around America, that people will not stand for this for ever. I hope that hearing Robeson's story today (whether for the first time or not) inspires us to listen to, and join with those who may be on the margins of society who may have important truths to tell us about how we can make this world a better place, and in a peaceful way. I hope you enjoy the show.