

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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With Michael Conliffe, Piano

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Greetings, Croeso. There has been a lot of talk of rape in the news recently, what with the justice secretary giving the impression that he considers some forms of rape more serious than others, and the head of the IMF facing accusations of the attempted rape of a Guinean chambermaid in a New York hotel. For many, guilt has already been proven. I refer not to these actual cases, but to their symbolic and metaphorical equivalent. The IMF has long been accused by Third World Countries of assisting and participating in repeated acts of international rape by promoting policies of international finance and “free trade” that force ordinary women, children and men to wallow in dire poverty while banks, multinationals and rich elites plunder their countries’ natural and human resources. From the 1930s, Paul Robeson tried to draw people’s attention to this, but for his pains, was found guilty of the serious crimes of un-Americanism and communism. What was at stake then remains so today – the metaphorical victims of the rapists are international, as we see ordinary people in even some European economies cowering in fear as the IMF and others prepare to force their policies of mass privatisation and mass unemployment upon them. When brave people around the world, from the Bradley Mannings to the Middle Eastern freedom fighters to British trade unionists try to defend ordinary people, they deserve support, not derision. I hope you enjoy the show.