

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko,

With Michael Conliffe, Piano

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Greetings. I wonder how many of us have had our phones “hacked” recently by the papers? As you will see from Robeson’s story, the media were always interested in him, and he was routinely listened to by the authorities. Not for the trivial reasons our media are interested in today, but because his conversations were deemed not to be conducive to America’s national interests. Not conducive in what way exactly? Arguing for equality between races; for equal access to the world’s resources for all people; for freedom for colonial people; for peace and friendship among all people of the world. The media seem particularly interested in people’s sex lives right now, but Robeson would argue that the interests of the people would be better served by papers probing more deeply into the machinations that take nations to war, or spend our resources in harmful and greedy ways. There would be much juicy stuff to uncover from the recent Chilcott enquiry or the recent revelations of multinational companies’ offshore bank accounts. Of course, if too many of us delve into such sensitive issues, we might have the kind of insurrections we are witnessing in other parts of the world. I hope Robeson’s story will inspire us to retain our interest in those things that really matter, and remind our leaders that they can, should, and will be held accountable for what they say and do behind closed doors, when the lives of ordinary people are affected. I hope you enjoy the show.