

From Tayo Aluko
Mandela Remembered Concert, Friday July 18, 2014.
The Roundhouse, London.

Greetings. What an honour it is to be celebrating the life of Madiba with you all today. It is amazing to recall that he was once branded a terrorist in many political circles around the world, and ironic that when he died, many of those same people (or their successors) had mysteriously dropped their prejudices and rushed to pay gushing, fawning tributes to him. Terrorism is alive and well in today's world, and as with Mandela, we know that the label is often attached to the wrong people. What, if not terrorism, is what the Israeli State is subjecting the people of Palestine to? What, if not Apartheid, is the system that operates there? As we remember and honour Madiba today, let us not flinch from speaking truth to power in the way he did, at risk of great personal sacrifice. There is a demonstration tomorrow, Saturday 19 July, assembling at Downing St. at 12 noon, and marching to the Israeli Embassy, to let the Israeli government and their supporters know that the world protests against their actions, and to let the people of Gaza know that they are not forgotten. Let us channel Mandela by joining in the demonstration and other struggles for justice and freedom. And as we mourn mindless slaughter of innocents elsewhere today, let us also support groups that campaign for peace and disarmament, like the ones listed below. One day soon, we will be celebrating a Free Palestine in the same way as we now celebrate a free, if flawed, South Africa.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked previously as an architect and property developer, with a special but as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as *Nabucco*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Anything Goes*. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, as well as highly favourable reviews in the press – most notably in the Guardian and on BBC Radio 4. He has toured the play around the UK, the United States of America, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria, and at New York's Carnegie Hall in February 2012 on his 50th birthday. He also delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*, and another one titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE* - a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals has 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. His 15-minute play, *HALF MOON*, which also deals with ancient Africa has been performed several times in the UK. He has recently been appointed president of the Birmingham Clarion Singers. With The Maltings Theatre, Berwick-upon-Tweed, he recently premiered a new piece, titled *What Happens?* featuring the writings of Langston Hughes, performed with live jazz accompaniment. He is a current writer on attachment with the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse theatres.

Paulette Vassell, Piano. Paulette has worked as an accompanist in London for over 20 years. She has accompanied classical singers, gospel choirs, Caribbean folk groups and other performers. Paulette studied piano with Patricia Hancock at Colchester Institute and the MMus in music composition with Roger Redgate at Goldsmiths College, London. Paulette is currently developing her career as a composer while continuing to teach music in London schools and FE colleges.

Call Mr. Robeson will be performed at the Dugdale Centre in Enfield on October 25. Tayo Aluko & Friends is presenting an American actor in a performance in Mandela at the same venue. *Mandela: Let Freedom Reign* will be performed there on October 22.



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