

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko,**

**With Michael Conliffe, Piano**

**The Riverfront, Newport. Thursday 22 September 2011**

## **Greetings and Welcome.**

*"Only when our government has taken ... action toward protecting its own citizens can its role in aiding the progress of peoples in other countries be viewed with trust and hope."*

This is how Paul Robeson ended a telegram to President Truman in 1947, protesting the lynching of four Black men in Georgia. Earlier this morning, there was another lynching - this time not by the Ku Klux Klan, but by the State of Georgia. Troy Davis, whose 1989 conviction for a murder that all evidence shows that he didn't commit, was executed by the state of Georgia, despite a worldwide campaign for a fair trial and for clemency on his behalf. As the American government prepares to veto Palestine's bid for U.N. membership as an independent state, and continues to prosecute expensive wars elsewhere for spurious reasons, Robeson's words ring even truer today than they did in 1947. Interestingly, he also led a delegation to the U.N. in 1951 charging his own government with "Genocide against the Negro people", as most of them were forced to live in dire poverty, like many more continue to do in today's dire economy. Troy Davis's case will hopefully shine a light, not just on the death penalty but also on the hundreds of thousands of African Americans festering in U.S. prisons, in many cases because of their skin colour, the opportunities denied them in life, and the justice denied them by the racist legal system. State sanctioned violence, murder and genocide, be it in Syria, Libya or America and elsewhere in the West must be called for what it is, denounced and resisted. Another innocent man was killed today, and the added tragedy is that the real murderers, including those in the criminal justice system are free. We all owe the victims of this violence our determination to use whatever weapons we have at our disposal to peacefully but resolutely continue their fight for truth and justice. To those responsible for his death, a well known Spiritual says "God's A Goin' To Trouble De Water". Troy Davis, Rest in Peace. The struggle continues.