

**CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.
Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko,
with Dr. Jay Fluellen, Piano
Community Education Centre (CEC) Philadelphia, PA,
Sept. 4,5,6*, 10,11 &13, 2009**

Greetings and welcome. Paul Robeson liked to believe that he would have come from the noble tradition of griots: African people who travelled telling the stories and histories of their ancestors using words and music. If I were to spend the rest of my life travelling around the world telling just this one story, I will die happy. And what better and more significant place to pass through than here in Philly, where he spent the last years of his life? This is my second visit: the first one being one day in June 2008, in a theatre probably one third the size of this, with less than half the seats taken. However, in the audience that night were representatives from the Paul Robeson House who have been instrumental in helping deliver a bigger audience this time around, and whose work is to preserve the legacy in Philadelphia of one of the most gifted people the world has ever known. I feel blessed and honoured to have been given the gift to be able to share such a remarkable and inspiring story with a growing number of people of all races and ages. In the turbulent times that we are going through right now, I feel that there is no better, more urgent story to tell than that of Mr. Robeson, and hope that you enjoy my telling of it and that it re-energises you to continue – however long the road, however steep the climb - the fight for freedom, peace and justice that Robeson and so many others before and since, fought on our behalf.
Peace...