



Greetings, Welcome. They get things wrong in the US, sometimes. The world gets to see it happen live often, but it is rare for errors to be admitted, and rarer still for them to be corrected immediately. This happened the other day at the Oscars, when the Best Picture Oscar was first awarded to one movie, and then to *Moonlight*, a film that tells the story of a young Black man in inner-city Miami, with the tough choices that people in such environments have to face, and with homosexuality. A decade ago, it would have been inconceivable that such a film could have been made, let alone for it to win *three* awards. Since January 20 this year, it has begun to look like such characters' lives will be viewed with a lot less empathy by the government, and it is to the credit of the Academy that they were brave enough to stand up to the mounting tyranny of these times and recognise excellence where such recognition is due. Had this been the case in Robeson's time, he probably would have been celebrated more, not just as an artist, but as an activist and world citizen. Instead, he was described as an "enemy of the people" by many. It is no coincidence that this phrase has been used again recently in relation to the media in this county, for Robeson was trying his best to draw attention to the injustices suffered by his people then and historically, and to the power that people had to change things. That he chose to do so through the medium of art was his undoing, because art is so much more effective in delivering truth than almost anything else, which is why he was seen as such a dangerous figure when, for instance, he said that he viewed his art as "*my weapon in defence of my people and all oppressed people.*" The decision to vilify Robeson to such an extent that even his descendants in the modern civil rights struggle would distance themselves from him was no mistake, because we have seen such policies repeated even to this day, where people can be jailed for revealing truths that the government wants to keep hidden. If we thought it was bad in the time of the last administration, "*we ain't seen nothing yet.*" We could be heading toward even worse times unless we resist with all the means at our disposal. It is good to know that in an institution that has recently been considering the status of sanctuary campus for immigrants (Hofstra), teachers and students recognise the effectiveness of art as one of the best weapons in our armoury. May the day soon come (if it hasn't already) when a Hofstra alumnus wins an Oscar for a great piece of progressive political film, no mistakes made.

I hope you enjoy the show.

CAST OF MAIN CHARACTERS

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in England, having worked previously as an architect and wannabe property developer. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and performed lead roles in operas and musicals. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada. He delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*. 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 developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. His new play, *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER*, premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe in August 2016.

Dennis A. Nelson (Piano) Dennis studied at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music and also here at Hofstra University (Class of '86). He is organist and choir director for Trinity Baptist Church in Brooklyn, and accompanist for the New York City Labor Chorus. He is a member of The New Hope Ensemble, a gospel/jazz quintet, and Instrumental Sounds Of Praise (ISOP), a gospel big band aggregation. His songs have been recorded by artists including gospel singer Valerie Boyd, R&B/gospel singer Desiree Coleman-Jackson and actress/singer Jeannette Bayardelle. Recent keyboardist/writer recording credits include: "Never Turning Back" by the New Hope Ensemble, "Autumn Breezes - Songs For The Harvest" by Gwen Davis-Young, and "For Seasons Of Love" by the Hallmarx Music Group.

OluşolaOyeleye, Director and Dramaturge.Oluşola is an award-winning writer, director and producer working in opera, music theatre, visual arts and dance. Theatre includes: *Tin* (The Lowry), *Ti-Jean and his Brothers* (Collective Artistes & Sustained Theatre, Cottesloe), Resident director on Trevor Nunn's West End production of *Porgy and Bess* (Savoy Theatre), staff producer at English National Opera, Spirit of Okin and Sankofa for Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, (National & International tours), *Coming Up For Air* (The Drum & UK tour), *The Resurrection of Roscoe Powell* (Soho Theatre), *The Shelter* (RSC Barbican Theatre), *Medea* (Ariya, Royal National Theatre Studio), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre, Time Out Critics' Choice Pick of the Year), *High Life*, (Hampstead Theatre), *Maybe Father*, (Talawa, Young Vic), *Twelfth Night* (British Council Tour, Zimbabwe) and *Ella*, a monodrama about Ella Fitzgerald (Rich Mix). Opera includes: Akin Euba's *Orunmila's Voices: Songs from the Beginning*

of Time (Jefferson's Arts Centre, New Orleans) and *Chaka: An Opera in Two Chants* with the St. Louis African Chorus, *Dido and Aeneas* (Tricycle/BAC), *God's Trombones* (Fairfield Halls) and the second cast revival of Jonathan Miller's production of *The Mikado* (English National Opera). Oluşola has also worked in Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. She has been a visiting lecturer and Artist at Universities in South Africa and London, and was Head of the Acting Studio at Morley College. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba and performed at both Harvard and Cambridge Universities. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Phil Newman, Designer & Assistant Director.Phil's Design credits include: *Jungle Book &High School Musical* (Elgiva Theatre), *Strange Land*, *Saint/Jeanne* and *Spring Awakening* (Chelsea Theatre), *Carousel*, *Fame*, *Hairspray*, *Cabaret &Attempts On Her Life* (Amersham & Wycombe College), *Kwaidan* (Rouge28 Theatre), *Lord of the Flies &Grimm Tales* (Colet Court School), *The Tempest &Pinocchio* (UK/UAE tours for Shakespeare4Kidz), an open-air *Romeo & Juliet* (Cornucopia Theatre), *Dance or Die* (Hoxton Hall), *Voices in the Alleyway &Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) and film short *The Judge* for Faith Drama, *The Riddle of the Sands &Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour), *Stockholm* (BAC), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice &The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the award-winning UK/international touring production of *Hannah & Hanna*. Collaborations with director OluşolaOyeleye include *Heartbeat - The Musical* workshop (in Lagos, Nigeria), *A Wing, A Prey, A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *The Security Guard* (Merton Abbey Fest 2012), *Ella* (Rich Mix),*Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). Phil has recently been appointed Resident Creative Designer at the Colour House Children's Theatre, Merton Abbey Mills where he has designed their 100th production, *Peter Pan* and their forthcoming pantomime, *Cinderella*.

Sound Design: David Darlington & Liam McDermott. **Sound Engineering:** Derek Murray. **Lighting Design:** Gareth Starkey. **Recorded Percussion:** OludeleOlaseinde **Voices:** Shamus Maxwell, Paul O'Neill. Felix Pring, Kat Bishop, Suzanne Goldberg, Harry Arkwright, and from the original HUAC hearing of June 12 1956, "Honorable" Senators Walter, Arens and Scherer. **Male Voice Choir:** Liverpool Male Voice Choir.