

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

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Colin Hazel, Piano  
Littleport Library, Littleport, Cambridgeshire. Saturday, 26 October, 2019

**Greetings, and Welcome.** Vietnam was at war with the United States and her allies for over nineteen years, until 1975. Before that, they had been at war with France, who had colonised them in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, for eight years from 1945. The victorious but battered Socialist country became politically and economically isolated, and in 1986 they decided to take a more capitalist route, and became better integrated into the world economy. With such a history, it is perhaps not so surprising that conditions there are so dire today that people are desperate enough to voluntarily risk their lives to get to the UK, resulting in the tragedy of a few days ago. News of similar tragedies have become horribly regular in the Mediterranean, as people from countries with similar histories flee war-torn former European colonies. The same goes for north-bound migrations from Latin America to the U.S. Media pundits and many people wonder what could cause such desperation. Paul Robeson, speaking in 1947 suggested an answer: *“A day or two ago, the British Foreign Minister said, and I quote, ‘If we do not want total war, we must have total peace.’ For once, I agree with him. But Mr. Bevin must be totally blind if he cannot see that the absence of peace in the world is due precisely to the efforts of the British, American and other imperialist powers to maintain their control over the peoples of the Middle East, Europe and Africa.”* Robeson was dismissed as a misguided communist. And as those powers carry on causing chaos around the world, the climate emergency continues to manifest itself in devastating ways, including in California at this very moment. Strange then that in politics today in Robeson’s country, the leading politicians proposing radical solutions to one or both these existential threats are constantly vilified in the mainstream media as Robeson was. Over here, even some *Guardian* journalists and Labour MPs criticise Jeremy Corbyn as much as the right-wing tabloids, insisting that he is unfit to be Prime Minister. As the scale of the climate crisis suggests that we need global cooperation as never before, anybody more anti-war, anti-racist and anti-capitalist than Corbyn or Sanders will get my vote. I hope you enjoy the show.

**Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer.** Nigerian-born and a former architect, Tayo lives in Liverpool. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and performed lead and solo roles in operas, musicals and oratorios. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and has taken him as far afield as the North West Territories of Canada and Australia and New Zealand, including New York’s Carnegie Hall. He delivers a lecture/concert titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE*: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals. His audiovisual piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is part of the permanent exhibit at Liverpool’s International Slavery Museum. His 15-minute play, *HALF MOON*, which deals with ancient Africa has been performed several times in the UK. He originated a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?*, featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, is performed with live jazz accompaniment. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana* and *Searchlight Magazine*. His play *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* has been performed on three continents, including at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in August 2017 and the Harare International Festival of the Arts in May 2018. He was one of a group of ten “outstanding writers of colour” invited to write and perform responses to artefacts held in Oxford’s Pitt Rivers Museum in September 2019.

**Colin Hazel, Piano.** Since graduating with a BA (Hons) in Music from the University of Nottingham, Colin has worked in a diverse range of musical areas including theatre, choral, jazz, rock, pop and music education. His performing credits include two years as a multi-instrumentalist in Giffords Circus, keyboards and vocals with a variety of bands, cabaret performer, piano vocalist and youth theatre MD. He is currently director of music at St Augustine’s Church, accompanist for Cambridge’s Singing Allowed Choir and keyboard player for the Barefoot Doctors blues group. He has recently published an educational book, *New Horizons for Piano: Grades 2-3*, which is the first in a series of books aimed at reintroducing works by historic women composers into piano education. Available at Millers, Cambridge Pianoforte and Heffers. For more details go to [cjhazel.co.uk](http://cjhazel.co.uk).

**Olusola Oyeleye, Director and Dramaturge.** Olusola is an award-winning writer, director and producer working in opera, music theatre, visual arts and dance. Theatre includes: *Showcase* (Soho Theatre); *Arawa* (Mboka Festival); *Last Shift* (York Theatre Royal); *A Raisin in the Sun* (Farnham Maltings); *Tin* (The Lowry), *Ti-Jean and his Brothers* (National Theatre, Cottesloe), Resident director to Trevor Nunn, *Porgy and Bess* (Savoy Theatre), Staff Producer, English National Opera; *Spirit of Okin* and *Sankofa*, Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble (UK & International tours), *Zhe* (Producer Collective Artistes, Soho Theatre), *The Shelter* (RSC Barbican Theatre), *Medea* (Ariya, 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, Zimbabwe). Opera includes: *The Pied Piper of Chibok* (Grimeborn Festival, Arcola); 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* (St. Louis African Chorus), *Dido and Aeneas* (Tricycle/BAC). Olusola has worked in The Gambia, Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. She is a senior lecturer at St Mary's University, and was Head of Acting at Morley College. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba and performed at Harvard and Cambridge Universities. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

**Phil Newman, Set & Costume Designer.** Phil's recent Design credits include: *Cinderella* (MAC, Stoke-on-Trent), *The Little Mermaid & The Wonderful World of Oz* (UAE tours, S4K International), *Pinocchio & A Christmas Carol* (Voice of the Show, Chesham), *The Mikado* (Network Theatre), *Jungle Book* (Elgiva Theatre), *Bernarda Alba*, *Strange Land*, *Saint/Jeanne & Spring Awakening* (Chelsea Theatre), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK/UAE tours, Shakespeare 4 Kidz), Japanese ghost story *Kwaidan* (UK/International tour), *Carousel*, *Hairspray & Cabaret* (Amersham College) and a huge walk-through Xmas Grotto at Wyevale Garden Centre, Aylesbury in 2017. He has also designed the multi-award-winning monodrama *Call Mr Robeson*, *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). Further credits include: *Lord of the Flies* (Colet Court), *Dance or Die* for Avant Garde Dance's Tony Adigun, *Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the original award-winning international touring production of John Retallack's *Hannah & Hanna*. Phil is proud to be an Associate Artist with director Gbemisola Ikumelo's Faith Drama Productions, for whom he has designed *Custody* (Oval House), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) and *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre). Since 2015, he has been the Resident Creative Designer at Colour House Children's Theatre nr Wimbledon.

**Sound Design:** David Darlington & Liam McDermott. **Sound Engineering:** Derek Murray. **Lighting Design:** Gareth Starkey. **Recorded Percussion:** Oludele Olaseinde **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" Representatives Walter, Arens and Scherer. **Male Voice Choir:** Liverpool Male Voice Choir

**Forthcoming Performances Include:**

**Call Mr. Robeson: Oct 26: Littleport Library, Cambs;**  
**Dec 6:** Y Plas, Machynlleth, Powys. **Feb 1:** Bishop Center, **Aberdeen, WA, USA;**  
**March 3:** The Miners Theatre, **Ammanford;**  
**April 13 – 17:** Sogang University, **Seoul, S. Korea.**

**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Nov 2:** Unity Theatre, **Liverpool**

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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