

We hear today that the previous president of the United States of America, who wants to be (and could probably well succeed in becoming) the next one, is to be tried in federal courts soon. He says it's all part of a political witch-hunt, and a continuation of the one that started when he was in office. Many literally laughed when he first announced his candidacy, but few are laughing now. Here in the UK, we have had more of our own share of clowns in positions of great power, with the repercussions all too obvious to those who have eyes to see. The future continues to look bleak, when one considers the choices available at the next general elections. They are no better here than they are in the US, nor in other parts of the world – my birth-country of Nigeria included. Over there, we have just elected a man into office who I describe as making Joe Biden look like Trevor Noah. I can say such a thing from the relative safety of a country where one is protected by the rule of law. That last sentence was written with my tongue firmly in my cheek, because I appear before you today as a recently-convicted criminal. My crime was joining an activist group, Palestine Action, in staging a protest outside an Israeli-owned arms factory in Leicester, which manufactures drones and missiles which are then marketed to the world's armies as "battle-tested," meaning on the captive people of Palestine. That company, Elbit Systems, currently has eight remaining sites in the UK (two have successfully been shut down by Palestine Action's relentless attention), but continues to receive the full protection of the state. An ongoing siege at the Leicester factory that started on May 1, has benefitted from thousands upon thousands of police-person-hours, certainly at the cost of millions, and protesters continue to be arrested while the arms manufacturers and killers go about their sordid business as best they can. Meanwhile, Julian Assange remains quietly in prison, and has recently lost another appeal against his extradition to the USA for exposing war crimes committed by western governments. Many of the liberation fighters mentioned in this play spent time in prison: Nelson Mandela was there a lifetime, Steve Biko spent the last days of his amazing life there. I therefore wear my criminal conviction as a badge of honour, and am grateful, happy and proud to be sharing these inspiring stories of resistance at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vauxhall Law Centre: an organisation which, unlike the arms of state that masquerade as organs of law and justice, truly serves and protects the most vulnerable in society. Long may they continue to do so.

**Tayo Aluko, Writer, Performer.** Tayo was born in Nigeria, worked as an architect in Liverpool for many years. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in opera, musicals and oratorio. His first play, *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and continues to be performed after 16 years. He delivers a number of lecture/concerts and talks on Black Political Resistance using art and song. 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 writer Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana*, *Searchlight Magazine*, *Counterfire* and *Counterpunch*. His latest production is a radio play, *PAUL ROBESON'S LOVE SONG*, recorded during lockdown with actors from the USA and Canada, and now streaming online. He has recently had two poems published, and developed one of them – "*GREATNESS*" *IN A TIME OF COVID* – into an online international performance and mapping project and a workshop examining colonial history. His third one-man musical play (in progress), is *COLERIDGE-TAYLOR OF FREETOWN*, inspired by the life and music of the Black British Composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. He is also working on a screenplay telling the story of Pastor Daniels Ekarte (d. 1964), known as the African Saint of Liverpool.

**James Breckon, Piano.** James is an accomplished performer on piano, hammond and pipe organ, synthesisers, as well as guitar. He obtained a first class Degree from the prestigious Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, and regularly performs at pop gigs, musical theatre, functions and weddings. His session and composing work has taken him around the country and onto the sets of national TV; composing for programmes such as Britain's Got Talent and appearing on BBC Sessions. James' list of clients includes; Harvey Nichols, Hilton Hotels, Everton Football Club, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres, Norwegian Cruise Lines and The Richmond Hotel.

**Just an Ordinary Lawyer** was premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2016 by Tayo Aluko, with Angus Carmichael on piano

Directed by **Amanda Huxtable**  
Designed by **Emma Williams**  
Dramaturgy: **Esther Wilson**  
Lighting Design: **Mark Loudon**  
Sound Design: **Noel Inyang & Tayo Aluko**

**Future Performances Include:**

**10 June: Participant, Strike Benefit Support Night**, Rank and File Organising Conference, Rich Mix, **London**

**17 June: Paul Robeson – The Giant, In a Nutshell.**  
Birch Community Centre, **Manchester**

**22 June: Just An Ordinary Lawyer @ Liverpool** African Caribbean Centre

**30 July: Just An Ordinary Lawyer @ EBFringe, Eastbourne**  
**5-19 August** (odd dates only) **Call Mr. Robeson @ Edinburgh Fringe**

**6-20 August** (even dates only) **Just An Ordinary Lawyer @ Edinburgh Fringe**

**12 October Just An Ordinary Lawyer.**  
For Law Society of Scotland, EICC, **Edinburgh**

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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**VAUXHALL LAW & INFORMATION CENTRE**

**AND**

**TAYO ALUKO & FRIENDS**  
present

**JUST AN  
ORDINARY  
LAWYER**

————— (?) —————

**A PLAY, WITH SONGS**

**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko,  
with James Breckon, piano**

**VNC Millennium Centre, Liverpool  
9 June, 2023**