

There is apparently a phrase traditionally uttered by Orthodox Jewish men in prayer: "Thank you God, for not making me a woman." For a while, I have meditated on writing a poem with the title, "*Thank you God, for not making me an American.*" I feel that sentiment more strongly today than ever, for were I American, I would at this moment in time be wrestling with the fact that I am being expected to choose between one genocide-enabling party and another; between one war-mongering party and another; between one criminal conspiracy and another; between one oligarchic offer and another. Were I American, I would be screaming at the top of my lungs, using every available platform (but not being heard) to say we must surely be able to do better than this: that what we are being presented with cannot possibly represent the best of us, and we must be able to look elsewhere for leadership. I would be being called naïve if I said that I would instead be voting Green (I was indeed told I was naïve, years ago, when I expressed the hope that Bernie Sanders would stop campaigning under the Democratic Party ticket and take up the offer made to him by the Green Party to be their nominee) Weeks ago, I was criticised for suggesting Americans vote Green, as by doing so, we would risk having, once again, a Tr*mp presidency, for a Harris presidency would be infinitely better. Not only is she a woman, she is Black. Wouldn't that show how far America has progressed? Really? Like America progressed under the first Black president? Well, what is Madam Harris saying about the plight of women in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Sudan, Congo? Anything different from her outgoing boss? Back in 1948, Paul Robeson campaigned for the Progressive Party whose presidential candidate was Henry Wallace. The Party polled about 2%. Among their policies was making peace with the Soviet Union. Indications are that the Green Party might poll well over 5%, the threshold above which it will start to receive state funding and begin to have the ability to be heard through the noise. Perhaps in decades to come, one might not have to be so grateful that fate did not make them American, if, indeed, such a country still existed.

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. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and continues to be in demand 16 years since its premiere. His second play, *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* is itself 8 years old, and has been performed on three continents. 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 audio play, *PAUL ROBESON'S LOVE SONG*, recorded during lockdown with actors from the USA and Canada, and now streaming online. His third one-man musical play, *COLERIDGE-TAYLOR OF FREETOWN*, inspired by the life and music of the Black British Composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, premiered in Brighton in May. He is also working on a screenplay telling the story of Pastor Daniels Ekarte (d. 1964), known as the African Saint of Liverpool.

Meryn Williams, Piano. After graduating from Cardiff University Meryn has spent much of her time as an accompanist and animateur. She was the winner of the Morfydd Owen prize and Associate of the London College of Music and was accompanist at the Stuart Burrows masterclasses. Meryn is the accompanist for Wales West and Channel Islands for the Royal Academy of Dance London. She is currently leading the Newport Gwanwyn project and is musical director of two choirs.

Call Mr. Robeson was premiered at C-Soco at the Edinburgh Fringe on August 12, 2007, with Michael Conliffe on piano

Tayo Aluko & Friends
Present

Director and Dramaturge: Olusola Oyeleye.

Set & Costume Designer: Phil Newman.

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.

Some voices in the HUAC scene used from

Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?

by Eric Bentley, recorded by L A Theatre Works.

Male Voice Choir: Liverpool Male Voice Choir

Future Performances include:

October 23. Concert: **Black Activist Song Cycle**, St. George's Hall, Liverpool.

October 29. Participant, **Knowsley MBC BHM event**. Huyton Library

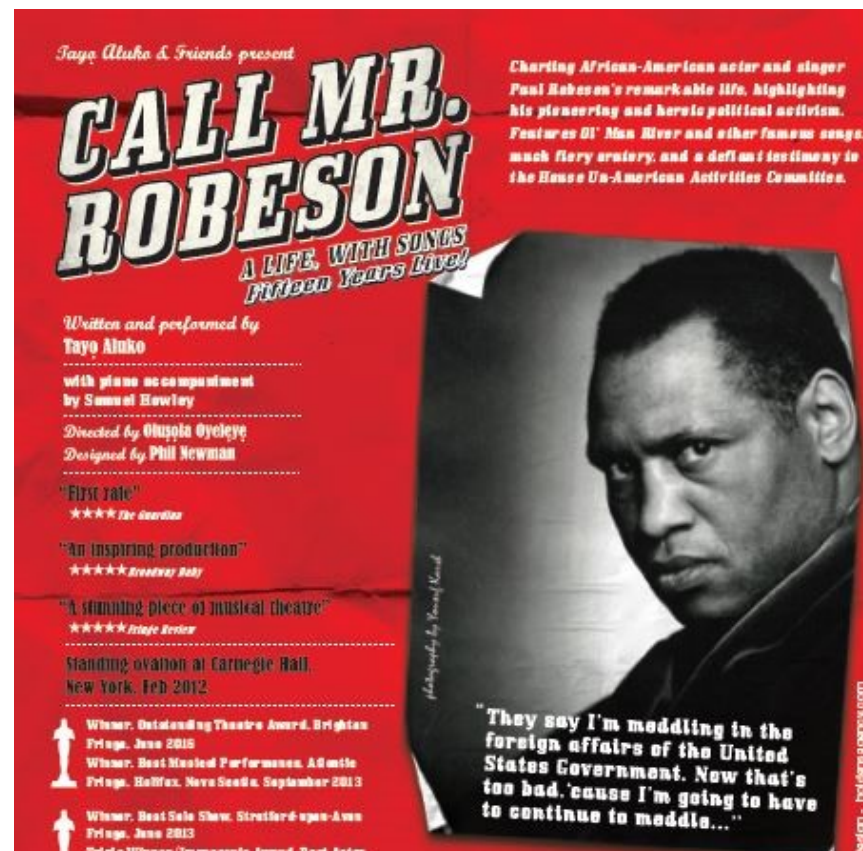
November 11: **Freedom First**. Jazz concert, London

November 22. **Just An Ordinary Lawyer @** Exeter University, Devon

November 23. **Just An Ordinary Lawyer @** Dragon Theatre, Barmouth, Wales

December 4. **Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown @** Unity Theatre, Liverpool

Dec 7. **Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown @** Courtyard Theatre, London



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Written and performed by Tayo Aluko
Accompanied by
Meryn Williams

Narth Village Hall, Monmouthshire
Sunday, 20 October, 2024