



FEED THESE PEOPLE

**Biography of
Noé Diawaku
dia Nseyila**

by Nkita Tshiana Arao

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A Biography of Noé Diawaku dia Nseyila

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By NKITA TSHIAMA ARAO

**Daystar University
Kenya**

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all the people who have made me who I am today starting with my parents tata Tshiana Lazare and mama Nkembu Marie for the survival principles they taught me; nkaka Mayimbi Esekia for his conviction and sacrifice to educate one child of mama Nkembu to take care of her in her old age; for nkaka Yambula Jean-Pierre and his sons mbuta Nsimba Samuel and mbuta Nlandu Moïse for making sure that my tuition was paid in Home Economics School and later at my secondary school at Kimpese; my adopted parents Dr. Wesley Brown and Rev. Mary Jane Smith who rescued me by bringing me out of the mire clay and set my feet firmly on the rock by paying my fees for the last three years of high school; all my teachers from elementary education in the Democratic Republic of Congo to the university in the USA.

“Je suis ce que je suis car je ne serai jamais ce que j’étais” (I am what I am because I will never be what I was)

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FOREWORD

The final years of the 19th century especially the 1880s marked significant changes in the continent of Africa. The major event was the partition of the continent by colonising European powers. These powers included tiny Belgium. The reigning king of Belgium King Leopold II, took the land covering the basin of Congo River, eighty times the size of his own country. Though he personally never set foot in the Congo choosing instead to run it through remote control as it were, under King Leopold II, Belgium looted the African country of its natural resources mostly copper, ivory and various mineral deposits. Adam Hochschild confirms this in his book *King Leopold's Ghost*.

“For Europeans, Africa remained the supplier of valuable raw materials- human bodies and elephant tusks. But otherwise, they saw the continent as faceless, blank, empty, a place on the map waiting to be explored, one even more frequently described by the phrase that says more about the seer than the seen: the Dark Continent, ” Hochschild wrote.

King Leopold II was not good to the inhabitants of the land. He was very cunning and cruel to the inhabitants of Congo. He brutalized them to the extent that millions of them died. To the Europeans, the king presented himself as a true humanitarian. However, after some time, some of his European counterparts started to suspect him when they saw boat loads of looted goods from the Congo. On their return trips to Congo, the Belgian ships were loaded not

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with products of any kind in exchange but they were carrying army officers, firearms and ammunition.

We are thankful for foreigners like Roger Casement, an Irishman, Edmund Morell, a Briton and trusted employee of Liverpool Shipping Line, two young African-Americans George Washington Williams, a journalist and historian and William Shepherd who took time to get a local perspective of the time by interviewing the African people they met. They were all instrumental in exposing the wickedness and greed of King Leopold II. Some of these people went to the extent of risking their lives to go to Congo to collect evidence against the cunning Belgian monarch.

However, quite unexpectedly, King Leopold II left the door to his new land open for European missionaries. A story is told that whenever the king's representatives in the Congo were to serve severe punishment on "errant" natives and which often involved amputation of the hands, a few missionaries would be summoned not just as witnesses but they would pray first before the punishment was carried out.

Hochschild comments in his book "The lust for slave profits engulfed even some of the priests, who abandoned their preaching, took black women as concubines, kept slaves themselves, and sold their students and converts into slavery."²

It was also said that the king's soldiers fought and defeated slave traders. This fact led many local people to believe that King Leopold II was a good man, till he turned against them for his own gain.

The struggle of Congo, which is still being experienced today, started a long time ago. In 1908, Congo formally became a Belgian colony, but that did not change the treatment of the indigenous people.

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Congo, located in the heart of Africa, was among the first colonised countries on the continent to get its independence. This happened in 1960 when Congo renamed Zaire in 1971 before reverting to its original identity as DRC in 1998, was freed from the yoke of the colonial Belgian government. However, though political freedom was gained, the vast and potentially rich country was not stable economically and in terms of human power development as evidenced in subsequent years. The statistics have shown that there were very few Congolese who had gone to the university by that time. The educational pyramid had an extended base at primary education, but thinned out as it reached university level. As the struggles continued, in 1961, Patrice Emery Lumumba, the Prime Minister under the first independent government led by Joseph Kasa-Vubu, was assassinated. Lumumba was seen by many as a leftist, which was considered dangerous to Western democracy.

In retrospect and decades later, many Congolese have come to appreciate Patrice Lumumba, and believe that had he lived long enough, he would have accomplished a lot for the benefit of Congo, and at least given the country a more stable beginning. However, the struggles continued and there were revolts in many parts of the land. For example, the secession of Katanga Province led by Moïse Tshombe; Antoine Gizenga from the Bandundu Province ruled in Kisangani and the north western part of the country. It was in this instability that an army colonel, Joseph Desire Mobutu later to be known only as Mobutu Sese Seko came to power a few years later in a military coup. There was great hope that Mobutu would unify the country which was still reeling from serious divisions. Among other things Mobutu sought to end the rift between the government and the church. He also reached out to strengthen links with former colonial masters Belgium – a trend common with the rest of African states seeking to put memories of the colonial era behind them.

Shortly after Mobutu seized power, I remember walking through the streets of Matadi to the south west of DRC capital Kinshasa

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where I had gone to visit my elder sister and finding soldiers in the streets cleaning the town under an operation dubbed *Retrouchons les manches* (Let's roll up our sleeves and work). As a young girl I was impressed. I thought - as indeed did many Congolese - that Mobutu had come to bring relief to the masses. Personally I liked him as he started well, his salary was very humble, till power went to his head and he started to view his own country in much the same manner that King Leopold II did.

Several years after that first impression and expectation of President Mobutu, I had a totally different perspective. This came in 1969 when President Mobutu travelled to New York to attend the UN meeting and gave a very impressive speech, which made us living in America then very proud of him. He visited San Francisco thereafter, and many of us who then lived around the Bay Area assembled at the reception of the hotel where he was staying, excitedly waiting to see our own president. First we were told that he was coming down from his suite. Then to our disappointment, we were told that he had already left, spirited out of the building via a different door as we came to learn. Still in the US though, Mobutu next visited Los Angeles, and the resident Congolese who no doubt were as excited as we had been looked forward to seeing him and at least did so, but as we later heard the eagerly awaited meeting was to be etched in the memory of those present more for a very discouraging remark made by their Head of State.

“*Bayuda bazali awa*” Judases are here, Mobutu told his perplexed and no doubt perturbed audience *inter alia*.

With all that power which he was to yield for more than 30 years, Mobutu would be forced to flee his own country after an uprising led by Laurent Kabila. Mobutu died in exile in Morocco within a few years. But Congo's leadership crisis was far from over. Kabila was president for a very short time. He met his death at the hands of his own guards in the capital. The saving grace to the family

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was that his son Joseph Kabila succeeded him. The younger Kabila, a soldier, assumed office under a transitional government and legitimised his reign when he was elected president in the country's first democratic poll in decades held in 2006 in which his fiercest rival was a rebel leader Jean-Pierre Bemba who disputed the poll outcome despite this having been adjudged as relatively free and fair by international observers. For a time, Kabila jnr did not seat easy as Bemba formented one round of fresh trouble after another. Relative peace has held since the arrest of Bemba during a trip to Belgium in 2008 on a warrant from the International Criminal Court.

A country with a long history of struggle, where many people have lost their lives and millions continue to languish in misery - despite the land's high fertility, rich mineral content and hydraulic power inherent in its many rivers - would make one cry "Is there any hope for Congo?" The answer to this question is a resounding yes; it is just a matter of time before the people in authority come to their senses and realize that they must put the interests of the masses before their own. It is at that point that Congo will become a power to be reckoned with for generations to come. The contents of this book revolve around one man who rose above the expected and unexpected obstacles including his own declining health to keep such hope alive, not so much for himself as for those around him.

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To God be the glory and the honour.

- Nkita Tshiana Arao

Few people would capture their days in high school in the fashion Mrs Arao has done, centred on one principal character. It is an amazing story that was stirred by a dream she had one night. For former students and staff at E.P.I Kimpese Schools in DRC it rekindles many memories and for the neutral reader, it provides an insight into the life and times of a man who must be one of Africa's many unsung heroes. Allowing for substantive editing, the train of thought by the author has been retained throughout this unique and in instances intellectually thought-provoking study.

- Dick Agudah
Nairobi, Kenya