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**Obama-Have You Ever Heard the Story about
the First Democratically-Elected President of the Congo?**

Represent Our Resistance

By Dr. Lenore J. Daniels, PhD

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

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My Dear Wife,

I am writing this without knowing whether you will ever get it or when or whether I shall still be alive when you read it...

Dead or alive, free or imprisoned by the colonialists, it is not I who matter, it is the Congo. It is our poor people whose independence has been turned into a cage...

For where there is no dignity there is no freedom and where there's no justice there's no dignity and where there's no independence there are no free men...

History will have its say one day...

Not the history they teach in Brussels, Paris, Washington or the United Nations but the history taught in the country set free from colonialism and its puppet rulers...

Africa will write her own history and it will be a history of glory and dignity...

Do not weep my love; I know that my country, which has suffered so much, will be able to defend its independence and liberty.

Long live the Congo. Long live Africa.

He didn't sit atop a throne, or darn himself in gold chains or a uniform heavy with shiny metal. He didn't ask the people to bow but rather rise with him. Stand side by side with him. He point to their condition: colonized, enslaved, abused. Worse, their history had

been stolen. Memory of another time when they honored the land and each other had been replaced with a history that spoke of their inferiority. Recount how we are depicted as animals. See the demoralization of our children. Feel how we are made to live in fear. We are equals to the white man, the Belgian. We are a people from a great civilization beyond this imposed "civilization" that has made us the "wretched of the earth."

Above ground, men from other lands surround our material resources while we labor beneath the ground pulling up copper, cobalt, diamonds, and other minerals that are shipped off to other lands to provide "civilization" for Europeans and U.S. citizens. They say we are incapable of caring for our land; we wouldn't know what to do with the wealth of resources; we are so incompetent.

And what do we know about freedom?

Belgium asked: who is this man? What is he saying?

The people came. They wanted to hear more. They had been thinking but dared to articulate what this man was saying to them. Take responsibility, he said. Stand up and we'll stand together. To the elite Blacks he said, join us, for we are human and this is our land and we have a right to control our land. Lies for generations tell us otherwise. Lies tell us that we belong to the King and the land, too. We can't remain silent any longer. The "wretched of the earth" must rise! We want a democracy here in the Congo!

All of Europe asked: Who is this man?

Patrice Lumumba - not monkey, not ape - but the son of a farmer, the son and brother of Congolese who declare independent, freedom, the right to form a democracy and rid the Congo of the corruption and violence of the Belgian rule.

Patrice Lumumba and we are organizing to take control of our people and our land.

Patrice Lumumba and we are taking responsibility for the Congo's destiny.

This was not the first time a people rose up and took responsibility for their destiny, a people rose up and said enough of watching people suffer, people brutalized, people starving and dying from thirst, people without shelter, without education, without medical care, but forced to work until they died while others lived from the human carnage.

U.S. leaders put the CIA to work to swoop up communist when the U.S. and European nations declared communism the evil in the world. A democratically elected Mossadegh in Iran was declared a danger, a communist! This evil declared without consulting foreign powers that Iran was for the Iranian people. The CIA went to work. Mossadegh is evil, Iran! He's evil, Iran. In the chaos, the CIA chased Mossadegh out of Iran and the U.S. gave the people democracy: the Shah. Neither the U.S. nor the Europeans noticed when the Shah's secret service tortured and imprisoned thousands and slaughtered hundreds of thousands of people. But the accounts show that the great gift of democracy came with U.S. weapons.

Another democratically-elected president Arbenz in Guatemala had the *audacity* to turn over the land to the peasants! The former owners, wealthy elites and the foreign U.S. and Europeans, were found themselves surrounded by the peasants, the Indian natives of Guatemala, standing with their backs straight. The elite and foreigners cried out to the world! Look at what is happening to us! Look! The peasants are in control. Look, Arbenz is evil!

Yes, declared the CIA. He's a communist! And again the CIA swooped down and reestablished order. Arbenz ran for his life. The elites and foreign took control again and the peasants, evil's accomplices, were imprisoned, tortured and slaughter by the thousand. Even closer than Iran, the U.S. leadership didn't notice the bodies, couldn't smell the stench of the dead rotting in the streets. But, once again, accounts showed that weapons were given as a gift to the new regime to forge democratic state in Guatemala.

Did Lumumba know of this *traditional* method of securing democracy in post-colonial countries?

He has hope and big ideas. The people were willing.

The Europeans and the U.S. had their *tradition* of democracy.

On June 30, 1960, Independence Day in the Congo, King Baudouin spoke first. Colonization had come to an end in the Congo thanks to King Leopold II who envisioned this day of freedom for the Congolese! All praise to the King! Cheers to the King! And the folks at the ceremony rose and applauded. The man Lumumba selection for President, Joseph Kasavubu rose and spoke. Yes, it was the great King who did it all! More monuments, please!

But Lumumba, first democratically-elected president of the Congo walked to the podium.

Good to see King Baudouin and the other Belgium governmental officials and all the dignitaries. But a message to the people:

For this independence of the Congo, even as it is celebrated today with Belgium, a friendly country with whom we deal as equal to equal, no Congolese worthy of the name will ever be able to forget that it was by fighting that it has been won [*applause*], a day-to-day fight, an ardent and idealistic fight, a fight in which we were spared neither privation nor suffering, and for which we gave our strength and our blood.

We are proud of this struggle, of tears, of fire, and of blood, to the depths of our being, for it was a noble and just struggle, and indispensable to put an end to the humiliating slavery which was imposed upon us by force.

This was our fate for eighty years of a colonial regime; our wounds are too fresh and too painful still for us to drive them from our memory. We have known harassing work, exacted in exchange for salaries which did not permit us to eat enough to drive away hunger, or to clothe ourselves, or to house ourselves decently, or to raise our children as creatures dear to us.

We have known ironies, insults, blows that we endured morning, noon, and evening, because we are Negroes...

We have seen our lands seized in the name of allegedly legal laws which in fact recognized only that might is right.

We have seen that the law was not the same for a white and for a black, accommodating for the first, cruel and inhuman for the other.

We have witnessed atrocious sufferings of those condemned for their political opinions or religious beliefs; exiled in their own country, their fate truly worse than death itself.

We have seen that in the towns there were magnificent houses for the whites and crumbling shanties for the blacks, that a black was not admitted in the motion-picture houses, in the restaurants, in the stores of the Europeans; that a black traveled in the holds, at the feet of the whites in their luxury cabins.

Who will ever forget the massacres where so many of our brothers perished, the cells into which those who refused to submit to a regime of oppression and exploitation were thrown [applause]?

All that, my brothers, we have endured...

But we, whom the vote of your elected representatives have given the right to direct our dear country, we who have suffered in our body and in our heart from colonial oppression, we tell you very loud, all that is henceforth ended.

The Republic of the Congo has been proclaimed, and our country is now in the hands of its own children.

Together, my brothers, my sisters, we are going to begin a new struggle, a sublime struggle, which will lead our country to peace, prosperity, and greatness.

Together, we are going to establish social justice and make sure everyone has just remuneration for his labor [applause].

We are going to show the world what the black man can do when he works in freedom, and we are going to make of the Congo the center of the sun's radiance for all of Africa...

I call on all Congolese citizens, men, women and children, to set themselves resolutely to the task of creating a prosperous national economy which will assure our economic independence.

Glory to the fighters for national liberation!

Long live independence and African unity!

Long live the independent and sovereign Congo!

[applause, long and loud]

The Congolese can thank themselves. The Congolese always knew they were human; they were the rightful owners of the Congo. It was only the Belgians, the West, newly formed *civilizations* who thought them animals and treated them as such and made sure they acted accordingly. But it was only acting.

Jacques Brassine, Belgian diplomat, said Lumumba was "dangerous for us." Belgian Secret Service called him a communist. They called in the CIA who seized up the matter and confirmed: Lumumba "was a danger" to the West.

The Belgians set up listening devises in his office and huddled in meetings with the CIA. What do you think? What do you think? You watch and listen and we'll get to work with the public. We'll find some on the Congolese who find this man a horror. We'll get to the press. And the white people! Yes! Let's get to work!

Mr. Cash, Moise Tshombe, bowed and said yes. And the Belgians handed him the presidency of Katanga, the mining area. No need to notify the actual Prime Minister, Lumumba.

In the press around the world, bulletins went out warning of the imminent danger of violence in the Congo! The white people are running for their lives. We can't stay here. We can't. Danger. Danger!

The Ape has escaped! Satan himself in person!

The Congo is under siege! Evil reigns!

The diamond and copper mines were secured. The peasants were pushed back. People stayed home. Lumumba heard his president. He could recognize the words. He ordered Kasavubu to step down. We will stand fast and for the people, for the struggle. But Kasavubu went to the Belgians.

The Belgians and CIA found in Mobutu Sese Seke a man of ambition, a man who would take responsibility! Head of the army, Mobutu, too bowed, and said yes, Master! You will be prime Minister. Yes, Master. *Guns and money!* Good, Master!

Lumumba looked to the U.S. but heard fear and saw the glaring presence of the CIA. Didn't he know? The U.S. looked to its CIA.

It was called Operation Barracuda.

Lumumba, at wits end, called to the world: will anyone step in and help us? France said no. No! Sorry! But there was a slight nod from the Soviet Union. Well, come, let's see, said Khrushchev. Yeah, yeah, monkey. Just like all the rest of them! Lumumba received a minimum amount of financial assistance - barely worth the trip.

But President Eisenhower didn't like what he was hearing about Lumumba. Allen Dulles is called to the White House. How fast can this communist, this ape, this man who

dares to pull the wealth of the Congo from us - how fast can he be eliminated? Fast!

Do it!

Done!

Where would the U.S. be without the responsible, hard work of military coups where the native elite take *charge*, and serve as camouflage for the Western governments and corporations?

U.S. diplomats and CIA personnel took Mobutu Sese Seke by the hand and led him to the throne. Mobutu's first order: Kill Lumumba. The follow up order: open Congo's mines and arid land to U.S. businesses.

A totalitarian regime in the Congo was fine. Nixon loved him. Reagan and Bush I sent billions in aid. Only Carter thought about all those human rights violations, but nonetheless, the aid kept coming.

The people receive death. Mobutu knew how to torture and imprison. He knew how to slaughter. Individuals who dared to think Lumumba was still alive would finally come to understand their error. Opponents were executed until the people finally got the point. Elections? Lumumba is DEAD! Elections are for the *electing* of me, Mobutu! Dictator Mobutu!

Foreign dignitaries couldn't miss that Mobutu was everywhere. The people couldn't dare forget. Mobutu news, too, 24/7 reminded them. Mobutu repression kept them silent. Watch the greatest show on earth: Mobutu cars and homes, Mobutu family members as government military official. Mobutu! Never mind the Congolese workers *didn't* receive pay for work. That's called slavery - and that's fine for the Congo! The poverty of the people was of no concern to U.S. and European leaders who respected Mobutu for being accountable - to them.

He helped the U.S. squash suspected *communist* threats in neighboring African countries with U.S. aid and weapons. Mobutu was the man for the U.S. presidents and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing of France, Belgium, of course, and even Pope John Paul II visited the great man. Gold, diamonds, copper, and other material wealth flowed up and out to the West and the great man did the dirty work of controlling those rebels in Africa calling for freedom.

In 1990, came the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union. The U.S. *discovered* a dictator in the Congo! A dictator! U.S. tried to cut off aid, because the U.S. doesn't aid dictators! Mobutu a dictator since September 1960 - and we didn't notice! He's stashed millions away in his private Switzerland accounts while the people die in the streets and die of thirst in rural areas, cried the Western *humanitarians*! Police and military are bribing citizens? How could he have done that for - 30 years?

An oversight!

The riots and anti-Mobutu movements finally drove the dictator out of the Congo - along with the stash of cash in Swiss banks!

We gave you billions, said the U.S. and Europe, and the people of the Congo you will pay us back! The IMF and the World Bank [\[1\]](#) will see to it that we are paid back for our gift to you of democracy!

The people of the Congo have been paying and paying and paying - as they always have seen the first expedition *discovered* the land and the mineral resources. They have been *civilizing* the world by their endless suffering.

The Belgian secret service and the CIA assassinated Patrice Lumumba while the world watched, thanks to the U.S. and European press, and applauded as Lumumba was abused and tied like a hog at the airport. In an open field, against a tree, the Belgian secret service and CIA believed they were putting an end to the peoples' demand for freedom. The CIA personnel moved on, for the CIA had other a long, long, long list of *communists* and *terrorists*, in democratically-elected presidents to remove after Lumumba's assassination - Jose Maria Valesco in Ecuador, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Salvador Allende in Chile, Jean Bertrand Aristide in Haiti - governments to support like Apartheid South Africa and repression of Nelson Mandela and the ANC and the UNITA rebels against the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola ("CIA Coups and Secret Wars"). The list is long. Military coups and assassinations and interference continue.

In other words, the CIA, on behalf of *democracy*, had business elsewhere. In the meantime, the Belgians were left to dispose of the body and they dissolved the corpse in sulfuric acid.

But two of Lumumba's teeth refused to burn, and they are souvenirs for the assassins to this today - reminders for them of the *audacity* of this African to think the people of Africa can truly pursue democracy.

"The future of Africa," announced President Barrack Obama, "is in the hands of Africans." (But the U.S. can help you!).

You have the *audacity* to tell the people to take responsibility. Applause from the CEOs sharing the throne here in the U.S. - your backers.

Admit it: You, Mr. Barrack Obama, a capitalist, are proposing a continuation of imperialist policies in Africa, your father's home land. You are selling Africa, the mother of all of us, to the highest bidder!

Remember Lumumba: the people will resist!

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BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member, Lenore Jean Daniels, PhD, has been a writer, for over thirty years of commentary, resistance criticism and cultural theory, and short stories with a Marxist sensibility to the impact of cultural narrative violence and its antithesis, resistance narratives. With entrenched dedication to justice and equality, she has served as a coordinator of student and community resistance projects that encourage the Black Feminist idea of an equalitarian community and

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Note:

[1] Corporations benefited from the Mobutu regime or “from the World Bank and IMF funds used to compensate them for money stolen by Mobuto...” According to *International Relations, Foreign Policy in Focus*, 1997:

In recent years U.S. policy has stressed the need for good governance in Africa. Most Africans view this as a supreme irony given Washington’s quarter-century of active support for Africa’s most notorious and antidemocratic ruling crook, Mobutu. Between 1962 and 1991, the U.S. directly supported Mobutu (with close to \$150 million in CIA bribes and secret payments) and his government (with more than \$1.03 billion in development aid and \$227.4 million in military assistance). It even provided transport for foreign troops used to suppress anti-Mobutu rebellions in 1977 and 1978.

The U.S. also helped funnel World Bank loans and IMF credits to Mobutu’s government, even though internal documents reveal that these agencies knew in advance the money was likely to be stolen and the loans unlikely to be repaid. Mobutu used IMF and World Bank loans to repay Zaire’s private creditors, thereby transforming private debt into public debt now amounting to almost \$14 billion.

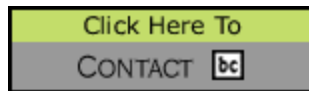
Mobutu reciprocated by providing bases and supply routes for UNITA rebels and by backing the U.S. in various arenas. For instance, as chair of the UN Security Council in the months immediately prior to the Gulf War, Zaire was crucial in rallying support for the U.S.-led military operation.

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