



**LUMUMBA AT HOME AND IN HISTORY:
MEMORIES, CONVERSATIONS AND CURRENT URGENCIES**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

There is something revivifying and resilient about the past, the way it refreshes the mind and memory; inserts itself in our consciousness; causes us to remember and reminisce; and reinforces our sense of self in both a fundamental and expansive way, reaffirming the sacredness and significance of our lives and history. Certainly, I am unavoidably engaged with the present and am alive and uplifted with the possibilities inherent in it. Also, as the *Odu Ifa* informs us, I “give continuous attention to the future” and “deep consideration to the consequences of things”. But history holds a special fascination for me as a fertile resource of record and remembrance and an indispensable ground of self-understanding and self-assertion in the world.

Thus, history is not only a record to read, but also lives lived, struggles waged, work done and a future being forged in the process. So when Guy-Patrice Lumumba, son of Patrice and Alphonsine Batamba Lumumba walked in the African American Cultural Center (Us) last Friday, February 6 for a reception, history itself entered. Indeed, it was history as life and living evidence that entered the room.

It was the history of the Congolese people and of Patrice Lumumba, legendary leader and freedom fighter, greatly mourned martyr for African liberation. It was the history of Alphonsine Batamba Lumumba, fleeing like Isis from those who sought to kill her and her son, Guy-Patrice, who hid him with relatives, temporarily changed his name and insured his life and learning. And it was the history of Guy-Patrice himself, who has taken up and continues the struggle his father described as one to secure the Congolese people’s “right to an honorable life, a dignity without stain and an independence without restrictions”.

Guy-Patrice Lumumba had come home, he said, home to his African American brothers and sisters, once separated from but never forgotten. And we greeted him in Swahili, French and English, saying, as is our custom, “Welcome, you’ve found your family and a peaceful place and we wish for you blessings without number and all good things without end. And we bear witness as an African people, that as our beginning was great and good so shall our development throughout eternity be if we dare struggle, speak truth, do justice and walk in the way of rightness (*Maat*)”.

Our brother, Lumumba, greeted us and informed us of his reading about and then celebrating Kwanzaa, and his sense of solidarity with us as an African people. He was pleased to see his father’s face among the pageantry of pictures of heroes and heroines that honor the Center’s walls. He spoke about coming to the African American community as a natural and necessary act of communal reaffirmation and support, as other peoples from their home continent and countries come to ethnic communities to greet, meet and be with their people.

Lumumba also paid homage to his father and mother and I read from his father’s book his last letter to his wife, a moving document of his father’s unyielding spirit, dignity and dedication to his family, people and cause. He talked extensively about the suffering, sacrifice and struggle of his people, beginning with the Congolese peoples’ oppression and resistance under the savage atrocities of Belgian colonialism, calling it a Holocaust of more than 10 million people killed, millions more tortured, terrorized and mutilated with amputations of hands, arms, legs, noses and breasts to punish the people and satisfy the savage evil in the oppressor.

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And he spoke of independence, June 30, 1960, and asked me to read aloud passages from his father's independence speech in English in which Lumumba, the Elder, spoke to the people, thanking the "victorious fighters for independence", telling the people not to forget the incalculable costs of freedom, saying "no Congolese worthy of the name will ever be able to forget that it is by struggle that it has been won, a struggle day-by-day, a struggle intense and idealistic, a struggle in which we were not spared either our strength, deprivations, sufferings or our blood". It was a "struggle of tears, fire and blood. . . indispensable to putting an end to the humiliating slavery which was imposed on us by force".

Then Lumumba recounted the reversal of the gains of independence, the U.S. and other European powers intervening, as in Haiti, to reverse the victory, create havoc and chaos and collaborate in the assassination and martyrdom of his father, Patrice Lumumba, 1961 January 17. Also, he discussed the continuing Holocaust of imperialist imposition, millions killed, raped and ruined of life, enslavement of child soldiers, theft of resources, coups and deep-rooted corruption and the awesome suffering of the Congolese people.

Concluding, he talked about the current urgencies of life—security, satisfaction of material needs, human services, peace, democracy, development and freedom from outside intervention. He ended with an overall sense of hope and possibility, appealing to African Americans to aid the Congolese people in their struggle to end their suffering, develop their human and material re-

sources for the good of themselves and their country, and build a worthy future for their youth, who, he stated, compose 60% of the country's population.

Lumumba reminded us we are a key people in a key country, that we in this country, especially under our new President, Barack Obama, can offer new hope, promise and possibilities to Africa and the world. And he said, it is especially to his people, he turns. For the President and the government will be moved to act by the peoples' demand and struggle for the liberation, support and development of Africa, as we did for the liberation of South Africa and other African countries. He challenged us, then, to do likewise for the Congolese people, creating conversations about the Congolese people, and building structures of advocacy and support for them. For as his father said, "without justice there is no dignity and without independence there are no free men (and women)".

In the 60's Malcolm praised and defended the Congolese people and their leader, Lumumba, defining our shared interests as African people and calling on us to support African people everywhere. Then, African people in the U.S. and on the Continent were rising, creating conversations and waging struggles of liberation and change enveloping the world. On the horizon of history unfolding, there are now similar signs of possibilities for change. But to be realized, the audacity of hope must be translated into the will to work and struggle. For there are no records or remembrances of hope alone liberating and creating a good, decent and dignified life for anyone, anywhere.

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