

**South People's Projects  
SoPPro**



# PROJET “BO’BISO”

Congo/UK Common History TASK FORCE

Revisiting Edmund MOREL (1873-1924)

&

The CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION (1904-1913)



# HANDBOOK

London, December 2021

“History will one day have its say; it will not be the history taught in the United Nations, Washington, Paris, or Brussels, however, but the history taught in the countries that have rid themselves of colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its own history and both north and south of the Sahara it will be a history full of glory and dignity”

**(Patrice LUMUMBA’s last letter to Pauline, 1961)**

“*DR LIVINGSTONE, I presume?*” One of the most famous quotations in the history of the world, but its back story beginnings in St Asaph workhouse. Henry Morton Stanley, star journalist of the late 19th Century, had humble origins as poor John Rowlands, an illegitimate child born in north Wales. But the extraordinary trajectory of his life led him ultimately to the shores of Lake Tanganyika and the meeting with Livingstone that changed the history of exploration. (...)

Pastor William Hughes of Colwyn Bay was an early proponent of pan-Africanism as well as modern fundraising methods: he set up The Congo and Africa Institute of Wales (...).

Later, another Welshman, Edmund Morel set up the Congo Reform Association, which was essentially a human rights movement, and his 1909 campaign at the Royal Albert Hall is seen as the beginning of the end of King Leopold’s reign.”

**(Dylan MOORE, “Wales and Congo: new beginnings” in Waleshome, February 22, 2011)**

“Reformer, rebel, political activist; amongst his many achievements E D Morel directed the first great humanitarian campaign of the 20th Century which brought King Leopold II of Belgium’s brutal and genocidal regime in the Congo to an end”

## Introduction

**South People's Projects-SoPPro**, a registered charity, received a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant made



possible by the money raised by National Lottery players, for one year and half project:

**"Bo'Biso<sup>1</sup>: The Congo/UK Common History Task Force Revisiting Morel and The Congo Reform Association"**.

Based in Newham (London's borough), it will mainly revisit-ation Edmund Dene Morel (1873-1924) and his established Congo Reform Association (1904-1913) history and to launch the UK wide **"Congo/UK Common History Task Force"** which selected participants from their communities to join the project main activities.

## Context

The Black American George Floyd assassination by the police on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and the raising of Black Lives Matter organisation are dreamed opportunities for revisiting the usual African and Black post slave trade and neo-colonial history narrative, especially when this past legacy is told only from the only Western perspective. Such important past revisitation could be carried, not only by

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<sup>1</sup> "Bo'Biso" in Lingala, the DRC lingua franca, means *"our culture, our roots, our being, our heritage, our legacy"*.

voicing African diasporas about their native African countries and black heroes, as does by the Liverpool Slavery Museum with its Black Achievers Hall, but also by the now diaspora skilled and talented storytellers and academicians so that both side of the narrative could be learned and such cultural heritage at the risk of being lost could thus be taught, saved in archives and shared by using modern, mainly digital, supports. This is the main modest leitmotif of this project. Such revisitation needs to unlock the usual post Slave Trade and neo-colonial African and black history narrative.

The Slade Trade, for example, needs to be dig by spreading the African perspective, opposite to some Western Ponce Pilatus attitude cleaning their hands by making swallowing to less informed that Blacks and Africans sold their own brothers and sister, to voice the truth that it was an inhuman European kidnapping business planned, sponsored, legalised by the 1685 Code Noir in France for example and blessed by the Church. It profited only to Europe and Africans were the losers with some impacts till now. The colonisation needs also to be power balanced by explaining that it was not a civilisational business and that also they were Africans who refused it and who fought against it and that, they were also other Western who refused and fought also against both the Slave Trade and the Colonisation, till now.

Unfortunately, most of those stories even of heroes and anti-heroes are not often known and told.

## **DR Congo/UK History: From Stanley and beyond Morel**

Even if at first glance, Congo and Britain may appear to have nothing in common as the Congo, a Belgian colony

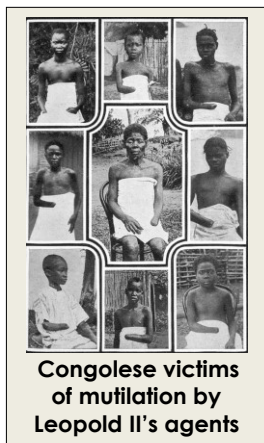
(1908-1960) independent on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1960, was not part of the former British Empire, a century ago, some famous



Royal Albert Hall - Tickets sold for the Congo Demonstration on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1909 against King Leopold II's Congo atrocities

Victorian Welsh and Brits lived in Congo; some of them well-known, while others remain anonymous: they were ordinary people who dedicated their lives for the Congolese.

Among them, it is worth mentioning: **Dr David Livingstone** (1813-1873) born in Scotland and famous for his missionary work, explorations and anti-Slaves trade denunciations sent back in Africa to solve the Nile source problem; **Henry Morton Stanley** (1841-1904), the greatest explorer of Africa born John Rowlands in Denbigh (North Wales) and well-known by his "*Dr Livingstone, I presume?*" reported by himself to be used when he found Dr Livingstone in Africa on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1871, as he fixed the Nile source problem, explored the now Congo River, mapped the now Congo, built and found cities and road and is the architect of the now Congo as a modern



Congolese victims of mutilation by Leopold II's agents

country when working for King Leopold II who had his own agenda different with Stanley's one; the remarkable Welsh pastor **William Hughes** (1856-1924) who established the Colwyn Bay (North of Wales) **Congo and Africa Institute of Wales** (1890-1912) with also the money raised by his two Congo Boys, **Kinkasa** (1875-1888) and **Nkanza** (1877-1892), brought in 1885 and died and buried in Wales;

**Edmund Morel** (1873-1924) who founded in Liverpool

the **Congo Reform Association** (1904-1913), the first modern times human rights movement set up in Liverpool who organised campaigns, rallies and conferences, wrote books, published newspaper and launched a VIP international network for the people of the Congo against King Leopold II's Congo bloodthirsty exploitation as he became aware from stories of those returning from the Congo by that time that they could be atrocities committing by Leopold II's agents and that he also knew it; **Roger Casement** (1864-1916) never mentioned in Congolese history lessons and books while this Irish anti-colonialist was appointed by the Westminster parliament as the first H.M. British Consul in the Congo and who investigated, reported Leopold II's atrocities with his "Casement report" to the British Parliament and also sponsored Morel's



Denbigh: Stanley first monument



"Dr Livingstone, I presume?"

Congo Reform Association; Morel benefited and used specially pictures of those amputated Congolese by the protestant missionary in Congo, **Alice Seeley Harris** (1870-1970); **Sir Francis Walter de Winton**, the first Congo administrator who proclaimed officially the birth of the Congo Free State at Vivi, the Congolese first capital city, on July, 1<sup>st</sup> 1885; **Joseph Conrad** whose fiction *The Heart of Darkness* refers to the D. R. Congo (surprisingly, very few Congolese have read this book as it is written in English while its main character, **Mr Kurtz** who died by saying "Horror! Horror!" and which compound hedge formed by sticks and woods surmounted by the heads of the men he had thus murdered (he seems to be the prototype of most of the Congolese leaders: human rights abusers, unfortunately!). And, Leopold II and his Congo

“Red Rubber” enterprise linked to the pneumatic tyre invention by **John Dunlop** (1840-1921), the Scotsman living in Belfast and who died in Dublin; the city of Liverpool that, after being the epicentre of the transatlantic Slave Trade, benefited also from Leopold II’s Congo exploitation as one of its companies signed with Leopold II to exploit the Congo.

And, just before she passed away, it was an astonished revelation that the late **Lady Daphne Park** (1921-2010), a former British MI6 in D. R. Congo during the 1960’s independence years, said, according to one of his friends, that she also planned the assassination of Patrice Lumumba.

*“Their [Congo Boys] graves tell the story of an ambitious project that brought Africa to Wales; a story that lay dormant in those graves for many years”. (Charlotte Williams, Sugar and Slate, Planet Books)*

From the side of those Congolese brought in the UK, in 1905, six Congolese pygmies were brought in the UK and were exhibited for 30 months in London even at a zoo before they returned back in the Congo and that one of them, **Bokani**, had his head sculpted by a Welsh artist, Goscombe John, and that bust is still displayed at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff.

And, just to mention those common history festive or fun side as well, the Scotland Football Museum in Glasgow stadium has records from the first World Cup football match in 1974 when the Congo then Zaire Leopards team was the first black sub-Saharan team to participate in this competition and had lost their first match against the Scottish team by 2-0. Etc.

A designed printing and digital-



**Norbert at H.M. Stanley’s grave at St Michael’s church yard (Pirbright, Surrey, UK).**

ising map will record those UK based common history known and unknown sites with the names of their heroes and even of those anti-heroes.

### ***Until the lions will have their own storytellers...***

A narrative re-visitation project, **“Bo’Biso”** will avoid



Kinkasa, Hughes,  
Nkanza (Ross)

slipping into the danger of splitting historical champions on, one side, those to be considered as the “saints” and, on the other rebuffing those considered, sometimes quickly and wrongly because of the lack of available information and disclosed archives, as historical “demons”.

With an open-minded approach and attitude, the project will benefit from contributions from experts, researchers, academicians and even

from the Congolese diaspora communities’ elders said in the oral African culture to be real libraries; facts will be questioned in their past contexts and the project will emphasise on the most important and essential: people, communities, men and laddies who dedicated their lives

for the history  
social cohesion  
by throwing, be-  
fore times, a vir-  
tual bridge be-

#### **“PLEASE DO NOT FORGET TO REMEMBER ME”**

(From Rd Hughes's last letter from *The African Institute*, Colwyn Bay, to old friends and supporters)

tween the two peoples, the countries and the two communities. It is certainly a challenge...

Lessons from the Black African storytelling inviting for such past narrative balance of power is well summarised by this famous usual quoted proverb variant that: *“until*



*the lions will have their own storytellers, the hunting story will always be on the advantage of the hunter”...*

## **Materials digitalising**

As **“Bo’Biso”** project will be a post COVID-19 pandemic project, lessons will be learned and projects materials,

“But the thing that troubled me was why such scant attention is paid now to the Congo. According to the best estimates, since conflict began in 1988 around four million Congolese lives had been claimed (1,200 a day) and, in spite of the 2002 peace treaty, there has been no significant reduction in this daily loss of life. The international community seems to have developed a terrible Congo-fatigue, where deaths and suffering, even on the enormous scale reported by statisticians, somehow don't register. The world seems to view the Congo as a lost cause without hope of ever being put right.” (Bucher, T., *Blood River*, p. 309)

“It taught me a lesson about one of the Congo's chronic problems, its lack of institutional memory. The loss of life during the slaughter on the Ubundu-Kisangani road was of the same order of magnitude as the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States, and yet in the Congo there were no repercussions. There was no memorial, or historical account of what happened, or court case to hold the perpetrators to account, or international response. The killings simply got lost in the Congo's miasma of misery. I wondered what hope there can be for a place if such lessons from the past are never heeded.” (Bucher, T., *Blood River*, pp. 247-248)

maps, documents and archives even from the other previous projects will be digitalised and online published in a kind of a virtual museum and infographic map.

Many other activities could be organised and delivered beyond such as the launch of the Congo/Africa Memories library/bookshop pilot-project in Newham. Why not translating into English some famous Congolese proverbs and oral legacies? What about or not launching the Rumba music and dance activities in Newham?

### **“Bo’Biso” activities:**

1. Data and archives collections

2. Organising trainings and workshops
3. Mapping, digitalising and virtualising common history sites visits and mainly those connected to Edmund Morel and his Congo Reform Association
4. To organise a project exhibition in Newham
5. Working for and improving SoPPro's capacity building
6. Publishing documents
7. Spreading the word and networking with other organisations and projects
8. To write the project end of the report and to carry project evaluation

*"The young British Congolese are not Congolese and they are not British... They are between. They are not both because most of them are struggling to become British... They are British but they do not have the British culture... They are still looking for their ways. Most of them are lost because we are the elders but we are not the role models to them and they are looking for new role models and they do not have role models... It is very important... we must sit down, the Congolese community, to say what we should do now. It is important for us to try to help our youngsters, because they are British, to become really British. And then, we should take the opportunity to teach them about Congolese culture."* **(Norbert Mbu-Mputu)**

**(Cfr .Dr. GARBIN & W.G. PAMBU, *Roots and Routes. Congolese diaspora in multicultural Britain*, 2009, p. 69)**

## **The Congo/UK Common History Task Force**

The main objective of setting up this task force is to benefit Congolese communities scattered across the

United Kingdom from these common stories by selecting, training and equipping some of their leaders to become focal points and champions of these stories. And that, at the end of the project, they could be also able to launch their own projects in their communities, learning from the successes and even failures of others.

Especially since, having delivered some communities heritage and history projects, SoPPro's motto is that, as the diaspora, *"we are not only part of the problems as we are most of the time portrayed by tabloids, but we should become really part of the solutions"*; even if it is not most of the time easy.

**Main activities:**

1. Zoom meetings and conferences
2. HLF and other sponsors applications workshops
3. Organisation, social enterprise capacity buildings trainings
4. Conferences
5. Visits of some historical sites mainly those connected to Edmund Morel
6. Oral stories and legacies collections
7. Networking

**Project Ref. Number: OM-20-07540**

**South People's Projects (SOPPRO).**

Founded in 2004, *South People's Projects-SoPPro* is a registered charity delivering community projects and working closely and in partnership with several and mainstream organisations especially to be the voice of the Congolese diaspora in Britain, to break the isolation they are facing, to rise their profile and to root not only them both at the British heritage and history but also of their native country, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Focus on the beneficiaries own skills to be used for

their community while learning and adopting the welcome British culture of charity and community volunteer organisations, SoPPro's main activities support families and especially young people with their integration/inclusion challenges, addressing some of their common issues and barriers through training and learning opportunities, to contribute also to the multiculturalism by sharing and celebrating back home Black African and Congolese cultures & heritages in Britain during community events and activities and to connect Africa and Congo to the UK.

## The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead and resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future: [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk).

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*"When you first settle into a new village, it is a big mistake to start your dance with the left leg when the inhabitants themselves start their dance with the right leg. If you are a good dancer, you need to join in their way of starting to dance with the right leg. Later, you can teach them your new way to start dancing with the left leg. The village will then become rich with the two ways of dancing: one starting with the left leg, another starting with the right one" (African Proverb).*

