



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **SOUTH PEOPLE'S PROJECTS (SoPPro) secures National Lottery support for the project "BO'BISO: THE CONGO/UK COMMON HISTORY TASK FORCE REVISITING MOREL AND THE CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION"**

**SoPPro** has received a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £66,200.00 for an exciting one year and half heritage project "Bo'Biso: **The Congo/Uk Common History Task Force Revisiting Morel and The Congo Reform Association**", in the London borough of Newham. Made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, the project focuses on the legacy of the first last century human rights movement founder: Edmund Dene Morel and how Congolese UK based selected leaders named "The UK/Congo Common History Task Force" could learn from it.

Supported through The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project will enable re-visit such an incredible history, Morel grave in North of London, his living place in North Wales, Liverpool where he established his Congo Reform Association; other UK/Congo common history champions graves to be marked so that they could be celebrated and well identify in the future.

The "Task Force" will be equipped and trained in Heritage projects applications so that, at the end of the project, they could become the new heritage projects epicentre for and in their community.

Based in Newham, collected materials especially artifacts to be donated by some of those British who lived in the Congo during the colonisation and others to be collected will be part of the exhibition and celebration for the Congo community in the UK.

Because stories of most of those historical champions are not well-known by the Congolese themselves and because also the new opportunity of voicing Black and African since the Floyd's assassination and the rise of the Black Live Matter campaigns, "Bo'Biso" (which means in Lingala "Our culture, our roots, our heritage, our legacy") will offer opportunities to the Congolese to be part of those common past and common history re-visitation by sharing and telling also their part of those histories.

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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).*

Project developed after the other SoPPro's previous delivered ones, "Bo'Biso" will recall, tell and revisit the stories, reread the available archives, visit the living places and graves of historical heroes such as the Africa's greatest explorer Henry Morton Stanley, the remarkable Reverend Pastor William Hughes who, with his first Congo Boys brought into Wales in 1885 established from 1886 to 1912 "The Congo and African Institute of Wales" in Colwyn Bay, to name just those ones, and many others even less known and in need of been part of the UK/Congo common history.

In fact, even if at first glance the DRC, a former Belgian colony, could have nothing in common with the UK as it was not part of the British Empire, there is an important number with stories of British, such as Edmund Morel and some missionaries, who dedicated their lives for the Congolese people. Alas, ordinary people, some of their stories are not well-known.

Also, as "Bo'Biso" project will take place during the period after the COVID-19 pandemic with its challenges, the materials, maps and other documents and archives of the other previous delivered projects will be digitalised and online published in a kind of a virtual museum and infographic map. Like bullet points, the project will thus lay the groundwork for more specific community projects afterwards in and for each community by the "Task Force" leaders.

Since "Bo'Biso" is a revisitation project, it will avoid slipping into the now danger of dividing historical actors and champions on, one side, those considered to be the "saints" and rebuffing those considered, sometimes quickly and wrongly because of the lack of available information and disclosed archives, to be history demons. An open-minded approach will be adopted to question experts, to listen to the elders and to put back stories and facts in their then past contexts. An effort will be made to emphasis on the essential: the peoples, the communities, the men who have worked for social cohesion by throwing, before times, a virtual bridge between the two peoples and the two countries and the two communities. It is certainly a challenge...

Many other activities will be organised and delivered beyond.

Commenting on the grant, Norbert Mbu-Mputu who will coordinate the project shared: "We are thrilled to have received this support thanks to National Lottery players and are confident to achieve the challenge of such an incredible milestone project as we aim to network, not only with other UK Congolese communities, but with the other diaspora and even with leaders and communities back home in the Congo so that, not only that we could share what we have learned, seen and observed; but, to learn from them also. Especially as this project happens the same year that the Congolese are revisiting their Belgian history ties with the return from Belgium to the Congo of the independence years assassinated Congolese leader and Black achievers Patrice Lumumba".

Thank to those academicians, professors, doctors, former missionaries in the Congo and many others who supported this application as they agreed to contribute with their teaching and sides of the history and also, for others, with their private Congo arts souvenirs donations for the exhibition. They will be and are part of also of "Bo'Biso" dream team.

#### **ABOUT 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.

#### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND**

About 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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