

CLOVIS A. MWAMBA, BIOGRAPHY

The school as an open window for the rising Congolese Nation-State

I was born into a working class family in the rich mining province of Katanga in eastern Congo. I have an undergraduate degree in Educational Sciences (1969) and a Master degree in Psychology (1972) and in French and African Linguistics (1980).

I became a teacher (1972), a secondary school principal (1975), Chief of the Division of Education (1976) and Chief of the Regional Bureau of Education in Western Kasai province (1979). Between 1973 and 1978 I also organised and spoke at psychology and education seminars for teachers, school inspectors, and jurors from the State Examination Board. Between 1984 and 1990, during my doctoral studies at the National University, I published dozens of articles and papers on Ethno-psychology and Traditional (oral) Luba Literature.

The ‘unknown Luba child’ within the Congolese urban subculture

I work hard to unveil the Luba oral tradition—a databank of secular knowledge and myths, tales and proverbs—because I believe it is a form of ‘collective therapy’ for ‘dealing with the unknown other.’

The fall of Mobutu’s one-party-state and right-wing military regime

By the end of the Cold War in 1989, there was throughout Africa a desire for radical change and democracy. I was chosen to represent Kananga in political institutions organizing the rule of law and human rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

I moved to Kinshasa and worked as ‘The Honorable Mwamba’ in the Sovereign National Conference for two years (1991-1992) and was then elected Member of the High Council of the Republic (1992-1994), the supreme authority of the nation. This encouraged the authoritarian President Mobutu to set up a Parliament of Transition in 1992 which lasted until his downfall in 1997.

As an activist standing against military dictatorships in DR Congo

- Between 1991 and 1997, I was a member of the popular resistance, an alliance between civil society and political parties (USORAL-S), and published (as a member of the National Press Association) numerous articles in the Red Press about the muzzling of opposition and the media, and the imprisonment and assassination of opposition leaders and journalists.
- I advocated, and voted in the Parliament in 1996 for the law instituting freedom of the press.
- Between 1997 and 1999, I fought in the political field (as a member of the UDPS National Committee) and in the media (principally the newspaper *The Alarm*); and organized a clandestine network for designing and distributing leaflets in Kinshasa.
- My advocacy for social justice, human rights, democracy, the rule of law, good governance meant I was harassed, abducted, tortured, and eventually condemned to capital punishment (1998-1999). I escaped being secretly executed as a result of pressure exerted by the press, political parties, Human Rights Non Government Organizations and Western Embassies.

UNHCR Refugee in Congo-Brazzaville (2000-2007)

Between 2001 and 2007, after I had escaped from prison in Kinshasa, and travelled west along the Congo River, I was given refuge as a UNHCR refugee in neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville (a former French Colony). In Congo-Brazzaville, I found many Congolese asylum seekers, living in harsh

conditions, who were not succeeding with their refugee applications. I organised clandestine opposition and undertook to advocate for them to get their refugee status from the UNHCR.

After five years in Congo-Brazaville, we succeeded, in establishing a strong well structured Congolese Community Association that was capable of working alongside the UNHCR and committed to working for the resettlement of the long-standing refugees, who were soon settled in the USA, Canada, Norway, Sweden and Australia.

My resettlement in Australia

I landed in this wonderful country in 2007; Learned English at AMES Footscray and at Walker Close Community Centre (Williamstown Education Centre); Attended SGP courses and workshops at Spectrum MRC in Preston. In 2008, I started working at Spectrum MRC in the Settlement & Family Relationships Services as the African Parenting Educator for the Congolese community.

Responsibilities

Former Member of the Inner Western Advisory Committee INWAC (Maribyrnong).

Former Member of the Refugee Action Program (SMRC & EMC).

Member of the Steering Committee of the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council DECC Inc., and former Member of the Darebin Australia Day Advisory Committee.

Co-founder and President of the Austra–Congo Inc.,.

Former Chair, nCommittee of Management, Walker Close Community Centre & Brooklyn Hall Inc., Chair, Community Tributaries Inc.

Chair, Victorian Council of Australian African Seniors Inc.

Victorian Senior of the Year Award 2018.

PUBLISHED WORKS

BOOKS

La Cathédrale – Poème (s), L'Harmattan, Paris 2009.

Le Sanctuaire – Poème (s), L' Harmattan, Paris 2010.

Parenting in a New Culture, A guide for Congolese parents (French & Swahili)
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, 2009.

Home Truths. An anthology of Refugee and Migrant Writing, Furber, Australia 2015.

The Meteorites Memos, L'Empreinte du Passant, Quebec, Canada 2020.

STORIES, POETRY, ARTICLES

New Australia Media

My short story, 2009.

The origin of the Congolese Rumba, 2009.

PEN Melbourne Quarterly

Two Poems from The Cathedral (Visa, Walking pace), 2012: p30-33.

Reflections on 'The Other Africa', 2012:pp 40-42.

Mikili: an initiatory and migratory route for Congolese, 2013: p46-48.

Poem from The Sanctuary (The Sunbow), 2014: p27-29.

Cellulite man, 2014: p38-39.

SAGE Journal, (3), 16 January 2015

Ancestors and the Politics of reality: Housing, Home and Belonging in Postcolonizing Australia

The Victorian Writer

Travelling, December 2014:p22-23

I fled the country by boat, January 2014, 'You, Your Story and The World: Writing the Refugee experience', Ecumenical Centre and Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation.

PUBLISHED ARTICLES ABOUT CLOVIS MWAMBA

THE AGE *Patience and longing, the gift and the burden of the exile*, 5/1/2010.

CATH NEWS *Benson Society Launches in Melbourne*, 7/11/2009.

KAIROS (CARITAS AUSTRALIA) *'Forsaken Voices' Report*, 2010.

KAIROS (CARITAS AUSTRALIA) Student Social Justice Day, 27 June 2010.

KAIROS (CARITAS AUSTRALIA) *Overcoming the conspiracy of silence*, Vol 21, Issue 1.

YOUR COMMUNITY VOICE *Touched by war, Refugees tell of their tortured past*

Moonee Valley 8/11/2011, Altona North 9/11/ 2011, Point Cook 9/11//2011.

MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY *Beyond Borders Exhibition*, Aug-Sept 2017.

POWER POINTS, CONFERENCES AND SPEECHES

Benson Society for Human Rights, 2009, *Blueprint for a better world*, Caritas, Melbourne launch.

West Care, Salvation Army, 27/10/ 2011, *Rearing up children within the Congolese Cycle of life*.

Darebin Ethnic Community Council, 27/07/2012, *A Freedom Fighter*, Refugee Week, Preston.

Darebin Ethnic Community Council, 21/03/2013, *Sharing Stories*, Cultural Diversity Week.

Melbourne Free University, 1/5/2010, *Sharing my Story*.

Melbourne Free University, 15/11/2011, *On-going trauma: Reflections on the ongoing effect of refugee experiences after resettlement in Australia* (Ellena Savage, Cecilia Sequeira Goncalves & Clovis Mwamba), MFU Podcast 21.6, 'Refugee Realities: Risk Rights & Resettlement' course.

Melbourne Free University, 3/5/2011, *Tales of war and peace: DR Congo*, 'War and Peace' course.

African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific, 2/12/2010, 33rd Annual AFSAAS Conference, Victoria University, Melbourne.

African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific, 28/10/2015, *Case studies from Africa and the Diaspora*, 'Twenty-first Century Tensions and Transformations', with Drs Sally Ninham and Cynthia Mackenzie, 38th Annual AFSAAS Conference, Deakin University, Melbourne.

Melbourne University, 13/2/2014, *Ontopolitics, Settlement and the Ancestors (4)* 'Authority and Knowledge: People, Policy, Politics', Interdisciplinary Conference, University of Melbourne.

DEEC Pop-up Art Studio, 8/6/2017, *Clovis Mwamba Poet and Writer, Political Prisoner, Refugee, Survivor & Human Right Activist originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo*, Darebin Intercultural Centre, Preston.

Walker Close Community Centre, Altona North, 21 June 2018, *My Story*, 'Celebrate Refugee Week

Darebin Intercultural Centre, Preston, 9/12/2018, *The On-Going Genocide in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire)*, UN International Day of Remembrance & Dignity for all Victims of Genocide & other Atrocity Crimes.

COURSES ATTENDED

Working better with culturally and Linguistically Diverse AOD Clients Centre for Child and Family Development, 'Turning Point, Alcohol & Drug Centre Training' (2008, Geelong),

Adaptive Social Leadership, The Bouverie Centre, Victoria Family Institute (2010, 2011, 2012).