

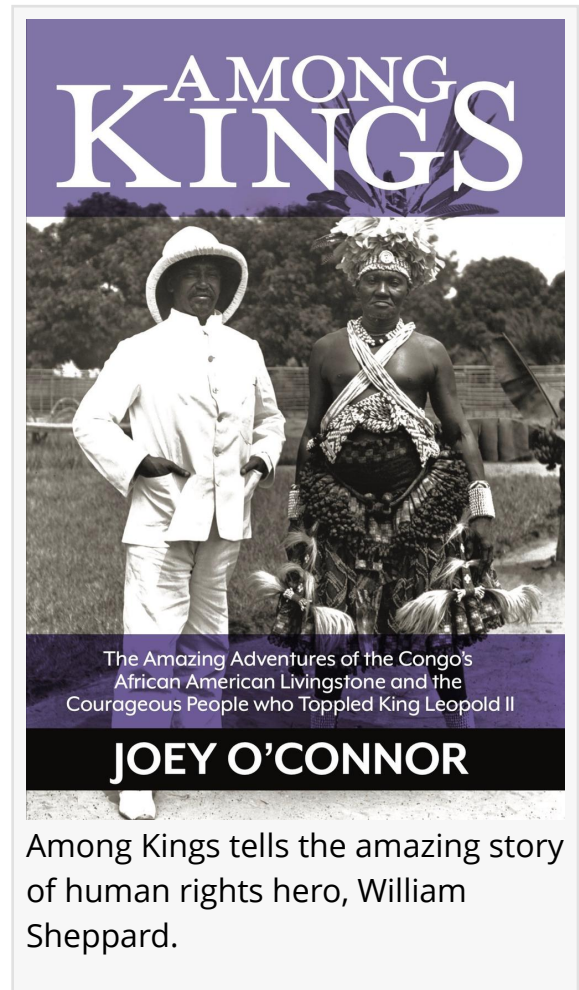
# Little-Known Black Hero Celebrated in New Historical Fiction Novel

*African American Human Rights Hero in the Congo Defeats Belgium's King Leopold II*

SAN CLEMENTE, CA, UNITED STATES, February 2, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- To celebrate Black History Month, author Joey O'Connor is advocating for the recognition of a little-known African American human rights hero, William Henry Sheppard. Available on Amazon, O'Connor's new historical fiction novel is entitled *Among Kings: The Amazing Adventures of the Congo's African American Livingstone and the Courageous People who Topped King Leopold II*. In the novel, readers follow the life, loves, journey, and adventures of a true Black hero who overcomes racial prejudice and adversity in a fight for human rights.

O'Connor chronicles the inspirational life story of William Sheppard, the African American missionary-explorer who courageously stood against King Leopold II's human rights abuses in the late nineteenth century. William Sheppard courageously fought Leopold's enslavement of the Congolese people for the ivory and rubber trades, which led to the world's first international human rights trial between America and Belgium. Unknown to many, Leopold II is responsible for the world's fourth-largest genocide. Adam Hochschild, Berkeley professor and author of the popular *King Leopold's Ghost*, estimates that eight to twelve million Congolese died under Leopold's rule.

O'Connor said, "Here in America, William Sheppard is important to celebrate during Black History Month and whenever human rights are discussed because of his compelling life story. He's a tremendous inspiration to anyone who cares about fighting injustice. Sheppard's accomplishments are well-established at his alma mater, Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia, his Stillman College seminary (Tuscaloosa), the Presbyterian mission board that sent him (PCUS), and a handful of academics who have studied Leopold's despotic rule in the Congo. *Among Kings* is also incredibly timely today because of his friendship with his white missionary



companion, Samuel Lapsley. Sheppard and Lapsley became dear friends as they battled King Leopold. The story is a powerful testament to what two courageous men can do together."

O'Connor added, "Inspired by true events, *Among Kings* will appeal to lovers of historical fiction who are captivated by true, unknown historical figures and unexplored time periods. William Sheppard was the missionary-explorer rock star of his day. He discovered an unknown African kingdom, became the first African American inducted into the Royal Geographic Society, had tea with Queen Victoria, met with U.S. Presidents, and ultimately faced death in a Congo prison if he lost the slander lawsuit brought against him by Leopold. My hope is that Sheppard's story can be told in classrooms, universities, and churches across America and all over the world."



Joey O'Connor with Camille & Esther Ntoto of Africa New Day and Congo human rights hero, Rebecca Masika Katsuva.

O'Connor's research led to a friendship with Camille & Esther Ntoto, the founders of Africa New Day, and to the Eastern Congo. "Camille and Esther invited me to travel to the Eastern Congo to film and interview many of their team at Africa New Day. Strategically, the Congo is one of the most mineral-rich countries in the world, and much of the conflict stems from the ongoing illegal mining of the country's mineral resources. My goal in writing *Among Kings* is to shine a bright light on the Congo and the positive things being done there by the Congolese people to bring real change so that we can right

“

Whenever human rights are discussed throughout the world, William Sheppard needs to be included in the conversation.”

*Joey O'Connor*

many of history's wrongs.”

O'Connor first learned of William Sheppard fifteen years ago when Ken Straw (his brother-in-law) shared a small academic journal with him about Sheppard's life. After reading Sheppard's inspirational story, the two began researching the Great Scramble for Africa, the Industrial Revolution, and the Jim Crow period in America. Their work led to O'Connor writing a riveting historical fiction novel about Sheppard and the cast of characters around him who brought down King Leopold II to stop the genocide. To that end, O'Connor and Straw formed the new [Congo Reform Association](#) non-profit organization to use story, film, and social media to bring

awareness and action towards ending the Congo Conflict.

When asked why he wrote the book, O'Connor stated, "As my brother-in-law and I researched the Congo, what brought us there was curiosity, but what has kept us there is an outrage. In the past twenty years, over six million people have died in the Democratic Republic of the Congo due to two Congo wars and ongoing mineral rights conflicts. The UN has said that the DRC is the most overlooked media crisis since World War II. We hope to play a small part in changing that."

Joey O'Connor is the co-founder and president of the new Congo Reform Association. He is the author of twenty-one books and screenplays. He is also the founder of The Grove Center for the Arts & Media, a Southern California non-profit organization. Joey lives and works in San Clemente, California.

Joey O'Connor  
Congo Reform Association  
+1 949-584-8868  
joey@congoformassociation.org

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Other](#)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/562159328>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2022 IPD Group, Inc. All Right Reserved.