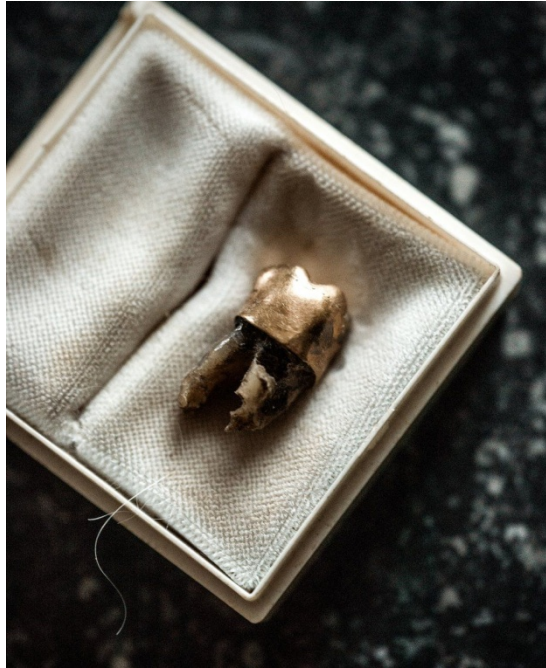


## Lumumba's Tooth for Keith LaMar



I don't recall his name  
but I read about him.  
How he was present  
as the man,  
the keeper of a people's dreams  
was murdered,  
dismembered,

butchered,  
and dissolved in acid,  
to remove all trace  
of his existence.

What part was his in all this?  
Only following orders, perhaps.

Yet, at some point  
he made a decision  
all on his own  
as he glimpsed the gold  
glittering through the blood  
as it sank into the hungry liquid,  
still firmly attached  
to the strong jaw bone.

That gold  
which, like all other gifts  
disproportionately endowed the Continent,  
he, like his rapacious ancestors and descendants  
decided it must be his to keep.  
That single gold tooth  
would be the spoils of yet another  
dastardly act of brutality.

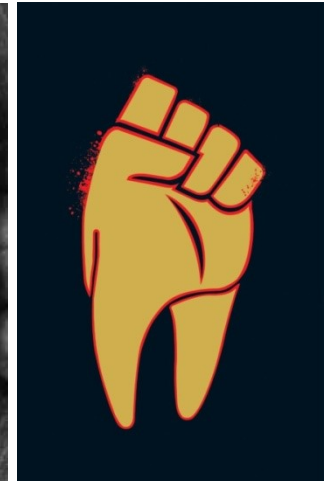
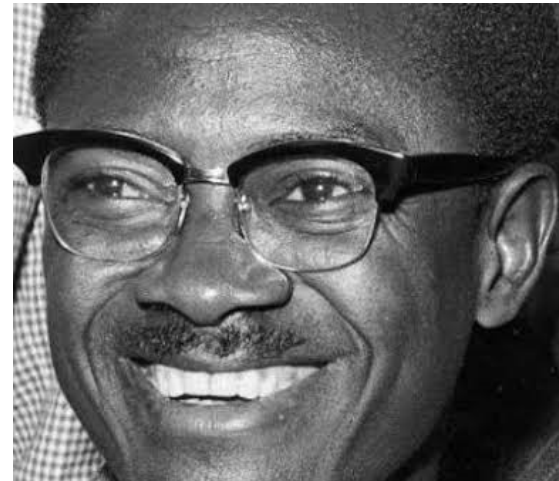
Inevitable, almost,  
that this small relic  
would end up in the pocket  
of one of that murderous lot.

The shining prize must have haunted him for decades  
And when, finally, he decided to confess,  
to acknowledge,  
and to surrender it  
Was his conscience salved?  
Did he think he'd be thanked?  
That his name would go down in history?

Again, it escapes me, that name  
Let's call him Belgium, or Britain,  
France or Germany,  
The Netherlands or Spain  
Last name, definitely:  
Europe

That interrupter of a people's dreams,  
The temporary custodian of the small gold tooth  
That would eventually find its way back  
to the continent,  
the country,  
the family  
of the man whose name  
wouldn't disappear:

Patrice Émery Lumumba



© Tayo Aluko. August 2022