

Evelyn Amony 2015. I am Evelyn Amony: Reclaiming my Life from the Lord's Resistance Army. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, ISBN 978-0-299-30494-2

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Review

- <1> I have heard of the exploits of Joseph Kony in the Media back in Zimbabwe and in Germany, respectively for a long while, although I have to admit that I have not followed his exploits very closely. The much I have known of him is that he leads a rebel group of fighters that normally operates in the North West of Uganda, and that he styles his movement as a holy one, The Lord's Resistance Army. In my view, operating in that region, he had the advantage of tapping on the general militarized culture of Northern Uganda, which is the same as the neighbouring North Rif in Kenya, where the cultures of youth regiments, pastoralism and a general sense of masculine courage and little fear of death, have made it easy for the rebel group to thrive. It needs to be noted too that that region of the North is generally less developed, and not well embraced within the modern scheme of, for instance, central, and Eastern Uganda. This is even before we consider the role of the neighbouring Southern Sudan and DR Congo, where there has always been rebel activity.
- <2> But when one considers Joseph Kony's rebel group in the context of rebel activity in post-independence Uganda, one finds this a bit intriguing. Several theories have been advanced to explain the Joseph Kony phenomenon. Some people think that Kony has just been allowed by Museveni's government to operate as a rebel, to keep that northern part in a state of internal war, to justify Museveni's own hold on power, now that he styles himself as the only leader that has managed to keep the peace in Uganda. But those are just conjectures. Some think that Museveni has taken advantage of the 'Kony threat' to gain some political mileage, citing that Museveni government has never taken the Kony rebel group seriously.
- <3> These and many other questions have been asked and the search for answers will forever remain imperative! When I read Evelyn Amony's book, I found more answers to questions that many people have been asking, including the big puzzle of whether the Museveni government is truly serious about dealing with the Lord's Resistance Army.
- <4> In this book, Evelyn's real life story is captured in a very captivating fashion. This narrative of survival is detailed in seven distinct chapters, all joined together with thematic threads woven through each chapter in detailed, thorough, and informative descriptions. I have read many real life narratives of survival before, but Evelyn's story is a more spectacular combination of miraculous incidences of escape and heroic feats of a young girl, whose brushes with death on countless

occasions, that could have easily claimed her life, defies the application of reason to understand how she scraped through.

- <5> Evelyn's book is a fine example of a true life story told in simple parlance. One can sense the spirit of honesty naturally oozing from the story teller's heart. The story is clearly not a result of academic pontification about the subject of war. It is an account that naturally relives episodes of a life experienced by a young soul, in whose memory was indelibly and vividly inscribed the horrors, the violence, the savagery and barbarism of war. The book is a precious account of a world of war and banditry, where it is difficult or impossible for any historian or social scientist to conduct empirical research. Because Evelyn lives to tell the story, it is a great privilege that she opened up to bequeath the story to the world.
- <6> The narrative also fosters a monographic perspective of war from the lens of a young girl who witnessed fierce gun battles and bombardments by artillery fire and bombs dropped from aircrafts. She also suffered the trauma of having to participate in a war, as a child soldier, whose cause she could not comprehend. She carried a submachine gun and fired shots!
- <7> More so, Evelyn's book is one of the rare accounts narrated fully from the beginning to the end from a worm's eye view, as the storyteller also lived as one of the seven wives of Joseph Kony. It is a revealing narrative of goings-on in the hidden and inaccessible world of the LRA camp. To many of us who have only heard about Joseph Kony through the media, this book offers a closer account of the man. As rebel leader, it is easy to perceive Joseph Kony as a ruthless murderer and a man possessed by a legion of demons of war, barbarity and violence. However, Evelyn's narrative is also quite revealing of many other facets of Joseph Kony's character. Although in Joseph Kony's body is trapped a devious soul, tainted and corrupted by what you and us cannot name, Evelyn's narrative dissects this phantom and penetrates through the shadows of the many forces behind Joseph Kony's being to give the reader something to chew in the process of imagining Joseph Kony's incomprehensible being.