



DR FRED M'MEMBE
INCOMING PRESIDENT

A living legend

By Cosmas Musheke Musumali

General Secretary and First Vice-President of the Socialist Party

Fred M'membe is a living legend. He has already left a mark on the history of Zambia. In 2021, he is being called upon to lead our country as President. For many people in Zambia, Fred has become the only hope for a better Zambia.

The Zambian masses feel betrayed by the greedy and corrupt political elite that has ruled the country since 1991. It is also becoming apparent that neoliberal capitalism and the economy dominated by foreign multinationals have failed to deliver to our people. The immense poverty and suffering of the Zambian masses stand in sharp contrast to the opulent and parasitic lifestyles of the rich.

A poor, elderly woman once summed it up well: “Fred M'membe Uwesu” (Fred M'membe is ours) – he is the President for the poor, humble and suffering Zambian masses.

I have had the privilege of knowing Fred since childhood. We are comrades, friends and brothers. It was very clear to me that Fred had to leave the media world and serve our people as President. The sheer incompetence, rampant corruption, and tribalistic tendencies of the ruling elite needed to be stopped. Therefore, a new socialist-inspired political platform was needed. Equally important was a qualitative change in the leadership. Zambia needed a President who would serve the masses. Fred was the first choice.

It took us a year to convince Fred to change direction – to come and serve Zambia in a different way. Even after



agreeing to join active party politics, he was still willing to serve the Socialist Party in various other capacities. His conviction is to a socialist transformation in general. Positions were not an issue.

Another year of consultations and discussions elapsed before he finally agreed to be the presidential candidate. During that process, I learnt something about my brother and comrade – his deep sense of humility and willingness to serve his country selflessly. He is the complete opposite of the power-hungry clique dominating the



political landscape in Zambia today. The humility that Fred expresses is something we can all learn from. It's not the false humility that some people express to build themselves up as paragons of wisdom, his track record does that on its own. It's a true humility that goes beyond expression to others, but digs deep down into himself. It is humility in his own mind that drives him to continuously iterate and improve on the ways he handles life.

It's easy to look at my brother's principles as something that were given down from

heaven, but it is not so. They have been developed over time, and became what they are through constant development. But being principled doesn't make Fred rigid, unbending or unyielding. He is very flexible, but without abandoning any principle. As reality changes, so his understanding of reality changes, and he is constantly ready to accept the new truth, and handle it with humility and acceptance.

I would therefore like to share with you, the Zambian people, some of the incoming President's qualities.

1

He is a Zambian patriot

Fred is a true Zambian patriot. He loves the people of Zambia and has been fighting for their human, political, and economic rights for more than 40 years.

Fred took up the fight against injustice in the late 1970s as a student. He founded a socialist student newsletter. Its focus was on Zambian, international and student politics. It was an informative and influential left-wing newsletter that called for justice and equity, and provided solidarity with the national liberation movements in southern Africa.

Later, in 1990, Fred was to build on this student experience by contributing to *Multiparty News*. This was a newsletter initiated by the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) advocating for political change in Zambia. This was before he set up *The Post* newspaper in July 1991.

Fred did not come up with *The Post* in order to make money. It was a political move. He wanted to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in our country. *The Post* was a political project – and, ironically, died a political death.

Through *The Post*, he created a platform where Zambians had a loud voice and fearlessly pointed out the shortcomings of the existing establishment. And, because of that, he has been both loved and hated, depending upon the point of view of those who judged him.



Fred has been arrested, insulted and abused. He has been stripped of his earnings and personal effects. His home has been invaded, vandalised and occupied by the state. Few have attracted that much venom from the corrupt, ruling elite. The aim was to cripple him economically and psychologically – to stop him from being a voice of the masses. And this has been going on for almost 30 years now. Yet Fred has grown stronger and more resolute in his fight for justice, equity and peace.

The Fred of today is more resilient than ever before. He is in the true sense uwesu, wathu-wathu, wesu, wetu, waluna and yowetu, for the voiceless masses.

2

Closure of *The Post* and the price of principles

Privately, Fredrick Chiluba used to say the greatest mistake he made when he was president was not to close *The Post*. If *The Post* was closed he could have succeeded in changing the constitution to give himself a third term in office.

Chiluba believed it was not easy to rule with *The Post* around, and he is said to have accordingly advised the Rupiah Banda regime. Attempts were made by the Banda regime to close *The Post* using the Zambia Revenue Authority, but failed.

The Edgar Lungu regime crudely implemented that strategy, ignoring even the lawful orders of the Revenue Appeals Tribunal. The Lungu regime used the Zambia Revenue Authority to close *The Post* by moving and closing the newspaper and demanding about \$5 million in all sorts of taxes. *The Post* appealed to the Revenue Appeals Tribunal, which ordered that the newspaper be reopened and the figures being demanded be reconciled with its auditors and tax accountants. The regime ignored that order and proceeded with the dismantling of the newspaper's assets. *The Post* had managed to secure the money, and gave it to its lawyers for onward transmission to the Zambia



Revenue Authority. They were ready to pay and reconcile the figures with the Zambia Revenue Authority later, but were advised that a firm decision was made by the regime to close the newspaper and such payment would be just a waste of money.

If he was not principled, Fred could have decided to cut a deal with the regime and compromise its editorial independence to keep the newspaper alive. But he said: "Let them close the newspaper. They can take away everything I own; as long as they don't take my life, it's okay. I am not ready to surrender to evil. It gets dark sometimes, but the morning comes."

Clearly, *The Post* was not closed because of taxes; if it was taxes, all other newspapers would have been closed; it was politics, dirty politics.

3

He understands the political landscape

Fred, in true internationalist spirit, supported the liberation struggles in southern Africa and other parts of the world. He became a member of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) – now the South African Communist Party (SACP) – in 1978. SACP became his political home during these formative years. Leading revolutionaries, such as Joe Slovo, Chris Hani, and Ben Turok, were his mentors.

Even in the socialist reversals of late 1980s, Fred never wavered in his belief in, and commitment to, socialism. He has been a socialist from his late teens to date. He is blood and soul a socialist.

In 1991, Fred participated in and gave his total support to the formation of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) in Zambia. Under the coordination of Akashambatwa Mbikusita Lewanika and Mbita Chitala, the key programmatic documents for the MMD were put together by a think tank, and a secretariat was set up. Fred was an active contributor to this process. He participated in editing the MMD's newsletter, *Multiparty News*.

In 1992, Fred significantly contributed to the formulation of the programmatic documents for the Alliance for Democracy in Malawi (AFORD) under the leadership of trade union activist Chakufwa Chihana.

From 1993 until 2014, Fred continued to support and encourage the formation, as well as the work, of various political



platforms in Zambia. His desire was the creation of an environment where good governance, human rights, and freedom of the press could be secured.

His support for the National Party (NP) under Baldwin Nkumbula and the Patriotic Front (PF) under Michael Sata is well documented. Both parties were founded on an anti-corruption and pro-poor stance.

4 He is a generous person



Some people have asked, “Is Fred M’membe a generous person?” And the answer is YES! How many people has Fred assisted out of generosity? So many – and we are not talking about his relatives – just ordinary people, especially schoolchildren who needed help. I am able to count 34 people. And the money didn’t come from the

party or a company, it came from his own pocket. Fred has always stood for the poor.

I have yet to come across any other presidential candidate who comes close to Fred. Ironically, he has, in the past, extended a helping hand to individuals or political parties who today fight against him.

5

He is a true Zambian

Zambians love to know whether their president is truly Zambian – that he is not foreign. They question whether each president is really from this country.

First came Kenneth Kaunda. Zambians questioned whether he was from Malawi. After Kaunda came Frederick Chiluba, and some people argued he was from Congo. Levy Mwanawasa succeeded Chiluba, and it was suggested he was from Mozambique. After Mwanawasa came Rupiah Banda. He was accused of coming from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. After Rupiah Banda was voted out, Michael Sata became president, and he was said to hail from Tanzania. After Sata came Edgar Lungu and, again, he was accused of coming from Malawi.

Each time a leader comes to power, his origins are questioned. It will probably be the case with Fred. Yes, people will ask where he hails from. Here is the answer.

Every person has two origins, a father's and a mother's side. So I will explain a bit about these two roots. Fred's paternal grandfather originates from Nkulungwe area, Mwika Royal Village, Shiwangandu District, in Muchinga Province. Fred's Nkulungwe family has produced four Bemba kings or Chitimukulus – Kasansu Kafunikile ku Ng'wena, Kanabesa, Chibamba wa Manshi, and Lwipa Ichacila Ababyalo.

His paternal grandmother was a Bisa from Makumya village, as well Bemba from Kapota village (Mungwi District), and from Mukuka Muleya village (Chinsali District).

Fred's mother's side is complicated and we need to do some geography to understand it. We start in Southern Province, in the villages among the Toka Leyas. He has relatives there. We then move upwards to Mwene Kahare of the Nkoyas, Nkeyema District. Fred's maternal grandmother is a direct descendant of the Nkoya royal establishment.

Fred's maternal roots are also anchored among the Mbundas of Mwene Kandala (Mongu District), Mwene Muundu (Kalabo District), and among the Kwangwas to the upper lands of the Barotse floodplain.

He is also Lui from the Barotse floodplain – a descendant of Ndiyoyi Mubuyayeta from King Mulambwa's lineage – and served in-charge of economics and foreign affairs (Mukulwakashiko) under King Lewanika. Ndiyo's mother was Totela, from Mulobezi.

Fred is also a Mukwamwenyi from Silayi village in Liuwa, Kalabo, the village and family where Namakando Wina – the longest serving prime minister under three Lozi kings (Yeta, Imwiko and Mwanawina) – hailed from. Silayi is the ancestral home of Zambian freedom fighters such as Arthur Wina, Sikota Wina and Maimbolwa Sakubita. Others, like Mundia Nalumino and Munukayumbwa Sipalo, also had some connections with Silayi village. In short, Fred has villages in Muchinga, Northern, Southern and Western provinces.

The truth is that Fred belongs to us all. He embodies the true spirit of one Zambia one nation. He is yours. He is a true Zambian.

6

He will be Africa's most educated president



Now you may ask what Fred's educational background is, although in the Socialist Party we do not think education necessarily makes one a good leader – it may just help a person to do certain things differently. National leadership requires more than education.

However, one thing is certainly true. With the death of Robert Mugabe, Fred will be the most highly educated president in Africa.

He has a bachelor's degree in accountancy. He has a law degree. Having studied at the Zambia Institute of Advanced Legal Education, he is a qualified and practising lawyer. He also gained a master's degree in economic policy management. He has another master's in taxation and he holds a doctorate in business administration. Name me one other living president who has so many qualifications.

And it doesn't end there. Fred hasn't given up studying yet. He is now reading for a doctorate in journalism and media studies. He is a true role model.

7

Honours and awards



don't know of any journalist in Zambia or Africa who has received as many international awards as Fred for his commitment to defending press freedom and promoting ethical journalism in Zambia and the world.

He is a recipient of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) press freedom award, South African Union of Journalists' Pringle award, World Press Review Editor of the Year award, Percy Qoboza press freedom award from the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) – an organisation of African-American journalists – and the United Nations-affiliated International Press Institute's Press Freedom Hero award.

But when president Michael Sata wanted to give Fred a national honour on independence day in 2011, he refused to accept it.

Fred's friendship with the Cuban Revolution has been recognised and honoured by president Raul Castro. He is a decorated, loyal friend of the Cuban Revolution.

8

He is firm and resolute



Today's Zambia needs Fred more than ever. He is generous but firm. A no-nonsense person when it comes to lying, stealing, laziness, and the many other vices that afflict our country.

Fred sets disciplinary standards for himself. He works a minimum of 15 hours each day,

does not drink alcohol, is vegetarian by choice, exercises an hour each morning, and is extremely time conscious and punctual for his appointments.

In Fred M'membe, you will have a Zambian President dedicated to solving people's problems.



In Fred M'membe
you will have a Zambian
President dedicated to
solving people's problems



Written and produced by The Socialist Party
LUS/10545, off Lumumba Road, P.O. Box 38278, Lusaka, Zambia
www.socialistpartyzambia.com