

Thomas Sankara

6/9/14

Thomas Sankara was born on December 21, 1949 in Yako, French Upper Volta, French West Africa, which is modern day Burkina Faso. Sankara attended high-school in a city named Bobo-Dioulasso; after he graduated his parents wanted him to become a Roman Catholic Priest. Sankara entered the military in 1966 at the age of 19, at the age of twenty he was shipped to Madagascar for officer training. While in training he witnessed several uprisings against the government in 1971 and 1972, which would help shape his future. He began reading the works of Carl Marx and Vladimir Lenin; their influence on him would show in his views towards politics. In 1972 Sankara returned home to Upper Volta but his military life would follow, he was involved in a border war against Mali in 1974. His show of military brilliance would earn him fame, but he would later reject his fame and involvement in the war as a result of a paradigm shift. He would become commander of the Commando Training Center in the city of Po.

Later that year he would meet Blaise Compaore in Morocco, they would later meet with Henri Zongo and Jean-Baptiste Lingani to form a secret organization the "Communist Officers' Group." In 1981 Thomas was appointed Secretary of State for Information in the Military; he would resign in 1982 because he was opposed to the views of the regime. The residing governmental regime was overthrown and Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo became president of the country. Thomas Sankara was named Prime Minister in January of 1983 but was dismissed in May of 1983. He was also placed under house arrest along with Henri Zongo and Jean-Baptiste Lingani; their arrest would lead to an uprising of the people in Upper Volta. Thomas Sankara became president of Upper Volta in 1983 as a result of a coup d'état which was organized by Blaise Compaoré. As president Sankara was inspired by Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Jerry Rawlings. His ideology focused on riding his country of corruption, restoring his country, preventing famine, and promoting education and health.

Sankara's regime suppressed the power of tribal chiefs to receive tribute payment and obligatory

On the Shoulders of Giants

We stand on your shoulders

<http://ontheshoulders1.com>

labor. In 1984 Sankara renamed the country from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso, which means “the land of the upright people.” He changed the name of the country in the two major languages of the country; he also changed the flag and the national anthem. Sankara made women’s rights one of his priorities; he banned female genital mutilation, forced marriages, and polygamy. He would also appoint women to positions within his government and encouraged them to work outside the home. He would also encourage pregnant women to stay in school. Sankara’s idea was to promote overall equality for men and women within his country. The Sankara led government would be the first African Government to recognize AIDS as a major epidemic to Africa. Sankara became popular with the people of Burkina Faso by making equality between the people and the government a priority. Sankara was named the “African Che Guevara” because he emulated his personal style and politics.

In 1987 Thomas Sankara was killed in coup d’état by his colleague Blaise Compaoré who betrayed Sankara. Compaore reversed Sankara’s policies and quickly accepted financial aid from the World Bank. Sankara worked hard to ward off the World Bank and establish a self-sufficient African nation in Burkina Faso. Thomas Sankara was a national hero and a true leader of the people; his sole purpose was to uplift his people at all cost. Governmental leaders who value the people they represent and resist corruption do not exist frequently. Thomas Sankara we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

[click below to view the Thomas Sankara Video](#)