

## Endorsements for *Jefferson's Tears*

A thoroughly well-researched, historically accurate portrayal of the incredible life of a man, his family and his country. Neil's ability as a wordsmith shines through as he takes readers from the depths of human depravity to a place where hope soars as on the wings of an eagle. One man's hope, against all odds, found only in Christ.

BENJAMIN SWIFT

Excellent piece of writing. Very visual. Cinematic. And of course the back-story is horrific.

FEARGHAS MACFHIONNLAIGH

Just finished reading your *Jefferson's Tears*, a Biblical boomeranger of a book. Excellent research and a gripping read, dramatic motion as Christian faith is taunted and tested; can one Jefferson's inspirational words rescue another from his personal hell? Brutality spans the ages with global consequences, in parallel with the bloody birth of a nation. From America to Africa — blood, guts, chains, and liberty, punctuated by bullet-point action. Ask not for whom Jefferson shed his tears; wake up and smell the real coffee.

STUART MCKINLAY

## **Endorsements for Jefferson's Tears**

Australians! Who are we? Most of us are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Apart from the relatively small indigenous population, our citizens have overseas origins. In the main we are a peace-loving society; we value our defense forces which keep our shores safe from the excesses of foreign influences which would otherwise curtail the great freedoms we often take for granted. Our news bulletins are continually reporting wars, conflicts, civil unrest, and a host of other events, including natural disasters, that tear people's lives apart in many parts of the world. Often our reaction is one of indifference; our hearts are hardened by the constant bombardment of these disheartening reports and it is much easier to treat them impersonally, so we can more easily dismiss them from our minds. Facts and figures about horrifying deaths, physical, mental and emotional scarring and injuries, destruction of housing and food sources, things we would normally find harrowing, are pushed aside as we become more and more inured to these devastating events.

*Jefferson's Tears*, Neil Cullan McKinlay's latest novel, changes our outlook on human suffering from mildly sympathetic to wildly empathetic, as we are exposed to the experiences of the intriguing protagonist Jefferson Williams Kollie. Jefferson is just nine years old when he is introduced to the reader; he is experiencing depravity and suffering that beggars belief. As the story unfolds we are subtly informed of the historical backdrop to the novel and given a close-up picture of Jefferson's family life. McKinlay artfully draws on the readers' emotions

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as Jefferson's life unfolds, revealing a surprising, resilient Christian faith in spite of his witnessing ruthless and brutal human behavior.

McKinlay's story, *Jefferson's Tears*, is well told; the distressing events are tempered with humorous anecdotes without detracting from the underlying serious nature of the overall thrust of the narrative. A great read, an encouragement for Christians, and thought-provoking for those seeking a more meaningful life.

PETER F. PIKE  
Editor, *FreeXpresSion*



# JEFFERSON'S TEARS

**Liberia's Founding and Fall, One Man's Horror and Hope**

NEIL CULLAN  
MCKINLAY



VENTURA, CALIFORNIA

JEFFERSON'S TEARS  
by Neil Cullan McKinlay

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## Prologue

# STARS & SCARS

**W**ith a crash the main door of the house burst open as half a dozen or so very tall young men, armed with weapons, rushed through the opening. They were yelling and screaming at the house's occupants: a nine-year-old boy, and a twenty-one-year-old female and her two little children. It was as if a tropical storm had entered the room. Things were being tossed around, including the room's innocent occupants. The tall men started slapping, punching, and kicking the pair as the young woman tried to protect her children. She became their main focus of attention.

The young boy saw another man, an older man, slowly appear through the same entrance, the doorway that he had been considering escaping through. At first he was silhouetted; then, as he slowly walked into the room, the boy could see that he was dressed in mismatched army fatigues. One of his front teeth was broken. In a scary voice he yelled, "I'm looking for government officials to kill! Those dogs are eating up all our country's money!"

The boy saw him wave his gun and that he had angry eyes.

Next, via another door, another man appeared in the room, and behind him came yet another man. They were wondering what all the fuss was about. Unfortunately, these two were Liberian government officials.

The first government official began speaking in a startled voice to the older man with the broken front tooth, "I know you. You worked in our office!"

"Yeah, and you got me fired from that office. I lost my job all because of you!" The older man in the mismatched fatigues pointed his gun straight at the man.

"But I caught you stealing a document, a classified document from the office," added the government official, as his wide eyes looked down the barrel of the intruder's gun. This time his voice sounded squeaky.

"It was only a piece of paper! You got me fired over a miserable piece of paper. And for that it's now time for me to take my revenge!"

The terrified nine-year-old closely watched the scene as it developed. His scared eyes looked at each of the tall, dark figures in the room. He wondered what was going to happen next. The government official with the gun pointing at him was shaking. Realizing what was about to happen, he said, "Please don't kill the children! Take my life, but please leave the children and my brother out of this."

The older man spat out his reply through his broken tooth, "Don't worry. I will make you suffer the way you made me suffer. I lost my job! But now I have a good job—which is to finish you off—along with all those that hurt me in the past."

Then the older rebel said to the younger men in the room, "You boys, why don't you have some fun with her? While I watch."

Immediately, one of the young men began to rip at the young woman's clothing and then he lay on top of her on the floor. The others were holding her down as she struggled and screamed.

The boy watched the second government official, the brother of the first, who had just appeared in the room, try to help the girl. But before he could, the older man with the mismatched army fatigues fired his weapon. The deafening shot echoed in the nine-year-old's head like a sonic boom. Then in the moment's silence afterward, he could hear his own heart beat as he watched, as if in slow motion, the man who had been shot as he fell to the floor. He couldn't make out the words he was saying, but the callous shooter started yelling angrily, firing his weapon a few more times into the man as he lay on the floor. There was blood.

The boy could hear himself inwardly screaming for help. Then outwardly. The men began beating him and the girl some more. Then yet a different young man began to lay himself on top of the young woman. She was screaming too. Screaming!

As he continued screaming for help he could see the first government official trying to reach him. But, with his teeth gritted, the older man with the gun was holding him back by his shirt. His would-be rescuer was thrown to the floor. The older man hissed through his broken tooth, "Your brother is dead all because he wanted to be a hero to save his daughter. And now you are doing the same! Come over here, you dog."

He watched helplessly as the older man in the mismatched fatigues dragged the Liberian government official across the floor, saying, "This dog is mine!" His younger cohorts were too busy with the young woman to notice or to care.

The nine-year-old took in the chaotic scene. He stopped screaming and simply stood and trembled. His big, dark, unblinking eyes were tear-filled. Then right in front of everyone, the older man smiled, an evil broken-tooth smile, and calmly shot the man in the head. The sound of the gunshot began to echo through eternity. There was more blood. A great teardrop rolled down the boy's face...



Jefferson woke up with a start. He was panting as if he had been running. His wife, Princess, had seen her husband go through this before.

"Was it the same nightmare as before, Jeff?" She spoke with soft and sympathetic tones, partly because she didn't want to wake the children and partly to comfort her husband.

It was Brisbane, Queensland. And it was the middle of the night. The streetlights were giving off a filtered glow through the curtains.

"Yeah. I know it was just a bad dream. But his face with that broken tooth still haunts me. I'm sorry, Babe. I hope I wasn't making too much noise. The kids?"



Jefferson Williams Kollie is not tall in stature. He's about five foot six inches. However, what he lacks in height he makes up for in physique. He could be a middleweight boxer. His black skin ripples with well-toned and sculpted muscles. His biceps suggest a regular weightlifting regimen.



In the dim light Jefferson looked across the room. He could see his neatly pressed Australian Army uniform, ready for the morning, hanging on the back of the slightly ajar bedroom door. His dark eyes locked onto the little Australian flag depicted on its shoulder patch. He studied it and could just make out the Southern Cross star formation depicted thereon. He thought out loud, "I'm free now. We really are in Australia."

He instinctively lifted and glanced at his phone that lay on his bedside table. In its silvery glow, his wife could see beads of sweat sparkling like stars in the night sky on his black forehead.

"Princess, I need to step outside for some fresh air."

"Take your time. I'll check on the kids," she replied.

"I love you."

"And I you," she replied. Then she kissed him and went to check on their children.

It was 0200 on a clear and balmy night. The summer weather in subtropical Queensland is not unlike that of Liberia. Jefferson clicked the locking mechanism and quietly slid open the security flyscreen door. He stepped

outside. His big, dark, unblinking eyes were tear-filled. The emotion he was feeling at that moment was one of thankfulness. Deep in thought, he lifted his shiny dark eyes and looked to the star-clustered heavens and searched for and found the Southern Cross formation.

“Yeah, I’m free. No more running. Thank God this is Australia, not Liberia. Thank You, Lord!”

Just then, a star shot across the night sky. Upon seeing this, a great teardrop rolled down his face and splashed on the ground.



Every human being has a potent story to tell. Perhaps if Jefferson’s story were to be distilled and then poured into a glass, the golden elixir could be called *Resilience*. What’s resilience? Let’s call it spring-back-ability. Perhaps the old adage made famous by a certain brand of watches best sums up resilience: “Takes a licking and keeps on ticking.” What Jefferson has gone through in his life would make an ordinary man or woman all bitter and twisted. However, like something made of rubber after being run over by a steamroller, Jefferson just springs back to life and gets on with it—with a smile.

Jefferson’s story is a tale of tears from a vale of tears, real salty tears. However, they have been wiped away by the handkerchief of love, a woman’s love.



## Chapter 1

# LIBERTY ON THE HORIZON

SOMEWHERE IN THE ATLANTIC  
SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 1829

**T**he wooden bow of *Harriet* gently splashed its way through the calm salty brine toward West Africa's coast, somewhere in the far-off hazy distance. The ship of 160 souls, many of whom were presently milling around on deck, had set sail from Virginia. The brig was making good time on her way to Monrovia, Liberia.

"I hear that this is a special day for you?" This was the commander of the ship, Captain Henry Peters, one of those ageless types of men.

"This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it," replied the young man whom the captain had addressed.

Joseph Jenkins Roberts brushed his fingers through his grizzled reddish-brown hair as he looked into the

captain's face, which suddenly had become rather stern. Seeing that the captain had tilted his head as if to register slight disdain, he quickly added, "However, sir, I do believe that it is my birthday to which you allude, and not to the Lord's Day?"

There were others standing around on deck, both young and old. So, to make their conversation more private, they turned and leaned on the ship's rail and instinctively looked towards the horizon. Yes, it was the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath, and it was as if even the sea itself were observing a day of rest. The sky was blue and the turquoise ocean was calm.

"Sir, I turned twenty today, and I make passage to Monrovia with my newly widowed mother to start a new life, along with my wife and our newborn child. Of my two younger brothers, one desires to become a Methodist priest, the other a physician. With God's blessing, I desire to honor Him in the mercantile business, through which I seek to import and export goods to and from Monrovia, with the able assistance of my partner-in-business who remains domiciled in Virginia for the time being."

"A merchant? Did someone, I forget who, not say, 'Merchants have no country'?" This the captain said hastily. He was a little taken aback. He had not expected such an educated response from a Negro. He studied the features of the young man a little more closely. Perhaps he was not a Negro. Though his skin was olive-colored, he did look like he could pass as a white man, but then again, maybe not. Intrigued, he decided to dig a little deeper.

"Are you travelling to Monrovia under the sponsorship of the American Colonization Society?" He adjusted

his captain's hat. He had removed it a few minutes prior, during the Sunday morning worship service. There were still so many people crowding around on deck.

Joseph Jenkins Roberts patted down his hair once more and he raised himself to his full height of five foot six inches. Yes, a slight man, but his diminutive stature was deflected by his handsome features and his poise.

Joseph responded to the captain's question with a smile, and in Southern intonations, volunteered the following, "Yes, Captain, I am traveling under the auspices of the American Colonization Society. As are most of your passengers, I'd wager." Then, becoming more impassioned, he went on to say, "We are thankful that, through President Monroe, America was able to purchase that strip of land that now bears his good name: *Monrovia*. In God's Providence, the land has now, according to my research, expanded into what during these last five years people have been entitling, 'Liberia,' which, as you of course know, means 'freedom,' or better, 'The Land of the Free'."

Wishing to probe further into the young man's story, the captain tilted his hat back on his head, wiped with a kerchief the moisture from his white forehead, and said, "By your accent I would wager that you are Virginian. And by your erudition I would say that you were university educated. Why then would you not wish to seek 'Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness' in America, rather than in some far-flung, disease-infested, foreign swamp land?"

"Captain, sir, you misjudge me. Indeed, I may have a 'liberal education,' as they call it. However, I first trained as a flat-boatman on the James and Appomattox rivers, carrying goods. Thus, my interest in being a merchant.

And I have also worked as a barber in Petersburg, on Union Street.” He patted his hair once more, laughed, and said, “But I never learned to cut my own hair!

“Indeed, William Colson, now my business partner, owned the store in which I worked as a barber. I am grateful to his erudition, and to his vast library, for my ‘liberal education.’ The study of law, including international law, now being my primary interest.”

Seeing he had a captive audience in the captain, and that others were now straining their ears to hear what this young man had to say, he continued, “My father has newly gone off to Glory. As to my education, even were I university trained, which I am not, though I have been mistaken on occasion for a white man, the color of my skin would somewhat hinder me, and perhaps even preclude me, from seeking Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness in my home country. Captain, sir, you have twice quoted Thomas Jefferson, first, with your ‘merchants have no country’ comment, and secondly, let me add that though President Jefferson may have written those Lockean words that you have just mentioned, he indeed also has written: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness....’ That word ‘happiness’ was changed from the word ‘property’ in the original draft. I oft wonder if it should have been left in the former. But the meaning is essentially the same. It seems to me that both happiness and property are other words for prosperity.”

He turned and faced the small gathering and continued, “Captain, sir, may I continue?”

Captain Peters scanned the audience, and seeing that all the pleading faces were in a mood to listen, decided to indulge the young Roberts. “Yes, do carry on. We are all ears!”

Yes, in a mood to listen, the group moved in closer to the orator.

Joseph took a deep breath as he collected his thoughts. “As I was saying, the Declaration of Independence goes on to say—let me see now, where was I? ‘Unalienable Rights . . . and the pursuit of Happiness’—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation . . .”

As if they had not been paying attention enough, the word “foundation” leapt out at them, causing the audience to turn its collective ear even more in the direction of the orator. That word had been in the text used by the preacher for the morning’s sermon, Psalm 11:3, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” Young Joseph was about to build upon the preacher’s message. The boat gently swayed and its timbers could be heard to creak gently as the crowd stood in silent anticipation.

Joseph looked the crowd directly in the face, smiled, and then continued, “To institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

The young man stopped there, as the crowd won-

dered if he had memorized the whole Declaration of Independence.

As if reading the crowd's mind, he continued, "Yes, I do have the whole of the Declaration memorized! However, suffice for now, I humbly and mostly desire to bring to your attention, if you would permit me, three main things."

At that he looked down at a young boy who had positioned himself to the front of the crowd in order to see who was doing all the talking. "Young man, what is your name?"

The boy, looking over his shoulder and up at all the many faces of the crowd, cleared his throat and said, "James, sir. My name is James Spriggs Payne." The crowd applauded the boy's courage in attempting the onerous exercise of public speaking.

"Well, James Spriggs Payne, pray, tell me how old are you?"

"Nine years? Well, James Spriggs Payne, the first thing I want to say is, thank you for answering me!" He touched the boy's head and made a gesture as if he were about to cut the lad's hair. The crowd chuckled. Then, as if addressing only the boy, Joseph went on to say, "Thomas Jefferson, who went to be with the Lord less than three years ago, indeed did write those words, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.' So, my first point is this..."

He looked at the boy again and said, "'All men are created equal.' What does this mean? That we always should treat others as our equal? Nay lad, let's go the extra mile and let us do as the Bible says, 'In lowliness of mind let each esteem other *better* than themselves.' Therefore, do

not mistreat anyone. I know that some of you here have been mistreated, even severely mistreated, but believe what the Declaration says: 'All men *are* created equal.' And secondly, you know already that the Creator has endowed you with certain unalienable rights. You know this because that is what is in your heart.

"There are things that even James at his young age yearns after, yes, 'Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness'." He looked again at the boy. "James wants to *live*, he wants to live *free*, so that he is not hindered in pursuing those things, those *lawful* things, that make him happy. And lastly, for you and for me to be enabled to seek Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness, we must needs have a government that will protect us in all our lawful pursuits, and not instead become tyrannical, which is to say that we wish for the government not to lord it over us."

Still looking at the boy, Joseph continued to wax eloquent, "James, this means that we need a group of grownups to look out for us, to look after us. How so? How ought a government look after us and look out for us? Simply by promoting the doing of good, while commending those who do good, and to be about the business of punishing evildoers. 'For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.'

"We are some ten days out from Liberia, 'The Land of the Free.' When we arrive there, may we each as free individuals, and as a free people, lay good foundations, Biblical foundations to build upon. I wish you young

James, I wish everyone in our new land, Life, Liberty, and pursuit of Happiness!”

As if he had clearly understood everything, the boy firmly nodded his head towards Joseph as the crowd applauded. It had been the boy's father, Rev. David M. Payne, a Methodist minister, who had led the worship service earlier that morning. Slowly the crowd began to disperse.

Before Joseph took his leave, the captain said to him, “I perceive you to be a politician, and an exceedingly good and clever one at that. We shall talk some more anon. I have duties to attend to for now.”

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

“Indeed! And enjoy your birthday!” replied Captain Peters.

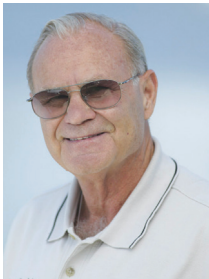
Something had awakened in the heart of Joseph Jenkins Roberts. But he wasn't quite sure what. In the company of his own thoughts he once again looked out at the horizon as if trying to penetrate eternity. He unconsciously patted down his hair as a knowing smile came upon his face. He quoted a verse of Scripture out loud, as a prayer, “Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.”

The *Harriet* with her valuable cargo continued to splash gently on her way to destiny.



## PUBLISHER'S WORD

I will lift mine eyes unto the mountains, from whence mine help shall come. Mine help cometh from the Lord, which hath made the heaven and the earth. He will not suffer thy foot to slip: for he that keepeth thee, will not slumber. (Psalm 121:1-3, Geneva Bible)



**J***efferson's Tears* is a powerful story and its author Neil Cullan McKinlay is a storyteller. He couldn't help but write books. Nordskog Publishing published his *From Mason to Minister* in 2011. In *Mason to Minister*, Neil takes us on a kind of pastoral amble from his childhood home in Scotland, to his sojourn in Canada, to his present home in Queensland, Australia. Neil keeps us rapt as he unfolds his pilgrimage in colorful detail. Even more importantly, he takes us through his spiritual amble into Freemasonry, which in turn leads him to find his true Lord and Savior. In Australia Neil joins the Australian military as a chaplain for the Christian faith.

Fast forward. While serving in the army, Neil meets a remarkable man who also has a remarkable story, but one of a radically different kind. Jefferson Williams Kollie's childhood and young-adult story is bitter and mean, ugly almost beyond imagination. Liberia began as a promising new African nation seeking to emulate the character, justice, and liberty of the United States. Yet in our generation the Liberian civil war, through which Jefferson suffered, revealed inhumanity at its worst. How could anyone survive such a childhood and youth without the deepest psychological scars and the sociopathy that commonly accompanies such experiences?

True to his pastoral style, Neil honors his readers enough to allow them to discover for themselves exactly how Jefferson survived, without hitting them over the head with it. For those who have ears to hear, there is a powerful message of redemption that awaits any who have suffered the trauma of sin's degrading effects, even if they haven't gone through the nightmare that Jefferson experienced. We all need the peace offered through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, regardless of our circumstance. But if Jefferson could survive, there is reason for all of us to be hopeful.

Let Neil McKinlay tell you the story of Liberia, and the story of *Jefferson's Tears*.

GERALD CHRISTIAN NORDSKOG

*July 4, 2018*

*Independence Day*