



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

CITATION ON

**THE RT. HON RAILA AMOLO ODINGA,
EGH, MP, MSc,**

PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA

ON HIS CONFIRMATION OF

**THE HONORARY DOCTOR OF LAWS (LLD)
(HONORIS CAUSA)**

**OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, AT NAIROBI, KENYA
ON
17TH OCTOBER 2008**



**THE RT. HON RAILA AMOLO ODINGA, EGH, MP, MSc,
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

~~~~~

Raila Odinga’s early interest in politics can be said to be the product of his childhood environment. His father, the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga was a courageous and perceptive politician who was involved in Kenya’s freedom struggle throughout the colonial period. The Senior Odinga rejected colonial government offer to be president arguing that that Kenyatta had to be released first. Raila remembers the lengthy political discussions that used to take place in their residence in Kaloleni estate in Kisumu where his father had relocated after resigning from a teaching job in Maseno School.

Raila Odinga’s first plunge into elective politics did not take place until 1992 when he contested the Langata parliamentary seat. He won the seat on his first attempt with a large majority and has retained the seat in every successive election. Langata is probably the most multi-ethnic, multiracial and cosmopolitan constituency in the country. As the MP for a constituency that also houses the largest urban-poor in Nairobi, Raila Odinga has initiated several poverty –alleviation and education projects, including Kibera slum upgrading and the Raila Education Centre.

In 1997 Raila Odinga offered his candidature for the presidency and emerged number three out of fifteen candidates. In 2002 he sacrificed his presidential ambition in support of one opposition presidential candidate. He was convinced that under the then prevailing political circumstances this was the only way to rid the country of the then oppressive KANU regime.

Aware that political parties are indispensable to participatory democracy, Raila has paid a lot of attention to the development and organization of political parties. In this regard Raila Odinga has been associated with the formation of a number of political parties in the country and held leadership positions in several. Between 1991 and 1996 he was Deputy Director of elections in

the original Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD). He was the elected leader of the National Development Party (NDP) between 1997 and 2002. In 2002 NDP merged with KANU to form New KANU and Raila Odinga was elected the Secretary General of the party. He was also appointed the Minister for Energy in 2001 and served until 2002. Later that year, Raila founded the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and was elected the party leader, a position he occupied until the party merged with other parties to form the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), which went on to win the December 2002 General elections and thereby dislodging KANU, which had been in power since 1963. Raila was appointed the Minister for Roads, Public Works and Housing, a job he performed efficiently.

Guided by the values and principles of social democracy and the humanness of the African traditional societies, Raila Odinga has been particularly concerned about the oppressed, the poor, inequity in the distribution of public resources and the voiceless majority. His unrelenting fight for social justice for all and participatory democracy earned him three detentions without trial. In 1991 at the height of the struggle for democratic change, Raila sought asylum in Norway where he stayed briefly in order to escape a fourth detention.

The tribulations did not deter nor break Raila's spirit and commitment to the search for justice and the opening up of the democratic space. Instead he emerged from each period of harassment with renewed commitment and with an open hand to his tormentors urging them to move closer to the ideals he stands for and for which they vilified and victimized him. He does not shy away from speaking the truth as he urges others to do the same. He leads by example.

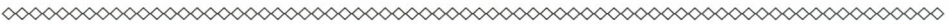


Raila Odinga has been at the centre of all major political events that set in motion the wheels of irreversible change towards a more open and participatory political system in Kenya. From the struggles of the 1980s for the second political liberation that led to the restoration of multiparty democracy in Kenya in 1991, to the peaceful transition of power from incumbent independence political party to the opposition in 2002, Raila Odinga has been the definitive political mobiliser, team builder and peace maker.

The Rt. Hon Raila Odinga has consistently struggled for a new constitutional order that would radically change the nature of governance in this country. In particular, he believes in the sharing of power as a way of ensuring checks and balances in the management of public affairs. It is on this basis that he advocated for a devolved governance structure that would ensure social equity and one in which all would share both the responsibilities and benefits of nationhood without excluding any segment of the society.

Raila Odinga is perhaps known best for his persistent and dedicated opposition to corruption including misuse of public resources and mismanagement of public affairs. Above all Raila Odinga is a nationalist who loves his country and would not hesitate to subordinate his personal political ambition to the interest of the country. It is therefore not surprising that when Kenya was at the brink of disintegration, following the contested 2007 presidential election results, Raila Odinga did not hesitate to place the interest of his country above his political ambition for the coveted position of president of the Republic of Kenya. He demonstrated great leadership by agreeing to talk with his political adversaries with a view to finding an amicable and sustainable political solution to the looming crises.





Here then is a nationalist who has walked the journey of academics, public servants, entrepreneurs, liberator of the oppressed and now walks the journey of an eminent African statesman. His vision and the struggles he has engaged in has and continues to contribute enormously to the development of education, entrepreneurship, economic, political and social welfare of this great country, Kenya. These are qualities and achievements that we in academia are proud to be associated with.

I am therefore greatly honoured and privileged MR. CHANCELLOR SIR, to request you to honour by conferring the Degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD.) (Honoris Causa) of the University of Nairobi upon the Rt. Hon. Raila Amolo Odinga, EGH, MP, MSc, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya.

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE Rt. HON. PRIME MINISTER.**



**P .O. Box 30197 - 00100 Nairobi**

**Tel: +254-20-318262**

**Fax: +254-20-2216030/2212604**

**Website: [www.uonbi.ac.ke](http://www.uonbi.ac.ke)**