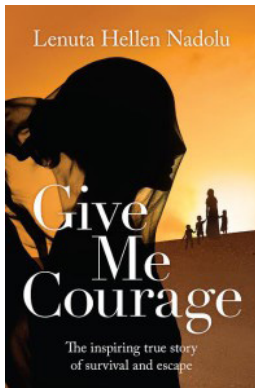


Give Me Courage

The inspiring true story of survival and escape

LENUTA HELLEN NADOLU

13 October 2014, Xoum Publishing



A powerful memoir of a woman's determination to survive – and succeed.

Lenuta 'Hellen' Nadolu was a bright young woman with a promising academic future when she met Victor, the dashing Ghanaian doctor who saved her mother's life after a near-fatal home abortion – the only option available to desperate women in Communist Romania. Hellen had worked hard to overcome a childhood marred by poverty, uncertainty and violence, understanding from a young age that her intelligence would be her ticket out of her caged life in a society that valued women mainly for their marriageability.

But her youthful naïveté led her to lose the virginity so prized by her domineering father, who sometimes sent his daughter for official 'virginity checks'. Confused and alone after her scandalised family disowned her, Hellen became pregnant, eventually marrying Victor in order to secure a future for herself and her daughter. With that, her university dreams died forever. To make matters worse, the closed borders of Romania under Ceausescu's dictatorship fostered a cloistered and highly racist society; Hellen was frequently called a slut by strangers on the street for marrying a black man, and her tiny daughter Elsie spat upon and called a 'black crow' for her mixed race heritage.

The cracks in Hellen's still-new marriage were already beginning to show before the family left Romania for a fresh start in Ghana. Victor's dismissiveness and increasingly aggressive behaviour peaked when he began an affair with a 17-year-old high school student with a view to taking her as his second wife, a tradition ingrained in Ghanaian culture. Yet again, Hellen became the prisoner of a man, unable to flee Ghana with their now three children without their father's permission and forced to rely on her husband to ration out their meagre weekly food portions. Hellen gathered all her courage to leave Victor and become **the first European woman in history – and the only woman since – to successfully divorce a Ghanaian man**. She smuggled her children home to Romania only to discover that little had changed – she and her family were still subject to racism of the worst kind – and, desperate to find a future free from prejudice, Hellen fled the country for Australia, with only \$50 to her name, to apply for political asylum.

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It took a year of endless applications, interviews with immigration officials and living on the poverty line but Hellen was finally granted asylum and, a year later, flew her children to join her in Australia. So began the happiest chapter of the family's life. Determined to be both mother and father to her small children, Hellen worked two, often three, jobs in order to support them and to avoid being a burden to the State, sending her children to good schools for the education Hellen herself lacked. Elsie is now a mother to the next generation of indomitable Nadolu women, and runs a successful business with her younger sister Nancy by her side, while son William qualified as a pilot and then a lawyer, now dedicating his time to helping those less fortunate than himself.

Give Me Courage is a stunning memoir, the story of an amazing woman forced to fight prejudice, tradition, the patriarchy and even Communism in order to provide a future for her much-loved children.



About the author:

Lenuta 'Hellen' Nadolu is a successful, self-made business owner and cosmetologist. She is 61 years old and lives on Sydney's lower north shore. Her three children, Elsie, William and Nancy, and her two granddaughters, Amira and Leila, also live in NSW.

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