

---

VOLUME XXII


1997

Number 1

---

## **LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL**

**Special Anniversary Issue Commemorating Liberia's  
Sesquicentennial, 150 Years, as a Nation State**



**Liberia  
1847-1997...**

---

**Published by THE LIBERIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION, INC.**

---

# LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

## Editorial Policy

The *Liberian Studies Journal* is dedicated to the publication of original research on social, political, economic, scientific, and other issues about Liberia or with implications for Liberia. Opinions of contributors to the *Journal* do not necessarily reflect the policy of the organizations they represent or the Liberian Studies Association, publishers of the *Journal*.

## Manuscript Requirements

Manuscripts submitted for publication should not exceed 25 typewritten, double-spaced pages, with margins of one-and-a-half inches. The page limit includes graphs, references, tables and appendices. Authors may, in addition to their manuscripts, submit a computer disk of their work preferably in WordPerfect 6.1 for Windows. Notes and references should be placed at the end of the text with headings, e.g., Notes; References. Notes, if any, should precede the references. The *Journal* is published in June and December. Deadline for the first issue is February, and for the second, August.

Manuscripts should include a title page that provides the title of the text, author's name, address, phone number, and affiliation. All works will be reviewed by anonymous referees.

Manuscripts are accepted in English and French.

Manuscripts must conform to the editorial style of either the *Chicago Manual of Style*, The American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA).

All manuscripts submitted for consideration should be mailed to:

C. William Allen, Editor  
*Liberian Studies Journal*; Division of Fine Arts, Languages and Literature  
University of South Carolina; 800 University Way; Spartanburg, SC 29303

All Book Reviews should be mailed to:

Augustine Konneh, Book Review Editor  
*Liberian Studies Journal*; History Department  
Morehouse College; 830 Westview Drive, S.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30314.

Cover: Flag of the Republic of Liberia.

**LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL**

**Editor, C. William Allen**  
University of South Carolina at Spartanburg

**Associate Editor, Similih M. Cordon**  
Florida Community College

**Book Review Editor, Augustine Konneh**  
Morehouse College

**EDITORIAL ADVISORY  
BOARD**

Bertha B. Azango-- University of Liberia

Warren d'Azevedo-- University of Nevada

Christopher Clapham-- Lancaster University

Thomas Hayden-- Society of African Missions

Svend E. Holsoe-- University of Delaware

Coroann Okorodudu- Rowan College of N.J.

D. Elwood Dunn-- The University of the South

M. Alpha Bah-- College of Charleston

Momo K. Rogers-- Kpazolu Media Enterprises

Yekutiell Gershoni-- Tel Aviv University

Lawrence B. Breitborde-- Knox College

Romeo E. Phillips-- Kalamazoo College

Henrique F. Tokpa-- Cuttington University College

---

Edited at the Division of Fine Arts, Languages and Literature; College of Arts and Sciences; University of South Carolina at Spartanburg.

---

**LIBERIAN STUDIES ASSN.  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Massala Prince Reffell-- President

Ciyata Coleman-- Vice President

Dianne Oyler- Secretary-Treasurer

Margaret Deconte Brumskine

Timothy A. Rainey

Walter T. Wiles

**FORMER EDITORS**

D. Elwood Dunn  
Edward J. Biggane  
Jo Sullivan  
Svend E. Holsoe

The editors and Advisory Board gratefully acknowledge the contributions of The University of South Carolina in the production of the *Journal*.

## CONTENTS

### THE ANTITHESES OF LIBERIA'S INDEPENDENCE IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, 1822-1990

By Amos J. Beyan..... 3

### THE AFRICANIZATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

By Hannah Abeodu Bowen Jones..... 8

### THE CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY IN LIBERIA

By George Klay Kieh, Jr. .... 23

### IDEAS AND POLITICS IN SESQUIC LIBERIA

By Yekutiel Gershoni..... 30

### LIBERIA: A COUNTRY IN SEARCH OF ID AND UNITY

By James S. Guseh..... 37

### THE LIBERIAN PRESS: QUO VADIS?

By Kenneth Y. Best..... 45

### PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS IN LIBERIAN EDUCATION-- A ROAD TO NATIONAL PEACE

By Bertha Baker Azango..... 67

### LIBERIA IN AFRICAN CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS-- 1847-1997

By Similih M. Cordor..... 78

### THE NEED FOR A BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN THE THIRD REPUBLIC

By Robert H. Brown..... 83

### THE *ASILI* OF LIBERIAN PSYCHOLOGY

By Boikai S. Twe..... 88

### THE PRESS IN LIBERIA, 1826-1966: A SELECT CHRONOLOGY

By Momo K. Rogers, Sr. .... 95

BOOK REVIEWS

Best, Keith Neville Asumuyaya. *The Other Side of Roots (Liberia): Chronicle of Self-Destruction Foretold*, 1994.  
By Robert H. Brown..... 121

Bolton, Bill. *Just Keep on Walking: An African Odyssey*.  
Baton Rouge: LSU Agricultural Center, 1995.  
By Richard A. Corby..... 125

Browne, Herman. *THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: A Dialectic Study of the African and Liberation Traditions*.  
By Michael Battle..... 131

RECENT PUBLICATIONS AND THESES..... 137

NEWS AND NOTES..... 139

DOCUMENT..... 143

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE..... 150

---

A refereed journal that emphasizes the social sciences, humanities, and the natural sciences, the *Liberian Studies Journal* is a semiannual publication devoted to studies of Africa's oldest republic. The annual subscription rate is \$40.00; \$15.00 for students and \$50.00 for institutions, and include membership in the Liberian Studies Association, Inc. All manuscripts and related matters should be addressed to The Editor, *Liberian Studies Journal*; Division of Fine Arts, Languages and Literature; The University of South Carolina at Spartanburg; 800 University Way; Spartanburg, SC 29303. Subscriptions and other business matters should be directed to The Secretary-Treasurer, Liberian Studies Association; Albany State University; 504 College Drive; P. O. Box 31222; Albany, GA, USA, 31705-2791.

Copyright 1997 by the Liberian Studies Association, Inc. ISSN 0024 1989.



## From the Editor

This issue of the *Liberian Studies Journal* is very special to us. It is intended to help commemorate the 150th Anniversary, Sesquicentennial, of Liberia as a nation state. It is so special that for the first time in the history of the *Journal*, we are using color, the Liberian flag, on the cover.

The editors invited several scholars to write short pieces-- their reflections on the last 150 years, appraisals of the current state of affairs in Liberia, and projections for the anticipated Third Republic and beyond. We thank those of you who responded. For those of you who could not contribute this time, we will take a raincheck.

The Liberian Studies Association (LSA), publisher of the *Journal*, is a scholarly organization and does not take a political position on any issue. The intent of the articles in this special anniversary issue is to, hopefully, reflect on the mistakes and achievements of the past, assess the present quagmire of the Liberian state, and make some meaningful suggestions on how Liberia can avoid repeating the mistakes of the past as we share a cautious optimism for a Third Republic in which human rights, the rule of law, and the empowerment of all Liberians and friends of Liberia will be considered inalienable to the human condition. It is in this spirit that the LSA makes this contribution on this special anniversary of our country.

We lead with **Amos Beyan's** "The Antitheses of Liberia's Independence in Historical Perspective, 1822-1990," followed by **Abeodu Jones' "The Africanization of the Republic of Liberia."** **Yekutiell Gershoni's** "Ideas and Politics in Sesquicentennial Liberia" is very appropriately sandwiched between **George Kieh's** "The Crisis of Democracy in Liberia," and **James Guseh's** "LIBERIA: A Country in Search of Identity and Unity." **Kenneth Best** goes above and beyond the call of duty with his piece, "The Liberian Press: Quo Vadis?" We are very grateful to **Bertha Baker Azango** for sharing with us her nearly four decades of experience in Liberian education in her article, "Problems and Conflicts in Liberian Education." This special anniversary issue would be incomplete without putting events in Liberia in a cultural perspective.

**Similih Cordon** fills that void with "Liberia in African Cultural and Artistic Expressions-- 1847-1997." **Robert Brown** graces the pages of this issue with two pieces: "The Need for a Bilingual Education in the Third Republic," and a review of **K. Neville A. Best's** book, *The Other Side of Roots (Liberia): Chronicle of Self-Destruction Foretold*. The review is written in typical Brown style-- through, thought-provoking, critical but fair. **Boikai Twe** attempts to unravel the complexity and duality of the Liberian psyche as he provides a prescription for healing some of the wounds of war in "The *Asili* of Liberian Psychology." **Momo Rogers** provides, very timely and appropriately, "The Press in Liberia, 1826-1996: A Select Chronology."

Our Book Review section includes two other reviews in addition to Brown's. **Richard Corby** displays a unique knowledge of the Liberian persona in his review of **Bill Bolton's** book *Just Keep on Walking: An African Odyssey*. **Michael Battle**, in his first submission to the *Journal*, does an excellent job with **Herman Browne's** book, *Theological Anthropology: A Dialectic Study of the African and Liberation Traditions*.

In the Recent Publications and Theses section, we like to call your attention to **Victoria Tolbert's** long-awaited book *Lifted Up: The Victoria Tolbert Story*. Given her proximity to the events of that fateful morning of April 12, 1980, surely, she must have a lot to tell.

We are very appreciative to **Willie Davis** for providing us with the piece that appears in our Document section. Willie has always been very generous in sharing his collection with the *Journal*, thanks.

Saving the best for last, my sincere gratitude goes to my colleague, **Carl Patrick Burrowes**, whose idea it was to produce this special anniversary issue, and to **D. Elwood Dunn** for his encouragement.

We extend congratulations to the new members of the **LSA Board of Directors** who were elected at the 29th Annual Conference in Prairie View, Texas: **Massala Prince Reffell**, President; **Ciyata Dinah Coleman**, Vice President; **Dianne Oyler**, Secretary-Treasurer; **Timothy Rainey**, Member. Also, thanks to **Arnold Odio** for his distinguish service as Secretary-Treasurer, and to **Doris Railey** for her services on the Board.

**The Editor**



## **The Antitheses of Liberia's Independence in Historical Perspective, 1822-1990**

**Amos J. Beyan**

Liberia could be described as a unity of opposites since its beginning in 1822. In other words, although its establishment brought liberty to some Liberians, the Liberian entity meant subjugation for other Liberians. Against this background, the meaning of Liberia's independence and its current crisis can be put into a proper historical perspective.

The source of the foregoing development can be traced to the American Colonization Society, (ACS) that established Liberia in 1822.<sup>1</sup> The semi-integration of Liberia into the global economy was also to reinforce its unity of opposites. Such an argument could be applied to what was in the making on the ship *Elizabeth* that sailed from New York City on January 31, 1820 with some eighty-eight African-Americans for what would become Liberia in 1822. Samuel Bacon, a white man, was empowered by the U.S. Government to serve as an abater of the sailing emigrants. He was assisted by John Bankson and Samuel Crozier, who were also white. Although they died from malaria in 1820, the centralized political system the three leaders introduced survived.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it was becoming institutional after the Liberian colony was established in 1822, and became clearly evident during the leadership of Governor Jehudi Ashmun who served from 1824-1828. The constitution framed by the ACS in Washington, D.C., for the Liberian colonists made the power of the governor absolute. Although it allowed for a colonial assembly or legislature, and the election of candidates to that body through manhood suffrage, the constitution likewise empowered the governor to have the final say over the assembly.<sup>3</sup>

As chief executive, the governor also served as chief justice and

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

commander-in-chief of the colonial militia. He not only was the most powerful person in the colony, he also had the best of everything. Governor Ashmun had the most expensive house in Liberia in the 1820s. It was valued at about \$7, 000.00.<sup>4</sup>

The near totalitarian system in question influenced the leaderships of Agent Eli Ayres, Governors Ashmun, Joseph Mechlin, John Pinney, Ezekiel Skinner, Anthony Williams, Thomas Buchanan, and Joseph J. Roberts, the first full-time black governor who also became Liberia's first president after that country's independence was declared in 1847.<sup>5</sup> Just below the governor in social, political, and material status were members of the colonial assembly, leading merchants, planters and clergymen. They also profited abundantly from Liberia's evolving stratified social arrangements. The status of the emerging elites was maintained at the expense of settler Liberians, especially during the colonial period. This trend was not, however, without opposition. Indeed, the promotion of the liberty and material status of small numbers of settlers at the expense of majority of the settler population was among the factors that precipitated Liberia's first major coup in 1823. Ashmun's leadership that had been overthrown by the coup was reestablished in the colony only because of U.S. military threat and the tactfulness of Ralph Gurley, a special ACS envoy sent to the colony in 1824 to deal with the crisis.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, the emerging institutional system in Liberia that had been responsible for the coup was not done away with after the settlers took power from the white

**The status of the emerging elites was maintained at the expense of settler Liberians, especially during the colonial period.**

representatives of the ACS in the 1840s, and especially following their declaration of Liberia's independence in 1847. Indeed, the limited social, political, and economic accommodation of poor settler Liberians by the new

leaders corresponded with continued subordination of the majority of indigenous Liberians.<sup>7</sup>

The question is, why did Liberia's Founding Fathers like Joseph J. Roberts, Samuel Benedict, Elijah Johnson, J. N. Lewis, Beverly Wilson, John Day, Amos Herring, Ephraim Titler, Jacob Prout, and others continue to propagate the institutional values introduced by the ACS? First, Liberia's Founding Fathers had been carefully screened, and, indeed, indirectly selected by the ACS. The members of this class were the ones who had closely identified with the ACS and its values in return for political and material rewards before Liberia became independent in 1847. No wonder they worked to preserve the status quo they inherited from the representatives of the ACS. It had served them very well prior to 1847; and they, therefore, had every reason to believe it would continue to do so after independence.<sup>8</sup>

The cohesiveness of Liberia's small ruling class also helped to reinforce the centralized political system introduced by the ACS, since it discouraged expression of conflicting views,

**Liberian leaders had neither the capital nor the army, air force, and the navy like Western leaders to influence the functions of the global economy on behalf of their country....**

especially on critical issues. The togetherness of Liberian leaders was further reinforced by pressures from poor settler and indigenous Liberians, and increasing commercial advent of Europeans in Liberia. Against this background, the American-model government of check and balance that Liberian leaders developed did not work; the executive branch of such a government became predominant. In practice, Liberia, indeed, became a one-party state in every sense of the description from 1877 to 1990. But as

I have detailed elsewhere, Liberia's one political party system was developed in response to a compelling need for unity against both internal and external pressures. This trend was, however, a political system with which Liberian leaders were well familiar-- the reinforcement of centralization of political power as exemplified by the National True Whig Party from 1877 to 1980 closely resembled, for example, the paternalistic and totalitarian political system the ACS had commenced in the Liberian colony in the 1820s.<sup>9</sup>

And of course, the peripheral involvement of Liberian leaders with the global economy served Liberia narrowly. While such an engagement served as a main source of power, liberty, and material wealth for insignificant numbers of Liberians, it produced the opposite of these for the majority of the Liberian people.<sup>10</sup> Liberian leaders had neither the capital nor the army, air force, and the navy like Western leaders to influence the functions of the global economy on behalf of their country. This, together with their taste for items produced abroad discouraged them from investing in ways which would have led to the development of large working and middle classes. It is against this background outlined above that the meaning of Liberia's independence, the sources of its current tragedy, and hopes for its rejuvenation should be examined.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Henry N. Sherwood, "Early Negor Deportation Projects," *Mississippi Valley History Review*, 11 (1916), pp. 484-495; Philip Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement 1816-1865*, (New York, 1961), pp. 1-47, 59-68; Tom Shick, *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settler Society in Nineteenth Century Liberia* (Baltimore, 1980); Amos J. Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State: A Historical Perspective, 1822-1900* (Lanham, 1991); Lawrence J. Friedman, "Purifying the White Man's Country: The American Colonization Society Reconsidered, 1816-1840," *Societas*, Vol. 6 (1976), pp. 1-24; David M. Striefford, "The American Colonization Society: An Application

of Republican Ideology to Early Antebellum Reform," *Journal of Southern History*, 45 (1975), pp. 316-341; Issa V. Brown, *Biograph of the Reverend Robert Finley of Basking Ride, NJ* (Philadelphia, 1857), pp. 93-99; and *Original Constitution and Proceeding of the American Colonization Society*, Vol. 1 (1816), pp. 1-9.

<sup>2</sup>Beyan, *The American Colonization*, pp. 60-62.

<sup>3</sup>*Twelfth Annual Report of the ACS* (Washington, 1828) pp. 35-36.

<sup>4</sup>Richard West, *Back to Africa: A History of Sierra Leone and Liberia*. (New York, 1970) p. 28; *African Repository*, 11 (1825), pp. 25-26.

<sup>5</sup>Beyan, "The American Colonization Society and the origin of Undemocratic Institutions in Liberia in Historical Perspective," *Liberian Studies Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (1989), pp. 140-151.

<sup>6</sup>Ralph R. Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun* (Washington, DC, 1835), pp. 190-193; *African Repository*, Vol. 1 (1824), p. 24; Vol. II (1825), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup>Beyan, "The American Colonization Society...." *LSJ* XIV:2, 140-151.

<sup>8</sup>Phil S. Sigler, "The Attitudes of Free Blacks Towards Emigration to Liberia," Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University (1969), pp. 138-140.

<sup>9</sup>Beyan, "The American Colonization Society and the Origin of Undemocratic Institutions in Liberia," pp. 140-151; *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State*, pp. 101-103; Martin Lowenkopf, *Politics in Liberia: The Conservative Road to Development* (Stanford, 1976).

<sup>10</sup>Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State*, pp. 124-158.

## **The Africanization of the Republic of Liberia**

**Hannah Abeodu Bowen Jones**

### **Introduction**

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Liberia, the celebrations are held in the shadows of a devastating civil war that spared not an inch of Liberian soil. The blood of Liberians covered their land from Cape Mount in the west to Cape Palmas in the east and from Lofa in the north to Montserrado in the south. Still, Liberians learned in those dark days and endless nights that there is no place like home. They were confronted with racism and segregation in some foreign lands to where they had fled from perceived colonialism in Liberia where the doors of opportunity for advancement and upward social, political and economic mobility were legally denied to no one. Faced with such stark conditions, many Liberians developed a deeper devotion for their home land, with sober reflections and yearnings for a lost paradise that had achieved a distinguished, honorable and enviable record of 175 years of national existence.

### **Liberia's Origins**

The Republic of Liberia is an offshoot of African and American historical, political and cultural experiences. Formerly known as the Grain Coast and as a peripheral adjunct of the Mali Empire of the west savanna below the Sahara Desert, its coastal and inland influences merged into the rain forest zone on the great bulge of the west coast of Africa facing the Atlantic Ocean.

The coastal trade and savanna trade competed for the domination of the

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

rain forest for many centuries until the arrival in 1822 of a third factor--liberated Africans, whose ancestors had been betrayed into captivity in the Americas across the Atlantic Ocean from the 16th to the 19th century. With the emergence of a new economic and industrial order in the western world, during the 19th century when African labor was no longer considered necessary, many were taken back to Africa along with others recaptured on the Atlantic Ocean. They were accompanied by American benefactors from the United States of America who, under the Anti-Slave Trade Act of March 3, 1819, passed by their Congress, were authorized to negotiate for them a new home which became known as Liberia. Supported by the Act of Congress and prominent United States citizens who, earlier in 1816 had organized the American Colonization Society, they were the founders and the first citizens of the Republic of Liberia.<sup>1</sup>

Before the arrival of the first Liberians, however, the political evolution of the local African populations of the rain forest, the Kwa, Melle and Mande had achieved various levels of political systems. The Mande had established kingdoms and were governed by

**The Republic of Liberia is an offshoot of African and American historical, political and cultural experiences. Formerly known as the Grain Coast and as a peripheral adjunct of the Mail Empire of the west savanna below the Sahara Desert, . . .**

centralized political authorities. They were descendants of migrations from the Mali Empire which had a common border with the rain forest. The Melle who were neighbors of the Mande, too, had evolved centralized political systems. The Kwa, on the other hand, who were also neighbors of the Mande, were known to have established democratic decentralized political systems from the village level to clans. From time to time, the

## 10 THE AFRICANIZATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

Mande, Melle and Kwa had entered into federations. One such federation, the Kondo Federation, was in existence at the time the Liberians arrived.<sup>2</sup> All three ethnic groups learned to coexist in a symbiotic relationship for trade and defense and had traditions of consensus for accommodating immigrants and strangers. Indeed, the cultural traditions of the African peoples on the Grain Coast made them receptive to accommodating strangers from far and near.<sup>3</sup> The *Poro* and *Sande* Societies had time-honored modalities as to how they should be treated.

**Before the arrival of the first Liberians, however, the political evolution of the local African populations of the rain forest, the Kwa, Melle and Mende, had achieved various levels of political systems.**

Strangers were often special guests of their rulers and given protection. This tradition of being brothers' keepers, a corner stone of Pan Africanism, was put to a test with the coming of the Liberians and the intervention of King Sao Boso of the Kondo federation. The King prevailed successfully on the other kings of the federation to accept the American venture. The Kwa, Mande and Melle were even known to accommodate strangers from Europe beginning with the Portuguese in the 15th century, who were the earliest arrivals on their way to the Far East by way of the South Atlantic Coast. It was a slow journey which the Portuguese undertook. Begun in 1441, they did not cross the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa until 1898. Besides exploiting the African coastal trade and peoples for peppers, gold and labor, they left a legacy of historical landmarks on the coast of Liberia, such as Cape Mount, Cape Montserrado, Sestos River, Cape Palmas, St. Paul River and St. John River.

The Americans searched for a settlement on the west coast of Africa from



1820 to 1821 until finally they were successful in landing on Providence Island on January 7, 1822. Elijah Johnson, on this historic occasion, was moved to exclaim "For two long years have I sought a home, here I have found one, here will I remain." Freedom did indeed raise its glowing form on Montserrado's verdant height, and set within the doom of night of the slave trade, and amidst thunderstorms, the star of liberty, on the west coast of Africa. It

proclaimed the rebirth of African liberty to an expectant world.

The British, desirous of lending a helping hand to the infant settlement, caused

Elijah Johnson to once again

**. . .by an Act of the United States Congress passed on March 3, 1819, the government of the United States committed itself to participate in the anti-slave movement.**

demonstrate his new feelings of nationalism by telling the British: "We don't want your flag staff put up on Liberian territory that will cost us more to bring down than to defeat any local opposition." The British, and then the French, had followed the Portuguese. Long accustomed to trading on the Grain Coast before the arrival of the Americans, they challenged the presence and legitimacy of an American colony in the area. The British and the French had more powerful imperialistic designs than the Portuguese to the extent that they caused Liberia to declare its independence in 1847. The declaration caused Liberia to obtain a national and diplomatic identity in the international community.

### **The American Legacy**

As stated earlier, by an Act of the United States Congress passed on March 3, 1819, the government of the United States committed itself to participate in the anti-slave trade movement. However, a technical situation

## 12 THE AFRICANIZATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

soon became evident as to how to implement the Congressional Act. Once recaptured, a home must be provided for the destitute African victims of the slave trade.

Fortunately, the American Colonization Society (ACS) was organized by concerned Americans in 1816 with the objective of colonizing free Blacks in Africa. The ACS came about in reaction to the successful outcome of the Haitian revolution of 1800 by Africans over the French during the Napoleonic wars with its proclamation of liberty, equality and fraternity, and reacting further to periodic acts of violence for liberation by Africans in captivity in the American South.

Accordingly, on March 4, 1819, the next day following the passage of the Congressional Anti-

slave Trade Act, the president of the American Colonization Society, Bushrod Washington, called on President James Monroe and

**The Americans named their settlement Liberia, and the capital city Monrovia, in honor of President James Monroe.**

petitioned him to permit the Society to implement the Congressional Act. The Society appeared to have been well prepared to render such assistance to the president: In 1818 it had sent emissaries to West Africa to locate a home for free Blacks and they returned with reports that guaranteed a favorable colonizing venture in Africa. President Monroe was known to be a friend of the Society, but it took seven months, from March to December 1819, to overcome the opposition of his attorney general, and to give his consent to the offer of the Society that it be an arm of the United States government to implement the Congressional Act in Africa.

When Monroe made his historic decision to use the assistance of the

Society, his justification was that there being no authority on the west coast of Africa that was familiar or knowledgeable about United States foreign policies and competent to implement the Congressional Act, only United States citizens could be entrusted with such a serious national commitment. It was not the intention of the Act, he declared, to exclude them from undertaking the obligation as stated in The Anti-slave Trade Act.<sup>4</sup> After all, British citizens were in Freetown, Sierra Leone, implementing the British Anti-slave Trade Act, and the French were in Libreville, Gabon, doing the same thing. Initially, the Americans were eager to have their recaptured Africans taken to Sierra Leone as a permanent home for them also, but Governor Charles McCarthy allowed them only a temporary stay, from 1820 to 1821, until they succeeded in landing at Providence Island. The Americans named their settlement Liberia, and the capital city Monrovia in honor of President James Monroe. The two-year search for a home was not an uneventful experience. In a final act of desperation, the white American agents, Eli Ayers and Robert Stockton, threatened King Peter of Bushrod Island near Monrovia at gunpoint to sign the deed for the land for the American venture.<sup>5</sup> No Black pioneer participated in the deed signing ceremony and negotiation. The deed was signed by only white American agents in December 1821. As a matter of fact, the Black pioneers were all still residing in Freetown at this time. After the deed signing ceremony, they were relocated at Providence Island. This fact must be clearly stated because from 1822 to the present, a myth persists that liberated Black pioneers took the land from the African rulers at gunpoint. The threat of the gun was a last resort because there were European slave traders still around advising the local African kings that the Americans had come to undermine the slave trade, and that the efforts of the Americans should be resisted. The Europeans, in defiance, continued to do business on the coast of Liberia. At gunpoint, African kings had been forced by Europeans to make their people captives in a strange land. Africans, including Liberians, have long speculated as to why their rulers lacked the will power to resist the guns of the Europeans as some still do today. In a solitary instance, the gun was used as a threat for the descendants of Africa from the United States to have

## 14 THE AFRICANIZATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

a home in Africa.

From 1822 to 1847, the flag flew over the colony of Liberia in West Africa. The American Union did not bring about an instant reunion between the Liberians and their African brethren, therefore American protection from local and European opposition was needed. The settlers from abroad, rather than their existence among a majority and diverse ethnic Africans—Kwa, Melle, initially their own ethnicity and the nomenclature of being Americo-Liberians. They were also denied participation in the government of the colony. From 1822 to 1847, with the exception of a few emergencies which necessitated the temporary transfer of power to the Liberians, Liberia was ruled by white American governors for twenty-five years who transplanted into Liberia principles and institutions of government established under the outdated United States Articles of Confederation with all power initially concentrated in the hands of a powerful executive. There was no separation of powers. By 1847, John Greenleaf of Harvard University, who drafted the independence constitution of Liberia, did provide for the separation of powers among three branches of government—Executive, Legislative and Judiciary. Harmonizing the two constitutional traditions to make them workable in Liberia has not been easy. Separation of powers no powers remained largely entrenched in a strong executive.

**No Black pioneer participated in the deed signing ceremony and negotiation. The deed was signed by only white American agents in December 1821.**

### **The Africanization of Liberia**

From 1822 to 1997, two ideologies had competing claims on the

patriotism of Liberians-- nationalism and Pan Africanism. As an off shoot of the American experience, Liberia is an expression of the Enlightenment of the 18th century with its emphasis on the eradication of evil from human society if good laws are made for governance. Americans took some measures to eradicate an evil system in their new society by finding a home for the descendants of Africans whose freedom had been stolen from them. This momentous act occurred forty years before the outbreak of the Civil War in the United States which brought to an end both the slave trade and slavery.

The Enlightenment further gave birth to the principle ideology of nationalism, and the architects of the American venture in Africa must have

**. . . from 1822 to the present, a myth persists that liberated Black pioneers took the land from the African rulers at gunpoint.**

clearly had it in mind when, in their instructions to the white agents of the Society taking the first group of eighty-eight liberated Blacks who traveled on the *Elisabeth* on February 6, 1820, they warned them emphatically not to exercise any principles based on the colonization of Africans in the area selected as home for Africans recaptured in the anti-slave trade movement.<sup>6</sup> The agents were further warned that they would have to negotiate with existing African governments and rulers as their cooperation would be needed for the success of the American humanitarian venture.

Arriving in Liberia in 1850, after the independence of the nation, Edward Blyden, Africa's first Pan Africanist, did not appreciate the initial great divide in the directives given to the agents of the Society to guide their conduct in Africa.<sup>7</sup> These directives appeared to have been preserved even after independence and would seem to have been a wise course of action because the Liberians were a minority among the other ethnic groups, and besides, there was the difficulty of the lack of money for inclusion and governance.

## 16 THE AFRICANIZATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

Notwithstanding, the independence constitution stated that outreach activities would be extended to the local African populations when financial resources permitted the government to do so. The Africans for their part, especially after the Berlin Conference of 1885 which made the final and permanent determination of Liberia's borders and peoples, soon began to exert their own view of Liberian nationalism by complaining that the Liberian Constitution was closed to them. Like the revised United States Constitution of 1789, the 1847 Independence Constitution of Liberia made no provision for the right to vote, but did however proclaim that only people of African heritage could become citizens of the Republic of Liberia. Citizenship did not guarantee the right to vote in the 19th century.

Long before independence, the constraints in the directives given to the agents notwithstanding, Liberians and the local ethnic groups began to take informal and formal measures to reestablish their African linkages. Blyden, however, felt that the linkages should be firm and established by law. Accordingly, the Liberian Constitution was amended from time to time to make more binding and permanent the ties, rights and privileges of citizenship. The nationalism of the Liberians and Pan Africanism were destined to create an African nation although constantly confronted with circumstances too powerful and beyond their control. Realizing the numerical disadvantage, 18,000 Liberians to nearly a million Africans, the existing circumstances of the slave trade fortunately did contribute to the forging of African linkages and to undermine the directives given to the agents. Not long after the founding of Liberia, the weaker ethnic groups soon viewed the American venture not as a safe haven only for recaptured Africans, but also for those Africans living in perpetual fear of powerful neighbors. Gradually, the population and territory of Liberia began to increase. The brothers' keepers realities deeply imbedded in Pan Africanism and Liberian nationalism contributed to nation building by territorial expansion and population increases since those Africans fleeing from their neighbors imposed a new burden on Liberia to protect them and to claim the territories from which they had fled.

In the decades since declaring its independence in 1847, other significant events have contributed to the Africanization of the Republic of Liberia: The first was the Edward James Roye episode of 1870 which caused Liberians to confront a legacy of racism and segregation based on skin complexion. That year, the dark-skinned Liberians took over political domination of the nation from the light-skinned Liberians by forming the True Whig Party (TWP). For more than a century afterwards, the TWP became the melting pot that broke down the color barriers, proclaimed a National Unification and Integration Policy and created a one-party state for nation building. This lasted until the April 12, 1980 military coup d'état led by Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe brought it to an end. Then-President William V. S. Tubman had predicted during the D. T. T. crisis of 1951 that as sure as night followed day, Liberians of the local ethnic background would also serve as presidents of Liberia. It was not perceived then that this prophecy would be realized in a violent take over of government.

The second event was the Berlin Conference of 1885 which demarcated the boundaries of Liberia and radically turned the attention of the government to confront its large ethnic population and their constant demands for equal rights as those given to the descendants of the African American founders of the Liberian nation. The various ethnic groups, starting with those on the coast, were aggressive in their demands for these rights and were initially granted limited participation in government due to financial constraints in the early decades of the twentieth century followed by full participation after the Second World War. The Berlin Conference exacerbated further the burden of expansion to include still more territory and people in the Liberian nation. By 1900, it became evident that Liberia would become a common home for the accommodation of the fruits of nationalism and Pan Africanism despite the existing constraints and limitations on the resources to provide for an enlarged hegemony. Edward Blyden was always cognizant of the vitality that could be realized from an accommodation of the two ideologies in Liberia that were being undermined

## 18 THE AFRICANIZATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

by the negative ideologies of social Darwinism and imperialism in the 19th century.

The third event leading to the Africanization of Liberia was the Fernando Po crisis in the third decade of the twentieth century. Grave financial constraints then led to the exportation of migrant labor to the Island of Fernando Po which was colonized by Spain, and to European colonies in West Africa. A few Liberian authorities were implicated in the labor contracts with Spain in which it was alleged that the Liberian government also received commission. When the

Liberian Peoples' Party lost the 1928 presidential elections, its presidential candidate, Thomas Faulkner, a disciple of Marcus Garvey, brought international

**By 1900, it became evident that Liberia would become a common home for the accommodation of the fruits of nationalism and Pan Africanism. . . .**

attention by making charges of slavery in Liberia. The League of Nations of which Liberia was a founding member and a signatory to its Anti-Slavery Convention, conducted protracted investigations into the charges and at one time was inclined to recommend that Liberia be made a mandated territory, a move which nearly cost the loss of sovereignty. By the mid-1930s these investigations were soon overshadowed by the 1929 world economic depression and the gathering storms of the Second World War. Italian aggression in Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War and Japanese aggression in the Far East were all grave enough to put the Liberian crisis on the back burner. The positive repercussions of the investigations recommended to Liberia the establishment of the Liberian civil service based on merit in 1936, and the need for an Open Door Policy to attract foreign investments into Liberia. President Edwin J. Barclay who succeeded President Charles D.B. King during whose term the allegations of slavery in Liberia were made, instituted



the civil service and opened the door to public service to Liberians of all social and cultural backgrounds.

The fourth event was the long and unprecedented rule of William V. S. Tubman-- from 1944 to July 23, 1971. Tubman implemented the League's recommendation for an Open Door Policy and carried the Africanization process further by proclaiming a National Unification Policy and National Foreign Scholarship Program for the training of Liberia's manpower for national development.

The fifth event was the independence movement in Africa after the Second World War for liberation from European colonial rule. Some ethnic groups in Liberia soon developed the strange notion that Liberia, too, had a history of colonization and that the dominant African-American control of the Liberian government must be overthrown. The 1980 violent overthrow of the government of William R. Tolbert, who succeeded Tubman by Samuel Doe of the Khran ethnic group from Grand Gedeh County, brought an end to the over a century-old government of the True Whig Party. The background of Samuel Doe from the Kwa speaking linguistic group and a decentralized political and clan heritage in no way enabled him to govern a centralized nation state. There lay the core of the difficulties he encountered in attempting to win and maintain acceptance of his administration. The euphoria of his coming to power quickly faded and he came to rely solely on members of his own ethnic group for support. By the time of his own violent overthrow and death on September 9, 1990, he had however begun to learn slowly but belatedly the principles of governing a nation state by the inclusion of all ethnic groups in national politics. He took a few positive steps to bolster his administration such as receiving a bachelor of arts degree in political science from the University of Liberia in what some critics have called a watered-down curriculum. He got Liberia admitted into the Least Developed Country (LDC) status at the United Nations, and tried to strengthen Liberia's ties with powerful nations in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The final act in the Africanization of the Republic of Liberia came in the last decade of the twentieth century in a civil war gleefully sponsored by neocolonialists with willing Liberian surrogates. They carved Liberia into exploitable economic zones, killed over 200,000 Liberians and caused nearly a million more to flee into exile to far away lands like the Philippines and Alaska. Liberia's African neighbors did not hesitate to demonstrate the brothers' keepers attributes of the Pan Africanist ideology. They comforted Liberians and gave them courage to keep hope alive as they became totally Africanized. While in

exile in the lands of their African neighbors, Liberians mourned and lamented for their beloved dead and homeland and they could not be comforted. By the proverbial waters of

**Liberians must now look forward to a new century and millennium in a new spirit and with a renewed destiny to forever be a beacon of freedom, peace and justice.**

Babylon, they sat and wept when they remembered Liberia, sweet land of liberty. The Johnsonville Gospel singers sang out from their agony and distress one morning in early 1991 over the British Broadcasting Corporation from Accra, Ghana: "When we get back to Liberia we'll be glad! We'll be singing hallelujah, glory, glory hallelujah, when we get back to Liberia, we'll be glad!" And (the popular singer) Lucky Dube soothed eyes that could find no more tears for the beloved dead when his music was played daily for months over the airways in Freetown, Sierra Leone: "Remember me wherever you are." Then came the forces of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) with a mandate for the triumph of Pan Africanism and the Africanization of Liberia. Thank God for ECOMOG! These brothers' keepers had been baptized in the fiery furnace of European imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism. In less than a century, they had fought wars against the partitioning and

pacification of Africa, fought in World War I and in World War II on the African continent and abroad while Liberia was safe from these violent and bloody experiences. When Liberia's turn came, however, in the last decade of the twentieth century, the brothers' keepers knew instantly what was at stake in Liberia, perhaps more than the Liberians knew. They sacrificed much and rushed to save Liberia from the deadly fires and wounds of neocolonialism and naked greed. The Dogonyaros and Malus would not let Liberia die! Liberian nationalism fell into the embrace of Pan Africanism to establish in Liberia a true African national identity. This was the final act in the Africanization of Liberia and a victory for Pan Africanism.

The rescue mission by ECOMOG was well deserved. Liberia had labored through the rule of international law and diplomacy for the liberation and restoration of Africa's freedom from the yoke of European colonialism in the twentieth century. Now, the heroic mission of ECOMOG to preserve the independence of Liberia was to embrace Liberia with the arms of Pan Africanism and establish its true African identity.<sup>9</sup> Liberians must now look forward to a new century and millennium in a new spirit and with a renewed destiny to forever be a beacon of freedom, peace and justice.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Charles Henry Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia*, 1947, Vol. 1, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup>Warren d'Azevedo, "A Tribal Reaction to Nationalism," *Liberian Studies Journal*, Vol. No 2, 1969, p. 5

<sup>3</sup>Yekutieli Gershoni, *Black Nationalism*, 1985, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Henry Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia*, 1947, Vol. 1, p. 70.

## 22 THE AFRICANIZATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

<sup>5</sup>Philip J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement*, 1961, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Henry Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia*, 1947, Vol. 1, p. 70.

<sup>7</sup>Hollis Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan Negro Patriot*, 1967, p.21.

<sup>8</sup>E. Reginald Townsend, *Pres. Tubman of Liberia Speaks*, 1959, p. 95.

<sup>9</sup>Leonard Brehun, *Liberia, The War of Horror*, 1991, pp. 1-50

### Selected Bibliography

Brehun, Leonard. *Liberia, The War of Horror*. Legon, Accra: Adwinsa Publications Ghana Ltd., 1991.

d'Azevedo, Warren. "A Tribal Reaction To Nationalism." *Liberian Studies Journal*, Vol. No.2, 1969.

Gershoni, Yekutiel. *Black Colonialism*. London: Westna Press, 1985.

Huberich, Charles Henry. *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia*. Vol. 1. New York: Central Book Co., 1947.

Lynch, Hollis. *Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan Negro Patriot*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Staudenraus, Philip J. *The African Colonization Movement 1816-1865*. New York: Colombia University Press, 1961.

Townsend, E. Reginald. *President Tubman of Liberia Speaks*. London: Consolidated Publications Co. Ltd., 1959.

## **The Crisis of Democracy in Liberia**

**George Klay Kieh, Jr.**

### **Introduction**

Since the inception of the Liberian state in the 1800s, the country has been engulfed in a crisis of democracy. This phenomenon has been characterized by political repression, and its attendant lack of respect for civil liberties and human rights, and socioeconomic malaise. Undoubtedly, it is the crisis of democracy that precipitated the country's civil war.

Against this background, the purpose of this paper is twofold: First, it will assess the roots and the dimensions of the crisis of democracy. Second, it will offer some prescriptions for helping to address the crisis.

### **The Roots of the Crisis**

The foundation for the crisis of democracy was laid in the 1800 by the American Colonization Society. As Liberia's colonial patron, the American Colonization Society developed a repressive and exploitative political economy. This architecture had two basic components: Politically, it was anchored in authoritarianism, and its associated features of the lack of mass political participation, and vitriolic human rights abuses. For example, the politico-legal system which was rooted in the feudal order and its system of chattel slavery, mandated that citizens unquestionably obeyed "authorities."<sup>1</sup> Concomitantly, the right to peaceful assembly was denied; the freedom of speech was repressed; and the modalities for political governance were formulated without the participation of the governed.

Economically, the relations of production were based on a caste cum

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

class structure. Under this arrangement, the overlapping ethnocultural characteristics and the relationship to the means of production determine the status of the individual in society.<sup>2</sup>

When Liberia gained its independence in 1847, the emergent oppressive and unjust political economy retained the basic features of its colonial predecessor. For example, until 1869, the political and economic arenas were dominated by the light-skinned tier of the repatriated African-American stock, in competition with the dark-skinned one. Following a brief interlude between 1871-1874, the dark-skinned tier became the dominant group in the political sphere. The majority indigenes, comprising sixteen major ethnic groups, were excluded from the political economy, both legally and practically. In the case

of the former, they were not considered citizens of Liberia. In the latter case, they served as the "army of cheap and exploited labor." Amid the travesty of justice, the indigenes were forced to pay taxes and to

perform a plethora of civic tasks. The state used draconian measures, including physical abuse, to coerce, and make the indigenes compliant

**The purpose of this paper is twofold: First, it will assess the roots of the dimension of the crisis of democracy. Second, it will offer some prescriptions for helping address the crisis.**

By the mid-1920s, the political economy experienced a major transformation: With the entry of Firestone, the American giant rubber corporation, into the Liberian economy, and the subsequent introduction of wage labor, class became the *terra firma* of the relations of production.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the relationship of the individual to the major means of production ascended over ethnicity as the principal determinant of status. Accordingly, the emergent political economy and its system of stratification

heralded the rise of pan-ethnic classes. In the case of ethnicity, it became an instrumentarium in the hands of "political entrepreneurs," who lacked a national vision and broad-based legitimacy, for mobilizing support. Since then, each regime in Liberia-- from Charles D. B. King to Samuel K. Doe-- has maintained the repressive and exploitative political economy.

### **The Dimensions of the Crisis**

The crisis of democracy in Liberia is a multifaceted phenomenon with political, economic and social dimensions. In this section of the paper, each of these dimensions will be briefly discussed.

#### **The Political Dimension**

The political dimension of the crisis of democracy is rooted in an interlocking web of societal pathologies.

The base is the lack of nationalism. That is, Liberians, by-and-large, view themselves first as individuals, whose narrow personal agenda are more important than that of the country. This orientation has been reflected in the

**The dominant view among Liberians is that a liberal democratic post-civil war order, and its attendant market economy will be the panacea to the perennial crisis of democracy. Clearly, . . . (they) are epicentral, but insufficient.**

perennial problem of mortgaging the country to foreign interest, and pillaging state resources for personal gains. Interestingly, these "I first" individuals have employed myriad strategies, including ethnicity, to serve their self-interest

Another manifestation of the crisis is the lack of accountability by public officials. Operating under the panoply of the "cult of the presidency," the president and public officials arrogated unto themselves, with the coerced acquiescence of the populace, carte blanche right to do whatever they desired.

Also, the human and civil rights of the citizens were violated by the government with impunity. With the judiciary and the legislative clearly subordinated to the executive, the regime could harass, arrest, torture and detain citizens, without regards to due process. For example, the government used laws such as the Emergency Power Act, the Sedition Law and Decree #88A to muzzle dissent, and to make the citizens compliant and complacent.

**...a mixed economy, consisting of a synergy of private and public ownership, will better serve the interest of the majority of the Liberian populace, in contradistinction to a market economy that caters to the privileged few.**

Unfortunately, civil society, the citizen's principal instrument for checking on the excesses of the government, was weak and fractured. Most of the constituents of civil society were primarily interested in having a piece of the largess, than serving the "common good." Accordingly, it was quite easy for the regime to buy off and co-opt some of the leaders of various organizations.

### **Economic Dimension**

In the economic arena, the lopsided class system produced abysmal



inequalities in wealth. For example, prior to 1980, the members of the ruling class, consisting of about 4% of the population, owned and controlled 60% of the wealth, while the subaltern classes embodying 96% of the populace struggled over the remaining 40%. After 1980, the expanded ruling class, comprising about 6% of the population, owned and controlled about 70% of the wealth, while the balance 30% was fought over by the majority of the population.

Regrettably, given their preoccupation with maintaining their privileged positions, the members of the ruling class both in the public and private sectors had very little interest in the material well-being of the citizenry. Accordingly, the appropriate policies and strategies were not designed to create employment opportunities. Accordingly, by 1989, about 59.1 percent of the working age population was without jobs.

The other critical elements of the economic crisis were the twin problems of corruption and mismanagement in the public sector. For example, from the Tubman to the Doe regime, it was public

**... the solutions to the crisis of democracy must be holistic and comprehensive. They must seek to address the political, economic and social ills.**

knowledge that the state was the principal source for the private accumulation of capital: government officials, including the president, diverted public money to their private bank accounts. The various annual reports of the government's own Bureau of General Auditing confirmed that corruption in the public sector was analogous to an epidemic and contagious disease. To make matters worse, public resources were spent on grandiose non-revenue generating projects. For example, in the 1960s, over \$4 million was expended on two presidential yachts. Similarly, in 1979, over

\$10 million was spent on the Organization of African Unity (OAU) festivities.

### **The Social Dimension**

The social dimension of the crisis has several major facets: In the area of health, by 1989, only 35% of the population had access to medical services. Accordingly, the populace, especially the rural poor, was vulnerable to diseases. In turn, life expectancy was low-- The average life expectancy was 52 years.

Another problem was the inadequacy of schools, and the burgeoning illiteracy rate. For example, by the outbreak of the civil war, over 70% of the population was illiterate. The very low priority given the education has adversely affected Liberia's capacity to develop the requisite pool of trained human power, which is indispensable to the country's development.

### **Where Do We Go From Here: Some Prescriptions**

The dominant view among Liberians is that a liberal democratic post-civil war order, and its attendant market economy will be the panacea to the perennial crisis of democracy. Clearly, the political rights that are the crux of liberal democracy are epicentral, but they are insufficient. Alternatively, I propose that the solutions to the crisis of democracy must be holistic and comprehensive. They must seek to address the political, economic and social ills. This is because the utility of democracy must lie in its capacity to link political rights with "bread and butter issues."

In terms of an economic architecture, a mixed economy, consisting of a synergy of private and public ownership, will better serve the interest of the majority of the Liberian populace, in contradistinction to a market economy that caters to the privileged few.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>See George Klay Kieh, Jr., "The Taproots of the Liberian Civil War," *Twenty First Afro-Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Fall 1996, 131.

<sup>2</sup>For an excellent discussion of the caste cum class system in Liberia, prior to the 1920s, see Carl Burrowes, *Who Rules Liberia: A Reconsideration of the Settler Ruling Class Thesis and Other Myths*, monograph, Chicago, 1982.

<sup>3</sup>In 1975, Bridgestone, a Japanese company, bought Firestone.

## **Ideals and Politics in Sesquicentennial Liberia**

**Yekutiel Gershoni**

Ideals and politics have been inseparable in Liberia for much of its history. In fact, ideals preceded the founding of Liberia. The relation of ideals and politics changed during the 150 years which followed the declaration of independence. When they increasingly separated after the 1950s, disaster followed.

### **Ideal Politics**

Liberty, building an asylum for the entire black race, spreading the Christian gospel, and promoting Western culture were the ideals which the fathers carried with them from the New World to Africa. Despite the problems of getting used to a new environment and a new way of life, the black settlers implemented a policy aimed at realizing their goals. Building schools, religious missions, and "civilized" settlements were some of the steps the settlers took, in an attempt to open the political and social structures of their society before the Africans for emulation.

The declaration of independence on 26 July 1847 was seen as the of some of the ideals. Liberty was achieved and the establishment of an independent republic was a big step forward toward achieving another goal— an asylum for the entire black race. The leaders of the young state were determined to continue implementing a policy aimed at achieving the other ideals of cultural and religious uplift as well. In pursuing that aim, renewed efforts were made to attract black settlers from the New World. With the help of the newcomers, the Republic would be able to attain its goals. Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), an intellectual and diplomat, became the outstanding advocate for further settlement. He crossed the

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

Atlantic several times in an attempt to encourage New World blacks to emigrate to Liberia. On one of his visits to the United States, he told his black audience "two hundred millions of people have sent me on an errand of invitation to their blood relations here. Their cry is 'Come over and help us.'"<sup>1</sup>

By the latter part of the 19th century, it became obvious that Liberia could not implement the founding fathers' ideals. New World blacks were reluctant to uproot themselves *en masse* and come to Africa. Meanwhile, many Africans preferred to

**Liberty, building an asylum for the entire black race, spreading the Christian gospel, and promoting Western culture were the ideals which the founding fathers carried with them from the New World to Africa.**

hold onto their traditional cultural and religious values, and rejected the Christianity and Western culture offered by the black settlers.

### **Turning the Outreach Ideals Inwards**

Faced with the reality that the original ideals had failed, Americo-Liberians developed two schools of thought: The first, led by Blyden, argued that the old values set up by the founding fathers had to be replaced. Some parts of Western Christianity and Western views of civilized culture, Blyden claimed, retarded their spread to indigenous Africans. There was a need to omit these parts and replace them with genuine African values and customs.<sup>2</sup> The second school of thought was advocated by the majority of the Americo-Liberian leadership, who wanted to keep the old ideals in tact, but to shift the focus from the Africans to their own community. These thinkers used Christianity and Western culture to classify the Americo-

## 32 IDEALS AND POLITICS IN SESQUICENTENNIAL LIBERIA

Liberians as a separate and distinguished caste, and with their possession of Western civilization they justified a privileged position in the Republic for themselves.<sup>3</sup> Blyden's ideal of cultural integration was rejected mainly because the Liberian leadership was afraid that it would eventually lead to the loss of their hegemonic status. Transforming the ideal of black racial asylum, the Americo-

Liberians identified themselves with the European ruling minorities in the neighboring territories, rather than with their African brethren.

Throughout the colonial period, when the rule of culturally

distinct minorities over African masses was accepted as an international norm, the Americo-Liberians could comfortably hold to their set of values. Unlike white colonists, they developed a one-way social mobility system. Africans were accepted into the ruling class social and political milieu on condition of dropping their African heritage and adopting the Americo-Liberian identity.<sup>4</sup> This openness appeared to preserve the asylum ideal.

**By the latter part of the 19th century, it became obvious that Liberia could not implement the founding fathers' ideas. New World blacks were reluctant to uproot themselves *en masse* and come to Africa.**

### **Ideals and Politics Separated**

The decolonization era pulled the ideological carpet from under the political structure of Liberia's Black Republic. The realm of liberty extended from the New World to the whole African continent. There was no longer a need to establish asylum for the black race. Christianity and Western culture ceased to legitimize minority rule, as the ideal of majority rule in Africa was accepted by the international community. The Americo-

Liberians faced an additional problem. Unlike the British, French, and Belgian colonialists, they did not have a homeland to which they could withdraw. The way out of the problem was to adopt a different set of ideals.

During the 1950s, more than sixty years after Blyden's school of thought originally had been rejected, the leaders of the Republic turned back to it and invoked Blyden's ideal of integration.

President William

V.S. Tubman (governed 1944-1971) announced a new policy of unification. The colonial-like administrative structure in the hinterland was abolished. Suffrage was extended to the African-Liberian population. Some Americo-Liberians replaced their Western names with African ones, and studies on the history of the various ethnic groups were conducted. Tubman himself added traditional African titles to his presidential title. The trend of symbolic change continued during the administration of President William R. Tolbert (1971 - 1980). Tolbert traded his formal European attire and top hat for safari suits, named some streets in the capital, Monrovia, after renowned African chiefs, and even limited the use of the 133-year-old national motto: "The love of liberty brought us here."<sup>5</sup>

**Blyden's ideal of cultural integration was rejected mainly because the Liberian leadership was afraid that it would eventually lead to the loss of their hegemonic status.**

The reorientation of cultural symbols helped change the image of the Americo-Liberians in the eyes of the leaders of the new African states. Liberia was accepted into the mainstream of the new African countries, but new symbols changed little else on the home front. The Americo-Liberian leadership proved unready to take Blyden's ideals to their practical conclusion, namely a genuine integration of the two cultures which would lead inevitably to majority rule. Thus, a line was drawn which separated

### 34 IDEALS AND POLITICS IN SESQUICENTENNIAL LIBERIA

ideals from policy. An ideal picture of majority rule was used to convince critics at home and abroad that the Americo-Liberians complied with the new political order which decolonization created in Africa. Political power actually was used to maintain Americo-Liberian minority rule. Americo-Liberians hoped to keep their practical hegemony by trading some of their cultural symbols for African ones.

Their hope proved to be unfounded. The 12 April 1980 coup d'état put an end to the Americo-Liberian struggle for political control.

#### **Ideals and Politics in Contradiction**

After the coup, it seemed as if the artificial separation between ideals and politics, which had proved to be disastrous, would come to its end. The military regime declared that the coup was directed against an evil government and not against the Americo-Liberian people. It set up a new ideal of a united, integrated, and democratic nation. The new regime's policy initially seemed

**The 12 April 1980 coup d'état put an end to the Americo-Liberian struggle for political control.**

designed to achieve that ideal, as the new head of state, Samuel Kanyon Doe (1980-1990), stated that his purpose was to prepare the country for democratic, multi-party elections. The membership of the People's Redemption Council (PRC) government and the National Constitutional Commission was drawn from a wide geographical, political, religious, and social spectrum of Liberian society. However, it soon became obvious that the new regime did not have any real intention to realize its stated ideals. During the ten years of Samuel Doe's government, his policy openly contradicted the nondiscriminatory majority-rule ideal which he had set up. In the Second Republic, Americo-Liberian minority rule was replaced by a



Krahn ethnic minority rule.

During the civil war and after Doe's fall in September 1990, the contradiction between ideals and politics became even starker. In 1990, Charles Taylor, who led the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), declared his intention to start a revolution in Liberia that would put down all dictatorial regimes in West Africa.<sup>6</sup> Soon after his declaration, the NPFL and other armed factions were concentrating on criminal activities, looting the country and sending most Liberians with sizable resources scurrying into exile.<sup>7</sup>

One hundred and fifty years after Liberia declared its Independence, history shows that as long as political action was directed by ideals,

**In the Second Republic, Americo-Liberian rule was replaced by a Krahn ethnic minority rule.**

governments in Liberia demonstrated a great deal of political stability, even when the ideals changed. The separation between ideals and politics, which started in the mid-20th century decolonization era, led to growing political instability which finally brought about the division of the country into a mosaic of territories controlled by various warlords. Thirteen signed peace agreements failed to bring the civil war in Liberia to its end. Some of them, like those called Cotonou (July 1993) and Abuja (August 1995), provided a detailed outline for cease-fire control, disarmament, and a timetable for open and democratic elections. Yet, they all collapsed, not because of lack of detail, but because none of them was able to provide an answer to the question of how the various competing factions could live side by side, and work together in a common government to make the country work.<sup>8</sup>

Creating a new set of ideals which the various belligerent parties would commit themselves to might provide a way out of the vicious circle. It could provide a solid base on which a long-lasting political agreement could be

built.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Edward W. Blyden, *The Africa Problem and Other Discourses, Delivered in America in 1890*. (London: W.B. Whittingham, 1890), p. 2.

W. Blyden, *Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmont Blyden*. Hollis R. Lynch, ed. (New York: Humanities Press, 1971), pp. xxiii, xxxi.

<sup>3</sup>Monday Akpan, "Black Imperialism: Americo-Liberian Rule over the African Peoples of Liberia, 1841-1964," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. vol. 7, no. 2 (1973), pp. 217-236.

<sup>4</sup>J. Gus Liebenow, "Liberia: The Dissolution of Privilege, Part 1: Seeds of Discontent," *American Universities Field Staff Reports*. vol. 60, no. 39 (1980), p 2.

<sup>5</sup>ibid, pp. 4, 8.

<sup>6</sup>"Taylor Calls for Coups," *West Africa* (22-28 June 1992).

<sup>7</sup>Donald M. Snow, *Uncivil Wars: International Security and the New Internal Conflicts*. (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1996), p. 106.

<sup>8</sup>Roy Licklider, "How Civil Wars End: Questions and Methods," in Roy Licklider, ed., *Stopping the Killing*. (New York: New York University Press, 1993), p.4.

## **LIBERIA: A Country in Search of Identity and Unity**

**James S. Guseh**

After 150 years of independence, Liberia is still in search of identity and unity. This is attested to by the civil war that has been protracted in duration since 1989. Over 150,000 Liberians have been killed, and about 1.2 million have been displaced, out of a population of 2.5 million. The population of the nation's capital, Monrovia, which was 250,000 before the war, has quadrupled to a million because of displaced people. Displaced Liberians are also in other countries in Africa, North America, Europe and Asia. Most of the infrastructure, including roads, hospitals, and schools, has been destroyed. When stability returns Liberia, billions of dollars will be needed to rehabilitate the people and rebuild the infrastructure.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the causal factors of the war and how the lack of identity and unity have contributed to this state of affairs.<sup>1</sup> According to Gurr and Harff, there is no comprehensive and widely accepted theory of the causes and consequences of ethno-political conflict.<sup>2</sup> This paper employs a theoretical framework based on political-geographical analysis. Political geography focuses on the spatial expressions of political behavior, such as administrative systems, voter behavior, and conflicts over resources. The results, it is hoped, will provide new insights into achieving stability and unity.

### **Framework of Analysis**

Political geographers have identified two sets of forces that affect the existence of states: One, centrifugal forces, which are disunifying or divisive

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

forces that can cause deteriorating internal relationships and trend to break a state apart. Examples include interregional and interethnic rivalries as in Canada and the Biafra conflict of the 1960s in Nigeria, and racial strife as in South Africa.

The other, centripetal forces, are forces that tend to bind and unify a state. They consist of attitudes and cultures that unify a people and enhance support for the state. Two of the most significant centripetal forces shared by citizens of a state are nationalism and a commitment to the governmental system.

Nationalism involves loyalty and devotion to the state that represents a particular nation's distinctive cultural characteristics.<sup>3</sup> People display nationalism by supporting the creation and growth of the state that preserves and enhances the culture and attitudes of their nationality. For example, Brazil exhibits a strong national culture, wherein a single language and the domination of one religious faith constitute powerful unifying forces.<sup>4</sup>

A commitment to the governmental system is recognition that the governmental system constitutes the best option. This commitment may entail the concept of legitimacy, which is "a belief on the part of citizens that the current government represents a proper form of government and a willingness on the part of the citizens to accept the decrees of that government as legal and authoritative."<sup>5</sup> For example, a majority of American citizens regard their government as the proper set of institutions to govern the country and consequently accept the actions of that government as authoritative as long as its actions are in accordance with the Constitution. A commitment to the governmental system may also stem from the strong charismatic qualities of a leader-- a leader who personifies that state and who captures the population's imagination-- like Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in India.<sup>6</sup>

Identifying and measuring centripetal and centrifugal forces are

important. The degree of strength and cohesion of a state depends on the magnitude of these forces. When centripetal forces exceed centrifugal forces, a country is united and tends to bind together as in Japan. On the other hand, when centrifugal forces exceed centripetal forces, we have division, internal conflicts, and war.

### **The Case of Liberia**

Analyzing these forces in the case of Liberia is instructive. During a Thanksgiving and intercessory service held for Liberia in 1994 in Charlotte, North Carolina, a session focused on discussing centrifugal and centripetal forces in Liberia. Liberians and other guests in attendance were asked to identify these forces in the country. Centrifugal forces that were identified included tribalism, nepotism, Americo-Liberianism,<sup>7</sup> propaganda, and corruption. However, the participants could not identify any centripetal force in Liberia. The discussion showed that over the years in Liberia centrifugal forces have not been controlled and have exceeded centripetal forces, leading to the civil war.

As noted above, two of the most important centripetal or unifying forces are nationalism and a commitment to the governmental system. These forces are further analyzed in the case of Liberia to determine whether or not Liberians are nationalistic or committed to their governmental system.

With respect to nationalism, certain questions need to be addressed: Are Liberians loyal and devoted to their state for representing any distinctive cultural characteristics and attitudes? What, if any, are these distinctive cultural characteristics and attitudes? Nationalism in many West African states has developed as a result of the demand of African control of state power from colonialists. Since Liberia was never colonized, it has mistakenly found it unnecessary to develop a body of political principles or a nationalistic ideology which would appeal to the masses and secure their support. The ethnocracy of the Americo-Liberian group, who constitutes about 5% of the population and has been the dominant minority since

independence in 1847, seems to have been the main political issue in Liberia.

Moreover, although there are sixteen major indigenous languages in Liberia that are spoken by 95% of the population, none has been selected as the *lingua franca*.<sup>8</sup> English is the official language, the language adopted for use by the government for the conduct of business and publication of documents. Liberians with indigenous background usually tend to identify with the indigenous languages, while those with Americo-Liberian background tend to identify with English and the American cultures. It is therefore difficult to identify any distinctive cultural characteristics and attitudes that the state represents that would tend to unify the Liberian people and enhance support for the state. This lack of national identity or aspiration has tended to impede stability and unity. Thus, after 150 years of independence, Liberia is still in search of an identity and unity.

With respect to a commitment of the governmental system, the issue is whether or not a vast majority of Liberians accept their governmental system as the proper form of government. The current quest for political freedom around the world indicates that democracy may be internationally the proper form of government. Table one presents the annual ratings of political freedom in Liberia over the period 1960 to the present. These ratings are obtained by combining the degree of political rights and civil liberties in the country. Political rights are rights to participate meaningfully in the political process. In a democracy, this means the rights of all adults to vote and compete for public office, and for elected representatives of the people to have a decisive vote in public policies. Civil liberties are rights to free expression, to organize or demonstrate, and to freedom of religion, education, travel and other personal rights. Combining political rights and civil liberties yields a country's overall rating of freedom, which can be classified as free (democratic), partially free (partially democratic) or not free (undemocratic).<sup>9</sup> A free country has political rights and civil liberties as defined above. In a country that is not free, these rights and liberties do not exist. A partially free country is where these rights and liberties are

circumscribed and elections are usually characterized by fraud and intimidating violence as in the Liberian election of 1985.

**Table I. Annual Ratings of Freedom in Liberia: 1960-97**

Year	Status of Freedom	Year	Status of Freedom
1960	Not Free	1975	Partially Free
1961	Not Free	1976	Partially Free
1962	Not Free	1977	Partially Free
1963	Not Free	1978	Partially Free
1964	Not Free	1979	Partially Free
1965	Not Free	1980	Not Free
1966	Not Free	1981	Not Free
1967	Not Free	1982	Not Free
1968	Not Free	1983	Partially Free
1969	Not Free	1984	Partially Free
1970	Not Free	1985	Partially Free
1971	Not Free	1986	Partially Free
1972	Not Free	1987	Partially Free
1973	Not Free	1988	Partially Free
1974	Partially Free	1989-97*	Not Free

**Sources:** The author. R. Gastil, *Freedom in the World* (Westport: Greenwood, 1990).

\*The civil war period at the time of this writing.

As Table I shows, Liberia has never been a politically free or democratic country over the period 1960-97. Thus, according to the instrumental explanation of ethnic conflict, in such a situation the goal of the other ethnic groups is the pursuit of economic and political objectives.<sup>10</sup> The main political objective of the other ethnic groups or communal contenders in Liberia has been to share power in the central government. As a result, over the years, a majority of Liberians neither have appeared to regard their governmental system as legitimate nor have appeared to be committed to it. The failure to adhere to constitutional restraints and political guarantees can escalate into full-scale civil or revolutionary warfare,<sup>11</sup> as in Liberia. This

further attests to Liberia's lack of identity and unity.

## Conclusion

This study shows that the civil war in Liberia is the result of centrifugal and divisive forces exceeding centripetal or unifying forces. The two most important unifying forces in a state-- nationalism and a commitment to the governmental system-- are lacking in Liberia. Thus, Liberia appears to be in search of identity and unity.

For stability and unity to prevail, centripetal forces must exceed centrifugal forces. To realize this will require political and social reforms to establish democratic institutions and provide political rights and civil liberties. What is needed to implement these reforms is a leader who is committed to realizing these reforms, especially the adopting of democratic institutions and national aspirations. As Nodia notes, "all real democratic movements (save one in Russia proper) were at the same time nationalist."<sup>12</sup> Given that ethnic rivalries and the division between the indigenous and Americo-Liberian groups have exacerbated as a result of the war, the leader must be someone who can be trusted by these groups, a leader committed to promoting the interest of the country rather than that of his or her own or that of any particular group. Finding Liberians who possess these qualities is one of the major political challenges facing Liberians in their search for identity and unity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>For other explanations for the cause of the war, see, for example, Emmanuel Dolo, *Democracy Versus Dictatorship: The Quest for Freedom and Justice in Africa's Oldest Republic-- Liberia*. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996); Stephen Ellis, "Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence," *African Affairs* 94 (1995): 165-197. The present paper presents another theoretical framework.



<sup>2</sup>Ted R. Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

<sup>3</sup>Although nationalism can be negatively employed, such as attempting to achieve unity through the creation of negative images of other nation states, this paper does not employ or support that perspective. J.M. Rubenstein, *The Cultural Landscape: An Introduction to Human Geography*. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), p.260.

<sup>4</sup>H.J. de Blij and P.O. Mueller, *Geography: Regions and Concepts*, revised sixth edition. (New York: John Wiley, 1992).

<sup>5</sup>B.G. Peters, *American Public Policy: Promise and Performance*, second edition. (Chatham: Chatham House, 1986). In Eugene J. Kolb, *A Framework for Political Analysis*. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978), pp. 7-11.

<sup>6</sup>de Blij and Mueller, *Geography: Regions and Concepts*.

<sup>7</sup>The term "Americo-Liberian" refers to the small group that descended primarily from freed American slaves who, along with other settler groups, such as those of West Indian descent, have been the rulers of Liberia from the time of its founding in 1847 to 1980. This group constitutes about 5% of the Liberian population.

<sup>8</sup>The major ethnic language groups in Liberia are Bassa, Belle, Dahn (Gio), Dei, Gbandi, Gola, Grebo, Kissi, Kpelle, Krahn, Kru, Lorma, Mandingo, Mano (Ma), Mende, and Vai. A *lingua franca* is a language mutually understood and commonly used in trade by people of different languages.

<sup>9</sup>R. Gastil, *Freedom in the World*. (Westport: Greenwood, 1986).

<sup>10</sup>Gurr and Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ghia Nodia, "Nationalism and Democracy," In Larry Diamond and Marc F. Platter, eds., *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

## The Liberian Press: Quo Vadis?

Kenneth Y. Best

### From Whence We've Come

The Press in Liberia was rich and vibrant during the first 125 years of the country's founding. It was in 1826, barely four years after the landing of the pioneers at Providence Island, on January 7, 1822, that the country's first newspaper, the *Liberia Herald*, was established. A number of scholars, including Dr. Momo Rogers, a leading Liberian media expert, credit Charles L. Force, a freeborn printer who hailed from Rhode Island, as having been the founder of the *Herald*. According to these scholars, Force began printing the monthly on a hand-operated printing press that had been given to him by the Boston Auxiliary of the American Colonization Society (ACS). The ACS was the organization that initiated the repatriation of freed men and women from the United States to Liberia, in search of an asylum from racial oppression in the USA. Unfortunately, Force died only six months later of malaria.

But Dr. Carl Patrick Burrowes, one of Liberia's foremost media scholars, disputes this account. He contends that there is no record of the *Herald* having been published before 1830. According to Burrowes, it was in that year that the *Herald* was published, and its first editor and publisher was John B. Russwurm, the son of a white American trader and a Jamaican woman. Russwurm was educated at Bowdoin College, where he graduated in 1824. According to Burrowes, Russwurm's classmates included two of America's great men of letters, Nathaniel Hawthorne (*The Scarlet Letter*) and poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow ("A Psalm of Life").<sup>1</sup>

Whenever the newspaper's precise date of birth, the founding of the

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

*Herald* started a great journalistic tradition in Africa's first independent republic. But like all beginnings, it got off to a rough start. At one point in the early 1830s Russwurm published a notice for the colonial government about an insurrection by some of the settlers. They got angry and stormed the offices of the newspaper. This caused Russwurm to leave for the State of Maryland in southeastern Liberia, where he became the governor. He was succeeded at the *Herald* by Hilary Teage, who was to become one of the signers of Liberia's Declaration of Independence.

Teage, a Baptist minister, had emigrated to Liberia from Virginia in 1821, and had become a successful trader. After taking over the *Herald*, he bought it from the ACS and ran it successfully for many years, using it to foster the cause of Liberia's independence. Independence was eventually declared on July 26, 1847. Another prominent Liberian to head the *Herald* was Edward Wilmot Blyden, one of the young nation's best known statesmen and scholars of the 19th century.

Over a hundred other newspapers followed the *Herald*. Among them was *Africa's Luminary*, founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1839; the *Liberia Sentinel* (1854), founded by E.J. Roye, a successful businessman who also founded the *True Whig* in 1868. It was the *True Whig* that played a role in catapulting Roye to the presidency in 1870. *The Observer*, 1878-1883, was edited by A.B. King and others. *The Weekly Spy*, the nation's first weekly, appeared in 1898 and lasted for three years. *The Liberia Gazette*, the country's first government newspaper, was founded in 1892. It was followed by *The Liberian Official Gazette*, 1912.<sup>2</sup> The *African Agricultural World* appeared in 1903, run by Osborne Gray. It lasted until 1925. It was in the 1920s that the *Crozierville Observer* was born, published and edited by the veteran Liberian teacher, writer and pamphleteer, Albert Porte, along with George Stanfield Best and the Rev. J.I.A. Weeks.

Given the fact that Liberia became an independent nation nearly a half

century **before** the Berlin Conference, that is, before much of Africa was carved up as colonies by the colonial powers, there is no question that the circumstances leading to the establishment of the Liberian state were indeed different from those out of which emerged the newly independent African states, beginning in the late 1950s. But this does not explain why, unlike most other African countries, Liberia after independence did not attempt to squash freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

It took some 80 years for the authorities' intolerance to show its head, and even then, the new restrictions were partly prompted by the outbreak of World War I. In 1916, during

**In 1916, during the administration of President Daniel E. Howard (1912-1920), a series of controversial anti-press laws were passed by the Legislature.**

the administration of President Daniel E. Howard (1912-1920), a series of controversial anti-press laws were passed by the Legislature. They included a ban on material intending to weaken the government, increase instability or demean public officials. The Legislature passed resolutions on the previously nonexistent crimes, such as criminal libel and obscene libel. The new legislation also prohibited comments which questioned the government's behavior toward any of the country's tribes and thus threaten stability. Violators were subject to up to \$2000 fine, five years in jail and the loss of all their property.

These were soon expanded in the 1920s, during the administration of President Charles D.B. King (1920-1930), when criminal libel was made also applicable to the president and not only to foreign nationals. A "False Publications" law was also enacted, which outlawed any fabrication judged to be serious enough to undermine public life. In effect, this law took precedence over an important part of the previous libel law, which stated

that public officials must themselves demonstrate the untruthfulness and intent to harm of the offending comment. Instead, the new legislation obligated the defendant to prove his or her veracity.

But it seems that none of these laws were actually enforced against the press, and Liberian newspapers continued to be forthright and often scathing in their attacks on government. Ironically enough, it appears that no administration received more critical reporting and comment than the King administration. In addition to several pamphlets by Albert Porte in the 1920s hitting and hinting at some of President King's malpractices, including a sarcastic piece on his country estate in Careysburg, the *Crozierville Observer* and the *Bensonville Whip* gave relentless and persistent coverage to

the Report of the International Commission appointed by the League of Nations to study the charges of forced labor leveled against President C.D.B. King and his administration. It was largely due to widespread public

**(During the Edwin J. Barclay administration) many newspapers vehemently protested (the) violation of the Writ of Habeas Corpus, but no reprisals were taken against them.**

sentiment against King and his government and the dogged reporting on the crisis by these newspapers that eventually forced King and his vice president, Allen Yancy, to resign. The local and international sentiment against King was so strong that he could not muster the will to enforce any of the sedition laws that had been enacted up to that point.

The decade which saw King's successor, Edwin J. Barclay, through the presidency was, for the most part, uneventful as far as journalism was concerned. The Barclay administration accused a number of people of

sedition and threw them in jail for a long period without trial. Many newspapers vehemently protested this violation of the Writ of Habeas Corpus, but no reprisals were taken against them.

It was under Edwin Barclay's successor, President William V.S. Tubman, that the Liberian press, for the first time, began to experience very serious reversals, in the form of persistent and unrelenting assaults on press freedom, freedom of speech and even political pluralism. Ironically, it was also during the Tubman era that the nation crept into the modern age, with the training of many Liberians in new professional fields, including accounting, agriculture and forestry, electronics and telecommunications engineering, economics, international law and diplomacy, medicine, and even journalism.

The building of roads, schools, clinics and hospitals in many parts of the interior for the first time, and the installation of telecommunication facilities and improved electricity, particularly in urban Liberia, were among the achievements of

the Tubman era. For the first time also, the country began to exploit its vast iron ore deposits, with concessions agreements granted to the Liberian Mining Company (LMC) in Bomi Hills (later named Tubmanburg) and LAMCO (the Liberian American Swedish Mining Company) in Nimba County.

**It was under ... President William V. S. Tubman that the Liberian press ... began to experience very serious reversals ... and unrelenting assaults on press freedom, freedom of speech and even political pluralism.**

But Tubman was no democrat. He brooked no dissent from or criticism of, his policies and programs, in the media or anywhere else.

Accordingly, in 1946, after scarcely three years in office, he had the House of Representatives arrest and imprison Albert Porte, after he had published a pamphlet critical of the concession agreement granted to LMC. Mr. Porte had called the agreement a "give away" and urged government to renegotiate it in order to obtain a little more from the concessionaires for the country. The pamphleteer served another term in jail under Tubman, and on several occasions lost his job as a public school teacher, because of one disagreement or the other between himself and the government. That was only the beginning.

But Tubman had a suspecting and indignant eye not simply on press freedom, but free speech as well. In addition to having the Legislature routinely reenact the Emergency Powers Act initiated by the Barclay administration in 1942, the Tubman administration in 1948 put through the Legislature a criminal malevolence law, restricting freedom of expression. The law, according to Burrowes, barred the writing and circulating of pseudonymous materials at night which slandered or scandalized "any government official or private citizen." Anyone found guilty of this crime was fined \$1,000, in addition to five years in prison.

In 1950, the government arrested another journalist, C. Frederick Taylor, the highly respected editor and publisher of the *African Nationalist*, because he wrote articles critical of Tubman's bid for a second term. Mr. Taylor was to remain in prison for 21 years, the longest prison term in the history of African journalism.

Tubman's next move was against political pluralism. That indeed had been one of Taylor's problems with Tubman. The editor had earlier criticized the intimidating tactics employed by Tubman's ruling True Whig Party against the Reformation Party, headed by D. Twe, which was preparing to contest the ensuing 1951 elections. The TWP did everything to harass and frustrate the Reformation Party, and eventually ended up arresting and imprisoning many of its followers on sedition charges. Mr.



Two fled into exile in Sierra Leone, where he was to remain until his death a few years later. Tubman and his TWP therefore went to the polls in 1951 unopposed. It was only his first attempt at reelection, and he could not stand to see anyone opposing him. It would not be his last.

At the time of Taylor's arrest, the country's only surviving independent newspaper was *The Friend*, published by Samuel T.A. Richards. *The Friend*, too, raised serious questions about Tubman's bid for successive terms in office. The TWP promptly raised up a succession of its stalwarts to attack *The Friend* and its editor, through articles in the *Daily Listener*. The *Listener* was run by a TWP stalwart, Charles C. Dennis, and received an annual subsidy from the party. Among the writers in this series of attacks on *The Friend* was the Attorney General, C. Abayomi Cassell, who sent Richards an ominous message titled, "Whom the Gods Wish to Destroy . . ." The following night, thugs stormed Mr. Richards' press on Randall Street and broke up his machines. That is how *The Friend* went out of business.

Tubman and the TWP then embarked upon a two-pronged assault on the next challenge to his presidency. In preparation for the 1955 elections, former President Edwin Barclay and several

**(The 1955 incident) marked the end of multi-party politics in Liberia-- a giant step backward. That year also marked the end of independent journalism and the free press in the country.**

prominent politicians, including S. David Coleman, Tubman's first Secretary of the Interior, formed the Independent True Whig Party. They also established a party organ, a powerful and well-written newspaper called *The Independent*. Edited by Mrs. Bertha Corbin and coedited by a talented young writer, S. Tuan Wreh, the newspaper was fearless and forthright in

its attacks on the Tubman administration. In 1954 Wreh published an article titled, "Inside Politics: Why You Should Not Vote for Tubman." Wreh was immediately charged with contempt by the House of Representatives, found guilty and sentenced to six months in prison. Many people saw him stripped to his underwear and paraded in downtown Monrovia, cleaning streets and toilets with his bare hands. Tubman later released him due to ill health.

A short while after that, the paper's editor, Mrs. Corbin, a naturalized Liberian from the USA, was hauled before a joint session of the Legislature following *The Independent's* publication of an article titled, "Tubman's Monstrous Claw." Mrs. Corbin pleaded that the article had been placed in the paper by unknown persons while the paper was with the printer. But the TWP had had enough of the free press. She was summarily deported to the United States.

The final blow to the Independent True Whig Party came after it was accused of masterminding a plot to assassinate President Tubman, following a shooting incident at the Executive Pavilion on June 22, 1955. The party was immediately banned, hundreds of its followers arrested, given a *nut parade* (marching stark naked) through the streets of Monrovia, and imprisoned. Meanwhile, David Coleman and his son John, a young civil engineer, were killed while allegedly trying to escape through a farm to Sierra Leone. Of course, during the election that followed, Tubman and his True Whig Party were returned to office unopposed.

That marked the end of multi-party politics in Liberia-- a giant step **backward**. That year, 1955, also marked the end of independent journalism and the free press in the country. Such was Tubman's gift to Liberia when she turned 108 years old!

William R. Tolbert, who succeeded Tubman upon his death in July 1971, immediately began liberalizing the political atmosphere. Barely three weeks later, in August, Tolbert announced in Zorzor, Lofa County, that he

wanted "to know what the people are thinking, so that I may tailor my policies to suit them." The Liberian people erupted with joy. At last, freedom of speech and of the press had been reborn! People immediately started speaking up, and one of the first things they did was to begin criticizing Tubman in his grave. Even top officials who few months earlier had been singing his praises, were now hitting at him, speaking of how he corrupted the Liberian nation, how he squandered the resources of the country on entertainment and gifts to cronies, and how he had failed to bring real development to the people and the country. Even the Legislators, who voted over a million dollars each year for Tubman's yacht, were now saying it was "a waste"--all because Tolbert, the new president, preferred flying to sailing. So the yacht was sold.

But when *The Revelation*, an independent political, social, economic and cultural monthly produced by a group of university students, started criticizing some of the policies of the Tolbert government, the new president suffered a change of heart. All four editors were arrested at one point in 1975, charged with contempt and tried by the Supreme Court of Liberia, found guilty and fined \$17,000! It was the highest fine in the history of Liberian journalism, imposed on mere students, most of them barely 20. But their parents and relatives had to cough up the money before they could be released from jail. Undaunted and reinvigorated, the young editors applied to the Minister of Commerce, William E. Dennis, for a license to continue their publication. But the youthful Dennis, himself barely 30, denied them a license, forcing them out of business. From that point on, there was not a single independent newspaper left in the country! The Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL), led by G. Baccus Matthews, and the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA), led by Togba Nah Tipoteh, each published an organ of its own.

But by that time it had become too late to stop the Liberian people. They continued voicing their views on every subject. The political movements took off where the media could not. The most powerful media

in the country were owned and operated by the government-- the Liberian Broadcasting Corporation, which controlled radio and TV. A third radio station, ELWA, belonging to the evangelical Sudan Interior Mission, confined itself mainly to religious programs, though it ran a highly professional local and international news program. But it stayed clear of politics. Thus in 1975, 20 years after the forced demise of *The Friend*, Liberia could not boast of a single independent medium of communication.

Only a coup d'état, staged by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe and 16 other noncommissioned officers on April 12, 1980, would end the TWP hegemony. Independent journalism was reborn in 1981 with the appearance of the *Daily Observer*; in 1984, *Footprints Today* and *Sun Times*, and the *Catholic Herald* sometime later. A year later, 1985, the country would hold its first multiparty presidential and general elections in more than 40 years. The last had been held in 1943, when Tubman was elected the first time--little did Barclay, the anointing one, and the rest of the people know that Tubman's election was for life.

**Like an evil genius, (Samuel Doe) tried with his own hands to tear apart the independent press he had helped make possible.**

But the same Samuel Doe who made the rebirth of independent journalism and multi-party elections possible was the man who led the country through 10 years of terror. In the process, he brutally destroyed not only the positive things he had helped reintroduce, but by stubbornly and resolutely clinging to power following the outbreak of the Civil War even after 98 percent of his captains had abandoned his political sinking ship, Doe contributed to the destruction of what he had not built-- the fragile infrastructure he met in 1980.

Like an evil genius, the master sergeant tried with his own hands to tear apart the independent press he had helped make possible. He ordered the *Daily Observer* shut down five times, thrice imprisoned its staff and twice tried to burn it down. He shut down the *Sun Times* and *Footprints*, imprisoned their editors, too, had some of them whipped and others banished to Belle Yallah, the concentration camp in the middle of the dense Lofa forest. He ordered the brutal execution, by bayonet, of a state television reporter, Charles Gbeyon. Doe also shut down the Catholic radio station ELCM.

In addition to all that, he rigged the elections of 1985, with the complicity of his elections commissioner, Emmet Harmon. All of these atrocities and more-- including the massacre of thousands of people, especially from Nimba County-- took place over a 10-year period. To crown it all off, Doe and his cronies squandered hundreds of millions of dollars in locally generated revenues and foreign aid, especially the \$750 million received from the United States, mostly in grants and some in loans. This was more money than the "mother country" had offered to all Liberia's previous administrations combined-- viz., from J.J. Roberts, the first president, to W.R. Tolbert, the last before the coup.

The stage had thus been set for something even more terrible to happen. And happen it did on December 24, 1989, when Charles Taylor took up arms against Samuel Doe, in Taylor's own words, "to get the tyrant off the backs of the Liberian people." The people silently welcomed that move, despite the fact that they knew that they were dealing with a man who had broken jail in the United States where he was awaiting extradition hearings. Doe wanted him back in Liberia on embezzlement charges. But at that point, the Liberian people were desperate. Anyone could be better than Doe, they thought.

Little did they know that Taylor was equally stubborn and demonic: he presided over the massacre of tens of thousands of people, and because

of his unwillingness to share power, prolonged the Civil War a full six years after Doe had been captured and killed-- in September 1990. On April 6, 1996, just as peace was finally returning, Taylor launched a renewed attack on Monrovia, displacing the city's entire population, which hitherto had stoically braved the war and stayed. This time, they had to run for their lives, many clinging on to rusty bars on the decks of tattered cargo boats, going from port to port along the West African coast, only to be rejected and sent haplessly back to sea-- thousands of men, women and children, hungry, humiliated and hopeless.

**(Doe) shut down the *Daily Observer* five times, thrice imprisoned its staff and twice tried to burn it down. He shut down the *Sun Times* and *Footprints*, imprisoned their editors, too, had some of them whipped and others banished to Belleh Yallah, a concentration camp in the dense Lofa Forest.**

Nor was the media spared during the April 6 incident. Several newspapers were gutted by fire and burnt to the ground, others looted, radio stations ransacked, and every building that could be reached was pillaged and/or destroyed. Only Taylor's radio station remained in operation. Thanks to his prolonged intransigence, other "warlords" emerged, who have been equally as selfish, brutal and ruthless, with utterly no regard for the well-being or even the lives of the people. And here, it is tragic and painful to admit that among them is a fellow media professional, Alhaji Kromah. His troops allegedly massacred thousands in Lofa and Bomi Counties and elsewhere and burned down hundreds of villages, leaving tens of thousands more destitute, hungry and homeless.

What has happened to Liberia over the past seven years is not only shocking but inexplicable, coming as it has from a people who once prided themselves as belonging to Africa's oldest independent republic. By our own senseless acts of selfishness and fratricide, we have destroyed our country and caused the collapse of the Liberian state.

### **What Then Shall We Say To These Things?**

Selfishness-- that is the bottom line of Africa's problems and Liberia's in particular. Our forefathers set a great example of free speech and free press and handed it down to us, their posterity; and somehow, because of our own selfishness, we lost it. It doesn't mean that our forefathers did not make mistakes. Their greatest mistake was their failure to incorporate their indigenous brothers and sisters into the body politic, and create a new nation in which all could share in all the country had to offer, and all could contribute to the making of a synthesis that would stand the test of time.

But even as we criticize them for that incidence of shortsightedness, even selfishness, we have to admit that within their limited circle, they did try to live up to the democratic ideals which they caused to be enshrined in the constitution they adopted 150 years ago. They practiced free speech, free press and free association, and went to the polls every two years to elect their leaders and representatives in a reasonably free and fair contest. Another mistake that was made was to keep one party in power too long-- the True Whig Party. The time came for a change in 1923, but the elections were so badly rigged that they made the Guinness Book of Records! It came again in 1943 when Edwin Barclay was going out. But in typical True Whig Party tradition-- a tradition that surely proved politically suicidal-- and Barclay came to realize this only too late-- it was the party caucus which had to decide who the next president of Liberia would be. And who was the king maker? The president, as always-- Barclay. He chose Tubman, only to realize when it was too late that the man had absolutely no appreciation whatsoever for the democratic ideals which for over nearly a century had

been faithfully and carefully handed down by the forefathers.

We had another chance under Tolbert, but we blew that, too. Here was the ripe time to bring the indigenous majority into the body politic, by giving all the vote, fairly and

squarely. But no. The TWP had to protect and sustain itself, even to the point where, at over 125 years old as the first "democracy" in Africa, they were still frowning on free speech and free press. Christians all-- yet they forgot Christ's sobering admonition that "He who seeks his life shall lose it; but he who loses his life for my sake shall find it." This was the 1970s, when all Africa, with few exceptions, was now free. What on earth were the Liberians waiting for to free their own people from the oligarchic stranglehold on the nation's wealth and power?

**What on earth were the Liberians waiting for to free their own people from the oligarchic stranglehold on the nation's wealth and power?**

Could the press have saved the situation? Maybe. And yet, the free press could bark all day and all year, but if the men and women at the top remain stubborn and selfish, and if the people in the middle and at the bottom remain apathetic and indifferent, then things would remain the same until an explosion comes. Things-- and people-- did remain the same and, unfortunately under Tubman and under Tolbert, there was no free press; therefore the explosion came in 1980.

The press barked from 1981 to 1990, but again, not only was the press harassed almost out of existence, but we found that we were dealing with the same people-- the stubborn and selfish at the top, and the apathetic and indifferent in the middle and at the bottom. Whenever a newspaper was closed, the people would fold their hands; whenever a radio station was closed, the people would fold their hands; whenever a media house was set



afire, the people would fold their hands; whenever a journalist went to jail, the people folded their hands. They also folded their hands when Charles Gbeyon was murdered.

### **To Restore the People's Freedom**

A great writer has said that "Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it." I have deemed it necessary to look back before

**A great writer has said that "Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it."**

looking forward precisely to avoid the temptation of ignoring our history. We cannot, we must not ignore the things, the attitudes, the shortcomings, the sins, which brought us to where we are now. Because if we do, we shall, ten years from now or sooner be right back to where we are now. Liberia, and by extension, Africa, has lost so much time over the past four decades that we cannot afford to go even one step backward again. The time has come for us to buckle up and move forward. While we squandered the past four decades, other nations in Asia, many of them much smaller and far less endowed than ours, have moved so rapidly ahead that they are now considered industrialized nations. I'm afraid that if we do not make a conscious and determined effort to get serious and move forward, everyone will soon write us off as a forgotten and hopeless people, who seem to be irredeemable. We must now start now to redeem ourselves. Already, some people in the West are suggesting the recolonization of Africa. We cannot, must not permit that to happen. The ball is in our court. Will we play it? Or will we pussyfoot and plunder our time and resources again?

No, we cannot afford to do that! As journalists we must begin to rebuild the press in Africa, in Liberia, first by taking care of the basic needs. These are, **training**, so that our people become truly professional. In this

way, no one-- not the people at the top, in the middle or at the bottom-- will have anything adverse to say about us. The Liberian press must not be accused of being too sensational, unfair or nonfactual. We must be sure of our facts, we must be balanced in our reporting, and we must be fair to all. It is true that sensational papers sell, but they are not sustainable. Soon, the people will get to know the difference, and one could lose his credibility in sensationalism. When one loses his credibility, one is finished.

**If the press must be free, it must be independent-- that means it must be self-reliant and self supporting. A dependent press is not a free press. . . . The Liberian press must strive to be an ethical press. . . .**

Training must include not only journalism but management as well. It is important for the media to have good managers, because it is only through proper management that progress can be made. Good management knows how to cut costs, to save, to be just and fair to the staff so that the staff can stick with the media organization through thick and thin. Good management knows how to look ahead and plan, so that no future takes us by surprise.

We need **capital**. We can obtain some of this capital by going directly to the people, enabling them to have a share in what we are doing, so that they may feel a part of the enterprise. We must enlist the professional expertise of the financial people in our communities, to help us with financial advice. We must never assume that we know it all. A journalist is not necessarily a good businessman. He or she may be an excellent writer, but not good at financial matters. We must seek help when and where we need it. It is important to keep the financial ship of state

floating on an even keel, so that we are not taken by surprises, so that we look ahead to growth, development and hopefully, prosperity. If the press must be free, it must be independent--that means it must be self-reliant and self supporting. A dependent press is not a free press, for the ageless dictum is still true: "He who pays the piper calls the tune."

The Liberian press must strive to be an **ethical press**. **Ethics must be our watchword**. It is wrong to take money or any form of a gift for writing a story, feature or editorial, or whatever. That is why it is important for all media managements to strive for efficiency and financial solvency, so that we remain always able to pay our people, and pay them well, so as to obviate the temptation to accept people's gifts. In order to play the role we are called to play in

society, the press  
m u s t        b e

incorruptible. How  
else can we be  
watchdogs, if we,  
too, are wolves of  
money, sex and  
scandal? As media

people, every aspect

of our behavior must be exemplary. **THAT, MY FRIENDS, IS THE ONLY WAY PEOPLE WILL TAKE US SERIOUSLY.**

**The press must strive for efficiency  
and financial solvency. . . . How  
else can we be watchdogs, if we,  
too, are wolves of money, sex and  
scandal?**

Having just come out of war, the media should play a forthright and constructive role in **reconciling the country**. Those who committed atrocities against the people should confess their misdeeds and wickedness and ask forgiveness. The press should encourage the culprits to come forward and confess. They should be sincere in their confessions, by renouncing their selfishness and wickedness and become new men and women again, ready to join in the struggle to rebuild the country they helped destroy. The press should then go on to prepare the population to develop

a forgiving heart, so that the nation may move on to **reconstruction and development**.

But, at the same time we are promoting reconciliation and reconstruction, the media must help **mobilize our people to protect and defend their rights, as well as to exercise their responsibilities in society, so that no one will ever take advantage of them again**. I consider this **the greatest challenge of the media: to help prepare the people never to take anything for granted, to stand up and speak or write immediately when they detect something amiss, lest the subtle but determined and ruthless hand of dictatorship and despotism strike again**. This time, I assure you, if we do nothing, it will be fatal. That will be the very end of Liberia. For not many countries can endure more than once what we have gone through during these Seven Years of Apocalypse. This is the way the media help **build a democracy**. The people must be taught and learn how to speak out, speak out, speak out for their rights and the rights of others.

I am convinced that apathy is one of the problems that have led us to where we are now as a nation. This was Mr. Albert Porte's one complaint about the Liberian people. Indeed, Mr. Porte tried for nearly 60 years--from the mid 1920s when he was a very young man to 1986 when he died--to help save Liberia. He walked, he talked, lectured, he wrote, he got dismissed, he went to jail, he suffered humiliation-- he and his wife and 11 children. They all were part of that sacrifice. Even Samuel Doe, who in 1980 hailed Albert Porte as the "Father of the Revolution," by the time Doe had tasted enough power, once damned Mr. Porte out and threatened to have him arrested the next time he set his foot on the Executive Mansion grounds. But Mr. Porte never gave up. He persevered. He did all those things until the day he died.

Like Albert Porte, the media must persevere in the struggle to **remain always in the vanguard of truth and justice**. We must always strive to know and to do the right thing, so that we may play a leadership

role. If all else fails society, it should not be the media. We are supposed to be among the enlightened in society, because we are among those who should inform, educate, entertain and persuade, if possible. It is important, therefore, for us to be seen to be fair, just and moral, so that by our example, others may be the same way. Our world today is so full of evil and wrong doers that it is dying for good examples. Let our media people be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

The Liberian media should become involved in **development**. I do not mean we should be the mouthpiece of the government. Far from it, the newspaper, radio and TV organizations can be catalysts in development by developing and following various themes that mean something to the people-- such as improved farming methods, better health care, better nutrition, stimulating creativity among the population, by encouraging letter writing, feature writing, poetry contributions, essays, even books. The media should be interested in sanitation, in the environment, and help protect all these things. The media should find ways to help promote **literacy**, and crusade relentlessly and vigorously for *ALL LIBERIANS TO BECOME LITERATE WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS*.

There are some journalists in a number of advanced countries that argue against this kind of journalism. They contend that the role of the press is simply to present the facts. But in our context, facts alone are not enough. People need to know where to go for what kind of help; they need to know that the same old ways of doing things may keep us continually backward; they need help in looking and moving ahead. There are also people, including men, women and children, with very special kinds of needs-- for example destitution, the need to go to school, to seek special medical attention. The media ought to be open to those people so that society may know of their needs. There are thousands of people willing and eager to help, only if they knew of specific cases where they could reach out and touch somebody in need.

We must **be our brothers' and our sisters' keeper**. When one of us is affected, all of us are affected, and that should be so. Too often journalists and media organizations tend to be selfish and refrain from even reporting on the plight of a colleague. It is when the enemy sees us divided that he can better make plans to devour us. I speak not only of internal solidarity--sharing and caring for one another within the country; but external as well. When a journalist is in trouble anywhere in the world, we should be there with him or her, writing about it, screaming about it. There are many organizations of journalists around the world, such as the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Reporters Without Borders, the World Press Freedom Committee, the International Press Institute, Freedom House, the Freedom Forum, international women's media groups, etc., which have reached out and are reaching out to African and Liberian journalists. It's time we start giving back by showing our compassion, our concern, our solidarity, by writing letters to the authorities concerned, or to influential or powerful people or groups that may be in a position to help.

One way to keep in tune with the world is through **the Internet**. We should set a goal for all Liberian journalists to become computer literate by the year 2000, and by the year 2005, all of us should be online-- and not just us but our news organs. It is possible for us to link up with organizations that can give us some reciprocal service for placing our organizations online, or paying us something in return. Being online will not only enable us to keep in touch with our colleagues worldwide; it will also enable us to be better informed, so that we may better help our people and our societies to catch up with rapidly advancing civilizations.

Finally, I cannot overemphasize the need for journalists to **help promote more freedom, more democracy, more free market economy-- to help teach our people to be competitive**. It is in promoting more freedom and democracy and more economic freedom that will keep our governments accountable and transparent and hopefully more efficient and productive.

How we execute our sacred responsibility as the press will determine the extent to which and the pace by which we shall be able to catch up as a nation and redeem all the losses we have sustained over the past 150 years. In charting a new and hopefully more progressive course, let us remember that the great United States is only 71 years older than Liberia. But more challengingly, many of the Asian countries, such as South Korea and Singapore, were even less developed than we were in the 1960s. Let us tell ourselves that if they can do it in less than a quarter century, so can we, so that we do not need another 150 years to catch up.

I remain convinced that we Liberians can redeem Liberia within less than a generation. There are only four things that are required: The first is **FREEDOM**-- let no one be permitted ever again to take it away! We must defend, even with our very lives, our freedom to speak, to write, to publish, to broadcast, to associate, to vote and to elect our leaders and representatives. These freedoms are inviolable and cannot, must not be compromised!

The second is **JUSTICE**--making sure that everyone, including our individual selves, is accountable for his or her actions; that all the people have an equal access to food, safe water, shelter and sanitation, education, health care and jobs-- in short, the opportunity to fulfill oneself to the limits of his capacity; and the franchise to elect their leaders and participate in the great decisions affecting their lives and destiny.

The third is **VISION**-- the ability to see clearly ahead and know where we ought to be going and how to get there.

And the fourth, **SACRIFICE AND HARD WORK**-- knowing that when one has a goal-- and Liberians do have a goal: to reconcile and rebuild their country and make it modern and prosperous, for all the people-- one realizes that it is no longer business as usual. Sacrifices must be made, sweat must come down our brows and determination fill our eyes and sinews.

When this happens, we shall be on our way.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Rogers has produced a page from the June 26, 1826, issue of the *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, in which the editors acknowledge, with joy, receipt of the first issue of the *Liberia Herald*. Reprinted on the page are some advertisements carried in that issue of the *Herald*.

<sup>2</sup>Momo K. Rogers, "Liberian Journalism, 1826-1980: A Descriptive History." Ph.D. Dissertation. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1987.



## **Problems and Conflicts in Liberian Education: A Road to National Peace**

**Bertha Baker Azango**

This sesquicentennial year of Liberia's independence (1847-1997) provides an opportunity for serious reflection on development over the last 150 years. The present seven-year civil war brings into sharp focus demands for such analysis. This article, therefore, aims to review Liberian Education in order to determine what impact it had on the present national crisis and what lessons could be learned in shaping education in the future.

It is generally believed that all groups migrated from outside the boundary of what is now Liberia, however the heterogeneity of the Liberian society was not utilized in establishing and molding social, political and economic institutions. The fact that there are 17 ethnic groups, including the descendants of the "immigrants," is well known; but the history, social structures and cultures of most of these groups were never a part of Liberian education. The first 16 groups to arrive came from the savannah region of Africa sometime between the 16th and 18th centuries. According to legend, those trans-African immigrants who settled in the northern and western regions, came to escape either the anarchy resulting from the dissolution of the ancient African kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhay; the Arab raid on sub-Saharan communities or in search of water as the Sahara Desert expanded. The trans-African groups that settled in the southern and eastern regions came in search of salt, spices, gold, ivory and other commodities. The school history program, however, is entirely focused on the trans-Atlantic immigrants who migrated from across the Atlantic Ocean-- the United States of America and the Caribbean in search of a homeland to eradicate the scars inflicted by slavery. There was an 18th immigrant group which eventually became absorbed into the latter. This constituted of people

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

from west and central Africa who were taken off slave-ships on the high seas in order to enforce the abolition of slavery in the 19th century. The origin of this group is also excluded from the history. It is essential that the various groups understand they are all descendants of immigrants who had a common African heritage. A decisive effort should have been made to build a nation out of this diversity by scrutinizing, studying and sifting the various cultures with a view to adopt those qualities which could benefit the development of an African nation-state.

The trans-African schools are consistently denigrated and held in low esteem. On closer inspection, one will find that education of children in these schools (guild-like societies in the southeast, *poro* and *sande* in the northwest) is methodically organized. Although the length and procedure vary from group to group, the aims and outcome are basically the same: Originally, children entered the phased program about age eight and completed during adolescence. The curriculum includes the teaching of family and community values, such as respect for elders and authority, social rules and conduct, the history and traditions of their respective ethnic group, the geography of their environment and its importance to life; vocational training (fishery, hunting, farming, midwifery and domestic training for girls, crafts, the use of herb as poisons and medicines) and fertility rites. The course of study ends in vigorous tests and graduation or the rite of passage. Certainly, the national education system could have benefited from some of these principles and contents (curricula). Instead, the term "bush school," used to refer to the traditional system, carries a stigma which the "civilized" did not want to be identified with.

In the 1960s, the traditional school was mandated by the government to reduce the length of training to the three-month summer vacation because children were often pulled out of westernized schools to attend the traditional school and this greatly affected enrollment in these schools. The trans-Africans resented this and other external intrusion. Thus, for a long time they refused to send their children to the missionary schools established

in their areas. Students had to be recruited through conscription under government orders by paramount and clan chiefs.

The trans-Atlantic immigrants were not the only ones to despise and reject the African cultures. Missionaries established religious schools among the trans-Africans

when the government lacked funds (and often interest). Most of them were complacent because they had their own agenda. Their objectives were to "Christianize and civilize" Africans.

**(Some missionaries) created separate communities for their converts outside African villages in order to prevent contamination by their "heathen" families. African dress and languages were prohibited in their schools.**

They created separate

communities for their converts outside African villages in order to prevent contamination by their "heathen" families. African dress and languages were prohibited in their schools. All African languages were referred to as "dialects," implying some inferiority to European languages. Liberian educators later came to understand, however, that a dialect is merely a local variation of a language and that all languages have such variations. Consequently, these various *lingua franca* are all languages.

Another prejudice instilled by the missionaries was the scorn of African religion as satanic. They did not understand its spirituality or accept the idea that it is monotheistic, as demonstrated by the singular noun used to refer to the Supreme Being-- *Nyesua* --by the Greboes and Krus, *Glapor* by the Bassas, *Kamba* by the Vais and Lormas and so on. The missionaries regarded the African religion as ancestral worship, not realizing that the high priests and other officials who use ceremonial masks represent the spirits of their ancestors and, like western religious statues and pictures, these spirits

(equivalent to saints) are continuously solicited to make intercession to the Divine Creator on behalf of the living. Hence, they referred to these masks and their wearers as "bush devils" or "country devils." This stereotyping and denigration of the local culture found its way into books and other printed materials.

Monopoly of political and economic power by the trans-Atlantic immigrants and their intransigence in denying the trans-African immigrants equal opportunities, provided a significant dimension to the ethnic conflict. The trans-Atlantic immigrants saw themselves as a "civilized light" in the dark continent. Thus, to prevent their leadership role from eroding or their culture eclipsed through assimilation, they considered it necessary to suppress the trans-African immigrants who out-numbered them tenfold. The trans-African immigrants, on the other hand, considered themselves lords of the soil and therefore

had inherent right to leadership.

Some far-sighted individuals foresaw the explosive danger such ethnic divide could have on nation-building and tried to find solutions. The

19th century

educator and writer, Edward W. Blyden was a leading champion in this respect, as reflected in his writings. A few others used intermarriage. However, these were isolated efforts, insufficient to make a serious impact on the inflexible status quo. The enmity still persists, having been transmitted from generation to generation by all groups and thus is deeply imbedded in the perception of their children. The extent of this is reflected in the organization of political parties on school campuses in Liberia today and emotional sentiments in Liberian communities abroad, which are sharply

**Studies in the 1980s showed that only 40% of children who entered elementary school reached grade three and only 25% completed the sixth grade.**

divided along ethnic lines (trans-Atlantic vs. trans-African).

The use of Liberian languages in the beginning grades of school, in areas where English is not widely spoken, is an important transitional tool for introducing English to non-English-speaking pupils. However, this has not been the official policy of the Ministry of Education and is sometimes even frowned upon. Of course, a few teachers who studied in the United States under the Monrovia Consolidated School Agreement, learned to teach English as a second language, despite the fact that it is less needed in Monrovia than in other areas of the country. The neglect of this important educational principle had a disastrous effect on the education system. It resulted in very high rates of repetition and dropout. Studies in the 1980s showed that only 40% of children who entered elementary school reached grade three and only 25% completed the sixth grade. Although there were other factors which also contributed to the high wastage rate, such as the poor quality of teachers and lack of adequate teaching materials, the impact of language in understanding reading and other school subjects can not be underestimated.

Against this backdrop, it is understandable why the coup of 1980 and the civil war started in 1989 were so brutal, full of bitterness and uncompromising. The instigators capitalized on group emotions and the warlords used ethnic rivalries to win their rebel followers. Some faction leaders and their clandestine supporters see the struggle not as an issue of right or wrong, nor the harm the civil war continues to inflict on the nation, but one of political survival, protection of their ethnic identity and/or personal enrichment. Consequently, the establishment of stable and durable peace will be a Herculean task. It will require sincere and committed effort to look at the problem from a broad and realistic prospective and establish confidence in all groups. Education will have a crucial role in this national healing. Goals and procedures must be expanded to integrate the various cultures, the rural and urban sectors into a national fabric of mutual respect, trust, reconciliation, national consciousness, patriotism and peaceful

coexistence.

The formal school system, like other institutions, is designed on the American pattern. In 1961 it was reorganized to provide for four levels; reforms in the 1970s redefined their aims as follows:

- The pre-primary, consisting of kindergarten (for ages 4-5) and pre-grade for school age children without adequate command of English. It is estimated that more than 80% of students begin in pre-grade, despite its irrelevance to their needs. About 40% drop out before reaching grade one.
- The six-year elementary level has a large number of older students who come to school late and are placed in the same classroom with younger ones. This produces disciplinary problems like bullying as well as a high rate of dropout caused by teenage pregnancy and the need for self-supporting adolescents to seek jobs. Only about 25% of the first-graders reach grade 6. Such wastage has a bearing on the national literacy rate, which in 1981 was estimated to be 24%.
- The secondary level has two stages: (a) the junior high school (grades 7-9), is designed to provide general education and career identification through vocational exploration. The latter objective has not been effectively pursued because most schools lack adequate space, instructional materials and teachers. (b) The senior high school (grades 10-12) provides for career selection by offering a three-prong program: academic, commercial and vocational. Unfortunately, most schools concentrate only on the academic because they lack the necessary workshops, equipment, laboratories, materials and teachers. In 1985 it was estimated that only 52% of the Grade 7 cohort reached Grade 12 and about 45% graduated. Also at this level are the vocational training schools such as-- Booker Washington Institute and the Liberian-Swedish Vocational Training Center which

together carry programs in agriculture, home economics, wood trades, commercial, mechanical and electrical skills.

- The tertiary level, which aims to train professionals, provides two-year and above programs. It includes the Zorzor and Kakata Teacher Training Institutes for preparing elementary and junior high school teachers; the Rural Development Institute at Cuttington University College which gives a two-year associate degree in agriculture for extension service; the Tubman National Institute of Medical Arts (TNIMA) which trains nurses and para-medics; a number of theological institutes, the W.V.S. Tubman College of Technology in Harper, which offers technician training in engineering; Cuttington University College and the University of Liberia together offer degrees in education, social sciences and humanities, economics, public administration, law, theology, agriculture, science, engineering, forestry, medicine and nursing. There is no institution for training vocational teachers.

Although the percentage of the national budget allocated to the Ministry of Education grew steadily from 11% (\$12.1m ) in

**Such wastage has a bearing on the national literacy rate which was estimated at 24% in 1981.**

1974 to 17.5% (\$42m) in 1988, the condition of the public schools did not improve significantly. Many lower to middle income African countries spend over 30% of their national budgets on education). One reason for the stagnation is that enrollment, which grew at an average annual rate of about 24%, out-paced appropriation. Another reason is the small amount actually expended on these schools. For example, in 1988 only 7% went for materials and equipment, 33.2% for teachers' salaries, 8.2% for administration and 10% for scholarships. A large portion of the remainder

was provided to mission and private schools as subsidy, with some prestigious schools receiving twice as much per student as expended on public schools per student at the same level. In addition, mission and private schools charge tuition while public schools do not.

A third reason for the poor quality of public schools is overcrowding.

Because they are tuition-free and operated at taxpayers' expense, they cannot be selective in enrollment as their mission and private counterparts.

Classrooms are frequently above the

required student-teacher ratio of 35 and 25 respectively at the elementary and secondary levels.

**It is important that those genuinely interested in finding lasting peace and national reconstruction understand the deep-rooted ethnic sores and animosities unleashed by the catastrophe.**

Unfortunately, during the civil war conditions dangerously deteriorated and caused the entire education system to collapse early in the 1990s. Reconstruction will require tremendous investment in human and financial resources. A bright side, however, is that the present educational goals are still valid and viable. There will be greater demand for education in the 21st century than existed in the last decade if barriers to access at all levels are removed and wastage rates (repetition and dropout) curtailed.

Summarily, although the present national crisis has shifted to political and economic power struggle, it is important that those genuinely interested in finding lasting peace and national reconstruction understand the deep-rooted ethnic sores and animosities unleashed by the catastrophe. As most wounds produce hurt before healing, it will require considerable time, commitment,



political will-power and tremendous resources to heal them.

From the educational prospective, there must be planned strategies and programs in the areas of formal education (schools), informal education (one-on-one contacts and conferences) and non-formal education (organized learning activities outside the school system). This includes adult programs that are relevant to the major economic activities of respective areas and which will open new opportunities for wage employment and self-employment. The emphasis on rural development during the 1970s will have to be revitalized and vigorously pursued.

In order to ensure that learning is meaningful and productive, as a national policy, local languages should be used as a vehicle in the beginning grades of school to make a smooth transition into English in areas where it is not prevalently spoken. This will reduce high wastage in the school system, increase the literacy rate of the country and maximize the scarce resources allocated to education.

The school curricula will have to be re-orientated to produce a unique Liberian identity; instructional materials must be rewritten and teacher training restructured. There are some studies in the last 20 years which tried to examine the various cultures and the traditional school system (e.g. Zetterstrom, 1976; Duberg, 1978), but there is need for further, in-depth exploration. The school must involve the community in its activities, including the use of well informed members to share their knowledge of history, tradition, handicrafts and other productive skills; as well as experiences in organizing and running successful small businesses. The curricula must be flexible to include workstudy programs where service and work or apprenticeship can be provided to students on the basis of academic credit.

The database for similar and/or other appropriate procedures and experiences in other countries needs to be compiled, analyzed, secured and

made available to writers and researchers. Liberians who have knowledge or access to knowledge of Liberian culture and modern technology to utilize appropriate concepts and procedures should be willing to share information and begin to transfer that knowledge on paper, even if it is in the form of personal journals.

### Selected Bibliography

Azango, Bertha Baker. "130 Years of Education in Liberia." *The Liberian Education Review*, Vol. 1, April 1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. "A Study of Dropouts From Educational Institutions in Liberia." Monrovia: Department of Education, 1965.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Historical and Philosophical Development of Liberian Education, *The Liberian Historical Review*, Vol. IV, No. 1, February 1969

\_\_\_\_\_. "Present Socio-Economic Situation in Liberia and Its Implications for the Education System," *The Liberian Research Association Journal*, Vol. 3 No. 3, January 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Statistical Analysis of the Age-Grade Structure of Students in Elementary and Secondary Schools of Liberia." Monrovia: Ministry of Education, 1973

Duberg, B. R.. "Forces Influencing Educational Policymaking in Liberia: Socioeconomic Changes and Educational Relevance." Ann Arbor, Mich, 1978

Dunn, D. Elwood and S. Byron Tarr. *Liberia: A National Polity in Transition*. Metuchen, N.J. and London: The Scarecrow Press Inc, 1988.

Harvard Institute for International Development. *New Directions for*

*Education and Training in Liberia.* Monrovia, 1976.

Henries, A. Doris Banks. *The Educational System of Liberia.* Monrovia, Ministry of Education, 1974.

Wreh, S. Tuan. *The Love of Liberty: The Rule of President W. V.S. Tubman in Liberia, 1944-1971.* London: C Hurst and Company, 1976.

## **Liberia in African Cultural and Artistic Expressions--1847-1997**

**Similih M. Cordon**

One-and-half centuries of political independence give Liberia a recognizable place in the world of nations. To survive even a fraction of this long historic period has been very difficult for many countries of the world. Thus, Liberians have come a long way during which they have demonstrated an indomitable spirit in the creation and building of their society. So it should be with pride that we Liberians look back over our 150 years of existence. It is also a good idea that we are reflecting on our various spheres of state building such as economics, health, communications, culture, and literature. My reflections fall in the realm of culture and artistic expressions which encompasses literature (poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction), sculpture, painting, music, and general aspects of cultural development.

For many years Liberia was the "Lone Star" of Africa, shining as the only free, sovereign republic when most other parts of the continent lay under European colonialism. During this period, Liberia not only pursued her course of history, but she pioneered many things in Africa: journalism with the establishment of newspapers around 1826; poetry writing beginning before 1827; political nationalism from the birth of the Liberian nation in 1821; political independence in 1847; cultural nationalism with Blyden (1880-1912); and fiction writing with the publication of a novel in 1891.

Despite these achievements, Liberia lagged behind several other African countries in many of the very things she had pioneered. And nowhere is this lag more pronounced than in cultural and artistic expressions such as creative literature and visual arts to portray authentic Liberian traditional and modern societal nuances. However, Liberians have not sat idly because they have produced novels, short stories, poems, plays, sculpture, and music.

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

But we lagged behind such countries as Nigeria, Ghana Kenya, and Senegal.

Liberia, like many other African countries, has a rich cultural heritage which includes traditional African cultural nuances and the images of Western culture that our founding fathers and mothers brought back to Africa from the United States. But somehow Liberians did not capitalize on this rich cultural heritage. Consequently, we did not carve out a recognizable place in African cultural development until recently.

But my reflections over the past 150 years of Liberia's existence must include a brief mention of Liberia's accomplishments in cultural development. Over

these many years, Liberia produced many forms of cultural and artistic expressions. While modern African literature emerged out of Nigeria with novels and plays from Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, Liberia was already ahead with its

**For many years Liberia was the "Lone Star" of Africa, shining as the only free, sovereign republic when most other parts of the continent lay under European colonialism.**

two novels: Joseph Walters' *Guanya Pau: A Story of an African Princess* (1891) and Charles E. Cooper's *Love in Ebony* (1932) (written under the pseudonym Varfelli Karlee). These novels had preceded the now great African novels of the second half of 20th century. Writers and book reviewers have praised Walters' novel for its literary merit and stylistic achievements.

The 20th century opened with new and more powerful fiction writers such as Bai T. Moore [author of *Ebony Dust*, *Murder in the Cassava Patch*, (1976), and *The Money Doubler*, (1976)]; Wilton G. S. Sankawulo (whose writings include the novel, *The Rain and the Night*, (1976); Also in

this group is the renowned writer and literary critic, Robert H. Brown, who among other works, has published sixteen short stories in *Short Story International*, New York. C. William Allen has also published two novels, *An Obituary for Hawa Barchue* (1983), *The African Interior Mission* (1992). Similih M. Cordor (formerly S. Henry Cordor) has written several works of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. These writers have continued to enhance the place of Liberia in modern African fiction writing. We can also point to earlier poets like Hilary Teage (1805?-1853), Robert H. Gibson (1830-1900), Daniel B.

Warner (1815-1880),

and Garretson W.

Gibson (1872?-1952).

Then we have our principal 20th century poets like Roland T. Dempster (1910-1966), author of the book *The Mystic Reformation of Gondolia* (1953), and

Bai T. Moore (1920-1988). We can add to this list some journalistic writers such Albert Porte, G. Henry Andrews, Kenneth Y. Best, K. Neville A. Best (also a poet), Momo K. Rogers, Stanton Peabody, Bill Frank Enoanyi, Carl Patrick Burrowes, Rufus M. Darpoh, and C. William Allen (also a novelist). We also have three leading playwrights: Lester Parker (who wrote dramas such as *Then Shall the Dust Return*, 1970; *That I May Lead Them*, 1969, and *Fear in the Morning*, 1975), Peter Ballah, and Kona Khasu (whose plays include *Manja Asumana*, *Kanda Goto of Suehn*, and *Homage to Africa*).

**In 1978, I dreamed of, and then called for, a "Cultural Revolution" in Liberia. . . . My dream for a cultural revolution in Liberia has yet to materialize. . . .**

Liberia's achievements in visual arts and music might be minor when compared to those of Ghanaian, Nigerian, Senegalese, and Kenyan artists. But my reflections must take in whatever little we have done so far. The sculpture of Vanjah Richards stands out as an artistic expression of modern Liberia; so are the works of such Liberian artists as George Tabmen. We

have the musical voices of Yatta Zoe, Nimba Bird, Zack Roberts, Meita Fahnbulleh, Arinze Allen, Tecumsey Roberts, and the popular music group, The Dynamics, which made headlines in then-West Germany in the late '70s and early '80s.

Then we have the promoters and scholars on Liberian culture in the persons of Bai T. Moore (who wrote on *Poro*, *Sande*, and other cultural subjects), J. Taplah, former professor of anthropology at the University of Liberia (who studied Liberian ethnology), Thomas Ken, a former sociology professor at the University of Liberia (who studied Liberian societal and cultural nuances), and Wilton Sankawulo (a novelist and short story writer) who has written essays on Liberian cultural and artistic expressions. Thus, Liberia has made some progress in cultural development and artistic expressions with her traditions in literature, fine arts, and music. These lists are by no means exhaustive as young writers and artists, some published and unpublished, continue to make their contributions to the anthology of Liberia's cultural and artistic heritage.

In 1978, I dreamed of, and then called for, a "Cultural Revolution in Liberia," in my publication, *The Study of Africa: Brief Topics in African Studies with Particular Reference to the Liberian Society* (Monrovia). My hopes were high for such a cultural revolution. I believe that we need it to help cleanse our minds of the images of cultural imperialism that we have inherited from America so we could produce authentic African cultural and artistic expressions such as novels, short stories, poems, plays, music, sculpture, and painting.

The rise of contemporary African literature and other areas of cultural expressions during the second half of the 20th century gave a wide intellectual recognition to a body of Black African writing and art works to project a new image for African peoples. And I wanted Liberia to be part of this new spirit of African cultural and artistic expressions that were sweeping the entire continent at the demise of colonialism in Africa. My calls for a cultural revolution included putting Liberia on the literary and

cultural map of the world, improving the quality of higher education, using more traditional African cultural materials, reorientation of our mentality toward greater cultural achievements, and becoming very productive in creative works such as literature, visual arts, and music.

My dream of a cultural revolution in Liberia has yet to materialize, but I gather that the postwar Liberian society will examine all areas of nation-building. And culture, literature, visual arts, and music will have their share in planning for the new Liberia that will emerge out of the debris of our bloody civil war. As we end the war and as our hopes rise high for continuing our national journey, we must demonstrate pride in and love for our literature, sculpture, painting, music, and other areas of cultural and artistic expressions. These are our distinctive cultural heritage.



## **The Need for a Bilingual Education in the Third Republic**

**Robert H. Brown**

As I reflect on the 150th Anniversary, sesquicentennial, of Liberia's independence as a sovereign state, I recall the coexistence of the English language and the sixteen officially recognized major languages of the country and the bilingual and multilingual individuals which the language situation has produced. A complex network of multiethnic and multilingual speech communities does not develop overnight. It grows steadily over the years. Thus, if one looks briefly at the historical background of the country, he will discover that two factors were instrumental in bringing to Liberia various ethnolinguistic groups speaking a wide range of languages and dialects: The two factors included:

- The migration of the indigenes from the Sudanic region of Africa more than two hundred years before the arrival of the settlers, and
- the repatriation of the settlers as freed slaves from the United States during the nineteenth century.

Traditionally, indigenous Liberian languages were perceived by the settlers to be intrinsically inferior to express sophisticated concepts about Western Civilization and Christianity because they were considered primitive languages. However, no language is intrinsically inferior or superior to any other language whether it belongs to the Indo-European language family or to the Niger-Congo language family. Language reflects culture. It is my ardent hope, therefore, that local languages as vehicles of Liberian culture and heritage will be taught in Liberian schools and institutions of higher learning in the Third Republic because it is upon the knowledge of language that knowledge itself rests.

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

Indeed, bilingual education (i.e., using two languages) would be beneficial to Liberia. Plans drawn up in 1970 by the Ministry of Education indicated the teaching of local languages alongside the English language, the *lingua franca* of the country. However, because of the coup d'état of April 12, 1980, and the outbreak of the inter-ethnic civil war in 1989, this remains an aspiration rather than a reality. The plans outlined the development of oral fluency and written materials in eight local languages namely, Bassa, Gio, Vai, Kpelle, Loma, Kru, Grebo, and Krahn. If and when a civilian government is installed, these plans can then be implemented.

We, Liberians, could learn a lesson from African countries such as Ghana, Nigeria and Botswana, for example. In Ghana the Institute for Ghanaian languages teaches the local languages of the country. In Nigeria, there are over 400

**Traditionally, indigenous Liberian languages were perceived by the settlers to be intrinsically inferior to express sophisticated concepts about Western Civilization and Christianity because they were considered primitive languages.**

languages. However, major languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo can be studied as subjects at the university level and, are in fact, certifiable in diploma and degree programs. In Botswana, there are eight ethnic groups and, therefore, eight languages. But primary state education in Botswana is conducted in the Setswana language.

Learning a second language is a skill quite distinct from learning to read and write, and the skills of reading and writing are concepts that can be transferred to, and useful for, learning other languages. A student who is learning to read and write English without having done so initially in his or her mother tongue is learning two distinct skills and the task is so complex, confusing, and formidable that only the exceptionally brilliant student can

survive such an ordeal successfully.

The best way to educate a bilingual student without a great deal of frustration and loss of precious learning time, is to begin with a skill he or she has mastered, namely his or her mother tongue, and build on it one step at a time. For example, during the formative years of a Liberian pupil's education, the first five years in primary school could be ideally devoted to learning to master the skills of reading and writing his or her mother tongue while at the same time being exposed to the English language in a classroom setting. For example, a Liberian pupil whose mother tongue is Grebo should first learn to read Grebo history and culture, and have classes in spoken English. When the pupil has an adequate mastery of reading and writing skills in Grebo-- sometime in grade 5-- learning to read and write English will be given increasingly more emphasis. Within two or three years after the pupil begins to read and write in his mother tongue, classroom teaching would gradually change to a situation where most subjects would be taught in English with a few special interest courses of cultural relevance in the Grebo language.

The first step in drawing up a bilingual program of this sort is to formulate the behavioral objectives and the type of bilingual pupils to be involved and the terminal behavior to be achieved. A number of questions could guide those who will be involved in materials production and syllabi design:

- Is the bilingual program for true non-readers?
- Is it to teach bilingual pupils who have some proficiency in reading English to read their mother tongue?
- Is it for children?
- Is it for adults?

- Will it form the basis of an institutionalized bilingual program?
- Is it to be part of an extramural bilingual program?
- Is it to meet the needs of adults so that they will have a language tool for improving their standard of living by making information on modern educational, health, and agricultural programs available to them in forms of manuals or primers?
- Is it for the enhancement and preservation of teaching the positive aspects of the history and culture of an indigenous language?

A good bilingual program would take all these questions and more into consideration when designing curricula materials.

Such a bilingual program involves certain amount of highly specialized

linguistic assistance. It also requires the skills of trained Liberian linguists and writers who understand the needs, aspiration, and interests of other Liberians. Such linguists and writers must be sensitive to the needs of the pupils. It should be emphasized that if a bilingual program of a large scale is to be successfully instituted, language teachers must be trained adequately.

**The best way to educate a bilingual student without a great deal of frustration and loss of precious learning time, is to begin with a skill he/she has mastered, namely his/her mother tongue, and build on it one step at a time.**

It is a popular belief in Liberia that anyone who speaks his or her mother tongue fluently and competently can make a good teacher of that language. But teaching a second or foreign language requires, in the teacher, a working knowledge of the phonology and grammar of the mother tongue to be taught.

After linguists and language teachers have been trained, the next step is to undertake a vigorous exercise in the production of instructional materials. The linguists and language teachers who will undertake this exercise of materials production must first of all make adequate linguistic analyses of the local languages in question. The linguistic analyses of the languages to be taught should include at least an adequate phonology, adequate grammars, and dictionaries. Based on these linguistic data and relevant sociological criteria, an orthography or writing system must be postulated and tested for effectiveness. The next step is to develop a core of basic literature which should include:

- a primer for pre-literate children;
- a primer for literate pupils;
- a primer for adult non-readers;
- a primer for readers of English who want to become literate in their mother tongue;
- teachers' manuals to accompany the primers;
- graded readers to build reading skills;
- and a basic and developing corpus of relevant literature of a broad spectrum to make the entire process of learning to read and write worthwhile.

Finally, this core of literature should include material for transferring knowledge to the use of the English language.

## **The *Asili* of Liberian Psychology**

**Boikai S. Twe**

I have been asked on many occasions to discuss the post-civil war effects on the Liberian psyche. I have always tried to be cautious when it comes to predicting the African psyche because of its complexity and duality. To describe the Liberian psyche, I will briefly review the African and American duality of Liberian psychology in the last 150 years. My intention is to identify the *asili* (the ideological core, germ/seed) of Liberian psychology which was planted more than 150 years ago in the soil of West Africa.

Nature teaches us that a nation is like a tree that grows from a small seed or *asili*. The *asili* is held together by complimentary forces, i.e., masculine/feminine, positive/negative, African/American and material/spiritual. When these forces fail to balance each other, the *asili* falls apart and becomes dysfunctional. It is the *asili* that provides the life force of the nation like the roots that provide the life force of the tree. A unified *asili* produces both positive and negative outcomes like a tree that bears good and bad fruits. In this essay, I will describe the imbalance within Liberia's *asili* or ideological seed. Next, I will describe the self-image or the ideological tree that has been produced. Finally, I will describe the ideological fruits, good and bad behavioral and international consequences of Liberian psychology. I will conclude that Liberians will have to change their ideology and choose to defend and develop their African personality in order to gain the maximum benefits out of life through the perpetuation of African traditions and psychology.

### ***ASILI*-- The Ideological Seed**

West African history suggests that there have been several mass

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

migrations to the area occupied by present-day Liberia. These migrants were trying to escape the rise and fall of the empires of Ghana Mali, and Songhey and to settle on coastal farmland away from the Sahara Desert. These migrations along the West African Coast encouraged longstanding political alliances and accommodation among diverse ethnic groups to maintain regional security and commerce. Disruption of this security and commerce was due to widespread violence in the capturing and selling of West Africans into the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Captured Africans had to endure the "Middle Passage" which caused millions of deaths and physical, mental and spiritual trauma. To decrease the violence of enslavement and to promote other types of trade, some indigenous groups and leaders like Bah Gwogro (King George) of the Dey and King Kaanda Njola of the Gola welcomed African-American settlers along the Grain Coast.

Other positive forces forming the Liberian asili were the abolitionist movement and the African fight for emancipation in the United States. Under the auspices of the American Colonization Society, these forces united to establish the

**Liberians will have to change their ideology and choose to defend and develop their African personality in order to gain the maximum benefits out of life through the perpetuation of African traditions and psychology.**

colony of Liberia in 1822 for free blacks on the Grain Coast. This was done to repatriate African-Americans who were emancipated in the United States and to promote the spread of Christianity, "western civilization," and legitimate commerce to replace the "slave trade." The emigration of more than 19,000 African-Americans like Hilary Teage, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, Stephen Allen Benson and Edward Wilmot Blyden during the 19th century also brought the wholesale transfer of American institutions and belief systems. American ideologies and institutions shaped the Liberian self-

image as individual, race conscious, modern, elite, Christian land owners.

The colony that became Liberia was initially established with the help of the United States Navy and run by white men. Hilary Teage and other African Americans had to rebel against white domination to establish a "blacks-only" Republic of Liberia. African-American promotion of American institutions and practices in the new republic, the exclusion of traditional African institutions like the *Poro* and *Sande* societies and values like ancestors veneration and respect for nature, produced an imbalance and conflict in the Liberian *asili*. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that the Liberian government came to partially accept its African identity and to incorporate the sixteen indigenous ethnic groups as citizens of the republic. This imbalance in the Liberian *asili* has contributed to the recent dissolution of the First and Second Republics. Due to the settler elite exclusion of African traditional values and institutions, the self-image that took root in Liberia came to reflect the political, religious and commercial aspirations of African Americans far more than the culture and personality of the majority indigenous citizens.

### **SELF-IMAGE: The Ideological Tree**

The founding of the Republic of Liberia was based on American practices of elitism, individualism, willingness to use force, exclusion, freedom of the press, and property acquisition. Many of these practices were in conflict with traditional West African culture. The American hegemony in Liberia was later synthesized with elements of an emerging African ideology referred to as "Ethiopianism," "Black Nationalism," or "Pan-Africanism." This ideology promotes a self-image of African greatness, inclusion, shared history, self-rule, a common origin and destiny of people of African decent. Edward W. Blyden (1888) was the most outstanding spokesperson of this ideology and the inventor of African cultural nationalism. Due to this ideological development, the Liberian self-image began to reflect a greater accommodation of indigenous ethnic groups and the pursuit of unity among



settler and indigenous Liberians. President William V. S. Tubman's Unification Policy contributed to indigenous Liberians increasingly viewing themselves as true citizens of Liberia.

The Liberian government lack of a strong commitment to uphold its "African personality," as Edward W. Blyden had suggested, led to the exclusion and exploitation of the indigenous majority by an elite class of settlers, some indigenes and their foreign allies. This exclusion and exploitation also led to restriction of press freedom, increase use of the military against citizens, and the establishment of an autocracy which eventually led to the Liberian Civil War.

The Liberian elite feared the inclusion of traditional African institutions and values due to the popular American stereotypes of Africans as violent and uncivilized. The

**The founding of the Republic of Liberia was based on American practices of elitism, individualism, . . . exclusion, freedom of the press, and property acquisition.**

self-image of Liberians has many roots and branches of painful memories of enslavement racism barbarism, and exclusion, as well as hopeful signs of African will for freedom, justice, truth, self-determination and inclusion in human history. The Liberian ideological tree has been nurtured by its exposure to African traditions, a color-conscious America, and a colonial Africa.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS: The Ideological Fruits**

The Liberian *asili* has produced both negative and positive ideologies and achievements. Its positive ideology has been associated with its emerging African personality and its negative ideology continues to be associated with greed, tribalism, and its uncritical acceptance of American values and

institutions. For example, to promote its American-style institutions and modernization, the Liberian republic treated many of its indigenous citizens as unpaid laborers and soldiers. The Liberian Frontier Force which was trained and armed by the United States Military was used to collect taxes, recruit, supervise labor for building roads and other infrastructures in the interior, and to maintain Monrovia's authority over the hinterland. Soldiers of the Frontier Force, who were often unpaid indigenes, were associated with heinous acts of killing chiefs and villagers, destroying property, stealing, major acts of harassment and intimidation of people in the hinterland. The Liberian government faced international condemnation by the League of Nations for forcing some of its indigenous citizens into contract labor outside of Liberia. Due to foreign investments and American strategic interests, press freedom and democratic election were restricted to protect these foreign and commercial interests. These bad fruits eventually led to civil unrest in the late 1970s, 1980s and eventually the Civil War of the 1990s.

On the positive side, Liberians have contributed to the liberation of Africa by financing the freedom struggle of many African states, educating many African leaders and providing asylum for their families. Liberia is credited with playing a key role in drafting the charter for the Organization of African Unity, proposing the Economic Community of West African States, founding the Mano River Union, helping to set up the African Development Bank, and being an original signatory to the charters that founded the League of Nations and

**(Liberia's) positive ideology has been associated with its emerging African personality, and its negative ideology continues to be associated with greed, tribalism, and its uncritical acceptance of American values and institutions.**

the United Nations. Liberia also joined the Ethiopians to sue the Apartheid regime of the Republic of South Africa to the International Court of Justice for illegally annexing Southwest Africa. Liberia cast the deciding vote in 1948 which led to the UN recognition of Israel as an independent state, and provided an African symbol of political self-determination, modernization and international morality. These positive ideological fruits have helped to sustain Africa and the world.

The Liberian *asili* continues to be an important seed of the African regeneration and renaissance project. The power of the Liberian *asili* has been felt all over Africa, however its major weakness has been its unwillingness to develop and nationalize African languages and indigenous institutions among its citizens. Liberians continue to eat the bad fruits of self-alienation, anti-self attitudes and self-destructive behaviors (e.g., tribalism, selfishness, corruption, using of armed force, intolerance, sorcery, foreign dependency, Americanism). Marcus Garvey (1923) warned that "a people without knowledge of their history and culture is like a tree without roots." The seven years of civil war and the intervention of ECOMOG have probably encouraged a deeper Liberian self-examination and rededication to African values and institutions.

## Conclusion

I have attempted to identify and expose some of the conflicting forces and elements of the Liberian *asili*. This discussion has suggested that there is a duality to the Liberian *asili*: The legacy of African traditions and underdevelopment on the one hand, and the legacy of American enslavement and modernization on the other. These ambivalent aspects of the *asili* have contributed to the growth of a contradictory and dysfunctional national culture and self-image. There is a need to recognize the weaknesses of both of these legacies and to build on their strengths.

Additionally, Liberians need to acknowledge and change their

dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors (selfishness, sorcery, cannibalism elitism, violence, and disrespect for African life, values and institutions) which produced the bad fruits of Liberian history. Unless Liberians are willing to acknowledge the dual nature of their *asili* and are willing to work for balance and reconciliation, they will eat more bad fruits in the future. Liberians must help to provide a new vision of reconciliation between the traditional and modern in Africa in order to heal and revitalize African psychology.

### References

- Blyden, (1888). *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* Baltimore: MD: Black Classic Press.
- Garvey, Marcus (1923). *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*. Dover, MA: Majority Press.

## The Press in Liberia, 1826-1996: A Select Chronology\*

Momo K. Rogers, Sr.

### Introduction

1996 marked the 170th anniversary of the establishment of the newspaper in Liberia. While it will take a book to narrate the vast and colorful history of mass communication development in Liberia, the author hopes that this select chronology will highlight important epochs in the general development of the modern media in Liberia, Africa's oldest republic.

### 1826

#### Feb. 26

The *Liberia Herald*, the nation's first newspaper, appeared in Monrovia, printed and edited by Charles L. Force. Force, a printer, was among a group of settlers who left Boston, Massachusetts, on the brig *Vine*, in December 1825, for the Liberia Colony. He brought with him a printing press and printing supplies donated by the Boston auxiliary of the American Colonization Society.

#### August

Force died from the "African Fever" (malaria), and publication of the *Liberia Herald* was suspended.

### 1829

#### November

John B. Russwurm, co-editor of the first African-American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal* of New York, arrived in the Liberia Colony as an emigrant.

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

**1830**

**March 6**      *The Liberia Herald* is revived by John B. Russwurm, who served as editor until 1836, before leaving to become Governor of the colony, "Maryland in Liberia."

**1839**

**March 15**      *Africa's Luminary*, the first church-owned newspaper, is started, published by the Methodist Episcopal Church Mission of Liberia. It was edited by the Rev. John Seys, superintendent of the Mission.

**November**      The American Colonization Society adopted a resolution to sell the *Liberia Herald*, and the paper was promptly bought by Hilary Teage, the editor. The paper thus also became the nation's first privately owned newspaper as part of Teage & Co.

**September**      The nation's first postal act, "An Act constituting and regulating the Post Office Department for the Commonwealth of Liberia," was adopted by the legislative council.

**1840**

**March**      The first government-press confrontation occurred when the Rev. John Seys used the *Africa's Luminary* to attack the commonwealth government of Gov. Thomas Buchanan for imposing customs duties on the Methodist Episcopal Church Mission.

**1846**

**February (?)**      The second printing press in the colony was established by the Rev. Jacob Rambo at Fair Haven, Maryland in

Liberia, under the auspices of the Foreign Board of the Protestant Episcopal Mission. It was later moved to the Half Cavalla mission station as part of "The Messenger Press."

**1852**

**March**

*The Cavalla Messenger* appeared at Half Cavalla, near Cape Palmas, in Maryland in Liberia, becoming the first newspaper published outside of the Liberia Colony, printed by the Messenger Press and edited by the Rev. (later Bishop) John Payne. It has the distinction of being the first bilingual newspaper as it was published both in English and Grebo, the native language of its circulation area.

**1854**

**August**

The first partisan newspaper, *Liberia Sentinel*, appeared, published and edited by businessman-turned-politician Edward J. Roye, who used the paper in his first bid for the presidency of Liberia. It was also the first newspaper to appear in the young Republic of Liberia, which declared its independence on July 26, 1847.

The first post office was established in Liberia.

**1867**

**November**

*The People of Grand Bassa*, a monthly, appeared in Buchanan. It was the first newspaper to be published in Grand Bassa County. It may have been published and edited by S. A. Horace, and appeared intermittently until 1873, when Horace sold his printing press to the

## Government of Liberia.

**1868****September**

*The True Whig* Edward J. Roye's second partisan newspaper, appeared in Monrovia, and as organ of the newly published True Whig Party, was used by Roye, the bearer, to campaign in the presidential elections of 1869, which Roye won.

**1870****September**

*The West African Record*, perhaps the nation's first student or scholastic newspaper, appeared at Hoffman Institute, near Cape Palmas, in Maryland County, edited by \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ under the editorial supervision of the Rev. Dr. J. G. Auer.

**1872**

The first \_\_\_\_\_ run \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ County was *Sons of Cape Palmas*, published by John W. Cooper, one of the leading merchants of Cape Palmas, who owned a printing press. The paper was said to be of "short \_\_\_\_\_," but the printing press lasted much longer, until 1898, when it was said to be "broken and gone out of repute."

**1878****April 25**

*The Observer* appeared at Monrovia, described as "...well edited and nicely printed, and is altogether an improvement on any paper yet issued in Liberia." It was published and edited by three aspiring young men who later became prominent leaders: Joseph W. Hilton



(became Attorney General), Albert B. King (Senator), and Arthur Barclay (Liberia's 14th president). The monthly was published until 1883.

1879

**April(?)** Liberia became a member of the Universal Postal Union (UPU).

1892

**September 8** The first newspaper to be established and run by the government, the *Liberia Gazette*, appeared in Monrovia, published by the Bureau of Information, Department of State, printed and edited by T[homas] W. Howard of the Government Printing Office.

1897

**October 25** *The Recorder* appeared, a semi-monthly, edited by N. H. B. Cassell, with T. W. Howard, Jr., and Charles B. Dunbar as assistant editors. A popular national newspaper, it was the first to publish "Telegraphic News" or world news briefs column.

1898

**June** *The Cape Palmas Reporter* became the nation's first magazine, appearing in Maryland County as a quarterly. It was co-published by James H. Dennis, James J. Dossen, and the Rev. Samuel D. Ferguson, Jr., who served as editor.

The nation's first weekly newspaper, *The Weekly Spy*, appeared.

100

MOMO K. ROGERS, SR.

1900

June

The Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention of Liberia became the third religious group to start a  
when the *Baptist Monitor*, a monthly,  
in Monrovia, edited by the Rev. R. B. Richardson.

December 17

The first mile of telephone lines was lain in Monrovia

1901

February 10

The first message through a telephone wire in Liberia announced the death of printer Thomas W. Howard, who was then Treasurer of the Republic of Liberia.

1902

October

The first newspaper to be transplanted on Liberian soil, *The African League*, appeared in Monrovia in its fourth volume after having been published for three years in the United States before its owner, John H. Green emigrated to Liberia from the southern U. S. state of Alabama.  
ed with the Monrovia estab ' Green again  
moved his newspaper, in 1906, this time to Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, where the paper became a popular, national newspaper until its demise in 1911.

1903

May

*The Liberian School Reader*, the first publication to be started by the Department of Public Instruction (Education), appeared posthumously soon after its founder and editor, Julius C. Stevens, died on April 25. Stevens was an agent of the American Colonization

Society, who came to Liberia in 1893.

1905

May?

*The Cuttington Cadet* may have been the first collegian newspaper, published by students at Cuttington Collegiate and Divinity School, Cape Palmas, Maryland County, under the editorial supervision of Prof P. Osborne Gray.

1907

??

The first church magazine, *The Silver Trumpet*, appeared in Cape Palmas, Maryland County, edited by Rev. Samuel D. Ferguson, Jr., and F. W. Ellegor. It was said to be a "Quarterly Magazine of the Missionary District of Cape Palmas and Parts adjacent of the Protestant Episcopal Church." It was published until 1912.

1912

January

*The Guide*, one of the first attempt at a general interest, consumer magazine appeared in Monrovia, edited by F. Wilcom Ellegor. Promoted as a "Magazine of Current Topics, Development and Thought," the monthly magazine, which averaged about 26 pages per issue, was printed in England.

1918

Liberia's first newspaper group was started by Abraham H. Butler, Sr., with the appearance of *The Liberian Press*, a monthly. This was followed by the *West African Commercial News* (1919), a semimonthly, the *Liberian Commercial News* (1919), a weekly, and the *Commercial Bulletin* (1920), also a weekly. Butler, who was a businessman, later served as Liberia's Commissioner

of Police.

**1920**

**January 4**

The first newspaper to be published from any of the upriver settlements around Monrovia, *The Enlightener*, appeared, published weekly by the Path Finders and edited by Albert Porte, perhaps beginning his career as a nationally known pamphleteer and journalist.

**1922**

**October**

*The Liberian Churchman*, the first publication to come out of Grand Cape Mount County, appeared, published bimonthly by the Missionary District of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Liberia. It was printed by the Douglas Muir Memorial Press, the printing department of the St. John's Industrial School at Robertsport. The school's principal served as editor along with news editors from the various parishes. The paper's first editor was the Rev. Elwood L. Haines. Between 1922 and 1926, the paper had a magazine format, but after 1926, it took on a newspaper design, appearing monthly, until it folded around 1966.

**1925**

**September**

The first newspaper to be devoted solely to news of industrial development, *The Liberian Tribune*, appeared in Monrovia, edited by Nathaniel B. Seton and proclaimed in its masthead that it was "The Cogwheel of Liberian Industry."

**1928****February**

*The Liberia Times* appeared in Monrovia, published by The Liberia Times Company, noted as the first newspaper to be incorporated by an Act of the (Liberian) Legislature. The Act named J. Clement A. Gibson, J. Edmund Jones, and their heirs as proprietors. Jones served as editor, while Gibson was the business manager of the monthly newspaper, which was the first to give a cable address.

**1929****December 7**

The first newspaper published solely as an entertainment medium, *Hints Facts Jokes*, appeared in Monrovia as a weekly, published and edited by Charles B. A. Caine, who went on to publish these other "Funny Paper(s)" as he called them: *The Weekly X-Ray* (1936) and *The Searchlight* (1940).

**1930****October 9**

Liberia's first daily newspaper, the *Daily Mirror*, appeared in Monrovia, published and edited by Dr. J. F. B. Coleman. The following year it became a weekly.

**1936****April**

The Liberian Government Radio Service was established, with John L. Cooper as supervisor. Other staff members included Henry W. Grimes and James B. Doe. Its mission was to establish radio telegraphy throughout Liberia.

**1937****??**

*The Literary Companion*, a magazine devoted exclusively to youth, appeared, published as the organ of The Young-

Men Literary Club, Inc. The monthly was published by the Club's Committee on Publicity, whose chairman, D. Colston Nelson, became editor. Other members of the committee, who served as associate editors, included Nathaniel M. Gibson, David S. Carter, Jr., Robert F. Okai, Jr., and Jacob H. Browne.

**1938**

**October**

The second transplanted newspaper in Liberia, *The African Nationalist*, a fortnightly, appeared in Monrovia, after being published as a monthly for at least five years in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, from where its West Indies born publisher, C. Fredrick Taylor, emigrated to Liberia. The paper soon became nationally popular for its *Nationalist War Supplement*, a daily, penny-a-copy paper that advertised itself as "containing the War News Fresh from the Centre of War."

**1939**

**March**

The Liberian Government Radio Service established the first telegraphy radio station outside of Monrovia, in Cape Palmas, Maryland County. In July, another station was started in Kolahun, Western Province.

**December**

*The Daily News Bulletin*, the nation's second daily newspaper, appeared in Monrovia, published by Gibson & Sons, who were noted as "Printer," and edited by V. B. Caulker. The paper was short-lived, as it was demised after its June 27, 1940 issue.

**1941**

**March**

*The Liberia Almanac*, the first such publication in Liberia, Monrovia, published and edited by J[ames] B.

Bar-Rolle, who was then postmaster of Monrovia.

**1942**

**February 28** The first newspaper to be attacked by a mob, *The Liberian Friend*, appeared, published and edited by printer S. T. A. Richards. Its name was changed to just *The Friend* in 1944, and *Baby Friend* in 1954. Known for its strong editorials on national issues, the paper opposed President Tubman's bid for a third term, irking Tubman supporters who then ransacked the *Friend's* facilities and destroyed its presses in 1954. Although President Tubman offered to rebuild his presses, editor Richards refused his assistance.

**March** The proposed radio telegraphy broadcast site to be located in Paynesville, a 20-acre land was purchased by the Government of Liberia for \$1,000.

**1943**

**July** *The African Nationalist* newspaper carried an article, "Broadcasting Station Nearing Completion" about the building to house the Liberian Government Radio Service.

**1946**

**May 14** The longest government-run newspaper, *The Liberian Age*, appeared in Monrovia, first as a private newspaper published and edited by Jacob Browne, but soon accepted government subsidy and was converted to the official organ of the ruling True Whig Party. It was published continuously until April 1980, when its name was changed

to *The Redeemer* by the PRC military government. It ceased to exist after 1981, but was revived as *The Liberian Age*, a private newspaper, in 1992(?).

**1947**

**June** Colonel John B. West resigned as head of the United States Public Health Mission in Liberia (USPHMIL) to start the nation's first radio station, with the call letter ELBC. Its initial schedule was three hours of programming daily.

**June 24** *The Voice of Liberia College* appeared, starting a tradition of student-run newspaper at Liberia College (now University of Liberia). It was founded by Prof T. O. Dosumu Johnson, who served as editorial advisor, and was first edited by student C. Wellington Campbell.

**1950**

**April** C. Frederick Taylor, editor of the popular newspaper, *The African Nationalist*, is imprisoned on charges of seditious libel, and because he refused to apologize to Pres. Tubman, he would serve the longest prison term of any Liberian editor, until his release in 1967 due to poor health. He died soon after his release from prison.

**April 2** Colonel John B. West revived radio station ELBC, by establishing the Liberian Broadcasting Company (LBC), devoting full time to operating the station until his return to the United States in 1955.

**May 22** The nation's third daily newspaper, *The Daily Listener* appeared, published by C. Cecil Dennis, Sr., a well-known



printer and politician. For the next two decades, it was a popular national newspaper and editorially, a strong supporter of the administration of President William V. S. Tubman.

**1951**

**June** *Liberia Today*, the first of several specialized public relations publications and journals to be published by the Government of Liberia, appeared in London, directed at readers in the world of business and politics. It was edited by Arthur H. Thrower, an Englishman, who served as Liberia's PR Consultant. The quarterly journal was later published at various Liberian embassies abroad, including Washington, D.C., Rome, The Hague, Paris, and Lagos, Nigeria.

**1952**

**March** The Government of Liberia gave Col. John B. West a subsidy of \$25,000, to assist with the construction of a new building for the Liberian Broadcasting Company.

**June** E. Reginald Townsend wrote and successfully defended the first master's thesis on the Liberian press, titled, "Problems of the Liberian Press," presented at the American University, Washington, D.C.

**1953**

**September** E. Reginald Townsend was appointed Presidential Intelligence Secretary by President William V. S. Tubman, essentially becoming Liberia's first Press Secretary to the President.

**August** The Liberian Press Association was revived at the meeting held at the resident of C. Cecil Dennis, Sr., who was elected president. The Association was first established in the early 1940s.

**October** Liberia's first literacy magazine, *The Readers' Paper*, a bi-monthly, appeared, published by the Department of Public Instruction and edited by personnel of the Division of Adult Education. The magazine's name was later changed to *New Day*, and was circulated widely throughout Liberia in the 1960s.

## 1954

**September 25** *The Independent*, newspaper of the opposition Independent True Whig Party, appeared, proclaiming in its debut editorial that it was the organ of the loyal opposition to the reelection of President Tubman.

**January** Radio station ELWA, owned and operated by the U.S. - based Sudan Interior Mission, went on the air, becoming the first religious broadcasting station in Liberia and all of West Africa.

## 1955

**January** Tuan Wreh dismissed as reporter for *The Liberian Age*, joined *The Independent* as a reporter.

**February** Tuan Wreh was indicted for seditious libel, jailed and later disgraced in public when he was paraded in the streets of Monrovia and made to clean toilets at the Executive Pavilion on orders of President Tubman. That same

month, the Liberian Senate passed the Censorship Act of 1955.

**March**

Mrs. Bertha Corbin, editor of *The Independent*, was held in contempt of the Liberian Legislature, jailed briefly and then deported to the United States, her native country. Soon after that, the newspaper was banned.

**1956**

**January**

Henry B. Cole published *The Liberian Yearbook 1956*, the first reference book of its kind on Liberia. It contained 312 pages.

**July**

Richelieu Watkins and his assistants, G. Henry Andrews and Sewell Brewer, all of the Liberian Government Radio Service (LGRS), put on the air, radio station ELRS, the first broadcasting service to be operated by Liberians. They broadcast a partial schedule.

**1957**

The first live broadcast was made when a football game between Barrolle and I.E. was aired on station ELRS.

**1958**

**January**

The Liberian Legislature passed an Act establishing the Liberian Information Service (LIS), as an autonomous agency charged with disseminating information about government policies and programs. Its first director was E. Reginald Townsend, and Henry B. Cole served as deputy director. LIS was the forerunner of the

Department of Information and Cultural Affairs (DICA) and the Ministry of Information. Cultural Affairs and Tourism (MICAT).

**March**

*The Liberian Teachers Journal*, a quarterly, appeared, the first publication devoted exclusively to covering the Liberian schools and teachers. It was edited by Prof T. O. Dosumu-Johnson.

**??**

Station ELRS was moved from PHP to the Centennial Pavilion and its call letter was changed from ELRS to ELBC, soon after the Government of Liberia signed a contract with Rediffusion of London to provide needed equipment. As part of that contract, Jack Knight of Rediffusion was named the first general manager of ELBC, and G. Henry Andrews became assistant general manager.

**1960****January**

Radio station ELBC started broadcasting as a public corporation, the first fully licensed commercial station in Liberia, although it continued to be heavily subsidized by the government. G. Henry Andrews was named Director General of the Liberian Broadcasting Corporation (LBC), the parent company of station ELBC, which now had a full schedule of programming.

**1963****April**

*The Gbarnga Gbele News*, which appeared in Gbarnga, Bong County, became the first rural mimeographed newspaper in Liberia. Rural newspapers spread rapidly throughout the country after this, supported through a

joint Government of Liberia-UNESCO pilot project.  
Most of these rural papers survived until 1972.

## 1964

**January** To coincide with the sixth inauguration of President William V. S. Tubman, the Liberian Broadcasting Corporation launched ELTV, the nation's first television station, whose broadcast debut was the televising live the entire inaugural program.

**January(?)** Wreh News Agency was established by veteran journalist Tuan Wreh, supplying national news briefs and features to local newspapers. It may have been the first news service to be founded and run by a Liberian.

**June 2** *The Liberian Star* appeared, the first daily newspaper to be jointly owned by the Government of Liberia and a private newspaper company, the Thomson Papers of London. Edited by Henry B. Cole, it was said to be the training ground for some of Liberia's well-known journalists, such as Rufus M. Darpoh, Carlton Karpeh, and John F. Scotland.

## 1967

**April 23** *Sunday Digest*, perhaps the first newspaper to be published on a Sunday, appeared in Monrovia, the second of three newspapers to be published by C. Cecil Dennis, Sr., who started *The Daily Listener* in 1950. His other newspaper, *Saturday Chronicle*, would follow in 1969, making it the second newspaper group to be run in Liberia.

**1971****July**

*Kaafa, Bulletin of the Society of Liberian Authors*, appeared as a semiannual journal, perhaps the first publication devoted exclusively to literary works by Liberian writers.

**1973****November**

The first student-run newspaper to be operated from underground, *The Revelation*, appeared as a mimeographed sheet. It is possible that the paper was published before 1973, but its series starting with Vol. 1, No. 1, November 1973, revitalized by the court case involving journalist/activist Albert Porte and finance minister Stephen Tolbert made it an ardent critic of the administration of President William R. Tolbert. Fearing political reprisals, it went underground until its demise. It was founded by Willard Russell, and its editorial staff included Victorio A. Jesus Weeks, K. Neville A. Best, Patrick Burrowes, and Ernestine Cassell, all students at the University of Liberia.

**1977****September**

*The Liberian Outlook* appeared, edited by Willie Givens, who was then also press secretary to the president. The monthly , printed in Seoul, South Korea, became a popular, general interest magazine.

**1978****March 9**

*The Liberian* , a weekly, appeared, published by the of Information, Affairs and Tourism, but its name was changed after its second issue to the *New Liberian*, which became the leading government

newspaper through the 1980s.

**May** The Liberian Broadcasting Corporation signed a \$3.5 million-dollar expansion agreement with Pye TVT to improve the facilities of stations ELBC and ELTV.

**July 21** *Sporting News*, the first newspaper to be devoted exclusively to the coverage of sports news, appeared in Monrovia, as a weekly, edited by J. Blamo Robinson. However, it was very short-lived as no other issue appeared after its debut edition.

1979

**October** *Focus*, the first pictorial newspaper, appeared, edited by photojournalist O. Eugene Shaw in his attempt to use photographs almost exclusively to report the news. Designed more like a tabloid, it carried crossword puzzles and a local comic strip created by artist Reggie Townsend, Jr. It folded in late 1981.

1981

**February 16** The *Daily Observer* appeared, published by veteran journalist Kenneth Y. Best, and first edited by well known journalist Rufus M. Darpoh, and later by veteran journalist Stanton Peabody. From its birth until 1990, it became not only the most independent and popular national newspaper but also the newspaper most persecuted by the Military government of Samuel K. Doe. It was closed down over five times and its building burned by suspected arsonists. It finally went out of business in 1990 due to the civil war, but was revived in 1995.

**1982****January**

The Liberian Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) was re-incorporated by the PRC military government as the Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS), but no other visible structural change was made.

**1984****March**

*Footprints Today* appeared, published by the Footprints Enterprises with Momolu V. Sackor Sirleaf as President and Publisher. The daily, which became fearlessly independent, was first edited by C. William Allen. It was edited later by Lewis A. Smith, and subsequently by Siaka Konneh.

**June**

Rufus M. Darpoh became the first well known Liberian journalist to be detained at the infamous Camp Belle Yella, a maximum security prison in Lofa County, where he spent six months for allegedly writing "false news" articles against the PRC government which were circulated abroad.

**July**

The PRC government passed into law Decree 88A, which empowered security forces to arrest and detain a person without bail on the charge of first degree felony if he/she accuses any government official or any other individual either by mouth or writing or by public broadcast or any act which constitutes the commission of a crime. Said to be intended to protect the public against the spread of rumors, lies and disinformation, most critics saw the decree as a ban on free press and free speech.



**October** Official cornerstone laying ceremony for the Central Programming Unit of the Liberia Rural Communications Network (LRCN) was conducted in Paynesville, outside Monrovia. The \$18.7 million project was a joint Liberia-U.S. government venture to expand broadcasting to rural Liberia. Talks for the project, initiated in 1979, were continued after the 1980 coup.

**1985**

**February 16** Journalist Tom Kamara, chairman of the public affairs committee of the Liberian People's Party, was arrested and detained by security officers, but soon his whereabouts became a mystery as he escaped prison and went underground. Fearing that he may have been secretly killed by the government, public mistrust of the government increased as embarrassed security officials could not produce Kamara for public viewing.

**June (?)** *Footprints Today* publisher Momolu V. Sackor Sirleaf and Klon Hinnah, sports editor, sued the Government of Liberia in an unprecedented lawsuit for "false imprisonment" after they were detained for 55 days in 1984, without a charge. Consequently, the government re-arrested them a few days later and charged them for a "breach of security." However, the two journalists were released in September due to an "executive clemency" by President Samuel K. Doe.

**July (?)** The Press Union of Liberia issued its first Code of Ethics.

The *Daily Star* newspaper is closed down by the government after its first publication because the government said management violated a law that says that

“aliens are not permitted to own or operate national commercial newspapers” in Liberia. Government suspected foreign ownership.

- August** The PRC government banned the *SunTimes* newspaper “for publishing erroneous headlines or articles” in its August 14 issue, although the government did not deny the veracity of the articles in question.
- November** Charles Gbenyon, editor-in-chief of the Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS), is allegedly murdered at the Executive Mansion under unexplained circumstances following the aborted coup led by former PRC Commanding General Thomas Quiwonkpa. He may have been the first journalist to be killed directly on orders of a Liberian president.
- November 18** The Press Union of Liberia was among five organizations banned by the PRC government, as part of a crackdown following the aborted Quiwonkpa coup attempt. Although no reasons were given, the ban lasted for 97 days, ending in February 1986.
- 1986**
- February** The Executive Committee of the Press Union of Liberia was forbidden by the Minister of Justice from holding a scheduled meeting for March 1, even though the ban on its activities had been lifted.
- March** A few days after the *Daily Observer* was reopened, after a one-year ban, its building in Monrovia was reportedly destroyed by fire suspected of being arson.

**August** President Samuel K. Doe performed groundbreaking ceremony for the multimillion dollar National Radio Station, in Paynesville, near Monrovia.

**1987**

**August** The first dissertation to be written on the newspaper press in Liberia, titled, "Liberian Journalism, 1826-1980: A Descriptive History," was successfully defended by Momo K. Rogers, Sr., in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in journalism at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

**1989**

**August** The National Communications Commission was established by the Government, with its secretariat located at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, with responsibilities to harmonize working relationship between the press and government. Also, it was to stipulate, among other things, policies and regulations designed to safeguard Liberia's sovereignty in respect of changing communications technologies in the airspace.

**1991**

**August** After the arrival of ECOMOG (the peacekeeping force of the Economic Community of West African States, followed in November by the arrival of the Interim Government of National Unity in Liberia (IGNUL) in Monrovia, the city began to recover from the civil war that led to the overthrow of the Doe government. The unexpected result was the sudden proliferation of new

newspapers, including three dailies: *Monrovia Daily News*, *The Eye*, and *The Inquirer*.

**November** *The Liberian Age*, which first appeared in 1946, but had its name changed after the April 12, 1980 coup to *The Redeemer*, was revived, with the new edition a continuation of the old with "Vol. 45, No. 1."

**December** Radio station ELWA, which first went on the air in 1954, resumed broadcasting by rebuilding and testing its new FM equipment after its facilities were destroyed during the civil war when rebels of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) occupied the religious broadcasting compound in Paynesville, near Monrovia.

## 1992

**January 2** The president of the Press Union of Liberia(PUL), Isaac Bantu, was jailed by Prince Johnson, leader of the breakaway rebel force of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia. Johnson also jailed Daniel Brown, an executive member of PUL because both journalists failed to publish the unverified Johnson's press conference, announcing an assassination plot on his life.

**January** The minister of information in the Interim Government of National Unity, Lamini A. Waritay, reaffirmed IGNU's commitment to press freedom in Liberia, during remarks honoring the first anniversary of the birth of the independent newspaper, *The Inquirer*.

The first newspaper whose main function it was to poll and publish the opinions of citizens on the peace process,

*First National Poll*, was launched. The weekly was published by Infotech Consultants, whose president was Monie Captan.

**August** Radio station ELWA resumed shortwave broadcasting, reviving a full schedule disrupted by the civil war.

**1993**

**December** *New Democrat Weekly*, published and edited by Tom Kamara, appeared, noting in its debut editorial that "We are determined to be a newspaper with a difference. We will take interests in matters in which others have no interests."

**1994**

**??** Radio Monrovia, the nation's first talk radio station went on the air, founded and operated by Charles Snetter, who served as the station's manager. This also may have been the first privately owned, commercial FM station in Liberia.

**1995**

**November 14** Tom Kamara, editor of *New Democrat Weekly*, warned the public that press freedom and free expression were once again in danger, noting that Justice Minister Francis Garlawulo was acting outside of the courts in an attempt to silence those who point out the "inadequacies" of leaders (especially Charles Taylor) on the Council of State.

**November 30** Security officers attempted to close down offices of the *New Republic* newspaper after that day's issue carried a

story that Councilman Charles Taylor had demanded money as refund for the funeral of NPFL's legislators A. C. Farcarthy and A. W. Nyesuah.

**December 5** George Boley and Charles Taylor, both councilmen on the ruling Council of State, held a joint press conference during which they accused the press of being bias, unprofessional, and journalists untrained. They accused journalists of negative reporting.

**December 6** The President of the Press Union of Liberia, Sam Van Kesselly, was suspended for time indefinite during an emergency meeting that looked into his acceptance of a position as Press Secretary to one of the warlords who is a member of the Council of State. Kesselly was said to be in violation of Article IX, Section Two, of the PUL's Constitution, which forbids such political affiliation of its elected officers.

**1996**

**April 6** The most violent fighting yet among the nation's warring factions erupted in Monrovia, effectively closing down all newspapers and broadcast outlets in the country.

\*This chronology is an excerpt from the forthcoming book, *Dictionary of Liberian Journalism* written by the author.

(?) indicates that an exact date could not be found.

(??) indicates that the month is not known.

**Best, Keith Neville Asumuyaya. *The Other Side of Roots (Liberia): Chronicle of Self-Destruction Foretold*. 1994, 117 pages.**

Usually, a review of a book such as *The Other Side of Roots (Liberia): Chronicle of Self-destruction Foretold*, would devote itself almost entirely to the content, and only at the very end would the author be given a pat on the back for a job well done, or a cuff to the ear for the sin of omission. Neville Best deserves both. At more than just 100 pages, the book is hardly long enough to justify its making references to events that culminated in the decline and fall of Africa's oldest republic South of the Sahara. So why bother making references to some of the events that led President Tolbert, the most progressive leader that Liberia has ever had, to trample his way to a splendid downfall? The author goes into neither detail nor spells out the strengths and weaknesses that led to the downfall.

This is not an enchanting memoir of a childhood in Liberia. It is a series of disconnected incidents in the life of an intelligent and sensitive young Liberian. The book is fragmented, filled with light and serious poetry, and written with a touch so deft and graceful that turning its pages is, indeed, a pleasure. Neville, you see, is a poet, and this little book is littered with a few poems of astonishing beauty, *la sensibillite*, and exquisite turn of phrase, my favorite being "The Vision" (pp.44-47), a description of what lies ahead for a nation living in a whirlpool of sin, greed, corruption, social injustice and lacking faith in God.

The author's prologue seems to suggest that Liberia was an ideal homeland for American blacks who were experiencing racial discrimination in the United States. Thus, attempts were made to maximize Liberia's appeal to American blacks who became freed slaves to settle on the continent of their origin. But once they were settled, they began to systematically mete out to the indigenes the same treatment that they had

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

suffered at the hands of white Americans.

The book then moves to the author's education. Concerned with his education, Neville's mother teaches him the English alphabet and the rudiments of arithmetic. He presents his mother as a kindly, even-tempered lady, who is a bit irked by her son's occasional misdeeds. Nevertheless, she stands her ground and sends her son to Crozierville to be taught by Albert Porte, the epitome of honesty in a society that is Janus-faced. Later, he continues his education at the Ganta United Methodist Mission in Nimba County where he encountered bigotry at the hands of students of indigenous background. This sectionalism-ethnicity divide had been pinpointed earlier by Edward Wilmot Blyden and other prominent Liberians.

The narrative eventually moves to the author's desire to acquire a university education which begins in Lesotho and ends at the University of Liberia. At the University of Liberia,

**This is not an enchanting memoir of a childhood in Liberia. It is a series of disconnected incidents in the life of an intelligent and sensitive young Liberian.**

Neville Best becomes the editor of *Revelation*, a publication that aired students' grievances on academic and national issues. Eventually, however, the magazine ceased publication because of its blatant coverage of the Porte-Tolbert libel case--The late Albert Porte had written a pamphlet, *Liberianization or Gobbling Business*, a candid expose of the corrupt dealings that brought into being the Mesurado Groups of Companies. The pamphlet remains today as a major documentation of Liberian business culture in general. Neville and other students of the University of Liberia were arrested and imprisoned. They were released from prison when the fine of \$17,000 was paid into the national treasury. A second stint in prison taught Neville a lesson he will never forget.



The most enthralling part of the book, inevitably, deals with the events that led to the downfall of President Tolbert. This begins with the rice riots of April 14, 1979 when Gabriel Baccus Matthews, leader of the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL), and his supporters decided to stage a demonstration against the increase in the price of rice, the nation's staple, from \$22 to \$30 a bag. In any event, the march turned into a riot. Many Liberians lost their lives and hundreds of others were wounded. President Tolbert had preached a philosophy of from-mat-to-mattress. He also emphasized the importance of food production and a nation being able to feed itself. In sketching the inside story, Neville Best seems to scotch President Tolbert's philosophy and political machinations, suggesting what some Liberians had suspected all along: the renegeing on his philosophy and tightening his grips

on the freedom of thought and utterance which he had earlier espoused. Thus, the decline and fall of the First Republic on April 12, 1980, was not

**The most enthralling part of the book, inevitably, deals with the events that led to the downfall of President Tolbert.**

that Liberians were not law-abiding citizens, but that it was the President who was, with his capricious advisers and officials, the fly in the ointment.

In the epilogue, Neville Best tells the reader what motivated him to flee with his family to the United States: the nation's affluence and abundance of food in its supermarkets. The epilogue also contains a number of memorable poems such as "Great Men," "The Blind Beggar," "Wake Up--1972" and "Life," which seem to be a universal metaphor for the human condition.

Commendable though the little book is, it does have some weaknesses.

The major weakness is that a book of this length cannot do justice to the events that precipitated the downfall of Africa's oldest republic South of the Sahara. A price has to be paid for this wider scene-painting. In the end, Mr. Best has not left himself enough room to explore any of the events in depth. He whets the reader's appetite by making only brief references to significant national events. The reader is left disappointed. This failure to analyze what significance the events signaled in bringing about President Tolbert's downfall is a recurrent weakness of the book. So concerned with Neville Best in reminding the reader that he was an integral part of that drama that he backs away from the material that would have provided an in-depth analysis even where it does exist. Moreover, in view of the series of disconnected events that the author narrates, he should have titled the book simply *Fragments*.

Despite this weakness, Neville Best affords a panoramic view of Liberian society of the past, showing how Liberians--young and old alike--at work and prayer, at school and

at home, cared for their country. Yet it is hard to hear their voices, their anxieties, and anger in a book of this brevity. Readers will have to fill in the cries, in-depth analysis, and criticisms for themselves. In the meantime, Liberians can rest-assure that the peace and stability that they had enjoyed in the past have gone for good.

Robert H. Brown  
Colchester, Essex  
United Kingdom

**The major weakness is that a book of this length cannot do justice to the events that precipitated the downfall of Africa's oldest republic south of the Sahara.**

**Bolton, Bill. *Just Keep on Walking: An African Odyssey*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, 1995, 311 pages.**

This book is one American's personal account of his years in Liberia from 1978 to 1991. The author divides his book into three parts of unequal length. The first section, 20 percent of his account, concerns his work with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). He was assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture from 1978 until the mid-80s, first in Monrovia and later in Suacoco. This section also contains the author's tale of establishing his own pig farm on the St. Paul river near its mouth with the Atlantic just north of Monrovia. The second section comprises the bulk of the book, about 70 percent, and contains Bolton's descriptions of the relationships with Liberians on and near his farm and his encounters after the Civil War started with the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), Prince Johnson's forces, and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). In the last section, 10 percent of the book, Bolton gives his opinions and observations about Liberia and Liberians, the Civil War and possible ways to end it, and the role of the United States government in Liberia under the rule of Samuel K. Doe.

Bill Bolton had had a long career on the Louisiana State University campus in Baton Rouge before accepting his assignment with USAID in 1978 to work with the Ministry of Agriculture on transforming the agricultural economy of Liberia. He soon learned that any change, whether initiated by Liberians or foreigners, was opposed by virtually all officials in the ministry as they had an established interest in some aspect of the status quo. And herein lies a problem with Bolton's book. He ceaselessly criticizes Liberian bureaucracy (and certainly there is plenty to criticize) but he never sets his criticism in a larger context to show to what extent bureaucracy in Liberia is or is not more rigid than their counterparts in other countries of West Africa, in the Third World as a whole, or in the West, for

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

that matter.

There are exceptions to this picture of bureaucratic inertia. Bolton portrays then-Minister of Agriculture Dr. Cyril A. Bright, who served during the last years of President William R. Tolbert, as a person who set out to reorganize the ministry to improve agriculture and the lives of Liberia's small farmers. This effort came to a premature end with the April 1980 coup which brought M/Sgt. Doe to power and Bright's subsequent execution along with twelve other high-ranking government officials.

Soon after the coup, Bolton is transferred to the agricultural research station at Suacoco, where the USAID-funded project to

**This book is one American's personal account of his years in Liberia from 1978 to 1991.**

provide guidance and technical research was not going well. In Bolton's narrative, it is difficult to develop much sympathy for either the Liberian agriculture employees at Suacoco or the American USAID personnel. According to the author, the Liberians were greedy, avaricious, and wasteful, and the Americans were bumbling, incompetent, and ignorant of how to approach their tasks within the context of the host country's culture. Needless to say, the project did not lead to beneficial results for Liberia's farmers.

Bolton's most interesting section is the 70 per cent of the book which discusses his experiences with various insurgent groups. Although the author's Liberian wife and children left the country, Bolton himself remained behind on the pig farm hoping to save it from destruction. The writer's notion--that one American could prevent by his mere presence the havoc the warlords were wreaking on all of Liberia from occurring on his farm--was, of course, foolish, irrational, and arrogant.

Concerning his contact with the principal rebel forces in 1990 and 1991, Bolton's assessment is that Prince Johnson's men were the best trained and best behaved toward civilians. His views on the AFL and the NPFL were mostly negative. Bolton gives yet another vivid description of various sorts of atrocities which the combatants perpetrated on innocent civilians. Although these outrages have been well documented in the past by both Liberians and foreigners, Bolton's account does reinforce the view that the armed boys and young men in this conflict preferred to prey on civilians than to confront each other. In fact, one of Bolton's themes is that the fighting will not end in Liberia until the West African peace keeping force, ECOMOG, and other restraints to all-out fighting are removed and one of the Liberian factions emerges victorious over all the others. In the long run, Bolton maintains, fewer Liberians civilians would suffer in a relatively short all-out struggle than by the current process of achieving numerous cease fires which do not hold.

The inevitable fate of Bolton's farm is, of course, that it is destroyed and he loses everything. The combined firepower of ECOMOG, the NPFL, and the AFL destroy the farm buildings following which

**(Bolton) maintains ... that development projects fail in Liberia, ... Africa and the Third World because no effort is made to harmonize the goals of the project with cultural forces....**

various fighters and civilians steal all the pigs and equipment. In poor health and thus unable to get to Monrovia, Bolton is sheltered by several different Liberians in nearby towns before an NPFL operative, Patrick Diah, who had befriended him numerous times, helped the author in March 1991 to escape to Sierra Leone, first to Kenema and then to Freetown, the Sierra Leonean capital. From the Sierra Leonean capital, Bolton finally flew home to Louisiana.

The last section of the book reveals some of Bolton's opinions on Liberian life. He maintains, among other things, that development projects fail in Liberia (and by implication throughout Africa and the Third World) because no effort is made to harmonize the goals of the project with cultural forces at the family, "tribal," and government institutional levels. Even more of a hinderance, Bolton contends, are the government officials who manage to squelch any promising economic project because of their vested interests in the "old order."

Bolton's judgments on American responsibility in the development of the Liberian quagmire are virtually all negative. He faults Washington for supporting Doe and his repressive government throughout the 1980s, expending extra disgust at the U.S. apologies for the November 1985 election which Doe and his cronies blatantly stole. The writer also condemns the U.S. government for its inability, or unwillingness, to do anything to prevent the Civil War from continuing for year after agonizing year.

Bolton does, however, fall victim to hoary myths and stereotypes which Westerners often hold about Africans. For example, Liberians do

**The author's impressions of Liberia and Liberians are mixed, often contradictory.**

not reciprocate hospitality nor show initiative, writes the author, as he says of one Liberian employee, "like all the workers [on my pig farm], he didn't listen to instructions and took little pride in what he did." What seems strange in these assertions is that Bolton often describes the actions of various Liberians he knows or who work for him which belie these stereotypes. Included in the latter would be the Liberian Bolton presumably knows best--his wife-- and numerous other people who come into the author's life.

The author's impressions of Liberia and Liberians are mixed, often contradictory. He complains that Liberians rarely display "acts of spontaneous sympathy and kindness" (page 216), yet he himself was often the

**He faults Washington for supporting Doe and his repressive government throughout the 1980s, expending extra disgust for the U.S. apologies for the November 1985 election which Doe and his cronies blatantly stole.**

recipient of such random acts of kindnesses, whether from Archbishop George Browne of the Episcopal Church or from Liberians who sheltered him for weeks after his farm was destroyed. Bolton sees Liberians as ready to steal whatever they could from him, whether that be pigs on his farm or money from his wallet--and he does give numerous vivid accounts of just such incidents. But people do not act in an ordinary manner in wartime. The author, however, never seems to realize that just as some people rise to acts of altruism, even heroism, many others respond to situations abnormally as a result of overwhelming wartime deprivations, hardships, destruction, and killing. Surely, the recent wars in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia also demonstrate this truism. Bolton, himself, at times suspected that his judgments of Liberians were too negative, as he wrote, "For a long time I maintained illusions about going back and trying to start over. I loved our place. And I loved Liberia and Liberians, despite what must sometimes sound like harsh judgements [sic], although not so intended or felt." (page 272).

Let me end this review in a manner similar to its beginning. Bill Bolton's provocative account represents one American's earnest effort to describe and

analyze his experiences in Liberia in the turbulent years from 1978 to 1991. There is much here that is informative, even instructive, and much with which many people will disagree. Read this book and decide for yourself where you stand!

Richard A. Corby  
University of Arkansas at Monticello



**Browne, Herman. *Theological Anthropology: A Dialectic Study of the African and Liberation Traditions*. London: Avon Books, 1996. pp. 344**

Herman Browne's book provides the provocative thesis that African Liberation Theology carries within it-- the inevitable conflict between African cultural understanding and western socio-political liberation. His display of the two distinct religious traditions of African Traditional Religions and Latin American Theology is provocative in the midst of burgeoning liberational theologies which often concede a similar *telos* toward the liberation of the oppressed. For Browne, there is no such similarity in *telos*, and in fact, liberational theologians often overlook the disjunction between the dialectical polar qualities described between an African cultural cosmology and an egalitarian socio-political imperative. Browne defends African Traditional Theologies in the sense that African religious logic is transmitted through communities and ancestral antiquity, a transmission dear to the African heart, whereas, the legacy of the Enlightenment fosters the understanding that African societies inevitably adopt a value of socio-historical liberation. Herein is the crucial problem for Browne, namely --whether Enlightenment values can be accommodated and given expression in the theology of African Traditional Religion. Browne's thesis is that no such accommodation can be made. In the end, Browne does not so much seek a synthesizing analysis as much as a clarification of the difficulty in advancing a theological synthesis between African and Latin Liberational Theologies.

The first section of the book reveals and affirms the West African religious tradition.<sup>1</sup> Browne, however, names the preconditions of socio-political understandings left unsatisfied when reflected upon in African Traditional Religions. In this first section, Browne foreshadows that an alternative Latin American theology in the second part of the book may reveal the most poignant contrast.

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

Therefore, in the second part of the book Browne describes a Segundovan Liberationist Anthropology; herein is the best descriptive foil to African Traditional Religions. Now, the opposition of an African anthropology and a liberationist anthropology becomes clearer in part two because these two traditional liberative frameworks are further distinguished. On the one hand, African Theology tends to be more cultural in analysis, indeed, to be purely African in its analysis. And on the other hand, Latin Theology does not seem to fully admit the cosmology projected from the symbolics of African Traditional Religions.

In Browne's third section, he uncovers reasons why the antithesis between African and Latin theologies have been obscured by theologians, inculturalists and liberationists alike. The last part of the book is Browne's invaluable evaluation of the theological discussion among African theologians

**Herein is the crucial problem for Browne, namely-- whether Enlightenment values can be accommodated and given expression in the theology of African Traditional Religions.**

claiming a commitment to socio-political liberation while still using the categories of African Traditional Religious thought. In the end, Browne posits the critique that African Traditional Theology cannot bear the weight of a liberationist expectation. Since Browne is mostly interested in the practical function of religious claims, he concludes that the axiological, symbolic and existential messages of the African Traditional Theology do not only obscure the historical process of liberation, they silence and deny its value.

### Methodological Concern

This book is a revised version of Browne's doctoral thesis submitted to the University of London. As with many doctoral theses, the writer attempts to find the answer to ancient questions in the milieu of an academic institution. It is in this attempt to accomplish "original research" that Browne's theological anthropology itself becomes overwhelmed. Browne wants to accomplish many tasks simultaneously. One task is to examine conflicting theological traditions by contrasting their basic understanding of human existence. Another task is derivative and secondary to the purpose of the book but remains significant, thinks Brown: This task is to critically engage the trend in African Theological discourse to subsume liberation language' within

African Traditional God-talk, without giving sufficient attention to whether African Traditional Theology can sustain such sociopolitical liberation. Another

**(Browne) argues that African Traditional Theology subverts the value of socio-historical liberation in popular religious consciousness.**

task is to build on the hermeneutic of North American Black Theology which tends to be more racial and cultural in analysis than Latin American Liberation theologies, which tends to be more socioeconomic in analysis. Another task is to see how human agency in African Traditional Religions is viewed differently by the respective liberational theologies. The immensity of Browne's tasks can leave the reader asking whether there really is a dialectic or a repletion of antitheses. And yet the power of Browne's work is his challenge against unwarranted assumptions while at the same time understanding the important impact provided by liberational theologies.

Browne's specific critical tool is developed by the Uruguayan theologian, Juan Luis Segundo, who distinguishes realms of value and that of ideologies,

as well as his own methodical application of these categories to theological reflection. Browne depends on Segundo to provide appropriate theological categories to assess the historical values subsisting in a theological system. Browne himself in some way, however, needs to acknowledge that the church in Latin America does not fit Browne's caricature of western Enlightenment's primary value of the individual. More ecclesiastical analysis may provide Browne a synthesis he may not suspect.<sup>2</sup> For comparison, Browne chooses Latin

American Theology simply to show more clearly what is being denied in African Traditional Theology. If Browne admits that there is an historic church, however institutionally linked to colonialism, in both Latin America and Africa, he may have to confess a positive role

**Browne's work is extremely important reading in that he provides the critical assessment of how some African Liberation theologians of African Traditional Theology provide the symbolic theological tools to interpret African reality.**

of human agency both communally and individually. In other words, the church may redefine Browne's understanding of the apolitical role in African Traditional Theology. As Browne's argument stands, he argues that African Traditional Theology subverts the value of socio-historical liberation in popular religious consciousness. And Brown shows that the value of African liberation is neither upheld nor warranted by the reasoning of Latin liberation theology and thereby does not justify an assumption of the compatibility by those theologians who seek theological justification for similar sociological concern.

## Conclusion

Browne seeks the logical conditions which make intelligible any theology revolving around the value of socio-political liberation. For Browne, "liberation" entails a reading of the human condition that discovers basic domination by other human persons. This condition leads to an investigation of the value claims, namely, the basic condition of human domination must be understood theologically as victimizing, discriminating and undeserving. This leads to a consideration of any recourse to divine power and how this divine power is to be understood primarily as an assistance to ameliorating historical suffering. Browne's work through these logical conditions leaves him with a differing outcome between how African and Western people see liberation and God's presence in oppression. Browne seeks to correct those who assume that there is no differing outcome. One of Browne's purposes is to incite clarity about what the real values are when theologians, committed to the historical project of liberation, do not subject their own (indigenous) ideologies to that commitment. To Browne's credit, from the beginning, he does not question the commitment of these theologians, but the ideology that is accompanying their commitments and thereby frustrating their project of any unitive liberational theology.

Browne concludes that the logical conditions for the possibility of a theology committed to socio-political liberation are not satisfied by the thought-categories of African Traditional Theology. In fact, the axiological, symbolic, and existential claims of both African Traditional Theology and the Latin American Theology are incompatibly opposed. He further concludes that although the core value of African Traditional Theology is internal resistance and endurance in the creative order, which is compatible with the core value of Latin Theology, the axiological and symbolic ideologies that ensure resistance and endurance undermine the value of how each individual determines and names the historical process of liberation.

Browne's work is extremely important reading in that he provides the

critical assessment of how some African Liberation theologians of African Traditional Theology provide the symbolic theological tools to interpret African reality. A reality different from western notions. The core of Browne's insight exposes the incoherence of human agency in what African Liberation Theology seeks to promote and in what African Traditional Religion presupposes. Browne wants to expose these inconsistencies and present a critique of contemporary African Liberation Theology by investigating the conditions of the possibility of such a theology. In his conclusion and Browne proceeds from the concerns of those who suffer, and in acquiring their perspective, ends up indicating a more honest environment in which conflicting ideologies must be acknowledged.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>In particular, Browne investigates the theological anthropology of seven West African Traditional Religions (i.e., the Akan and Tallensi in Ghana; the Kalabari, Igbo and Yoruba in Nigeria; the LoDagaa in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Togo; and the Mende in Sierra Leone and Liberia).

<sup>2</sup>For a good example of why an analysis of the church matters in theological analysis, See Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.

Michael Battle  
The School of Theology  
The University of the South

Boikai, Jerome Zack. *Bringing and National Development in Liberia*. Detroit, MI., 1996.

Brown, Robert H. "Life Broken Promise." *Short Story International* No. 113. Great Neck: N.Y., 1997

Burrowes, Carl Patrick. "Modernization and the Decline of Press Freedom: Liberia 1847 to 1970." *Mass Communication Monographs* 160. AEJMC: Col 1996.

Chater, Corin Nicolas Anan. "Keeping in Africa Towards 2000: A Viable Option." *University of Gelp* (Canada). *MAI* 34/06 p. 2229.. Decem 37 pages.

Cordor, Similih. "A Comparative Analysis of the Changing Sociopolitical Role and Status of Western-Educated Intellectuals in Africa With Particular Reference to Liberia and Ghana: A Study of Writers, Journalists, Educators and Other Literary and Intellectual Groups in Contemporary African Societies." Ph.D. Dissertation. The Pennsylvania State University (0176). *DAI-A* 57/08. p. 3413. Feb. 1997, 545 pages.

Dolo, Emmanuel. *A Survey of Liberia Entrepreneur Economy: Implications for Building Civil Society*. 1997.

Guseh, James S. "Government Size and Economic Growth in Developing Countries: A Political-Economy Framework." *Journal of Microeconomics*, Winter 1997, Vol. 19, No. 1, p 175-192.

Hart, Barrett S. "Repairing the Effects of Threats to Ethnic Identity: Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Workshops in Liberia During the Civil War." Ph.D. Dissertation. George Mason University (0883). *DAI-A* 57/03

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

p. 1277. September 1996, 384 pages.

Lancy, David F. *Playing on the Mother-Ground*. New York: Guilford Publications Inc., 1996.

Scott, Minear and Weiss. *Humanitarian Action and Security in Liberia 1989-1994*. Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies, 1996.

Shaka, Richard John Morte. "Understanding Theologies of Mission and Evangelization in Post-Conciliar Roman Catholicism and Assemblies of God With a Focus on English-Speaking West Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana)." Ph.D. Dissertation. Duquesne University (0067). *DAI-A* 57/03. p. 1190, September 1996, 437 pages.

Smith, Stephen. *Background to Problems in Liberia and Sierra Leone: Bibliography With Addenda*. *World History Archives*.

Tolbert, Victoria Anna David. *Lifted Up: The Victoria Tolbert Story*. Minneapolis: Macalester Park Publishing, Inc., 1996.

University of Pennsylvania, African Studies. *Country map of Liberia*.



## PRESS RELEASE

**Today is :** Monday, May 5, 1997

**For Release :** Immediately

**For more information contact:** C. William Allen  
Editor, *Liberian Studies Journal*  
(864) 503 5645

The Liberian Studies 29th Annual Conference will be held at Prairie View A&M University in Prairie View, Texas. The conference will elect a new corps of officers at its April 3-6, 1997 session at Prairie View A&M University.

The conference theme was "Technology Transfer to Africa in the 21st Century."

Those elected include:

Professor **Massala Prince Reffell**-- President  
Dr. **Ciyata Dinah Coleman**-- Vice President  
Dr. **Dianne Oyler**-- Secretary-Treasurer.

Also elected to the Board of Directors is Maj. **Timothy A. Rainey**, an instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and a doctoral candidate in history at Johns Hopkins University. Maj. **Rainey** has a long standing research interest in Liberia.

Retaining positions on the LSA Board of Directors are: Dr. **Walter T. Wiles**-- Immediate Past President; **Margaret Deconte Brumskine** a Liberian Attorney-at-Law based in New York who also teaches law at

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

Barauch College, and Dr. **C. William Allen** who also serves as Editor of the *Liberian Studies Journal*.

Other key decisions taken at the 29th Annual Meeting:

- The 30th Annual Meeting will be sponsored by Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Georgia.
- The 32nd Annual Meeting in the year 2000 is scheduled to be held in Liberia, security conditions permitting, under the joint sponsorship of the University of Liberia and Cuttington University College. A planning committee headed by Dr. **D. Elwood Dunn** was charged with putting together the modalities for hosting the conference, billed as **LSA 2000**.

The Conference kicked off with a Plenary Session on the Prairie View Campus on Friday, April 4, and ended with a Closing Banquet and Fashion Show on Saturday, April 5 at the Ramada Plaza Hotel at 12801 Northwest Freeway in Houston with Dr. **Melvin A. Mason**, President of Cuttington University College as the banquet's keynote speaker. The Conference featured many panels:

- "Global Computer and Information Technology Science Revolution;"
- "Human Resources and Culture;"
- "Building Professional and Human Resource Bridges Between Africa and African Americans;"
- "Male Chauvinism in African Marriages;"
- "US-Liberia Relations;"
- "Defining 21st Century Science and Technology in Terms of Liberia's

and Africa's Needs;"

- "Political, Social and Economic Factors: Strategies for Liberia, Africa and Pan Africa;"
- "The New Economic Order: Impact and Consequences, Self-Sufficiency, Environmental Issues;"
- "Internal & External Sources of Needed Technology & the Impediments & Possibilities for On-Going Research: The New World Order;"
- "Africa and the New Millennium."

The primary goal of the Liberian Studies Association, now entering its third decade, is to study the interdependence of political, economic, social and scientific factors that affect free and open scholarly studies and presentation on democratic development in Africa and Liberia. The Association publishes the *Liberian Studies Journal*, a semi-annual refereed interdisciplinary journal.

**Membership** in the LSA is open to anyone with a scholarly interest in Liberia directly, or which has implications for Liberia. There are three categories of membership: Institution or individual on pay \$50.00 per year; Individuals pay \$40.00 per year, and students pay \$15.00 per year. Membership also includes an annual subscription to the *Liberian Studies Journal*. Persons interested in membership should contact: Dr. **Dianne Oyler**, Secretary-Treasurer LSA; Department of History; Minot State University; 500 University Avenue West; Minot, ND 58707.

**Editor's Note.** This document was provided to us by Mr. **Willie R. Davis**, a Liberian who is recognized as an astute collector of photographs, documents, and other items related to Liberia or with implications for Liberia. The editors think that on this 150th Anniversary of Liberia's independence, it is appropriate to reproduce it here. We have tried, wherever possible, not to alter the original wording of this piece.

**"The American Colonization Society has proved a Triumphant Success."**

**-- Abraham Lincoln, January 1865**

### **Liberia 50 Years Ago.**

Just fifty years ago (1819), a report of the slave trade in the British Parliament estimated that over twenty thousand slaves were annually shipped from the Western coast of Africa, between the Equator and the Sahara. That whole coast was dotted with slave baracoons. The only human activities seen there were those employed in catching, branding and shipping the captured negroes, amid all the horrors of the middle passage, into hopeless bondage.

### **The Work Begun**

The discussion on the subject of slavery in our collonial [sic] days, awakened the public mind to reflect, and the public conscience to feel the wrongs inflicted on the suffering race.

In 1773, **Dr. Samuel Hopkins** of Newport, R.I., established a school for educating colored young men for missionaries in Africa. While he was carrying on his school, some of the wealthy merchants in his parish were employing their ships and their capital in the slave trade.

*Liberian Studies Journal*, XXII, 1 (1997)

The war ended his school. The Doctor had learned that Euro had established several mission protection against the slave trad

in 1784. Mean time ies in the last century all failed for want of es.

In 1789, **Dr. Thornton** proposed to take for the want of funds.

ny, but the plan failed

It was now determined that a colony must be sent and a society formed to sustain it. Circulars were issued for funds. A society was formed in Newport, R.I. In 1791 The Connecticut Emancipation Society was incorporated with power to act as an educational and colonization society. **Dr. Hopkins** died in 1805, but the influence of his earnest labor lived, and the minds of good men in every part of the country were drawn to reflect and to see that colonization was practicable and beneficent.

Another event had its influence. While **Sir Henry Clinton**, with the British Army was in the South, during the Revolutionary War, he proclaimed freedom to the slaves-- 4000 came to his camp and were employed in the camp and in the ranks. At the close of the war, **Sir Henry** found himself in the predicament of the man who never drew the elephant in a lottery-- he did not know what to do with his elephant. These slaves were shipped to Nova Scotia, then re-shipped to England, and finally placed as a British Colony in Sierra Leone. Thus, that colony was of American origin.

In 1815, **Paul Cuffee** of New Bedford, from a cabin boy, rose to be the owner and master of a ship. He carried out thirty free negroes ad settled them in Sierra Leone, being driven by slave traders from his intended site. The American Colonization Society was at Washington in January 1816.

Forty-seven years ago (1822), **Jehudi Ashmun** sailed on the Brig *Strong*, with less than 100 sable men and women, and planted the first

permanent settlement on Cape Messurado. Two parties had sailed before him, but were repelled from the coast by the pirates and slave traders. One of these parties landed at Siera [sic] Leone, the other on Sherbro Island, some miles from the coast. These parties, now uniting with Ashmun's company, formed the germ of the present African Republic-- A Nationality for the African race.

Fifty vessels have carried out emigrants to the number of 14,222. These, with their children born there, and educated in the Liberia schools, form a Christian population, of American origin, of over 20,000. In all these voyages there has never been the loss of an emigrant, by accident or drowning, during the voyage, a fact, probable, without a parallel in ocean service.

Just three months after **Ashmun** landed, the settlement was assaulted by about 800 natives, instigated by the slave traders. They were repulsed by thirty-five colonists, capable of bearing arms. The natives made a second attack, Dec. 2nd, 1822, [sic] with twice their former numbers, and were again totally defeated. This repulse settled the question of the rights of the colony for all future time.

From 1822 to 1847, the colonies were governed by Agents of the Colonization Society. In 1847 they became a *united and independent sovereignty*, acknowledged by fifteen of the leading Governments of the world.

### **Liberia in 1869**

What do we see, to-day, as results of fifty years' labor of the Society?

We see the foreign and domestic slave trade and polygamy utterly abolished on 1000 miles of the West coast. We see there a well-regulated Republic, geographically as large as New England, with a Constitution like our own, wisely administered by colored men. We see there 20,000

Americo-Liberians, in some 40 different settlements; 5,700 re-captives from slave ships,-- civilized, educated in the Liberia schools, assimilated to Christian habits, and received as citizens in the bosom of the State. Some of these re-captives are now effective preachers of the Gospel and members of the Legislature. We see 600,000 of the native population, within the Republic, cheerfully obedient to its laws-- speaking the English language, and having already a civilization of a higher order than that of the masses of ancient Greece and Rome-- for it is a civilization that is informed and moulded, to some extent, by Christianity. We have a College there, with an able faculty of liberally educated colored men, and 40 students in the collegiate and preparatory departments; three Academics, and our New England system of District Schools introduced. The steam engine is there-- the sugar mill, and the printing press, that great instrument of civilization. Two or three newspapers are published there, edited with ability, in the various columns of which we see all the indications of a prosperous and thriving State.

But, best to all, there are sixty-two or three Churches there, in which are found about 2,000 converts from the native population. *We are doing the Foreign Missionary work there as fast and as effectively as it is done by any Board of Mission.*

Every time the Society's ship sails she carries out one or two Churches. Take an example: the *Golconda* sailed from savannah May, '68. Besides some 70 communicants in other Churches, she carried one complete Baptist Church from Columbus, Ga., an educated colored Pastor, two Deacons, and some 40 members. That Church settles in one of the native towns; every member of it is practically a Missionary.-- a living illustration of the benefits and blessings of a Christian civilization. *Here is organized Christianity*, doing the work much faster than by the common method of sending one or two preachers, with their wives, who must labor five, ten or fifteen years before they have converts enough to form a Church. The Colonization Society places a whole Church on the field of effort. Its members are

adapted to the climate, are of the same race, color and sympathies as those whom they seek to bless, and the work of assimilation goes right on.

Such is Liberia today. It is, through God's blessing a "TRIUMPHANT SUCCESS." The Colonization scheme *was and is* a noble conception, encircling, in its wide and benevolent embrace, a nation of slaves, a continent of heathens, and the future peace of our country.

### **The Cost Financially**

And the whole cost of this fifty years' work, for purchase of territory and transporting emigrants, has been (\$2,662,057) two millions, six hundred and sixty-two thousand and fifty-seven dollars! This is less than the average daily cost of our war, during the last half year of its continuance! *When and where* has so much been done, in the interest of Christian civilization, as so little cost?

In these results the words of our Saviour,-- Matt. 4:16-- find their fulfilment: "The people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light hath sprung up." In ever a people were "in darkness and the shadow of death," it was the tribes of the coast fifty years ago. How great the contrast between *then* and *now*.

### **Shall Not This Work Go On?**

More than 2,500 Freedmen, including nearly thirty licensed preachers, have spontaneously applied to the American Colonization Society for passage. A few single men can, perhaps, pay their own passage,-- \$30; but they go by families, and, being just out of slavery, the most they can do is to provide themselves with a scanty outfit with which to begin life in a new country.

Do you ask "Why they should go?" For many good reasons:--



**1st.** Africa is their own white men. For a thousand years placing pestilence at her gates to keep were stolen to serve for her won children, ious white man.

**2d.** There they can have social eq family as a gift from the Go owners of land, every es of good land; every single man, ten acres.

**3d.** Because they are assured by their friends in Liberia that the conditions of the Americo-Liberians, in Africa, is vastly better than that of the most favored Freedmen here, in respect to the quality of their houses, quality and abundance of food, clothing, and all home comforts, and means of acquiring property.

**4th.** They should be aided to go, that they may carry our Christianity, our on, literature and arts to the millions whom God has made *ready* to receive them.

Christ loved Africa. It was the land that received and protected him from the cruelties of Herod

Africa is to be converted. The incipient work must be done by her own children, suited to the climate. White men cannot live there. Their average length of life is but about eleven years, while that of colored preachers, from America, is twice or three times that.

Poor Africa has been sadly overlooked by our Foreign Missionary Boards. From the appropriations last year, of the five leading denominations for Foreign Missions, *only one dollar out of seventeen* is for the heathen of Africa. Yet, if there is any one portion of the heathen races that has stronger claims upon us than any other, it is the heathen of Africa. We have inflicted on them unutterable wrongs. We stole them from their country. They have contributed largely to our national wealth. Their unpaid toil has spread out

tables with luxuries. At great hazard to their own lives, they helped us subdue Rebellion. They were all the true friends of our sons and brothers during the war. How well they behaved.

We own them a debt which no arithmetic can compute,-- a debt that we shall never pay. Let us be just and generous. Let us speed the work of Africa's redemption by giving it our sympathies, our prayers, and our liberal contributions. We find the form and measure of our duty to these freedmen in the Divine Word, Deut. 15:12-15.

"And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, he sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

"And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:

"Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.

"And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to-day."

Any contributions sent to the undersigned, at Burlington, Vt., will be thankfully received, and forwarded to the Society at Washington.

J.K. Converse,  
*Agent American Colonization Society*

**Bertha Baker Azango** served with the Ministry of Education (Liberia) from 1953 to 1980 as Director of Student Personnel Services and Evaluation, Assistant Minister of Education for Planning and Research and Deputy Minister of Education for Planning and Development. Associate Professor and Research Associate at the University of Liberia, 1980-1984, and Director of Research, 1984-1990. She obtained the Educational Specialist Diploma from Columbia University in 1966, the M.Ed. Degree from Rutgers University in 1957, the M.A. Degree from Boston University in 1953 and B.S. Degree from Spelman College in 1951. She was awarded the Doctor of Science Degree (*Honoris Causa*) by Cuttington University College in 1975. As a prolific writer, Mrs. Azango has 20 publications on Liberian Education to her credit, including a book, *Vocational Guidance for Liberian Schools*, Macmillian, 1966. She also wrote a novel, *Image and Influence* (Tabletop Printing), 1993.

**Michael Battle** is assistant professor of spiritual and moral theology at the School of Theology at the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, and former adjutant to Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Battle's forthcoming book: *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*, is expected in June and will be released by Pilgrim Press.

**Kenneth Y. Best** is a fellow at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center in New York City. Before his fellowship at the Media Studies Center, he was journalist-in-residence at The American University in Washington, D.C. Best, a Liberian, is a newspaper publisher and journalist, who served as managing director of the Liberia Observer Corporation, publishers of the *Daily Observer*. He also served as publisher of the *Gambia Daily Observer*. He is a past president of the Press Union of Liberia, 1986-1987.

**Amos J. Beyan** is associate professor of history at West Virginia University in Morgantown. He has a Ph.D. from the same university. He is the author of the book: *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State: A Historical Perspective, 1822-1900*, United Press of

America, 1991. He has two books in progress: One on the life experiences of John B. Russwurm; he is also co-editing the second edition of *A Historical Dictionary of Liberia*, scheduled for release by Scarecrow Press in 1997.

**Robert H. Brown** is assistant professor of English at the University of Liberia, has had his sixteenth story, "Elegy for My Country" accepted by the editors of *Short Story International* in New York. His novel, *To Seek a Newer World*, is still being assessed by an Oxford publisher for possible publication.

**Richard A. Corby** is a professor of history at the University of Arkansas at Monticello where he teaches a two-semester survey of world history and upper division courses on Africa and the Middle East. He previously held faculty positions at Cuttington University College in Liberia, the University of Florida, and the University of Illinois.

**Similih M. Cordon** (formerly S. Henry Cordon) writes fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. He is currently professor of humanities & communications/literature/English at Florida Community College at Jacksonville. He has taught at several other institutions in Liberia and the United States including Monrovia College, the University of Liberia, and Kennesaw State University in Georgia. He was a Writer-in-Residence at Macon College in Georgia (1993), a Visiting Writer at the University of Miami (1992), and Visiting Scholar in English at the University of Texas in Austin (1989). Cordon was educated at the University of Liberia, the University of the State of New York (Albany, and the Pennsylvania State University where he took his M.Ed. And Ph.D. degrees. His publications include *The Study of Africa* (1978), *Africa, from People to People* (1979), *Facing the Realities of the Liberian Nation* (1980), *New Voices from West Africa* (1980).

**Yekutieli Gershoni**, is associate professor of African history; lecturer in the

Department of Middle Eastern and African History and Aran School of History, Tel Aviv University; Supervisor at Open University, Tel Aviv; Visiting Research Fellow, Hoover Institute, Stanford University, California (1986 - 1987); Visiting Scholar in the Department of History, Stanford University, California (1987-1988); Head of African Studies at Tel Aviv University (1994-1996); Visiting Research Fellow at the African Studies Center, Boston University, Massachusetts (1996-1997). Recent publication: *Africans on African-Americans: The Creation and Uses of an African-American Myth*, New York, London: New York University Press, MacMillan, 1997.

**James S. Guseh** has a B.A. in Economics from Brandeis University, an M.S. in Economics from the University of Oregon, a joint J.D.-M.P.A. in Law and Public Administration from Syracuse University, and a Ph.D. in Political Economy from the University of Texas at Dallas. He has served in senior policy positions in the Government of Liberia, as Legal Advisor and Economist in the Ministry of Finance and as Assistant Minister of Justice for Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Justice. He has taught at the State University of New York in Fredonia as a professor of Law and Political Economy. He is currently a professor of Political Economy and Public Policy and Director of the Center for Alternative Programs at Shaw University. He has published articles in *Current Politics and Economics of the United States*, the *Journal of Macroeconomics*, the *Liberian Studies Journal*, and *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. His research interests include the political economy of development, public sector economics, government reorganization, electoral politics, and defense economics.

**Hannah Abeodu Bowen Jones** has a Ph.D. in history. She is former chair and professor of history at the University of Liberia. She served as Liberia's Ambassador to the United Nations, Minister of Health, and Minister for Post and Telecommunication in the Liberian government.

**George Klay Kieh, Jr.** is associate professor of political science at

Morehouse College. He has published extensively on African and Liberian politics. Among his publications are the book *Dependency and the Foreign Policy of a Small Power: The Liberian Case*, and a monograph-- *Ending the Liberian Civil War: Implications for United States Policy Towards West Africa*. He has a forthcoming book on Repression, Rebellion and the Liberian Civil War.

**Momo K. Rogers, Sr.**, a media consultant, is president and publisher of Kpazolu Media Enterprises in La Vergne, Tennessee. Kpazolu publishes *Liberia Updates*. Rogers has a Ph.D. in Journalism from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

**Boikai S. Twe** is a 1971 graduate of Ricks Institute in Virginia Liberia, who worked with the Urban Youth Council in Monrovia in 1972-1973 as the Coordinator of Vocational Guidance and Counseling. He completed his B.A. degree (Psychology) in 1976 at Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, masters program in Clinical Psychology at Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1979, and his Ed.D. in Educational Psychology (1985) at the University of Cincinnati. He has published several articles on education and psychology and has an upcoming book on African Psychology. He has served as President of the Liberian Studies Association (1995), President of the Dayton Area Liberian Association (1993-1995), and Coordinator of the African American Studies program at Sinclair Community College (1992-present). He is also currently serving as Professor of Psychology and African-American Studies at Sinclair Community College, National General Secretary of the All Liberian Conference of North America, President of the Board of Directors of the McClendon Institute of Learning, an African-American independent school in Dayton, Ohio, and as the Chairperson of the *Rafiki* (friend) Council of the Dayton Chapter of the *Simba Na Malaika Wachanga* (Young Lions and Angels organization).

## NOTES

.

## NOTES



## NOTES

## NOTES

**Map on back cover:**  
**Molnar; Geography**

**by William Kory, cartography work by Jodie**  
**of Pittsburgh at J**

