

**LIHEDE Symposium on Collective Security**  
**- October 29-30, 2004 -**

*The Liberian History and Education Development, Inc organized a two-day symposium under the theme: Promoting Civil Liberties, Collective Security and Development in Post War Liberia on October 29 – 30 on the campus of North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, North Carolina. The symposium was attended by more than 12 Liberian organizations in the United States as well as individual participants. The symposium highlighted the enormous constraints facing the nation as well as pinpointed solutions needed to put Liberia back on its feet. The attached list of participants as well as the list of the various panels will give an indication of the quality and seriousness of the discussions that went far beyond rhetorical presentations to finding applicable solutions to existing problems.*

**The Opening Ceremony**

Mr. Marvin Dickerson, Chairman of the Board of LIHEDE, the Board, opened the symposium at 8: 50 am on Friday, October 29, 2004. In his remarks, the Chairman welcomed North Carolina A&T State University Vice Chancellor David Hoard; Greensboro Councilwoman Carolyn Small Bellmay who represented the Mayor, Liberian officials and participants to the Symposium; leaders of Liberian organizations, students as well as the general public. Mr. Dickerson briefly reviewed the agenda for the two-day long symposium that brought together more than a dozen of Liberians organizations in the US as well as individuals from every corner of the nation.

As he briefly went over the agenda, Mr. Marvin Dickerson noted changes that occurred due to the travel delays. Also, government officials, the Ministers of Justice and Information who were planning to attend the meeting could travel due to civil unrests that had broken up in Monrovia, reminding all of the fragility of peace process at home. Mr. Dickerson invited the public to make comments and the agenda.

After the official opening of the symposium, Reverend Wheigar J. Bright, Jr. of Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina gave a spirited invocation.

Speaking on behalf of the North Caroline A&T State University, Vice Chancellor David Hoard, welcomed participants to the first LIHEDE Symposium jointly sponsored by NC A&T State University, Bennett College for Women and LIHEDE, Inc. Chancellor Hoard noted that the symposium will help Liberia identify gaps and practical solutions in development and assist the Liberian people as they make recommendations to the Liberian government later this year. Chancellor Hoard commended the Executive Director of LIHEDE Dr. Sylulwa Somah and the organizing committee for their initiative to help Liberian redevelopment after 14 years of civil war.

Vice Chancellor Hoard acknowledged that Liberia has a special relationship with the United States, especially African-Americans, relationship that needed to be strengthened. He further said that his university was available to respond to any need that would make the gathering have an excellent deliberation.

On her part, City of Greensboro Special Representative Councilwomen Small Bellmay thanked LIHEDE for the invitation to welcome the participants in Greensboro, North Carolina. Ms. Bellmay presented the official key of the City of Greensboro to the Keynote Speaker, Monsignor Dr. Robert G. Tikpor as well as maps and an official pen to each presenter at the symposium. Councilwoman Bellmay acknowledged the plight of the Liberian people and said that it was time Liberians come together in such forums to dialogue and charter a road for lasting peace, prosperity and good governance for their nation.

Bennett College Vice President, Dr. Claudette Williams, welcomed participants at the Symposium. She briefly discussed her personal historical connection to the African people as a Jamaican who is now an American but still cherishes her African roots. Dr. Williams reviewed the purpose of the Symposium, stating that it is in line with any nation seeking sustainable development after a protracted civil conflict to map out plans to identify where the nation is, where it want to go and how it will get there.

Nat Gbessegee gave an Overview of the Symposium program and welcomed his fellow compatriots, asking them to reflect deeply on the future of Liberia as it emerges out of more than 25 years of military rule and instability. Mr. Gbessegee reminded Liberians that those in the Diaspora have a unique responsibility in thinking things through and helping the government and people of Liberia in chartering a new course for their devastated nation. He said this symposium was a first that would be followed by many more events to be organized by LIHEDE. He thanked the host universities and the city of Greensboro for their warm welcome.

In a very inspiring welcome statement to the participants, the Executive Director of LIHEDE, Dr. Syrulwa Somah, gave a brief overview of the Goals of LIHEDE and Recognition of Symposium Participants. Dr. Somah said that the world was watching this event and that it was time that the sons and daughters at home and abroad, the "brightest minds of Liberia" did some meaningful to rescue their country.

After introducing a dozen US-based Liberian community and professional organizations, including the Liberian Associations of Charlotte, Durham, Greensboro, the Liberian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Good Governance, the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA), the Metro Council of Negro Women, the Sinoe County Association, UNIBOA, UNICCO, the Sunday Group, an NGO on Mental Health, the Association of Liberian Journalists in America (ALJA), Dr. Somah called forth Liberian native 76 years old Sarah Moore who had only heard about the symposium and felt compelled to jump on a bus to attend the deliberations. Dr. Somah went on to

remind his fellows Liberians “we owed it to ourselves to do good” because Liberia has the capacity to emancipate itself from this self created dungeon.

Dr. Somah said that “as Liberians, we have a challenge and an opportunity right before us on this day, at this historical crossroad to make an indelible difference in the history of our nation that will not only draw applause from our parentage but preceding generations.” Pursuing his remarks, the Executive Director said: “Our generation, unlike any preceding ones, is the more exposed, most wildly traveled and most educated be it by commission or omission; be it by our own will and unmanageable conditions in our immediate environment or Liberia. But whatever the case may be, we can find courage and vision within the inner sanctum of our heart and use our nation predicament as a rallying point for nationalism, patriotism, national reconstruction of our mindset, political, economic, social and spiritual pillars of our nation.”

Stressing the meaning of the symposium, Dr. Somah said: “LIHEDE asked you to come because our nation has become the child who refuses to grow up,” and he called on Liberians who have acquired knowledge and wisdom to move their nation forward. According to him, “We (this generation) have the ultimate responsibility to call Liberia and whisper in her inner ears about what it means when the whole world is fed up with your nonsense or refusal to develop into adulthood. ”

In a plea to the attentive assembly, Dr. Somah added “It was commendable that many Liberians have acquired education, training, experience and therefore it befell on them to come up with solutions to address the ills affecting the nation. What difference does it make if all this education does is to create criminal enclaves, make piranhas into soldiers, and make foxes into judges, hawks the patrolmen and women around the “hen house.” Liberia would ask of us “You lawyers, doctors, engineers, nurses, pastors, Imam, Priests, peacemakers, how did you use your education, training and experience to foster meaningful national development, education, jobs, human rights, national construction, protection of human life, and the environment when I (Liberia) needed you the most when I was lying in my sick bed”? We must be prepared to answer such question and provide some concrete answers for the God of Liberia on that day if we failed as a collective people to advance our nation just as sons and daughters of America have developed their nation into one of the greatest nations in the world. If the God of Liberia cannot forgive us for our deeds, the rest of the world will never forgive us, especially if we, the most educated generation of Liberians, allow the country to die on our o'clock. ”

Father, Dr. Robert G. Tikpor of the Catholic Diocese of Liberia Father, gave the Keynote address of the symposium. The Catholic prelate spoke of religion in post-war Liberia. Tracing the history of the Catholic Church in Liberia, he spoke on its early involvement in Liberia, especially its many attempts to prevent the country from losing land to Guinea and Ivory Coast. He emphasized the work accomplished by many religious leaders in the areas of education, health and mostly in preaching peace throughout the ages. During the war, the parochial

schools were the only ones that remained open; the only medical centers where people could receive treatment were run by religious orders. He added that throughout the years of conflict, there was a strong bond of cooperation between Muslim and Christian leaders who created the Interfaith Mediation Committee to lay out foundations for the peace process back in 1990. He called on Liberians to be tolerant of each other's feeling and be humble, because, he said those were important conditions for any people to come together and accept one another.

### **Presentations & Discussions**

The symposium started with deliberations on various topics dealing with the recovery process of Liberia. Speakers presented several great papers; some academic while others took a practical approach to problems of reconstruction and development. The various panels were organized in different formats.

Among the presenters, Dr. Cyril Broderick established a direct link between agriculture and stability. He told the audience that peace and agriculture go hand in hand and that Liberia must emphasize agriculture as the path to development and stability. Mrs. Mia Quipu Yuan, an agronomist, spoke on "Women & Small Business Development in Post-Conflict Liberia. Dr. Emmanuel Dolo discussed Mental Health and Social Rehabilitation, stressing the need for every Liberian, victim or perpetrator of the years of violence to have some type of mental health assistance and how to build institutions dealing with the problem. Mrs. Madea Reeves-Karpeh, a former president of ULAA spoke at length on the historical role played by women such as Secretary of State of Education Ellen Mills Scarborough; President of the United Nations-Trusteeship Council and President of the General Assembly of the UN Angie Elizabeth Brook-Randolph, Susana Lewis, the designer of the Liberian flag to contemporary women like Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Ruth Perry, Roberta Rashid, outgoing female President of ULAA and herself, the first female president of UNIBO, ULAA, respectively and who have made meaningful contribution to our nation.

Lt. J. Kessel Tarley, a Liberian in the US military presented a paper on the reorganization of the Liberian military and pinpointed the weaknesses of the past military culture of the country. His topic prompted a lengthy discussion on the role of the military in the new Liberia.

The outgoing president of ULAA, Mrs. Roberta Rashid called on Liberians in the Diaspora to be advocates for their country and work with government for the recovery process rather than acting as if they were in the opposition. Echoing his words, Mr. Charles A. Minor, Liberian Ambassador to the US said in a letter read at the Conference that beyond criticism, Liberians must put their efforts into finding solutions for the reconstruction of Liberia. He pleaded with Liberians to be advocates for Liberia wherever they find themselves and each one must consider him/herself an ambassador for the cause of nation building.

During the two days of discussion and brainstorming, Liberians and others academics and friends of Liberia discussed various strategies necessary to put the nation on track and heal the wounds caused by the war. "Cultural Diversity and National Unity," "Local and Foreign Policy," Press Freedom and Civil Liberties," "Health and Services and Rehabilitation," "National Security and Public Safety," and "National Development and Strategic Planning" constituted few of the many topics, through which various speakers unveiled theoretical approaches to putting the pieces of Liberia back together.

**There were many notables presentations, however, only few of the speakers made copies of their papers available that we briefly present here.**

### **Women and Agriculture**

Mia Quipu Yuan, Bsc, Agriculture, Former President, UNICCO, Agronomist spoke on Women and Small Business Development in Post-Conflict Liberia. In her presentation, Ms. Yuan said, "if the affliction of poverty, Civil War, hunger and environmental problems are to be alleviated in Post-Conflict Liberia, Liberians must find viable ways to create a process of economic growth that would raise both the standard of living and quality of life in the country. This will entail infrastructure, policy and institutions that encourage self-reliance and economic independence. In pre-conflict Liberia, agriculture constituted the mainstay of the majority of our people. As Liberia moves into another historical era, all efforts must be made to enhance agricultural practices, promote food security and protection of our forest as well as the environment. Improved crop production, conservation, native seed sources, storage capability, market opportunity and constraints as well as transportation must all be analyzed." She emphasized, "The formation of agricultural farmer cooperatives and associations would an important aspect of empowering farmers in general and the women in particular," adding that land tenure was a crucial issue to be tackled in the new Liberia.

She concluded her paper by saying: "The Liberian economy remains based on agriculture, which is reliant on low input technologies. In the near future, these land intensive economies will have to master technology to compete with the capital and/or labor intensive economies. Key ingredients are appropriate national policies and effective innovations to involve women in small business development. Women must continue to promote the evolution of customary tenure systems and gender equality under the law must be advocated. Development strategies that include women are more likely to alleviate poverty in a sustained way. Women will need to fully participate in market mediated economic growth. Difficulties with access to credit and land will need consideration by policy-makers in the new Liberia. Liberian women are critical to plans to feed our people, raise animals, rear children and sustain the environment."

### **Press Freedom and Civil Liberties**

This very important panel comprised many outstanding journalists who spoke about the difficulties journalists have faced throughout the history of the nation. To introduce the discussion, Mr. T. Nelson Williams, Sr., former Chairman of the Department of Mass Communications, University of Liberia who presented a paper on the subject of the freedom of the press and its responsibilities. Following are excerpts of his communication:

“As a purveyor of information, the news media and their managers, owe it to themselves and to the society, to give accurate and unbiased presentation and interpretation of the news. The suppression of any news item, for any consideration other than the welfare of society, is indefensible.”

“Secondly, as an educator, the media have the responsibility to educate their publics on all issues affecting the well being of the Liberian society. As the conscience of the people, they cannot afford to glorify politicians for doing what they are paid to do. They can maintain their status as torchbearers in the vanguard of press freedom, if they put Liberia first in their editorial decision making process and not in their pocket books. During this period of transition, the media must also strive to promote national integration, development and social mobilization. As agents of change and development, they must teach the rural inhabitants the revolutionary approach to agriculture, by introducing simple and inexpensive methods by which the rural dwellers can produce enough food to feed themselves.”

“And thirdly, as an entertainer, the news media are the primary redeeming values that will help in the rehabilitation of the hundreds and thousands of young Liberians that have been traumatized by this unfortunate war. Special radio and television programs, especially for children, should be aired constantly to rehabilitate the youth whose minds have been traumatized and emotionally damaged by the civil wars.”

The presentation by the former Chair of the Department of Communications at the University of Liberia was followed by a discussion facilitated by Cllr. Philip A. Z. Banks, former Minister Of Justice of Liberia and Former Member of the Council of State of Liberia. Others on the panel included Dr. Abdoulaye W. Dukule, Media & Policy Consultant & Associate Editor at The Perspective Online Magazine, Ruth Yvonne Nelson, Student John Hopkins University, Maryland and Mr. Sam Togba Slewion, Journalist

### **Health Services and Rehabilitation**

A lengthy discussion on public health and rehabilitation sprung from the presentation on Power Point by Mr. Gerry Corneau and Ms. Victoria Rapozo, of the ENCOMPASS GROUP working in collaboration with a group of Liberian women who had organized themselves into a non-governmental organization (NGO) under the name The Sunday Project. The main objective of the group consists of creating a model for rehabilitating children and mentally challenged adults in Liberia.

With the discussion centering on the dangers of importing “foreign made” social models into Liberia, the group defended its project as one conceived by Liberians and who intend to go on the ground to involve other Liberians in preparing the ground work. The Sunday project is based in Rhode Island and has been carrying out fundraising activities.

Dr. Emmanuel Dolo, Principal Investigator, Minority Mental Health Service Utilization Research Project, Lifeworks International Evaluation and Consulting, also discussed Mental Health & Social Rehabilitation in Liberia in a presentation that dealt mostly with issues related to trauma and the recovery process after a protracted period of instability in the country. He said that without reinsertion programs to rehabilitate former fighters as well as victims of the 14 years of violence, Liberia would continue to be plagued by mental health issues that could undermine stability and peace down the road.

After Dr. Dolo's presentation, Mr. Nyan Flomo, ABD, RN, Public Health Nurse, Guilford County Health Department spoke of the threat posed to Liberia by the HIV/AIDS. He pointed out that the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees from the sub region as well as the presence of thousands of international workers and peacekeepers are all phenomenon that facilitate the spread of the deadly disease. In addition, he said, the poverty caused by the war has made sexual commerce a fact of life in society and this is also another way of spreading the disease. He said massive education would be needed to prevent epidemics.

### **National Security and Public Safety**

The issue of national security and public safety was discussed from two perspectives. On the one hand, Dr. Lawrence Amos Zumo spoke of the necessary moral character and inner strength as well as cohesive efforts needed to move the country forward. On the other hand, Lt. Jonah Kessel Tarly (US Army) addressed himself to the military aspect of security and pinpointed what he considered as the main constraints of the Liberia military and what solutions were needed to secure not only the Liberian state but also to ensure that the military does not become a force of disruption of the social order.

Dr. Zumo said Liberia was at a critical juncture and would depend on the rational choices made by Liberians collectively, openly and these choices must be implemented. He argued that the task at hand required solid inner fortitude, extreme discipline, foresight and a level of patriotism never before experienced in our nation. “We need new bold thinking and action. It is in this vein, using our utmost imaginations and analytical skills.”

Dr. Zumo also proposed that Liberia enacts new laws to deal with the new economic and political order the world has entered into. This would include an Economic & Security Crimes Act which should be enacted by the Legislature and not passed by Presidential Decree as it should survive each succeeding president because this of perpetual national interest.

He also called for the establishment of an External Economic Intelligence Service (EIS for short) whose function will be to gather, process, and appropriately disseminate useful economic/manufacturing mechanisms and processes from places we have visited abroad that we can readily adapt to our setting for rapid economic integration as part of our long term strategic goal.

Dr. Zumo gave many examples of cases where Liberia, rather than importing manufactured goods, could easily rely on its domestic productions. For examples, said he, "We have ample sugar cane supply but we still import sugar; we have cassava but still import flour, etc; we can make and export quality whisky and wine from sugar cane, rice, etc; yet we spend enormous money on importing whiskey; we have coconut, palm nut, etc; yet we die to import cooking oil. We have "jologbo" for worms, yet we yearn for worm medicine from abroad; we have Raulwolfia trees with abundant recipes, yet are dying waiting for imported high blood pressure medicines, without considering investing in local natural products chemistry; we have abundant mango, guava, etc but we are dying to buy jam from abroad; oranges and other citrus fruits; yet we await juices from abroad; we have trees and wood but we want imported furniture; abundant fish but can't wait to buy canned sardines; abundant coco and coffee but we can't wait to get our morning oval tine; etc, etc."

Speaking on the issue of the military, Lt. Jonah Kessel Tarley (US-Army) said that he strongly believed that the military has an unrivaled capacity to project force. This makes it an important tool for asserting state authority, enforcing the rule of law, and protecting the nation against external aggression.

In his very detailed presentation, Lt. Tarty said that unfortunately, such power, if not properly managed, could also pose a serious threat against civil authority as has been demonstrated numerous times in several African countries. African states' failure to exercise effective civil control over the military is manifested by their highly politicized armies, recurrent coups and armed rebellions. Because the armies in Africa lack viable external threats, they become one additional political party, just to have something to do.

Lt. Tarty said that in essence the military remains the most prominent and observable threat to democracies in Africa. Corruption is frequently used as an excuse for military coups. Coup makers points to various and sometimes, verifiable examples of government corruption. This wins immediate support for the coup makers, but does not stop corruption. Coup makers have led some of the most corrupt government in Africa.

According to Lt. Tarty, studies have shown that coup makers are usually worse than the government that they replaced. With proper training the new Liberian Military could avoid this devastating trap. His presentation and recommendation focused on key issues related to the following:

- Reasons for Military coups;
- How to prevent Military coups in Liberia;



- Organizing a professional Military;
- Composition of the Liberian Army;
- The role of society and the State in building a professional Military;
- Effective strategies for keeping the Military in the barracks;
- Educating Military personnel and citizens on the ills of Military coups;
- Dynamics of civil-military relationship;
- Constitutional and organizational issues and;
- Strategic Military and security considerations for the new Military

Following these presentations, a panel comprising among others Mr. Niece Forkpah, Association of Liberian Journalists in the Americas (ALJA), Panelists: Mr. Robert A. Garguah, Sr., Former Investigator, CID, Republic of Liberia, Dr. James S. Guseh, Professor, North Carolina Central University, Former Assistant Minister of Justice, Republic of Liberia discussed the arguments and made suggestions.

### **Proposal for an All-Liberian Diaspora Conference**

At the end of the last day of the symposium, the main topic for many participants was the holding of a national conference of Liberians in Diaspora to take place prior to another such conference held in Monrovia. This was an outstanding topic from the July 2004 symposium organized by the embassy of Liberia in Washington, DC. At the end of that meeting, participants agreed to continue consultations with a view of calling for a general conference of US-based Liberians and Liberian organizations. Although there was a consensus on the holding of such of forum, the sticking problem has been that of agreeing as to who would convene the forum.

Among those taking part in this panel were Professor D. Elwood Dunn, Professor of Political Science; University of the South, Sewanee; Dr. James Tarpeh, Former Ambassador to Nigeria; Dr. James S. Guseh, Mr. Bodioh Siapoe, National Chairman, Coalition of Progressive Liberians in the Americas (COPLA), Mr. Elijah J. Tarpeh, Network Planning & Daimler Chrysler Corporation, MI; Isaac S. Zawolo, Regional Vice President/Eastern Region, ULLA; Mr. Miamen Z.Z. Wopea, President United Nimba Citizens' Council.

Following the symposium organized by the embassy, a one-day meeting was held in Baltimore and the issue as to who would take ownership of the conference caused a rift between various groups who wanted to serve as convener. In Greensboro, with the urgency of the situation at home as a backdrop, advocates reached a compromise and they agreed that ULAA would call a meeting of Liberian organizations in America. That group would set up an independent steering committee that would take on the organization of the National Conference, scheduled to take place in the next couple of months.

The symposium came to a close after this agreement. The Executive Director of LIHEDE invited all participants to a Liberian buffet at his home. He reminded one and all that this first successful meeting would be convened again in a year time to review progress made and to keep pushing for outstanding issues.

## **List of Sessions and Panelists**

### **Cultural Diversity and National Unity**

Rev. J. Emmanuel Z. Bowier, Former Minister of Information, Culture & Tourism, Liberia

#### **Liberian Socio-Cultural Realities & the Challenge for Nation Building**

Dr. Mariah Seton, Education Consultant

#### **Ethnic Diversity and Socio-Economic Development in the New Liberia**

Mr. Bai M. Gbala, Former Presidential Political Advisor, Liberia

#### **Decentralization in the New Liberia: Pros and Cons**

### **Local and Foreign Policy**

Dr. Abraham L. James, Former Assistant to President W.V.S. Tubman; Adjunct Professor of History at The Coney Institute, Saint Joseph's University, Pennsylvania

#### **Redefining Liberian-American Relations in the New Liberia**

Cyril E. Broderick, Sr. (Ph.D.), Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources, Delaware state University

#### **Food, Agriculture and Peace in Liberia**

Dr. C. William Allen, Minister of Information, Culture & Tourism, Republic of Liberia

#### **Government Policies and Update on Current Developments in Liberia**

Mrs. Mia Quipu Yuan, Former President, UNICCO, Agronomist

#### **Women and Small Business Development in Post-Conflict Liberia**

### **Press Freedom and Civil Liberties**

Cllr. Kabineh Janeh, Minister of Justice, Republic of Liberia

#### **Justice and Civil Liberties in Post-Conflict Liberia**

Mrs. Madea Reeves-Karpeh, Former President, Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA)

#### **The Role of Women in Post-Conflict Liberia**

Mr. T. Nelson Williams, Sr., Former Chairman, Department of Mass Communications, University of Liberia

#### **Free Press & Responsibility in the New Liberia**

Panel: Philip A. Z. Banks, Alvin Teague, lawyer, Hon. J. Napoleon Torque, II, National Chairman, Consolidated Registered Political Parties (CRPP) G-9, Dr. Abdoulaye W. Dukule, Media & Policy Consultant & Associate Editor, The

Perspective Online Magazine, Ruth Yvonne Nelson, Student John Hopkins University, Maryland; Mr. Sam Togba Slewion, Journalist

### **Health Services and Rehabilitation**

Mr. Gerry Corneau & Ms. Victoria Rapozo, The ECOMPASS GROUP  
**The Sunday Project: A Model for Rehabilitating Children and Mentally Challenged Adults in War-Weary Liberia**

Dr. Margaret Kromah, DDS, MPH, General Dental Practice:  
**Confronting the Spread of Hepatitis B (Yellow Jaundice) in Post-Conflict Liberia**

Dr. Emmanuel Dolo, Principal Investigator, Minority Mental Health Service Utilization Research Project, Lifeworks International Evaluation and Consulting, MN  
**Mental Health & Social Rehabilitation in Liberia**

### **National Security and Public Safety**

Lawrence A. Zumo, MD, Neurologist  
**Imperatives for Collective Security in the New Liberia**

Mr. Tarty Teh, Sr. Deputy Commissioner of Maritime, Republic of Liberia  
**Improving Airports and Highways in Liberia**

Lt. J. Kessel Tarley, US Military, United States Veteran Hospital, New York  
**Reorganization of the Liberian Military**

### **National Development and Strategic Planning**

Mrs. Roberto Rashid, Former President, ULLA & Mr. Arthur Watson, Current President, ULLA  
**A New Partnership for Liberia's Development**

Mr. Varney Yengbeh, Turfs University:  
**Liberian Peace Processes: What Went Wrong? And The Way Forward**