

# Liberian Literary Magazine

# KWEE

Dec Issue

Iss. # 1228

**HAPPY  
CHRISTMAS  
HAPPY  
HOLIDAYS**

**Mohammed  
Donzo Dolley**

**Author of  
the Month**

**Book  
Reviews**

**LIBERIAN CLASSICS  
GIFTS OF THE MASTERS  
RESURRECTED MASTER**

**Unscripted  
Liberian  
Proverbs**

Words of Nia  
Janice Almond  
Kpana Nnadia Gaygay

**Featured Poets:**

Althea Romeo Mark  
Richard Wilson Moss  
Aken Wariebi  
Cher Antoinette  
John Eliot  
Jeanine Milly Cooper  
Jack Kolkmeier  
Berenice Mulubah  
Sylomun Weah  
Josiah F. Joekai  
Lekpele M. Nyamalon  
Alonzo Gross  
Renee' D Brown  
Hialil Karahan

Liberian Literary Magazine

# KWEE



*Liberian*

*Literary*

*Magazine*

### Overview:

#### New Look

Hurray! You noticed the new design as well right. Well thanks to you all, we are here today. We are most grateful to start our print issue. This would not have happened without your dedicated patronage, encouragement and of course, the belief you placed in our establishment. We look forward to your continual support as we strive to improve on the content we provide you.

#### Our Commitment

We at Liberian Literature Review believe that change is good, especially, the planned ones. We take seriously the chance to improve, adopt and grow with time. That said we still endeavor to maintain the highest standard and quality despite any changes we make. We can comfortably make this

commitment; *the quality of our content will not be sacrificed in the name of change.* In short, we are a fast growing publisher determined to keep the tradition of providing you, our readers, subscribers and clients with the best literature possible.

#### What to Expect

You can continue to expect the highest quality of Liberian literary materials from us. The services that we provided that endeared us to you and made you select us as the foremost Liberian literary magazine will only improve. Each issue, we will diversify our publication to ensure that there is something for everyone; as a nation with diverse culture, this is the least we can do. We thank you for your continual support.

**Place your  
ads with us  
for as low as  
\$15**

### Overview

Segments

From the Editor's Desk

Diaspora Poet - Althea Mark

Bai T. Moore's Poem in Gola

Authors' Profiles

Mohammed Dolley's Interview

Book Review

Resurrected Masters

Random Thoughts

The Hunter's Dilemma

Runett Ebo Gray's Interview

Finding Meaning in Everyday

John Eliot's Interview

Living - JANICE ALMOND

Unscripted: Cher Antoinette

Martin Kollie-Article

'Twas Briggling

Liberian Proverbs

RuNett Ebo Gray's Interview

Words of Nia

Aken-bai's

According to Eliot

Poetry Section

12 Days of Christmas: A

Liberian Christmas

Gifts of the Masters

New Releases

Meet the Team

Around Town

**Liberian  
Literature  
Review**

## *Segment Contents*

### *Editorial*

In our editorial, one should expect topics that are controversial in the least. We will shy away from nothing that is deemed important enough. The catch theme here is addressing the tough issues

### *Risqué Speak*

This new segment to our print covers the magical language of the soul, music. It will go from musical history, to lyrics of meaning to the inner workings of the rhythm, beats, rhyme, the way pieces connect and importantly, the people who make the magic happen.

Our host and or his guests will delve into the personal life of our favorite musicians, bands and groups like those that we have not seen. This is more than their stories; it is more like the stories behind the stories. They'd shine the spotlight on the many people that come together to make it all happen on and off stage. Watch out for this segment.

### *Kuluba's Korner*

The owl spills out wisdom like no one else; won't you agree? Our own KLM hosts this corner and she shies away from nothing or no one with her whip- the **truth**. They say fewer things hurt more than the honest, uncoated truth. Well, she does that but with spices of humor and light-heartedness like only her can.

### *Authors of the Month Profile*

This is one of our oldest segments. In fact, we started

off with showcasing authors. It is dear to us. Each month, we highlight two authors. In here we do a brief profile of our selected authors.

### *Authors of the Month Interview*

This is the complimentary segment to the Authors of the Month Profile one of our oldest segments. In here, we interview our showcased authors. We let them tell us about their books, characters and how they came to life. Most importantly, we try to know their story; how they make our lives easier with their words. In short, we find out what makes them thick.

### *Articles*

Our articles are just that, a series of major articles addressing critical issues. A staffer or a contributor often writes it.

### *Book Review*

One of our senior or junior reviewers picks a book and take us on a tour. They tell us the good, not-so-good and why they believe we would be better of grabbing a copy for ourselves or not. Occasionally, we print reviews by freelancers or other publications that grab our interests.

### *Education Spotlight*

Our commitment and love to education is primary. In fact, our major goal here is to educate. We strive for educating people about our culture through the many talented writers- previous and present. In this segment, we identify any success story, meaningful event or entity

that is making change to the national education system. We help spread the news of the work they are doing as a way to get more people on board or interested enough to help their efforts. Remember, together, we can do more.

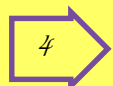
### *Artist of the Month*

We highlight some of the brilliant artists, photographers, designers etc. We go out of the box here. Don't mistake us to have limits on what we consider arty. If it is creative, flashy, mind-blowing or simply different, we may just showcase it.

We do not neglect our artist as has been traditional. We support them, we promote them and we believe it is time more people did the same. Arts have always form part of our culture. We have to change the story. We bring notice to our best and let the world know what they are capable of doing. We are 100% in favor of Liberian Arts and Artists; you should get on board.

### *Poem of the Month*

Our desire to constantly find literary talent remains a pillar of our purpose. We know the talent is there; we look for it and let you enjoy it. We find them from all over the country or diaspora and we take particular care to find emerging talents and give them a chance to prove themselves. Of course, we bring you experienced poets to dazzle your mind!.



## Editor's Desk

### The Year Ahead



2016 is swinging and thus far, things are on the up. This is our new issue and I am excited for many reasons. We have an improved line up, some segments have changed and others shifted, whilst yet others are, well, NEW.

It appears that we might outdo ourselves this time around. Each issue, we see a better [KWEE](#) and for that we remain thank to you. Yes you. All of you that have stayed by us, that take time off to read and support us in the different ways you do. Thank you once again.

I will try to let nothing out of the bag too early, although I can't promise. The excitement is too much to contain.

Oh here is a teaser, but I'd deny it if quoted☺! Oops, did I just type that? There goes my plausible deniability.

Anyways, I'm one that likes my bad and not so good news first, that way, I can enjoy the good ones. So here it goes. Our hot corner [Kulubah's Korner](#) by our sharp wit KLM will not be with us for a while. Sad right? Don't worry, she's not gone yet, trust me, she is on a refresher and will be back with more of her insightful, but truthful opinion bites. Quite frankly, am I the only one who thinks that at times she's just meddling ☺ [-I'm whispering here-]? We will miss you KLM, please hurry back.

We'd also be shifting some of the segments to the blog exclusively. Yeah, we know, but we wish to keep the magazine closely aligned to its conception- *a literary mag*. You will not lose your segments they will

only be shifted. The blog is also attached to the new website so you don't have to go anywhere else to access it. It is the last page of the site- [KWEE](#).

We have new segments hosted by poets and authors from all over the world. "I ain't sayin nothin' more" as my grandmamma used to say. You'd have to read these yourself won't say a thing more.

The Poetry section is our major hotspot. It is a fine example of how KWEE manages to be true to her desire of giving you the best form of creative diversity.

We have new poets still finding their voices placed alongside much more experienced poets who have long ago established themselves and found their voice. They in a way mentor the newer ones and boost their confidence.

In *Unscripted*, as the name suggests, Cher gives it raw. The artist, the poet, the writer- anyone of her talented side can show up and mix the science geek. You never know really what will come up until it does.

Richard Moss goes about his randomness with purpose in his poetry corner, *'Twas Brillig*. He can assume the mind or body of any of his million personifications, ideas or characters or just be himself and write good poetry. I am sure you know what to expect there.

Well, I knew I said only tips I was giving but it is just hard to contain myself considering all the things that are in store.

If there is one message you want to take from here, let it be this-prepare for a roller-coaster this 2016.

We are bringing you a better KWEE every single issue. We will break the boxes; go on the fringes to find what it is we know you would love.... Creative Difference- the best of its kind.

From the entire team here at KWEE, we say enjoy the year, sit back, lay back, relax or do whatever it is you do when you hold a copy of our mag and feast along.

**Read! Read! Read!**

KWEE Team

## Liberian Classic



### *GUANYA PAU: A Story of an African Princess I*

By: JOSEPH J. WALTERS

**Guanya Pau holds a special place in Liberian and African literature. It is the first full length novel published by an African.**

#### **RECAP From PART III**

But the Devil found him his match and granted him whatever favor he desired.

Upon Pandama-Pluzhaway's return to earth he instituted the Gregree Bush and appointed certain old women at its head. This is the Girls', the Boys' are of later origin and is said to owe its founding to Guanya Pau's eminent father.

The Zobah, as the leaders of these institutions are called, are those who lecture to the young women on matters of practical importance, and some of the instructions given by them are beneficial and wholesome. In their dress they approximate as near as possible the image of the Devil. Hence foreigners call them **\*\*Country Devil.**"

Their attire consists of a black gown, reaching to the ground, a false-face, a head-dress two feet long, carrying in their hand a plaited brush. They are present at all weddings and deaths of great men to lead in the song and dance.

The natives try to persuade foreigners that the Zobah are not human, but real devils. An amusing story is told of how an American was affected on meeting of a Zobah. There was some celebration at a certain town when he was eager to see the whole.

But in his curiosity he ventured outside of the prescribed limits and, of course, one of the Zobah started at him. Fortunately the American had his gun with him, and after retreating a few steps stopped and with one of those **\*\*d you"**, for which the average American is famous, made the Devil halt, turn around, and march back to her quarters.

The bully American, of course, had to pay five dollars for his imprudent act.

The Gregree Bush girls are under some strict rules. For instance, they seldom dance with men.

Men dance by themselves and maidens by themselves.

For unchastity the punishment is so severe that very few ever recover from it.

On entering the Gregree Bush they are given a peculiar kind of beads and a small horn for the neck, which they are required always to wear.

As a rule these girls are respected and cases of unchastity are comparatively few.

I believe I can truly say that cases of moral turpitude are more frequent in America than it is among these heathen people.

## Chapter IV

### KAI KUNDU'S VISIT

ON the following day, Guanya Pau being now near her sixteenth birthday, within a few weeks of the time when her master would come to take her to his home, he came to the Gregree- Bush to visit her. His name was Kai Kundu, because of his short, stumpy form ; he was homely beyond description, with nose and lips twenty-five percent, in excess of the average African, with a face perpetually bearing the expression "I-don't-care -which-way-the- wind-blows, I am Kai Kundu, the short, the ugly, the clumsy, Kai Kundu."

He made an attempt to seat himself on the mat beside Guanya Pau, who immediately rose, went into the adjoining room, brought a bamboo chair, which she set at a more than respectable distance from the mat, thus avoiding all possible means of proximity between herself and his lordship. Looking up into her face with one of his characteristic grins, which made him look like a full-grown chimpanzee, he said: "Guanya Pau, I understand it all, you are yet young and inexperienced; your fair complexion has not yet been burnt by the sun's heat, nor your hands hardened by work. Your action is like that of many other maidens." Then thinking that she was persuaded of the truth of his assertion, because she made no reply, he again made an effort to bring his chair near, only to be told peremptorily that if he didn't keep to the distance she had assigned him, she would report him to the authorities for indecorum.

Finding argument useless, Kai Kundu made himself comfortable, and grinned more than ever.

The two together certainly resembled Dr. Talmage's "hawk courting a dove."

Finally, he mustered up enough courage to tell her his purpose for coming to see her, winding up with "I have watched and cared for you, Guanya, since you were a baby; O, my joy, when a very small girl, your mother consented to my having you, and fixed the dowry, I was SO elated that I paid her more than what she asked. I shall make you my head wife. I have cassava and rice farms all along the Marphar, have men and women gathering my nuts and making my oil. I have several large canoes which carry my produce weekly to the Beach — oil, kernel, wood, ivory, cloth, hides, rice, etc..

Now, Borney, my child," this time grinning with his whole face, "tell me what you think of me."

"When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter, Giving more light than heat, — extinct in both, Even in their promise, as it is a-making,—

You must not take for fire."

Guanya Pau with all the contempt of which her full, strong voice was capable, replied, "Elombey^" etc. "What do you mean? Believe me if I tell you the truth from my heart, will you? I have not cared to think about you in any way except to hate you. As to loving you, I'd just as soon love a monkey. I shall never be your head wife, I don't care if you own all Marphar and Pisu put together, and you may convey this intelligence, if you choose, to my mother."

Kai Kundu contracting his grin into a small compass, assured her that she would rue such expressions when she was in better spirits; but finding all attempts to make her believe this futile, he took up his ungainly body, grinned like a chess-cat, and stalked out of the room. **\*\*\*To be continued!\*\*\***

Liberian Literary Magazine

# KWEE





## In Celebration of Bai T. Moore

### *Ko Bomi Hee M Koa*

THIS VERSION OF A GOLA POEM BECAME VERY POPULAR AROUND 1956.

**Bai. T Moore**

#### **Ko Bomi Hee M Koa [Verse III]**

##### Gola\*\* Version

koa mu wo wo siafa  
o hinya duazet\*\* n noo  
ko bomi hee m koa  
ko mi nyinia kei ma  
ma jeima wuye m zoo

#### **Ko Bomi Hee M Koa**

##### English Version

go tell my siafa  
to bring his duaze  
to bomi i'm going  
where i'll do my stuff  
and sweat it out hard

**\*\* DUAZEH IS A TERM USED FOR SECONDHAND CAR**

\*\*The Gola tribe is one of the tribes in Liberia. They are often believed to be one of the earliest groups to migrate to the landmass we today call Liberia. Their language is also called Gola. They are one of the local tribes that lost their script over time because of inter-tribal conflict and disuse. Today, the **Gola Script** is considered one of the 'dead scripts'. There are no known speaker and hardly any full version of the script. The text above was Mr. Moore's 'anglicized' or 'Romanized' version. It was not written in the original script.

The Gola Script is one of the six indigenous scripts developed in Liberia, making Liberia one of the only nations to have developed as many indigenous scripts all of which are unrelated to the other.

## Authors of the Month Profiles

### Mohammed Donzo Dolley



### Mohammed Donzo Dolley

is an emerging voice on the Liberian literary scene. His passion for poetry goes back to his high school days when he often found himself writing poetry. He nursed this desire until it blossomed into the book you're now reading, *Our Future*. The selection of poems in *Our Future* comes from a larger collection he wrote over many years.

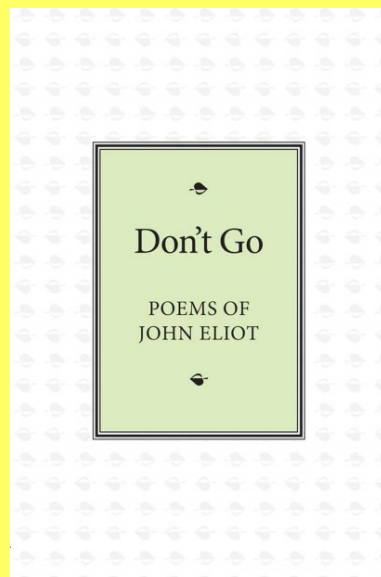
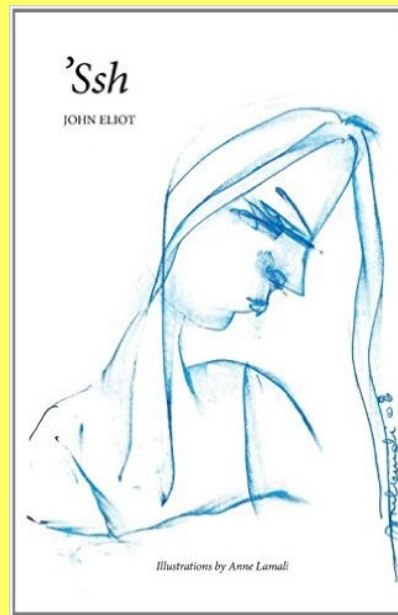
Mohammed is an international member of Amnesty International and facilitated the Amnesty International "Write for Rights Campaign 2014" in Liberia.

Amongst the many activists around the world, he was selected for an interview because despite the Ebola Outbreak in his country, the program was executed successfully.

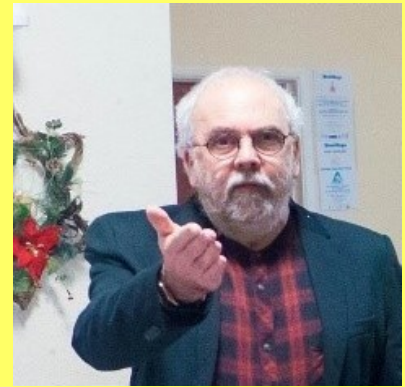
He is a student of Public Administration at the University of Liberia and has undergone several online training courses from the University of Macquarie in Australia, and the Western Sydney University through the Open 2 Study Australia platform.

The author has also been active in local and national youth advocacy since secondary school days.

Currently, he is the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Prepare Africa Incorporated - PAI, a pan African organization concentrated on raising awareness about elections and good governance in Africa. Along with the amazing team of PAI from other African countries, they recently launched the youth magazine, *African Moment Magazine*.



### JOHN ELIOT



**JOHN ELIOT** lives in Suffolk, UK, is an author, editor, creative writing tutor, and photographer. She writes in multiple genres including science fiction/dystopian and magic realism

Nicola was born in Liverpool, the youngest of six children. She grew up amidst books, music and lots of animals. She originally trained as a photojournalist, but her love of the theatre and story telling, saw her gaining an Honours Degree in Drama and English Literature. She spent many years as an actor, scriptwriter and workshop leader, but gave it up to concentrate on her writing.

Nicola gained a Diploma in Creative Writing from the UEA, won the Suffolk Book League's Short Story Competition with the title story from her first anthology – *Glimmer*.

She was shortlisted for The Escalator Genre Fiction Competition 2011 with her book *Echoes from the Lost Ones* and in 2013 it was published by Fable Press, followed by the second book in *The Song of Forgetfulness series - A Silence Heard*.

*The song of Forgetfulness* has been re-released, with a new prequel *Whisper Gatherers* and *The History of NotSoGreatBritAlbion*, a series of short stories connected to the series, the first story is due out December 2016

**Our Spotlight author is a young Liberian making inroads in youth advocacy**

*Mohammed Donzo Dolley*

## **Author Interview**



**Liberian Literary Mag conducted an interview with**

**Mohammed Donzo Dolley**

**LLR: First, we would like to thank you for granting this interview. Tell us a little about you- your education, upbringing, hobbies etc.**

I am a bold, compassionate and hardworking young person deeply passionate about leadership and volunteerism. I am a religiously tolerant person and cherish diversity so much.

**Why writing?**

Writing is my calm in rage, my relaxation in stress and my comforter in loneliness.

**What books have most influenced your life/career most?**

I have read lots of books that have influenced me in different ways. My poetry journey has been most influenced by Maya Angelou's poems. I have started to read poems from Liberian and African writers lately that are pushing my limits than expected.

**How do you approach your work?**

With curiosity, critical analysis and imagination.

**What themes do you find yourself continuously exploring in your work?**

Themes about the future, young people, virtues and political and social inequalities

**Tell us a little about your book[s]- storyline, characters, themes, inspiration etc.**

My book focuses on the future, virtues and young people. The themes are sadness, meditation, love etc.

**What inspired you to write this title or how did you come up with the storyline?**

Look a poor child in the eyes and just imagine what the future will be like for him or her. The title is inspired by the belief that we have done very little as a global community to leave a better world for the next generation.

**Is there a message in your book that you want your readers to grasp?**

That there is something called the "Future" and it is very beautiful. It will be hell for those who do not cease it right now and paradise for those who do. The book explains further

**Is there anything else you would like readers to know about your book?**

"Our Future Today" says to you what many would not. It allows you to think deeper and reflect on your actions and your preparedness for now and the future. This is a must read book.

**Do you have any advice for other writers?**

Be persistent and never get too satisfy. Search for your deep inner voice, embrace it and learn from other writers in perfecting it.

**What book[s] are you reading now? Or recently read?**

Just completed *Between the World and Me* – Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Hard Things About Hard Things* – Ben Horowitz, *One Minute Manager* – Kenneth Blanchard & Spencer Johnson, *Measure of a leader* – Aubrey C. Daniels & James E. Daniels and I am now reading *The Fate of Africa* – Martin Meredith.

**Tell us your latest news, promotions, book tours, launch etc.**

I am scheduling a book launch for January and after the launch, there are plans for book tour etc.

**What are your current projects?**

I am presently working with some of my friends from across Africa in publishing the *African Moment Magazine*, one of Africa's foremost youthful Magazine. I am also encouraging and mentoring young first time Liberian poets and writers for free etc. Watch out for my Memoir about the Ebola Outbreaks in Liberia by next year.

**What Liberian book[s] have you recently read?**

Yes, *Going to World for America*, *Yearning of a Traveler* etc.

**Any last words?**

Anybody can be a writer. Just discover the right story, sign a long-term contract with persistence, patience and hard work and you are good to go. Stay true to yourself and do what you want and need to do while you still have the chance.

## Diaspora Poet

### Now Massa Loved Some Hunting PART II

(Thoughts on visiting a  
Georgian Plantation)

#### II.

Caribbean "Bokrahs," too,  
said  
they were hunting  
mongoose  
or inspecting plantations  
fences.  
There weren't many  
trapped vermin to show  
and the number  
of *mulatto* babies spiraled.

Bokrahs' wives knew their  
husbands weren't out  
hunting  
and took revenge on the  
"baby-mamas."  
Slave-women were  
countless times on potty-  
duty.  
They counted chamber  
pots in their sleep instead of  
sheep—  
if they slept at all.

Bokrahs loved to hunt and  
their wives  
dared not interfere with  
their favorite sport.

#### III

I am a descendant of  
hunter and hunted.  
There are numerous shades  
of brown named after us.

We betray each other,  
deny our darker brethren  
their dignity,

define them by menial  
labor they cannot refuse.

We constrain and imprison  
them with draconian laws  
that give license to hunt in  
all seasons.

#### IV.

They are strong like  
mahogany,  
and are weaned on the  
steeling of backbones.

They are stalks that spring  
back  
after bending to breaking  
point.

They are the seed carriers  
of marathon runners.  
There is no end-line in their  
long distance sprint.  
There are no barriers to  
their dreams.

© Althea Romeo-Mark, 2014

"Massa" – Master.  
"bokrah, bokra—white  
land owner in the Colonial  
Caribbean.

A West Indian Celebrates  
Christmas in Switzerland

Advent beckons in Basel  
City.  
I prepare my calendar,  
hang my Christmas  
wreath.

Santa Klaus is dressed in  
red.  
His helper Schmutzli is  
cloaked in brown.  
They warn the great day  
is near.

Some youngsters' faces  
light like candles.  
Others wear frowns.

My mind sails to sunny  
islands, childhood.  
John bulls covered in  
coarse burlaps sacks,  
heads big like brown  
bears, prance around  
the villages,  
spring and crack whips at  
naughty children,  
who flee in fear into  
mothers' arms.

My thoughts journey  
back  
to my new home near  
the River Rhine,  
join the children feasting  
on juicy mandarins,  
brittle peanuts and  
lebkuchen,  
December 6th snacks.

In the city, the Three Kings  
beat their staffs.  
At home I dress my tree.  
Excitement  
builds with every tinsel,  
red bell hung.  
A silver angel perches at  
its crown.

I immerse myself in  
Christmas songs,  
last minutes shopping,  
wrap gifts,  
sip Gluehwein, prepare  
ham, turkey,  
sweet potato pudding.

At a midnight service, I  
celebrate  
Christ's coming, pray and  
think of family  
far away under the

umbrella of the tropical sky

There, Christmas carols ring the air as choruses sing before gates. Banjos and maracas compete with harmonicas.

I hunger for guavaberry, the local sherry, the beach where we make merry, drink ginger beer and sorrel, eat raisin buns, coconut tarts, papaya pastry.

Awaken by the heartfelt hymns, I abandon the sun. Outside the church, snowflakes powder the ground. And I, warmed by the joy of Christmas, feel home.

© Althea Romeo-Mark, published in *If Only the Dust Would Settle*, Author House, Milton Keynes, UK, 2009.

1. *Samichlaus* (Swiss Christmas tradition) was all about rewarding the good kids and *Schmutzli* was the enforcer who punished the bad. He used to carry a whip and when the large sack of goodies was empty, *Schmutzli* could

use it to stuff naughty children into and then kidnap them.

2. *The John Bull* was used in some Caribbean islands as a cautionary threat to reprimand children who had been naughty, especially a bed-wetter child. In return for the dancing and the disciplining of children, the John Bull was offered money, drink and food, with varying degrees of liberty to help himself to food and money from vendors.

3. *Lebkuchen* or *Pfefferkuchen*, is a traditional German baked Christmas treat, somewhat resembling gingerbread.

4. *Gluehwein* (Mulled) wine is a beverage of European origins usually made with red wine along with various mulling spices and sometimes raisins. It is served hot or warm and may be alcoholic or non-alcoholic

### Althea Romeo-Mark



Born in Antigua, West Indies, [Althea Romeo-Mark](#) is an educator and internationally published writer who grew up in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. She has lived and taught in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, USA, Liberia (1976-1990), London, England (1990-1991), and in Switzerland since 1991.

She taught at the University of Liberia (1976-1990). She is a founding member of the [Liberian Association of Writers \(LAW\)](#) and is the poetry editor for *Seabreeze: Journal of Liberian Contemporary Literature*.

She was awarded the [Marguerite Cobb McKay Prize](#) by *The Caribbean Writer* in June, 2009 for short story "Bitterleaf, (set in Liberia)." *If Only the Dust Would Settle* is her last poetry collection.

She has been guest poets at the International Poetry Festival of Medellin, Colombia (2010), the [Kistrech International Poetry Festival](#), Kissi, Kenya (2014) and The Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, Antigua and Barbuda (2015)

She has been published in the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the USA, Germany, Norway, the UK, India, Colombia, Kenya, Liberia and Switzerland.

More publishing history can be found at her blog site:

[www.aromaproductions.blogspot.com](http://www.aromaproductions.blogspot.com)

## Resurrected Master

Edwin J Barclay



This series focuses on the writings of one of the literary giants of Liberia. Unfortunately, more people remember the man as the politician or the masterful lawyer.

Arguably, the Barclays [he and his uncle, both presidents of Liberia] were the sharpest legal minds of their times, rivalled only by an equally worthy opponent JJ Dossen.

What we try to do in this series is spotlight the literary giant, E. J. Barclay was. We attempt to show the little known side of the man- free from all the political dramas.

### The Death of Faith

Toll, toll, toll  
Ye solemn bells of night!

Let your wild requiem roll  
Far o'er the earth with  
might!

Toll, toll, toll!  
Toll for the death of truth  
and right !  
Toll for the birth of Error's  
night!  
Toll ye the rampant joy of  
sin!  
Toll for the good that  
might have been!

Toll, toll, toll!  
Toll ye from brazen  
throats your ire,  
Let the wild clangour  
rising higher,  
Shriek loudly out life's wild  
despair;  
For Faith and Hope lay  
dying where  
Irreverent Lusts control  
the soul !

### The Death of Faith

Toll, toll, toll  
Ye solemn bells of night!

Let your wild requiem roll  
Far o'er the earth with  
might!

Toll, toll, toll!  
Toll for the death of truth  
and right !  
Toll for the birth of Error's  
night!  
Toll ye the rampant joy of  
sin!  
Toll for the good that  
might have been!

Toll, toll, toll!  
Toll ye from brazen  
throats your ire,  
Let the wild clangour  
rising higher,  
Shriek loudly out life's wild  
despair;  
For Faith and Hope lay  
dying where  
Irreverent Lusts control  
the soul !

***WRR Literary Festival  
WE ATE ALL THE WORDS  
IN IBADAN. A Report on  
WRR Literary Festival***

*by Oppong Clifford Benjamin*



***Introduction***

The first time I saw writing unite men was on the evening of 2nd December, 2016. I quietly watched a group of committed young men from all over Nigeria cook their words for the ensuing morning. It was a night of rehearsals for the biggest literary festival in the ancient city of Ibadan- The WRR Annual Literary Festival.

As if the organizers knew there would be some ravenous vampires in attendance, they rightfully nicknamed the event 'Feast of Words' and strategically themed it 'Words in a Season of Change'.

The theme sought to open the minds of writers and poets about the power of their words and their importance in our

busy and dynamic world. After what seemed like a long night in slow motion, we were gradually ushered into 3rd December by the hour hand.

The morning came with the aroma of the feast. Kukogho Iruesi Samson, the CEO of Words Rhymes and Rhythm, who single handedly built Africa's largest hub of contemporary poets, was all over to make sure the venue was ready and befitting a feast.

Actually, I must praise the decorators of the event grounds-the institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan- for job well done. Some selected books from the WRR publishing house were neatly arranged on shelves at the entrance which prepared the mind of anybody entering the venue for a daylong celebration of the finest of African literature. Attendance.

The attendance was beyond the expectations of the organizers. The overflow was twice the number of people who were seated in the hall. It was a crowd of poets,

writers, lovers of words and the media. There were also in attendance cameramen who squatted, prostrated just to capture every passing moment and freeze every memory in a picture.

***Open Mic Session.***

The event started with a freestyle session which was so professionally hosted by Bliss Oyindhamolher Akinyemi.

Poets made us laugh, cry and provoke our thoughts with the charms in their words. My favorite was a poem on the national story on MMM in recent Nigeria. The poet was really funny yet stayed focused on his message.

***The Main Event.***

The main feast actually began with a motivational speech by Mr. Kukogho himself. He inspired everyone with the story of how WRR came to be the largest poetry sharing platform on the African continent and also how it grew from a mere Facebook page to a big publishing house and a college.

He gave us more to believe in the saying 'never give up'. His inspiring speech was followed by a few others before a male MC called me to deliver the lecture of the day. I was tasked to prepare a lecture around the theme.

My paper was titled WRITERS AND NOETIC SCIENCES- the power of the writer's intentions. The only magic I did with my lecture was creating a lasting impression on their minds; actually making them realize that by words alone writers can influence the pattern of thought of their readership and by sciences, collective intentions generate a force that really have effect on the physical world.

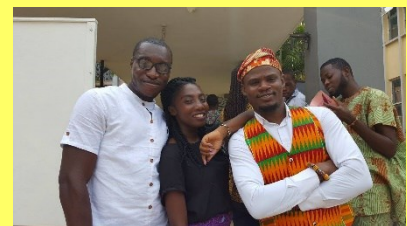
So as writers they possessed more than a pen or a keypad. I made them understand that they were demons and angels at the same time, if not God himself. Sadly for me, I had to leave Ibadan right after my session for a meeting in Lagos.

I wished I stayed for the evening session which I was well informed it was

a smiling night of dance and more words to feast on, a night of African cultural setting as they went from being under the roof to sitting on mats under the sky, a dark night of colourful traditional dance.

**Conclusion**

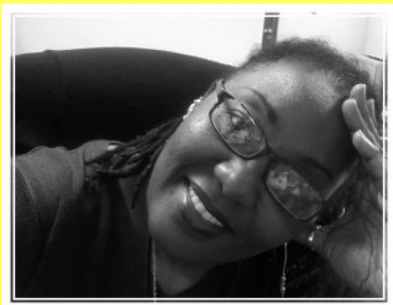
In all, it was worth travelling from Accra to Ibadan. Thank you WRR family for having me, thank you Sir Kukogho Iruesiri Samson, thank you, James Ademuyiwa and you all gallant soldiers. I salute!





## Unscripted

Cher Antoinette



DECEMBER 2016

### ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

\*\*\*\*\*

*“Time to get your bath,  
Cherry! Hurry up before the  
water gets too cold! I ain’t  
putting on the kettle again.”*

My Daydee yelled from the bathroom as she poured the last of the hot water into the galvanized basin that I used for my evening bath. The running water from the shower was way too cold for me (well that was what I had convinced her of and I was quite dramatic in my presentation). Under normal circumstances I would have gotten up from the rocking chair in a slow purposeful manner and continued the charade as to how tired I was, and that I didn’t want to bathe, and it was too much trouble, and I had already had one that day, and so on and so on (quite the little actress I was). This evening, however, was different; it was December 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve and there was no way I was risking a cut ass, or a “I gonna take away that doll from you”. The next twenty-four hours were to be the most exciting ever, even though it had happened every year for the past eight years and I expected, would continue into the future.

I lived with some elderly folk since my mother was a single parent and had to make ends meet by working very long hours. I saw her often, but in my youthful eyes the person who was my maternal figure was the younger of the two ladies in the home, my Daydee. I never knew why I called her that because that was not her real name, and now, as I sit and reminisce; her beautiful long black curly hair that was always pulled back into a waist length pony tail, her caramel skin dotted with numerous moles and her strong but gentle hands, tears well in my eyes.

I stepped into the basin and felt the warm water rise to just below my knees (yea it was a big basin) and I was lathered down from face to toes with Pears soap. To this day, the smell of that golden brown bar brings such joy to my senses and such peace to my mind that I keep one in my dresser drawer as my rescue on really tough days.

As my bath concluded, the ritual began. It was now seven-thirty and I heard the BBC Evening News come to an end and the Christmas carols from that famous British boys’ choir started. The old Redifusion that hung in the corner of the dining room was turned up to all. Daydee hurriedly towed me down to prevent me from “catching a draft” and then powdered me up with Cussons Baby Powder, and quickly pulled my vest over my head. I was then brusquely told to go sit on the bed.

Next came the combing of the hair. The tangle of fibre on my head had become more unmanageable as each year

passed and Daydee wanted to press it out with the hot-ironing comb but my mother forbade it. So, I suffered through the brushing and the parting and the greasing with Blue Magic.

That night, however, I felt little pain. I was far away as my thoughts swirled - what would I find under the Christmas tree? Under the tree...but where was the tree?

Every year there was the saga of the missing tree. For as long as I had remembered I would look for the tree; in the back yard, in the old shed. One year I even ventured to our neighbours’ who lived two houses down to ask if they had had it. I was promptly sent home with a scolding and a “you betta guh long home before I call you mudda”.

The plight of the elusive tree conjured all sorts of scenarios in my overactive imagination and I was totally unaware when the sand man appeared, only to be yanked to reality with a sharp tug that whipped my head backwards.

*“Child, hold yuh head straight. I ain’t got all night. You know the number of things I still gotta do. De ham still in put in yet. I hope I get all de salt outta dat leg cuz dis year I don’t know what Mr. Branch, that thieving shopkeeper, did tinking. I know we like we hams well cured but I had to soak that thing four times before I get out most of de salt. Den you know the sweet bread gotta bake, cuz what else you gonna eat fuh breakfast before we go to five o’clock service in de morning. Lord hav’ist mercy, I ain’t gonna get no sleep tonight at all!”*

It never failed to amaze me, the same soliloquy each year as

to how daunting the Christmas day preparations were, but it made no difference; I had faith in my Daydee that it all would be done and I would awaken to the glorious smell of baked ham and fresh sweet bread and a hot cup of Milo before going off to church.

So, with the last few tugs of my plaits, rubber bands affixed and head-tie securely on, I moseyed into the corner of the bed, snuggled under the sheets and pressed myself against the wooden walls that felt damp and cool this December night. Daydee turned off the overhead light and raised the wick on the kerosene lamp that was on the night stand. She hated sleeping in darkness and figured that I did as well.

I closed my eyes and I waited for her to tuck me in and whisper her usual prayers of protection over me before I went off to sleep. *"Goodnight Cherry-Baby. Sweet dreams,"* she said as she kissed me on my forehead and smiled that crooked smile of hers that I loved dearly.

*"Come on Cherry, time to wake up."* It seemed like I had just blinked and there she was again, but this time accompanied by a wonderful smell that wafted into my bedroom. I could not throw off the covers fast enough. I ran to the bathroom, almost squished the cat in my haste, washed my face and brushed my teeth. It was still dark outside and I heard the faint refrain of Christmas carols coming from down the street.

I pulled my pink and blue blanket tightly around me and tip-toed into the living room. There it was, my Christmas

tree! As tall as the ceiling with a gold star at its crown; blue, silver, and red glass balls gleamed and glittered as the multi-coloured string of lights wrapped tightly around the pine branches reflected off their surfaces.

I stood still. The only light in the room came from the majestic decorated conifer. And oh, the smell!! The pine scent mixed and merged with the pungent aroma of the recently polished furniture. Everything had been newly cleaned and dressed; the Morris chairs shined like dog stones on a moonlight night. Cushion covers had been changed and newly crocheted doilies placed on the side tables and mahogany cabinet. The floor boards were still slightly damp underfoot from being scrubbed with blue soap. A thought crossed my mind, albeit fleetingly, as to how could all this have been done during the time I had slept. Never mind, I did say fleetingly, because my primary concern was about my tree and what lay underneath.

But, there was something different about my tree. Yes all the decorations were there, and yes the silver tinsel strings were hanging on for dear life on every branch but what was that white cottony stuff that covered it like a fluffy petticoat. I reached for it when I felt a stinging slap on my hand. *"Don't touch dat! You wanna be itching fuh de rest of de day?"*

Angel Hair - the worse Christmas adornment that was ever made, in my opinion. I stepped back, frustrated that I could not touch my tree and caress its branches, not to

mention sit underneath and ponder what was in the presents that bore my name. To me this was worse than getting lashes. Daydee saw the look on my face and obviously took pity on me, held me in a tight hug and told me to come get my breakfast because Mr. Jordan would soon be arriving to take us to church.

I sat at the dining room table and for just a moment I forgot about my tree, because before me lay the ham and sweet bread and Milo that I had waited for three hundred and sixty-four days to date. The wait was worth it. The golden brown raisin bread was still warm and I could see the coconut centre, glistening with crystallized sugar and ginger. My one slice of ham was a deep pink with an outer edge of brown crisp skin that sandwiched a thin layer of juicy white fat. I placed the ham on the slice of sweet bread and took the first bite. The salty sweet sandwich almost brought tears to my eyes...it was so good; hot Milo was the icing on the cake.

*"Pa-parrrrp!"* A horn blew loudly outside; it was our ride to Five O'Clock Service.

I wore my red and white diamond patterned armhole dress with the red bow at the neckline; this was my favorite of all of Daydee's sewing creations, even though it made me look like I should be under the Christmas tree nestled amongst the other gifts. And Daydee, oh she was a vision of beauty. Her crisp white ruffled-necked long-sleeved blouse and the red and blue full-circle skirt she wore, cinched in the waist with a red two inch-wide patent leather belt fitted her perfectly; she wore her hair in a tight

coiffure at the nape of her neck. Even at her age she still got second glances, especially from Mr. Jordan as he opened the back passenger door for us to climb into the old Morris Minor. Mrs. Jordan however sat ramrod straight in the front seat and proffered a very cold “*Good Morning!*”

The short drive to James Street Methodist Church in the city stood as one of my favorite memories of Christmas morning. I pulled my red cardigan closer around me as I stared out the small side window of the car. There was silence within other than a slight humming from Mr. Jordan and the accompanying purr of the engine. Our departure from home had signaled the entrance of our companions on this Michaelmas journey. It was almost as if we had synchronized our clocks and bolted from the starting blocks at the same time. Men clad in their Sunday best hopped on bicycles with loose chains and lead the parade down the street. Women hurriedly tugged on small arms as they walked quickly to the bus stop to catch the lone red Transport Board bus that would carry the villagers Bridgetown. This was the only time of year that the bus came out this early at four a.m.

Everyone had a singular purpose, to get to the church on time. As we passed the many wooden chattel houses on our way, there were still some homeowners that were ‘*fixing up*’ at the last minute. Silhouettes ‘*putting up*’ curtains could be seen through windows,

and one or two people were now carrying the furniture back into the house, as the residence had been completely emptied onto the front yard to allow for the scrubbing and cleaning of the floors. I could see the front footpaths had all been freshly laid with white marl; this I was told was to signify the fallen snow of our Mother Country. The holly-hocks that that were planted in most of the gardens were awakened by the headlights of the old car; their baby pink petals glimmered in the darkness of the early morning. The snow-on-the-mountains stood elegantly as they hedged walkways and brought a perceived visual sense of a winter landscape to our tropical island.

The exodus to the city continued and more and more people joined the movement as we got closer to our destination. I enjoyed the delicious aroma of hams, black cake, turkey, pound cake and pork as they played an epicurean medley in my nose and reminded me of what would come within the next few hours.

Daydee squeezed my hand and straightened the bow on my dress and I smiled at her, showing her my toothless grin and hoping that what I would receive for Christmas would be a lot more than just my two front teeth.

We were almost there. Past St. Mary’s Church we heard the well-tuned organ playing the first of the introductory Christmas carols as the congregation made their way up to the entrance of the historic stone building.

Mr. Jordan blew the car horn to have pedestrians move out of the way and garnished a few rude arm gestures from an old geezer who had obviously started his celebrations a little earlier.

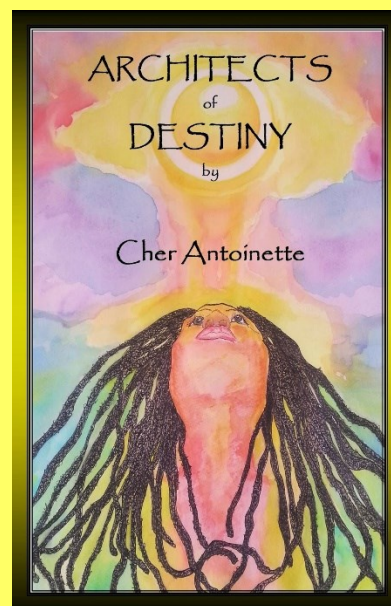
We turned into the parking area of our place of worship just as the first notes of the organ were played. Mr. Jordan pulled up the hand brake and quickly came around to the back door to assist Daydee and me out of the car. Mr. Jordan looked at me, smiled and tipped his hat. Mrs. Jordan was still sitting in the front seat, stiff as a two-by-four.

“*Come Cherry, let’s go inside.*” I held my Daydee’s hand tightly as we walked up the steps to our church and the first refrain of one of my favorite hymns was heard,

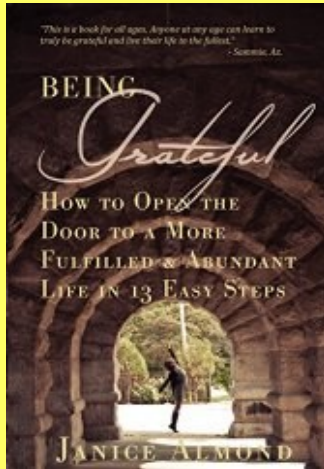
“*Christians awake! Salute the happy morn.....*”

It would be another good Christmas for us all.

**Cher-Antoinette ©2014**



## Finding Meaning in Everyday Living



Janice Almond

### Look to the Future

*"Faith Gives Us the Courage to Face the Present With Confidence and the Future With Expectancy."*

Author unknown

### —Look to the Future

This makes sense, doesn't it? Then why do so many of us stress out and continue to stew over the past? It is hard to think abundantly while mesmerized with the past, past victories, past mistakes, past issues, etc. Here's a phrase to adhere to- "Get over it!" Get over the past and press toward the future. We are told to do that in the Bible.

What is so important about looking to the future? If we can't see forward, we can't go forward. The scriptures say, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint..." Proverbs 29:18. The things that we all do and the actions we take mainly happen as a result of us looking forward toward a goal or some sort of achievement. This is what pushes us forward. This is what enables us to live with hope. We must have faith in the future to go toward it. FAITH, what is that? It's a knowing, a believing that without seeing the evidence, you believe and expect good things to come to pass.

Let's suppose you had no vision for your future. If this were true, you probably wouldn't even get up out of bed in the morning. If you had no goals whatsoever, why would you even get up? You could just sleep all day. Am I right? You would have no purpose. Something has to drive you, compel you to move. Having no vision for the future-instead of bringing a fulfilled life, brings a depressed life. We have all gone through a time or two of depression, of some kind or another, and pressing forward is the key to freedom. Just practice putting one foot in front of the other, right then left, right then left again. What we do today, now, is preparation for our future, our dreams.

I know it can sometimes be hard and painful. But one day you will look back and see just how far you have come. Focusing on the pain of our past is a continual downer. Believe me; I know from experience what a prison this can be. As my husband, a prison chaplain, likes to say, "We are all inmates." We can all be in our own prisons of our own making. We can lose faith.

On a daily basis, we choose either to press forward or to focus on where we currently are. We may not like our living condition, our job environment, or our family situation, but even in the most horrific times, we can fix our minds on some good that will eventually come out of it if we only keep the right focus. Train your mind to have an expectancy of hope and good will.

With courage and confidence, we can look to the future. If we don't look to the future, then where will we look? There are not many choices left. At least not a choice that leads to a more fulfilled and abundant life. Deep down inside, this is the kind of life we desire. We want to be more grateful. We want to feel and be more fulfilled. We sincerely wish for more abundance. Stephen King, author of many books said, "Get busy living or get busy dying." Sounds as if we are given a choice to make, once again. Life or Death.

List as many reasons that come to your mind why you must look to the future:

#1 Amazon Kindle Best Seller New Release

[www.janicealmondbooks.com](http://www.janicealmondbooks.com)

Reach out to me: Get a copy of my first book, *BEING GRATEFUL...free!* Simply click the link: [begrateful.subscribemenow.com](http://begrateful.subscribemenow.com)

– You will join our “being grateful” community. We look forward to having you become a part of spreading gratefulness around the world.

Until next month-  
Your attitude matters,  
Janice

Follow me on twitter: [@JalmondjoyRenee](https://twitter.com/JalmondjoyRenee)

Like me on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/begratefulbooks](http://www.facebook.com/begratefulbooks)

Sign up for my monthly inspirational newsletter and get my first book *Being Grateful: How to Open the Door to a More Fulfilled & Abundant Life in 13 Easy Steps* FREE!

Go to:

[www.begrateful.subscribemenow.com](http://www.begrateful.subscribemenow.com)

I choose to never back down by ...

Join my email list & get my first book free.  
Go to [www.janicealmondbooks.com/contact](http://www.janicealmondbooks.com/contact)



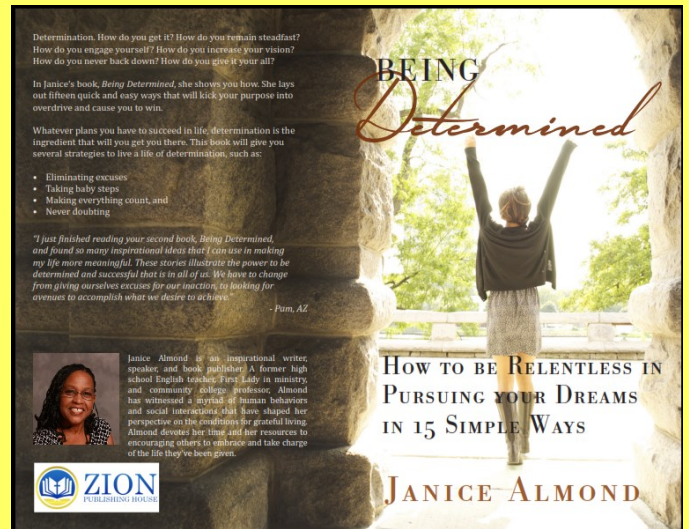
**Janice Almond** is the author of the *Being Grateful* book series. Her first book in the series, *Being Grateful: How to Open the*

Door to a More Fulfilled & Abundant Life in 13 Easy Steps is available on her website:

[www.janicealmondbooks.com](http://www.janicealmondbooks.com).

Follow Janice on Twitter:

[@JalmondjoyRenee](https://twitter.com/JalmondjoyRenee)



**BOOK SIGNING!**

**JANICE ALMOND**

— AUTHOR OF THE —

**BEING GRATEFUL SERIES**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2016 11:00AM**

**GLEN AVON LIBRARY**

**9244 GALENA STREET RIVERSIDE, CA 92509**

**AMAZON KINDLE BEST SELLING  
NEW RELEASE AUTHOR!**

Order now at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

[@janicealmondauthor](https://twitter.com/janicealmondauthor)

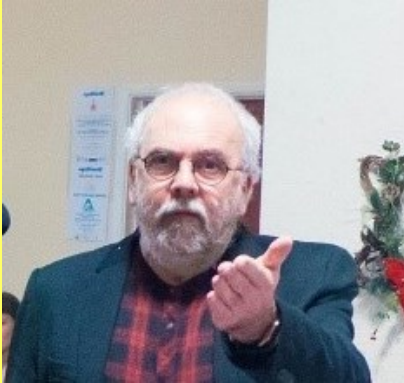
[JaniceAlmondBooks.com](http://JaniceAlmondBooks.com)

ZION PUBLISHING HOUSE

## Author Interview 2

### Spotlight Author

**JOHN ELIOT**



Liberian Literary Magazine conducted an interview with the poet JOHN ELIOT 😊.

**LLM: First, we would like to thank you for granting this interview. Let us kick off this interview with you telling us a little about yourself.... Tell us a little about yourself**

That is a very difficult question to answer. I guess I'm just a very average kind of person. I suppose if you read my poetry then you will find out about me. I think my poetry tells what is going on in my heart and soul.

#### **Why writing?**

I have an addictive personality. I see a CD shop I have to go in and look. I see a bookshop I have to go in and look and very often buy. It is the same with writing. My

brain is constantly working out themes for new poetry. Placing words in a new and correct order.

#### **What books have most influenced your life/career most?**

I'd replace books, with authors. Although then I'd think of books. So if I said Shakespeare I wouldn't say all of his work, but I would say Hamlet and Macbeth. Prufrock and The Wasteland by TS Eliot. The Gospel According to Luke. Norman Mailer's The Gospel According to the Son (if you have not read this then it is a must). And, the first serious novel I ever read, The Stranger by Albert Camus. I read the Camus when I was about thirteen. My sister who was six years older, told me it was time I took my reading more seriously and gave me the novel to read. There are many many others, but then it would just become a list.

#### **How do you approach your work?**

I have to write at least one poem a week. That is usually an outline of words. I may even think, 'That will come to nothing...' Weeks later I

will come back to it and develop it further. Or, in time it may just be rejected. I rarely simply delete, but there are a lot of poems on my laptop that will never see the light of day.

#### **What themes do you find yourself continuously exploring in your work?**

Religion. Birth and death. Life.

#### **Tell us a little about your book[s]- storyline, characters, themes, inspiration etc.**

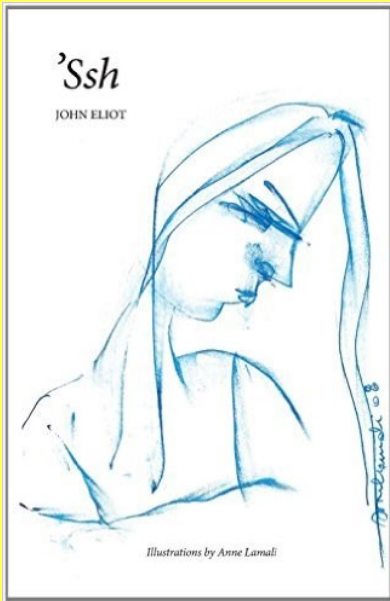
My themes simply come from my other reading. Listening to music. The arts in general. Talking to other poets, reading their work.

#### **What inspired you to write this title or how did you come up with the storyline?**

My new collection *Don't Go* the title came from a piece of writing by poet and singer Patti Smith.

#### **Is there a message in your book that you want your readers to grasp?**

No, I don't believe in giving my readers



messages. I'll leave that to the evangelists. Let those who have ears, hear.

**Is there anything else you would like readers to know about your book?**

The collection is published by Mosaïque Press and is available online from such stores as Amazon, and good bookshops.

**Do you have any advice for other writers?**

I probably don't need to advise other writers, but for potential authors self-discipline is important. Read widely. Write every day.

Writing poetry is good for fiction authors as it trains their imaginations to use language widely.

**What book[s] are you reading now? Or recently read?**

Right now, I'm reading the excellent Indian author, Khuswant Singh. Well worth reading.

**Tell us your latest news, promotions, book tours, launch etc.**

Radio, TV, newspapers and readings.

**What are your current projects?**

I'm reading the psalms. I'm then going to write a new poem based on the language of the psalms. I'm also using a work by the composer Stockhausen, *Mantra* which is in twenty six parts and just about finishing a poem of, twenty six parts.

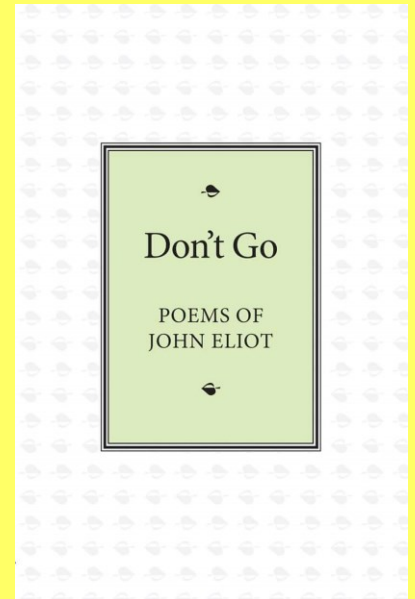


**Have you read book[s] by [a] Liberian author[s] or about Liberia?**

I haven't. Very remiss of me!

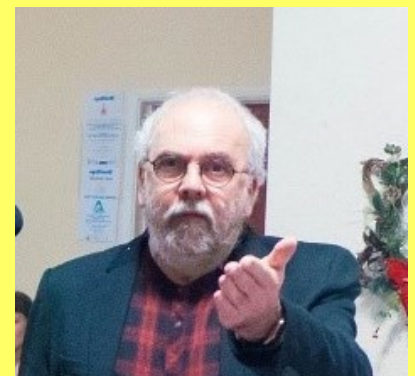
**Any last words?**

Stay true to yourself and do what you want and need to do while you still have the chance.



**Do you have any advice for other writers?**

Learn your craft. Go to writing classes and study. Read. Keep writing, even if you think what you are writing isn't very good. Discuss your work with others. Critique other he and money in the end.



**John Eliot** is a poet and an educator.

## 'Twas Brillig

**Richard Wilson Moss**

### I Praise God

I praise god  
While holding and  
extracting shrapnel  
From a two year old Syrians  
gut  
Who bleeds to death  
anyway.

### After Rain

After rain  
We are great ships of rain  
puddles  
And the hours navigated  
lie down  
Like fish tucked in dark rows  
in damp markets.

### Terrorist At A Swiss Cafe

White mountains are simply  
Bottoms of blue seas  
Winds are merely  
Courage of a breeze  
And the one relaxing at  
curbside  
What is he?  
Collected damage of his  
day?  
What is he?  
Terrorist of a coffee?  
  
His restless friend  
Walking back and forth  
Between tables glances up  
At the alps above

Hardly distracted by  
A slowly passing bus  
The snow, he says  
Look at all that snow up  
there  
The wind will bring it down  
It will bury us.

### Forgotten Season

Such is the forgotten  
season  
Where rhododendrons rot  
for no reason  
Where every flower  
divorces beauties abuse  
Bare maple limbs do not  
strangle skies  
The loon dives for fish  
holding its breath  
Longer than it ever could  
A dragonfly's erratic flight is  
understood  
And the moon rules without  
sheepish light  
As the sun sits as it has  
never sat  
On the cusp of twilight.

### Nobility

I am going to the carnival  
To bend the iron bar  
And wrestle the snake  
Break the bell  
Without using the hammer  
For I have failed  
To fix the end table lamp  
Or repair the shingles  
On the roof  
So I am going to the circus  
To do handstands  
On top of elephants.

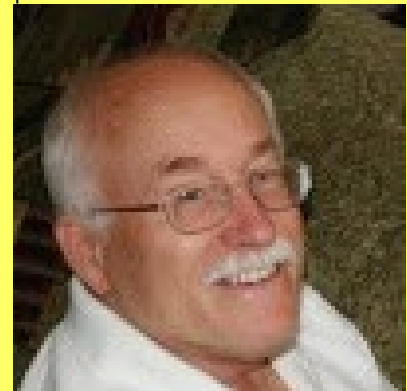
### Afterlife of Orchids

I brought most beautiful  
white orchids  
To the gates of heaven  
Golden bird cages were  
lined with them.  
In hell they were put on  
cool, marble pedestals  
Cherished and honored.

### Before Making Orange Preserves

Oranges eclipse apples,  
fruit forgiven knowledge  
On drooping limbs  
exuberant sugars  
Conspire with their star  
Warmth so close, intense,  
magnificent  
Shaking hidden shoulders  
of a seed  
Inspiring future arms that  
will sweep away  
The rain and snow of all  
storms  
Cradle and nourish the  
pulp  
Of all resolve.

**Richard Moss** is the author  
of numerous full length  
poetry books. You can find  
his books on every major  
platform.



©Richard Moss



## *Riquespeaks- Human Shields "Defense du Jouer"*

### **A Review**

One of the best things about the music scene today is the new delivery methods that allow music lovers access to songs and tunes they may never hear otherwise, through the openness of the world wide web. "Defense du Jouer" by the Swiss group Human Shields, is an example of an excellent piece of music by a great band that I might have never come in contact with, if not for their internet presence and a suggestion from a close friend. Right away I was intrigued by the band's name, "Human Shields", as it held instant political resonance in the manner of favorite groups of mine such as the great Hip Hop group Public Enemy.

"Defense du jouer" is a title that loosely translates into English as "Defense of play." This defense of play and leisure time as a facet of normal human existence is evident from their excellent somber folksy blues piece, "Bataclan" which leads off their set. The Bataclan is a very popular music venue in one of the world's greatest cities, Paris, France. It has hosted such musical luminaries as Prince, Snoop Dogg, Jerry Lee Lewis, The Roots, Kendrick Lamar, The Clash, The Police, and many others in the world of music.

Tragically, the Bataclan was the scene of one the modern era's worst terror attacks, last year, November 2015. As a person who has visited and enjoyed Paris

several times and with family living there, this event hit me very deeply. I also am a regular concert goer and I've seen the power of music to bring people of different walks of life together, so it was shocking to see the battlefield of the terror war be expanded to the footlights of the performance stage!

"Bataclan" begins with strong guitar strumming outlining a deep bass line. Immediately a somber, meditate mood is set. The bass line is soon joined by another guitar scratching a lively rhythm. Another guitar soon joins that playing single notes more in the manner of a melodic line.

Human Shields singer Dany Demuth lays out a story of visiting the City of Light familiar to anybody who has ever visited or even dreamed of visiting Paris. He sings of seeing Notre Dame, the Champs Elysee, and of going into bookstores. The Paris that our narrator meets finds a Paris that is the same vibrant city it has been for hundreds of years, with "Napoleon still in his grave." After experiencing and enjoying the total sensory rush that the city provides, the narrator and his companion decide to unwind with a show, singing, "We've paid our tourist dues/its time for a show."

The chorus tragically lays out what might have been a motivation for a concert goer on the fateful day of those attacks, "It's been a long day in the city of light/who's playing at Bataclan tonight?" The chorus as the rest of the song, is pregnant with lyrical power precisely because of what it doesn't mention, as much as for the scene of

Parisian sight seeing that it sets, with the Bataclan attacks never being referred to by name, simply the desire of a tourist group to unwind and enjoy the gift of music after seeing as many of the beautiful sights of Paris as they could.

After the first chorus the song moves into an instrumental bridge and another verse, with a very lyrical guitar solo after the second chorus. Demuth sings a line that says "we'll sing along if we know the song", with the song ending with very hopeful sounding music featuring handclaps that keep the rhythm.

The second song on the "Defense du Jour" set is a jaunty blues number called "Aegean Blues" that features boogie woogie style riffs played on acoustic guitar and another very visual lyrical scene being set.

Human Shields songs can be found on Bandcamp under the "Defense Du Jour" album. I'm very much impressed both by the quality of their music, with its very rhythmically vital acoustic blues/folk/soulful sound, as well as by the quality of their lyrics, which paint stories in an engaging way while also allowing the listener to fill in some of the blanks to their tales. The band does good music with a good message that should be heard by fans of good music as well as people who care about the human community as a whole.

**Reviewed by**

**Henrique Hopkins**  
Music Editor/Blogger @

**RIQUESPEAKS BLOG**

## According to Eliot

### A Winter Trilogy

I

21 December 2008

Break Fast in Belgium  
Shortestday  
Through pane  
Wheels spin rain

735am  
Piped carols 🎵  
In this Vilvoorde Motel  
Hark The Herald Angels

Poised between  
Plate & mouth  
*mirabile dictu*  
The mystery

Of how  
Jesus liked his bacon

II

25 December 1958

Memory  
A beaten path  
To the past  
Cold darkness  
Before dawn

A moment's scent  
Anticipation  
The fire's blue glow

For a moment  
As lights around  
An artificial tree

We took the stairs  
My sister and I  
Each essential tread  
How far away child Christmas

III

31 December 1983

5 4 3 2 1  
A drunken man shouts

And people feign excitement

Another year

Shall we countdown to our death

An overfed bore  
Approaches extending a hand  
Woman  
With florid face  
Broken veins  
Like vines  
Pouts for a kiss

c. John Eliot 2016

c. John Eliot 2016

\*\*\*\*\*

**John Eliot** is a poet. He shares his time between Wales and France. In Wales he lives close to a capital city where he spends a lot of time reading his poetry to an audience.

In France he lives in a tiny village and enjoys the silence to write. John was a teacher.

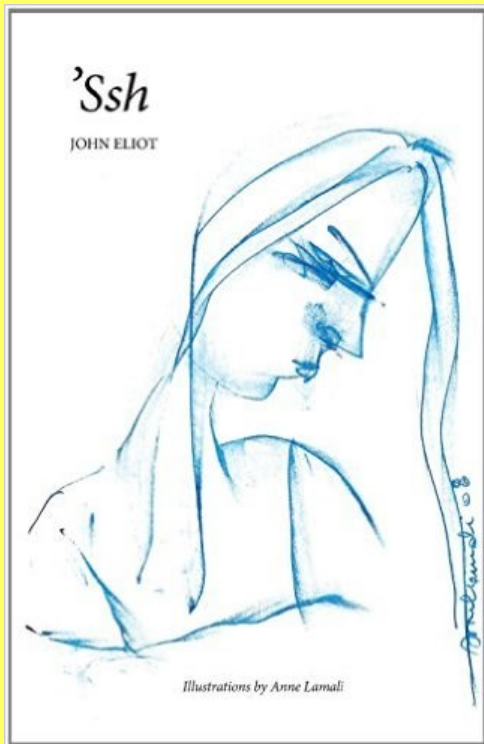
He is married with children and grandchildren. He has two books of poetry published. '**Ssh**' and '**Don't Go**' his new one which is his latest creative effort, titled '**Don't Go**'. Both books are published by Mosaïque Press of England" and are available on Amazon.

Any comments to

I will reply to all emails.

**Connect here:** [johneliot1953@gmail.com](mailto:johneliot1953@gmail.com)

**John Eliot**



"The photograph of John Eliot was taken by Dave Dagers during a live poetry reading. Dave is a professional photographer and artist. He has contributed drawings to John's new collection of poetry, 'Don't Go' which will be out in the Autumn."



**Advertise with us today.**

## According To Eliot – Extra

Leonard Cohen

I'm aged fifteen; still a school boy. Well aware of quality authors. My sister had taught me to read Camus, my brother, Sassoon and Owen. I was yet to discover TS Eliot, Yeats and Joyce. I listened to Bob Dylan, loved the LP Times They Are A Changin'. I owned a couple of LPS, The Beatles, *Sergeant Pepper's* and Dylan's *Greatest Hits*. But everyone owned *Sergeant Pepper's*. A Saturday morning. No school for me. I wasn't Jewish, but I took their advice. I never did any schoolwork on Saturday, saving it up for Sunday. I went into the city of Leicester to a favourite second hand record shop. I was about to buy my third LP which was to change my life. Looking through the bargain bin I picked an LP by Leonard Cohen. At the price of fifty pence it was a bargain. I'd heard of Cohen that he was like Dylan. I got home and played it on the old record player. The voice that came out of the speaker, the way it was produced (by John Simon, Paul Simon's brother) was...even now words fail me. Often a song takes a few listenings before the listener likes it. But this was poetry.

*Suzanne takes you down to her place by the river...*

*She feeds you tea and oranges...*

*And Jesus was a sailor when he walked upon the water...*

I hadn't heard poetry like this in a song.

*Songs of Leonard Cohen*. His first LP on CBS. And there began the love affair. And like a love affair it is just a matter of incidents and memories. One evening I was watching a play on television. I remember nothing about the play, but the closing credits had the Cohen song *Stories of the Street* sung over them. I was simply transfixed.

The LP *Songs From a Room* soon followed with the Cohen song that was always sung at a concert *Bird on a Wire*. I loved every song on

that LP, especially *Tonite Will Be Fine* with its EAD chords, that even I could play to a girlfriend on a guitar.

I went to college in about 1972. I lived on the top floor of a house. My Cohen LPS played every Friday night when the new girlfriend visited. By then it was the LP *Songs of Love and Hate* with the incredible song, *Famous Blue Raincoat*.

This short elegy is in danger of turning into my favourite songs and LPS of Leonard Cohen. Suffice to say, I love them all.

From 1974 I saw him on every tour he performed up to the final one in 2008. The first is worth a mention. I was in the choir stalls at the Albert Hall, London, so all I saw was his back; until he turned round to leave the stage. I leapt out of my seat and shouted, 'Leonard!' He looked directly at me and raised an arm.

He was a stunning performer. That evening at the Albert Hall, he ran out of songs and so just began the concert again.

When he became more sophisticated with his performances he would sing his very well-known song, *Hallelujah*. At a natural break towards the end of the song he would say, 'Goodnight friends' and leave the stage the band still playing. The audience would go wild until he returned for an encore.

On Friday the 11<sup>th</sup> November my telephone rang at half past five in the morning. It was my daughter. 'Dad,' she said, 'I've just heard Leonard Cohen has died. I'm sorry.' I sat on the edge of the bed and cried. I am sorry, I'm sure there are more important issues to cry about in the world. But his death was like losing a brother.

Leonard Cohen September 21<sup>st</sup> 1934 – November 7<sup>th</sup> 2016

c. John Eliot

### c. John Eliot 2016

I will respond to every email and may include them, with your permission, in future columns.

## Author Interview 3

### Spotlight Author

#### RUNETT NIA EBO GRAY



Liberian Literary Magazine conducted an interview with the poet **RUNETT NIA EBO GRAY** ☺.

**LLM: First, we would like to thank you for granting this interview. Let us kick off this interview with you telling us a little about yourself.... Tell us a little about yourself**

My name is RuNett "Nia" Ebo Gray. Gray is my married name. Nia is the name given to me by a college classmate when I wrote for our HBCU's underground paper called Yo'Mama Is Black back in 1968-69. Nia means purpose, so they began calling me the Poet of Purpose since a lot of my poetry had a message throughout or a moral at the end. Someone asked one time if Ebo is genuine. It is my family name and as much as I hated it as a child, I embrace it now

and I'm tracing my family tree. I'm the mother of 5 sons, one died in 2004. I have 14 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

#### Why writing?

I started writing at 10. At first, it was like therapy for me. I'd lost my best friend, my Pop Pop/my great-grandfather. At his funeral, everybody grieved but for some reason I couldn't cry. It didn't make any sense to me because I loved my Pop Pop so I felt I should have been weeping all over the place. When we got back to the house, I went to the study where we had spent the most time together at his roll-top desk. My mom was always a firm believer that when you can't express yourself out loud, you should write it down. So without saying a word she put a pencil and a piece of paper in my hand. When she left the room, I wrote down my feelings. It just happened to be in a poem. After that, I seemed to express all of my feelings poetically because it came easy for me.

#### What books have most influenced your life/career most?

First, anything by Richard Wright, from Black Boy to

Native Son, I consumed him! I've read several books by Terry McMillan, Mama was my favorite. I love poetry so I've read Dark Symphony, the Book of Negro Folklore and books by Langston Hughes, Dr Maya Angelou, Laini Mataka, Paul Laurence Dunbar and my favorite, Dr. Nikki Giovanni. I heard an interview she did after her album was released and that got me to be more serious about my work.

#### How do you approach your work?

My best poems have come to me at 3:00 AM. Some wake me up. I used to think that was crazy to say until I spoke with other poets who said the same thing. I have written at other times because when something really bothers me I have to... have to... have to write about it. I think my best pieces are the ones I write when I'm upset. The subjects include domestic violence, drug abuse, child molestation, low self-esteem, spirituality and I will always write about self-acceptance when it comes to my people. A lot of my poetry has to do with Black Pride and loving ourselves. I have tried to stay away from politics but lately, I have written one or two.

**What themes do you find yourself continuously exploring in your work?**

I love to write about people or people and relationships. Not just love poems but those that have to do with the absentee father, family, the relationships between men and women, adults and children but I guess what I write about the most is being Black. I don't use the term African-American as much because there are White African-Americans from South Africa. I prefer to be clear on who I'm writing about so I say Black people. My signature poem, *Lord Why Did You Make Me Black*, came about because I saw so many of my people immersed in self-hate.

**Tell us a little about your book[s]- storyline, characters, themes, inspiration etc.**

I have several books: 1) *God Has All You Need*- which is a book of poems with a spiritual and inspirational theme. 2) *Poems Of Nia (book 2)* - this is a continuation of the themes in my first book, 3) *Poems of Nia* (which is being re-done). Both books deal with issues of everyday life. One of the favorite poems in both books is *What Did You Make Roaches Fo'?* 4)

*Poetry Has Raised Me* is a book I had to write because of the poets who came before me, inspired and influenced me. 5) *Truth With Purpose*- This is a collaboration between me and my Partner-in-Rhyme, Victoria Peurifoy. We tackle issues like spirituality, technology and urbanology. We even took a unique way to address the subject of slave lynchings in this book of poetry. I also have several chapbooks: 1) *Black On Purpose*- I really think the title says it all for this one. 2) *Words Of Nia* - which deals with everything from male and female chastity to a relationship with God. 3) *Seniors Rockin' The Pen*- This is an anthology of poems by several "seasoned poets," including me. We belong to a Poetry & Discussion group at one of the senior centers in Philadelphia. 4) *Lord, Why Did You Make Me Black*- I wrote this poem back in 1994 and even though I copyrighted it, a lot of people came behind me claiming authorship or my name is spelled wrong or it says anonymous/author unknown. It is my most-pirated, hijacked and plagiarized work. Someone claimed it to get a scholarship for college and someone else printed it on T-shirts and posters for a while. Good things and bad things have

happened since I wrote this poem but the good outweigh the bad and I am grateful to be the vessel God chose to do it. Some of the good things are that this poem is published in *Chicken Soup for the African American Soul* (©2004) and in 2014, I wrote a play based on the poem which has been performed by the *FreshVisions™ Youth Theatre Group* in Northwest Philadelphia in 2014 and 2015. There is also a chapbook with the same title; this book includes two poems about items invented by Black people. Something the schools refuse to teach.

**What inspired you to write this title or how did you come up with the storyline?**

I like to call *Lord, Why Did You Make Me Black* a Divine Dictation and I'm working on a book that describes the process. When I tell people that God woke me up and dictated it to me, they think I a little "mental" but I really did wake at 3 AM and wrote what was pouring from my spirit. I wrote down the exact date and time I wrote it. I actually read it after I finished writing and was so overwhelmed, I cried. Next, I called my BFF and read it to her and she cried too.

**Is there a message in your book that you want your readers to grasp?**

People have accused me of saying that Black people are better than everyone else. Funny how people can twist things when they don't understand the purpose. My intent is to tell Black people that they are just as good as; not better than... The poem is intended to let Black people know that they don't have to be ashamed of who they are. I watch my people on the street and a lot of them look down when they are walking. I see the expressions of anger and negativity on their faces. I observe how young people mistreat themselves. They throw themselves in chairs when they sit down. They say all sorts of negative things about their skin, their looks and their hair. They spew a lot of hate and ridicule toward each other. They prefer the White doll to the Black one. We have nothing to be ashamed of and God did not make a mistake. This among other lies has been told for centuries. Once Black people can see and accept their true beauty, it is a wonderful transition.

**Is there anything else you would like readers to know about your book?**

Yes, I am the Poet of Purpose and my purpose is to let people know that we are a people who have done a lot of positive things, so don't just focus on the negative or you cannot strive to reach your destiny. You'll appreciate where you are going if you know where we've been and you can't know who you are until you know whose you are. It might sound corny or preachy but it's true.

**Do you have any advice for other writers?**

My main message would be, 1- don't let haters bust your dream bubble. My 11<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher told me I'd never be a good writer. She even threw one of my pieces away but that just made me work harder. 2- Don't be afraid to explore various styles of writing. If you lock yourself in one mode, you'll never know what else you can do. Hone your craft. Go to workshops and classes when you can, find a mentor. Be teachable but don't let anyone force you away from what you love. I had a young spoken word artist tell me that rhyming poetry was out of style so I asked him how many of the great and famous poets (who are still being studied) did he know or read. He walked away.



**What book[s] are you reading now? Or recently read?**

Recently, I read *Killing Willis* by Todd Bridges and *Reach* edited by Ben jealous and Trabian Shorters. Now, I'm reading Russell Simmons *Def (Poetry) Jam* on (Broadway and more) to read more poems/spoken word by young poets and *A Piece of Cake* by Cupcake Brown. I read it before and I loved it but my copy got away from me so I recently bought another one.

**Tell us your latest news, promotions, book tours, launch etc.**

There isn't a whole lot of news right now. My mom and her sister (my aunt) both passed away in December so after caring for both of them for a while, my husband and I are just getting our bearings again. My poetry venue, Poet-Ify: Poetry to Edify has been

my solace most of the time because it was the opportunity for me to see and hear other talented people share on our open mic. Even that had some painful moments because my mom and my aunt attended the venue and my mom, a gifted musician would often play keyboard to the delight of the crowd. By the grace of God, I can move forward knowing that is what she would want me to do.

### What are your current projects?

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, I am trying my hand at writing another play. I plan to give it to FreshVisions Youth Theatre Group after that it will be available to others. I have a coloring book in the works now and I want to connect with an animator. I am ghostwriter for 2 people working on their books, both autobiographies. Last but not least, I'm still tracking my family tree. I hope one day to take a trip to Africa,

### Have you read book[s] by [a] Liberian author[s] or about Liberia?

Not yet but I am willing to look into it. Because of the DNA test I took, my focus has been Camaroon and Nigeria but anything's possible.

### Any last words?

I would tell anyone – Don't be afraid to ask questions. The one I get asked the most is "how did you get started?" No matter what you are pursuing ask that question and ask more than one person.

I got a lot of answers when I asked; some I knew I could use and some I couldn't either because of money, time, travel or it was just not going to work for me. I say Explore. Find what works for you and Go for it. You will regret it if you don't.

### RuNett Nia Ebo



**RuNett Nia Ebo**, is a local resident of NW Philadelphia and married to William Gray, Sr. She has been writing since age 10 (which means over 5 decades). She is published in several anthologies including *Stand our Ground* © 2013 and she collaborated with eight other senior poets on the anthology, *Seniors Rockin' the Pen* © 2014.

She has self-published 8 chapbooks, 3 books of poetry, one CD and one fiction story, *All For You* © 2002.

Her signature poem, "[Lord, Why Did You Make Me Black?](#)" © 1994, is also her contribution to *Chicken Soup for the African-American Soul* © 2004. Recently (Feb 2015) RuNett and Victoria, her Partner-In-Rhyme, released a poetry book they co-authored entitled *Truth With Purpose* © 2014.

In 1998, along with her brother, Darien and another musician, the late Keno Speller, Poet Ebo established [Nia's Purpose: Poetry and Percussion @ Work](#). The trio used this vehicle to visit churches, schools and community centers to share poetry, percussion and Black History with audiences of all ages.

She has appeared on cable and public television, been featured or guest hosted on cable and regular radio and acted on local stages in Philadelphia in addition to speaking and presenting at community events and local schools on every level in Philadelphia, New York, Houston, Los Angeles, and St. Croix as well as several cities in New Jersey and Delaware.



## LORD, Why Did You Make Me Black?

Lord, Lord,  
Why did You make me Black?  
Why did You make me  
someone  
The world wants to hold back?

Black is the color of dirty  
clothes;  
The color of grimy hands and  
feet.

Black is the color of darkness;  
The color of tire-beaten streets.

Why did you give me thick lips,  
A broad nose and kinky hair?  
Why did You make me  
someone  
Who receives the hatred stare?

Black is the color of a bruised  
eye  
When somebody gets hurt.  
Black is the color of darkness,  
Black is the color of dirt.

How come my bone structure so  
thick  
my hips and cheeks are high?  
How come my eyes are brown  
and not the color of daylight  
sky?  
Why do people think I'm  
useless?  
How come I feel so used?  
Why do some people see my  
skin  
and think I should be abused?

Lord, I just don't understand;  
What is it about my skin?  
Why do some people want to  
hate me  
And not know the person  
within?

Black is what people are  
"listed,"

When others want to keep them  
away.

Black is the color of shadows  
cast.

Black is the end of the day.

Lord, You know, my own  
people mistreat me;  
And I know this isn't right.  
They don't like my hair or the  
way I look  
They say I'm too dark or too  
light.

Lord, Don't You think it's time  
For You to make a change?  
Why don't You re-do creation  
And make everyone the same?

### (God answered):

Why did I make you black?  
Why did I make you black?  
Get off your knees; look  
around.  
Tell me what do you see?  
I didn't make you in the image  
of darkness.  
I made you in the likeness of  
Me.

I made you the color of coal  
From which beautiful diamonds  
are formed.  
I made you the color of oil,  
The Black gold that keeps  
people warm.

I made you from the rich, dark  
earth  
That can grow the food you  
need.  
Your color's the same as the  
panther's  
Known for (HER) beauty and  
speed.

Your color's the same as the  
Black stallion,  
A majestic animal is he.

I didn't make you in the Image  
of darkness  
I made you in the Likeness of  
Me!

All the colors of a Heavenly  
Rainbow  
Can be found throughout every  
nation;  
And when all those colors were  
blended well.  
YOU BECAME MY  
GREATEST CREATION!

Your hair is the texture of  
lamb's wool;  
Such a humble, little creature is  
he.  
I am the Shepherd who watches  
them.  
I am the One who will watch  
over thee.

You are the color of midnight  
sky,  
I put the stars' glitter in your  
eyes.  
There's a smile hidden behind  
your pain,  
That's the reason your cheeks  
are high.

You are the color of dark clouds  
formed  
when I send my strongest  
weather  
I made your lips full so when  
you kiss  
the one that you love...will  
remember.

Your stare is strong; your bone  
structure, thick,  
to withstand the burdens of  
time.  
That reflection you see in the  
mirror...  
The Image that looks back is  
MINE!

©1994 all rights reserved

<http://www.poetebo.com>

## Liberian Proverbs

Excepted from, **The Elders' Wisdom**

The feces are the food of flies. *Everything has a value in life to someone. The very thing we consider a waste, is food for other animals to survive on. Hence, we should treat people with respect because to someone else, that person we have low regard for, means the world.*

The head that came to carry the stone, instead stone carry it. *An ill-prepared person can only expect defeat. The very problem that such a person undertakes to resolve ends up consuming them.*

The huge silk cotton trees grow out of very tiny seeds. *The smallest of things can bear great fruits. It is not good to underestimate people or their hard work. It may seem meaningless, but with time and dedication, they can turn that venture into success.*

The life we have is the same life that animals have. *Often times, we tend to think highly of ourselves and far less of others. The fact is we are all equal as humans. Similarly, some people think animals are less valuable, but they also have life and we should learn to respect and treat them properly as we would any other living creature.*

The marriage life gently glides away, when partners respect and obey each other. *A happy marriage involves both parties making effort to keep it. When they do, time flies and there is much*

*happiness. When they don't things go south and time seems to crawl.*

The thing that makes the dog cook well, is the same thing that made the pig *por-tor-por-tor* (cooked extremely soft - more like overcooking rice until it is sticky). *There is not one major fix for all problems, each problems has a unique solution. Rice is a staple food in Liberia, and it is often cooked grainy, this makes eating with soup/stew easy. A rice that is por-tor-por-tor means the rice is sticky, making eating with stew/soup difficult. Most people do not like it that way. Rice cooked that way is also an insult to a cook since it tells badly on the one who prepared it. An aspect of this is that, por-tor-por-tor rice is often used for babies or very ill people; even then, it is mixed with milk and sugar to make eating it enjoyable. Thus, a healthy person doesn't take kindly to eating food like that.*

The vulture doesn't have a barber, but his head is always shiny. *Certain things will work out naturally, there is no need to worry about them. Doing so does not make them work out any differently than they will do by themselves.*

When a cattle is born, it is with its ears; the horns grow later. *With practice, we grow to mastery. It is best to listen well and understand before attempting to act.*

When you see animals playing and licking each other, it is because they know each other.

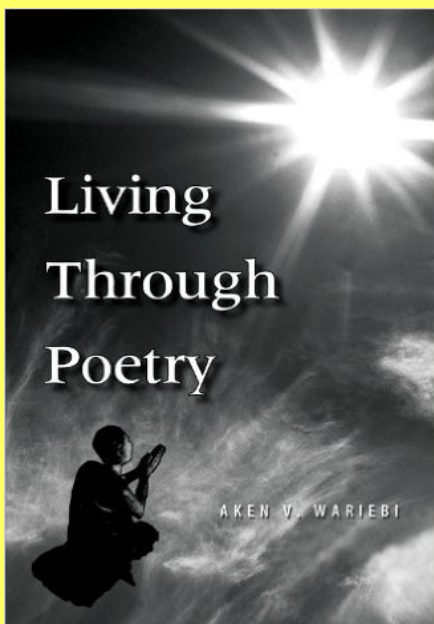
## Aken-bai's- A Flow of Thoughts



**Aken Vivian Wariebi** is an avid reader and writer and the latter began more frequently since grade school. A graduate from both Rutgers and Syracuse Universities, respectively, she never left a book nor a

pen behind. Today, a Poet and Advocate for the most vulnerable, Ms. Wariebi finds joy in inspiring and helping others in any positive way that she can. Some say her Poems speak to their heart and soul and for Ms. Wariebi life speaks to her pen. Others describe her writings as life short stories. No matter how it is felt, Ms. Wariebi speaks to your heart and soul from hers and hopes that all can find a little more light along their journey of life in her work as she has in her writings. She is originally from Monrovia, Liberia and currently resides in the USA.

[www.facebook.com/inspirewithlove](http://www.facebook.com/inspirewithlove)



## How Do We Define Christmas?

Christmas is every year. A Christian holiday but how is it defined in one's heart? Most people give love freely at that time even if for the rest of the year it has a cost. They share and give but that is limited to the holidays only. Most think it is about giving and being nice somewhat for that particular time, receiving gifts et cetera.

However, the time disappears and life returns back to normal, then what? The mask is worn again and the magic is over. Where does love, sharing, giving, kindness and all that positive action and the thoughts go? Does it go into remission until the next holiday? Shouldn't it be recycled every day? Does one wait to love or just simply love? Does one give as Jesus would or love as he did all year, every day? Isn't it really about him not us?

Well, as one revisits the holidays with songs of cheer, with the holiday spirit, let's remember what love is and live that more than often than hate. As we all should know by now, hate does nothing but destroy, so let's let love build.

Let's let love grow, let love be shared and defined like nothing else but what it is. Hate has no place in love, let's remember that love still lives every minute, every second of every day and one must know and understand that it starts within not spared for just the holidays.



**Aken V. Wariebi, MSW**

[www.facebook.com/inspirewithlove](http://www.facebook.com/inspirewithlove)

## A Liberian Christmas

We present the 12 days of Christmas segment. On each day, we feature one piece by a Liberian creative artist.



**Aken V. Wariebi**, is a Liberian-American who has self-published two inspirational books of Poetry namely; "Living Through Poetry" and "Think as your heart beats". Her work has been featured in the United States and internationally as well. She hopes that her writings will inspire and soothe the hearts of readers within their worlds and they would find solace in it as she did. She currently lives in the United States of America. Her Facebook page is: [www.facebook.com/inspirewithlove](http://www.facebook.com/inspirewithlove)

DAY 1:

**On the first day of Christmas...**

### What is Christmas?

How do we define Christmas? What does it mean to us? We have high expectations for sure, for gifts received or given. We may get annoyed or frustrated if we don't receive anything or perhaps have to do a return at a store for a refund

or exchange. We may want to remember those we lost if the loss was closer to Christmas or even in the past. We may have fond memories that we do not want to lose of those we adored, treasured and so forth. We may be lonely or alone and be sad. We may want to celebrate in unlawful ways and if we do, may get caught.

But what is Christmas really? I want to believe it is a celebration of life, a life that is the best example there is of all that is good. This is far bigger than we are. It is not just about us. We must follow the example set before us by this birth and life of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Positives like compassion, spreading love and joy, peace, courage, lifting others up with kindness, all of this and anything that brings a smile and wipe away the tears.

But then may we remember this is not just limited to this day, but to everyday we live. It is for and with every opportunity we encounter. This is because a chance may be the only chance we've got to light a darkness, brighten a dull light, or shine a light in an otherwise gloomy or doomed moment.

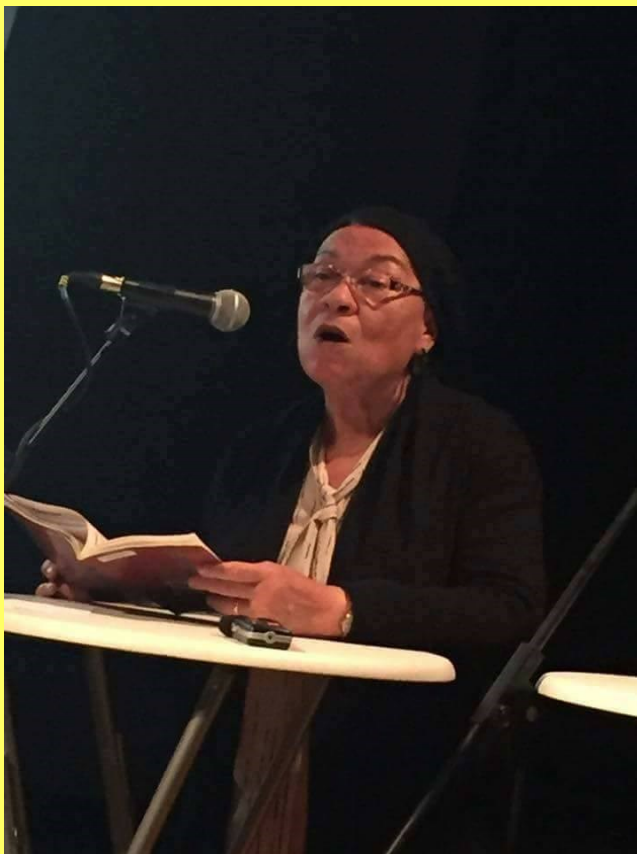
We must let this celebration last within and spill out what life truly means. In order to allow God's love to flow within us and through us. We have to remember the unconditional love involved here and let that be a guiding light for who we are and not what we embrace only on Christmas day.

As God loves us for our lifetime, so loving for us to give must be a life time as well. May this Christmas bring to us all the goodness that the day itself represents now and always. Peace2u!

Day 2

On the second day of Christmas...

We offer you a poet that is no stranger to us. In many ways she molded some of the best Liberian writers around today. Prof. **Althea Romeo-Mark**. She is a former Assistant Professor of the University of Liberia, and currently lectures in Basel, Switzerland.



Poem

**Liberian Devil Comes to Town at Christmas**

The long-faced mask frowns.  
Its huge O-mouth made for gobbling.  
Gigantic eyes gawk at gathering crowd  
round its skyscraper legs that leap  
backwards and forward under spun out  
grass skirt.  
The child's piercing screech,

hitting and hovering on the ceiling,  
drags everyone away from dinner.  
Fufu and soup are left for flies to feast on  
The shrieking child waits to be rescued,  
while the music of merry musicians  
beating drums, singing and dancing  
bring Christmas cheer.  
"Oh, it the country devil.  
Don't be afraid," soothing voices say.  
But in the hinterland the real country  
devil threatens  
women, children, and the uninitiated,  
cower behind closed doors.  
Order is restored to the child's world.  
Hands held by ma and pa  
she feels the rhythm of their hips and  
feet,  
watches as the devil prances in the front  
yard.  
It plays its legs high and wide  
to the pat-tum, bum, pat-tum, bum of  
drums.  
Old Man Beggar joins him, too, in the  
dance  
for a small feast, coins and cane juice.

© Althea Romeo-Mark, 2015

Published in DoveTales: Family and Cultural Identity, An International Journal of the Arts. Published by Writing for Peace, McNaughton & Gunn, USA, 2016

\***Old Man Beggar** –Liberian antithesis to Santa Claus. He is accompanied by drummers and doesn't bring gifts. But he tells stories and expects some form of a thank you in return.

\***Country devil**-a person in mask and wearing stilts and who is a part of a secret society that is feared by those not yet a member of it.

Day 3

On the third day of Christmas...

Our featured author today is a rising star. He's a poet, Pan Africanist, a 'dreamer' and a Liberian.

[Lekpele M. Nyamalon](#) offers us what he calls, things happening around Christmas.



Poem

**Christmas is Here**

When the year slips through  
my fingers and there's nothing  
else to hold on, I sigh at the hamattan,  
as it swirls around the poles,  
Christmas is nigh.  
I look at the smiles  
raining on the faces of Children,  
asking for a dime,  
nickel, anything, they too know  
that Christmas is standing by.  
I believe the moon knows the season,  
cuz it hangs around all night  
waiting a get a glimpse and  
throw its smiles down the shores.  
Christmas is speeding up.  
The market women,

yanna boys, susu pa  
all pose a chorus of laughter  
as she walks on the stage,  
greeted by firecrackers,  
Oldma beggars,  
flooded streets of peddlers,  
Monrovia twisted by booze and breeze,  
as the magnificent entry proceeds,  
Christmas is here!!

[#ALiberianChristmas](#) [#LIBLiterature](#)  
[#ChristmasBonanza](#)

Day 4

On the fourth day of Christmas...

Today's feature is a microfiction by an emerging Liberian writer. [Kpana Nnadia Gaygay](#) is a story teller and poet. She often writes humorous pieces. As true to the Liberian tradition of storytelling, she ends her stories with morals. She is studying to be a biologist at the University of Liberia.



Flash Fiction

### **The Joys of Christmas**

The town was quiet. Everyone seemed lost in their own thoughts. The events of the last two days were still fresh on people's minds. None could get over the brutality of men against their fellow men. Men who were neighbors and drinking buddies had now become enemies. Conflict had divided the town. People who used to live at peace with one another became sworn enemies over a trivial issue. They fought each other with knives, sticks and machetes. It was three days to Christmas, and it seemed they had ruined the holiday for the entire town. Christmas is meant to be a joyous, peaceful and happy time of celebrations. Even kids who were excited to show off their "Christmas clothes" were all withdrawn. The usual lively sounds of utensils in kitchens were dull. No one was looking forward to this Christmas. Attention has been diverted to the conflict. Everyone went to bed solemnly, none looking forward to the 25th. And then early that morning, we woke up to the sound of old cans, buckets and drums from a group of your people singing the usual Christmas song "MERRY CHRISTMAS..... WE'RE AT YOUR DOOR.....MERRY CHRISTMAS....." Many were both shocked and overjoyed!!

Unknowingly to the rest of the town, the rebel commander held a meeting with the commander of the AFL. They met under the flag of truce and decided that they would cease fire for a full day to allow residents as well as their men to celebrate the holidays. They knew they could get in serious trouble with their bosses but' they risked it. They chose to stop fighting and have peace, albeit briefly.

The joy of Christmas returned! Thanks to the young people. The entire town joined them in singing and exchanging Christmas greetings! The past happenings could wait, not Christmas!! The joy and happiness needed to be shared, not bitterness. And so Christmas was celebrated, not conflict!!!

#### **Moral**

It's better to have a moment of peace than a lifetime of conflict?

#### **Day 5**

#### **On the fifth day of Christmas...**

In today's feature, we present an artist that's best described in some corners as controversial... okay day book over der.... dey say trouble maker. Lol. But she's determined to make her imprint on the industry regardless of the market noise.

[Berenice Mulubah](#) is a poet, musician, blogger and many more. I call her BM. She is a veteran whom runs arguably the largest Liberian entertainment blog, [Berenice Cliberiaclearlyblog](#). She gives us a piece to remember how a Liberian Christmas felt



Poem

### Remembering Christmas in Liberia

Remembering Christmas in Liberia  
Mehn, the celebration there was serious,  
Pot boiling with jollof rice inside,  
The Kids dressed up, ready for a fun  
experience  
If you have  
Be prepared to give  
For every greeting ended with  
"my Christmas on you."  
Seeking Christmas trees  
None to be found  
But that old man beggar  
Surely did suffice  
Good old times  
Great old times  
Collecting dimes  
From my uncle Tilmon  
Christmas in Liberia  
What an experience  
The Fun, the laughter  
Distance relatives from the interior  
That's Christmas for you, in Liberia

[#ALiberianChristmas](#) [#LIBLiterature](#)  
Day 6

### On the six day of Christmas....

Today's feature is a story crafty in every sense because the author is a weaver of words. [Jeanine Milly Cooper](#) is many things, humanitarian, author, poet, etc. Her stories leave readers rolling with laughter on their worse days. She's one of those authors that are good at making their readers behave crazily... they're talking to themselves and giggling and outright ROTFL. Trust me when I say so. Try reading one of my favourites, Why Dog is a Dog. But she never misses the opportunity to bring in a teachable moment at the end of the humor. She blends the rich Liberian culture into her stories.



Short Story

### Christmas Dinner

Once upon a time.  
Time.

In late 1990, the guns had pretty much silenced in Monrovia and the Interim Government of National Unity -IGNU or I ain't Got Nothing for U- had taken "power". Bless their souls. ECOMOG had secured the city and installed checkpoints everywhere. Cars were moving around again, sometimes missing key parts like a door or a fender but hey, they were moving. Gas was being brought in by ECOMOG so only those with access to that were actually moving around. Very brisk market places had been set up all around the city. Not in stores but on the sidewalk.

"Buy your own things! Buy your own things!" the hawkers called out.... They had learned this pre-emptive call because many of them having been beaten up by people reclaiming their loot.

"That ma radio you selling? You rogue!"  
Ehn! Boo-tee open!! Most times, the hawkers would just let you have whatever it was and would go back and get something else to sell.



Wartime Free Market. You get the goods for free and you sell it for cash or barter.

On the other hand, in the aftermath of the war, when you have lost so much, so many material things and so much of emotional value, seeing anything that once belonged to you has a helluva lot more significance. I saw a man wearing a shirt I had had made before the war and I wanted to fight him so bad! That shirt, whose material I had bought in El Corte Ingles, the Spanish department store in Las Palmas; brought home and had the tailor sew for me with special buttons, stands out in my mind as the representation of the house, the car, the business, the photo albums, the land and the life that I once had and had lost in the war. As if that one man was responsible for all I had lost.

"Dah not even a man's shirt," I wanted to scream at this man, walking serenely down Benson Street, just know he's zooting in his looted goods. So yeah, the yanna boys, the street hawkers, had learned that it's best to just tell people that you were selling looted goods; that you didn't know who it belonged to; that you were just trying to survive.

Nightclubs like LIPPS were giggling, and I mean seriously! It was like Liberian people had survived the war and so would now kill themselves with booze and dancing. Everybody looked like skeletons or at least like the crash-diet versions of themselves. Everybody! Clothes were hanging on people's frames but they were in the nightclub and for that time, they could forget their pain.

I was hardly fat before the war but I was down to my CWA size...not even a size 0, more like a size 12 years. Because food was scarce. Charles Taylor had put a front line around Monrovia, blocking all road exits and prohibiting food coming into the city. Even the looted food from the supermarkets were dwindling as

people bought little palm-sized repackaged sacks of mayonnaise to eat as the daily meal. Just mayonnaise. Ugh!

Living with the MSF team in the former British embassy, around the corner from my grandmother's house, we too were eating MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) that the American marines so graciously sent to us by container load since the first Gulf war was winding down. They tasted like you were chewing vitamins; and it all tasted the same, no matter the name on the package. Once a week or so, our team in Freetown would send us a carton of canned food on the Weasua flight. The funny thing is, everybody used to monitor the WEASUA flight to see who was getting food. The various NGO logisticians knew who had cheese or jam, or meat, or, most precious commodity: beer.

They say hungry make spider eat pepper. Yeah, pikin! That ain't no lie! Hunger also makes people do amazing things and change their behavior. War + hunger + Christmas? Hmm!

One enterprising Egyptian man, who had worked in their embassy before the war, set up a "supermarket" in his kitchen in Mamba Point. He got a freezer full of frozen chicken and about ten cartons of assorted canned goods. I think the food was looted from the Ambassador Hotel, but what is my own?

Anyway, since my grandmother had sent \$500 through Western Union in Abidjan for me to bring for all her people in Monrovia, I went to buy chicken from the Egyptian man. \$25 per little scrawny chicken. Each. I begged that man until I was hoarse. \$25!! There were about 15 people left in my grandmother's house: my mother and aunt, great aunt, great uncle, scattered cousins and relatives, mostly elderly, but a few younger extended family members, including my foster son. My grandmother's instructions were to give them a good Christmas dinner so at least 4 chickens. A \$100

feast!!! I delivered those chickens that day and Mummy and Solomon, my foster son, himself a gifted cook, put together all the elements for the dinner.

Meanwhile, up at the MSF house, the team of ten people were also preparing chicken. I could have eaten with my family down the road but I decided that since the food was so small, let them eat and enjoy and I would eat with the MSF team. For our dinner, we had 2 chickens, MREs and some canned cheese and peas and carrots. We nah cook that meal up and we sat down to the table to eat in the ambassador's dining room with a gorgeous view of the ocean. Everybody thinking how they would have to overcome politeness to get their desired chicken parts.

Johan, as team leader, was carving the chicken. I was learning that this is a task he enjoys immensely. Bubba started to carve up those two scrawny chickens and people were loading up on the rice and canned peas, chicken aroma wafting all around us. I thought it was just my one planning on how to get me the thigh, not the drumstick...well maybe if somebody didn't want it, I could get a wing.

In walks the last member of the team, Monique, but she comes with 2 friends behind her.

"Hello everybody! Merry Christmas!"

Everybody greeted them with Merry Christmases and all. It was the couple who had some kind of zoo or a vet clinic or something, near Hotel Africa. We all knew them and they were very nice people. An Australian couple.

Monique started looking for chairs for them to come sit at the table and all of a sudden the conversation subsided as people began looking at each other. Wait now! Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait!! These people were coming to eat? With us? This was not just 'greet and go'? The import of the situation began to sink in.

Everybody was thinking it but one fellow, Benoit, rest his soul, was the first to voice it.

"I am not sharing my chicken. This chicken is the MSF chicken and these people are not in the MSF team."

Ah. Bootee coming open, I thought. NGO chicken not for sharing!

## Day 7

### Christmas Dinner Part II

I had already figure out that I would not get no wing part...just that MSF chicken thigh. I was recalibrating to think that maybe Mummy would leave piece of chicken for me. If push came to shove, I could go to the house and beg for some chop. This MSF chicken looked like a problem.

"But it's Christmas!" Monique said. "Christmas is a time for sharing."

"Yes. You share your piece of chicken with them but I am not sharing."

Johan was just looking from one to the other. He nah stop carving. All his decent home training and MSF humanitarian standards were pushing him one way, but he was hungry too. Looking back, I see him standing there with his brain working. He wanted to intervene but to say what? He cleared his throat and opened his mouth but Benoit rounded on him, this time with another supporter, one of the logisticians.

"I am not sharing my piece of chicken!"

"I am not sharing either. If Monique wants to bring her friends to dinner, let Monique share her piece of chicken. They can eat all the rest but not the chicken."

My eyes were big and round and I kept my mouth closed. See White people fighting for chicken aye! Johan tried his best to exert leadership in the face of this

revolt. He would give Monique two pieces of chicken and some of his piece for her friends. Poor fellow. You would think his team-mates would also relent. Nah-teen!!! Nobody was giving up piece of chicken! Knowing I nah settle on my own plan B, I relinquished any claim to a second piece, settling for just one thigh. At least I got my chicken thigh and I could look magnanimous, knowing I could go beg my people for for.

To show you well how hungry they were, that Australian couple did not crack their teeth to refuse the chicken. They waited us all out until they were given some chicken too and they chomped that chicken and sucked the bones like true Liberians. European manners went way out the door that day!

Later that evening, Johan and I went to wish my family Merry Christmas. Mummy, in that generous way of hers, had saved us some chicken, split peas and rice. The two of us acted like we hadn't already had dinner and we shamelessly ate two more pieces of chicken each.

## Day 8

### On the eighth day of Christmas....



Today's featured author is one that is constantly striving to make things better in

his community, in the industry and just about everywhere he goes. [Josiah Joekai](#) is a poet, author, educator and public servant.

His writings cover both academic and fiction. His desire to see a new Africa is hard to miss when reading his works.

Poem

### At Christmas....

Back then, it was all about me  
The toys, new suits and shoes  
My colorful wrist watch and rubber  
sunglasses

Oh my fancy haircut spiced it up  
The aroma of delicious meals  
Not without the famous chicken thigh  
The excitement and happiness we  
shared

Running about without limits  
Truly defined my world of Christmas.  
Oh yes, blissful Christmas  
With all I needed right at my disposal  
The gifts and meals from mommy and  
daddy  
The ambiance and fun with friends  
Ruling my short-lived world  
Always give me hope for another  
Christmas

And I always rolled like no tomorrow  
Many years have come and gone  
I have grown and realized the true  
meaning of Christmas

Yes, Christmas is still full of fun and  
excitement  
But let's love each other like God loves  
us

Let's give like God gives to us  
Let's share like God shares his grace and  
mercy with us  
This is Christmas, let's live it.

Day 9

On the ninth day of Christmas....

Today, we feature my personal historian and my boss at LHC. If you've bit heard about Liberian History and Culture, then you're missing out. We're one of the oldest Liberian FB groups. Was there from the onset of groups and [Sylomun Weah](#), a poet and lover of history nurtured this baby from scratch. I jokingly call him 'Much Obligated' something I shamelessly took from him. Lol. Weah is a musician, songwriter and composer. For his Christmas piece, we are running this.



Song

**I Wish You**

This is the time of the year to come together  
Yes, it's Season time, come on let's do it  
Come on let's celebrate, no matter where you are  
Come on let's celebrate, no matter what you've got  
Though you are far from home, come on let's do it  
Your mama's not by your side, come on let's do it  
Your papa's not by your side, come on let's do it

Come on now-come on now\_sing a song -a happy song

\*\*\*\*\*

Yes, I wish you - a merry Christmas  
Yes, I wish you - a happy new year

\*\*\*

Bye-bye\_\_\_bye,bye -2016

Welcome\_\_\_welcome -2017

\*\*\*\*\*

Hello Liberia, how are you doing  
Hello Monrovia, how are you doing  
Hello West Point, how are you doing  
Hello New Kru Town, how are doing  
Hello Broad St., how are you doing  
Hello Gardnesville, how are you doing  
Hello Liberians, all over the world  
Sing a song- let's sing a song  
A happy song, a merry song

\*\*\*\*\*

Yes, I wish you - a merry Christmas  
Yes, I wish you - a happy new year

\*\*\*\*\*

Aye yah mama - aye yah mama -oh  
Aye yah mama - aye yah mama - hey  
What are you doing- mama I love you  
What are you doing- mama I miss you  
Aye yah children- aye yah my children-  
oh

Aye yah children- aye yah my children-  
hey

How are you doing- papa loves you so-o  
What are you doing- papa miss you so-o

\*\*\*\*\*

Yes, I wish you - a merry Christmas  
Yes, I wish you - a happy new year

\*\*\*\*\*

Happy new year, me no die- oh  
(Happy new year)(aye mama-maa)

Happy new year, me no die-  
oh\_\_(Happy new year)

End:

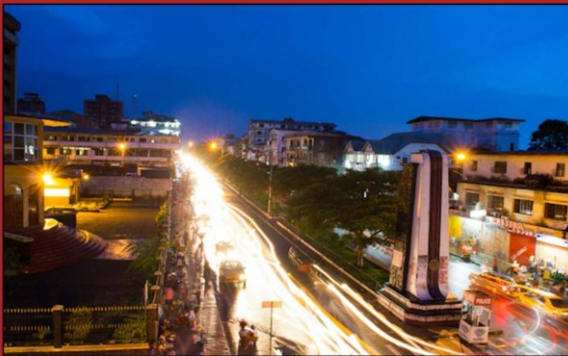
(A Song of Sylomun)

Day 10

**On the tenth day of Christmas.....**

Story culled from the book, *A Liberian Christmas* by **D. Othniel Forte**

**D. OTHNIEL FORTE**



*A Liberian Christmas*

Memories of  
Amazing Times

No Liberian Christmas was complete without the masterful display of Oldman Beggars. During the season, many activities occur, but hardly any compares [when it comes to originality, local talents and entertainment] to Oldman Beggars.

This was the penultimate stage for the display of raw, local talents. It is quite easy to attribute the dancers' skills to their experience at traditional dances, but this level of performance requires more. The performers know that they are on the highest national stage. Failure is not an

option. Entertainment is their goal and entertain they do. If you have not seen one, you would not fully appreciate what I am talking about here. This is an experience to be experienced.

Oldman Beggar is a star in his own rights. He has a crew dedicated to making his show a success. On an average crew, there would be drummers, many using drums they made themselves. It was as if they had an unspoken rule that they must make their own. They used a wide variety of things- tin cans, aluminum, zinc, PVC, wooden skin drums etc. what fascinated me was the fact that almost no two drums were made the same. Imagine the countless possibilities of sounds that were produced. The same kind of skill they applied to their guitars, flutes and sassas.

Speaking of sassas, I love them. They make them out of calabash gourd or long melon. They would use fully rounded [hallowed] ones, which are elongated at the stem. This narrowed end, they would use as handles. They would then cover the whole gourd with an intricate set of nicely threaded beads that are extended at the top. Because the dried melons are lightweight, the person playing it could play extremely fast beats or counter beats. The dancers would have to then match that rhythm at all times. There is just so much magic in their displays.

Old Man Beggar lives up to his name. He wears loose fitting, bulky clothes. His shoes are old, torn or both. Despite his ragged looks, he doesn't smell like a street beggar. There is a cleanliness to him. They stuff him to look as though he has a protruding gut [potbelly]. His shaggy looks may fool you but he is a great dancer. When the beggar is on the

floor, his moves reveal his skills. Children soon figure out that it is unlikely an old man beneath that disguise. He does everything that contradicts that notion of being old.

If you expect some overweight dude with silver beard, long hair, big belly and glasses as Santa Claus, then think again. St. Nicholas has no carriages, no reindeer, no elves and certainly no presents. The Liberian Santa is one lavishly dressed dude. He normally wears three-piece suits [often white or black], leather shoes, hat, the occasional gloves and or a walking stick.

He doesn't care if kids have been naughty or nice. He has a list all right, but his is one of things the he wants for himself. He comes around and takes alms from people. I guess it is a crude twisted joke he pulls on his western counterparts.

So, what is the fuss about Santa if he is not a judgmental, sledge-flying dude that carries no presents? Why do kids go crazy over him?

Here is the deal, at least part of it. Santa brings inexplicable joy to children. They get to chase after him, all the while screaming their lungs out. They are in the center of the action. Right there that moment, they matter. They are a part of something bigger. They are a prelude to the performance. Liberia was so safe that I remember chasing several Santas from Nelson Street, down to Sao Bosa Street and Waterside where the crowd would literally swallow us.

Sometimes, we went down Ashmun Street, took the left on Randal, joined Front Street briefly and took the next left on Gurley Street then down on to Water Street. Again, the marketers ate us alive. All this time, folks would run out of their

offices to get a glimpse at the performers. Others in several storey buildings with windows facing the street would open them to look on.

The country was quite safe back then; folks left their doors unlocked. Many homes had screened doors to keep out mosquitoes, insects and rodents, but that was about the only security they need. Each person was a keeper of the other.

However, I suspect that parents were too busy enjoying the performance to get worked out over a bunch of kids they knew were in no real danger. I know many friends that followed Santas or Old Man Beggars to parts further and did not land in trouble with their folks when they returned. I just never had that pleasure.

It was not just all running around making noise for us kids. This was like 26, Flag Day and our birthdays rolled into one. We too enjoyed the dance and music. There were many songs like Merry Christmas We Are at Your Door; Kpelle People Put On Shoes and Happy New Year We Nah Die Oh- but this one was often reserved for the New Year's serenade.

However, my all-time favorites were:

"Oh we are, we are, Oh Santa Claus we are

Ah yea!

Oh we are, we are, Oh Santa Claus we are

Ah yea!

"Old Man Beggar, join the Beggar" (2x)

-----, join the Beggar;

[----- one could fill in any name]

"Monrovia Girl Stop Drinking Lysol, (2x)

If You Want To Live Long,

Stop Drinking Lysol"

Originally, the song said Young in place of Monrovia.

## Day 11

### On the eleventh day of Christmas.....

#### PART II

I recall this one time we had just left from choir practice. We had cramped inside our Dad's Matches Box [Austin Mini]. My Old Boy was a sucker for old cars, but our friends called the car as such not so much because of its looks but for the way we all had to stash ourselves in it. They likened it unto a box of match fully stack. It goes without saying that the angrier we got with the name, the more we ensured that they used it. With time, it stuck and the sting wore off. I grew to fancy it almost as much as the car.

Somewhere around Jamaica Road, just after the bridge, a crowd gathered adding on to the traffic. I am talking traffic backing up to New Georgia Estate junction. We had crawled our way only to reach here and find out that Santa Claus was performing. I recall thinking to myself that some traffic police at the Free Port junction was not doing his job. I had no idea how close to the truth I was.

We inched on a few more feet and then we stopped. Nothing was moving expect people. It took a while to realize that this congestion was not stopping anytime soon. Papa wanted to turn back and go to the garage. He had a garage a few hundred meters away from the bridge. We could go there and wait it out. We wanted to follow Old Man Beggar. We pleaded, he refused on grounds that it was not safe and we were far from home. However, Mother Dear did her magic again and reminded him that this was Christmas and that we spent so much time at the garage that we practically lived there; for all she cared, it

could be home. I suspected he relented out of pure fatigue. He insisted that our eldest go along with us.

We chased after the crowd under the less scrutinous but watchful eyes of the older boys. Almost reaching Cement Factory, we found the Santa and Oldman Beggar performing. We watched for no more than a few minutes and then the show was interrupted. The Santa, who was wearing, a white tailcoat with a black bowtie and cummerbund, stopped dancing. He strolled over to his 'manager'.

They spoke briefly and he signaled his friend Old Man Beggar to join them. They conversed briefly. All the while, Santa and Beggar were nodding profusely, excitedly if you ask me. The manager then took to the center of the circle and announced that they were taking this competition to the next level. They had just learned of another group of performers just at Free Port junction. They were about to go and challenge them.

The crowd burst into cheers. Every child screamed, as I had never before heard. I had seen several competitions but never had I seen the famous group from Vai Town and Clara Town together; nor had I see Jamaica Road's performers. We later learned that a huge part of the stand-up was because the Santa and Old Man Beggar groups were performing separately [this was not unusual]. Then word spread that another group was inbound from Jamaica Road.

Apparently, they had a beef from the previous holiday. The Clara Town group had split up, to cover more ground. She was at the Port when they learned of their inbound rivals. They were unable to reach their other members, so they went in bed

with the Vai Town neighbors [who were also their rivals]. It was a matter of proximity and pride. They were brothers and needed to stick together against an outsider.

The market women and street vendors, who were aware of the bad blood from last year, were pumping things up and raising all the hype. Somehow, the traffic officers and the market goers were caught in this web. As news spread, a bigger area was prepared for the showdown. This caused the traffic jam- too many cars, street vendors and a whole lot of spectators. They all gathered about on an already small road.

Inbound, on the right hand side, is a clearing. There were few tables for vendors to use because during the raining season the area was swampy; thus, no one made it a permanent station. This was the designated spot. We tagged along the Jamaica Road group and managed to somehow keep together. I was quite skinny so it was not difficult to nudge my way between people. Once I found an opening, my brother would wedge it wider and we would be through. I was practically seated on the floor of the action.

A rather nicely dressed man came up. He held a portable loud speaker in one hand with a writing pad and few pens in the other. He looked official. He greeted the crowd, cracked a few jokes and moved around a lot.

He introduced himself and proceeded to tell the tale of Old Man Beggar. It turned out that Old Man Beggar was very educated and well travelled. He had more degrees than any other person around. Somehow, he had fallen into tough times. His ragged look was a fragment of the great man that was beneath the junk.

## Day 12

### On the twelfth day of Christmas.....

#### PART III

He told his story with such passion, dedication and flare. He held his audience every moment. As he walked by, they followed him. He knew how to bring himself into the story and step out without alerting the audience. One moment all eyes are trained on him, his gestures, voice and silence. The next, he vanishes from the scene and the story captivates its audience; he is just a mere voice narrating the story. He brought out empathy, sorrow, and pain and then suddenly, he flooded you with guilty before the moral dilemma.

By this time, people were willing to part with their cash. As if on cue, they started dropping money onto the cloth the performers had spread on the floor for collection. Not long after the cash began dropping, another person started passing around collecting more, but he did so in the most unobtrusive way. Now that I think about it, I realize that many in the crowd had fixated on the narrator and his narrative that any obstruction was offensive. They would easily 'donate' than have their show interrupted. This was a nice set up that worked perfectly.

Somewhere in the midst of this, Old St. Nick hit the floor. He boogied, as I had never seen a Santa do. When he was done, the floor was on fire. I felt that no one could topple what I had just seen, but I could not be further from the truth. As I was taking in what had just happened, the women began chanting something. It sounded like Clebuttu. I had no clue as to what they were talking, but



they were surely excited. They chanted against the announcer's attempts to quell them. I later realized that he wasn't making any serious attempt to calm them he was showing off. He wanted his opponents to see how popular they were.

Anyways, because of their insistence, Old Man Beggar sprung up and started dancing. The young girls were by themselves, gyrating as much, if not more, than the Beggar himself was. I was in dance heaven. I didn't mind the multiple steps, kicks, nudges or bums I got.

It was as if the adults and teenagers, all around me, had suddenly lost it. They had gone wild on some drug. Everyone seemed desperately trying to do the dance Old Man Beggar was doing. Many were failing horribly at it, but that did not discourage them. If anything, it pushed them harder.

I don't recall how long that lasted but it was a wonderful show. I did not think the other group stood a chance. I entered this competition green, maybe with small leanings towards the Jamaica Road's group, but this performance pushed me over. I was sure that they had won this competition without their opponents ever having to contest.

Things quieted down for the briefest of moments, and by quieted I mean the noise just dropped from the stomach screams to market loud. Just then, from behind me, I thought these people would do the smart thing, vanish; save themselves the embarrassment. Well I guess they were braver than I thought of them.

The performance by their Santa, who by the way wore a black suit with red bowtie

and cummerbund, was spell bounding. The Old Man Beggar danced so hard, that several times, his mates had to pause him and tuck or re-prop his protruding belly.

When they concluded, I was as dumbfounded as I had been with the first performance. Now that I am older, I'd like to think that I was a wee bit more astounded that the 'underdog' had held its own. I walked away from that convinced that it was a tie. I was unable to select one winner. To me, both teams won; it was more like a superb performance-superb performance. I stored it in two equal but separate compartments. As the adage says, The proof of the pudding is in the eating, I had now eaten.

With time, the tradition dwindled. It then became common for Santa to go his own way from the Beggar. Old Man Beggar still stole the girls' hearts with his hot single, ironically called Hot Water, Clebuttu [or Hot Water Klebutu]. The Beggars competitions got less astounding, or perhaps, I had seen too much and the initial effects were dulling. Maybe the awe of the performance stuck with me hence every other one paled in comparison. I judged all others by that standard; they were either as good or not as good.

In the end, it was a win-win. The people got great entertainment, Santa Clause, not the heavy dude in red, but the Liberian Santa, Old Man Beggar and their crews walked away loaded; loaded enough to have an even pleasant Liberian Christmas.

##THE #END##

## **Diametrically Differing with President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf over President-elect Donald Trump's Victory**

**By Martin K. N. Kollie**

**Columnist & Youth Activist,**  
[martinkerkula1989@yahoo.com](mailto:martinkerkula1989@yahoo.com)



**US President-elect Donald Trump**

It has been barely 3 weeks now since millions of Americans headed to the polls to decide the successor of President Barack H. Obama who has served for two terms (8 years) as Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful nation in the World, the United States of America. Even though the race for Presidency is over between Trump and Clinton, but this gone election sent a lot of messages about politics and its dynamic nature.

On November 8, 2016 precisely, the American people through the Electoral College overwhelmingly made their choice known to the entire World by electing Republican nominee Donald Trump for the highest office. Out of 231,556,622 eligible American voters, 134,765,650 decided the fate of America by casting their ballots. According to available stats, Trump won in the Electoral College with 290 votes over Hilary's 232.

After months of political contestation, Republican nominee Donald Trump emerged victorious as the presidential choice of the American people. Upon his victory over Democratic nominee Hilary Clinton on November 8, 2016, world leaders began to immediately react in diverse manner to Trump's landmark victory. Surely, Trump's victory took the entire world by surprise especially when most opinion polls suggested that Hilary was the favorite candidate prior to the Election Day.

While dozens of Heads of States and Prime Ministers were congratulating President-elect Donald Trump, the President of Liberia and Chair of ECOWAS, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf told BBC the following during an interview:

**“We are extremely saddened by this missed opportunity on the part of the people of the United States to join smaller democracies in ending the marginalization of women. We are concerned as to whether President-elect Trump will have an African agenda, will be able to build bridges with Africa. We can only hope that he will do so in due course. I'm worried about trade deals for Liberia, for Africa. I'm worried about investment and the special programs that have been put in place by President Obama and by President George Bush before him, and we just don't know what the policy towards Africa will be.”**

I wonder why President Sirleaf could not even congratulate Trump before reacting in such a manner. When Trump won the election on the night of November 8, even Hilary Clinton congratulated him and offered to work with him on behalf of America. Unfortunately, the initial reaction of President Sirleaf was diplomatically erroneous and democratically unjustifiable.

Even though some pundits and protégés of President Sirleaf's regime have come in defense of her by proffering feeble analyses, but I want to diametrically differ with the President for making such statement. Let me endeavor to candidly analyze in segment what Africa's first female President actually said after Trump's victory.

**“We are extremely saddened by this missed opportunity on the part of the people of the United States to join smaller democracies in ending the marginalization of women.”**

This statement extremely opposes Trump's victory and expressed serious disappointed in the people of the United States for electing Donald Trump as President. I am still finding it difficult

to understand the point of President Sirleaf in relationship to the marginalization of women. Were women prevented from participating as candidates in the just ended electoral process? Were they deprived from voting for a candidate of their choice? No woman was ever deprived from contesting or electing a candidate of her choice.

The process was free, fair and transparent and voters (both men and women) expressed their choice through the ballots. So, where is the marginalization of women in all of these? In my opinion, this is far from marginalization as claimed by President Sirleaf.

In fact, 54% women voted for Clinton while 42% voted for Trump. 94% of black women and 68% of Latina women voted for Clinton. So, where is the marginalization here when everyone had an opportunity to make his/her choice?

Women make up about 19% of the US Congress. In the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, which is expected to convene January 3, there will be 21 women in the Senate and 83 women in the House.

In the previous congressional session, there were 20 women in the Senate and 84 in the House according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. So, where is the marginalization? Liberia has 11 female legislators, which accounts for just 10% of the total number of lawmakers.

According to the ranking of women in national parliaments worldwide, the United States of America ranks 99 while Liberia ranks 148 (source: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>).

In the 2012 Senate Pro Tempore race in Liberia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf supported a male senator Gbehzongar Milton Findley of Grand Bassa County against two female senators, Jewel Howard of Bong Taylor and Clarice Jah of Margibi.

Why didn't President support either of the female candidates? Isn't this the real meaning of women marginalization? The President does something different in Liberia, but reacts to a situation differently abroad.

**“We are concerned as to whether President-elect Trump will have an African agenda, will be able to build bridges with Africa. We can only hope that he will do so in due course. I'm worried about trade deals for Liberia, for Africa. I'm worried about investment and the special programs that have been put in place by President Obama and by President George Bush before him, and we just don't know what the policy towards Africa will be.”**

The second segment of President Sirleaf's reaction hangs a cloud of uncertainty over America's relationship with Africa. It presupposes that Trump's relationship with Africa will deteriorate, even though there is no empirical proof to validate such assertion.

I think President Sirleaf's pre-judgment of Trump's administration towards Africa was unfair and hasty. The President ignored the fact that America's foreign policy is not influenced or shifted by the presidency alone. The US Congress plays a pivotal role as well.

Even though I respect the opinion of President Sirleaf, but her opinion is likely to hinder Africa and Liberia's relationship with the United States of America under a Donald Trump's presidency. This could put the succeeding regime at odd with America and hurt our nation (Liberia) even further.

I think President Sirleaf's statement was predominantly driven by her longstanding and personal relationship with Madam Hilary Clinton. The outcome of democracy must never be questioned based on friendship. I see no objectivity in Madam Sirleaf's statement. What I see is an expression meant to temporarily woo and

console Hilary Clinton at the expense of Donald Trump and majority voters.

The President was never fair in her judgment to unjustifiably contest the popular will of the American people through such a demeaning characterization of Trump's victory. In the eyes of the majority, electing Trump was never a mistake. Electing Trump was the path the American people chose and this is what democracy calls for.

Instead of our President being 'extremely saddened' by the missed opportunity on the part of the people of the United States, I think our President needs to be 'extremely saddened' by the fact that after 12 years of democratic rule under her presidency:

1. Liberia has had 554 rape cases in one year (Ministry of Gender Report, 2014).
2. The rate of teenage pregnancy is 38% (UNFPA, 2013)
3. Monrovia was the least on the City Prosperity Index (UN Habitat Report 2012/2013) Besides, Monrovia and most parts of Liberia remain dark at night hours.
4. The number of dropouts in Liberian schools is high, with 65% accounting for boys and 73% for girls (National Education Profile 2014 Update)
5. The maternal mortality rate stands at 1,072 deaths per 100,000 live births (Ministry of Health 2014 Report).
6. Out of US\$8 billion worth of natural resource contracts signed by President Sirleaf since 2009, almost all (66 out of 68) violated Liberia's Laws (Moore Stephens Report, May 2013)
7. US\$13.5 million EU funding meant to reduce infant and maternal mortality rates

is yet to be accounted for (FrontPage Africa Report, 2013)

8. Liberia was the most corrupt country in the world (Transparency International Report, 2013).
9. The mass suffering of the Liberian people as a result of the lack of basic social services.

After 12 years, the government of Liberia has received so much, but has done so little. Even safe drinking water and quality education are yet to be seen. Aren't these facts about Liberia that our President needs to be 'extremely saddened' by? Madam President, I beg to differ. In this manner, I would like to congratulate President-elect Donald Trump for his victory as Commander-in-Chief of the World Superpower.



About The Author: **Martin K. N. Kollie** is a global columnist, a Liberian youth and student activist who hails from Bong county, central Liberia. He currently reads Economics with distinction at the University of Liberia and has written hundreds of articles. He can be reached at [martinkerkula1989@yahoo.com](mailto:martinkerkula1989@yahoo.com)

## Words of NIA



### They Were Armed

#### The man was armed.

The police shot and killed him  
killed him when he pulled out  
his WALLET!  
His leather-bound weapon  
was fully loaded  
with I-D!

#### The woman was armed.

Authorities kept shouting  
shouting for her to  
put her hands up.  
They were suspicious because  
she hesitated.  
Weapons drawn, they waited.  
She extended her hands  
to reveal a .38 caliber  
MANICURE!  
She died with her  
perfectly polished \$38 nails  
clawing at the ground!

#### They were armed.

Men in blue converged on the place,  
converged on the place, demanding  
the couple come out.  
They heard  
that the man and woman  
were armed and dangerous.  
They heard  
the pair would shoot to kill.  
The terrified couple emerged,  
they came out with their arms  
FULL OF BABIES!  
Facing guns drawn,  
they surrendered; later, let go

because the impetuous rookies  
had the wrong house.  
The 9-1-1 operator  
got it wrong!

#### The young boy was armed.

Police said  
they felt threatened,  
threatened by a boy  
and a TOY GUN.  
So this mother's son  
paid the ultimate price  
for having fun.

#### The teen was armed.

The cop slowly eased up on the car.  
She approached the car  
with caution and fear.  
Fear fed by someone who  
wasn't even close enough to see.  
She said, "Hands up."  
He was afraid.  
She said, "Get out of the car"  
but she only saw one hand.  
Before he exited the car  
Miss Cop pulled the trigger.  
She searched for a gun but  
he was ARMED WITH A PHONE.  
Because he was afraid,  
the young man was calling home.  
The only thing it was loaded with  
was numbers.  
Trigger-happy, paranoid police  
with no regard for Black folk's lives.  
Not caring if we get home  
to our mothers, kids,  
our husbands or wives.  
How many of these cops  
suffer with PTSD  
and all they see is an enemy  
when they look at you  
or when they see me?

© 10/2016

RuNett Nia Ebo, Poet of Purpose to contact this  
poet

[runett.ebo101@gmail.com](mailto:runett.ebo101@gmail.com)  
[www.poetebo.com](http://www.poetebo.com)



## Herbert Logerie

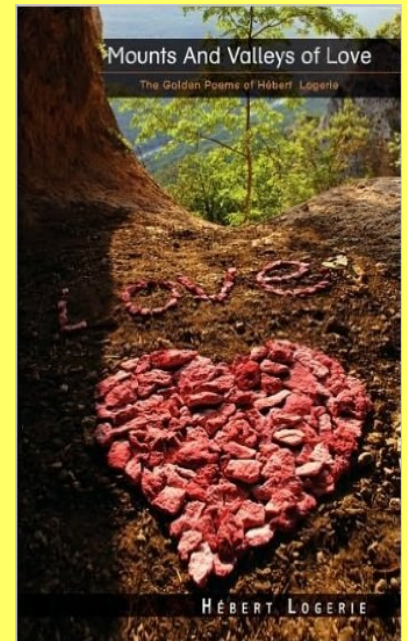
### It Is Your Smile

Woman, let me  
demystify you,  
So I can see why I love  
you  
So much.  
Let me search:  
The curves, the  
preserves,  
The gardens and the  
reserves,  
So I can understand  
Why every second  
That you flash in my  
memory,  
The chemical formula  
changes in my body.

Turn around;  
You're safe and sound.  
Let me examine you  
from head to toes:  
Touch your nose,  
Cover your cheeks,  
Do some tricks,  
Try to fake it,  
Walk, run, stop and sit.  
Oh! I'm beginning to see:  
It is your smile  
That drives me crazy;  
It is your smile  
That makes me feel so  
good.

Oh! My soul  
Is engaged in a chaotic  
feud;  
I wonder if you are the  
divine doll  
That I dreamt of the  
other night.  
You are out of sight.  
Your smile drives me  
crazy,  
Every day and every  
night,  
When I am lonely,  
When the sky is gloomy  
or bright  
And when you gaze at  
me.

## Herbert Logerie



### Herbert Logerie

is the author of several collections of poems.

Alumnus of: 'l'Ecole de Saint Joseph'; 'the College of Roger Anglade'in Haiti; Montclair High School of New Jersey;and Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, USA.

He studied briefly at Laval University, Quebec, Canada. He's a Haitian-American.

He started writing at a very early age. My poems are in French, English, and Creole; I must confess that most of my beautiful and romantic poems are in my books.

<http://www.poemhunter.com/herbert-logerie>

<http://www.poesie.webnet.fr/vospoemes/logerie>

HALIL KARAHAN



Halil is Turkish and has a known secret. She lives a triple life, all of which she is successful at, a mother, a poet and a medical doctor.

“Gecenin kemikleri üzerinde yükselir ay”

Yoktur ateşin eyyamı  
geceyle örter eteğini hilâl

Öne düşen boyna acımaz  
hırsıyla vurur bakır orak

Öfke neyi örter  
yüzünü tırnaklarıyla  
kazırken şafak?

Hançerdir hilâl  
hançeresi lâl

Geceye  
gölgenin  
âhı sorulmaz

« La lune se soulève sur les os de la nuit »

Le feu n'a pas des jours  
le croissant lunaire  
se couvre les jambes avec la nuit

La faucille en cuivre n'a pas pitié  
au cou qui tombe à sa portée  
le frappe sans merci

La haine couvre quoi  
pendant que l'aube gratte son visage  
avec les ongles

Le croissant lunaire est un poignard  
son larynx est muet

On ne demande jamais  
à la nuit  
la malédiction de l'ombre

“Moon rises above the bones of night”

There are no days of fire  
crescent covers her skirt with night

Copper sickle shows no mercy  
reaps faller necks avidly

What can temper cover  
during the dawn  
scratching your face?

Crescent is a poniard  
with mute larinx

It is not asked to night  
the curse of shadow



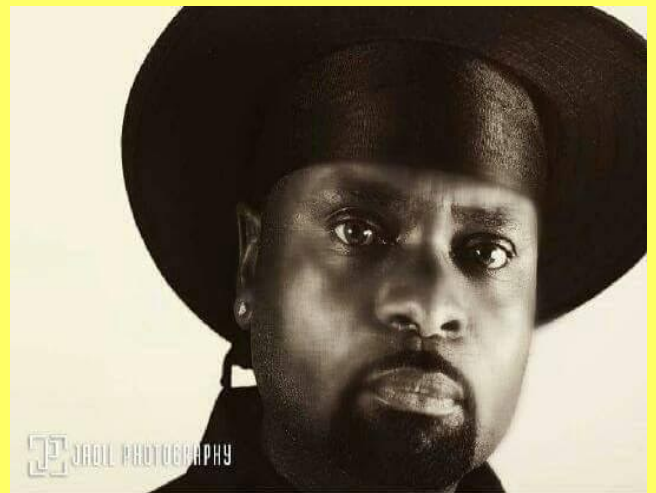


## Alonzo "Zo" Gross

### Experience

I Been there done that,  
ran away just ta run back,  
cuz the "smallest things,  
can get "under ya skin",  
like a "Thumb Tack".  
I "Found" That",  
Then "Lost" That,  
"Caught" that then "Tossed" That,  
"Ego Trips",  
had me "Burnin Bridges",  
couldn't "Cross Back".  
I thought that,  
dismissed that,  
As chitchat...  
Never listened ta intuition,  
in my "Gut",  
like a "Six Pack".  
I used 2 see Red then Spew That,  
True Fact,  
Didn't know My own-self in the "Mirror"...  
"Dawg Who's That"?.  
Made Mistakes,  
then I had ta redo that,  
said, "Yes",  
when I shoulda first,  
reviewed that,  
"Lost My Mind",  
"Where was my head at?"  
Girls cryin sayin,"  
CAN'T BELIEVE U SAID THAT!!!!".  
Way Back,  
When someone tried 2 "Feed Me Food 4  
Thought",  
I was 2 "Fulla Myself when I shoulda Ate  
That".  
But Hey Black,  
U Live & U Learn,  
Life is "Priceless",  
& Experience...  
iZ the Best "Pay Back".

© Alonzo "Zo" Gross



Alonzo "Zo" Gross

Born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, raised in Allentown Pa. Zo graduated from William Allen High School. He went on to graduate from Temple university with a BA in English literature and a Minor in Dance. Zo started Dancing, writing songs, poetry, and short stories at the age of 7. Zo successfully performed at the Legendary Apollo Theater as a dancer at 18. Zo signed a contract with Ken Cowle of Soul Asyum Publishing in 2012, & released the book of poetry and art "Inspiration Harmony & The Word Within" Noveber 2012.

On December 2nd 2012 he won the Lehigh Valley Music Award for "Best Spoken Word Poet" at the LVMAS. In October 2014 Zo traveled to Los Angeles, California to be one of the featured poets/musicians in a documentary film called "VOICES" Directed by Gina Nemo. The Film is slated to be released in 2016. Zo was again Nominated for "Best Spoken Word Poet" again in 2016. Zo's Poetry has been featured in several anthologies, as well as magazines.

Zo's New Book of Poetry & Art "Soul EliXiR"... The WritingZ of Zo will be released in 2016, along with His Debut Rap CD "A Madness 2 The Method" to be released the same year.

Jack Kolkmeier



close the door

sometimes the breeze  
blows cool across your face  
with a mist of morning dew  
or a splash of warm ocean grace

sometimes though  
the breeze turns gusty and mad  
and grazes across your visage  
with cold and angry fingers

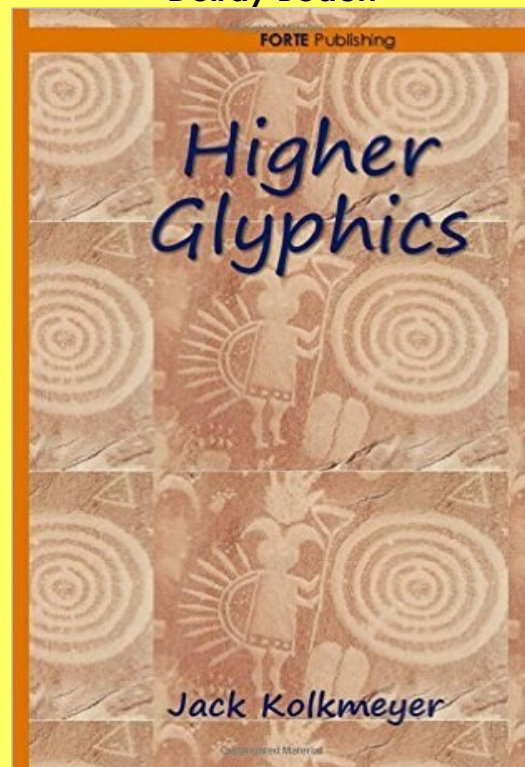
you can feel a change from splendor  
to anger and then to hate  
bursting from moments of still  
contentment  
into fear that hides and lingers  
just behind the open gate

as you find solace and respite  
through these days  
as the lilt moves from room to room  
in whatever house you built  
to serve your needs  
and tender to your ways  
you open and close doors behind you  
to let in certain breezes  
that bring ideas and thoughts  
some that stay  
and others that wisp away

so while there may be no choice  
in our intended fate  
the hallway leads us over there  
to that place in the calmer divide  
where you can stare into the minds  
of those who just don't care  
to see the world's view  
and know the winds of change  
have come to find you

but because of faith and clarity  
you know it's never too late  
for you to close the door of hate  
behind you

Delray Beach



FORTE Publishing

Jack's newest book Philosophy of Yard is expected to be published soon. But Higher Glyphics is currently available for purchase

**Renee' B. Drummond-Brown**

## I Love Lucy

Brown dreams  
lost  
'inna'  
black sea.  
Slaves  
riding them waves,  
passing by  
this  
so, called,  
American dream.

Identity cries,  
theft lies  
beneath  
the oldest bones  
found.

Who are they?  
Archaeologist  
want to know?  
Her.  
But; do they though?  
Really?

Scripture foretold,  
tale; tale signs  
of her  
long, long ago;  
since  
the beginning,  
O'  
time.

November 24,  
1974,  
Lucy,  
was re-born  
again  
an'

again  
an'  
again.

3.2 million years,  
of  
innocent blood  
sweat,  
'an'  
enslaved  
tears.  
Tarry til'  
I come;  
He said.

But how?  
'Sum' 400 years later,  
the oldest fossil's  
children's  
children,  
are still  
'beggin' bread!  
Tarry til'  
I come;  
He said.

Lucy your  
lineage  
camouflage  
artifacts.  
O'  
'dem'  
hidden treasures  
of Ethiopia's  
pleasure  
beyond  
her majesty's  
mystery,  
of man  
daring to dream  
Lucy's  
vivid dreams,  
beyond her measure.  
No scheme;  
THIS IS NO SCHEME ATTACHED!

FREEDOM  
She 'sangs'!  
O'  
FREEDOM!  
LET IT RING!  
LET IT 'RANG'  
I love Lucy.  
Lucy I'm home.  
Although,  
freedom for 'our' children  
has come  
an'  
be gone.

Lucy's in Africa  
with diamonds an' pearls  
oh' my!  
Dinknesh;  
she's amazing,  
she's marvelous  
she's free.  
Everyone's roots  
date back  
to 'ONLY HER'  
genealogy;  
from sea  
to  
shining seas!  
I love Lucy's legacy.  
Mother we're home.  
But  
simply not free.

A B.A.D. poem

**Dedicated to:**  
Arrest #AL 288-1  
(Lucy I'm home).

## JAMES JOYCE

### I HEAR AN ARMY

I hear an army charging upon the land,  
And the thunder of horses plunging;  
foam about their  
knees :  
Arrogant, in black armour, behind them  
stand,  
Disdaining the rains, with fluttering whips,  
the Charley  
ioteers.  
They cry into the night their battle name  
:  
I moan in sleep when I hear afar their  
whirling  
laughter.  
They cleave the gloom of dreams, a  
blinding flame,  
Clanging, clanging upon the heart as  
upon an anvil.  
They come shaking in triumph their long  
grey hair :  
They come out of the sea and run  
shouting by the  
shore.  
My heart, have you no wisdom thus to  
despair?  
My love, my love, my love, why have  
you left me  
alone ?  
40

## EZRA POUND

### TS'AI CHI'H

The petals fall in the fountain,  
the orange coloured rose-leaves,  
Their ochre clings to the stone.  
46

## Gifts of Christmas

In this segment, we run poems from some of the greatest literary masters that ever lived.

**EMILY DICKENSON**

### 'Twas just this time, last year, I died

I know I heard the Corn,  
When I was carried by the Farms —  
It had the Tassels on —

I thought how yellow it would look —  
When Richard went to mill —  
And then, I wanted to get out,  
But something held my will.

I thought just how Red — Apples wedged  
The Stubble's joints between —  
And the Carts stooping round the fields  
To take the Pumpkins in —

I wondered which would miss me, least,  
And when Thanksgiving, came,  
If Father'd multiply the plates —  
To make an even Sum —

And would it blur the Christmas glee  
My Stocking hang too high  
For any Santa Claus to reach  
The Altitude of me —

But this sort, grieved myself,  
And so, I thought the other way,  
How just this time, some perfect year —  
Themselves, should come to me —

**HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW**

### Holidays

The holiest of all holidays are those  
Kept by ourselves in silence and apart;  
The secret anniversaries of the heart,  
When the full river of feeling overflows;--  
The happy days unclouded to their close;  
The sudden joys that out of darkness start  
As flames from ashes; swift desires that  
dart  
Like swallows singing down each wind  
that  
blows!

White as the gleam of a receding sail,  
White as a cloud that floats and fades in  
air,  
White as the whitest lily on a stream,  
These tender memories are;--a fairy tale  
Of some enchanted land we know not  
where,  
But lovely as a landscape in a dream.

**ROBERT FROST**

### Christmas Trees

*(A Christmas Circular Letter)*

The city had withdrawn into itself  
And left at last the country to the country;  
When between whirls of snow not come  
to lie  
And whirls of foliage not yet laid, there  
drove

A stranger to our yard, who looked the city,  
Yet did in country fashion in that there  
He sat and waited till he drew us out  
A-buttoning coats to ask him who he was.  
He proved to be the city come again  
To look for something it had left behind  
And could not do without and keep its  
Christmas.  
He asked if I would sell my Christmas trees;  
My woods—the young fir balsams like a  
place  
Where houses all are churches and have  
spires.  
I hadn't thought of them as Christmas  
Trees.  
I doubt if I was tempted for a moment  
To sell them off their feet to go in cars  
And leave the slope behind the house all  
bare,  
Where the sun shines now no warmer  
than the  
moon.  
I'd hate to have them know it if I was.  
Yet more I'd hate to hold my trees except  
As others hold theirs or refuse for them,  
Beyond the time of profitable growth,  
The trial by market everything must come  
to.  
I dallied so much with the thought of  
selling.  
Then whether from mistaken courtesy  
And fear of seeming short of speech, or  
whether  
From hope of hearing good of what was  
mine, I  
said,  
"There aren't enough to be worth while."  
"I could soon tell how many they would  
cut,  
You let me look them over."  
"You could

look.  
But don't expect I'm going to let you  
have  
them."  
Pasture they spring in, some in clumps too  
close  
That lop each other of boughs, but not a  
few  
Quite solitary and having equal boughs  
All round and round. The latter he  
nodded "Yes"  
to,

Or paused to say beneath some lovelier  
one,  
With a buyer's moderation, "That would  
do."  
I thought so too, but wasn't there to say  
so.  
We climbed the pasture on the south,  
crossed  
over,  
And came down on the north. He said, "A  
thousand."

"A thousand Christmas trees!—at what  
apiece?"

He felt some need of softening that to  
me:  
"A thousand trees would come to thirty  
dollars."

Then I was certain I had never meant  
To let him have them. Never show  
surprise!  
But thirty dollars seemed so small beside  
The extent of pasture I should strip, three  
cents  
(For that was all they figured out apiece),  
Three cents so small beside the dollar  
friends

I should be writing to within the hour  
Would pay in cities for good trees like  
those,  
Regular vestry-trees whole Sunday  
Schools  
Could hang enough on to pick off  
enough.  
A thousand Christmas trees I didn't know  
I had!  
Worth three cents more to give away  
than sell,  
As may be shown by a simple calculation.  
Too bad I couldn't lay one in a letter.  
I can't help wishing I could send you one,  
In wishing you herewith a Merry  
Christmas.

**MAYA ANGELOU**

### **“Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem**

Thunder rumbles in the mountain passes  
And lightning rattles the eaves of our  
houses.  
Flood waters await us in our avenues.

Snow falls upon snow, falls upon snow to  
avalanche  
Over unprotected villages.  
The sky slips low and grey and  
threatening.

We question ourselves.  
What have we done to so affront nature?  
We worry God.  
Are you there? Are you there really?  
Does the covenant you made with us still  
hold?

Into this climate of fear and  
apprehension,  
Christmas enters,  
Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of  
hope  
And singing carols of forgiveness high up  
in the  
bright air.  
The world is encouraged to come away  
from  
rancor,  
Come the way of friendship.

It is the Glad Season.  
Thunder ebbs to silence and lightning  
sleeps  
quietly in the corner.  
Flood waters recede into memory.  
Snow becomes a yielding cushion to aid  
us  
As we make our way to higher ground.

Hope is born again in the faces of  
children  
It rides on the shoulders of our aged as  
they  
walk into their sunsets.  
Hope spreads around the earth.  
Brightening all  
things,  
Even hate which crouches breeding in  
dark  
corridors.

In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.  
At first it is too soft. Then only half heard.  
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.  
We hear a sweetness.  
The word is Peace.  
It is loud now. It is louder.  
Louder than the explosion of bombs.

We tremble at the sound. We are thrilled  
by its presence.

It is what we have hungered for.

Not just the absence of war. But, true  
Peace.

A harmony of spirit, a comfort of  
courtesies.

Security for our beloveds and their  
beloveds.

We clap hands and welcome the Peace  
of Christmas.

We beckon this good season to wait a  
while with us.

We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and  
Muslim, say come.

Peace.

Come and fill us and our world with your  
majesty.

We, the Jew and the Jainist, the Catholic  
and the Confucian,

Implore you, to stay a while with us.

So we may learn by your shimmering light  
How to look beyond complexion and see  
community.

It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.

On this platform of peace, we can create  
a language

To translate ourselves to ourselves and to  
each other.

At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth  
of Jesus Christ

Into the great religions of the world.

We jubilate the precious advent of trust.

We shout with glorious tongues at the  
coming of hope.

All the earth's tribes loosen their voices  
To celebrate the promise of Peace.

We, Angels and Mortal's, Believers and  
NonBelievers,

Look heavenward and speak  
the word aloud.

Peace. We look at our world and speak  
the word aloud.

Peace.

We look at each other, then into  
ourselves

And we say without shyness or apology or  
hesitation.

Peace, My Brother.

Peace, My Sister.

Peace, My Soul."

## **WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**

### **The Magi**

Now as at all times I can see in the mind's  
eye,

In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale  
unsatisfied ones

Appear and disappear in the blue depths  
of the

sky

With all their ancient faces like rain-  
beaten

stones,

And all their helms of silver hovering side  
by

side,

And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find  
once more,

Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied,  
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial  
floor.





## **Do You Not Father Me**

Do you not father me, nor the  
erected arm

For my tall tower's sake cast in  
her stone?

Do you not mother me, nor, as I  
am,

The lovers' house, lie suffering my  
stain?

Do you not sister me, nor the  
erected crime

For my tall turrets carry as your  
sin?

Do you not brother me, nor, as  
you climb,

Adore my windows for their  
summer scene?

Am I not father, too, and the  
ascending boy,

The boy of woman and the  
wanton starer

Marking the flesh and summer in  
the bay?

Am I not sister, too, who is my  
saviour?

Am I not all of you by the  
directed sea

Where bird and shell are  
babbling in my tower?

Am I not you who front the tidy  
shore,

Nor roof of sand, nor yet the  
towering tiler?

You are all these, said she who  
gave me the long suck,

All these, he said who sacked the  
children's town,

Up rose the Abraham-man, mad  
for my sake,

They said, who hacked and  
humoured, they were mine.

I am, the tower told, felled by a  
timeless stroke,

Who razed my wooden folly  
stands aghast,

For man-begetters in the dry-as-  
paste,

The ringed-sea ghost, rise grimly  
from the wrack.

Do you not father me on the  
destroying sand?

You are your sisters' sire, said  
seaweedy,

The salt sucked dam and darlings  
of the land

Who play the proper gentleman  
and lady.

Shall I still be love's house on the  
widdershin earth,

Woe to the windy masons at my  
shelter?

Love's house, they answer, and  
the tower death

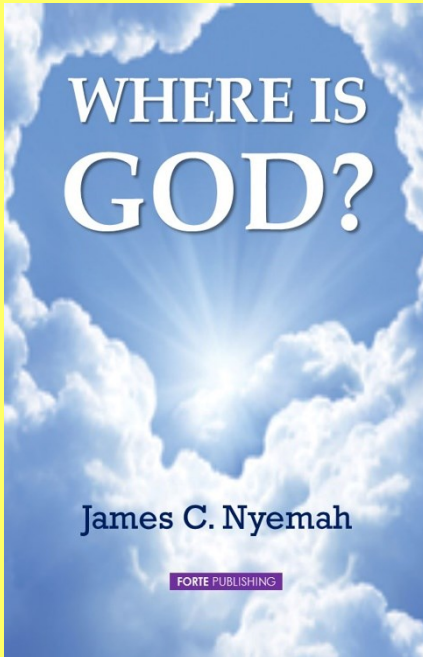
Lie all unknowing of the grave  
sin-eater.

**Dylan Thomas**

## Recommended Reads

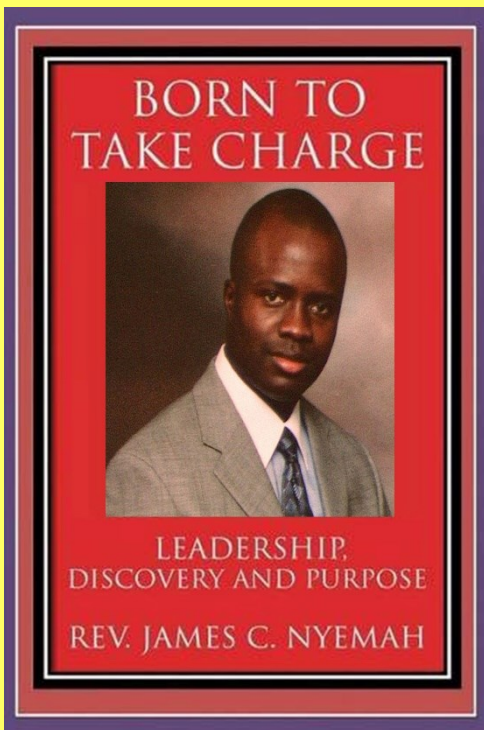
Published by **FORTE Publishing**

### *WHERE IS GOD?*



“Where is God?” A most difficult question no doubt but a necessary one about God and life. If things are worse, we even go further and ask all sorts of questions. For example, “If God is such a loving and caring father,

why does he allow bad things to happen to good people, including Christians?



*We were all born to do something or for a reason, even if one does not know or has not yet figured out theirs. Grab a copy of this book and be inspired.*

*Pastor James*

*Nyemah writes a powerful motivational book that spurs one to do one thing... TAKE CHARGE.*



**MOMOH SEKOU DUDU**

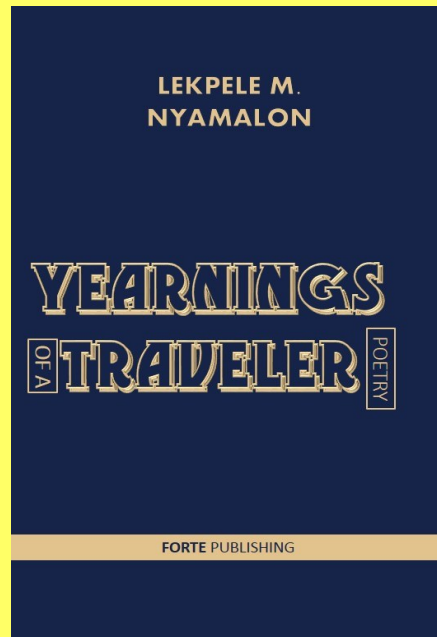
takes us on a mental journey in his latest release, *When The Mind Soars*, poetry from the Heart.

He exposes us to a Liberia as freshly, honestly and

chaotic as he sees it. He presents us a broken Liberia that is pulling herself up by its own boot straps. Let your minds fly, soar with ideas.

### *Yearnings of A Traveler*

We all have a yearning for something. For



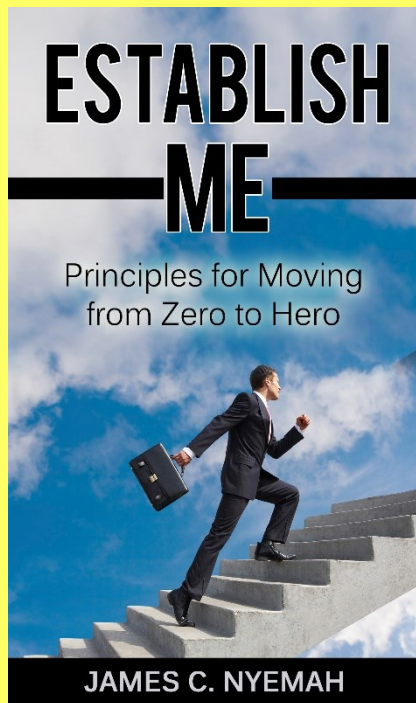
Lekpele, his has been a message of self worth, as we see in his signature piece, My Body is Gold; one of patriotism, as in Scars of A Tired Nation; one of Pan Africanism as in the piece, Dig The Graves. He

also has a message of hope as seen in his award winning poem, Forgotten Future. He is an emerging voice that one can't afford to ignore. Yearning is the debut chapbook by Liberian poet, Lekpele M. Nyamalon.

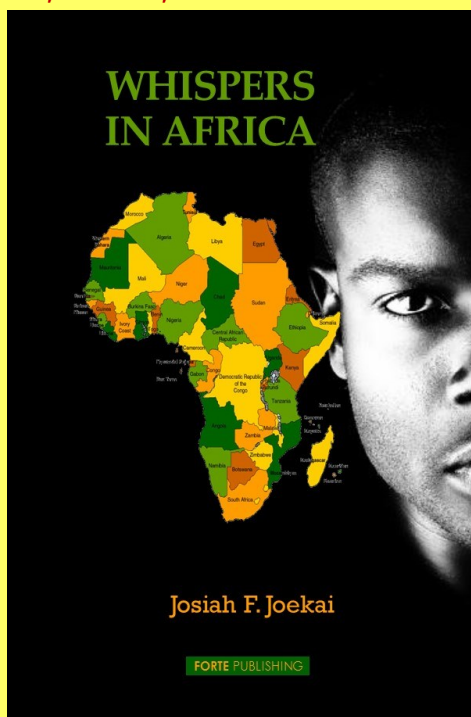
Recommended Reads

ESTABLISH ME in the world is Liberia?

WE GET BROKEN, DAMAGED, THORN UP BY THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE. IT RIPS US APART, IT SQUASHES US. WE FEEL DEJECTED, REFUSED, ABUSED AND USED. WE OFTEN DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH OUR SHATTERED SOULS. WE SEEK A PLACE OF REFUGE, OF CALM, A PLACE TO MEND THOSE PIECES. WE SEARCH FOR A PLACE SET APART FROM THIS WORLD TO PULL US TOGETHER

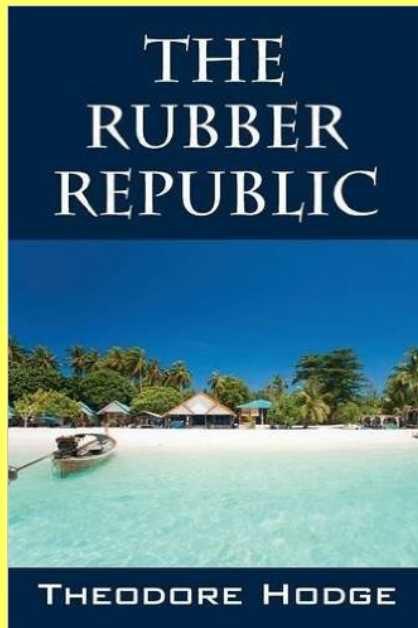


In his latest work, Ps. Nyemah lets us know that God can **Fix Us, Mold Us, Create Us** and then **Establish US**.



Available now from FORTE Publishing

The Rubber Republic



From relative stability to upheaval, military coup, violence and revenge. . . The Rubber Republic covers two decades, the late 1950s through the 1970s. Set mainly in West Africa, the story takes the reader to the United States and a few

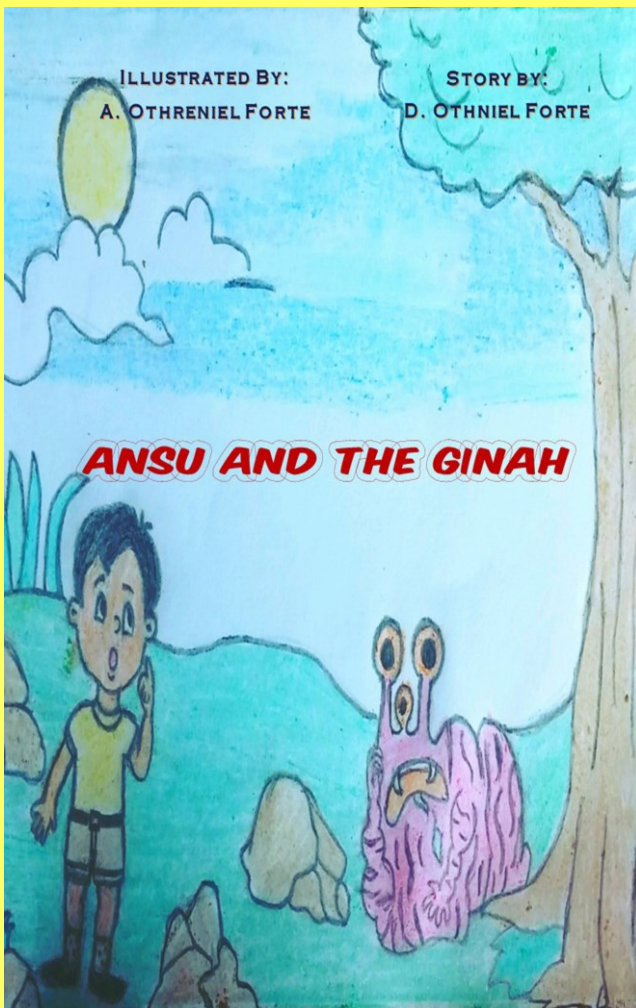
other stops along the way. The story is mainly about the intriguing and fantastic lives of two young men, Yaba-Dio Himmie and Yaba-Dio Kla, who leave their parents' farm in search of enlightenment and adventure. But the story is also about their country, the Republic of Seacoast, and a giant American Rubber conglomerate, The Waterstone Rubber Plantation Company.

Mohammed Dolley Donzo

In his debut endeavor, Our Future Today, the author writes about things that should unite not just Liberians but Africans as a whole. He encourages African youths to stand firm and revive the strong warrior spirits of their ancestors.



Available now from FORTE Publishing by Mohammed Dolley Donzo



Ansu, is a stubborn boy, he doesn't like to listen to his parents. He prefers to do naughty things.

He runs off to avoid working and encounters a strange creature. What will happen?

Follow Ansu as he journeys through the deadly Liberian forest. **Ansu And The Ginah**, is a part of the **EDUKID** Readers Series.

In this book, the father and daughter duo combine to bring a great reading experience to little ones as they begin their life's journey of reading.

**FORTE Publishing Int'l**

Miatta, an orphan, lives with her foster parents. She is hardworking and focuses on her studies. Life is dull, boring and quiet. She is ordinary, or so she thinks. Accidentally, she stumbles on a magical kingdom deep in the Liberian countryside where she learns that not only is she welcome, she is a princess.

**Miatta The Swamp Princess** recounts her adventures into the African forest.

**Belle Kizolu** is one of the youngest published Liberian authors. She lives in Monrovia where is attends school. She is in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

**FORTE Publishing Int'l**

*Around Town*



Cozy Evening



The boys here are already training for the big stage. That they are brave enough to go around serenading is a testament to their courage. In a few years, they'd have much experience under their belts to hit the big stage.



Kids carrying on the tradition of Old Man Beggar



Traditional Dancer from the Gio Tribe-Gio Devil



The Gabriel Tucker Bridge- New Bridge



A Powerful message in support of arts/artists





Photo: S. Mark

City Center







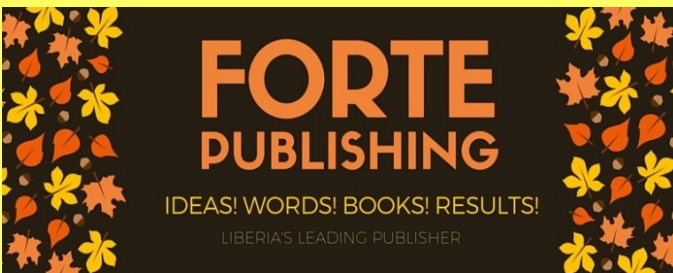
Hustle is real.



A scenic view of Monrovia, city center



DK, one would only ask if they are unfamiliar with LIB



Around Town



**Bomi County, a perfect view**



**Famous Liberian Piggy Hippo**



**This exotic waterfall is a great opportunity  
To expand tourism if developed.**



**Down town Pehn Pehn Hustle**



**The People's Monument**

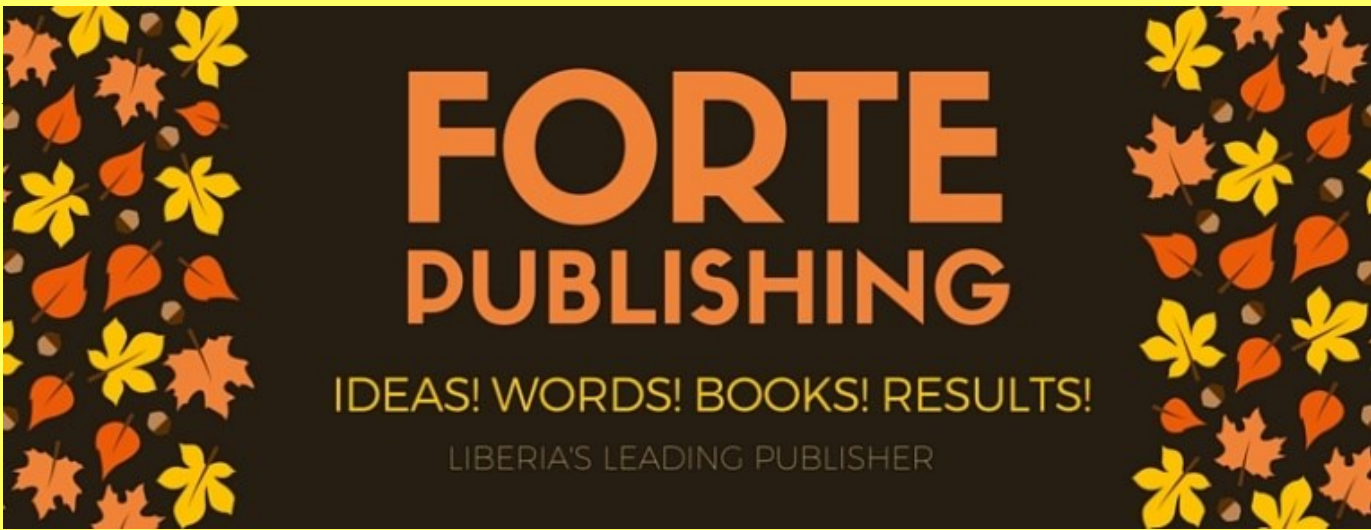


**Forget us not**



**Broom & Mop sellers. Hustle; real life situations**

*Credit: Darby Cecil & Daily Pictures from around Liberia*



**Liberia**

# 12 Ashmun Street  
Monrovia Liberia

[+231-770-456038]  
[+231-886-527151]

[fortepublishing@gmail.com](mailto:fortepublishing@gmail.com)

**Asia**

76 Sarasit Road  
Ban Pong,  
70110, Ratchaburi  
Thailand

+66-85-8244382

[fortepublishing@gmail.com](mailto:fortepublishing@gmail.com)



**USA**

7202 Tavenner Lane  
Alexandria VA

+1703-3479528

[fortepublishing@gmail.com](mailto:fortepublishing@gmail.com)

Join our team today and enjoy countless  
benefits in any of our locations.

Liberia's fastest growing publisher.



Ad Space available

MEET OUR TEAM



PATRICK BURROWES  
CONTRIBUTOR



HARRIET AGYEMANG DUAH  
STAFF REVIEWER CHILDREN'S BOOK



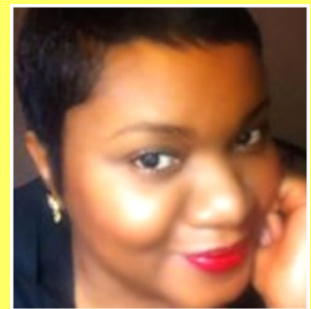
REBAZAR FORTE  
IT/LAYOUT DESIGNER



HENRIQUE HOPKINS  
SEGMENT HOST/REVIEWER



JOSIAH JOEKAI JR.  
CONTRIBUTOR



KULUBA MUCURLOR  
SEGMENT HOST



MARTIN N. K. KOLLIE  
CONTRIBUTOR



NVASEKIE KONNEH  
CONTRIBUTOR



LEKPELE M. NYAMALON  
IN-HOUSE POET



JOSEPHINE BARNES  
ART CONTRIBUTOR

**ELMA SHAW**  
EDITOR ANTHOLOGY

OTHER  
CONTRIBUTORS

- ALTHEA ROMEO MARK
- JACK KOLKMEYER
- RICHARD WILSON MOSS
- BERENICE MULUBAH
- JAMES NYEMAH
- CLARENCE PEARSON
- PRESTON M. TULAY
- JOHN ELIOT
- JANICE ALMOND
- ALONZO GROSS
- RENEE DRUMMOND BROWN



BRIMA WOLOBAH  
ART CONTRIBUTOR

**AKEN WARIEBI**  
EDITOR ANTHOLOGY

Team



**VAMBA SHERIF**  
Editor - Short stories

He was born in northern Liberia and spent parts of his youth in Kuwait, where he completed his secondary school. He speaks many languages, including Arabic, French, English and Dutch, and some African languages like Mande, Bandi, Mende en Lomah. After the first Gulf War, Vamba settled in the Netherlands and read Law. He's written many novels. His first novel, *The Land Of The Fathers*, is about the founding of Liberia with the return of the freed slaves from America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This novel was published to critical acclaim and commercial success. His second, *The Kingdom of Sebah*, is about the life of an immigrant family in the Netherlands, told from the perspective of the son, who's a writer. His third novel, *Bound to Secrecy*, has been published in The Netherlands, England, France, Germany, and Spain. His fourth *The Witness* is about a white man who meets a black woman with a past rooted in the Liberian civil war. Besides his love of writing and his collection of rare books on Africa, he's developed a passion for films, which he reviews. He divides his time between The Netherlands and Liberia. You can see more of his work on his [website](#)

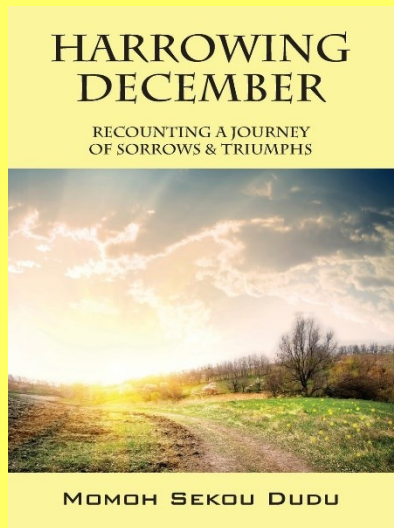


**MOMOH DUDUU**  
Editor- Reviews

Is an educator and author. For the last decade, he has been an instructor at various Colleges and Universities in the Minneapolis metro area in the state of Minnesota, U.S.A. At present, he is the Chair of the Department of Business and Accounting at the Brooklyn Center Campus of the Minnesota School of Business at Globe University.

His works include the memoir 'Harrowing December: Recounting a Journey of Sorrows and Triumphs' and 'Musings of a Patriot: A Collection of Essays on Liberia' a compilation of his commentaries about governance in his native country.

At the moment, he is at work on his maiden novel tentatively titled 'Forgotten Legacy.'



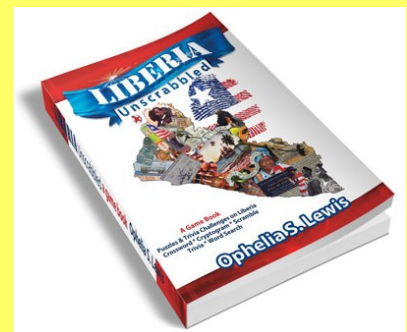
Find out more [here](#).



**OPHELIA LEWIS**  
Editor- Anthology

The founder of Village Tales Publishing and self-published author of more than ten books, Lewis is determined to make Village Tales Publishing a recognized name in the literary industry. She has written two novels, three children's books, a book of poetry, a book of essay and two collections of short stories, with the latest being *Montserrat Stories*.

As publisher-project manager, she guards other authors in getting their work from manuscript to print, using the self-publishing platform. Self-publishing can be complicated, a process that unfolds over a few months or even years. Using a project management approach gives a better understanding of the format process and steps needed it take to get an aspiring writer's book published.



Find out more [here](#)

[Editor](#)

**Editor**

D. Othniel Forte



PHOTO BY: Melisa Chavez

Here at Liberian Literary Magazine, we strive to bring you the best coverage of Liberian literary news. We are a subsidiary of [Liberian Literature Review](#).

For too long the arts have been ignored, disregarded or just taken less important in Liberia. This sad state has stifled the creativity of many and the culture as a whole.

However, all is not lost. A new breed of creative minds has risen to the challenge and are determined to change the dead silence in our literary world. In order to do this, we realized the need to create a *culture of reading* amongst our people.

A reading culture broadens the mind and opens up endless possibilities. It also encourages diversity and for a colorful nation like ours, fewer things are more important.

We remain grateful to contributors; keep creating the great works, it will come full circle. But most importantly, we thank those of you that continue to support us by reading, purchasing, and distributing our magazine. We are most appreciative of this and hope to keep you educated, informed and entertained.

Promoting  
Liberian

Creativity  
& Culture

We are  
Accepting  
Submissions

Advertise  
with us!!!!

Liberia	Asia	USA
Monrovia Liberia	Ban Pong, Ratchaburi	7202 Tavenner Lane
# 12 Ashmun Street	76 Sarasit Road	Alexandria VA
[+231-770- 456038 [+231-886- 527151	+66-85-8244382	+1703-3479528
<a href="http://liblitrev.wix.com/llmag">http://liblitrev.wix.com/llmag</a> <a href="mailto:liblitrev@gmail.com">liblitrev@gmail.com</a> <a href="http://othnielfd.wix.com/mybooks">http://othnielfd.wix.com/mybooks</a>		

# Liberian Literary Magazine

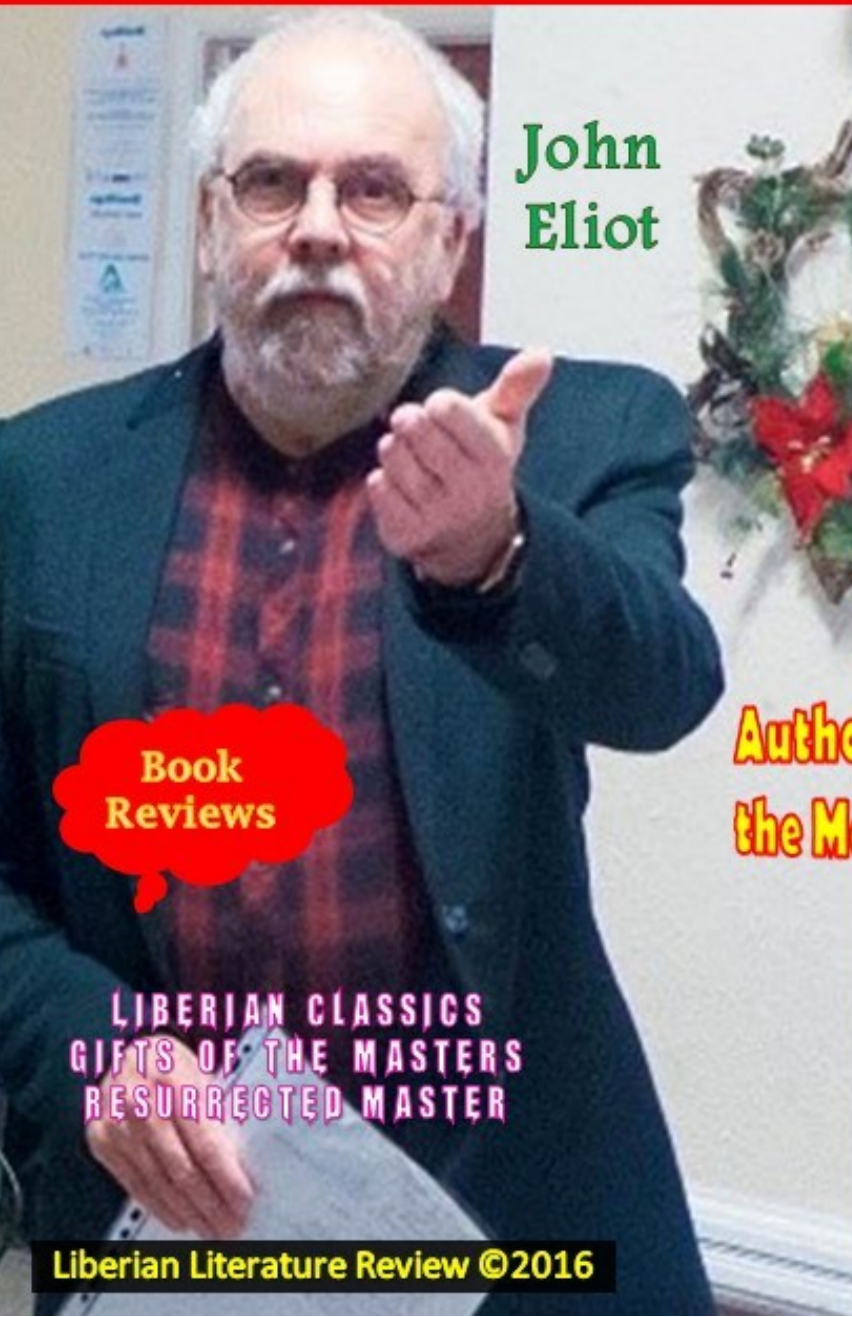
# KWEE

Dec Issue

Iss. # 1228

**MERRY  
CHRISTMAS  
HAPPY  
HOLIDAYS**

**RuNett  
Gray**



**John  
Eliot**



**Authors of  
the Month**

**Book  
Reviews**

**LIBERIAN CLASSICS  
GIFTS OF THE MASTERS  
RESURRECTED MASTER**

**Liberian Literature Review ©2016**

**Featured Poets:**

Althea Romeo Mark  
Richard Wilson Moss  
Aken Wariebi  
Cher Antoinette  
John Eliot  
Jeanine Milly Cooper  
Jack Kolkmeier  
Berenice Mulubah  
Sylomun Weah  
Josiah F. Joekai  
Lekpele M. Nyamalon  
Alonzo Gross  
Renee' D Brown  
Hialil Karahan

**Unscripted  
Liberian  
Proverbs**

Words of Nia  
Janice Almond  
Kpana Nnadia Gaygay