

KWEE

Liberian Literary Magazine

Sept Issue

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★ ★ ★ CONGRADULATIONS ★ ★ ★

LONE STAR

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ FOOTBALL TEAM ★

LONG LIVE THE

★ ★ ★ LONE STAR ★ ★ ★

Liberian Literary Magazine
KWEE



Promoting Liberian Literature and Creativity

Liberian Literary Magazine

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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.

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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!

Editorial



The Lone Star Defeats Tunisia

By D. Othniel Forte

Football is the world's leading sport. It is more than just a wonderful game. It is life in itself for many players. I mean who doesn't like 'the game'? Even yours truly, one of its worst players to grace the touch, still felt the magic. Who can resist its power? Eleven physically fit players on each team. Their objective is to control one relatively small ball and place it in the back of the net or goal post of the other team. With such a huge field and wide net, how is that not an easy feat? It is practically a piece of cake. Get the ball, dribble a few; place well-connected passes to your team mates. I mean we all connected lines in geometry classes or was it arts? Whatever! The point here is this should be an easy task for professional players right? Or is it not so?



However, for the Liberian national team, this *simple* task -winning- has eluded them. Heck, it has done more than that. It seems more as if it boarded a plane, then a train and left, permanently, for another place; anywhere but Liberia. The senior team has just not been ready for serious competition. Citizens have prayed; yap actually gone on their knees expecting some divine intervention in this all so real, physical game. Of course, it has not come. Soccer, like anything else, requires time, dedication, perseverance and discipline; four things that our players lack to varying degree. Quite a few have talent, but the truth is, talent, minus a good combination of those four things, is not enough to get the job done. One must have a reasonable combination of all those things if one expects to secure a win.



Therefore, on Saturday, September 5th, when the Lone Star played Tunisia, people settled in for the one trophy we have no shortage of, 'did well'. By now, I am certain, we hold a Guinness record in number of 'did wells' and 'tried' trophies. Unfortunately, that category is not yet officially recognized. Up to the morning of the game hopes were still locked away and gathering dust as she had

been for eons. The heavy downpour of rain darkened the mood further. Many stayed home; preferring to do something believed to be more worthwhile than 'wasting' money for a predicted result.



The game began with no additional flare and that is how things were.

Somewhere along the line, one of the star players, scored a goal. The Lone Star's performance has been so dismal that even a goal ignites so little optimism to all but a few. Certainly not to the larger citizenry. By the 90th minute, our guests were still struggling to find the ball, before holding it and then placing it in the nets. Thus, by the final whistle and to the utmost surprise of 'most everyone, Lone Star finally WON! That is something that has NOT happened in such a long time, it seemed surreal when the match ended and news started pouring in on the social media networks that we beat the North Africans by one goal to nothing.



Pause! Just for a second, step back and take it all in. don't just internalize it, savor it. Yes it is real. It happened and in no small way to James Debbah, Kelvin Sebwe and George Weah. Names that are etched in our memories for many reasons. Recently, just after taking over the reign of the team, coach Debbah and his assistant, Sebwe, came under heavy pressure to resign when they lost the first match. This was not surprising considering how outspoken Debbah was of the LFA, the Team, its management or just about everything else. Many felt that after the noise, he should expect exactly what he dished out. But what can I say? Debbah is almost as passionate about the game and the Lone Star off the pitch as he was during his playing days. There is no denying that.

With this win, the two former stars have given a glimpse of what could be for all to see. But least we forget, the team is NOT ready to serious action against big players within the region. For so many reasons. It is not practical to conclude from this win that we are anywhere near our golden team's days; not in the least. For example, we have had a way with our North African brothers. We've beaten all of them even when they were in

their best forms. For some reason, we have nailed down their style of play, hence, our checkered but arguably results. The coaches had everything to prove. The new team is still unknown, making it difficult for experienced coaches to study. No one really knows the pattern of play. It is more often on the pitch that coaches have to find solutions to what they face. This very strength is our greatest weakness. The old team had discipline, something Coach Debbah would do well to instill considering he had issues with many coaches before. The man seems to have left all that behind him, which is all good.



They had skills [something not altogether missing in this new team] and more importantly, they had experience playing together against the powerhouses in the region. All of these may well pale when we consider a most significant aspect of the game. The support from the LFA. Without serious commitment to the team, I don't mean Mr. Bility and his team just dropping by on the field during a game, or lip servicing their commitment.

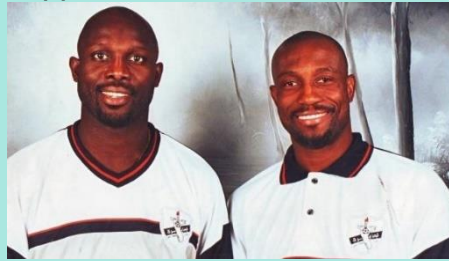


I mean, strategized, executable plan. We know Mr. Bility is capable of providing such plan based on his business success. However, we do not see the knowledge storage being translated here. The LFA has to approach the team more than they would a business entity to succeed. We have seen the business approach and thus far, it has produced nothing.

The coach has practically whined about this and many other aspects. One can't expect him and his team to work wonders when they lack the basic support structure. Cooking up money to buy plane tickets for the team to go for a match is not enough. No matter how many matches you can send them to play, if they are not trained properly, regularly and taken care of before they fly out, it is a plan based on luck rather than strategy. The TEAM has to practice as a team, frequently, for obvious reason. It is good that the LFA send the coaches to Germany for training just after the match, but sending off the two of them at once, and leaving the team behind kind of sends the wrong message. It stalls the very momentum the team needs. The boys soon get the idea that they can vacation just after one win. At least one coach could

have gone now, whilst the other stays behind and encamp the team. Keep them in the mindset of winning, practice and bonding. What do they expect? That after weeks away in Europe, the team will be any better off when they return? This is partly why often the president never leaves the country with the vice president together. These kinds of slip ups have the potential to derail any gains made. Frankly, I am surprised Coach Debbah considered this move and its timing prudent at all. Interestingly, he sites the slipup of the team after the Ghana win that cost us a world cup qualifying spot as the very reason why this trip was necessary. I have no doubt that he has the team welfare at heart. After all, this is the chance he asked for, he can't afford to screw it up. Furthermore, the man has shown what lengths he would go for the national team. None of those aspects is in question here. Instead, it is the fact that he would take his number two along for this length of time. The timing is just off. One person should have remained to keep the boys in check and working them towards the goal. These are expensive mistakes that we can't have them making. Not if we intend to keep the winning streak going. I remain optimistic in the team and still believe that we should allow these two to move the team forward. I doubt there is much reason supporting the dream that they can take us to the heights we wish to be at; they don't have what we need

to do that, they can't be building a team lacking those things and we expect such high standards from them, at least not any time soon. We need to be realistic here about this issue. With time, they could but that is one of the many things we don't have and now that they have won, the pressure is more on them to deliver, regardless of the fact that they lack what they need to make it happen often.



Nonetheless, they can lift us out of the trenches we have become so comfortably residing in or calling home. They can, with the right support mechanisms in place, do more for structuring a base team from which we can have a golden team drawn from one day soon. That is as far as I am willing to allow my optimism to go. I won't be pessimistic either. I would rather stay in the realistic plane.

Like many Liberians, I remain loyal to the Lone Star, but loyal alone will not get us there. It is important but we need to pressure our administrators to give the boys what they need, go overboard if you have to, do what it takes; give the coaches more than financial support. They will fall along the line, but stay the course with these two until it pays off. We have jumped ship too many times all in the name of making it big,

what we have failed to consider is that when class A teams swap coaches seasonally, it is partly because they know they have all in place to make the team win, hence, no excuses. They CAN afford to do that. We, on the other hand can't and the sooner we realize this and build a team from scratch, the better our chances will be. There is no shortcut here to success, not for this sport; not for an advance game as soccer has turned into. We believe the time is now to start giving the team its form so that we can reap in the near future.

The Liberian national Team, Lone Star was founded in 1936.

In the most recent FIFA World Rankings, Liberia ranks number 126. The Lone Star's Fifa rank in 2014 was 119. In their region, CAF Confederation, Liberia is the 36th highest ranked team.

All Time Games Played 239

In total Liberia has scored 220 goals and given up 342 goals, leading to an all-time record of 64 - 116 - 59 (W/L/D). Over the history of Liberia's national team games played, they have averaged 0.92 goals per game, which is below average. Additionally, Liberia has given up 1.43 goals per game, which is about average across all national teams.

The Liberia's all-time leading scorer is **George Weah**.

The All Time Winning percentage of the team. Winning percentage is the total number of wins, divided by the total number of games played (wins, losses, and draws) 26.78%

All Time Record: 64 - 116 - 59

All Time Winning %age: 26.78%

FIFA Rank: 126

FIFA Rank: 66 highest

FIFA Rank: 160 lowest

The Peace Corp New Offices Opened

Today, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, along with U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Deborah Malac and Peace Corps Country Director Kevin Fleming, officially dedicated Peace Corps Liberia's new headquarters in Monrovia. The new facilities will enable Peace Corps to better support the services that it provides Volunteers, and make room for future staff growth. Currently, there are five Response Peace Corps Volunteers serving as Math and Science educators throughout Liberia. Over the summer recess, the Volunteers supported the Ministry of Education's call to action in helping the Liberian Education system "Get to Great" by conducting workshops for 126 school administrators, representing 63 schools, from 14 counties. The workshops addressed gender-based violence in schools, lesson planning, and classroom management. Two Volunteers also conducted summer literacy summer camps with the support of USAID small project assistance grants.

President Sirleaf welcomed Peace Corps to its new home and noted the important role Peace Corps has played in Liberia since 1962, while Ambassador Malac underscored the importance of education and the role that Peace Corps Volunteers can play in the rebuilding of Liberia.

Source: Culled from the U.S. Embassy, Monrovia



Rique Speaks

Two Portraits of Liberian Blues: John Coltrane and Curtis Amy

Henrique Hopkins

Black jazz musicians anticipated the interest in Africa that would be a defining feature of Black Culture in the Civil Rights/Black Power eras. The great innovators of the branch of the music known as "Bebop", Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker wrote the standard, "A Night in Tunisia", in the early 1940s. This piece celebrated African identity on several levels, from its funky straight 8th note bass line, to the imagery of the title, inciting visions of a swinging night in that North African country.

Gillespie in particular was a pioneer of musical and cultural exchange, bringing the great Afro-Cuban musician Chano Pozo into his big band in the 1940s. Pozo was a dark skinned Cuban percussionist with strong African roots. He was a practitioner of the Santeria religion, a fusion of the Yoruba spiritual practice and Catholicism. He brought rhythms to Gillespie that had been passed down directly from Africa.

A strong interest in Africa had always however been a vital component of progressive African-American thought, from W.E.B DuBois to the writers of the



Harlem Renaissance. The climate of the 1950s however was one particularly fertile for interest in Africa to grow. The combination of the Civil Rights movement at home and African independence abroad brought African and African-American intellectuals and strivers into closer contact than any time before.

Many new styles of jazz music developed in the 1950s, including the "Third Stream" of Gunther Schuller and John Lewis, the "Free Jazz" of Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy, and the "Modal Jazz" which found full expression on Miles Davis Classic "Kind of Blue" album. One of the most influential of new jazz styles was the East Coast style



of "Hard Bop." "Hard Bop" was bluesy, funky reaction to both the cool "West Coast" school and the progressive Be Bop. The goal of it was to use the advanced musical language of Be Bop in a way the average Black Music fan could relate to.

Hard Bop musicians focused their compositions on The Blues, Gospel, and danceable, finger snapping rhythms- elements that were closer to the roots of Black Music in America and the roots Jazz had in common with the most popular youth musics of the time, R&B and Rock & Roll.

African musicians also began to make their impact in the United



States at this time, beginning with the great Babatunde Olatunji of Nigeria's "Drums of Passion" album in 1959. Olatunji came to the States on a Rotary International scholarship to study at the Historically Black Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. His intention was to get a Masters Degree in Public Administration, with his African percussion band being merely a way to subsidize his education. His "Drums of Passion" band ended up becoming a phenomenon, which included great jazz musicians such as Clark Terry, Horace Silver, Yusef Lateef and Bill Lee, the director Spike Lee's father. His great hit "Jin Go Lo Ba" would also become a big record for guitar great Carlos Santana.

With so much of modern jazz centering around the cultural hot house of New York City, it was quite easy to see how African American jazz musicians would meet and be influenced by Africans, West Indians, South Americans and musicians from cities such as New Orleans wherethe Afro connection was still strong. Some musicians such as Horace Silver had recent African heritage, which he explored on tunes like "The Cape Verdean Blues." Other musicians such as the drummer Art Blakey visited Africa, chose an African name and began practicing Islam.

John Coltrane was a prominent figure in the Hard Bop era, re ally



in every era from his emergence to prominence until his death in 1967. Trane as he was called was known both for his superb technical command of the saxophone and jazz forms, his ability to play long lines that fit the harmony of the song without tiring out, mixed with great emotional expression, embodied by his powerful, piercing tone on the horn. Trane, by the end of his life became to be viewed as a musical prophet, with the titles of his music resting on spiritual themes such as "Om", and his long soulful solos invoking both the fiery exhortations of a Baptist Preacher and the monotonous vibratory chants of Buddhist Monks and Hindu yogis. His music was also seen as the musical representation of both Civil Rights and Black Power.



© hansspeekenbrink.nl

History does not record in detail what inspired Coltrane to compose the ode to our nation he called quite simply, "Liberia." "Liberia" was found on the album recorded in 1960 and released in 1964 entitled, "Coltrane's Sound." The liner notes to the album say simply that the song was "Dedicated to a group of Liberians he met in the late '50s."

It's fascinating to speculate on who these Liberians might have been. Of course the late '50s and early '60s were around the middle of the Tubman era, a time of economic growth and many Liberians coming to the United States to study. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf first came to the United States herself to study in 1961.

Trane also became a close friend of Babatunde Olatunji, assisting him in Establishing the Olatunji Center in New York City, from where Trane delivered his final performance. Tenor Sax great Sonny Rollins had already written a tune entitled "Airegin", an ode to Nigeria in 1954, recording it on an album with Miles Davis. Trane himself played on a well-known version of the song, recorded with Miles a few years later.

Coltrane's "Liberia" was not the first jazz piece inspired by the Republic, coming over 13 years after Duke Ellington's "Liberian Suite." That piece was commissioned by President Tubman himself on the occasion of the Liberian Centennial. While that suite attempted to capture the whole of Liberian history in a musical composition, Trane's "Liberia" is a beautiful, somewhat wistful portrait of the "land of liberty" at mid century.

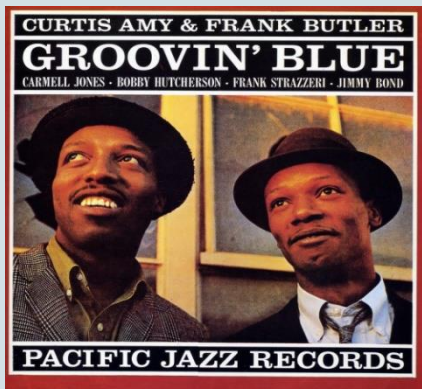
The tune is performed by John Coltrane on tenor sax, McCoy Tyner on piano, Steve Davis, bass, and Elvin Jones on drums. It begins with Trane blowing a melody that

evokes Africa in its lilting, calling tones, ending up very bluesy at the end of the phrase. Tyner accompanies him on piano, working it dramatically from the low bass all the way up to the high treble, while Jones lays down Afro percussive rumbling. As the full groove kicks in, Trane plays a very vocal, song like, plaintive melody, with Tyner laying down some very dramatic piano and Jones playing dancing African rhythms. The next section features Trane playing one simple note in a very syncopated rhythmic style, "swinging" while Jones beat goes heavy on the snare drum.

From there Coltrane goes on to play a very vocal solo. He's followed by Tyner on piano, after which Trane returns playing the B section of the melody, loosely reprising the "Liberia" melody, where the song ends. Coltrane's "Liberia" is much as he was, intense, yet also rhythmic and soulful.

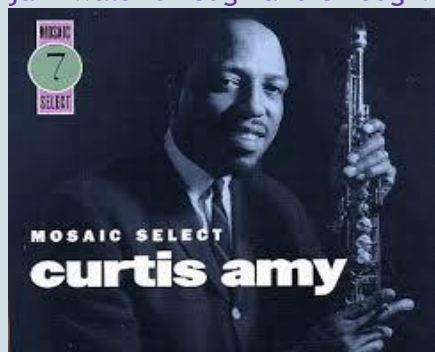


Curtis Amy was a saxophone contemporary of Trane but his career took the other tack to the point that he is now an undersung musician. He originated in Texas and made his career in Los Angeles, on the West Coast, where the Blues and Gospel influences that went into the New York "Hard Bop" were constantly strengthened by a steady stream of Southern migrants.



Amy's ode to Liberia can be found on his 1962 album "Way Down" on Pacific Jazz Records. The musicians include pianist Victor Feldman, and one of my favorite musicians, vibraphonist Roy Ayers, himself a leader in fusing the musics of the African diaspora in the 1970's.

Amy paints an alternate picture of Liberia than the one composed by John Coltrane. While Trane's "Liberia" is wistful and dreamy, Amy's is bluesy, funky, a swinging jazz waltz through and through.



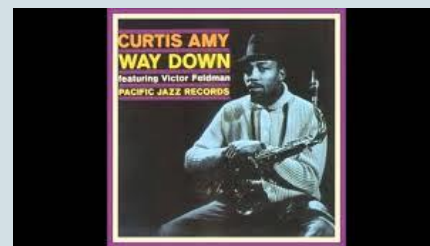
"Liberia" begins with Roy Ayers playing an African sounding melody on Vibraphone, closely mirrored by Victor Feldman's piano, with Tom Bazzley contributing a rumbling, Tom Tom heavy Afrocentric beat. Feldman's piano revolves around the "Amen" chord sequence, a staple of Black Christian music. After the intro, a rousing jazz waltz melody is introduced, moving and halting in a technique known as "Stop time." Ayers vibes play the melody along with Amy's tenor, Roy Brewster's trombone and Marcus Belgrave's trumpet. The melody is played twice before the soloists get to

add to the conversation, with Roy Ayers taking the first solo on vibraphone. The sound of the vibraphone in jazz is one I relate closely to Africa and Liberia for some reason, probably because I always heard records featuring vibes and flutes in the home. Of course, the Vibraphone descends from African instruments such as the Xylophone, Marimba, Mbila, Balafon and Gyii! The soloists continue on making their statements over the swinging rhythm section in a bluesy, soulful way. The composition reminds me of both the valiant struggle contained in the Liberian story as well as the hip, transcontinental sophistication and worldliness Liberia aspired to in the 1960s.

Discovering these jazz goodies, these musical invocations of the Liberian spirit was a real treat for me, as I hope it will be for you as well. My late father was a jazz fan, and a fan and contemporary of these two tenor men in particular. He would have been overjoyed to hear music by them dedicated to the country he was dedicated to. Their existence speaks to another time when Liberia occupied a different place on the world stage, one that provided inspiration. They stand then as a testament to that time, hope for the future, and swinging good music.



*By Henrique Hopkins
Hosts Rique Speaks
His experience and knowledge
in music is extensive.*



Authors of the Month Profiles

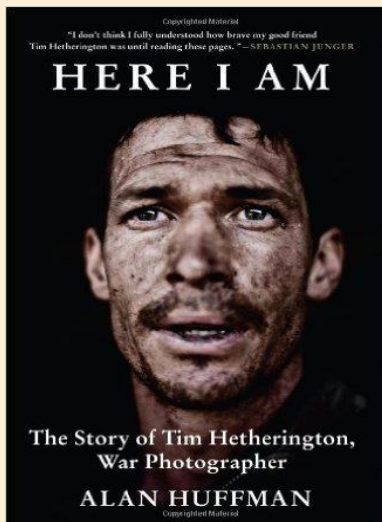
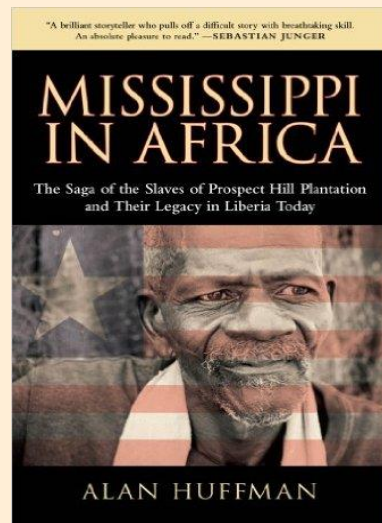
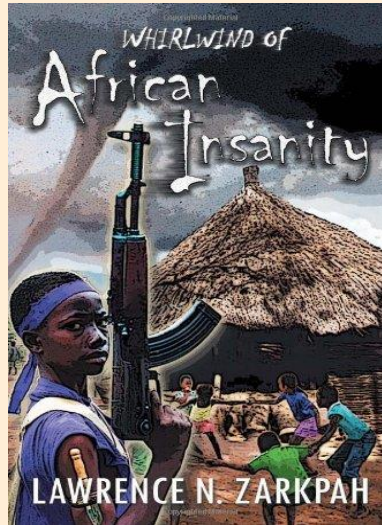
Lawrence N. Zarkpah



Lawrence N. Zarkpah Mr. Lawrence N. Zarkpah is from Liberia, a small West African country that imploded in a civil war and left 250,000 plus people dead. His father died when he was still a child. He was raised by an uncle who taught him self-dependence, gave him the desire to dream big and the courage to stand up in the midst of unspeakable storms. After nearly 14 years of dodging bullets and surviving near death experiences in war zones and life in refugee camps throughout West Africa, Lawrence came to the United States of America. He studied and acquired a degree in Surgical Technology, a profession in which he has worked for eight plus years. Lawrence is now studying at the Grand Canyon University in phoenix, Arizona to acquire his second degree, this time a Bachelor in Business Management. He is also a philanthropist, a screenplay writer, a poet, a motivational speaker and an author of a 5-star rating, life-changing and very informational book, Whirlwind of African Insanity. His work resonates with the countless voices of children who suffer and die in wars about which they know nothing. The book also provides some of the reasons why Africa is and may forever remain plagued. It presents two arguments about the real causes of Africa's disasters and is written on behalf of underprivileged children whose cries for help are drown in in oceans of selfish politics and whose lives are buried in the explosions wars. His is a story about survival in hellish conditions

and optimism when there is nothing about which to be optimistic.

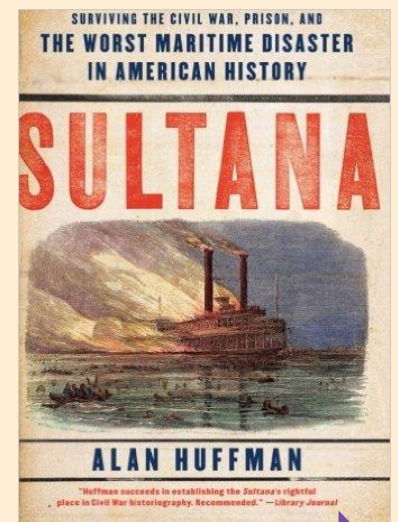
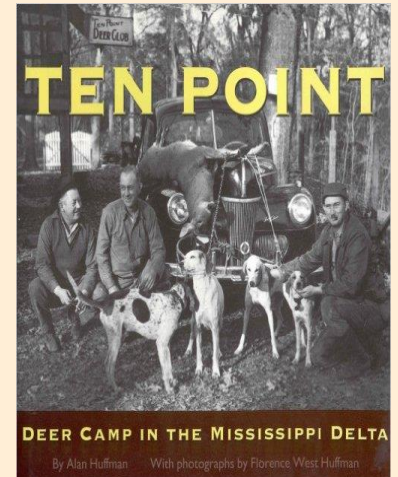
His poetry book, "Do Not Let Us Die" is in publication.



Alan Huffman



Alan Huffman is the author of five nonfiction books: *Ten Point*; *Mississippi in Africa*; *Sultana*; *We're With Nobody*; and *Here I Am: The Story of Tim Hetherington, War Photographer*. He has contributed to *The Atlantic*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*; *The Los Angeles Times*; *Newsweek*; *The New York Times*, *Outside*; *Smithsonian*; *Washington Post Magazine*; and *VICE*.



In the Spotlight of this issue, is a talented Liberian son. His signature piece, "Do Not Let Us Die" just scraps the surface of his gifted poet. If you have not heard it, check out our website or his YouTube channel.

Author Interview



Lawrence N. Zarkpah

LLM: *Tell us a little about your early childhood, upbringing, education.*

I was brought to life at the John F. Kennedy Hospital in Monrovia, Liberia. My dad passed when I was still a toddler. My mom is here with us presently in Glendale, Arizona.

What inspires you to write generally? Who are some of the people that influenced you?

As a kid I was intrigued by great books; how their messages reached places the authors may never go. They fill schools and other institutions for kids and adults to read and learn.

However, to me, that legacy transcends time and generations.

I always thought, one day, I will write books that will not just sit on people's bookshelves millions of miles away, but they will actually transform people's lives for the better.

What role does your family play in your writing?

Everything, they play every important role in my writing. Without their support, I would not be a writer.

Name one entity that you feel supported you besides your family members.

*One person that supported and still is supporting me is Deborah Campbell. She owns a signs company called Fast Signs. I worked for her when I first came to the United States. She considers me her son and she has always been there for my family. Her financial and moral support helped publish my book, *Whirlwind of African Insanity*.*

If you had to choose, which writer[s] would you consider your mentor/mentors?

Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American essayist, lecturer, and poet. He was born on May 25, 1803 in Boston, Massachusetts and died in 1882, centuries before I was born. Now you understand why I say that time can never efface great writings. As a first grader, I recited one of Emerson's poems, titled "A Nation's Strength" at my school's year-end ceremony. That poem is still deeply embedded in my heart.

How would you describe yourself using five words? I know it is not much but...

I would describe myself as thirsty for change in Africa.

Tell your fans two things about yourself they don't know.

Two things about myself my fans do not know: Primarily, I love Africa so much it hurts to see us

fighting and killing ourselves. Secondly, I hate being late for anything.

Let's talk books.

What books have most influenced your life/career most?

The Bible, it is because of this great book that I find the strength, courage and faith to believe in myself, to trust people and to dream big.

Who is/are your favorite Liberian author[s] and what strikes you about their work[s]?

Wilton Sankawulo of course. I grew up reading some of his books. I consider him the father of Liberian literature and a role model. His books are engaging.

Have you collaborated with a Liberian author before on a project? If so which project?

Not quite yet but I am now discovering other authors and I planning a big screen movie project that I hope to find the right person or people with whom I can collaborate.

Have you considered/would you like to work with other Liberian authors?

What possible areas would you consider collaborating on?

Absolutely. No man is an island. It is long pass time that we write and produce our own experiences and movies rather than sit dormant and watch while others who do not live the Liberian or African experience rewrite our stories to fit their perspectives.

Do you have a specific writing style?

I do. My writing style is mostly persuasive. However, I insert some narrative here and there.

How do you develop your plots and characters?

As a nonfiction writer, I draw inspiration from real life situations. Concerning my plots I look at past and present history, envision myself as the character in those situations and react appropriately. If that does not move me, I review and rewrite. There is no way you can tap into the emotions of your audience if you are not first, emotionally moved.

Could you tell us about your protagonist[s]/antagonist[s]? Did you draw from real people?

I did draw from real people, myself included. My book, *Whirlwind of African Insanity* contains more than one protagonist and antagonist as that was true during the case of the Liberian civil war. Contrary to what many people think, the enemy of your enemy is not always your friend. On both sides of the conflict, some of those who were considered enemies actually surprised everyone by helping the other side occasionally. The ones who appeared to be friends sometimes became the devil. The entire situation is at times unpredictable and thus the element of surprise is alive and keeps you at the edge of your seat.

What inspired you to write - Whirlwind of African Insanity?

I do not write to get me through adversities. I do that to inspire

people to become better and to hopefully give the most vulnerable people in our societies, underprivileged children, a chance to live. I consider myself a messenger for these children. Thousands of them die every year to preventable causes, for example gun violence and poor sanitation.

Yet for some reasons, deliberately and sometime inadvertently many of our leaders and the rest of the world are oblivion to the cries and sufferings of our children. They are too occupied seeking after their own gains, which most times are at the expense of these children. This and other injustices pain my heart every day. Therefore, I have decided to be a voice for the voiceless. This is my inspiration.

How did you come up with the title of your book, Whirlwind of African Insanity? Why that one?

I had three titles in mind, the African Child, War Child and Surviving Hell. Upon research, I realized that there was a book called "L'Enfant Noir," which when translated to English is African Child. My next choice, War child could have been written by anyone from any part of the world. Surviving Hell was not specific enough. At first glance one may assume it to be a biblical novel.

Upon deeper reflection, I realized how the war in Liberia appeared to have been blown by a wind sweeping through the country, entering Sierra Leone, then Guinea and finally the Ivory Coast. This wind was so strong it destroyed anything and everyone in its paths. Yes, it was an insane whirlwind that could not be stopped. Thus became the title of my book, *Whirlwind of African Insanity*.

How much of the book is realistic?

All of it, all 100% of my book is realistic.

Are the experiences based on someone you know, or events in your own life?

Few parts are based on the historical setting of Liberia and other people's involvements. The rest of it is my experience during the 14 years civil war.

What was the hardest part of writing this book?

Reliving my experiences was the hardest part. I had to go back in time to rewrite some of the scenes. I did not what to do that but I had to if I wanted to tell the story right. I was like unlocking and re-awaken the devils I had locked up in the deepest recesses of my mind. Yeah, those were the hardest parts writing my book.

What was your favorite chapter (or part) to write and why?

Part One, Chapter 37, pages 152 - 159 was my favorite. It is a debate we had in my school back in Sierra Leone. The topic, "The Problems of Africa are Africans Themselves" was the right topic to discuss at that time. It was fun.

Would you change anything in your books? What and why?

I believe every writer always wishes to change one or two things in his/her book. Is this part worded appropriately? Could I have approached this scene differently? Does my book fully represent the dying children on whose behalf it was written?

Those are the questions I have asked myself. Oh well, perhaps it is just the quest for perfection in me.

What book[s] are you reading now?

I am reading "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen R. Covey.

Are there any new authors that have grasped your interest?

She is not exactly a brand new author but I have started reading some of Maya Angelo's work. I find her pretty interesting.

Is there anything you find particularly challenging in your writing?

My challenge is having enough time to write. I cannot seem to get that.

Do you have to travel much concerning your book(s)? Who designed the covers?

I wish that I had to travel. Between raising a family, fulltime job and going back to school full time, the demands on my time are endless. I drew a rough sketch for the cover of my book and gave it to my graphic designer. He brought the images to life.

Do you have any advice for other writers?

Yes. Here is my advice, write. Write what you can, when you can, where you can and most importantly, write what you love.

What are the greatest challenges for a Liberian writer especially in terms of publishing, distributing and promotion?

Finding the right publisher who is interested in your story is a good thing. In respect to non-fiction, there are millions of Africans who have similar stories. Outside of Africa, these stories have been told and retold so many times, they lose their appeal. That makes it difficult to sell. Secondly, for some odd reason our people prefer to promote foreigners rather than their own.

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

I have had two main book signings in Arizona. They were successful. I am planning a tour soon, and will make sure to give you the details when all is finalized. My best story yet happens 2 days ago. I met a formal workmate by chance in a hospital's lobby. She was so excited to see me. After giving me a big hug she said, "Lawrence I have to tell you this. My son read your book, all of it. In fact once he started reading, he did not put it down till the end." She said, "I want to thank you because it changed his life. Seeing what you've been through and what you have accomplished sent a bolt of courage through his spine. He now has a positive perspective about life in general, and I want to thank you." Now, that is the greatest compliment every writer wishes to have.

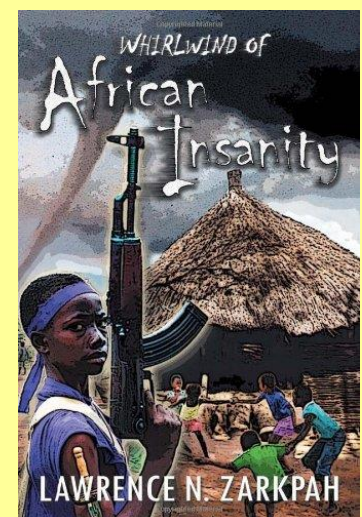
What are your current projects?

I am working on a poetry book and hoping to do an audio version and YouTube videos as well.

Do you have anything specific that you want to say to your readers?

I do. Life is a journey. Our places of birth and the families we are

born into give us certain advantages and disadvantages on this journey. However, what we make of ourselves is what tells who we really are, how we endeavor to turn our trash into treasures, our tests into testimonies and how we treat people along the paths of life. This is why I believe that the value of a man must never be measured by the abundance of his possessions but by his moral fiber and his love for God. This love is reflected in our deeds and actions, the way we strengthen the weak, care for the sick, feed the hungry and put a smile on somebody's face. What you release is that which impacts lives, not what you store away. We are all gifted differently. And through the course of our lives we acquire certain skills that help us grow and succeed in whatever it is that we do. Yet beneath all that gifting is a universal cause; to change unacceptable circumstances to ones that inspire, equip, and make our communities better. What have you done lately to touch and transform somebody's life? Life itself is short. Get out there and seek to make an impact. As you do, be safe out there everybody, and remain blessed.



#LibTakeOver#**Patrice Juah***A version of this article first appeared in the Daily Observer Newspaper*

A week before 26 July, Liberia's independence day, a storm hit Social Media. The indomitable storm that was #libtakeover could not be ignored as I scrolled down my Facebook and Twitter news feeds. As the hashtag depicts, I too was taken over by admiration upon reading the numerous Liberian colloquialisms and parables; some old and others new, all bore a semblance of uniqueness and humor about them - a uniqueness Liberians have come to be known for. Throughout that week, it became a front on which Liberians, both at home and in the diaspora united towards one common goal, whose purpose was yet unknown, aside from the entertainment it delivered. Although I didn't participate, I followed closely for days and wondered where the hashtag came from and what inspired its genesis. I wondered if the creator was just caught up in the celebrations or "jolly-jolly" associated with that time of year. Could the hashtag have arisen from the founder's desire to see a new and transformed Liberia, or did it emerge from a feeling of homesickness while basking in Minnesota's Brooklyn Park, Staten Island's Park Hill, or Ghana's Buduburam Refugee Camp? Did its inventor think that #libtakeover would actually take over the internet that week?

Those thoughts lingered for days as the '26' celebrations

heated up, and were reinforced when it became impossible to see regular Facebook posts from Liberians, other than those relating to the phenomenon. Scrolling through this time, I was struck and in awe - Liberian humor was certainly undeniable and at the core of every Liberian; perhaps this could be attributed to our ability to bounce back after every setback. Yes, we just laugh and shake it off! Taylor Swift must have heard about a group of people called Liberians when she made the song "Shake It Off" - that's what we do -- we shake off our trials and tribulations effortlessly. That quality, though heroic, plagued me with several questions: Are we stuck in the resilience and shake-it-off mode, waiting for our next trial to overcome, or are we waiting for the next "did-well-trophy"? Have we gotten so accustomed to shaking it off that we often ignore the recovery process of looking our challenges straight in the eye and working towards getting them completely out of our system, in order to prevent a recurrence? Yes, we are strong people, but is that all we want to be known for? Those thoughts were further emphasized when I played back a point made by

U.S Ambassador to Liberia, Her Excellency Deborah Malac, while sitting next to her at the National Policy Makers' Dialogue held at the Monrovia City Hall in May of this year. Throughout the dialogue, several Liberian speakers

applauded Liberians as being a "resilient people". It was as if the word "resilient" was the theme of the day. Every time they'd use the word, Amb. Malac would look rather disappointed. At one point, I leaned over to chat with her briefly, and she said "It's high time Liberians do something about the word resilient. Yes, we know and agree that you all are resilient and strong people, but how can that resilience lead to actual results? To me, using resilience to describe Liberians indicates that they're just sitting around and waiting for the next catastrophe to befall them so that they can overcome it, instead of taking steps to ensure that they don't happen again. Liberians should replace that word with another word that speaks to action and results."



Before the close of the independence week, I began to reflect more seriously on what a true takeover would look like as Liberia turned 168 years old, with the clouds of war, Ebola, and infrastructural challenges still hanging over us. Several days after the holiday, I glanced through my feed this time, startled to discover that

the #libtakeover hashtag had ended as quickly as it started, right after the independence festivities. I waited patiently to see if the same enthusiasm would resurface for the August 24th Flag Day celebrations, but the #libtakeover had vanished from our news feeds for good, thus leaving me with the conclusion that it was yet another fanfare meant for social media that week. Maybe, like the ambassador, I too had expectations and had every right to, as I yearned for the Liberia of old -- the one the older folks spoke so passionately about. The one captured in Yorel Francis' "The Wealth of Liberia Restored", which brought me to tears when I first saw it. I, like many of my peers did not see that Liberia, because we were too little when the country's civil war began, and we'd lost 14 years of our childhood living through those tumultuous years. The last ten years of peace in Liberia were seemingly the only peaceful years many of us had known in our lifetime - our version of "normal days".

The Oxford Dictionary defines "Takeover" as "an act of assuming control over something."

How then can we assume responsibility and take charge of the task of building a new Liberia? How do we build upon the legacy of the glorious "normal days" and move towards a brighter future? How do we reclaim our place amongst nations, as that nation which was once the beacon of hope for the rest of Africa? How

can we live up to the captivating legacy of a country once considered home to the likes of the Priestess of Soul, Nina Simone, and Jazz great, Hugh Masekela, who, upon visiting Liberia in the 70s was granted Liberian citizenship and passport, when he was exiled from his country due to his outspoken stance against apartheid? Intrigued by the beautiful culture and people of Liberia, Mr. Masekela would remark that our country had "some of the most beautiful women I'd seen since my return to Africa." What was that thing that kept Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom fascinated with Liberia, to the extent of paying several state visits to the small nation? True to its name, Liberia (land of the liberty), it was indeed a land many flocked to, particularly Africans and other peoples of color, to experience what was called "Small America"-supposedly an African equivalent of western democracy. A land whose beautiful women were lauded once more in the Michael Jackson's hit song, "Liberian Girl", as being "more precious than any pearl." A land that many borrowed from and a place founded to be the safe haven for all blacks across the world. Even in its troubled days, many still cannot get enough of the fascination that is Liberia. Why is that so?

I envision the #libtakeover hashtag as more than merely a spectacle, but the birth of a movement - a new renaissance born out of patriotism; a call to action that compels us to quit

the "blame game" and take full responsibility for the development of Liberia. I visualized it as being a movement that unites and boldly propels us to be the change we so fervently seek. I envisage #libtakeover as a force that would resurrect us from the pits of complacency and stagnation, into a new era of transformation. To mention that the hashtag blazed a trail on social media would be an understatement, but how can we take that same zeal and enthusiasm off of social media, turning it into a movement that is as powerful as the #blacklivesmatter movement, which was also born on social media, but became an actual force of change that's making waves across the U.S and the world?

How can Liberia (LIB) takeover in the true definition of the word "takeover"?

LIB can only takeover when we invest in our educational sector, while training and producing qualified teachers to mold the young minds of our children, inculcating in them the value and importance of education.

LIB can only takeover when we inspire the youth to take on the task of leadership, by educating and empowering them to become the next generation of Engineers, Doctors, Teachers, Lawyers, Geologists, Economists, Historians, Writers, Business Executives etc., to steer her into a productive future. By doing this, they become vehicles for development, not instruments of violence.

LIB can only truly take over when we rebuild our roads and infrastructure, thereby strengthening regional trade and collaboration with other African states.

LIB can only take over when we strengthen and equip our justice system to allow the rule of law to take its course, without fear or favor, thus reducing the culture of impunity.

LIB can surely takeover when we work towards building a sustainable economy that serves as the catalyst for a strong private sector and middle class, while ensuring economic growth and equal opportunities for all.

LIB can only take over when we stop cutting corners and taking the easy ride of corruption to the top, leaving the masses to suffocate at the bottom.

LIB can only take over when it becomes the hub of entrepreneurship and social innovation on the African continent, boasting of ventures that are driven by young and progressive visionaries who are passionate about its future.

LIB can only truly take over when basic social services are available to all regardless of socio-economic status.

LIB can only take over when we strengthen our healthcare system, to reduce the high rates of infant and maternal mortality, while meeting the needs of the poor.

LIB can take over when we're able to look past religious, tribal, and political differences and work towards the common goal of nation-building.

LIB can only truly take over when Gender Equality is no longer a "taboo" but a reality that enables women to thrive, while maximizing their full potential.

LIB can truly take over when our Farmers are equipped to go back to the soil to grow more food, to ensure a self-sufficient Liberia.

LIB can takeover when our security sector stands firm to protect and uphold the sovereignty of the state, while maintaining the peace we all enjoy today, even as UNMIL draws down next year.

LIB can genuinely takeover when we are fully integrated into the 21st century's technological revolution, equipping our young people to become the next generation of Programmers, Civil Engineers, Software Developers/Engineers, Systems Analysts, etc.

LIB can completely takeover when we're proud to identify as Liberians, embracing our beautiful cultural heritage, promoting arts & culture, and discarding the belief that we aren't "African enough".

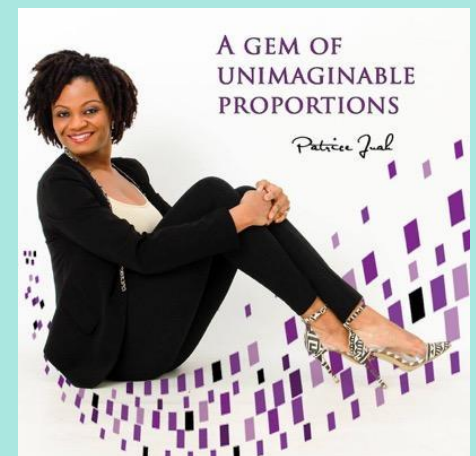
LIB can only takeover when we stop looking at the government as a separate entity from us, and start acknowledging the fact that we, ordinary citizens make up the government.

Lastly, as the 2017 elections approach, it is important to note that LIB will certainly take over when we value the power of our votes and stop selling our "rights for rice."

In the words of British Playwright, George Bernard

Shaw, "Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

With the Agenda for Transformation as our roadmap towards achieving the 'Liberia Rising Vision 2030', it is my hope that this new era of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) marks a shift in our mindsets, as we work collectively, backing our actions with renewed faith and commitment to undoubtedly usher LIB into an age of sustainable economic dominance and true developmental takeover.



Patrice Juah is a Mandela Washington Fellow for President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), Creative Entrepreneur, Writer, Girls' Education Advocate and Former Miss Liberia. She currently sits on the Advisory Committee for the 5th annual African Creative Economy Conference to be held in Yaoundé, Cameroon in October. Ms. Juah can be reached via email: Patjuah2001@yahoo.com

President Sirleaf Addresses the 2nd World Assembly for Women (WAW) in Tokyo, Japan

Executive Mansion
Press Release

Friday, 28th August 2015



Tokyo, Japan - President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has reflected on the struggle of women across the globe that continues to prevent them from “shining” and praised Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for organizing the World Assembly for Women (WAW) and all that he continues to do to promote the advancement and empowerment of women both in Japan and other parts of the world.

The Liberian leader stressed that if the world is to move “Towards a Society Where Women Shine”, we must continue to tackle with more forcefulness a world in which 30 percent of women around the world experience either physical or sexual partner violence; where 20 percent of women in sub-Saharan Africa suffer from non-sexual partner violence; a world in which 1.3 billion women do not have an account at formal financial institutions.

According to a dispatch from Tokyo, President Sirleaf made the remarks when she delivered the Keynote Address at the opening of the 2nd World Assembly for Women (WAW 2015) at the Grand Prince Hotel Takanawa on Friday, August 28, 2015. The WAW 2015 is being held under the theme: “Towards a Society Where Women Shine.”

Speaking further, President Sirleaf indicated that while recognizing unprecedented success in a few countries, just as Rwanda which has the highest world-wide participation, it is noted that in sub-Saharan Africa, women account for only 22 percent of seats in National Parliaments, admitting that both Japan and Liberia have much catching up to do at 9 percent and 10 percent respectively.

She also noted that 43 percent of women the agricultural workforce have limited personal access to credit, land and information, although they play the dominant role in ensuring food security for the African region.



President Sirleaf & Prime Minister Abe

President Sirleaf acknowledged that WAW 2015 comes at a time when advocates and proponents of gender equality and women’s rights are undertaking critical reviews and assessments of the level of



First Lady Kenyatta @ WAW

implementation of key women’s rights and participation as enshrined in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform Action and UN Security Council Resolution - 1325 on Women’s Peace and Security.

She indicated that the reviews and assessments indicate clearly that women have made significant progress in all areas and levels of society, but that it was also equally clear that women have not arrived yet.

She recognized Japan’s role in the formulation and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which was articulated in 2000 and will end this 2015 and indicated that the conditions in today’s world are far from the ideals of the UN Charter and from achieving the indicators established by the MDGs, prompting the UN Secretary General to make an unusual call for Global Action, to see the year 2015 as a unique opportunity to make collective commitment to end poverty and to transform the world.

President Sirleaf said the call of global action is a call to global leaders and to the people whom they lead to act with courage, to deliver, at a historical crossroad on the



timeless promise made at the birth of the United Nations.

“The successor to the MDGs, the Post 2015 Global Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide the opportunity to deliver on that promise,” she said, adding, “As stated in the Report, the world must ensure that women, youth and children have access to a full range of health services; ensure zero tolerance for violence against or exploitation of women and girls; ensure that women and girls have equal access to financial services; and the right to own land and property, ensure access to information; confirm the right to education and a safe environment to learn, recognize women’s reproductive health and rights; promote healthy behavior including those relating to water, sanitation and hygiene,” President Sirleaf pointed out.

She told the WAW that the Assembly provides the opportunity to look back and examine the world today, an opportunity for all regions to express and to join the call for action, to declare what they want in the world of tomorrow.

She further reflected that similar call is made in the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Agenda building upon the lessons obtained this

year 2015: “The Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development Towards Africa Agenda 2063,” adding that it is an Agenda which expresses the Africa we want, a peaceful and secure Africa, an Africa with strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics, and Africa where development is people driven, unleashing the potential of woman and youth.

“The struggle to emancipate women from social and economic repression across the globe must start with us individually. Today, if each of us makes the commitment to denounce the subordination of a woman or a girl child in the household, your action will lead to increased equity for women.



First Lady Kenyatta @ WAW

Our determination to impose confidence in our women and girls at the household level will not only increase productivity, but will lead to increased autonomy and self-esteem, which are cardinal to everyday decision making by women,” she told her excited audience.

She also encouraged men to see women’s participation in the economic, civic and political life of community and nation as an opportunity or an investment to foster complementarity development for the benefit of society.



High Level Round Table: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe @ WAW

President Sirleaf call on the Assembly to build on the trait of the Angie Brooks International Centre’s award winning Women’s Situation Room (WSR) which she champion as it utilizes women’s natural nurturing ability plus their abilities to negotiate and keep peace in a country.

As a way of sharing her personal experience, President Sirleaf also reflected on her personal life journey which she said epitomizes the struggle and determination of women worldwide. “It tells the story of activism, opposition political leadership, banker, administrator and international civil servant with deep focus on a firm determination to realize life’s goal. It speaks of the deep concern about the social, economic and political inequalities that existed and still exists in Liberia today,” she stressed.





IMF Lagarde @ WAW

She also referenced her participation in political contestations in 1985, 1997, 2005 and 2011, and the awarding of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize as the first African woman as major steps along the way in the struggle for justice, freedom and empowerment.

President Sirleaf also used the occasion to tell Liberia's story about the deadly Ebola virus disease and the impact it had on the nation and its people, and also pointed out the many constraints and challenges faced by the country as it seeks recovery.

She expressed grief and sorrow for the 10,400 victims of the disease in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone and announced that as she spoke, Liberia was ending a second 42-day countdown and was expected to be declared Ebola free by the World Health Organization for the second time. She also told the Assembly that Sierra Leone has



also released its last patient and has commenced a 42 days countdown.

"It was truly a horrifying situation, as you saw on your television screens. In the midst of deaths, fears, sanctions, departure of friends, companies and citizens, closure of schools and markets, and the confused cries of our people, I strongly rejected the horrifying predictions that Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone would face a 1.4 million infections before the end of January, and that 20,000 of the citizens in our three countries would die within months," President Sirleaf narrated.



PM Abe, US Ambassador Kennedy

She praised Japan and other members of the international community, including countries that deployed their citizens to help fight the virus for their support that enabled the country contain the further spread of the virus and requested that the world still stand by Liberia's side as it implements its recovery plan and effort.

Many personalities, including the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe; Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngueka; IMF' Managing Director, Christine Lagarde; and the UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman made remarks.

Other panelists at the Assembly who made remarks in person or via video recording

included the United States First Lady, Michelle Obama; the wife of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Clarie Blair; the wife of Kenya President, Margaret Kenyatta; Rula Ghani, Helen Clarke, Linda Hill, among others.

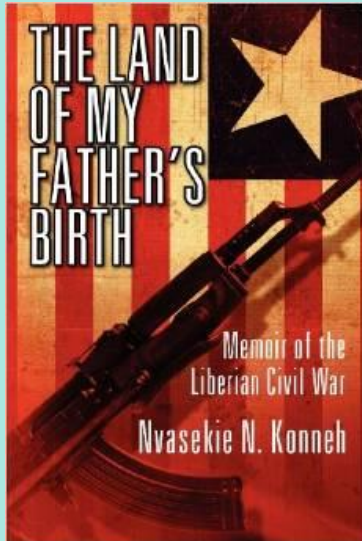
Earlier, President Sirleaf held talks with the Japan/AU Parliamentary Friendship League made of members of the DIET (Parliament) of Japan and discussed cooperation with Liberia and the African continent.

She also held talks with the President of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Akihiko Tanaka and delegation. They discussed JICA's activities in Liberia with emphasis on fast-tracking the resumption of work on the Somalia Drive Road and a plea to expand the Somalia Drive project to 4 lanes.

The 2nd Assembly, which has brought together about 140 leaders of various fields from more than 40 countries and 7 international organizations are discussing in a comprehensive manner various issues surrounding women. It also provides an opportunity for leaders who are active on the frontline in the political, economic and social arenas to have a frank exchange of views in their own words notwithstanding their country of origin and affiliation.



Book Review



The Land of My Father's Birth: Memoir of the Liberian Civil War

The author's primary purpose is to set the record straight about his nationality, and that of his father before him. That is too easy a case to make. He uses strong and impressive arguments from the outset by using general history and personal genealogy. To borrow a popular cliché of our times, it is a slam-dunk.

Besides nationality, Konneh addresses the sub-themes of tribalism, religion, and patriotism. Commonly held beliefs among many Liberians include the false point of view that Mandingo is not a Liberian tribe. The author debunks that theory with logical arguments and historical references. The French independently set new boundaries between its newly carved territories and the young Republic of Liberia. Through a show of strength, the French wrestled away what was Liberian territory and turned it into theirs. Clearly,

the Mandingoes are indeed an integral Liberian tribe though many of their kinfolk reside in Guinea and elsewhere. The history of Liberia is replete with stories of migration; the Mandingoes are no exception. The author makes a compelling case.

Then there is the sensitive issue of religion. While most Liberians consider themselves Christians, either by practice or preferment, the Mandingoes are overwhelmingly Muslim. But since the constitution makes it a point to honor the 'freedom of religion' as a right, being a Muslim does not nullify one's citizenship. After all, both Christianity and Islam are foreign religions to Liberia.

The questions of ethnicity and religion lead to the issue of patriotism. Could a group of people whose ethnicity remains questionable, and whose religious preference is different, be trusted to be patriotic? Those questions come to the forefront as war breaks out in the country. The author painfully narrates stories about Mandingoes being singled out, questioned and harassed by immigration officers at checkpoints; other citizens stand by without questioning the unruly actions of the officers. In fact, they seemingly approve and support the abuse and harassment.

But things get worse and the Mandingoes become real targets and are forced to flee to neighboring countries for refuge. The author tells a tragic story of betrayal and confusion and sadness. Friends and relatives die in the struggle for survival, but in the end, the group decides to fight back instead of fleeing. They join a coalition with the Krahn, only to see the alliance break apart. The Mandingoes are seen as unpatriotic to the land of their birth, not fit to run the country.

They are seen as outsiders in their native land. But the struggle makes the group more politically conscious of their rights as they fathom new social and legal rights.

Alhaji Kromah, a controversial figure, emerged as the national leader of the monolithic Mandingoes. The author takes to task a benefactor who makes an unflattering remark about Mr. Kromah. He writes, "At this time, just like thousands of Mandingoes, my love and support for Alhaji were very extreme. I was his fanatic and would have taken a bullet for him. So at this moment in Fleminster's house, I did not hesitate to tell him what I felt about his unflattering statement about Alhaji Kromah. I responded to his statement by saying that 'whether somebody likes it or not, Alhaji is our leader.'" [P.138]

The part about fanatic support and the willingness to die for a leader simply on the basis of tribal allegiance may be a bit shocking to many readers because throughout the narrative, Konneh writes about the close mindedness of other tribes, such as the Manos and Gios, who are willing to shut out the Mandingoes and victimize them in favor of their chosen ones. So how is this attitude any different from the others? How could he both frown upon and embrace blind tribal loyalty?

To the author's credit, he apparently sees the illogic of his fanaticism as he writes unflatteringly about Kromah himself: "Those who opposed him in any shape or form were ridiculed and ostracized by the community. They were labeled as 'enemies of Mandingo progress.'" [P. 144] He writes further, "Alhaji Kromah, just like many African leaders, found it difficult to resist the temptation of being dictatorial because people were

paying too much homage to him.”[P. 144].

The author does a fantastic job of bringing alive the political and military struggles that led to the dethronement of a government and how different individuals and groups manipulated others to fill the existing political vacuum. Innocent citizens were victimized as ambitious and sometimes vicious leaders sought to fulfill their own ambitions. Things fell apart as the self-destructive tendencies of warlords and their teams of blind and loyal supporters placed the welfare of the general citizenry below their personal agendas. What would follow could only be described as Liberia’s darkest days.

The narrative craftily weaves the stories of a young man, his people and country. He takes the reader on a fantastic journey in this memoir. He brings history to bear witness as he narrates his genealogy as far as three to four generations deep. If it is one thing that he establishes, it is that he knows his roots and is proud of his ancestry.

But it is not enough; he loves his country too and it pains him to see it falling apart as general anarchy replaces the rule of law. As the chaos sets in, the young man dreams on.

Through mere luck, as if sanctioned by destiny, the young Konneh gets an opportunity to leave Liberia and travel to the United States. Konneh’s fascinating journey takes him from a wayward corner of Liberia, in Saclepea, Nimba County, to the capital city, Monrovia, and other parts of Africa. But the journey does not stop there; he travels the continents in an admirable way. What propels and sustains him is pure determination and optimism. He is determined to survive, to succeed, and to tell his story.

This is his story. It is not the typical Liberian story. The typical Liberian story is told from a Eurocentric point of view with Western names and a Christian sensibility. Konneh is a proud Muslim and a Mandingo, but his story is just as relevant as any other Liberian story. He must be praised for having the courage to tell his story and the pride to claim his heritage.

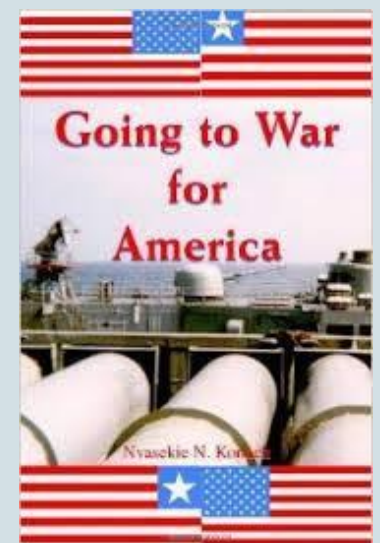
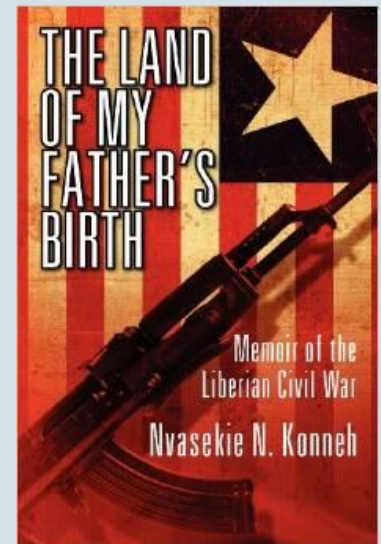
The recently deceased icon of African literature, Chinua Achebe, once said, “There is that great proverb --- that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” Achebe went on to say that storytelling “is something we have to do, so that the story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail --- the bravery, even of the lions.”

Nvasekie Konneh has now become that storyteller who has vowed to give us another perspective. We have an obligation to listen and take heed. His story has relevance. As the late Liberian journalist, Tom Kamara, was fond of saying, “This too is Liberia.” His story is a new Liberian story that has many facets. It is sad, cruel, challenging, liberating, and in the end, it is both refreshing and triumphant. I recommend it without hesitation because it is like a breath of fresh air in a stale environment.

The Land of My Father’s Birth: Memoir of the Liberian Civil War
by **Nvasekie N. Konneh.**
Philadelphia: Royal House Communications Consortium,
2013. 243 pages
Reviewed by
Theodore T. Hodge.



Nvasekie N. Konneh is the author of the following books:



The Order of the Pioneers of Liberia

D. Othniel Forte



Ribbon- there are three equal stripes of blue, red and blue respectively.



Medal/Insignia



Large nine-pointed white enamel and silver-gilt star, the arms with a gilt central line and two shorter gilt lines, with gilt rays between the arms on each of which is imposed a five-pointed pale blue star, on circular gilt laurel wreath suspension with loop for neck ribbon bearing a silver hallmark and maker's mark.

HERE'. In the center of this blue ring are the nicely designed intertwined letters "RL"(Republic of Liberian).



On the reverse, is a circular central gilt medallion bearing an allegorical female figure reaching for a radiant star within a red enamel ring inscribed in gilt letters 'LIGHT IN DARKNESS'.

The height, excluding the suspension loop, is 94.23mm (3.7 inches), diameter 57.25mm (2.25 inches).



.....###.....

The Order was instituted in 1920 under the Presidency of Charles Dunbar Burgess King to be awarded to both Liberian citizens and foreigners for distinguished service to the Republic of Liberia or to Africa in Literature, the Arts or Science, Public service. It is a spectacular example of rare order.

Degrees of the Order

The Order of the Star of Africa is awarded in five (5) grades or classes, which are:

1. Grand Cross
2. Grand Commander
3. Commander
4. Officer
5. Chevalier

On the obverse side of the medallion, is a blue circular central gilt medallion. Inscribed within a pale blue enamel ring in gilt letters are the words, 'THE LOVE OF LIBERTY BROUGHT US



Author Interview Spotlight 2



How did you come to know about/live in Liberia? When was your first contact?

I was only generally familiar with Liberia before a friend told me about a group of freed slaves from his ancestral Mississippi plantation who had immigrated to the freed-slave colony known as Mississippi in Africa two decades before the American civil war. No one seemed to know what had happened to the emigrants in the 150 years since, so I began researching the subject in the late 1990s and eventually decided to travel to Liberia to see what I could find out. I repeatedly postponed my trip due to the civil war, but in late 2000, when it was obvious that the fighting wasn't going to end any time soon, I decided to just bite the bullet and go. I flew to Monrovia in January 2001.

How was life like? What were some of the cultural shocks? Does any specific one come to mind?

I'm not a conflict journalist, and I was fearful of traveling to Liberia, having heard so many

sensational horror stories about the war. I knew no one there, and wondered how I'd be received, whether I'd be able to find the people I was looking for in a war zone, and whether I'd get caught up in the bloodshed or imprisoned by the Taylor government, as many journalists had been.

Monrovia was in a very bad state, with no electricity except in buildings with generators, and no phones. Refugees were squatting in bombed-out buildings. Given that I had never been in a war zone, I was shocked by the conditions I observed, but I was also surprised by the warmth of the people I met. Most of my concerns, aside from those relating to the Taylor government, proved unfounded. It helped that the fighting was at that point perhaps 100 miles away. Still, to see families of refugees suffering the way they were, cooking over small fires in the ruins of roofless buildings, yet singing together is something I will never forget.

How did you adjust/cope with things? The people, culture, attitude colloquia etc.?

I was fortunate that an American with whom I'd established contact during my research, John Singler, put me in touch with Jefferson Kanmoh, who later became a member of Liberia's parliament, as well as a family in Monrovia, the Raileys, whose ancestors had immigrated there from Mississippi. John

had arranged for Jefferson and one of the Railey brothers to meet me at Roberts Field. Jefferson would later introduce me to other people who helped me locate descendants of the freed slaves from the Mississippi plantation, which was named Prospect Hill, and he offered valuable insight into the history of Liberia. The Railey brothers - Edward, Augustus and Kaiser - accompanied me everywhere I went, introduced me to people and made sure I was safe. By having access to this group of people, I was able to accomplish what I set out to do, which was to find the descendants of the freed slaves from Prospect Hill and learn their stories.

I was nonetheless very wary of the government, and I knew that if Taylor decided I was a threat, no one in Liberia would likely be able to protect me, particularly if I was out range of communication with the American embassy. Initially, I stayed at the Mamba Point Hotel, but later moved to St. Teresa's convent and school, where at night I could hear men chanting in the nearby prison. I very much did not want to end up in that prison, and at one point, I was called to the U.S.

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embassy and told that Taylor was suspicious about why I was in Liberia, that he thought I was some sort of spy, so my wariness grew. But in the end, everything worked out OK.

Who is your favorite Liberian author[s] and what strikes you about their work[s]?

Most of my reading about Liberia has been works of nonfiction, including reports by journalists and historical accounts and records. My knowledge of contemporary Liberian literature is limited.

One book does stand out, though: Helene Cooper's *The House at Sugar Beach*, which I read after I had published my own book, and which I particularly enjoyed because it offered vivid personal accounts of the kinds of lives I had glimpsed during my time in Liberia.

Have you collaborated with a Liberian author before on a project? If so which project?

I have not.

Have you considered/would you like to work with Liberian authors?

What possible areas would you consider collaborating on?

I'd be most interested in the overlap of American and Liberian history and culture, such as the stories of related families in the two Mississippis - the U.S. state and the region of Sinoe County by that name.

What books have most influenced your life/career most?

Oddly enough, considering that I write nonfiction, the books that have most influenced me are fiction, including, in particular, William Faulkner, a fellow Mississippians whose novels focus on the complex world of the American South. I'm also a big fan of novelists Walker Percy and George Saunders. In the nonfiction realm, I've been greatly influenced by Sebastian Junger's *The Perfect Storm* and *War* and Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* and *Into Thin Air*.

If you had to choose, which writer would you consider a mentor?

Though I've never thought of him as a mentor, Sebastian Junger would come closest to that role. When I was preparing to travel to Liberia, I had no idea how to prepare for the chaos of a war zone, and because he had recently written about the civil war in Sierra Leone, I thought he might have some insight into Liberia. I contacted him out of the blue (we'd never met), and he offered some nuts-and-bolts advice and asked me to give him a call after I returned from Liberia, to tell him how things went. At that time, I had no literary agent or publisher, and he very graciously referred me to his agent, who subsequently found a publisher for *Mississippi in Africa*. Years later, when I was working on *Here I Am*, a biography of the

late war photographer Tim Hetherington, who I had met through Sebastian, he provided me with a great deal of information that he'd compiled while working on his own documentary film about Tim, *Which Way is the Front Line from Here?* Both my book and Sebastian's film (which were released simultaneously) have significant segments devoted to Liberia, where Tim worked as a photographer, videographer and writer, and who spent far more time there than I or Sebastian did. I would include Tim's *Long Story Bit by Bit*, about his time there, among my favorite books about Liberia.

Do you recall how your interest in writing originated?

I come from a family of storytellers, which is true of many people in the American South, and I was also an avid reader from a very young age. I began to write in high school, and to consider writing as a profession soon after. I don't think there was really a moment where I decided I was going to be a writer, but the novel *Look Homeward Angel*, by Thomas Wolfe, which I read in high school, showed me how the kinds of stories I'd been hearing all my life could be developed into an important written narrative.

Do you have a specific writing style?

I try to keep myself in the background as much as possible. Sometimes that's not possible, because the action of the book may be influenced by

my presence - by what the people in the book think about me, for example. And sometimes you just become part of the story, whether by choice or not. If there's any guiding force behind my writing, it's the desire to find things out, and to see an otherwise incomplete story through to its end. That is one of the things that led me to write *Mississippi in Africa*: I couldn't imagine not knowing the rest of the story about the freed slaves from Prospect Hill. What had happened to them? Once I found out, I needed to share that story with a larger audience.

How do you develop your plots and characters?

Because I write nonfiction, my books don't have a "plot" in the way novels do. It's more of a narrative arc. I don't have a set way of structuring my books; generally, the structure is dictated by the subject matter, though they tend to be organized chronologically. The characters themselves are, of course, real, so their development comes from my own observations, their comments and personal histories, etc.

Tell us about your protagonist[s]/antagonist[s]? Did you draw from real people?

Because all of the characters in my books are real people, I tend to leave it to the reader to decide who is a protagonist or antagonist, though obviously I have my own ideas about that. It all comes down to whether a

person's actions are ultimately positive or negative.

What inspired you to write Here I Am and Mississippi in Africa?

I was inspired to write *Here I Am* because I knew Tim, and Sebastian was producing and directing his documentary film about him. It seemed logical that there should also be a book about Tim's amazing life.

The inspiration for *Mississippi in Africa* came from hearing the story about that group of freed slaves who were freed from Prospect Hill to immigrate to Liberia in the 1840s. The plantation owner, whose name was Isaac Ross, had written in his will that his plantation should be sold and the money used to pay the way of those of his slaves who chose to immigrate to Liberia. An heir contested the will and it was tied up in court for a decade.

The heirs were divided over the "repatriation," with some being for and some against it. Then there were slaves who chose not to immigrate and therefore remained slaves until the American civil war, which abolished slavery in the U.S. And there was that unfinished story (unfinished on our side of the Atlantic, at least) of the emigrants to Liberia.

So I decided to tell the story through the vantage points of all those different groups.

How did you come up with the title? Why that one?

The original colony in Sinoe County was called Mississippi in Africa, and the name seemed to sum up the story well.

How much of the book is realistic?

It's nonfiction, so to the best of my knowledge, it's true.

Are experiences based on someone you know, or events in your own life?

Yes, both.

What was the hardest part of writing this book?

Surprisingly, the hard part was not finding the descendants of the Prospect Hill emigrants in Liberia, though that certainly presented many challenges. Finding the descendants of the slaves who chose not to immigrate was in some ways equally difficult because there were so few records and because some of the black Mississippians who had information were wary of my personal agenda, because I'm white. White people have historically written history in the U.S., typically from their own perspective, which has often distorted the lives of black people.

So I think it was natural that there would be concern about whether I would truly be inclusive of everyone's perspective. Eventually I was able to convince people that I wanted to tell the whole story, not just one version of it, and members of all the groups participated in the book.

What was your favorite chapter (or part) to write and why?

Because I'm a journalist, not a historian, I most enjoyed writing the sections of the book

that were about contemporary people's lives, both in Mississippi and in Liberia. In those cases, I had the opportunity to see things with my own eyes and ask questions of living people.

Would you change anything in your book[s]? What and why?

You always find things out after you publish a book that you realize would have been nice to know when you were writing it. For example, there was a reunion at Prospect Hill several years after *Mississippi in Africa* was published which was attended by representatives of all the groups whose stories were related to the plantation - both sides of the former slaveholding family, descendants of the slaves who stayed, and Liberians whose ancestors immigrated to Sinoe County.

That would have been a nice scene to include in the book. Otherwise, I'd hoped that after the book came out I'd find out what happened to one character who played an important role, who was allowed to immigrate from Prospect Hill to the American North when the others immigrated to Liberia.

His name was Enoch Ross. I thought perhaps someone would hear about the book and tell me what had happened to him and his descendants, but that didn't happen.

Is there anything you find particularly challenging in your writing?

Convincing my publisher that a book idea is good is always the biggest challenge. Book sales are declining, and publishers are very skittish about what they publish now. They're all trying to anticipate what books will be huge bestsellers, and they're less inclined to take risks. So it's harder to sell an idea, simply because it's harder today to sell books in general. Aside from that, I actually like the challenges of researching and writing the book, of tracking down information, getting people to open up, and synthesizing all this information into a cohesive narrative.

Do you have to travel much concerning your book(s)?

Yes. A writer has to go where the action takes place. My books have taken me all over the U.S., as well as to Liberia and Libya.

Who designed the covers?

In each case, it was either the publisher or a designer working under contract with them. There have been three covers of *Mississippi in Africa*, which was my second book, and in all honesty I didn't care for any of them. I didn't feel they truly illustrated the story I was trying to tell.

The first cover, designed by the art department at my original publisher, Penguin-Putnam, was a stock photo that depicted a group of unidentified American slaves. There were no photos of the Prospect Hill slaves, and to use a generic photo of slaves seemed

unacceptable to me because these people were not directly relevant to the story. I'd have preferred a photo that illustrated something specific to Mississippi in Africa, such as the ruins of settler houses in Sinoe County. Unfortunately, I lost that battle. When the book was reprinted my publisher used a different photo, this one of a man's foot bound by chains.

It was a more interesting cover, but still did not seem illustrative of the story. When University Press of Mississippi reprinted the book with its own cover, also designed by its art department, they relied upon another generic photo.

The biggest problem I faced in this regard was the lack of photos that were specific to my story. My own photos were not of sufficient quality - I'm not a photographer by trade. Then there was the issue of the publishers' agendas, including their ideas about what they thought would attract the most attention to the book, and who their target audience was.



Of my four other nonfiction books, the cover of the first, a photography book published by University Press of Mississippi called *Ten Point*, incorporated

one of the photos from the book, which made sense. I was happy with that cover.

The cover of my third book, *Sultana*, was designed by the publisher, HarperCollins, and to me it seemed to reduce the story to a stereotype.

Again, I lost the battle with my publisher over that one (some publishers are respectful of the author's ideas about the covers of their books; others disregard them, which is what HarperCollins did in the case of *Sultana*).

The cover of my fourth book, *We're With Nobody*, was designed by an outside contractor for HarperCollins, and I was happy with it.

Likewise, the cover of *Here I Am*, published by Grove, was in my opinion a perfect illustration of the story. There was no way you could see that cover and not want to pick up the book, and it was relevant to the story itself.

What was the hardest part of writing your book?

With *Mississippi in Africa* it was finding the descendants. In addition to the challenges I've already described about finding the slave descendants in Mississippi, most of the historical records in Liberia had been destroyed, and because there were no phones and getting around the country was not easy, I spent a lot of time on foot, knocking on doors.

Do you have any advice for other writers?

The first piece of advice is not to be daunted by today's difficult publishing environment. If you have trouble getting a publisher to commit to a book that you feel very strongly about, go ahead and write it anyway, if you can, without having a publishing contract. The odds are, if the story is good and you feel very strongly about it, the results will be marketable.

Beyond that, my advice is to be true to the subjects of your book. Too often writers go into a book project with an idea and then try to make the various characters fit a preconceived mold. You have to be open to the truth, even if it's different from what you envisioned starting out.

Do you consider writing as a career/hobby?

I consider writing a career, though I do other things - mostly research projects - to augment my books and other writing assignments.

What book[s] are you reading now?

I'm reading a book called *Empire of the Summer Moon*, by S.C. Gwynne, about the last of the Comanche Indians on the American frontier. It's one of the most interesting nonfiction books I've ever read. I'm also reading a novel by Miranda July called *The First Bad Man*.

Are there any new authors that have grasped your interest?

I read so many books, I don't usually pay much attention to what's "new." Sometimes it's a new book by an established writer, sometimes it's new to me because I haven't read the writer before, sometimes it's actually a new writer, and sometimes it's a classic.

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

I'm negotiating to sell the film and TV rights to three of my books, including *Mississippi in Africa*. It's hard to say, at this stage, if any of the projects will come to fruition, but I'm optimistic.

The producer involved in the negotiations for *Mississippi in Africa* originally proposed a feature film, but in my opinion it would work better as what's known as a limited TV series (similar to what was once called a miniseries).

It would enable the telling of the saga all the way through, encompassing all the characters and events across two centuries and two continents. Due to the time constraints, a movie would necessarily have to focus on only one segment of the story.

What are your current projects?

Lately I've been working on magazine and web articles and editing books.

I just finished co-editing (and writing parts of) a book about racial integration at my Mississippi high school in the 1970s, titled *Lines Were Drawn*, which will come out in 2016. I'm also working on proposals for a couple of other books, though I don't yet know which one I'll settle on.

Can you share a little of your current work with us?

I can provide links to a few recent articles, but not from the ongoing book or from articles that have not yet been published.

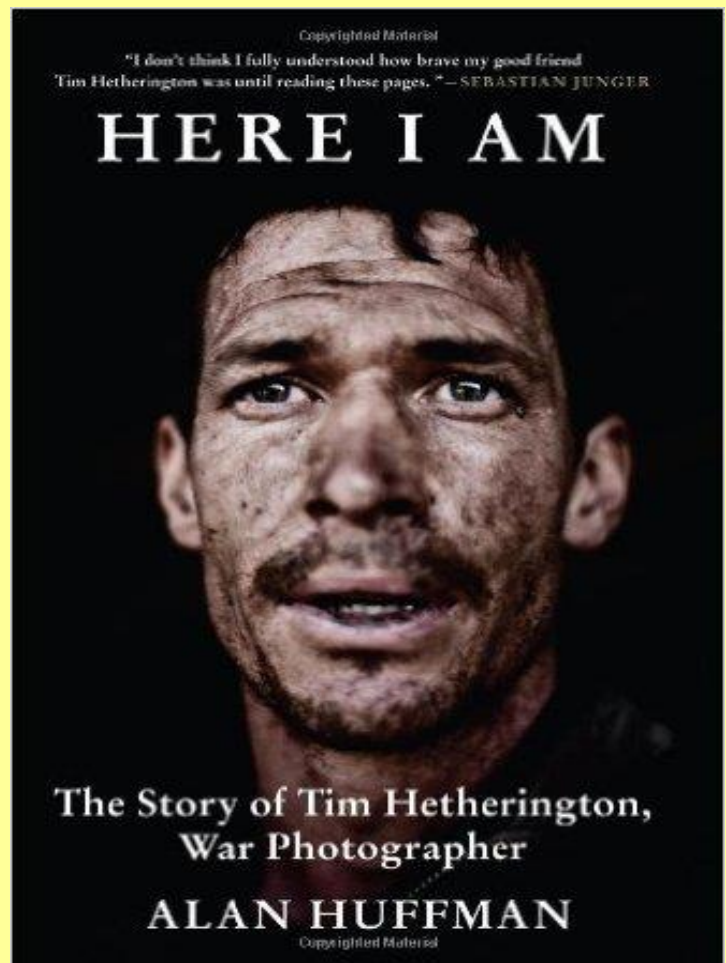
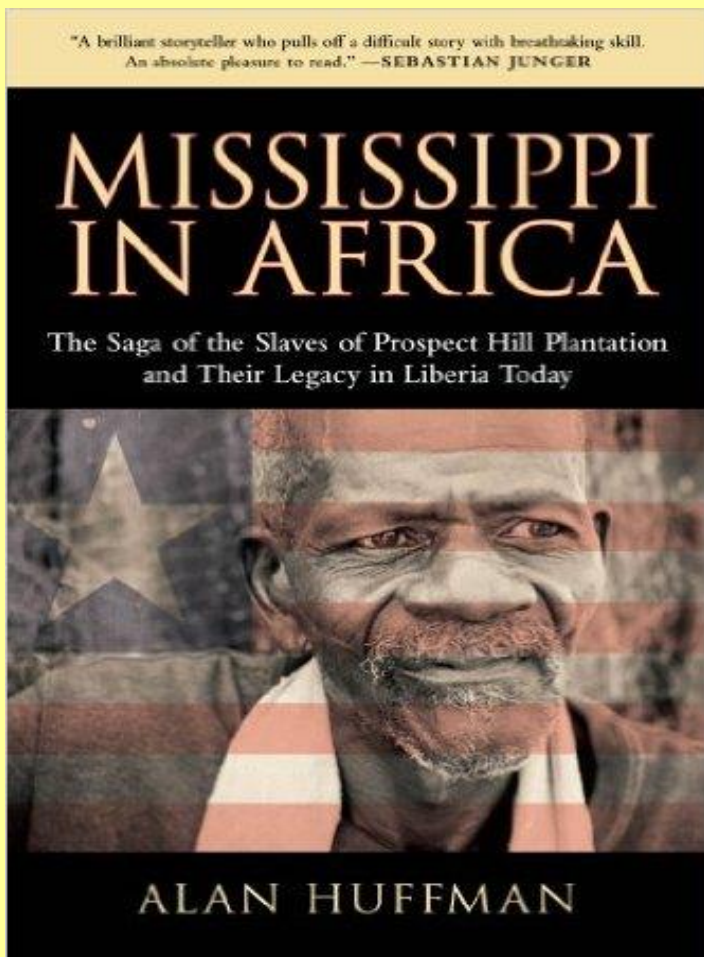
Do you have anything specific that you want to say to your readers?

In a place like Liberia, there is a greater likelihood that a person's life has included significant drama, given the country's history during the last two decades.

Tragic as that history has been, it offers amazing fodder for a writer. Great literature, like all great art forms, typically does not arise from comfortable situations. It usually results from some kind of conflict, whether it's an actual war or what William Faulkner described as the human heart

in conflict with itself. Mississippi, the U.S. state where I'm from, has arguably produced more great literature than any other state, and it's because its history and the lives of its individual people have tended to be embroiled in conflict.

Writing is a way to work through those things. Liberia has obviously had more than its share of conflict, and my hope is that writers will continue to use that raw material to create great literature. There are so many important stories waiting to be told.



Kuluba's Korner

Hi Everyone! Welcome to Kuluba's Korner.

My passion for the Arts, Writing, Empowering and Motivating is who I am. While I am not an Advice Columnist...I hope you're enlightened and at times, simply put your feet up and chuckle or may we be forced to THINK!!!.

In this corner, the shift is not to scare you, but to endear or cheer you up. When necessary, we'll make wakeup calls; offer up advice to enhance our lives or enable us to become an extension of ourselves in service to others.

However, since I believe in the brutal honesty of truth [as I see it], I might just step on some toes. In such case, just remember, it is in good faith and not intended to offend. The underlining hope is to help make this world a better place using social media. Since I believe social network is a wonderful medium to inspire. I'm going to try and do just that.

Enjoy the ride. ~ KLM



I THINK I
THINK TOO
MUCH.



... I'LL LET THIS MARINATE.

Every man or woman you have sex with deposits and leaves a part of their soul in you. Most of us haven't been properly educated about sex. It is almost a taboo to discuss these things outside of private matters but the silence leads to lack of awareness of what it even is. I mean it is the most powerful force that creates life. Most see it as a physical experience but forget the bond, the connection, energy exchange and deep cellular one experiences with their partner. When a man or woman decides to have multiple sex partners, it can send mixed emotional signals to the body's vibration system. People must be careful of different energies and spiritual forces polluting their internal temple. Sex is referred to as sexual INTER-COURSE because it's an internal course that unites man and woman, mind and mind, spirit and spirit. This is something that a condom can't protect you against because energy is behind the elements of all flesh. On a physical level, we have been educated to use "protection" but on an energy level nobody discusses the effects it creates on one's mind and soul. It is too much of a taboo and hidden away to avoid. Be one aware of what is going on, even if you've never heard before, just ponder on it.

Just "K" *_By Kuluba Mucorlor*

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Liberian Literary Magazine
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**Vanguard Student
Unification Party (SUP)
University of Liberia
Capitol Hill, Monrovia,
Press Release**

PRESS RELEASE

Comrades and friends of revolutionary and political prowess, sons and daughters of underprivileged and marginalized citizens of our country, militants, cadres and intellectual paragons, we bring you warm revolutionary greetings from the oasis of intellectual and political consciousness of Africa's oldest mass-based political movement, the Vanguard Student Unification Party.

In acquiescence with our historical and traditional mandate to protect the overwhelming interest of thousands of students across Liberia and the public in general, we are disappointingly dismayed to have ascertained that the Administration of the University of Liberia has embarked on a disingenuous and unproductive journey to unjustifiably increase tuition and fees at the detriment of struggling students. The Vanguard Student Unification Party (SUP) categorically rebukes, rejects, and resists any increment and would inexorably battle such devilish attempt, which has the inclination to depopulate the University. Let it be known that the University of Liberia which was solely established through an Act of Legislation to train men and women, is predominantly a public funded institution, especially to protect the weak.

The pitiless intent by UL Administration to increase tuition from L\$175.00 per credit to US\$

5.00 per credit and transportation fare from L\$30.00 to L\$100.00 does not only amount to wickedness, but it is also a canny and crafty scheme to discourage and dampen the academic progress of over 36,000 students currently attending the University of Liberia. The Vanguard Student Unification Party completely frowns on the insensitivity of this government to transform the nation's highest institution of tertiary education.

The deliberate and indiscreet action of national government to shockingly neglect its statutory responsibility by appropriating US\$15 million to UL this fiscal year, even though a minimum of US\$29 million was requested, projects the unwillingness of this regime to standardize academic programs and ensure quality education at the University of Liberia. Let it be categorically known that the real motive of Madam Sirleaf and her cronies is to intentionally strangulate the advancement and enlightenment of thousands of Liberian students at the University of Liberia.

As a means of justifying her unusual proclamation that 'education is a mess', her administration continues to underfund the University amidst harsh economic realities. This ill-omened and hapless tactic to portray a weak and dark cloud over the educational system in Liberia is a clever technique of paving a better future for their children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, cousins, friends, and confidants who are currently acquiring quality education in the USA and other parts of the Diaspora to return and economically enslave our people.

On May 11, 2015, the Vanguard Student Unification Party officially wrote a communiqué to the National Legislature justifiably

requesting members of this body to increase the budgetary allotment of the University of Liberia from US\$15 million to at least US\$20 million. Disappointingly, unpatriotic legislators overtly ignored this genuine proposal and went ahead to increase their own salaries, incentives, and benefits. Judging from existing realities, the National Legislature has become a self-seeking political theater of crooks and cronies only interested in amassing wealth at the detriment of ordinary citizens. How can quality education emerge in Liberia when Lawmakers are viciously using over US\$40,000 just to purchase a vehicle, while students at UL struggle to obtain scholarships every semester? This bald-faced and blatant thoughtlessness is unbecoming and unacceptable! It is a complete mockery for 36,000 students at UL to be given just US\$15 million as budgetary appropriation while 800 students at Tubman University are receiving US\$6 million.

SUP believes that a prosperous and great nation is only possible when adequate resources are made available to promote quality education. What is big about providing US\$29 million to enhance quality tertiary education for over 36,000 Liberian students when our current national budget totals US\$622,743,420 as opposed to just US\$80,000,000 in 2005? The Administration of UL needs to be bold with national government that US\$15 million is very insufficient to run the University. The Student Unification Party (SUP) is justifiably opposing increment in tuition and fees at UL for the following reasons:

1. Over 80% of students attending UL struggle every semester to obtain scholarships and financial aid from donors, philanthropists, and humanitarians.

2. There are no concrete achievements to display after increasing tuition and fees in past years. The learning environment still remains hostile. Access to modern facilities such as libraries, science laboratories, research and resource centers, computer labs, internet, pipe-born water, clinic, cafeteria, pit latrines, infrastructures, and logistics is lacking.
3. Access to student loan, financial assistance, grant, and subsidy is totally invisible while the **Student Loan Bill** lies in limbo at the National Legislature.
4. Internship and vacation jobs for students are unavailable.
5. Vast majority of the students studying at UL are jobless and self-supported, while the cost of living remains very high couple with hyperinflation, underpayment of civil servants, low household income and acute poverty.
6. The intentional and insensitive nature of national government to continuously underfund UL even though key State actors are pretentiously questing for educational reform.
7. UL Administration and GoL are not employing appropriate strategies to ensure Concession Companies settle their liabilities with the University, which is in accordance with the Mineral Development Agreement (MDA). Multi-billion companies in Liberia currently owe UL huge sum of US dollars.
8. Most students have been economically robbed due to the hard-hitting impact of the Ebola Virus Disease.
9. Education is not a privilege, but a fundamental right according to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights and Article 15(b) of the Liberian Constitution.

10. Even if tuition is increased to US\$5.00 per credit, which is not possible, it still does not address existing academic predicaments at UL. The administration will only generate US\$2,250,000 from 30,000 active students at an average of 15 credits. Who provides the remaining US\$11,750,000?
11. The University of Liberia was never established for profiteering or profit maximization. According to its Charter, it is not a revenue generating entity, but a public institution solely established to contribute to national development by providing quality tertiary education.

The highest form of injustice is for 36,000 students and almost 2000 staffers at UL to receive US\$15,000,000 per annum while a single Pro Tempore's office receives US\$1,483,784 and a single Speaker's office receives US\$974,654 per annum. Why must the Ministry of Finance that comprises of about 1,000 employees receive US\$82 million and the State-run University lies in ruin due to budgetary constraints? Are we really serious about promoting quality education? How can our nation produce great doctors, engineers, scientists, agriculturists, financial experts, economists, entrepreneurs, business tycoons, lawyers, public health specialists, and other professionals when the foremost refinery of higher education in Liberia is retrogressing each day due to budgetary challenges? SUP understands that President Sirleaf now uses a bulletproof hummer jeep while thousands of students

are struggling every day to acquire quality education.

As a means of addressing visible and surmounting challenges at UL, SUP hereby recommends a **National Consultative Dialogue and Stakeholder Conference on Tertiary Education** in order to brainstorm and engender a genuine and lasting framework or resolution to ensure quality education at the University of Liberia and other private institutions. SUP assures all students that a penny will not be added on the L\$175.00 per credit. We are ever ready to stand tall against this sinister agenda. However, if the University of Liberia ever shuts down as a result of our resistance to this glaring injustice and the inability of this government to reasonably fund academic programs, it means the Legislature and probably the Foreign and Finance Ministries will shut down as well. This will be the beginning of a new revolution. The 36,000 students can no longer be deprived of their rights! Their determination to redefine their destiny and reshape a nation of equality and justice for ALL must not be taken for granted. The wind of change is gradually blowing and the **Student Unification Party** is leading this process of inclusive change!

It is often said in Swahili "ushindi juu ya watesi wetu ni baadhi ya" meaning "victory over our oppressors is certain". In the cause of social justice and academic freedom, the struggle remains unabated. Long live SUP, long live all SUPISTS, long live the masses agenda, long live massesocracy, long live the Liberian people. SUP will never die...

Done and issued on this 28th Day of August A.D. 2015 by the mandate of the Central Committee and Politburo concomitantly.

In House Poet

Scars of A Tired Nation

What more can a country take?
Stories of children that can't live
in peace
Treating each other like
strangers from afar
The sons returning and the ones
they met
Fighting for a space left by Mama

1980-panic splashed upon the
face of Africa's oldest child
Bringing down the walls a century
high
Building another 100ft higher
Shaking to shreds young old
mama
Promising her a lie to leave her
alone

In House Poet

What a tired country she has
become
Standing alone on a continent she
blossomed
Left alone by countries she led to
Independence
A troubled house is always lonely
Such a land she stands to be
Her place in history forgotten by
men of time
Left to maggots and bugs to chew
And spit into history's shredder
Her prints erased from the
archives of Africa's glossary
And left to wander- gathering
crumbs
Couldn't her sons keep her diary?
Of how generous a home she had
Giving a shelter for Africa's
neglected

In House Poet

Spewing hope into a lifeless
continent
Doomed by colonialism and
whisked by fear
She went in shock and comatose
For 14 years her eyes couldn't
blink nor wink
Only ears of thunder and terror
With a sigh of relief to live again
Her candle is lit in a
thunderstorm
The scars of a tired nation are
eating up again
The face of EBOLA shatters the
dream
To put together a wretched
lonely life
Could this scar flip into a star?
And shine forever?



**Lekpele M. Nyamalon, is a gem.
He has talent and we are proud of in many ways.
He is an up-and-coming writer and poet who had
started a village-writing program entitled
"The Moonlight Series".**



Kiru Taye is an award-winning romance author and founding member of Romance Writers of West Africa. Her sensual stories about Africans falling in love will leave you breathless. When she's not writing she's immersed in a good book or taking care of her young family. She lives in England, UK.

CONNECT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Website

<http://www.kirutaye.com>

Blog

<http://kirutayewrites.blogspot.co>

m

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<https://twitter.com/#!/KiruTaye>

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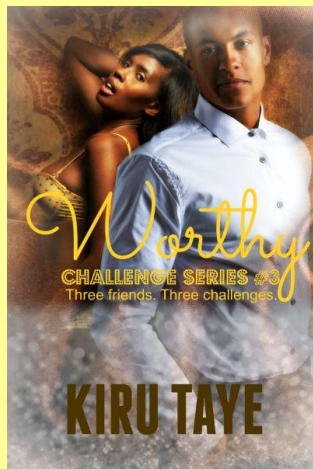
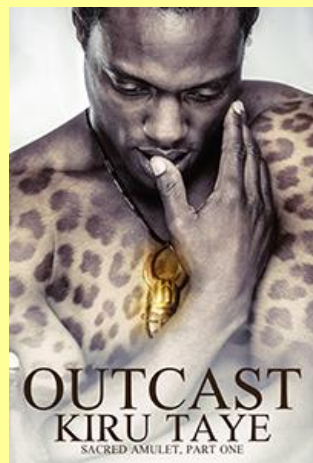
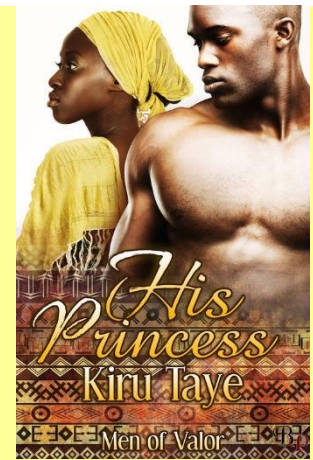
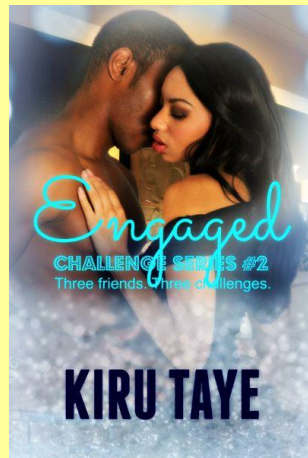
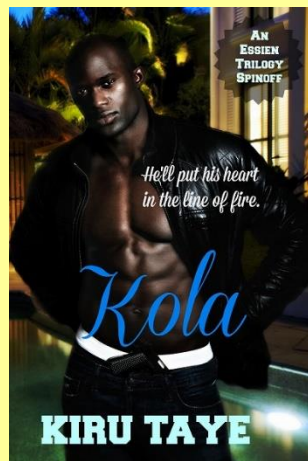
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Pinterest

<http://pinterest.com/kirutaye/>

Goodreads

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5242699.Kiru_Taye



Author Interview 3



LLM interviewed one of the most promising and successful African romance writer Kiru Taye

Tell us a little about you- childhood, education, upbringing etc.

I was born in Nigeria, the first of five siblings. My dad was an engineer and my mum a nurse. I grew up in Enugu which is a city in the south east of the country. I have fond memories of my childhood although I grew in a Nigeria plagued with military coups, austerity measures and 'war against indiscipline.'

What are two things your fans don't know about you that you feel comfortable sharing? LOL. If my fans don't already know it, then it's best left unshared.

Are you a big picture or detail-oriented person?

I'm good at straddling both, especially as a hybrid author, where I have to deal with developing long term goals as well as executing certain publishing details myself.

Also in my old life in the corporate world as a project manager, I was the bridge between the strategists and the developers. So yes, I can do blue-sky thinking as well as get my hands dirty with the nitty gritty.

How would your friends describe you?

Generous. Loyal. Kind. Dependable. I hope, anyway.

What books have most influenced your life/career most?

I get this question a lot and honestly, it's a tough one because I read so many books and every great book I've read has left an impact on me one way or the other.

If you had to choose, which writer would you consider a mentor?

Well, let me tell you the author I'd loved to meet if I had the chance, Buchi Emecheta. In my 20s I read all her books that I could get hold of. She wrote about women's issues in a way that I hadn't seen before then. So I admire her as a person.



Do you recall how your interest in writing originated?

Yes. I remember reading a romance novel and thinking, "Why are there no novels about

Africans falling in love? Why do the characters mostly have translucent skin, blue eyes and blonde hair?" I decided then to write about Africans falling in love.

Do you have a specific writing style?

If there's one word I can use to describe my writing voice it is 'Passionate'. My descriptions tend to be sensual and I use a mix of informal and formal words depending on the story.

How do you develop your plots and characters?

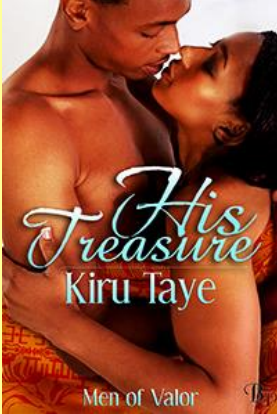
I'm one of those writers described as 'pantsers' who write by-the-seats-of-their-pants. LOL. My stories are character-driven and I basically write scene-by-scene, chapter-by-chapter. I don't know the full story until I complete the first draft of the manuscript.

It's probably hard for 'plotters' to understand writing without a plot outline but I do. LOL I basically get a glimpse of a character or a scene and as I write it just flows out. Does that make sense?

Tell us about your protagonist[s]/antagonist[s]? Did you draw from real people?

Yes and no. There's always going to be an element of real life in the stories otherwise the readers won't relate but the characters and stories are always a figment of my imagination.

What inspired you to write your first book?



My first published book is *His Treasure*, a historical romance novella set in Nigeria. I don't think anything in particular inspired it but I wanted to write a story about Africans being romantic before the white man introduced his own version of romance.

How did you come up with the title? Why that one?

The title came from the character's name, Adaku. Her husband used the pet name, aku m, which translates to my treasure. Hence the title, *His Treasure*. Genius, right? LOL

How much of the book is realistic?

As I said my stories are a figment of my imagination. Moreover, this story is set in a time before my grandparents were born, so it's based on anecdotes told by my grandparents. How much of it is realistic? I'll let the reader decide.

Are other experiences based on someone you know, or events in your own life?
See above.

What was the hardest part of writing this book?

Creating scenes about things that happened before my lifetime.

What was your favorite chapter (or part) to write and why?

There's a scene where Obinna is watching his wife sleep. As a reader, you connect with his internal as well a physical conflict in that scene. Loved writing it.



Would you change anything in your book[s]? What and why?

It was one of the first stories I ever wrote so I'm sure if I read it critically I'll find things to change now.

Is there anything you find particularly challenging in your writing?

I'm learning everyday and I always want my writing to be the best it can be. I hope readers see the improvements with each new story.

Do you have to travel much [for research] concerning your book(s)?

With my laptop and a fast broadband internet connection, I can virtually travel to any country in the world to research anything I want.

Who designed the covers?

For the books released by a publisher, the publisher commissions the cover artist. For the books I self publish, I designed the covers myself.

What was the hardest part of writing your book? [What's the hardest part of writing in general?]

I have a young family and a toddler at home at the moment. The biggest challenge is finding a quiet moment to write, especially at the moment when the kids are on holiday from school.

Do you have any advice for other writers?

Read as much as possible. Find out what you love about your favorite books and retain those elements in your stories.

Do you consider writing as a career/hobby?

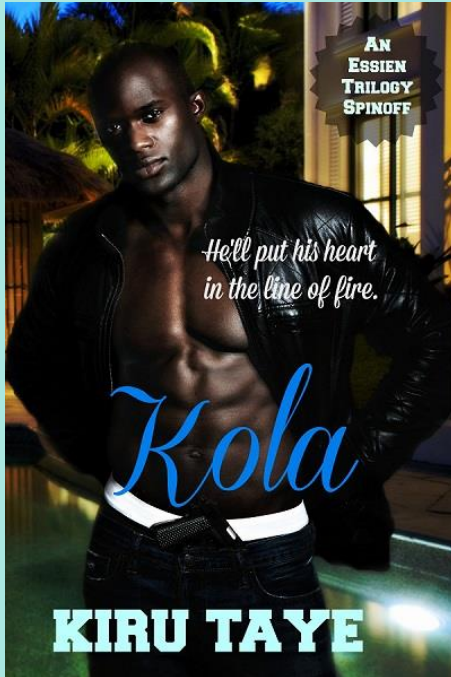
Writing is very much my career. I love writing stories and I'm earning a living from it, thanks to my wonderful readers.

What book[s] are you reading now? Are there any new authors that have grasped your interest?

I'm discovering new authors every day. You can check out Firi Kamson and Seun Odukoya.

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

The latest book is titled Kola, and is the 4th book of The Essiens, a contemporary series. Here is an overview of the series.



The Essiens are the kings of African finance. A close family, their father is the patriarch of a finance dynasty that ranges from retail to investment banking spanning the African continent. Yet all is not as it seems as the brothers—Felix, Mark, Tony and Kola—soon discover when their family is rocked by secrets and scandals. Blood ties or not, family is family.

To find out more, visit: <http://www.kirutaye.com/mybooks/books-series>

What are your current projects?

I'm currently working on a new book titled, Black Heart which is a paranormal romance novel due out in October 2015.

Can you share a little of your current work with us?

Here is the blurb from Black Heart

Cursed by an evil wizard to be scarred ugly during the day and a wanton sex addict at night, Rahma Bawa spends her life locked up in the palace hidden from sight, unwilling to make contact with men either during the day or night. When she is informed that she only has months to live, she swears she'd experience the one thing she's yearned for in a long time.

Idris Mustafa is a man on the edge of darkness. The leader of the Black Warriors and plagued by a horrible family history, he knows he can never choose a life partner. To do so will be to sentence the woman to death. Yet, the beautiful Princess Rahma sees beyond his dark heart, and he can't resist her.

Events are conspiring against them. There are others who need Rahma to achieve ultimate power and will do whatever it takes to have her. Will history repeat itself or can Idris and Rahma carve out a new destiny together?



Do you have anything specific that you want to say to your readers?

Thank you for reading this interview. I hope you will check out my books.

Lastly, have you read book[s] by [a] Liberian author[s]?

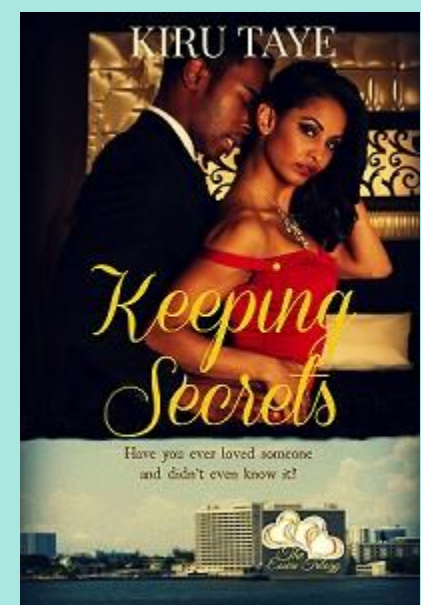
*I started reading 6 For A Dozen by D. Othniel Forte. He's Liberian, right? *smiles**

Have you read any book about Liberia in general?

I can't think of any specifically but I'm always open to recommendations.

Have you considered/would you like to work with Liberian authors? What possible areas would you consider collaborating on?

Of course. I'm currently interested in collaborating with other authors on an erotic thriller. So, if any Liberian authors are interested, they should contact me.



The Hunter's Might



It barely was the crack of dawn when the old cowbell rung. In the distance, out of the dewy and cool morning air, rose the booming voice of Kolubah Ndebe, the village town crier. Whatever it was that he was about to convey had to be particularly significant for it wasn't so often that the town crier was out this early. So the villagers, most of them still drowsy and heavy-eyed from nagging sleep urges, pinned their ears to the walls of their mud huts in rigid anticipation.

'Listen one, listen all! Listen well, people of *Gbagona*!' the town crier bellowed.

'By directive of the Great Fetish Priest Sowoi Zobo, all Poro men must report to the Red Square without delay,' he hollered.

By the time the town crier had gone halfway across the village, the message, it seemed, had taken hold for a gaggle of men, all with goatskin pouches

slung across their shoulders and sheathed machetes held firmly in their hands, were now gathered in the courtyard, at the hallowed gates of the Red Square. As the men stood outside the square's imposing fence, anxiously waiting on the gate to be swung open, they engaged in wild speculations on the reason the fetish priest may have summoned them in these early morning hours.

Had someone of prominence died in the chiefdom? Had the fetish priest finally decided on the date the next group of the village cadre of young men would be initiated into the Poro society? Was he about to take his next wife? As the group swelled in size, so also the men's chatter grew in intensity.

Suddenly, the cowbell rang again and, to much anticipation, the colossal wooden gate to the Red Square flung open. The fetish priest's fenced-in official residence, the Red Square was an arresting mud complex massively adorned in a variety of voodoo ornaments. Hanging conspicuously on the weather-beaten wooden gate was an array of amulets: antelope horns, puka shells, eagle feathers, and many more—all, obvious signs of the medicinal power that was thought to be resident in the compound. As inviting as the compound looked, it also was an unmistakably fear-inducing place.

Built on the village's northernmost outskirts, it sat in close proximity to the Poro bush—a forested part of the village parameters that was strictly off-limits to not only women, but also to men who

were, as yet, to join the male secret society.

The compound's external fencing, like the thatched-roof huts inside it, was fashioned out of considerably selected species of sticks and bamboos harvested from the *Gbagona* forest.

The chosen sticks and bamboos, before being craftily tied together with bush ropes and daubed with red earth to form the walls that would protect the priest, had been sculpted and sprinkled with special liquids containing powerful herbal extracts.

In single file, the men, upon the gate's opening, cautiously walked through it, anxious and worshipful at once. On stepping inside of the mud enclosure, each man bowed in ritualistic reverence to the sanctified grounds. Then, they walked past the main hut in which the fetish priest slept, and came to a stop at the roundabout, next to the open-air palaver hut that purposefully fronted the sacred bush.

Then, without further prompts, it dawned on them. They had been summoned to bear witness to something special. For sitting in the palaver hut, all by himself, was the land's most prolific hunter: the legendary, revered, and celebrated Janguba. He sat bare-chested in the middle of the palaver hut, his sandals—made of cooked rubber—off of his feet and neatly stashed under the bamboo bench upon which he sat.

From where the men stood, they clearly could see that the revered hunter had a long bush rope loosely tied around his

waist the other end of which was anchored to the supporting pillar planted in the middle of the hut. His single barrel hunting rifle, its nozzle wrapped with a dark brown talisman, was laid out before him, on a timeworn mat. To the initiated eye, that was more than sufficient clue. Most now knew why Janguba was being symbolically detained.

However, since the fetish priest had yet to announce it officially, no one dare say the hunter had taken a leopard. So, the crowd continued to chatter and wait, by then clearly in even greater awe of the greatest hunter their chieftom had ever seen.

‘He must have done it again!’ Gizzay, the village herbalist, exclaimed, neglecting, on purpose, to say what that ‘it’ really was.

As the men continued to chatter and speculate, Janguba pleasingly surveyed their faces, soaking in, with demonstrative satisfaction, every reaction of adulation he could glean. Known for his natural exuberance, he looked even more cheerful on this day. For the most part, in fact, he wore an ear-to-ear smile, unwittingly exposing his severely stained teeth—a byproduct of his habitual kola chewing ways. He was savoring the moment. So totally consumed he was by the focused attention he was commanding, that he cared less about showing off his severely discolored teeth for the whole village to see. Every now and then, he’d reach up underneath his chin to scratch his scruffy beard which he had dyed cherry red for the occasion.

As he continued to survey the crowd, Janguba’s eyes knowingly met those of several of the men in the gathering. Now fully aware of their intent gaze being undeniably transfixed upon him, he grabbed for his rug sac which lay next to him on the bamboo bench. With his right hand, he reached into it and took out a tiny bottle filled with finely smoldered tobacco. In a succession of several swift motions, he knocked the bottle against his left knee numerous times, methodically mixing its content. Then, he opened the bottle and emptied a bit of the snuff in his right palm. Slowly, he moved his right hand upward, toward his lips. With a rapid flick of his wrist, he dumped the pinch of snuff in his palm onto his tongue. His eyes widened with apparent satisfaction as he pursed his lips and suckled on the rush of nicotine that filled his mouth.

Then, the cowbell sounded again, this time, to signal the grand entrance of the fetish priest. The priest, as was expected, approached the eager crowd walking slowly, taking obviously rehearsed, deliberate steps. He was impeccably dressed for the occasion, sporting a flowing red robe with a matching skull cap. On his left shoulders, he carried an unusually large goatskin pouch that slung low to his hips; in his right hand, he held his trademark burnished cow tail.

Together, his over-the-top appearance and studied manner of walk made for a scene that was especially affecting to behold. His choreographed optics more than affirming, for

the gathered men, the measure of importance he attached to this early morning affair.

‘Great men of *Gbagona*,’ the fetish priest began, speaking in his patented gravelly voice.

When those first few words emerged forth from his lips, the horde of men fell instantaneously silent as if they had been paralyzed by the priest’s enchanted utterance.

‘I summoned you here this morning for a solemn purpose,’ the priest continued.

‘May the ancestors of our land guide and protect us all.’

‘Ameena!’ the men said in unison.

‘May our lips only speak the wishes of the ancestral spirits.’

‘Ameena!’ the men repeated.

The priest, with what seemed like a well-practiced swivel, turned slightly to his right and pointed toward the sacred hut where Janguba, a clear sense of expectation glaring on his face, sat.

‘As you can see, I have sitting there, a captive of the ancestors,’ he said.

‘Janguba has done grave harm to the spirits of our ancestors; he has, yet again, taken a lord of our sacred jungle.’

On hearing the official announcement, the crowd of men went into a wild frenzy.

‘Siengar yorrr -yor! Yoorr!’ The gathered men shrieked in unscripted unison as many of them broke into impromptu war dances. They swung their machetes above their heads, and took simulated jab-steps at each other. The fetish priest, well-versed in the way of these

things, allowed the brief moment of adulation, and then, he continued.

‘As ordained by our ancestral spirits, we must observe a three-day feast to cleanse our chieftdom and ask for the forgiveness of our forebears,’ he instructed.

On the high priest’s conclusion of his comments, and as he turned to take leave of the men, Ngobeh, the head of the council of Zoes, walked toward where Janguba sat. On reaching him, he took the end of the restraining rope that was anchored to the pillar. Thereupon, a group of twelve men—members of the chieftdom’s council of Zoes—followed Janguba as he led them deep into the heart of the forest where he had felled his latest leopard. With one end of the bush rope still tied around his waist and the other end in Ngobeh’s hands, Janguba and the group patiently traversed the narrow bush paths.

Soon, they came upon the dead beast. It lay at the base of a huge tree. Judging from how crumpled the thickets around it were and the many deep claw marks on the tree near which it laid, the leopard hadn’t expired immediately upon being shot. It must have, it appeared, fought for a long while as the lethal effects of the buckshot that had been exploded in its body sapped its energy, and, eventually, sucked out its life. Nonetheless, the men approached it with maximum caution.

‘Men of *Gbagona*,’ Ngobeh warned, ‘be extremely careful.’

In the chieftdom, leopards had a reputation for being

notoriously cunning animals. Legend had it, in fact, that once many moons before, a village man had been torn to shreds by a leopard in a similar circumstance as the men were now engaged.

The ill-fated village man, the story went, had approached the animal thinking that it was dead only to discover at the last moment that while gravely injured, the beast was still very much alive. Ever since then, the legend supposed, extra caution had been urged on the rare occasions when the chieftdom’s men had to undertake the dangerous mission of fetching a shot leopard.

‘It was the biggest male in these parts,’ Janguba eagerly volunteered.

‘It had to be for I have never seen one as huge,’ Ngobeh concurred.

From a safe distance, several of the men poked the fallen leopard with the sharpened end of long sticks they had prepared beforehand.

When they were sufficiently convinced that it indeed was dead, they descended upon it. They hoisted and tied the beast unto a plaited hammock-like pair of especially strong sticks.

Then, four men, at a time, two in the front and two at the rear, carried the dead animal out of the forest.

Before the men made it back to the village, news of Janguba’s feat had spread like wild bushfire. Several old women, in accordance with the customs of the land, had already placed mats in the village town hall where they sat, their legs fully stretched out before them,

flailing their arms in mock mourning for the leopard, the undisputed chief of the *Gbagona* jungle.

Little children, too, got in on the action, running about in anxious expectation of the celebration that was soon to take place in the village.

‘It is a joyous day today!’ Ngumbu blurted. ‘Our most revered hunter has taken his third leopard in as many years.’

Ngumbu was right. This was a feat only the most accomplished hunters of the chieftdom ever achieved. Truly, Janguba was now in a special class; on par with the greatest hunters the chieftdom had ever known. His achievement, therefore, called for a massive celebration. An aspect of this festivity, the tradition decreed, was a symbolic fight over the leopard pelvic.

This fight, symbolic as it was intended to be, was, in actuality, almost always fierce. All able-bodied men who had attained the age of marriage partook in it in deference to the dictates of the ancestors, to accord a deserving final honor to a fallen chief of the chieftdom’s forests.

Grown men, therefore, would scrap and scrawl at each other relentlessly whenever one of these contests was held.

As one would succeed in wresting away the bone from a competitor, he’d immediately be jumped by other men who’d be waiting in the wings with hopes of taking advantage of the sapping energy of the bone holder.

Stubbornly refusing to let go of the bone, a few would get

dragged about and amply dirtied. Even so, more out of pride than anything else, they'd continue to hold on, in last ditch efforts to prove their toughness, their mettle as true protectors of the traditions for, as they all knew, the fight was about much more than the pelvic bone.

It was about respecting the traditions, about paying unflagging homage to the ancestral spirits.

So on this day, as soon as the beast had been butchered, and the pelvic separated from the rest of the meat, the fetish priest, with a wave of his cow tail, signaled the beginning of the contest. Immediately, Ngumbu, cherubic and muscular, pounced on the bone.

He wasn't letting anyone beat him to his very first leopard pelvic. If it meant costing him an arm, he had said earlier in the day, so it was going to be. Before long, the men were all pulling and pushing, fighting so spiritedly, it would seem, to the uninitiated, as though their very lives depended on it; each man clearly intent on vanquishing the rest of the field.

Gizzay, the herbalist, stood firm under the shade cast by the hovering orange tree in his yard, biding his time, bracing for his opportunity.

When Ngobeh, in a display of sure-footedness and speed, peeled the bone away from the man who had it last, Gizzay was right there to confront him. He extended his hands and grabbed Ngobeh around the waist. With a swift, almost blazing push of his hips, he picked Ngobeh off of his feet and slammed him into the ground.

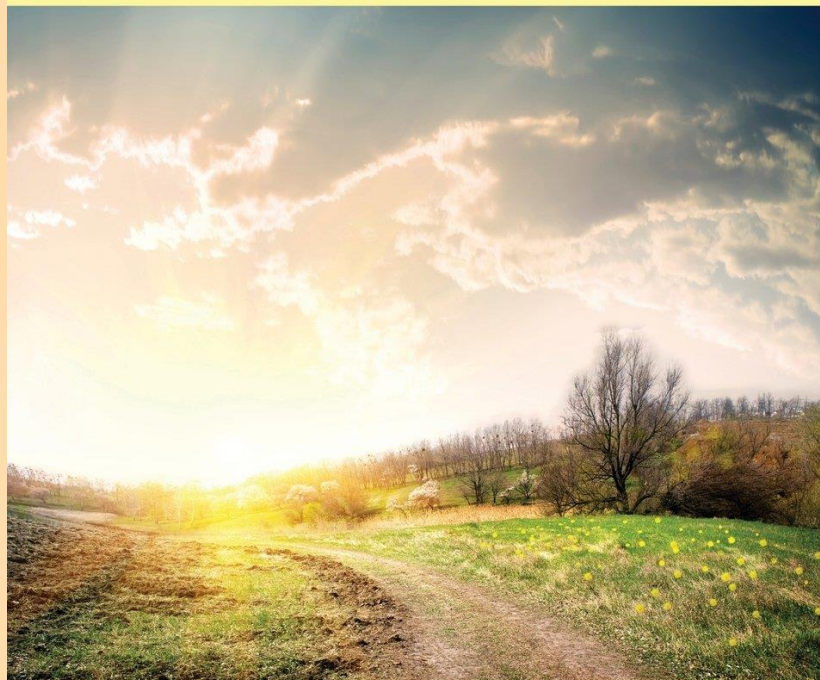
Still, Ngobeh would not let go of the bone. He continued to hang on. But then, one more time, Gizzay pulled at it, this time more forcefully than before and Ngobeh finally lost his grip.

Excerpt from the forthcoming novel, *Forgotten Legacy*, by **Momoh Sekou Dudu**, author of the memoir, *Harrowing December*.

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HARROWING DECEMBER

RECOUNTING A JOURNEY
OF SORROWS & TRIUMPHS



MOMOH SEKOU DUDU

For a moment, Ngobeh did not move. Out of unmitigated fatigue and in utter disappointment, he just lied there, facedown like an old unmovable piece of log. And, for the village herbalist, the fight began anew.

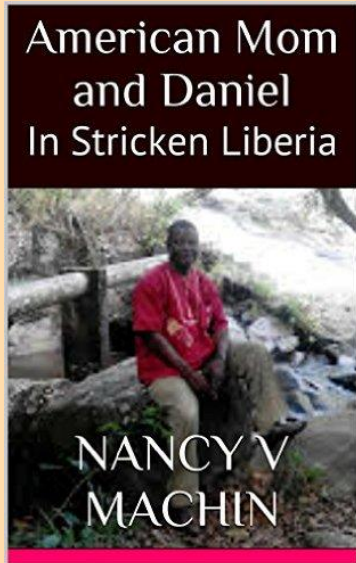
NEW RELEASES



THE WRATH OF QUEEN EBOLA

An American diamond-miner, entering her forbidden jungle-realm, angers a West African Ghost-Queen, and triggers the worst ebola epidemic in known history. This exciting tale is based on actual, recent events in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, West Africa. It's not only a tale of mystery and discovery, but also a tale of love and sacrifice. There's passion, adventure and death, all wrapped-up in this terrifying saga.

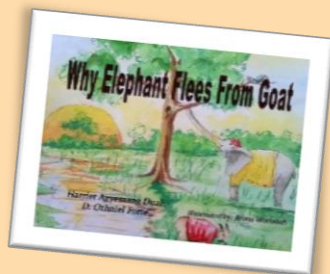
AMERICAN MOM AND DANIEL: IN STRICKEN LIBERIA (MOSAIC@SEVENTY SERIES BOOK 8)



An abiding friendship of a white American Mom, former teacher in Liberia, with one of her best students, Daniel Poawalio, endures war, Ebola, refugee life, separation, and love. The book is a testament to faith, hope and love

LIBERIA: A COLLECTION OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL IMAGES: LIBERIA, LIBERIA, MONROVIA, AFRICA,
Monrovia, Mary Ellen Mark, Lonely planet, Europe, Man Ray, Steve ... Countries Photo Collections Book 104)

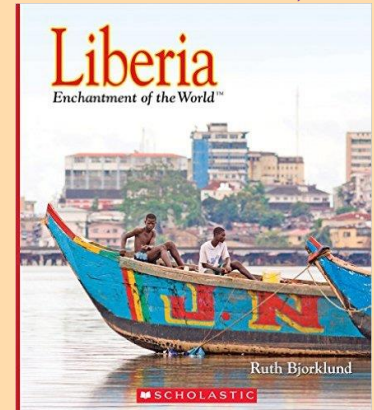
Collected from the finest, most extensive and most unique graphic resources on Earth, this evocative compilation of images expresses the human nature, life and the inseparable, indivisible notion that we are all connected. Both iconic and never-before-seen images from virtually every corner of the globe, each topic, various countries, subjects and amazing human achievements are showcased and placed in historic, artistic, technical and journalistic context. Following this lavish visual journey,



readers will be awed by a behind-the-scenes profile of the collection; its size, its richly diverse character and its special collections. Fine artwork and imaginative illustrations are also featured.

a Collection of the most Beautiful Images with subject: LIBERIA. related keywords: monrovia, africa, monrovia,

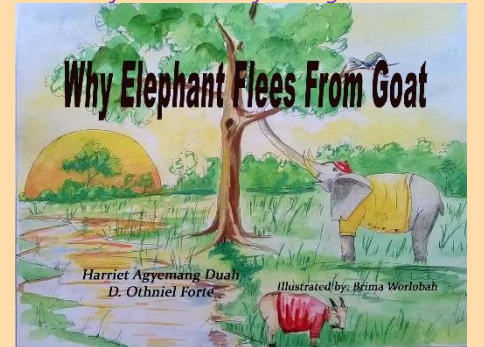
LIBERIA (ENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD. SECOND SERIES)



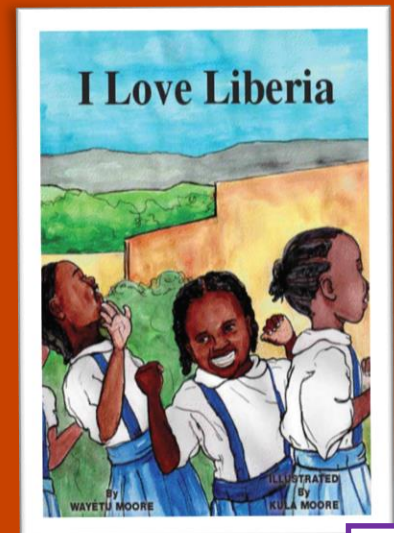
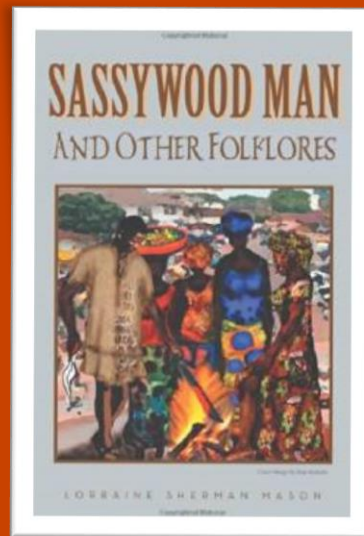
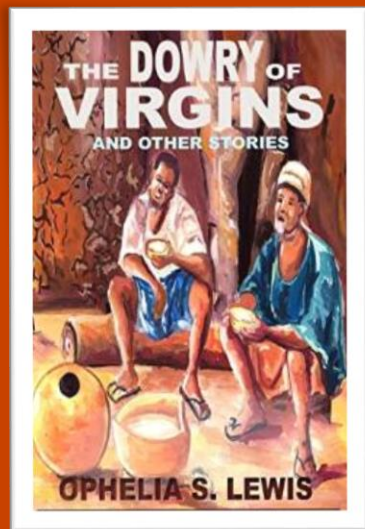
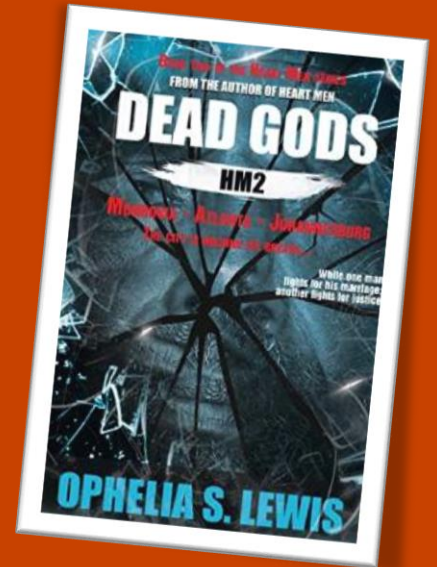
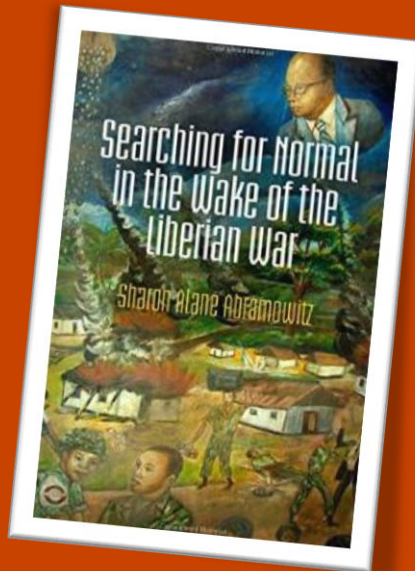
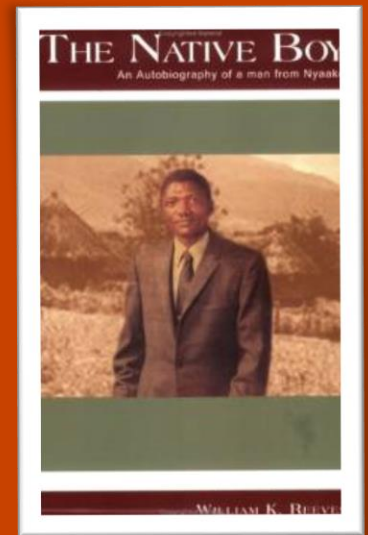
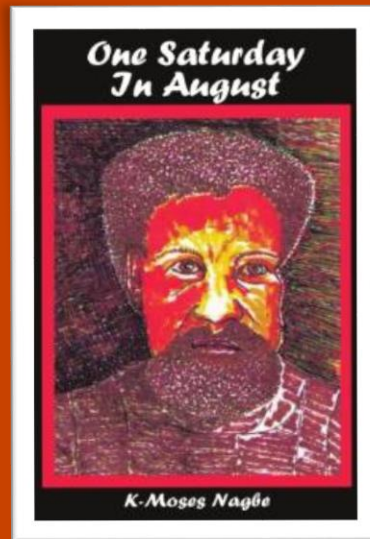
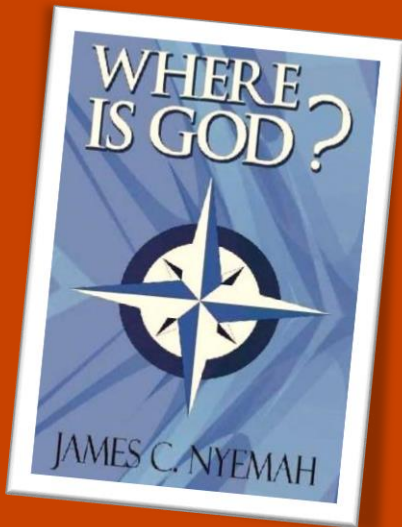
In each title of this enchanting series, readers are transported to distant lands with the fascinating text and attention-grabbing photos. Each country's culture, history, and geography are explored in detail, allowing readers a chance to see how people live in faraway nations.

WHY ELEPHANT FLEES FROM GOAT

A children's book by Harriet Agyemang Duah. Illustration by Brima Woloba i for this work of writing came to

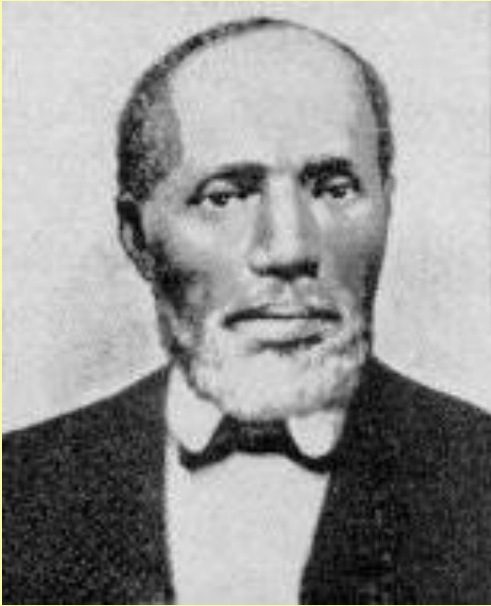


RECOMMENDED READS



Forgotten Heroes

Daniel Bashiel Warner (1860-1864)



Daniel Bashiel Warner

(April 19, 1814/15 – December 1, 1880)

Daniel was the fifth Vice President of Liberia. He was also elected and served as the third (3rd) President of Liberia from 1864 to 1868. Prior to this, he had served as the Secretary of State in the cabinet of Roberts (1854 to 1856).

He was born unto freed parents who were ex-slaves in Baltimore County, Maryland. They came on the famous ship Oswego in 1823. Daniel was around 8/9 years old then. He had served in the House of Representatives and later became an Agent for the ACS.

Mr. Warner left his imprint on Liberia in one unforgettable way. Not much will be remembered of his presidency, or of the pain he took to learn of the ways of the native tribes.

He personally organized the first major expedition into the hinterland (Mesurada or the Mandingo kingdom and the other tribes along the north to westerly part of Liberia). President Warner was a prolific writer. He engaged his colleagues in national dailies on just about any issue and held his own. Not even much is remembered of his great pieces he wrote in the national newspapers.

However, all will forever remember the powerful words for the nation's National Anthem, which he penned. Words that expressed his conviction and belief in the dream that was Liberia.

For this all Liberia is indebted to him, for no words could be better penned that embodies Liberia than those. Both natives and Settlers can find some Liberia in those lines if they search their souls. The song transcends the imaginary divide between the hegemony; we can all find a reason to truly say, "*All Hail Liberia!*"

Poetry Section

The Faces of Elder Wisdom (Inspired by Sheik Konneh)

Jack Kolkmeier

*the faces of elder wisdom
bear a visage of know and how
and see with eyes of then and now
they hear with whispers of the wind
and the delight of bird song*

*the faces of elder wisdom
bare no grudges
the wrinkles are but chasms of time
and earth melody
and people rhyme*

*the faces of elder wisdom
reach out their arms
beyond the confines of them
into moments of teach
and respectful reach*

*the faces of elder wisdom
walk into the face of adversity
and sit among diversity
to speak with words that charm
and inspire*

*the faces of elder wisdom
are mirrors of you and me
as we walk the same pathways
and sit around the same shared fires
that send our thoughts and aspirations
to lofty places
so much higher*

*the faces of elder wisdom
teach us that*

Delray Beach



Jack Kolkmeier studied English Literature/ Creative Writing at Ohio University in the 1960's where he developed a special interest in the Romantic, Imagist and Beat poets. He was the Editor of Sphere, the Ohio University literary magazine, from 1967-68. His writings have appeared in numerous publications including The Writers Place and have been broadcast on his popular Santa Fe radio programs, The International House of Wax and Brave New World, and presented with his performance group, The Word Quartet.

He was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Liberia, West Africa from 1969-72 and received an MPA in Public Policy/Urban and Regional Planning from Indiana University in 1974.

Jack moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1975 to study filmmaking at The Anthropology Film Center and worked there professionally in education, broadcasting and the performing arts, journalism and urban and regional planning. He currently resides and writes in Delray Beach, Florida. His current writing projects include poetry, music and city planning topics and screenplays.

He recently completed Tribal, his first, full-length book of poems.

His writings have appeared in Sphere, Gulcher, Mothering Magazine, The Beat, The Santa Fe Reporter, The Writers Place, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Liberian Studies Journal, Crosswinds, and Practicing Planner.

Santa Fe



Ebola Poem Mini Series

*Liberia - "The Before,
During, and After Ebola"**Preston M. Tulay**- Nine -*

*I am the land of the past
 Even so as I am the land of the present
 So shall I remain the land of the future?
 Yes is the answer of you my people
 Courage you have shown in the past
 Steadfast as you now go forward
 Of the three you must not refrain
 The batons you must hold on now
 Yet you must pass them on safely to the next
 As it is the symbol for the after victory
 Unto the race of progress
 I the land of greens and beauty will show
 Unto them that are on my no-boundaries limit
 As it is to the west, north, and east
 For the far and nearest of friends or foes
 Even my ocean friend of the north shall bliss
 In the display of more beautiful shorelines
 Misty breezes for my greens to flourish
 Even after the one that makes you weep*

- Ten -

*I am the land - soil of natural goodness
 You my peoples will reap what you sow
 I the land, desire you to sow more seeds on me
 From my richness of wetlands and dry up lands
 I will bring forth bountiful of your labor
 I am the land that grows all that take roots
 In distance of your feet I reserve water
 To this my greenest pasture is my testimony
 Even before, during, and so shall it be after
 For this we know Ebola is transient
 As it cannot deter our natural bond
 Not even in my wet nor dry season
 Not in the resources of greens, water and
 minerals
 Even that which my ocean friend has revealed
 The after Ebola moment is your beginning
 Not in the sorrow of the past
 As it is in triumph beyond.*



Mr. Tulay, was born in Liberia, West Africa and later moved to the United States of America.

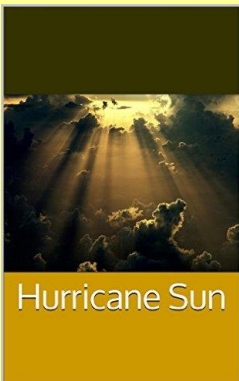
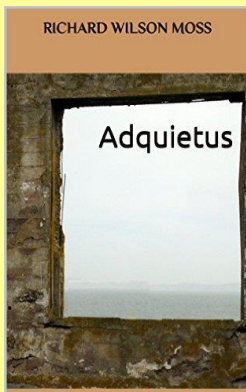
He attended Howard University where he received a Bachelor of Business Art degree in Computer Based Information Systems in 1991.

In 1999, he received his Master of Science in Computer Systems Management (IT) from the University of Maryland University College.

The False African

Richard Wilson Moss

Richard has been an active poet and writer since he was twelve years old, born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. Never caring much for public or private schools, Richard was basically home schooled, through lively discussions with his father around the family dining table. Richard is an avid reader, of science, history, and literature. Having lived and traveled across the lower forty-eight, Richard chooses never to stray too far from the Ocean, Rappahannock River or the Chesapeake Bay, nor from his wife, two adult children, and grandchildren. Also Richard is very active in many poetry groups online and has created a name for himself among other poets and readers around the world. He has self published twelve books of poetry and one book of prose, an autobiography of the first thirty years of his life as an unknown American poet.



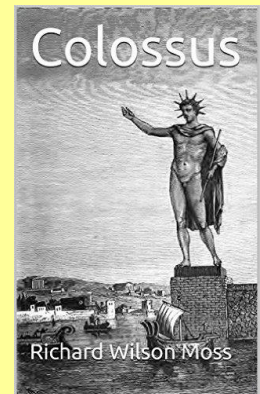
The False African

On graveled avenues of Asmara
A shopkeeper sings, his gray parrot
In a hanging cage watches the tired broom
Held by the morning sweeper on his rounds
Blue bristles spinning off
Like threads unraveled from discarded cloth
Of disrobing sky.

Three wheeled cars motor pass
Then one speed bikes their tires sewed
And then on foot, myself, the false African
Young and yellow in the sun.

Amish On The Pier

The wires always sing
In summer it is for King
In fall for Drum.
Young Amish girls meander on the pier
To look at early evening sea
All their long blue dresses rustling
Although there is starch in some
In their excited whispers
Is the rush of eternal spring
At dusk the ocean is dark rum
And the wires sing.



No Right

Cher Antoinette

You ask me what I wish for
 What I need
 Your attention
 Your comfort
 Fulfilment

Is that too much to wish for

I need my worth to be
 recognized
 Valued
 And revered

Is that too much to ask for

For too long
 I have been the one to give
 I have been the one taken
 Taken
 From my path
 Taken
 From the happiness
 Seen in the eyes of my
 children

I am not my physical
 appearance
 I am not my smile
 I am not my eyes
 I am the energy

Inside of me
 That part of me for which
 you have little time
 Or interest

But you wish to explore
 The outside
 Enter the tight spaces

No Right

Feast in the ambrosia
 Released
 Seducing me
 Knowing that I crave
 intimacy
 Connection
 Copulation

But that is not what I want
 That is not what I need

My soul cries
 Cries for understanding

You don't know me
 You don't have the right
 To question me
 To make me read between
 the lines

You put me on the sidelines
 To watch the game being
 played
 To be the substitute
 The understudy
 Whose name is not on the
 Playbill

But in everything there is a
 beginning
 And in everything there is an
 end

The cries of my soul will be
 heard
 Distance will no longer be
 The hemispheres will be
 whole once more
 As the world folds on itself

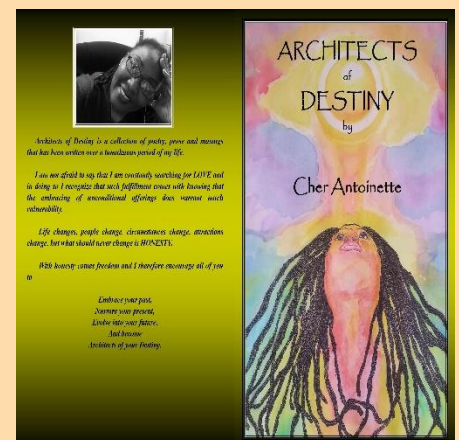
No Right

And I
 And I will become the woman
 I know I am
 For I would have found
 The man who knows me



Cher Antoinette

Cher-Antoinette is a mother of two, a forensic scientist and is a multiple silver and bronze award winner at the Barbados National Independence Festival of Creative Arts (NIFCA) in Photography, Visual Arts and Literary Arts.



Bai T. Moore***Liberia: Glory Days***

I wandered in the moonlit night
to view the glory of the past

The ruins of those pioneer days
were silhouetted against the light

where once stood mansions decked with pride
now ruled by vipers and the bats

are 'nough to make one stop and sigh

The broken frames can hardly stand
the beating of the constant rain

And on the landscape high above
the ruins of the parish too

can tell the ghostly story plain
beneath the grass stand epitaphs

a remnant of some burial ground

A lordly cricket once in a while
will break the silence with a sound

Or in some distant woods a drum
a native feast in feverish swing

I wonder after all these years
these ancient ruins can rise again

and brighten up a dismal scene?

When Night Falls...

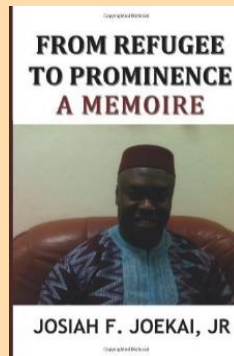
Josiah Joekai Jr.

When night falls,
That's when you face yourself,
Family members and friends
disappear,
Walking the beautiful streets no
longer matters,
The echoes of melodic rhythms
fail to satiate your quest,
Oh! When night falls, oblivion
consumes the earth.

When night falls,
And you are barricaded by your
own walls,
That's when the real deal
begins,
When you weep, you scream
and cannot sob,
It's only you and your
unconscious companions,
If only the walls could speak,
The facts would be unraveled.

When night falls,
The bed fails to accommodate
you,
The pillows no longer absorb
your tears,
You are consumed by fear.
Oh! When night falls,
And you become hopeless,
The journey even becomes
endless.

When night falls,
You are encircled by
uncertainties,
Persevere and remain focus,
With faith and hope for new
status,
Rejuvenation unveils itself.
Oh, when you are revived,
Nightfall disappears!



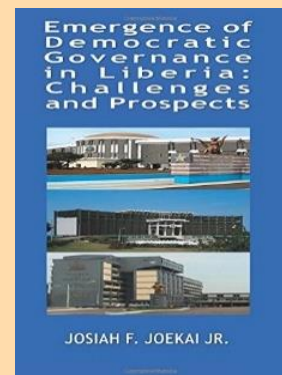
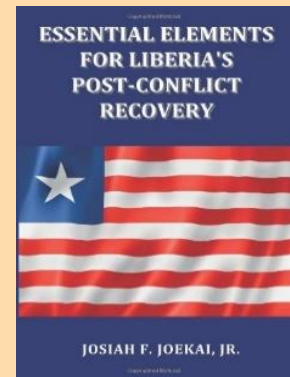
Insights

Inspired by Mrs. Hawa Morgan Tyler, a Movie Star, a Composer and Vocalist

The Author's description of night fall is a mirror image of the practical experiences we encounter in our respective life



journeys. Obviously, everyone has had his or her night fall. Yours could simply be financial constraint, serious ailment, joblessness, deeply rooted conflict, barrenness, illiteracy, etc. Though night falls may vary based on gradation, the Author however, presents a turning point in this undesirable journey. This turning point one's firm commitment to embrace and accommodate perseverance, focus, faith and hope for transformation.



Liberian Proverbs

A monkey with no teeth never smiles. A person embarrassed about something, tries not to do that thing. Smiling in this case, would only reveal the something embarrassing, the lack of teeth.

A monkey without teeth never chews. One who is unable to do something will not do it. The monkey is unable to chew, thus, it will find ways around

A neck that isn't broken will wear a necklace. Only those that are prepared get to enjoy the benefits; they reap from the effort they made.

A person changing his clothing always hides while changing. People value their privacy, thus they try to protect it well. Self-respect is important in life.

A stick, which is far away, cannot kill a snake. It is unwise to count on something one does not yet own or have. It is more like counting your eggs before the hen hatches. In this case, the stick is useless as a protection against the snake.

A weak person may enable a strong one to succeed. Sometimes in life, we have to

see the mistakes of others before we move ahead. We tend to learn from that situation and see first-hand what awaits us if we do the same. The 'weakness' in this case, makes us strong to press on.

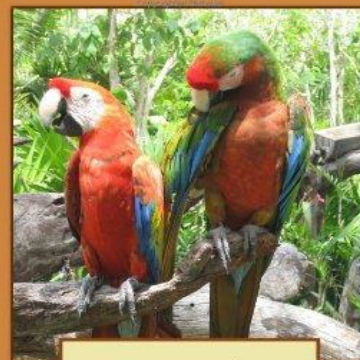
A word is (like) an egg. Words are extremely powerful. They can be potent or soothing. They have the ability to make or break people; hence, we should utter them with as much care as we would treat an egg.

Before good food goes to waste, the spoon will bend. Alternatively, it is said that: **before good food waste, let belly burst.** If there is an opportunity and one does not take it, others will. They shall make use of it.

One can't be ashamed of one's bath bucket. Our bath bucket is a private thing. Some have good ones, others have bad ones, yet they all do the same job, get us cleaned. They see us in our most vulnerable state. They see our true selves. In this case, we all have secrets, some big than others, but they are things we rather have others not knowing.

An empty bag cannot stand. We need contents in life to move on. In the Liberian style, this is used in reference to

food. A hungry person can't work or be expected to do anything substantial.



Proverbs from Liberia

D. OTHNIEL FORTE

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The Elder's Wisdom

Liberian Parables

Artist of the Month

ART SELECTION

We stepped out of the box to feature an artist all right but one that inspires not only by her craft but by her story; her life itself.

WINIFRED A. NAGBE is better known as Angel. She was born in Liberia, but raised in a Ghana Buduburam Refugee Camp. Currently she lives in the United States.

She came to America as a poor young African immigrant, but through her determination and belief spurred her on to change her story and to continue dreaming for better days ahead. She is currently a student.

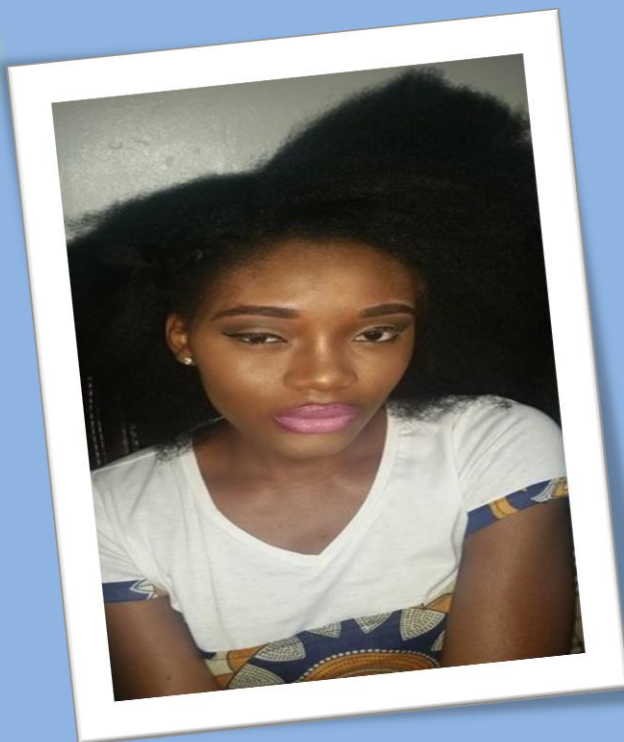
Her dream is to graduate from college and become a Neonatal Nurse. She also hopes to be one of the top fashion designers of all time.

One day, she hopes to start an organization back in her home country, Liberia, which will help orphaned and deserving children, because she knows what it's like to go through such struggles.

Even though Nursing and designing are her dream careers, continuing to learn is her number one priority.

Growing up in Africa, she says she lacked education hence her reason for placing such value on education today. Back then, she started school very late because of her family's financial situation.

One of my childhood memories was walking around the community selling oranges to



contribute to the family's distress. She faced many setbacks. Her grandmother and mother were not always around to cater to her needs. This meant taking care of myself when my mom or grandma was not around to watch over me. Doing so much for herself at such a young age. She felt she was an orphaned many times.

To survive, she sold food. This helped her to buy things she needed. She recalls how she hardly played during her childhood and had few clothes to wear. On a particular occasion, whilst selling oranges in front of my house, her classmates were on their way home from school and as they approached her house, she was very nervous and so embarrassed that she left the oranges outside and ran inside. She didn't want them to mock at her. At times, she feared she might never be able to escape such a poor life;

she might not get an opportunity to make something of her life. I will never forget these memories.

Fortunately, fate changed hands and in December 2005, Angel and her mom traveled to the United States.

Her first year of school was a challenge because the teachers and students couldn't understand her. It was very hard to socialize with others.

No sooner had she entered school, did her mother decide to go to nursing school. Angel found herself once more in a strange place and forced to care for herself.

Finally, she had to move out state to her aunt's place in order to have some adult supervision amongst other things. Life for the first time, in a long while, was great for Angel. Life had given her a cake. Her aunt was newly married, had a newborn baby girl; had moved into a new three-bedroom house. The cake came with a favorite icing too- the new family even had a stepdaughter, which was the one-year-old than Angel was. She felt like her life was completed. This lasted all but eight months when things went south and Ms. Nagbe found herself in a position she believed she had managed to escape.

Today, Angel considers herself blessed to be where she is and she is taking full advantage of every opportunity life throws her, which by the way is ever so oft. She is in school and managing a striving business. Her work is drawing the right amount of attention from several quarters.

Angel Nagbe is a testament to the spirit of womanhood and determination.







MEET OUR TEAM



MOMOH SEKOU DUDU
SENIOR REVIEWER/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
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MARTIN N. K. KOLLIE
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NVASEKIE KONNEH
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LEKPELE M. NYAMALON
RESIDENT POET

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS



JOSEPHINE BARNES
ART CONTRIBUTOR

PRESTON M. TULAY
BERENICE MULUBAH
CLARENCE PEARSON
VAMBA SHERIF
SYLOMUN WEAH
MASNOH WILSON



BRIMA WOLOBAH
ART CONTRIBUTOR

AROUND TOWN

Around Town



Central Monrovia

Randall Street market; towards Waterside



Traditional Dancers

Traditional dances form a major part of life. It is free entertainment. Sadly they aren't paid.



Selling 'Smor-smor' Things

A set of photos of people selling food. This is how the ordinary people survive.



Colorful Local Shops



Church in Careysburg



Real Life Hustle Rounds



Kids Playing Football



Local Arts and Craft Seller

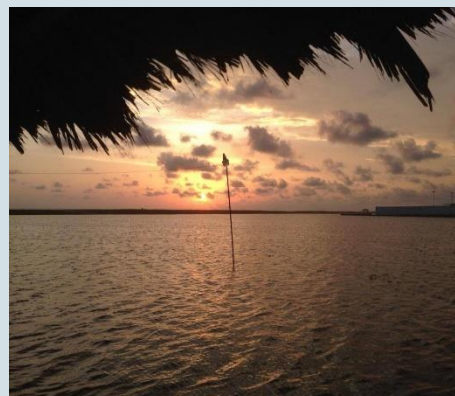


Ariel View of the City



Car Loaders and Taxi

"Carboys" hustling for passengers from one point To another. This is part of the average hustle



Sunrise- Relaxation Time

White sand beach adorned with fully grown cocoa nut trees



Beach on the out sketch

Liberia has some of the best beaches in the region. Sadly, many are not developed

Photo Credits: **Darby Cecil**

Editor

D. Othniel Forte

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.



PHOTO BY: CHITO REYES

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

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Liberian Literary Magazine

KWEE

Sept Issue

0915

John
Coltrane's
"Liberia"

Book
Review



Curtis
Amy

Featured Poets:
Bai T. Moore
Lekpele Nyamalon
Cher Antoinette
Richard Moss
Jack Kolkmeier
Josiah Joekai
Preston Tulay

Liberia
flogs
Tunisia

Poetry Series
Short Stories
Forgotten Hero

Pre. Sirleaf
@ WAW Tokyo