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# LIBERIA *Exhibit*

S E P T E M B E R - D E C E M B E R 2 0 2 1

ISSUE 3

*Feature*

PAGE 10

**KPATAWEE  
WATERFALL:  
A PRETTY PICNIC  
AND SWIMMING**

★ PAGE 17

**MAKING LIBERIAN  
CULTURE WEARABLE**

- The Patmole Cole Story

★ PAGE 20

**J SLUGHT TAKES AFRO  
BEAT TO NEW HEIGHTS**

★ PAGE 36

**CURSORY REVIEW  
OF GBARNGA**

★ PAGE 47

**MONROVIA FOOTBALL**

**ACADEMY:** Empowering  
Africa's Future through Education  
and Sports

PAGE 24  
**YOUNG  
ENTREPRENEURS  
OF LIBERIA**  
SATTA WAHAB'S  
NATURAL HAIR  
RENAISSANCE

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#### Publisher

Jos Travel & Tour Inc.  
Ground floor Kaba Building  
Benson & Mechlin Streets  
Monrovia, Liberia

#### Branch Office

Ground floor, Royal Hotel Complex  
15th Street Sinkor  
Monrovia, Liberia

#### Phones

+231 (0) 777 744 400  
+231 (0) 888 240 240  
+231 (0) 886 516 275  
+231 (0) 886 518 861  
+231 (0) 777 116 616  
+231 (0) 777 516 275

#### Emails

info@jos-travel.com  
reservations@jos-travel.com  
inquiries@jos-travel.com

#### Website

www.jos-travel.com

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New Matadi,  
Monrovia, Liberia

+231 (0) 770 799 018  
+231 (0) 888 799 018

stagamedia@gmail.com  
Staga Media

#### Advertisement

Joseph N. Wamah, Jr.  
Marketing Executive

+231 (0) 881 472 547  
+231 (0) 778 163 958

wamah.jr@jos-travel.com  
jostraveltours

www.facebook.com/jostravel2011

+231 (0) 778 163 958

jostraveltours

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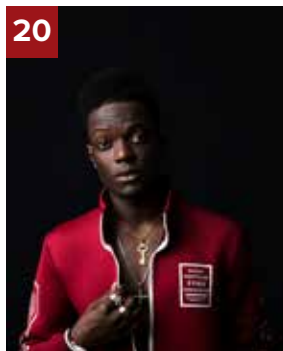
# Contents

SEPT-DEC  
2021  
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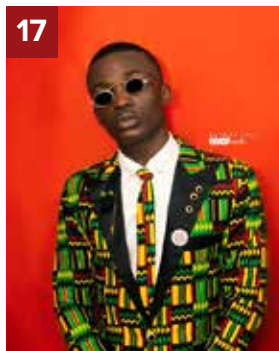
44



20



17



36



47



24



44



## Feature

10. Kpatawee Waterfall: A Pretty Picnic and Swimming
14. Gboata Magical Fish - A Traditional Mystery
17. Making Liberian Culture Wearable - The Patmole Cole Story
18. Cuttington University -The Cornerstone of Tertiary Education in Africa
20. J Slught Takes Afro Beat to New heights

## Young Entrepreneurs of Liberia

21. Satta Wahab's Natural Hair Renaissance

## Made in Bong County

23. PCK - The "I here" Man
24. Jewel Howard-Taylor - A Gift from Bong County to All of Africa

## Tasty Liberia

30. Liberian Snacks
31. KPORLOYAH - The Kpelleh Man's Favorite

## Natural Luxury

33. Wongan Waterfall -Tourist Attraction In Obscurity
34. Blue Lake -Serene Charm in Bong Mines
34. Traditional Horn of Bong County
35. Bird Watching at Libassa
35. 250 Years Old Cotton Tree Falls
36. Cursory Review Of Gbarnga

## Liberia On The Go

38. Women Engineers: Stepping Out Of the Cocoon Of Mediocrity
39. Redimere Chocolate: Local Content, International Quality
41. Passion Accommodations: The Charm of Bong's Hospitality
42. Baba and Mama SHABU - Painting History In Picture
44. Miss Tourism 2019 LINDA DOE - The Go-Getter
46. Titilope Fakuade: Lonestar MTN First Female CIO And A Go-Getter
47. Monrovia Football Academy: Empowering Africa's Future through Education and Sports

## 38. TourLiberia



WWW.JOS-TRAVEL.COM 5

## CONTRIBUTORS



**Joseph N. Wamah, Jr.**

Is a passionate travel enthusiast and a student of Economics. He wishes to pursue a degree in Airline Economics and Aviation Management respectively. He currently serves as the Marketing Executive at Jos Travel & Tours Inc and a board member of the Liberia National Tourism Association (LINTA). The Liberia Exhibit was envisioned as a showcase of Liberia today.



**Richard Eduafo**

Is an extremely creative individual with a love of creative designs & layouts, photography, dynamic content and an extensive background in developing effective direct response designs. This provides Richard with the ability to gather a deep understanding of Businesses to Consumer communications in a high-pressure environment.



**Rami Balaghi**

Is a Lebanese, living and working for an environmental consultancy in Liberia. He is very passionate about photography and applying his trade to promote Liberia as a tourist destination.

*"Pleasure in the Job puts perfection in the work"* is his philosophy.



**Michael Roberts**

Is a Liberian media practitioner, trainer and consultant with specific interest in investigative journalism and human interest. He has more than a decade of professional experience in media relations, image building, communications strategy, branding, editing, documentary, report writing, and public relations.



**Joma Barleah**

Is a young Liberian in the field of photography and computer graphics. He is among the many emerging photographers in Liberia with the dream of putting his skills into action and also putting Liberia on the map in the line of photography and artistic works.

# We Too Can Get Millions from Tourism

Liberia has been named as a top tourist destination by travel company "Lonely Planet due to the country's idyllic beaches washed by some of West Africa's best surfs. These features are, however, left at the discretion of neglect by bureaucrats.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in its 2019 report indicates that tourism grows faster than merchandise trade and only next in line to fuel and chemicals. In 2018, the report says 121 billion was generated globally from tourism.

Notwithstanding the enormity of tourism importance to export diversification for emerging economies like Liberia's with the capacity to reduce the trade deficit and compensate for weaker export revenues, the sector forms a small part of the country's economy.

The West African nation is endowed with luxuriant rainforest, sandy golden beaches along its coasts and imparts irresistible scenery for tourists

The Government of Liberia comprehends that tourism betokens a vital spill-over effect, spurring growth is closely related sectors and sub-sectors such as agriculture, furniture manufacturing, foods and beverages, and infrastructure development.

At a time like this when the oldest African nation's economy is tethering on the edge of collapse, millions are washed across Liberia in pristine beaches, beautiful surfing spot, bird watching, dolphin watching, forest that hosts rare species in the face of growing demand for adventure tourism, eco-tourism, the country's unique linkages with US market, intra-regional tourism and the increasing number of international visitors from emerging economies.

It is palpable that tourism is a bastion for many developing countries across Africa and it is creating thousands of jobs for young people. But Africa's oldest republic is treating the industry with disdain. This, however, does not take away the prospect of a private sector-driven effort to get the tourism industry living up to its usefulness.

However, there are key stumbling blocks that must be removed for the sector to thrive: transportation, fix the capacity deficits in the service sector and ensure that key cross-cutting enablers from other sectors are aligned and harmonized with the country's overall national tourism strategy.

With more travelers looking for eco-tourism destinations, Liberia's unspoiled virgin rainforests -the last of its kind in West Africa, wetlands, lakes, hills, mountains, waterfalls, lagoons and deltas, that set Liberia apart, will leave nature lovers marveling. And we too can make millions from these natural assets and lift ourselves out of the curse of poverty and economic backwardness.

There are several mechanisms to account for tourism's positive contribution to the economy. For one thing, tourism provides much-needed diversification of countries' export earnings away from a dependence on agricultural and primary commodities, thereby contributing to broader patterns of economic modernization. Meanwhile, in comparison to other economic sectors, such as manufacturing, the tourism industry requires relatively low levels of inputs of capital and expertise—resources that tend to be scarce in developing economies—thereby creating an abundance of space for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to thrive.

AGI opined in its 2018 report that there are also substantial benefits from tourism that accrue at the local level, including improvements in income distribution, regional development, and employment opportunities for remote and low-skilled workers, which both, directly and indirectly, impacting poverty levels.<sup>22</sup> Compared to other sectors, tourism also provides a disproportionately high number of jobs for women, who are often difficult to integrate into the formal economy in developing countries. A recent study by the U.N. World Tourism Organization concluded that, in the global hotel and restaurant industry, women often outnumber men and receive equal pay.

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Managing Director & CEO

# Profile

## ON JOS TRAVEL & TOURS INC.

*On behalf of Jos Travel & Tours Inc (JOS) it is my pleasure to welcome you to the third edition of our Liberia Exhibit Magazines. This time we have focused on discovery and exposure of the touristic and natural sites hosted by one of our oldest and prestigious counties; Bong County. It is our foremost desire to continue to positively expose and market Liberia to the world, to the tourists out there to come with their contributions and enjoy responsible and eco-tourism in Liberia. It is by no mistake that Liberia has been listed 8th among 10 as one of the most wonderful countries to visit in the year 2020 by Lonely Planet. To our guests, we assure you that your Liberian experience will be an unforgettable one if you're not already with us. Now kindly sit back and relax as I once again introduce our scope of services to our reading audience.*

Jos began operations in Liberia December of 2011 and provides numerous travel services, including but not limited to ticketing, tour packages, and transport services to people in Liberia, specifically in Monrovia and its surrounding cities. In order to become a viable and quality service provider, she has established affiliations with some of West Africa's top travel agencies in the sub-region. With this collaboration, Jos is highly regarded among all other travel agencies operating in Liberia. With capabilities of issuing all of the frequently flown airlines in the world, she is unique. Jos is the most functional agent in Liberia and serves as consolidator for many Travel Agencies in Liberia. Headed by Managing Director & CEO Mr. Joseph N. Wamah Sr., the majority shareholder in Jos which is 100% Liberian owned. Mr. Wamah Sr. with his vast aviation edification and experiences has placed JOS as the number one travel agent in Liberia. Jos now serves as a local and regional travel consolidator and Mr. Wamah has to his credit over 34 (thirty-four) years of working experience in the aviation industry. At Jos, we strongly believe that the potentially vibrant tourism industry of Liberia has the prospect of being a productive, impactful and lucrative one. The tourism industry remains the fastest growing and the largest generator of jobs. It brings in the most foreign exchange only second to petroleum. It serves as the principal export for many developing countries in Africa.



It gives rise to rapid infrastructure and super-structure developments alike.

At Jos, we always adhere to the truth and deliver on our promise of providing great services at the lowest rates. We will remain as a customer and market-driven Travel Agency, providing value added services in Liberia. The Travel industry is one that is rapidly changing with more players and competitors than ever before. We pride ourselves on an exceptional reputation that results from dedication and hard work of our employees and incomparable services.

As I take reflect on what has transpired over the years, I am extremely proud of our achievements since 2011. The future looks even more promising, with plans for diversified growth fully underway. We have successfully transitioned from a one branch operation to become a respected company garnering business nationwide and globally whilst earning our clients trust and respect. We have resolved to provide our clients extraordinary levels of customer service to ensure retaining them for a lifetime. For nearly a decade we have given all our customers reason to consider Jos Travel & Tours as their only choice in travel. Customer satisfaction is the hallmark by which we measure our performance, and we hold ourselves, as do our clients, to the highest standards of quality. It is satisfying to know that we are able to help our clients and enable them to connect to the world affordably and comfortably. We are also committed to offering significant savings on worldwide travel and we do so by delivering access to all corners of the world in peerless comfort and style, with value and expertise. Amongst our

most important assets is the extensive knowledge base, deep-rooted professionalism and unwavering commitment of our highly-qualified, diverse staff. Our team of travel specialists share a passion for creating the most inspiring experiences for every client. This requires a rare blend of innovation, professionalism, knowledge, patience, and understanding. The Jos team is committed to providing unparalleled service to our customers domestically and internationally. To achieve this, our mission remains to build successful and rewarding relationships with all of our valued customers. We are committed to the fundamental principle that the customer is not only important, but the reason for our business, and everyone at Jos genuinely works to earn and keep much-valued client trust. In this continually changing market, our clients are more informed than ever about their options. Even so, they continue to select Jos as their partner of choice because of our experience, commitment to quality and integrity. As Jos Travel & Tours continue to grow, each new day offers a chance for us to work together, pursue new opportunities and improve upon the past. In-depth client relationships are being built on a daily basis. Our business revolves around the needs of our clients, in doing so we are always at the forefront of innovation, change and where value is always been given. We invite you to take advantage of our insider travel expertise and to embark on a journey full of endless possibilities with us. As you indulge in the deep richness of our in-house travel and tourism magazine, we say "Welcome to Liberia" if you are here, and "We Hope to See You Soon" if you are not!

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## HOTEL BOOKINGS AND RESERVATIONS

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#### PERMANENT ADDRESS:



Feature

# Kpatawee Waterfall: *A Pretty Picnic and Swimming*



**A**t the heart of Bong in Suakoko District some 200 kilometers away from Monrovia, sits Kpatawee Waterfalls, a natural wonder of slimmest paths of segregating streams from plummeting valleys on the Mein River.

The hidden ecotourism attraction holds a tempting potential but managed by the local community.

Being surrounded by a dense forest, Kpatawee Waterfalls possess an attractive combination of natural beauty and local friendliness. Two cascades exist, the smaller being the closest to the road and the larger one reachable by roughly an hour of trekking. Liberian nationals already enjoy events and activities in this location in spite of the lack of basic amenities and services, e.g. food and beverages.



Discussions are being held for a tourism company to oversee the affairs of the facility which will have a great impact on the socio-economic development of the local community.

Besides the waterfalls, the facility enjoys a rich deposit of biodiversity in the surrounding forests.

Mr. Dawokollie Owah, a Lecturer at Cuttington University said the waterfall is positioned to serve as an essential boost to the country's economic growth and development if the right investment is done. He averred that the waterfalls also have mineral resources that could be used to augment national development efforts.

The Cuttington University Forestry Lecturer sighed that in spite of the vast natural endowments the country enjoys, the government of Liberia treats them with lip service.

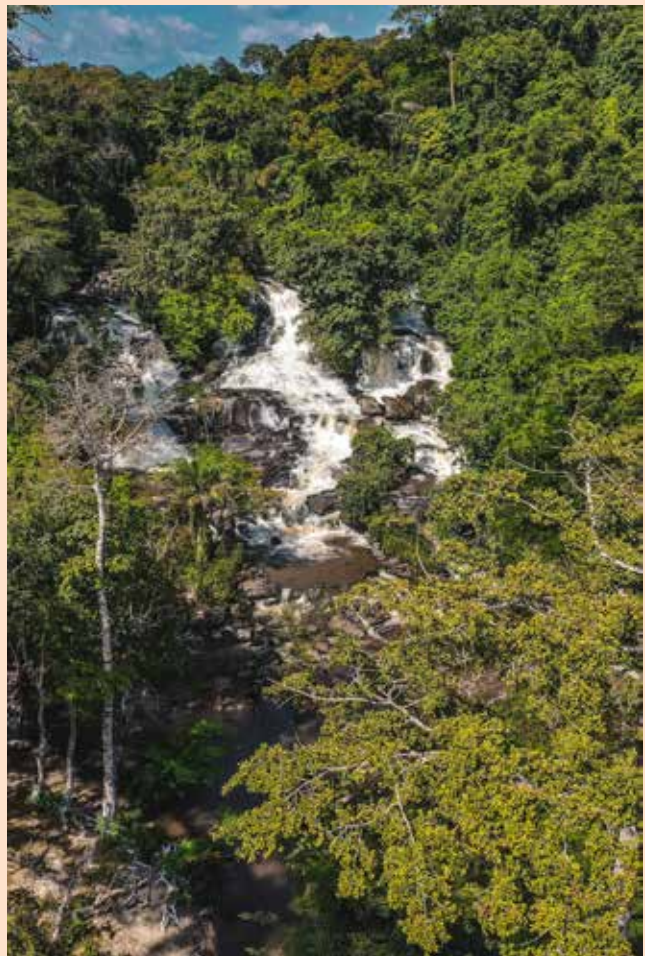
Kpatawee waterfalls, like waterfalls the world over, provide soothing sights and sounds that help you relax and de-stress in our busy world. Health experts have opined that the waterfall can aid in lowering high blood pressure as well as improve one's physical and mental health as you prop your feet up and enjoy the therapeutic effects of mother nature.

Sadly, farming and hunting activities are threatening biodiversity in the forest.

Kpatawee waterfalls are mesmerizing charm, recreational activities and simply a venue where tourists can sprawl in sheer tranquility.

When it is dry season, the waterfalls would be fastidious and its charm increases during the rainy season.

On the other side of the waterfall is an entirely quiet world because you would bid farewell to sounds even a phone call is impossible.





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An underwater photograph showing several fish swimming in clear blue water. The fish are of various sizes and colors, including shades of blue, yellow, and white. The lighting is bright, creating a serene and magical atmosphere.

# GBOATA

## MAGICAL FISH

### *-A Traditional Mystery*

**A**s crops from farms on both sides of the water overgrew into the Kponkor Creek. It was difficult to distinguish who owned what portion. As a result, a covenant was reached among the towns that water would be kept sacred and untouchable by anyone especially the fish since they could not find an amicable solution, according to elders in Gboata Town -the host of the magical fish along the Gbarnga-Ganta Highway.

Since then, the elders say, it became

generally accepted traditional law from generation to generation. The traditional sacredness of the fish makes it an abomination for anyone particularly childbearing women to eat it. Kpolokegekor is the name of one of the fishes. Each of the fish has traditional symbols.” It looks like water but it’s a town. Our ancestors live there,” one elder to The Exhibit magazine in an exclusive interview.

During the advent of development in the county, the fishes had to escape for safety when roads were built pass-

ing through the water toward Ganta. Everyone thought that the traditional heritage had been destroyed. But we were shocked that the fishes came back as the water returned after the road’s construction.

Additionally, barren women would consult the water for a child through the offering of rituals. If the water rejects you, you are cursed forever but if it accepts you, you can go buy baby’s tub and clothing.

The tradition is so rigid that nobody



symbols including cowrie shells around its head and is believed to be the head of them all. It would pave the way for other smaller fishes to come out. "It would come out to see if those calling them out pose no danger to them by any means. If it finds that people throwing break pose danger or carry a camera for photography, it would return and no other fish would come out. You should count yourself unlucky that day because no matter what you throw in the water, no fish will show up. That's one of the mysterious attributes of the fishes," another elder explained.

According to them, it is impossible to get photos of the fish because everyone who tried before could not see the images they took. For some traditional reasons, the ancestors represented in those fishes do not permit photography regardless of the motive.

Their mysterious attributes are not only rooted in the cowrie shells on their heads but also in the awe of their almost human characteristics. Except for pieces of bread or crumbs of biscuits are thrown in the creek to the delight of the rare creatures, they would not surface for a substitute. They do not eat bait either would they come out for it. When pieces of bread or biscuits are thrown in the creek on a lucky day, the sight would stun anyone because they would show up in the numbers. An uncountable number of catfish would be seen scrambling for their portion of the bread or biscuits. At times people go to the extent of purchasing a whole carton of bread just for their amusement and in hope that the one with the beaded head just might make an appearance. But that is a rare privilege.

dares to violate it for anything in this world. The fish in the creek are the center of attraction for travelers using that route.

Residents of the town informed The Exhibit magazine there is one of the fishes called Kpolokegekor that moves with a peculiar sound. It comes out only rarely. This rare creature has many traditional





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# MAKING LIBERIAN CULTURE WEARABLE

## - *The Patmole Cole Story*

Liberia is a captivating country with an unbridled history and enviable traditions. Despite being Africa's oldest nation, many Liberians take interest in Western fashions and styles, while citizens in other parts of the country are still seen wearing the traditional West African garb. Special events and dance festivals such as weddings are honored by wearing both Liberian grass skirts. Patmole Cole, a Liberian fashion tycoon is rewriting the narrative amazingly.



He started on the backdrop of telling a story by creating African costumes that exude the unique culture of Liberia and the need to wear local. Undoubtedly, Patmole Cole has succeeded in swaying his generation to take the Liberian culture to every occasion -from top to bottom. He would go lengths to transform the European style of fashion to Africans to imbue a connection.

Africanno'z Design is a brand that product attires for both Genders also rebrand European attire in an African style.

"Being inspired by the thriving love of my culture and tradition led me to a path of showcasing, and exploring unique ways of creating African costumes and buildings unique atmosphere of the uprising industry of Liberia fashion," the young African fashion mogul told The Exhibit magazine in an exclusive interview.

As a student of Economics and Public Administration at the African Methodist Episcopal University (AMEU), Patmole holds close to heart that Liberian fashion and art can be transformed

-a dream he strongly believes in.

Patmole's unrestrained passion to see the renaissance of Liberian

fashion and go hit a history height has landed him several accolades and nominations including the Liberia Youth Award in the Outstanding Man of Virtue category; Liberty Young Achiever (YOUNG ENTERPRISING MAN OF THE YEAR). The African Fashion giant is currently nominated as the BEST FASHION DESIGNER OF THE YEAR by the Liberia Entertainment Award.

He believes that African fashion is a great way of potentially making the best out of African culture style.

"My version is to see African culture reached the world," he stated.





# CUTTINGTON UNIVERSITY

## *-The Cornerstone of Tertiary Education in Africa*

In 1887, under the venerable leadership of Bishop Samuel D. Ferguson, the Cape Palmas Missionary District of Liberia of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America) founded the Hoffman Institute for the training of 'men in skill and virtue'. To it was later added a divinity school, and it assumed the name, Cuttington Collegiate and Divinity School when on February 22, 1889, Bishop Ferguson laid the cornerstone of the first building and named it Epiphany Hall on the Southern-most tip of Liberia, according to the historical accounts of Cuttington University. The School was named after Mr. Robert Fulton Cutting, of PECUSA, who in 1885 donated US\$5,000 to purchase a land on which to build a school. The primary purpose of the money was for the establishment of a manual labor farm, which would afford opportunities for practical instruction of boys in the mission schools and at the same time serve as a pattern for others. Stu-

dents came from all parts of Liberia and the West African region, and enrollment was limited to about 100 with high standards of admission and achievement. The institution put its first graduates of five persons in 1956.

The Rev. M.P.K. Valentine, M.A., became the First President of Cuttington Collegiate and Divinity School. The College awarded its first two certificates of proficiency in 1909 and was incorporated to give diplomas and grant degrees in 1922. In 1929 the College was forced to close down for disciplinary and financial reasons. It played an important role in providing classical education along with agricultural, industrial, theological and preparatory training.

In an interview, the current President of the University, Dr. Hermon Brown said the decision to establish the school given the fact that Liberia "had not matured in its internal administration

and its revenue collection to provide tertiary and vocational education in rural. Hence, the Episcopal Church came to the rescue. When no one else could."

Dr. Brown told The Exhibit magazine in an interview that the University now run three (3) programs from three (3) locations: Associate Studies from Kakata, Margibi County; seven undergraduate colleges and an institute of Peace Studies from Suakoko, Bong County and graduate studies from Monrovia -four (4) schools of Business and public administration, theology, education, and public health.

Since it came into operation, Cuttington University has achieved remarkable milestones through its extended regional access to higher education by starting the associate degree program in Margibi County; opening of the graduate school in Monrovia; retained high levels of entry in agriculture, nursing, and allied health fields; debate teams have been winning inter-university tournaments each year due to the school's high academic standard; catering services are outsourced and the management of the school's dormitories for more effective use of the institution's limited resources as well as a supportive alumni association home and abroad.

Maintaining the school's integrity requires someone high integrity sitting at the helm of administration. There could not have been anyone best suited than Dr. Hermon Brown with the earnest determination to improve the skills of the students and upgrade the learning and teaching environment at the school.

But why was Bong County chosen as the ideal location for the school? Dr. Brown told this magazine: "as a central province, it was rural and without easy access higher education. As a recognition that the Episcopal Church was fulfilling what essentially is the obligation of the state, President William V. S. Tubman granted 1,500 acres of land for as long as the church would provide education its people from on it."

Speaking on the uniqueness of the institution, Dr. Brown said: "first, it is a land grant educational institution; it partners with the Government of Liberia."

Secondly, he added that the school alone provides three levels of tertiary education and it is the first private institution in Liberia and sub-Saharan Africa; the first liberal arts four-year degree-granting, co-education private education university.

Additionally, Dr. Brown intimated that Cuttington is the only truly rural institution with headquarters outside of Monrovia and the first



**"HOW DO WE OPERATE SO LARGE AN INSTITUTION WITH SO LITTLE HELP FROM GOL? THIS REALITY HAS RENEWED OUR RESOLVE ON TWO FRONTS (1) TO FIND NEW WAYS OF FUNDING OUR OPERATIONS, AND (2) MAKING THE LITTLE WE GET TO COUNT FOR MUCH. REDUCING WASTE, FRAUD, AND BEING FISCALLY DISCIPLINED ARE OUT CATCHWORDS,"** Dr. Hermon

Brown opined.

university to grant a degree in nursing, public health, agriculture and theology, and the only school with truly residential facilities, campus for faculties, staff, and students. The CU President emphasized that the school give serious attention to classical education and its pursuit of high standards and discipline.

As one of the oldest tertiary institutions in Africa, what comes to mind when Cuttington University is mentioned: diligence to duty, service to the country, the crucible of trained minds and skilled hands; quality and employability and an old institution with the capacity to do more with little.

With the increasing demand for an up-to-date learning environment that conforms to contemporary learning dynamics, Dr. Brown stated that his administration is looking to upgrade classrooms and equipment; internet capability and library resources as well as institutional links to augment the school's academic standard.





# J Slught Takes Afro Beat to New heights

**T**he Crowd cheered and screamed as if Michael Jackson woke up from the great beyond for his last performance, the girls had tears in their eyes and the boys just couldn't wait to see this Artist that seem to be the god of sound in a Country as Unique as Liberia. The Master Of Ceremony would have felt he mentioned the wrong name, but knowing the weight of the Artist he called on Stage to perform, he was only glad that a Liberian Artist could be this loved and appreciated for being the change that there have always wanted to see in the music arena. J Slught gave them the performance of their life, Living them with

a rhetorical question in their minds, Why is J Slught such a wonder?

J Slught just got a juicy distribution deal with The Orchard, a subsidiary of Sony Music global and the number one distribution company in the world. You must have something worth marketing for the number one distribution company to come after your sound to sign a three-year deal with you. This year alone, J Slught has released five hit songs with three incredible videos; Amazing, No Money, Forgive me, Tempting and the most recent of them all, Sarafina. Everybody wants a piece of J Slught and this has reflected in his bookings, the demand for this Award Winning Afro Pop Artist wasn't all about Liberia as he touched down in the Gambia for EcoFest as he did in the previous year in Siera Leone for her Edition of EcoFest.

His demand moved from just performing at shows to the point that big companies like J Palm hiring his service as a Social Media Influencer to push their products and Anglers Bar and Grill who presently has the services of J Slught as their brand ambassador.

Music just got better right? Afro Beat infact because J Slught has transformed the culture of music with his God-given Singing talent and has extended the Liberian sound into a new trend with his exceptional Music Production skills. 2020 looks more promising for this great act, He is dropping an EP and would tour the world and win more awards for his hard work. Truly, it is very appropriate to say that J Slught is the transition in the Liberian Music game when it comes to taking Afro Beat to another Level.



# SATTA WAHAB'S NATURAL HAIR RENAISSANCE

What started as a personal hair care hobby in 2016 has become Liberia's fastest-growing natural hair care renaissance beyond the mere craving for profit to telling women to be beautiful. This is Naz Naturals, Satta Wahab's natural hair products manufacturing company.

I like to say 'I have created a business that goes beyond profit, beyond simply telling women and girls to be beautiful, I have created a solution-tool they can use to achieve confidence in their beauty'" Satta said in an interview with The Exhibit magazine.

According to the young natural hair product manufacturer, growing up in Liberia, she understood the challenges that many women were facing in a beauty industry that sought their dollars but didn't serve their needs. As a result, Satta averred that she became fiercely dedicated to empowering women to embrace their natural beauty.

It did not happen on the spur of the moment but through a regimented market research when "we identified two major problems: a large percentage of Liberians didn't want to use their natural hair because of the obsession with relaxed, straight and long hair that society has curated as the standard of beauty, and the cost of imported natural hair care products was exorbitantly high and unaffordable for the few who were inclining towards being natural."

"Naz Naturals was birthed as a solution to these problems," she maintained. "We're redefining beauty standards for women in Liberia by providing safe and affordable products for all their hair needs, and by also creating an environment where they can express and celebrate themselves and their African culture," Naz Natural founder stated.

Even though the natural hair revolution started with just US\$100 to produce 25 jars of the business' signature hair moisturizer, Naz Naturals is

## STRENGTHEN & GROW



The Palm Kernel Oil Collection

providing answers to natural hair lovers' quest for confidence and reliability in Liberia. In 2017, an African Black Soap Shampoo and a smaller version of our signature shea moisturizer have been added to the company's product line.

In 2018, Satta intoned, Naz Naturals realized the need for diversity in its products. So, the manufacturing entity launched the Kernel Oil line which consisted of a shampoo, conditioner, twist butter, hair growth oil, edge treatment, and detangler.

"The total inventory of our products currently includes our kernel oil collection that consists of shampoo, leave-in conditioner, twist butter, hair growth oil, edge treatment, and detangler and our coconut oil collection which consist of a shampoo, shea moisturizer, and a mini jar of our shea moisturizer. We also sell raw African black soap and raw shea butter," she disclosed with a production capacity of about 300 - 500 products monthly.

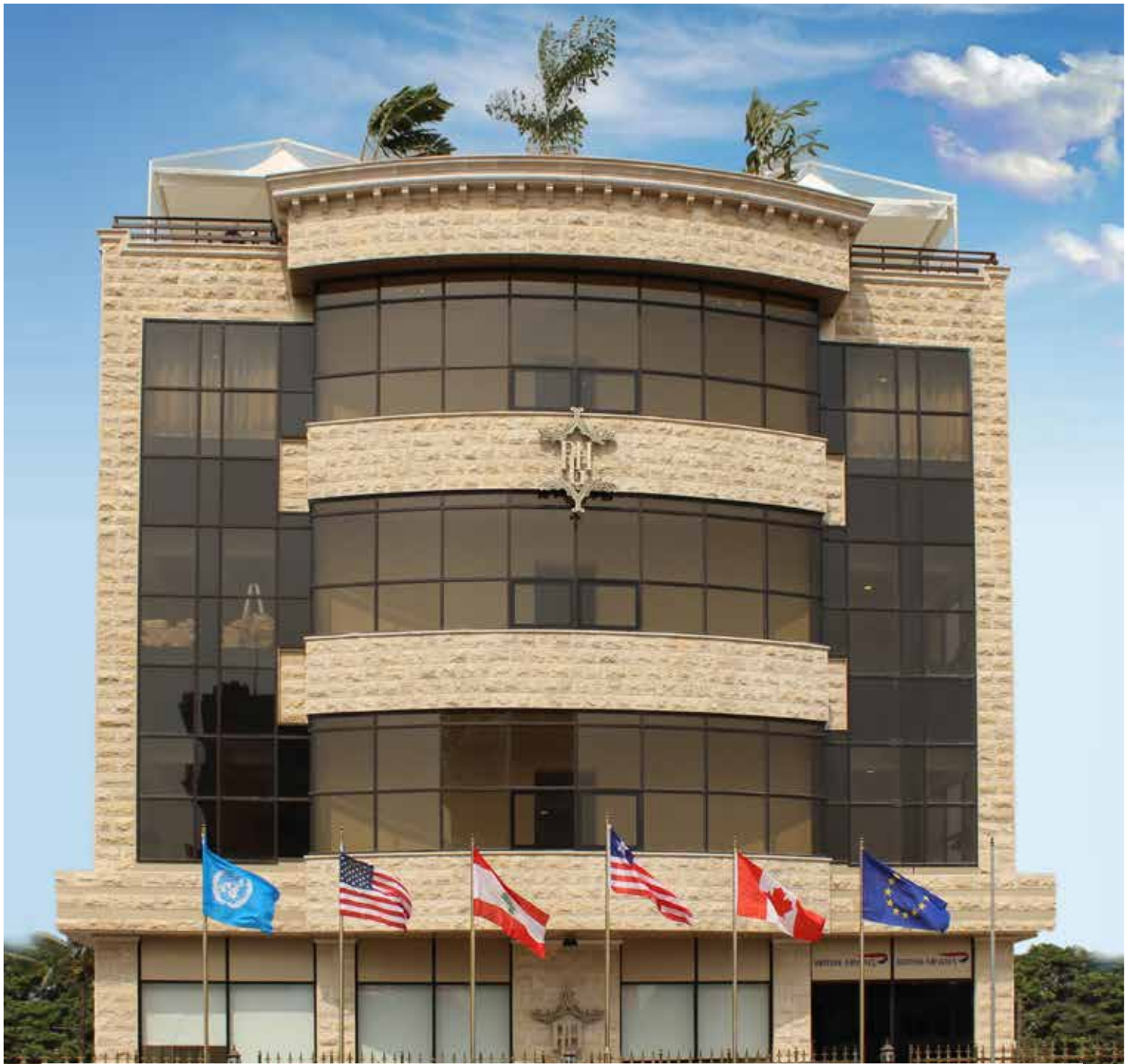
According to the innovator, entrepreneurship, since she started, has allowed her to contribute to society positively, by creating jobs and more importantly creating a community where young women and girls can feel confident and beautiful about who they are.

She said "soon, we are looking to invest in the resources to scale our production, improve our capacity, and enable us to implement a massive marketing push to drive sales across our product lines. More importantly, an increase in sales will mean an increase in the number of young women we are reaching and impacting across Liberia and potentially the subregion."

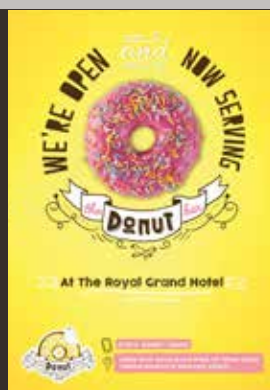
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# PCK

## - THE "I here" MAN



*H*is voice has a way of kindling an inimi table tranquil. It puts you on the edge of your seat to make moves while at the same time

keeping in meditation mood. That's Peter Cherubb Kamara, alias PCK- the melodic voice in the famous "I here record that took Liberia by storm.

He told The Exhibit magazine that the song "I here" was a message to society especially those entering into romantic relationships to stop hiding from their partners' parents. "It is normal that people especially men would not show themselves to their spouses' relatives. The music is meant to speak against such attitude" he said in an exclusive interview.

A native of Suakoko District, Bong County, PCK has lived music since he was a kid, starting among his peers in Sunday school in the church. Peter's passion for music has always inspired him to want to say something to someone through songs.

Given the uniqueness of his style of singing, Peter saw the need to team up with a rapper who would explain his lyrics for the everyday person to get his message. This resulted in the partnership with L'Frankie -the origin of the twosome: PCK & Frankie.

He released his debut song, "Mama" a tribute to his mother who has been a source of strength in every area of his life.

In Liberia, the music industry is a hustle. Pundits have opined that the people who are currently running the music industry have over the years promoted a culture of hustling instead of business building. PCK agrees with the assertion and hopes that it improves so that they would benefit from their work in the industry.

"Right now, there are no benefits. We are just trying to do our best to upgrade the quality of our songs while hoping that the music industry improves beyond its present status," he stressed.

The Liberian music giant revealed that the public should expect more goodies from him in the New Year 2020 with the release of his new album with twelve (12) danceable songs.

The Naymo Record frontline artist has many hipco songs and traditional gbema music to his credit as one of Liberia's promising stars.

# JEWEL HOWARD-TAYLOR

*- A Gift from Bong County to All of Africa*

From her humble beginnings in the small northern Liberian village of Zorzor, Lofa County; to becoming Liberia's 21st First Lady; to becoming a two-term senator for the 3rd largest county in Liberia; and recently becoming Liberia's first female Vice President, Chief Suacoco Dr. Jewel Ceaineh Ponofalon Howard-Taylor's career has experienced a steady rise thru the echelons of political power. Though this may seem an easy feat, it has not been a smooth ride, as she has gone through many political challenges but has weathered the storms on her way up the national ladder. Her vocal stance on many issues has made the Vice President controversial figure in the eyes of some. Yet she remains loved by many. Such an accomplished woman in today's world, should be celebrated for being a trailblazer and remaining relevant for over 20 years in Liberia's political arena. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Despite the criticism, she continues to impact the lives of many, especially as an advocate for women's empowerment, education, anti-rape messaging, mentoring and speaking on the need for more women voices at the tables of decision-making in Liberia and Africa. She also holds dear to her heart the passion to provide academic security and empowerment for young Liberian females so that there are more "JEWELS" in Liberia and across Africa;

Even at this level, she appears to be struggling to maintain her voice in a male dominated political space under the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) leadership. This, after staying afloat in churning political waters as a politician after more than 14 years. It has become increasingly evident that VP Taylor is aware of the challenges necessary to reach the pinnacle of life in a Liberian political career span. She knows a smooth ride is almost impossible, particularly in societies which believe that women should be in the home, whilst men sit at decision making tables. It is clear, that in order for her to succeed, Chief Suacoco must learn how to navigate the corridors of power in a manner quite different from any position she has previously held. It seems that this new assignment will tax her heavily.

In this exclusive interview with The Exhibit magazine, Jewel explains how it has been after two years in office and how she is managing to keep her passion for mentoring and educating girls, on track.

🎯 *What are your traditional names and how are they connected with the cultures of two dominant Liberian counties Lofa and Bong?*

🗨️ "As most Liberians whose lineage comes from two family links; I am privileged to belong to two strong tribal groupings through my bloodline - my mother Nora hails from Bong County, the home of the Kpelle people and my father Moses hails from Lofa County, the home of the Lorma people. As a result, I have two traditional names, CEATNEH from Lofa County, which means Successful Journey and carries with it, blessings of successful journeys. I have also been given the name PONOALON from Bong County, which means Light Which Cannot Be Hidden and carries with it, blessings to be a light wherever I go. Of course, my Christian name is JEWEL and the meaning is clearly evident.

It is generally believed in traditional settings, that names are not usually given lightly, firstly because they are a person's identity to his/her lineage and because a name carries with it a spiritual dimension of who that person will hopefully become. If this is true, I can then surmise that my name, JEWEL CEATNEH PONOALON, could mean - a successful journey for a precious thing, whose light can never be hidden."

🎯 *You always speak so proudly of your parents, with a glimmer in your eye; what kind of childhood did you have?*

🗨️ "When I see the chaos in today's world, as it relates to the actions and attitude of the next generation where children are parents of children themselves, I can only say 'Thank God for the time and season in which I was born'. Our generation was blessed. We had real parents and experienced a full childhood with all its benefits and when it was necessary,

we were punished. My siblings and I were loved, cared for, protected, encouraged and provided for. When the right time came, we could dream, spread our wings, fly and become the embodiments of our dreams and the hope of our parents. My parents weren't rich, I used to wonder how they took good care of us considering their salaries. I now understand why they had to work 3 jobs to secure our future. As a parent myself, I realize how tough it was for them. But thankfully, parents of those days knew that if you had children, it was your responsibility to care for them. So they were willing to make the necessary sacrifices to do that.

I was privileged to grow up in a time when children were also raised by the community elders, who kept an eye on all the children, chastising and punishing them when necessary, sometimes at the behest of parents. So though you were carefully watched at home, it extended to the community, and hence the characteristics of children were formed from these two ends to produce integrity, patriotism and hard work. Today, this communal type of training hardly exists. Families are fragmented and the foundation needed to groom good citizens is disappearing. Our families definitely need some "old time" child rearing, so that families can groom children with the important values such as character, integrity, commitment, and patriotism.

I always smile when I think of the system my parents used in rearing us, because



it wasn't all rosy. We got punished and pulled in many directions. Our generation as a result however, is more matured, wiser and [embodies] better ethics."

🎯 *What are you passionate about?*

🗨️ "I am passionate about women's empowerment and grooming the next generation of women leaders. I believe that women are the center of families, communities and the nation. So much so, that there is a coined phrase: 'if you train and capacitate a woman, you empower entire communities.' Another one says: that - 'any nation which ignores the potential of its women, will be left behind in its development efforts.'

But when one looks at the statistics, it is clear to see that the level of work needed to move many women to this leadership level requires the input of all. Some have seen the numbers and sit on the side waiting for others to fill in the gaps. Thankfully some others, including myself, have decided that they would play their roles and contribute their quota to this important social investment. In addition to the advocacy role I play in line with my constitutional duties, I established an NGO over 20 years ago, called the Mayo Starfish Foundation. The foundation has now been renamed the Jewel Starfish Foundation. Today, I am proud to say that this NGO has helped thousands of young girls, from 7th grade through university and continues to do so today. The organization has beneficiaries in all 15 counties of Liberia and hopes to expand its scope to neighboring countries in our region. As the Founder of the Jewel Starfish Foundation, I know that empowering, mentoring and educating girls will improve opportunities for the training needed by our women. This will result in our women being able to step up and step out, change national dynamics, and hopefully improve and provide the space for the full inclusion and participation of women at all levels of governance.



## What informed your decision to invest in the Jewel Starfish Foundation?

A My decision was informed by the teachings in the Holy Bible which states in Matthew, Chapter 6: 21 – ‘Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’

As a gender activist and humanitarian, I understand what it will take to make this dream a reality. It will take collective actions at all fronts. So we must not only speak about the issues, challenges and successes, we must also mentor others to join the movement. We must raise our voice on all available platforms, lift the issues at the relevant tables; but most importantly, intervene in ways which help solve the problems. This includes putting funds on the table.

This has become my passion and as long as I am able, so help me God, this will be my life’s work: to ensure that my organization produces more “JEWEL’s” in my Nation. I have been committed for 20 years to doing that and I remain committed to spending more than 60% of the donations received to support this agenda. Though it is demanding, I have seen what support to women empowerment programs has done to lift women out of dire poverty. It allows them to become change agents in their communities and across the world. It is so satisfying to see the accompanying changes in the lives of their families and those around them. I am committed to continuing to contribute to this women’s agenda. I am a staunch believer in the proverb that – ‘When you empower a woman, you empower families and communities.’

But it’s one thing to speak these words and another to ensure that you make your contribution in order to actualize them. I am an example of speaking and giving. I have also received funds from others, to make sure my vision succeeds. I want to take this time to say a very big ‘Thank You’ to all my donors being the wind beneath my wings. May God bless and prosper you all for your sacrificial gifts.”

## There are young women who aspire to be like you. What should they expect to overcome in order to achieve what you have?

A “I can say, without fear or favor,



that reaching one’s goal takes vision, passion, planning, learning, commitment and sacrifice whether you are male or female. In fact, if you are female the challenges are much more. But one who believes that they are on the right track, never ever gives up on their dreams until they become a reality. They work at it until it becomes a sustained success. Because dreams and visions should not be only for a time and a season. They should last, passed from one person to the next. Over the years, I have learned some simple formulas which form the foundation for a successful journey. A few of which are: 1) Find your passion or dream, 2) Believe that you can, 3) Activate your faith, 4) Learn all you need to know in order to make your dream a reality, 4) Make a commitment that you will work with all your strengthen order to make your dream a reality, 5) Become an expert in your field and build an institution, organization, or business in order to work at that goal or dream, 5) Give back to society to help others, 6) Find your voice, 7) Support and mentor others, 7) Finally, in your twilight years, remember to be a role model to show others that they can too I am of the belief that anyone who uses this simple formula, and makes it a part of their lifestyle, is bound to succeed. I am a witness to this formula for success. But beyond success, one must do their best to remain a positive role model for others to follow.”

## Does this mean that one can never fail in his/her pursuit?

A “Of course not, but what it means is that when you fail, fall down, or make mistakes, you must get up and keep going forward. Keeping in mind that life gives you the test before you learn the lesson. Through the difficulties, and they will come, one endures. It may at times seem like a failure and one may even think they are on the wrong path, but remember to always remain focused.

## How did you become the first Female Vice President of Liberia?

A “I am grateful firstly to the Almighty God, maker of Heaven and Earth, who has made all things possible. I am grateful for my birth into a wonderful family, to becoming the 21st First Lady of Liberia, to being elected Senator twice in 2005 and

2014; and then becoming the first Female Vice President of Liberia. I believe as the Bible says in Psalm 62:11 - God has spoken, and twice have I heard this; that all power belongs to God. By this word, I know that one cannot rise without divine destiny; so, it's not a coincidence that I am on this pathway.

Because of divine destiny, I am humbled and privileged to have been given this opportunity by my party, the National Patriotic Party. It is an honor also to have been chosen by His Excellency President George M. Weah and the Congress of Democratic Change to be Vice Standard Bearer of the Coalition of Democratic Change. I was also supported by the women of Liberia helping me to finally be elected by the people of Liberia in the October 2017 general elections.

So, I can clearly say that I became the first Female Vice President of Liberia, by a complex combination of God's grace and favor, destiny, preparedness, love and opportunity."

🎯 *How have you kept afloat in a male dominated political field, over the last 14 years?*

🗨️ "I know that I could not have reached this 2 year anniversary had it not been by the grace and mercy of the Almighty God; the prayers of fathers and fervent believers and by divine escape from traps and concocted plans of enemies; and by the wisdom, collaboration, consultations and partisanship.

After more than 20 years in politics, I have learned by trial and fire, that politics may be viewed as a 2-sided gold coin. On the one hand it is an ever-changing mine field of deception and intrigues. Whilst on the other hand, it is an ever-flowing field of dreams and aspirations, where the ground is tilled and seeds are sown for the common good and prosperity of all.

It thus demands that every day one must have the skills to navigate between these two corridors and either come out successful or not. It is sad to say, but important to note, that all women operating at this level will face many daunting challenges. Some solely because they are a female who steps outside the acceptable boundaries. Other challenges might come in other forms to ensure failure: setups, entrapment, frustrations, and more.

In a male dominated society such as Liberia, the situation is not unlike other African societies where not all men have accepted the idea of full women empowerment for development and progress. Most of them feel that women have a level which they should not cross, hence the old boys' network comes into play in full swing. Though our nation, Liberia, has seen the glass ceiling broken for female participation at the highest levels of governance, the perception and mindset has not changed much. There is still much more to be done to change this mindset. I can however say to other women, don't give up on your dreams. It is possible to reach and remain at the top (though very lonely).

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## Who are those that inspired you along your journey?

“My first inspiration was both of my parents. They were knowledgeable, focused, dedicated and hardworking. They also found the right balance between work, child rearing, community services and practicing their faith. As I grew older and became aware of the women’s movement, my role models were Winnie Mandela, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Madam Suacoco. All of them challenged the status quo and shifted the barriers which brought positive change and allowed other women to move forward. Today, the list of my role models has been expanded to include those who understand that the women’s movement must be supported and financed. They understand that the legacy needs to be continued by those who have been privileged to rise to higher levels of service. For one must pay for the price of greatness and continue to inspire others until there are many more women involved at all levels. If there are only a few women in high places it will make them an endangered species.”

## How is your current assignment as Vice President of Liberia?

“It has truly been a very challenging two-year period emotionally, spiritually, and physically. The almighty God has kept me and remains my rock, shield, and hope. As life is both physical and spiritual, I now know that campaigning and winning is much easier than governing, especially when one is part of a tri-partite coalition government.

The document which birthed the winning coalition put in place certain general agreements for its governance structure. Unfortunately, a lot hasn’t gone according to the way it was envisioned; especially as it relates to decisions surrounding our campaign theme - HOPE FOR CHANGE and how we should have worked to lift Liberia; under guarded by the distribution of job opportunities for competent coalition members. This situation is further heightened by the current trajectory in our nation which is experiencing serious socio-economic challenges, high unemployment, inflation and youth unrest amongst other issues. But I believe my capabilities are not fully harnessed in this period. It is my hope that this third year will bring better collabo-

ration and more meaningful success in the lives of our people.”

## Can this situation be remedied?

“As an optimist, I believe it certainly can be. At the coalition level, peace, unity and the spirit of consultations must be restored in order to create a platform for all parties to come back together and begin anew. They can do this with the knowledge that in unity there is strength. For it was the addition of the strength of the two other parties that allowed the CDC to win in 2017. This is a fact which some seem to have forgotten and now behave as if they got to national leadership all on their own. They



feel as if they need no one. But truthfully, if we go back to why we sought leadership the structures put in place to help us win; clearly we will realize that we need peace amongst the parties that will trickle down to the nation. We must remember that peace is the child of equity, fairness, and inclusion.

At the national level, the agreement envisaged that this would be a unified government, adherent to constitutional provisions, but with consultations among all three constituent parties and then the others. Unfortunately, this framework has not been adhered to thereby making it difficult to find the space for consultative voices and inclusion.

I believe this hampers the full strength of the potential to enhance governance and to include the creativity of all hands-on deck in order to fulfill our promises to the Liberian people. And because the Liberian constitution provides the framework for a very powerful Chief Executive, other stakeholders have gotten discouraged and partisanship and collectivity has largely disintegrated into squabbles for jobs. Oth-

ers who have opportunities seem to have forgotten that the promises made were wholistic - giving hope to Liberians in ways to change their lives for the better.”

## How does this affect the national psyche, especially Liberian youth?

“I believe the young people are disenchanted, yet still yearning for a ray of hope; to show them that this government has their best interest at heart and is still committed to putting in place opportunities to better their lives. You will hear them say on street corners that they voted for change. Change that would bring more opportunities to help them transform their

lives; not Government and its functionaries constantly engaging in continuous attacks, counter attacks, personal squabbles and leaked information.”

In most systems, those who make up the government should be an experienced and matured group of individuals. Those who have agreed to take up the mantle of governing in ways which lift the hopes of people, provide opportunities for engagement, and shows the path to a mutually rewarding future. This formula creates unity and peace for the forward march any nation needs.”

## Does this mean that the NPP is also having difficulties?

“Yes, truth be told, all three parties are having challenges, as shown by the not so pleasant exchanges in our national discussions since our ascendancy to power. I honestly believe that the NPP has more challenges relative to equal representation and inclusion at all levels. I believe this is so because the party structure that should have formed the vehicle for this journey has not been activated.

If the coalition’s party structure for engagement, governance and inclusion was in place and working, there would be space for discussions and consultations. This space currently isn’t being utilized and so the issues have boiled over and culminated into how can we work in government together? At this moment, it is clear we need to gather together and sort through these issues. I believe we can explore how structures can be put back in place. First we need to see who is responsible or not responsible for the lack thereof.

At the NPP level there are those who

believe that as Vice President, I am responsible for their lack of inclusion in the governing process and the lack of prominent positions for NPP partisans. I hope they know and believe that I have done all within my powers to remain engaged and that I will continue to advocate on their behalf.”

## How would you answer these criticisms?

“I would respond by saying I have proudly, led the NPP with my full commitment of time, resources and finances since 2011 as its Standard Bearer. I have continued to lift that flag up during these difficult times. I have sought the welfare of partisans and given hope to our them across the length and breadth of Liberia. Their livelihood has always been my priority. That is why in 2016, it was not difficult to gain their permission to form an alliance with the Congress for Democratic Change. I too, believed in the national programs set about to bring hope. Expressing these commitments is what galvanized our partisans. It paved the way for the coalition to win the 2017 elections. All leaders well aware that NPP was the last piece of the puzzle needed for the CDC victory. As Standard Bearer of my party, I have done my best and continue to advocate for jobs for NPP partisans. Fortunately, some partisans have been appointed, but not at the level we had hoped for. Especially given the huge contributions our partisans made for the sake of this victory. However, it must be clear that when recommendations are made, in the end the decisions for nominations rest in the ambit of the President, who alone wields the unshared constitutional authority on who gets appointed.

Nonetheless, we have all done our best to continue to seek better opportunities for our partisans. As stated in the agreement we hoped would be upheld by party leadership, constituent parties would sit and discuss equitable opportunities for our respective partisans. Frankly, this formula has not been used and we have resorted to

complaints, blame pointed at each other, and malicious lies to discourage some. But all is not lost, we will continue to advocate for these and other opportunities.”

## With this prevailing situation do you have any regrets?

“Life is full of challenges and people must deal with the challenges thrown at them. So, it is not about regrets. It is about mustering the courage and foresight to assess one’s situation and make the necessary adjustments to keep one’s dreams and desires on track. I believe, as one counted among the experienced, educated and passionate, female politicians, I am an asset to any system. I can contribute positively towards my nation. As a Senator, I believed I contributed positively to the national discourse and left lasting legacies during my tenure.

However, the Constitution provides a paradigm under which the functions of VP and national assignments could be delegated by the President, as He or She sees fit. Under this paradigm, I am also not prohibited from performing my civic responsibilities as a leader. And so I’ve been engaged in many other social programs, especially as it relates to women empowerment, girls education and sexual and gender based violence.

As a Party leader of the NPP, yes I do have regrets. I regret the way the coalition agreement between the three parties has been shelved leaving no room currently for the kind of inclusive consultation and engagement that formed the basis of this partnership.

## What do you hope history will say of you when you are gone?

“Gone where? I have no plans to go anywhere anytime soon! On a serious note, I pray for it be said that Jewel Howard Taylor, was first, a dedicated Christian worker, a patriotic citizen, a loving mother and a faithful steward. As a result of her dedication, she evolved into one of

Liberia’s foremost female politicians and a true agent of positive change. Her work contributed immensely to the growth and development of her nation and to the women’s agenda through empowerment programs, support to victims of sexual and gender-based violence, and the promotion of more inclusion and equity in governance. And that as a result of her positive stance and contribution to this agenda, the ratio of women versus men in positions of trust and governance increased greatly.”

## Then indeed you have much more work to do?

“Indeed, there are many more miles to cover before I sleep. But I have already begun my assignment. My goal is to continue working and impacting my generation until my creator calls me.”

### 250 Years Old Cotton Tree Falls

In April 2019, Liberians awoke to the shocking news of the country’s historical cotton tree having fallen after more than 250 years of existence on historic Providence Island.

The site marks the genesis of the integration of freed American slaves into African society.

For centuries the old cotton tree existed as living evidence and memory of a place where freed slaves from the United States would sit to discuss their course of action for the country known today as Liberia. The once captured and oppressed, became masters of their destiny upon arrival on this island in 1882. Their numbers would have a great impact on the new nation and the formation of its identity. The island serves as a testament to hope in humanity after being subjected to the grave injustices of American chattel slavery. The small parcel land sits in the Mesurado River and boasts of a landing dock, foundations of original settlement homes, and an ancient water well. The island has served as a trade post and most famously, the original “Point of Return” and first anchor place for freed Africans returned home to the continent.”



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# Liberian Snacks

*Most times when talking about Liberian dishes, what comes to mind are savory foods such as rice, soups, and fufu. However, Liberia has many other delicacies. Like most people, Liberians enjoy candies and snacks, though they prefer them homemade. Here are a few homemade Liberian candies and snacks you might want to try.*



### Milk Candy

Made from condensed milk, milk candy is the most popular candy in Liberia; almost everyone has had some. This delicious caramel candy is easy to make—all you need are a can of condensed milk and vegetable oil. Nutmeg and ginger are optional. Pour the condensed milk into hot oil and stir until the mixture is caramel brown. Once cool, make little balls and place a thumbprint in the center. ●

### Coconut Candy

Like beniseed candy, coconut candy is also easy to make and can be seen at many snack shops around town. The preparation is similar to beniseed candy, though you'll need to replace parched beniseed with parched coconut flakes; culled from Lip-Positive blog. ●



### Beniseed Candy

In Liberia, sesame seed is commonly known as beniseed, which is used to make beniseed candy. This tasty candy is easy to make, making it accessible at every snack shop around town. Only two ingredients are needed to make beniseed candy: sugar and beniseed. What you'll need to do is parch sesame seed until crunchy and melt the sugar until golden brown. Next, insert parched sesame seed into the melted sugar and stir. Once cool, make little balls. ●

# KPORLOYAH

## *The Kpelleh Man's Favorite*

It is pepper soup in its original state but we would add red oil to change the color. The soup is easy and fast. You can add ingredients for your liking.

That's kpolloyah- the Kpelleh Man's favorite cuisine.

Ma Bendu Pewee said Kpelleh men have a long history of working for rubber companies in Liberia when the crop was the fastest-growing commodity in the world and the demand for it was high. So our husbands would walk in speed. Hence the time for meal break with as a snap of fingers. We (the wives) found a way to ensure that at least something was available for them to eat as they would hurry back to work.

She informed The Exhibit magazine that it is how kpolloyah was identified as the fastest sauce so that the men would not eat plain white rice.

"It became so well known among us as the idea went from one home to another. This was so because if you miss one minute of work time, you would risk being fired - a piece of news that no family wanted to hear amid a scarcity of jobs and virtually non-existent judiciary at the time. No justice for the poor," Oldman Kollie narrated to The Exhibit magazine at his house in Gbatata.

"We were caught between getting something small to eat and not losing our jobs. We had to find a way to get something in the stomach for energy," Ishmael Lomaz added with his face downcast.

Kpolloyah is generally an indication that the Kpelleh women are humble and hold their husbands in high esteem. An elderly man in Saukoko said women were also afraid of invoking the wrath of their husbands by not being able to meal available in time.

The Exhibit magazine found that this innovation is being applied across the country as people of the largest tribe in Liberia migrated to other parts of the country. It was discovered that the sauce is used today for those into farming activities due to the easy way it is prepared.



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# Wongan Waterfall

## - Tourist Attraction In Obscurity

PHOTO CREDIT: DAILY OBSERVER

*In the middle of Kokoya District forest in Boisien Bong County sits the deafen roaring Wongan waterfall whose precipice over the torrents. It is a rare gem that exudes the beauty of mother nature and the tranquility that it brings. It enters the St. John River and companioned by an Island. The surrounding forest holds wild animals that are unique to the area.*

**T**he approximately 60 meters high waterfall's stunning beauty stands out when it surrounds the Wongan Island beneath it.

Although the development of the area is non-existent at the moment, locals have taken the charge to protect their tourism assets by banning hunting and farming activities to keep the biodiversity of the area from being destroyed.

"The waterfalls are not developed yet but we know the value it has even in its undeveloped state. As you can see, Wongan appeals to visitors several vantage points, like the "falling edge point" which gives visitors a panoramic view of the waterfall; the cascade and the boiling pot where the waterfall enters into the St. John River. We know that as many people come to see the place, the development will follow and

our efforts to protect it will be rewarded," Stephen Flomo said in an exclusive interview with The Exhibit magazine in Kokoya District.

There is no restaurants, hotels, drinks or otherwise but visitors have been going to Wongan waterfall to experience nature in its true beauty mesmerizingly with a park that is boosted by a thick patch of forest, which is home to a variety of plants and animal life that are exclusive to the area.

Activities, seasons and location

Stephen stressed that the waterfall is ideal for many activities including fishing and traditional canoe rides, swimming, and diving from the top of the waterfall for adventurous tourists.

The Wongan waterfall lies on the northern bank of a village in Boisien, Kokoyah Statutory District, Bong County. From the

town, it is accessible via a footpath that is a 55-minute hike.

The footpath in itself is an experience to take in, in addition to the anticipation of the waterfall and the surrounding jungle. The path provides visitors with a good selection of traditional food while en route to the waterfall.

Locals envision that Boisien town will have better accommodation, like hotels, guest houses, and supermarkets for visitors who would come to witness a deep tradition that has its foundation in the people's culture.

Despite poor accommodations, Wongan waterfall is a unique place of mesmerizing beauty, exciting activities, or simply to lounge in the sheer tranquility.

However, Wongan and Gbedin waterfalls, unlike Kpatawee, remains relatively unknown to the public but are exciting places to visit. Gbedin waterfall is between 25-30 meters in height and is located in Nimba County, off the road between Ganta and Sanniquellie.

The residents are unreservedly hopeful that when the story of Wongan waterfalls is told, the Government of Liberia or a private investor would see the need to develop the waterfalls so that jobs would be created for the locals especially the young people who are on the clock in preserving the sanctity of the area.



# Blue Lake

## -Serene Charm in Bong Mines

It is scorching weather on the Holiday of November 29 in Liberia -a day set aside to celebrate the birth date of Liberia's longest-serving President William V. S. Tubman. The stalk of dust is high in the air as vehicles of the new concessionaire move hurriedly from both sides of the laterites road. This is Bong Mines in the middle of whose plateaus sits the still dark Blue Lake -a serene charm about 30ft below.

"It is almost immovable even at the strike of a stone. "The Lake came as a result of a pit left behind by the former German-Italian owned Bong Mining Company that operated on the borderline of Margibi and Bong Counties in 1958 through the late 1980s. Many people have come to sit near

the Lake. Some people would venture to swim at the peril of not knowing what creature is beneath the still waters," James Suakollie told The Exhibit magazine at his small hut situated few blocks away from the mouth of the Lake.

He says the surrounding of the Lake is ideal of camping outings but only a handful of people have used the area since. "Tourists would not regret if they decided to visit Bong Town. Besides the Lake, there are other tourists' sites here that would marvel anyone. The relic of the Bong Mining Company is everywhere for anyone to see even for historical purposes," James added.

"Most of these tourism features are found wanting. Nobody is thinking about them

in spite of the huge potential for employment and revenue generation for the country and the communities in which these things are found," Suakollie averted.

The middle-aged man strongly believes that inclusive growth as espoused by the Government of Liberia will not happen on the spur of the moment. He argued that there must be an uncompromising commitment to see that policy goes beyond the usual paper trail.

"All our development plans are always in the pipeline. It is now hard times that we flush them with strong detergents otherwise growth in the economy will elude us for generations. That pipe must be suffocating now because a lot of things are stuck in it. We have to back our statements with tangible actions," Suakollie maintained.

This lake, according to Bendu Flomo, is quit pivotal to bring tourists to Bong Town to get economic activities back to prewar status when Bong Mines was the place everyone wanted to visit for merrymaking and sightseeing. "Most of us young people are jobless. The Chinese company that took over the old Bong Mining Company concession area does not have the capacity now to employ us because iron ore price is plummeting at the detriment of the company's survival. So, when Blue Lake is developed to invite tourists, the locals will benefit directly because these people will be escorted to the sites. They would get local food and lodging. These things will put monies in the pockets of the ordinary people," Bendu told The Exhibit magazine.



## Traditional Horn of Bong County

It represents the mode of communication for our tradition. When it is blown, all members of the Poro and Sande societies would know that the "country devil" - traditional masked dancer is on its way or already visiting a particular town. This is the traditional horn of Bong County.

The secret societies, known as Poro and Sande (Pfi~ and 181e~ in Kpelle), influence the political and social aspects of Kpelle life.

They represent arbitrary authority and

are powerful forces for preserving traditional values. They educate the young in traditional arts including such skills as ironworking, drumming, and dancing. They provide for the preservation of oral history. They are basically, but not always, conservative and resistant to change. The spirits of the Poro are essences of the arbitrary cultural authority. They sometimes appear in public as masked dancers.

The traditional horn is used mainly by town criers to alert people of the presence of the devil.



## Bird Watching at Libassa



In its forest of palm trees Libassa Ecolodge hosts over 200 species of birds making it an ideal venue to discover the vibrant colors and visually astonishing uniqueness of these amiable creatures.

Birdwatching or birding is a form of wildlife recreation in which the observation of birds is regarded as a “citizen science”. It can be done with the naked eye, through a visual enhancement device like binoculars and telescopes, or by listening for bird sounds. According to Mr. Jerry C. Garteh of the Society for the Conservation of Nature, birding in Liberia started after his organiza-



tion conducted several bird-counting initiatives and scientific research on the number & variety of birds in Liberia and their ecosystem. “We discovered that birdwatching is something that nature lovers cherish for recreation around the world. So we officially started birding in Liberia as an activity in 2017. There are 95 members of the bird club in Liberia now,” Jerry told The Exhibit magazine in an interview. He added that recent statistics show that Liberia has 695 species of birds in its forest. ‘Twenty-seven of these birds are of global concern because they are endangered meaning their population is reducing perhaps as a result of their habitats being destroyed. Some of the threatened species of birds include the Gola Malimbe, the Rufous Fishing-owl, the White-breasted Guinea fowl, the White-necked Picathartes, the Yellow-bearded Greenbul and the Yellow-casqued Hornbill.

The birdwatching club is led by Ms. Beatrice Jaeger. Jerry serves as the guide who ensures visitors & tourists are escorted throughout the activity. Participation from Liberian locals remains scanty.

## 250 Years Old Cotton Tree Falls

In April 2019, Liberians awoke to the shocking news of the country’s historical cotton tree having fallen after more than 250 years of existence on historic Providence Island.

The site marks the genesis of the integration of freed American slaves into African society.

For centuries the old cotton tree existed as living evidence and memory of a place where freed slaves from the United States would sit to discuss their course of action for the country known today as Liberia. The once captured and oppressed, became masters of their destiny upon arrival on this island in 1882. Their numbers would have a great impact on the new nation and the formation of its identity. The island serves as a testament to hope in humanity after being subjected to the grave injustices of

American chattel slavery. The small parcel land sits in the Mesurado River and boasts of a landing dock, foundations of original settlement homes, and an ancient water well. The island

has served as a trade post and most famously, the original “Point of Return” and first anchor place for freed Africans returned home to the continent.”



# *Cursory Review Of* **GBARNGA**

*Traditionally in ancient times, hunters would seek the counsel of witch doctors on how to establish a new town. So this witch doctor ordered the hunter to get a black hunting dog and tie a wooden hook around its neck. He would take the dog into the bush and the law was that the town should get set up where the hook has lurked into the ground. This is how the town now called Gbarnga was established. It was originally called "Gbagbegan" which means the hook. As time went on, people mispronounced the name and it became Gbarnga, according to 100years old, Dakpana Flomo T Barwor . This was in the 1920s- several years before Bong County became a county and part of Liberia.*



**A**cross its dust-laden streets, Gbarnga inundated with humility, diligence, kindness, and hard work that keep the city on the clock. Situated Northeast of Liberia's capital, Monrovia, Gbarnga is the political capital city of Bong County.

Like many parts of the country, Gbarnga had its pinch of the Liberian civil unrest particularly being the base for Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia. Cuttington College, a private, Episcopal-affiliated institution, is located near the town. Its campus was once home to the Africana Museum, which was destroyed during the civil war.

According to Liberia's outdated census, Gbarnga has a population of 34,046. This includes 16,080 males and 17,966 females. Hence, the city in Central Liberia is the fourth-most populous urban area in the West African nation.

The hilly city is a major transit position for those traveling to Nimba, Lofa as well as Grand Bassa.

In an interview with The Exhibit magazine in Gboata Town, Oldman Jorwateh Kollie said Gbarnga from time immemorial has been a place of joy and celebration for everyone, especially traditional people. "During those

days, we did not have hotels and other accommodations for people to lodge like now. But people used to come to Gbarnga. Many national events were held here before the war," Oldman Kollie narrated.

For motorcyclist James Flomoku, Gbarnga is now positioned for visitors (tourists) to come because unlike in the past, there are modern accommodations here like Passion Hotels and other facilities as well as entertainment centers. "Our traditional palm wine is available as well for those who are interested in natural wine directly from the farm. We are humble and hard-working. That is why people consider us to be stupid but we are not. The Kpelle people believe in serving others as our tradition dictates and it is also good for society," Flomoku told The Exhibit magazine on the outskirts of the City on the road to Gbatata.

Marie Yallah, a 24yrs old Student of the Bong Technical College, is optimistic that tourism will go a long way in helping the local economy to grow. This, she said, is critical because those small issues at the lower level of the economy would engender the real inclusive growth national government speaks about from time to time.

"When tourists come, bike riders would make money by transporting them to tourists' sites. Hotels owners will make money and employ more people as the demand for their services grows. You can imagine the rippled effect of what will happen," Ms. Yallah opined.



## Women Engineers:

### Stepping Out Of the Cocoon Of Mediocrity



From time immemorial, women were placed at the backseat in everything including professional life and family decisions. Today, the Society of Women Engineers in Liberia (SWEL) is rewriting that story with a bold statement that women are supposed to be on the table of professionalism even in areas that were deemed a 'no-go zone' -engineering by shoving themselves out of the cocoon of mediocrity. They are breaking frontiers amid the tempest of stumbling blocks.

Established seven (7) years ago, the organization's membership of professional female engineers is growing with several chapters across the country and in various institutions of higher learning: Stella Maris Polytechnic (SMP) Chapter – Montserrado County; University of Liberia (UL) Chapter – Montserrado County a) Booker Washington Institute (BWI) Sub-Chapter (Margibi County); Monrovia Vocational Training Center (MVTC) Sub-Chapter; Grand Bassa Community College (GBCC) Chapter – Grand Bassa County; Lofa County Community College (LCCC) Chapter – Lofa County and William V. S. Tubman University (TU) Chapter – Maryland County.

For the President of SWEL, Mrs. Ruth Coker-Collins, the idea is not just about putting a group of professional women under one umbrella but ensuring that they have the opportunity to practice what was taught in the classroom.

"We want the government and private sector actors to entrust us as professional engineers with many years of experience so that our younger ones can get an opportunity to do an internship.

SWEL's continuing objectives are to influence the minds of young female students

into believing that a technical profession is a desirable career aspiration and to empower young women engineers and technocrats to meet the challenges of the male-dominated technical profession.

Already, the group has succeeded in sending engineering students to work as interns on many projects including the Somalia Drive Road, the Liberia Institute of Public Administration headquarters, among others.

Massa Nuemene, one of the engineering students from the University of Liberia, who worked as interns on the LIPA headquarters project said she was inspired to pursue engineering career having seen a lady supervising a road construction project in Paynesville.

"It was exciting working with the professionals predominantly male. I was lost on my first day seeing what I learned in class before me. But the people who handled the project were very helpful. They gave me practical knowledge and responded to all my questions. I humbled myself because I wanted to learn from them. Now, I can confidently say that I can supervise a storey building," Massa said in an interview with The Exhibit magazine.

The University of Liberia Senior Engineering student pointed out that engineering like many other things in life is difficult but you can do anything once you put your mind to it. "Engineering is seen as a difficult career for both male and female," she added.

For Fatu Jalloh, a Senior Student reading Civil Engineering at Stella Maris Polytech-

nic University said the opportunity provided to her to see a practical version of what she is taught in the classroom through SWEL was an eye-opener. "I learned a lot. Now, when I go back to the classroom, I would know that whatever the lecturers would say are real," she added.

Mekie Kamara, a Junior student studying Civil Engineering at Stella Maris Polytechnic University, told The Exhibit magazine that she was blindfolded when she saw the things she was taught in school real. "My interest in engineering was driven by my desire to contribute to the development efforts of my country," Mekie stated.

SWEL Vice President, Mrs. Deena Cooper Morgan intoned that as a result of this network, many female engineers have shared opportunities with their colleagues and the rate of intimidation is taking a downturn. She added that whenever there is a job opening in a particular company, one of us who may have a connection with that company would recommend a friend and the feedbacks have been positive.

"When we were in school, there was a lack of opportunities for women engineers in terms of access to internships and jobs. At some point, women were asked to trade their pride in exchange for an internship opportunity. So, we came together as a network to rewrite that history," Engineer Cooper-Morgan said.

"We launched a project to build a Youth Resource Center to provide technical literature and resources for technical students. Presently, we have purchased two acres of land in Marshall City, Margibi County for this purpose," she disclosed.





# Redimere Chocolate:

## Local Content, International Quality

Mrs. Glenn proposed to her students that chocolate making would be included on the list of food they were processing given that cocoa was readily available. Mrs. Glenn is the Head of the Agriculture Department of LICC and the instructor for the course.

The proposal fell on fertile soil in Konah and Joshua as they incessantly reminded Anna of their preparedness to put the proposal for a business into action.

"In that class, students have the opportunity to learn how to add value to agriculture products in Liberia. Some of the things they've been working on are how to use solar driers to dry vegetables and fruits; how to use sugar and salt to preserve things like fruits and meat; how to make juices; how to make jams and jellies, etc. So one day, we decided that we would try chocolate making. And we did it without machines or equipment. It tasted a little rough but we started working on it more and more," LICC Agriculture Department head told The Exhibit magazine in an interview.

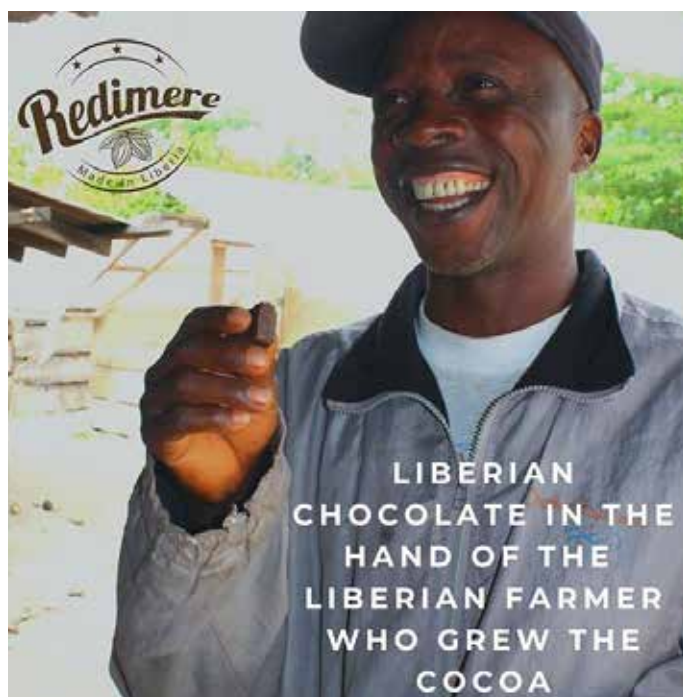
To improve the quality of the product, she said "we were able to get a small home scale-sized machine from the US and bring it and we started making chocolate as a part of that class. And since then, Konah and Joshua have been the brains behind the success of the innovation because they have been working very hard to make it happen." Hence, they started packaging and sending it to Monrovia for sale in November 2018 with a present production capacity of up to one and a half tons of

“The idea peddled in a mixed cloud of doubts and excitements” -Konah Drogbay, a native farmer from a cocoa-rich region in Nimba County, has never heard of any of Liberia’s cash crops being processed into finished products since 1964 when he was born. He and his co-founder Joshua Zemah were excited that finished products, particularly chocolate, are being produced within their lifetime no matter how long. Thanks to the American missionary couple, Anna and Nathan Glenn from Hope In Harvest, an organization working in the agriculture sector in Northeastern Liberia, they were introduced to the idea.

“When LICC came and disclosed that it could be done in Liberia, I didn’t believe it. That would be the first time for cocoa products to be produced in Liberia. Most of the time, we would send our raw materials to other countries. For example, iron

ore is one of the raw materials we send out. When she suggested that we produce chocolate, I was so excited. It thrilled my heart. That’s what gave birth to the idea of producing Redimere Chocolate,” Konah stated with glee. Redimere is a Latin word that means “Restored.”

As part of the Liberia International Christian College (LICC) Agriculture Department’s Food Processing and Preservation Class,





cocoa beans per year.

The demand for the chocolate is growing steadily and Monrovia is the business' primary target of distribution through a local delivery service provider.

Redimere Chocolate is of high quality with no additives or oil. It is 30% sugar and 70% cocoa beans. It is the best among the present brands available on the Liberian market. This, according to Mrs. Glenn, has drawn interest from people who are buying chocolate for baking cakes or cookies, and she is working with Konah and Joshua to get the chocolate in groceries stores soon while working on how to make other types of chocolates since the equipment the business has now can only produce dark chocolate.

The progenitors of Redimere Chocolate believe their innovation should be an opener for policymakers that investing in agriculture is the surest way to get the Liberian economy off its backward status.



The only challenge being faced is the consistent availability of grade one cocoa which is required for the production of the quality of the chocolate Redimere is making. But Anna remains optimistic that it is surmountable with the right education and incentives that the business is providing to cocoa farmers.

Note: Guests are welcome to come to visit the chocolate making facilities located on the campus of the Liberia International Christian College (LICC) in Ganta City

to see how the chocolate is made and purchase some straight from the kitchen. If in Monrovia, you can purchase their products from the LIBDelivery website (<https://libdelivery.com/shop/product/frequently-bought/licc-chocolate/>) and have them delivered straight to your door. Please call Joshua Zemah (0770209039) with inquiries or to plan your visit. Email redimereLIB@gmail.com for questions, ideas, or to place custom orders for your party, workshop, or special gift.



# Passion Accommodations:

## The Charm of Bong's Hospitality



**A**t the top of the quiet neighborhood of the Gboveh Hill Community in Gbarnga adjacent, the Presidential Palace sits the towering Passion Hotel don in lime green color glittery looking over a pool where customers' satisfaction is the driver of passion.

The three-storied facility stands tall providing visitors with the beautiful natural green scenery that welcomes you into the unpolluted natural air in the countryside of Liberia. The thirty bedroom facility is furnished with comfortable beds and all amenities to provide customers a good night's rest after their travels.

At this facility, customers are provided the option to shower with hot or cold water after a long day of work.

About that work-out schedule, begin your day with a workout using Passion Hotels newly opened gymnasium fully equipped with a treadmill, bicycle, and other modern fitness equipment to keep you in shape even while away.

A continental breakfast is served each morning at the property. Passion Hotel offers a terrace. When guests need guidance on where to visit, the reception will be happy to provide advice.

Don't feel like driving a mile to you training sessions, The Peter Y. Varpilah Multi-purpose Hall (PYVH) is equipped with state of the art equipment (a projector for your presentation, public address system, internet) ready to host your workshop or special events for up to 100 participants.

Wondering where to get food, the restaurant has the best of delicious and nutritious Liberian and European cuisines prepared by experienced chefs. The Hotel facility will do your workshop catering at a very reasonable cost.

According to the Manager of Passion Business, Mrs. Dabah Varpilah, told newsmen in Gbarnga that going into the private sector is far better than taking a public job. Mrs. Varpilah was Deputy Director-General of LISGIS but left the government to go full time into her private business.

Now, she disclosed that there are more than 50 persons in the employ of the Business.

"How many people did I have to employ when I was in government?" Just a few people including my house nurse and my driver but now I am an employer of over 50 persons including those from the two hotels – Passion One and Two, Passion Farm and the Foundation for Children's Recreation Center (FORCE) School," she said.

Mrs. Varpilah said, "I feel very good con-



tributing to the development of my country in this manner than waiting for paychecks every month."

Passion Business is one of the highest employment entities in Bong County; many of whom in the employ of the center are single mothers, who can't afford their daily bread.

"If Passion had not created jobs for some of the people we have in our employ, they would have been part of the many unemployed, who are contesting the city," she said.

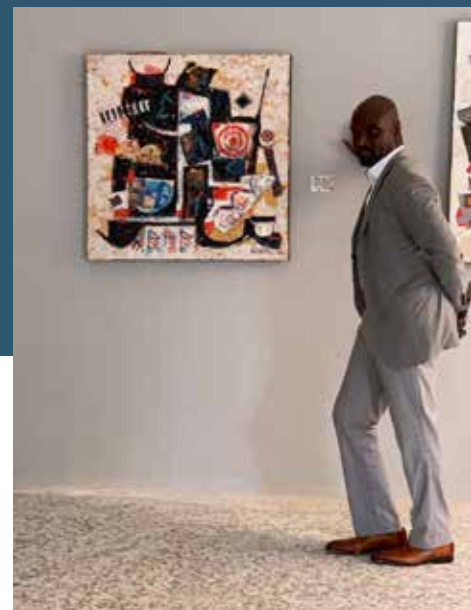
Mrs. Varpilah stressed that the business is not only for profit-making, but also intended to help the needy; adding: "We reach out to people who are in need, too."

Passion Hotels are home away from home.



# Baba and Mama SHABU

- Painting History In Picture



**H**e started painting and tapestry as a teenager and ever since then the craft became his life despite his thirteen (13) years spell in Government through the Ministry of Lands, Mines, and Energy. Omar El Shabu, widely known as “Baba Shabu” met his wife Mama Shabu with an undiluted passion for painting pictures of historical and cultural relevance through songs. Mama would sing and Baba would paint the words in tapestry. Conversely, Baba would paint a story and Mama would make music out of it. Mama Shabu has a musical group in the 1970s in Liberia called “Kormasasa”.

At 90 years, Baba still holds that his dream of seeing painting and other artworks are giving the deserved attention remains alive amid the tempest of challenges.



“I plan to go around and collect the works of Liberian artists and bring them to the forefront. For example, there are artworks in various government buildings but they would just pass by them without recognizing the contributions of artists towards the foundation of Liberia. At the entrance to the Ministry of Lands and Energy, there is a beautiful mosaic over the door. It was done by one of the renowned Liberian artists whose contributions to visual arts are still alive with us today. Even in the building, my work is everywhere including along the staircase,” the Liberian international painter told The Exhibit magazine at his home in Gbarnga Bong County where they moved in the 1990s but fled intermittently during the heydays of the Civil War.

In spite of the cold shoulders given to the arts and craft industry in Liberia, the



Baba added that he would love to see the memory of those years when artists would take their works to the African plaza in Sinkor for collectors to pick relived to encourage artists. He is urging the present government to buy artists' work and place them in public buildings so that artists would know their career path is not overlooked.

For Miesha "Mama" Shabu, the ultimate goal is to inspire reconnection to the extent that when "someone is looking for something old to relive an inspirational memory, we should be able to make it available."

The pair's unquenched desire for African culture is visible even in the part of Gbarnga they chose to live. "When we moved here, people were concerned that we didn't cut the bush entirely. We said no. We can't live without the bush. Today, if you need a herb to treat malaria, we have it here. We also have honey here. There are no mosquitoes," Mama stated.

She disclosed that as part of their desire to impact the next generation of painters, they have artists in training who are being trained to do most of the painting works under the direct supervision of Baba while conducting art classes for children in Gbarnga on weekends.

They said "trust" which is represented in one of the



symbols used in the artwork has been a major factor that kept them together through more than 55 years of their lives as husband and wife

sage artist continues to delve deep into centuries of African history and philosophy, emerging with nuggets of wisdom on canvas and cloth.

These are not Liberian quilts, though that art form has earned its esteemed place on the world stage -in the personal collections of queens and congresswomen. No, the ones by Shabu are tapestries -clothes that tell stories by their designs.



Tour Liberia is a tourism website that was developed and is operated by New Technology Solution Inc, to enhance and promote the tourism sector of Liberia. It is Liberia's first centralized tourism website that allows travelers to book Hotels, Guest-houses, Tourist sites, Tour Operators, Car Rental Services, and many more. This platform enables business owners to set up their businesses example; Hotels, Cabs, Guest House, etc. to be booked by customers who want to use those services. visit TourLiberia on [www.tourlib.online](http://www.tourlib.online) to register your business free of charge. Terms and conditions apply.



# Miss Tourism 2019 LINDA DOE - The Go-Getter



Since her nativity, Linda Doe has always aspired to be a Beauty Queen. She would go on to become the Queen of her High School –the Konola Mission High School in 2015 where she was honored as the Most Eloquent Female student. Linda’s desire to wear a beauty crown led to participate in Miss Stella Maris Polytechnic University but lost in 2018. Her bright spark was not dammed. Thanks to the impervious support of her parents: Mr. and Mrs. Reginald W. Doe, Sr.

Being a go-getter, Miss Doe kept her dream alive notwithstanding the loss at her university’s beauty pageant.

“I lost the Miss Stella Maris Crown but I said to myself that my determination to succeed is strong enough. So, I am not going to allow failure to overtake me. I used that to live the life of my dream by working hard for the title I have now,” the Miss Tourism Liberia Crown holder told The Exhibit magazine in an emphatic tone.

The tourism sector has for time immemorial remained untapped and undeveloped in spite of its huge potential for employment and inclusive economic growth. But Linda is impressed that at a time she is holding the crown of the sector, interest is being shown in tourism by the Government of Liberia and private sector actors. “People are seeing the beauty in the tourism sector. For too long, our tourist sites have been used for waste deposits. It is only now that we have a lot of private organizations helping to make the tourism sector better especially with the Liberia National Tourism Association (LINTA)



—the organization that is working extremely hard to put Liberia on the map of tourism in the world.

Having realized her dream of winning a Beauty Crown in Tourism, Linda has begun working with other tourism crown holders across West Africa to harness ways through networking that Liberia can benefit from their experience and knowledge of how tourism has been a blessing for them.

Already, she has extended hands of friendship to Miss Tourism Ghana and they are looking forward to implementing projects beneficial to both countries –Ghana and Liberia as well as reaching out to other West African Tourism Queens.

More than that, Miss Tourism Liberia 2019 is involved in community service through the Destiny Recovery Program as Goodwill Ambassador to rehabilitate and reintegrate disadvantaged youths who are victims of substance abuse and homelessness.

“As part of my community service, I volunteer to teach adolescent girls modeling, public speaking skills and organizational skills. I see this as my way of inspiring them to reach their full potential,” Miss Doe added.

Miss Linda S. Doe holds an Associate Degree in General Agriculture from Stella Maris Polytechnic University and presently pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree in General Agriculture from the same University.

The 23years old Miss Tourism Liberia is empowering her peers in peer education, a workshop for adolescent girls to prevent them from peer pressure and teenage pregnancy through her Reginald’s Foundation.



# Titilope Fakuade:

## Lonestar MTN First Female CIO And A Go-Getter

Titilope Fakuade is the first female Chief Information Officer (CIO) in the history of Lonestar Cell MTN and a true trailblazer. She is a seasoned CIO with a wealth of experience, spanning over 17 years in highly competitive markets, with 13 of those years spent as a member of the MTN family. She has a proven track record in IT Leadership and has delivered numerous new and exciting value propositions to maintain market leadership. Titi holds a Master's of Business Administration and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physics. She's a true hot-shot technology leader, a proud wife, and a mother of two children.

How has her journey to the top post in Lonestar Cell MTN history unraveled? Titi explains to The Exhibit in an exclusive interview:



### ☪ Who is Titilope Fakuade?

Ⓐ I am a business technology leader who is results-oriented and customer-focused with a drive for capacity development and leading people. With a science background specifically in Physics and an early career within the Information & Communication Technology industry, I have been instrumental in the delivery of a plethora of new and value-adding technology solutions critical to addressing business needs. I have had rich experiences having to lead the delivery of value-adding solutions to address various business needs while also learning and growing. I am passionate about positively impacting, transforming and enriching lives which I have consistently exhibited in my roles.

### ☪ Reaching your present status as CIO of MTN Liberia did not come on the spur of the moment. Tell us how it happened.

Ⓐ I have moved across many roles in my career evolving in skills and experiences. It has not come without its peculiarities of having to be diligent and hardworking to deliver quality solutions and ensure service availability at almost impossible targets. Being focused, committed to excellence and business-focused are some of the skills required while there is a need

to stay abreast of new technologies and trends which are critical to transforming and providing value. I have transitioned through different roles with the organization. "I first started managing people over ten years ago, and have since been promoted through various leadership roles. My experiences have exposed me to fresh possibilities with the mindset that there is no limit to what we can achieve. Through it all, I have grown and currently the Chief Information Officer at MTN Liberia.

### ☪ In the telecommunications industry, there are only a few females in top positions. What does breaking the barriers in the industry come with?

Ⓐ It requires grit, being authentic and consistent, readiness to challenge the status quo and leave comfort zone if required.

### ☪ What advice would you give to women seeking leadership positions? How can they reach their goals?

Ⓐ My advice to women seeking leadership positions is to Believe in Yourself, Do it Afraid, Be Authentic, Be consistent, Don't be afraid to leave your comfort zone, and continuously develop themselves professionally.

### ☪ How do you think gender equity be achieved at all levels, particularly in Liberia?

Ⓐ Raise awareness, being intentional in bridging the gap by taking deliberate steps, create supportive networks & communities

### ☪ Tell us about your initiative in lifting other women up.

Ⓐ As a CIO, I serve as a role model for other women to believe that they can achieve whatever they set their minds to. It is also a collective responsibility in showing the possibilities.

### ☪ What can the public expect from MTN Liberia in the new year?

Ⓐ Our transformation journey to lead the delivery of a bold new digital world for our customers and communities. We believe everyone deserves the benefit of modern connected life and are committed to ensuring this is achieved in Liberia. Our vision is crucial to life-changing moments for our customers. We will also be showcasing Liberian culture through our plethora of innovative product offerings, partnerships, and engagement



## Monrovia Football Academy:

### Empowering Africa's Future through Education and Sports



**M**ore than sixty percent (60%) of Africa's population is under the age of 25 -making the continent the youngest in the world according to the United Nations Demographic projection. This means that the future of the continent must be empowered to lead. Established in Liberia in 2015, Monrovia Football Academy is keeping sleeves above elbows to mold tomorrow's generation through education and sports -using football which is the most popular sport in Liberia as a positive mode to get students to remain in

school and attain academic excellence.

The dream was conceived after William Smith and Sekou 'Georgie' Manubah, a former National Team player met after a reconciliation football game in Liberia in 2014. The game was organized by the presidential candidate and soccer icon, George Manneh Weah. The event brought together some of Africa's big soccer names including Samuel Eto'o, Patrick



Mboma, Nigerian international JJ Okocha, and others. Since then, William has been mulling over how he would utilize the energy Liberians put in the game of football to provide quality education and break gender barriers-which was so pervasive. Consequently, the idea to establish the Monrovia Football Academy was put on paper.

Despite the doubts that occasioned the start of what is now changing the lives of many young Liberians, the institution provides coaching and a comprehensive football curriculum that abhors unwholesome behavior, introduces fundamental techniques to think the game of football at a high level, according to the official website of the Monrovia Football Academy (MFA).

Given the uncompromising gender sensitivity of MFA, the organization uses its mode of grooming the young generation of Liberia to break gender barriers by allowing the girls to train and study with the boys.

In an exclusive interview with Exhibit Magazine, Klon D.C. Hinnah who is the operations and outreach director of LEAD MFA leadership Academy said "LEAD MFA believes that although football is the incentive to get students to school, producing





only professional football athletes is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is to empower Liberia's future leaders through high-quality education and football. The way we are accomplishing this is by edifying ethical, value-driven, and critical thinkers, and equipping them with the skills and tools they need to become leaders in Liberian society."

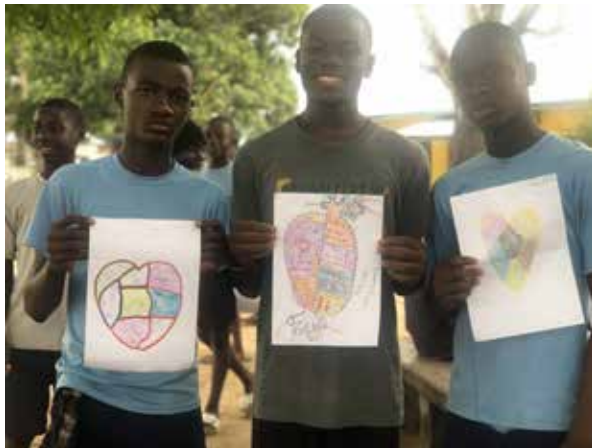
In July 2019, the MFA's Under 15 won the championship of the USA Youth Football in Minnesota. The team defeated Michigan's Vardar United 3-2 in post-match penalties. Sekou saw the girls' achievement as a clear indication that there are talents in Liberia that need nurturing with time. The tournament attracts more than 1,000 teams every year and held at the National Sports Center in Blaine, Minnesota.

To supplement sports and formal education, MFA provides life-saving skills to culturally relevant students: leadership, enthusiasm, accountability, and discipline (LEAD).

In its 2019-20 school year, we have 64 boys and 45 girls, ages 8-16, in grades 3-8. Our students are with us from 8:00 am-6:00 pm, Monday-Friday, with breakfast, life skills lessons, and football training in the morning, lunch at noon, and academic classes in the afternoon.

The Academy is an independent non-profit organization. We are not linked to anyone's academic institution, football club, political party, or ethnic origin. The Academy exists to prepare talented boys and girls to lead positive change in Liberia, the academy posted on its official website.

Eligibility Requirements: in the 2020-21 school year, we will have children between the ages of 7 and 16. Therefore, applicants born between September 1, 2003, and September 1, 2013, are eligible to apply. Boys and girls of all academic and football backgrounds are encouraged to apply.



Our student-athletes live with us on campus. If you live outside of Monrovia and are interested in applying, please continue to follow our website and social media pages for updates on potential 'open application days' in your community.



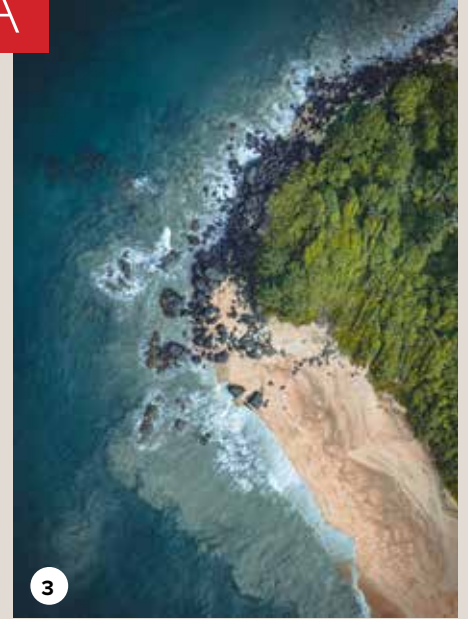
# TOUR LIBERIA



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

1. Lobster Fishing in Harper.
2. Home of Liberia Legislative Branch of Government - Capitol Building
3. Robertsport Prestine Coastline
4. Tourist Visiting Liberia-Guinea Border
5. Monrovia City Sunset
6. Beaten Path in Nimba County
7. Tourist Hiking up to Mount Nimba
8. Yoga Session with Tourist in Yekepa



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