

# ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE

Selected Political Writings and  
Speeches on Liberia  
(1978–2001)

H. BOIMA FAHNBULLEH, JR.

ISBN: 1-58112-544-5



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

USA • 2004

**Across the Landscape:  
Selected Political Writings and Speeches on Liberia (1978–2001)**

Copyright © 2004 H. Boima Fahnbulleh, Jr.  
All rights reserved.

Universal Publishers  
Boca Raton, Florida  
USA • 2004

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

ISBN: 1-58112-544-5

# DEDICATION

## TO THE MEMORY OF JOURNALIST KLOH HINNEH

(A poem by the Haitian Poet Jacques Roumain—1907–1944)

### I “NEW NEGRO SERMON”

In His face they spit their icy scorn,  
As at a black flag flying windswept by snow  
To make of Him, poor nigger, the god of those in power,  
From His rags, relics to embellish altars;  
From His gentle song of poverty,  
From the trembling lamentation of His banjo,  
The haughty thunder of the organ;  
From His arms that hauled the heavy cotton  
On the river Jordan,  
The arms of those who wield the sword;  
From His body, worn like ours from the plantations  
Like a glowing coal,  
Like a black coal burning in white roses,  
The golden necklace of their fortune;  
They whitened His black face beneath the spittle of their icy scorn,  
They spit on Your black face,  
Lord, our friend, our comrade;  
You who parted on her face long hair that hid the harlot's tears,  
Like a screen of reeds;  
They the rich, the Pharisees, the owners of the land, the bankers

From the bleeding man they made the bleeding god;  
Oh, Judas snicker;  
Oh, Judas laugh;  
Christ, like a torch between two thieves,  
At the summit of the world,  
Lit the slaves' revolt.  
But Christ today is in the house of thieves  
And his spread arms in the cathedral spread a vulture shadow,  
And in the monastery vaults priests  
Count the interest on the thirty pieces  
While church bells shower death on hungry multitudes.

We do not pardon them because they know what they do:  
They lynched John who organized the union,  
They chased him through the wood with dogs like a savage wolf

Laughing there, they hanged him to the sycamore.  
No, brothers, comrades,  
We will pray no more.  
Our revolt will rise like the stormbird's cry,  
Above the putrid lapping of the swamps.  
We'll no longer sing the sad, despairing spirituals!  
Another song will spring forth from our throats  
Our red flags we shall unfurl,  
Stained by the blood of our upright brothers.  
Beneath this sign we shall march,  
Beneath this sign we are marching,  
Standing tall, the wretched of the earth!  
Standing tall the legions of the hungry!

## PREFACE

The upheavals in Liberia over the past twenty years have made it necessary to put in book form a collection of some of my speeches and writings that covered the turbulence of this period. I was a participant and a witness to the evolving historical trends and therefore feel a responsibility to clarify issues, explain some of the political developments and rectify some of the distortions that have run amok in the midst of our national tragedy.

The ideas reflected in these speeches and writings have their genesis in my attempt to understand the society of which I was a part and to assign myself a role as the prodigy of political figures who were victimized by the system because they decided to reflect, analyse and take a different political path. I grew up under a father who was politically conscious and had a strong distaste for injustice in any form. He struggled intellectually to understand the sources of conflict in human society and used the knowledge gained to interpret and forecast the dynamic developments in the Liberian society and the means to their harmonious resolutions. He understood the human dimension of culpability in historical transformation and argued for an understanding of the subjective factors in deciphering the causes and consequences of conflicts. His study of world history and politics led him to accumulate books, manuscripts and journals—some of which my young mind wandered over when I was a boy of 16. The confusion these ideas wrought on my infantile consciousness led me to seek clarification on growing up.

The search for clarification never ends even after maturity as the issues and concepts that confront man and his society are in constant flux as human society shifts its emphasis after each generation. It is against this background—the shift in emphasis—that the speeches and writings should be understood. As there is nothing like absolute knowledge in the social sciences, so there cannot be infinite ideas in this domain. The relativity of knowledge is the essence of the search for clarification and thus every generation has a duty to define and analyse the concepts and ideas that confront it at its emergence at the barricades of history.

I take my politics from the Left of the political struggle that reached maturity in the sixties. As an undergraduate at Fourah Bay College, I led my colleagues to the barricades on issues that had great impact on our lives. The liberation struggle in Africa was high on our agenda as well as the international struggle against oppression and injustice. We were confronted by an international system that had been designed by those who saw our race as a

## Preface

stepping stone for the satisfaction and advancement of the interests of others. We awoke to the realization that our people had been shortchanged in the granting of independence and that the entire process of emancipation was built on very flawed principles. As students, we looked for alternatives in Africa and the third world. This led us to other paradigms and other fighters for independence who were not the ones selected by those who controlled the international system. This direction, diametrically opposed to the established one has influenced our politics to this day as can be seen from these selective speeches and writings. Our politics has always been the politics of radical democratic change which takes as its point of departure the participation of the people in the construction of their society and the building of new and equitable social relations.

Part 1 covers the period of my return to Liberia after my study in the United States. This was a dynamic era in Liberia's history as the social fermentation was accelerating in proportion to the growth and contradiction within the modern economy. The speeches of this period were made against the background of revolt and defiance against the established order. It also covers the period of my service in the first military regime in the country's history. This was an extremely difficult period as the coup shifted alliances and intensified the hostilities and hatred between the various social sectors. It was an era in which promises were easily broken, commitments abandoned and loyalties altered based on self-interest and not infrequently on opportunism.

Part 2 covers the period of my first years in exile. The writings during this period can be considered reflections on political developments in Liberia. In articles and newspapers, I tried to highlight some of the burning issues of the time, with the objective of exposing the dictatorship and drawing into focus some of the negative tendencies in the opposition groups. This first period of exile was spent in Paris, France

Part 3 covers the period of the civil war. This was the most tumultuous event in the modern history of the country. The outright distortions and fabrication that were manufactured against the background of the war set the agenda for the immediate future. The speeches given during this period were done under difficult circumstances. The pervasive fear imposed by the warring factions made people unwilling to accept an alternative interpretation of the situation. But to have kept silent in the midst of such tragedy was to condone the barbarity which presented itself as liberation. I returned home during this period.

Part 4 deals with the tragedy in Liberia after the first stage of the civil war and the imposition of a criminal cabal on the people of Liberia by some leaders

## Preface

in West Africa who controlled the West Africa peacekeeping force—ECOMOG. This was a betrayal of epochal proportions for which the heroic people of Liberia will continue to pay the price for generations. I went back into exile during this period and settled in London, England. I had the opportunity to observe many of our people from afar and came to understand the nature of our national tragedy better.

The ideas expressed in these speeches and writings are the collective ideas of a people in struggle. The fact that these ideas have been expressed by me does not alter their collective nature. It only means that while others worked and struggled, I had some time to reflect and write and thus put into focus the scattered utterances of the people in the midst of struggle.

I have dedicated this book to a brother and friend who was one of the most courageous, selfless and decent journalists in our country. His life was cut short through illness during the civil war. His short life represents the stunted potential of our youth. I salute your memory gallant patriot—Klon Hinneh.

January 2002  
London, England.



# CONTENTS

<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<i>TO THE MEMORY OF JOURNALIST KLOH HINNEH</i> .....	<i>iii</i>
<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>PART I</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>THE ONE-PARTY STATE AND ITS EFFECT ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT</i> .....	2
<i>NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT</i> .....	7
<i>THE CHANGING LIBERIAN SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AFRICAN REVOLUTION</i> .....	11
<i>UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS</i> .....	21
<i>UNESCO CONFERENCE</i> .....	25
<i>LIBERIAN EDUCATION IN THE DECADE OF THE 80S</i> .....	31
<i>NEW DIRECTIONS FOR LIBERIAN EDUCATION IN THE 80S</i> .....	36
<i>THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING LIBERIAN SOCIETY: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?</i> .....	46
<i>EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR A SUCCESSFUL REVOLUTION</i> .....	50
<i>THE CHALLENGE FACING MANKIND</i> .....	53
<i>THE UNITED NATIONS AT 37</i> .....	61
<i>NEUTRALIZING THE DEPENDENCY SYNDROME</i> .....	65
<i>GREETINGS TO OCTOBER</i> .....	69
<i>GREETINGS TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE</i> .....	71
<i>CHRISTIANS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE</i> .....	74
<b>PART II</b> .....	<b>77</b>
<i>LIBERIA AND THE U.S.: STRANGE HAPPENINGS (1984)</i> .....	80
<i>LIBERIA: THE UNITED STATES' PROBLEM (1984)</i> .....	84
<i>LIBERIA: DEMOCRACY OR DESPOTISM (1984)</i> .....	87

## Contents

<i>LIBERIA: FUMBLING WITH JUSTICE (1984)</i> .....	89
<i>LIBERIA: ASSASSINATION, PLOTS AND THE CIA</i> .....	92
<i>LIBERIA: MORE BLOODSHED, EVEN LESS FREEDOM</i> .....	97
<i>LIBERIA'S CASTLE OF SAND</i> .....	101
<i>LIBERIA AND DEMOCRACY</i> .....	105
<i>LIBERIA: THE CRISIS DEEPENS</i> .....	122
<i>TORMENTED LIBERIA</i> .....	128
<i>AFRICAN FREEDOM and WESTERN CONSCIENCE</i> .....	133
<b>PART III</b> .....	<b>137</b>
<i>THE STORY OF LIBERIA</i> .....	138
<i>A STATEMENT TO THE LIBERIAN PEOPLE (1991)</i> .....	148
<i>AFRICA'S REDEMPTION LIES IN POPULAR DEMOCRACY</i> .....	153
<i>WHAT IS POPULAR DEMOCRACY (1991)</i> .....	160
<i>TO THE HEADS OF STATE OF ECOWAS (UNDELIVERED SPEECH, 1991)</i> .....	162
<i>LIBERIA: SOCIAL FORCES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY: 1900–1992</i> .....	173
<i>EDUCATION TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING</i> .....	196
<i>LIBERIA'S AGONY DID NOT BEGIN TODAY</i> .....	207
<i>DISARMAMENT AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR</i> .....	215
<i>DEMOCRATISATION, PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN LIBERIA</i> .....	235
<i>REFLECTION ON LIBERIA (1997)</i> .....	248
<i>INTERDEPENDENCE: A KEY TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT</i> .....	258
<i>CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR A NEW LIBERIA</i> .....	264
<i>POPULAR PARTICIPATION AND ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT IN LIBERIA</i> .....	273
<b>PART IV</b> .....	<b>281</b>
<i>THE AFTERMATH (1997)</i> .....	282

## Contents

<i>LIBERIA: THE FARCE OF JULY 1997</i> .....	286
<i>INTERVIEW GIVEN TO THE PERSPECTIVE MAGAZINE (1998)</i> .....	293
<i>THE EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRACY IN MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETIES</i> .....	298
<i>ECOWAS AND LIBERIA: ANALYSIS OF AN INTERVENTION</i> .....	313
<i>LOFA, MONEY GRABBERS AND JESUS CHRIST (1999)</i> .....	330
<i>THE NATION IS DYING! (1999)</i> .....	335
<i>WEST AFRICA: AN INDICTMENT (1999)</i> .....	338
<i>VULGAR NATIONALISM: THE REFUGE OF A SCOUNDREL (2000)</i> .....	341
<i>CRISIS IN THE SOUL (2002)</i> .....	346
<i>DOWN THE HYPOCRISY, MY BROTHERS! (2001)</i> .....	352
<i>THE FOLLY OF CHARLATANS (2001)</i> .....	357
<i>WE SPEAK THUS! (2002)</i> .....	361
<i>ON MISUNDERSTANDING AND CONTRADICTIONS</i> .....	365



# **PART I**

# **THE ONE-PARTY STATE AND ITS EFFECT ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

A Speech delivered to the students of Cuttington University  
College, (1978)

Mr. President,  
Members of the Faculty,  
Students of Cuttington University College,  
Workers of the Cuttington Community,  
Comrades and Friends:

We come as revolutionaries and we extend to you revolutionary greetings!

I must caution you that if you have come to listen to one of those presumptuous intellectuals, one of those people who are so bookish and snobbish that they are far removed from simple reality, you will leave here disappointed. I am no intellectual. I am just an ordinary soldier—in the service of Africa, its people, and its revolution.

An African University embedded in the womb of traditional Africa, learning through interaction the ways of the tribes and in turn teaching the methods and ideas of the modern world is an indication that here at Cuttington University College there is a fervent search going on for a dynamic synthesis which will project the African image. For you at Cuttington, the goal should be obvious: to protect the African man, his values and cultures, and to teach him the ideas which would enable him to undertake progressive development. We are talking about that form of development which would encompass the welfare and dignity of the African people. How much you succeed will depend on your commitment to your people, your nation and your continent. If as modern educated men and women you decide to jettison the values and culture of your people and search for your identity in the cities of Europe and America, you would have committed a tragic error. In order to understand Africa, one must think like an African. In order to commit oneself to this continent, its people and their struggle, you will have to “return to the source” (to use brother Cabral’s phrase), and to participate fully in the people’s struggle

for food, land and dignity. The options are clear and you can take your pick. But remember, there is no way out. History has not given us the luxury of neutrality. You have to choose, for in this struggle, there are no spectators. You are either with the people or against them.

It is nice to be here at Cuttington. If in this brief escape from Monrovia we can join in your search for the synthesis we mentioned, then you would have rewarded us greatly. If after this meeting a few more sons and daughters of Africa rededicate themselves to the struggle of the African people, then we can begin to practice the dance of victory; for then the sun would have appeared on the horizon—signaling the coming of a new era: the era of the victory of the common people. Human history is moving from the stunted growth and paralysis of class distinction and social stratification. The backward social structures which immobilize the majority of the people and block their advancement into the modern world are being examined critically with the objective of smashing them, thereby allowing the great masses of the people to progress from the brutal “state of nature” and thus become the subjective actors in the transformation of their society.

The Intellectual Discourse Committee has given me a very interesting topic: “The One-Party State and its effect on Political Development.” I find it interesting for the simple fact that it tallies with the reality around us. So we can say that this is an attempt to interpret reality. Undoubtedly, there will be some who will frown on my interpretations. But that is natural; for in any class society there are different class ideas that are manifestations of the class struggle. The ideas I am going to express here are the ideas of a class. I have no apology!

In order to understand the One-Party State, one must first try to understand the framework in which it exists. We know that there can be no understanding of the superstructure of any society without an understanding of the material base. It is the base that determines the values and ideology of the society. Ideas and the attendant structures that come into being in any given society are reflections of the inter-play of material forces which are themselves products of the historical development of the society. In Africa, the One-Party State is the general phenomenon. There are variations of this depending on which sector holds state party. There is the military that seizes power and establishes a one-party regime without the institutional support structures. This form of rule is based on naked force and carries as a corollary the absolute marginalisation of the people. Under this system, the question of legitimacy does not arise. On the other hand, there is the civilian variety with its pretenses at legitimization and popular participation. This also lacks the institutional

## Across The Landscape

support structures and invariably comes to depend on a tribe, a clan or a sector. Most often it depends on the organs of violence to sustain itself. Thus, in a one-party state based on the marginalisation of the people, it is violence or the threat of its application that dictates conformity. What one should understand is that regardless of who rules, or under which brand of ideological coloration—state capitalist, African socialist or “open-door” pillaging—there will not be the slightest variation in the methods of control if the system remains the same. Let me clarify this a little. For example, in a society based on the exploitation of man by man, the ruling class compensates for its numerical inferiority by relying on violence to keep the people in check. Thus, we see in almost all African societies large armies, large police forces, extensive security networks and assortments of para-military groups, all orientated to serving as prop for the perpetuation of the rule of the minority. Thus, whenever there is a change from civilian to military rule, the pattern of violence and force accelerates. It is interesting that most often the only noticeable change is in the stature of the men who occupy the limousines: from over-fed and sluggish civilians to agile soldiers. But that will be only for a short time. Very soon the soldiers become bloated and sluggish, and they will have to change from military uniform to civilian clothes; for you see, they do not make large sizes in military uniforms.

A One-Party State within a class society is in reality a party of the ruling class. At times it happens that elements of the ruling class are so busy squandering wealth and indulging in appalling vulgarities that they delegate to the leader of their class, who is usually the president of the state, the task of mystifying the people. He becomes the grand-wizard of reaction, the managing director of the interests of the ruling class and the suave magician—promising much but giving little. In this context, the people become mere objects of history. They are told to work, to sacrifice, to create wealth, but at the same time they live in inhuman poverty with all the attributes of suffering, humiliation and the brutalization of their personalities. In this kind of one-party state, the effects on political development are disastrous. The people are immobilized in their wretched poverty. They live a sluggish existence, probably because they understand the futility of giving their sweat and blood for what the leader describes as “national development.” In this regard, one can argue that the people at times engage in a conscious attempt at sabotage. They pretend to work, in reality they dally. They see no reason to work for the national good. What little work they do is only to survive. The all embracing ethos that would allow for the development of that passionate commitment to a national ideal is lacking. Political education that would make them understand the necessity for hard work and dedication is not forthcoming, for the ruling class itself lacks political education. How else can one explain the sickening

bankruptcy of this class and its irresponsible mortgaging of the nation to foreign interests? One gets the impression that a deliberate attempt is made by the ruling class to deny the people an understanding of reality. Thus the process of mystification—accompanied by sloganeering—goes on. This in reality is the veil that conceals the political shortsightedness of the ruling class.

The One-Party State of the variety we have been talking about brings into being the political and economic hemorrhage of the nation. We witness the wasting of the life blood of the people and of their resources. There is that merciless exploitation conducted by foreign interests simply because there is no commitment to build for the future. The people are not only wasted in the mines and on the plantations, but they are corralled into reservations or Bantustans in the city without culture and dignity. Thus it is easy to understand our Buzzi Quarters, Bassa Community, New Kru Town, Vai Town and West Point. These are all slums for the habitation of those who have escaped the barrenness of the rural areas. We know for a fact that while the ruling class goes on mortgaging the destiny of the nation to foreign interests, the people—illiterate, undernourished and disease infested—go on giving their labour in the mining pits, on the rubber plantations and in the back rooms of shops and offices for the benefit of those who do not care one bit whether the nation and the people cease to exist. So the nation stagnates, the monopolies go on siphoning away profits dripped in the blood and sweat of the people, and the ruling class goes on wallowing in the luxurious filth it has made. In this state of underdevelopment, we witness what we call the underdeveloped consciousness. Here the ruling class turns to Europe and America for models of development. The people, onlookers in this tragi-comedy, become the experimental guinea pigs.

On the other hand, if the One-Party State should evolve within a framework where the exploitation of man by man has been relegated to the rubbish heap of history and the people are brought into the mainstream of politics, one can expect the effects on political development to be positive. For in this society, the people will be called upon to use their talents and resources for the betterment of the whole society. They will then build institutions that are based on the participation of the people. In this system, the people are made to feel that they are the subjects of history. There will be political education that is a necessary ingredient in the progressive development of humanity. The negative factors of class distinctions, chronic social stratification, tribalism and bigotry that are impediments to national development will be minimized. In a system where the interests of the people

## Across The Landscape

are paramount, there will be no need for mystification. In fact, the political consciousness which comes from the awareness that one is the subject of history will not compromise with any attempt at mystification.

In the One-Party State orientated to the development of the nation and its people, to the return of the land and its resources to those to whom they rightly belong, the leader has nothing to fear from the people. When the people realize that the leader leads in their interests, they will dedicate themselves fully to the nation and its survival. For to them, the survival of the nation, of the system that distributes justice, dignity and land is synonymous with their own survival. In this context, they will go forward, politically conscious and militantly committed to development—a form of development from which they will benefit and so pass on to posterity that which they have created with their blood and sweat.

I thank you all.

# **NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**A Speech delivered to the Students of Marcus Garvey School, (1978)**

Members of the Board of Trustees,  
Mr. Principal,  
Members of the Faculty,  
Parents and Friends, Graduates and Students,  
Brothers and Sisters,  
Comrades:

It is written in the annals of history that a people, conscious, determined and united can triumph over any force. The truism of this was demonstrated a few years ago when the heroic people of Vietnam—united, determined and conscious—inflicted a major defeat on the most technologically developed nation in the world—the United States of America. By this victory, man's history entered a new era: the era of the victory of the common man.

This era is so difficult to understand if one belongs to a class whose privileges are extracted from the blood and sweat of the common people. To enjoy their privileges in peace, members of any exploitative class must convince themselves that the people will never stir; that the masses will continue to wallow in their poverty, supporting through their ignorance and destitution, a false aristocracy and a wretched socio-economic system. Thus, we hear the cries for stability, for peace, for unity and patience. Beautiful pleas indeed, but they become hollow in a society ridden by greed, immorality and exploitation. We say here and now that the tendency in today's world is towards progressive development and humanity is moving forward!

Our topic today is National Consciousness and National Development. As our brothers and sisters leave Marcus Garvey School to continue the struggle in today's world, we need to concentrate for a few minutes on the one aspect of our society which has been ignored by all the political prophets, all the Reverends, all the Bishops, all the Clergymen turned politicians, and all the politicians turned Clergymen. The aspect of which I speak is National Consciousness and its relationship to National Development. In simple language, National

## Across The Landscape

Consciousness can be considered the mental attitude which places the nation above all else. Thus, a man who sees Liberia as a plantation where he can make “quick money” to spend in Europe and America can be said to have no national consciousness. Likewise a man who feels he must drain the public treasury for his own selfish ends has no national consciousness. We can expand our category to include all those who believe in luxury at the expense of the people; all those who believe in bullying the people; all those who cry for peace, stability and harmony and yet brutalize the common people; all those who turn their noses up when they see the broken bodies of workers and peasants; and finally all those who preach for another world but yet make the best use of this one. We say they have no national consciousness and are therefore not nationalists. They are parasites, thieves, exploiters and indecent opportunists. With such men, national development means self-enrichment at the expense of the nation and its people.

National development, in its rightful and dignified posture means the total development of the nation, its people, their culture and their dignity. We can call this kind of development people’s development. This means that it is reflected in the material welfare of all the people. This means that it is total, progressive and history making; for who else can make history but the people! A society that has not developed national consciousness is a society that has not found its direction. Such a society resembles a circus, with clowns jockeying for a place in the center; with the people watching and laughing; confused by the acts but nevertheless enjoying the tragi-comedy. Since you have decided to treat them as spectators, they will make mockery of your efforts!

Brothers and sisters, as you leave Marcus Garvey, I must advise you that your education will be meaningless without national consciousness. One of the main functions of education is to develop a critical consciousness: one that would allow you to bring before the judgment seat of reason everything and everybody. To take things for granted is unprogressive, unscientific and unacademic. To have national consciousness is to put your knowledge at the service of your people, your nation and progressive humanity. It is to develop a passionate love for your land and your people. If needs be, it is the love that makes you want to die for the people. So you must go out as soldiers in the service of Africa, its people and its revolution. You must go out as fighters for justice, for dignity and for decency. As sons and daughters of the people, you cannot deny the historical calling: you will have to move to the front and defend the people like honest men and women, or you will be pushed aside and watch history being made of you.

## Boima Fahnbulleh

The mental attitude that makes one devote his life to the people's welfare can only lead to meaningful national development. But this is only expected of honest men and women. I mean you brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of Africa—heroic servants of the people. Graduates, go out and together with the people make history! Proclaim the fight for freedom and justice. As you go out, I must warn you not to be afraid of changes; not to be afraid of the stirrings in men's souls; for these are consequences of passion, and only passionate men create works of lasting value. You must say like the beautiful song says: "when the roll is call up yonder, I'll be there"—not in heaven though, but by the side of the people at the barricades on earth in the fight against injustice, exploitation, disease, ignorance and poverty.

Do not go out with the feeling that you are inferior to any man. God in his loving kindness made all men equal. Some say that the five fingers are not equal, so men are not equal. Imagine! True, the five fingers are not equal, but neither is any one superior to the other. Remove one and the other four look abnormal. They all perform the same functions and are very much dependent on each other for the smooth functioning of the hand. In this sense, we can say that they are equal: so very much equal in their contribution to man's existence. No, my brothers and sisters, inequality in society was not ordained by God. It is created by man and is a consequence of the unequal distribution of the wealth of society. The problems of society are created by man. The solutions will have to be found by man.

I will now address myself to the teachers. I say thank you for putting all your energy in the training of these our brothers and sisters. Teachers, mentors of young minds, you who work so hard and get pay so little, do not be discouraged; for these brothers and sisters are your investment for the future. They go out to create a better society for you and your children—a society that will respect a person, not because of his name or his wealth, but because he renders service to humanity. Again, I say, thank you very much.

Now to the parents: mothers, fathers, workers, peasants, strong African people, this is your victory. Here are your heroes. They have come from the battle and have brought back the trophies of victory. But they do not intend to rest. They intend to move forward, to fight more battles for human dignity. Only then will their victory be complete. We say thank you for the sacrifices dear parents. Thank you for the support; thank you for everything—yes everything—even the tears on those hard and difficult days!

Finally, to you again my brothers and sisters: this victory is incomplete and will remain incomplete until you triumph together with the people. Stand tall my brothers and sisters like gallant soldiers! Stand tall sons and daughters of

## Across The Landscape

Africa like true children of the soil!! Stand tall and proud beside your people;  
for when you do, injustice will tremble!!! Congratulations. You will win.

I thank you.

# **THE CHANGING LIBERIAN SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AFRICAN REVOLUTION**

A lecture delivered at the Symposium of the Nimba College  
Student Association in Sanniquellie on September 29, 1979

People of Nimba County,  
Brothers and sisters,  
Comrades:

I am 30 years old and I have been in prison twice on political charges. The first time was in 1968 during my father's trial for treason. I was imprisoned because the State considered me a security risk. I was held for fourteen days. I was 19 years old then. The second time was in connection with the April 14 demonstration. I was arrested and charged with treason, because according to the State, I had been teaching "foreign ideology" and had used my classes to indoctrinate students which led to their participation in the demonstration. This time I was held for nineteen days.

My experience with political detention goes back to 1955. I was only 6 then. My maternal grandfather—the late Nete-Sie Brownell—Chairman of the defunct Reconstruction Committee was arrested and charged with treason. I was young then, but I remembered my mother crying and screaming as she would do in 1968 and again in 1979.

Why do I tell you all this? What is the relevance of all this to the subject under discussion? The answer is simple. Since we are talking about the changing Liberian society, it is necessary that we understand that this society can only change if men change their ideas of politics and their perception of man. My family's political history shows a pattern—a very interesting pattern—which is that one must conform; that is, one must stupidly accept what passes for reality without questioning the basis of that conformity. One gets into trouble if one decides to look at life from another perspective. One gets into serious trouble if one questions certain crystallized lies which masquerade as truths. This has been the nature of our society. We have deceived ourselves into believing that we can go on living the way our forefathers lived one hundred years ago. We have played the silly game of the sleeping beauty without realizing that Africa was changing, stirring into consciousness; and there we were, unconscious, immobile and paralyzed from a tragic coma—the

## Across The Landscape

coma of narrow-mindedness, prejudice and fear. Sooner or later, the African giant, awakened to its destiny would stampede into history, dragging along those who slumber or crushing them in its haste toward the future of dignity, justice and equality!

Today is Saturday, September 29, 1979. Looking back on the history of Africa, we can say that Africa has made progress. The fact that you have called us here to deal with the theme—Liberia, the Changing Society—is an indication that Africa has made progress and so have the Liberian people. But we can say that there are some who continue to sleep-walk, and are therefore incapable of understanding the rumblings of the African people as they emerge into the history of conscious humanity. For us who understand that there is no stagnancy in nature, that change is bound to come, and that the history of man is the history of progress, we need to move forward, to understand the changing world situation in order to make preparations for the future.

I have decided to speak to you about the “Changing Liberian Society within the context of the African Revolution.” In order to understand the changing Liberian society, I think it is necessary to understand the changing African situation and how it affects the Liberian nation. I believe in the politics of linkage—i.e., changes in one area affect all other areas. Since Liberia is a part of Africa, she cannot escape the wind of change blowing across the continent. This wind has smashed empires, has crushed tyrannies, has swept and is sweeping away the cobwebs of backwardness, ignorance and oppression.

Brothers and sisters, Africa is growing up and we are part of this growing up process. The demand for justice, equality and dignity signals the emergence of the African people into the cavalcade of the history of progressive humanity. This emergence is not a smooth process. The African people are paying in blood and lives for the right to live as human beings.

In 1957, only three countries in black Africa were independent: Ethiopia, Liberia and Ghana. In colonial Africa, the struggle for independence was being waged behind the banners which bore the insignia of justice, liberty and equality. The determination of the African people to be free alerted the colonial masters to the consequences of stubborn reaction on their part. By 1974, most parts of Africa had been liberated. The few countries still under colonial rule were: Rhodesia, South West Africa, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Djibouti and Spanish Sahara. In the interim—i.e. from 1957 to 1974—we had heard about coups d’etat, civil wars and revolutions throughout independent Africa. The men who led these coups and revolutions hoisted the same banners, with the same insignia: justice, liberty

and equality. Some of them lived up to the insignia on the banners; others betrayed the insignia and the people who fought with them. But the people continued to struggle; searching for a better life, a better future, and a better destiny. This was the reality until the Portuguese people decided to settle score with their own dictatorship.

The April 1974 Revolution in Portugal marked a new stage in the African people's struggle for justice, liberty and equality. Mozambique and Angola achieved their independence, thereby exposing at their rear the horror that was apartheid—whether in its crude form in South Africa or in its hybrid forms in Rhodesia and South West Africa. Immediately, the African people came to understand the bestiality of segregation—whether racist, economic, political or social.

By 1975, the liberation of Southern Africa had become an obsession in black Africa. African leaders condemned the oppression and exploitation of black men by the racist regimes in Southern Africa. Each blast at the white oppressors in Southern Africa re-echoed throughout the towns, villages and slums of independent Africa. The African people caught on to the message very fast: oppression and exploitation were attributes of man's inhumanity to man. It was not long before history played a trick on the leaders of Africa. The condemnation of racist South Africa became a condemnation of the systems they upheld minus the race factor. For it did not matter whether a man was white or black; if he upheld a system which distributed poverty, hunger and misery, he was an exploiter and an oppressor of man.

At this stage, the African Revolution moved forward. This Revolution, which entails the total liberation of the African continent from all forms of oppression and exploitation, reached a new level of development: the African people's demand for new social, political and economic orders propped up by the pillars of justice, equality and liberty. This is the stage we ourselves have reached in Liberia. The clamour for a new order has become louder as those who are responsible for bringing into being this new order have grown impatient with the clamours of the people and have decided to turn deaf ears to the pleas for meaningful changes within the nation.

My brothers and sisters, we are back home where consciousness is growing and the people are moving. The society is in a state of ferment because the developing consciousness of the people—existing in this period of history—has outstripped the institutions which were designed to cater for the consciousness of a different historical era. This is all within the framework of the African Revolution. An understanding of this Revolution is an understanding of the