

Let the Celebrations Begin: DATI Kicks Off 40th Anniversary at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in July!



July is the birth month of the modern Republic of Liberia established July 26, 1847. The naissiance of Liberia marked the beginning of a significant political era in the history of Africa, the cradle of world civilization. Apart from being the oldest modern republic in Africa, the independence of Liberia as a sovereign nation on the continent of Africa disproved the doubts of the western world that the Black man was capable of self-rule. In addition, Liberia, along with the former Empire of Ethiopia and Haiti, the oldest independent Black nation in the western hemisphere, championed the cause of Black freedom worldwide, and the independence of the rest of Africa from western colonial rule. Hence, Liberia’s Independence Day, July 26th, is the time of the year when Liberians jubilantly celebrate with great pride their cultural and historical heritage as citizens of Africa’s oldest republic, and say to one another: ***“My Twenty-Six on you oh!”***

Dehkontee Artists Theatre’s Contribution as a Cultural & Educational Society

Similarly, Dehkontee Artists Theatre is Liberia’s longest surviving nonprofit 501 © (3) entity presently based in the State of Maryland, U.S.A. Its birthplace and natal month was July 1977 at the University of Liberia’s Capitol Hill campus near the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of the Liberian government. DATI’s mission and goal was and still is to create cultural awareness and national consciousness among Liberians, Africans, and citizens of the world regarding the rich and diversified cultural heritage of Africans through the performing and visual arts. Hence, true to its mission, DATI has fulfilled and continues to pursue its lofty cultural and educational dream through good and bad times in Liberia, on the continent of Africa, and here in the western world.

Further, DATI continues to highlight the culture of Liberia and Africa on the world theatre stage in grand style through the ingenious direction of its founder and Executive Director, Liberia’s “Shakespeare” Rabbi Prince Joseph Tomoonh-Garlodeyh Gbaba, Sr., and such endeavors cost

huge amounts of monies to upkeep over the past forty years! Therefore, mere verbal praises such as **“Keep up the good work”** can no longer hold a grain of salt—but only raw cash is needed now to revive the cultural industry in Liberia and get the deed done to establish a national institute of the arts in Liberia. In fact, every patriotic Liberian should be ashamed of themselves to have a country that does not even at least have a cultural center or well established national museum of Art and culture to display its history and culture to the outside world, especially as Africa's oldest republic!

Therefore, let us put rhetoric aside and be more practical by supporting a worthy cause that will enhance our hegemony as a nation and people. Over the past four decades DATI has been the pride of all true Liberians who have pride in their culture and history. The group has served as a conduit for training bestowed young and old Liberian, African, and American artists and scholars that have become prominent citizens and successful personalities in their various fields of study and are making their contributions to society in a very positive way. Hence, the survival of DATI as a cultural and educational entity is very crucial to create national consciousness among Liberians, Africans, and citizens of the world through your steadfast financial, material, and moral supports.

Dehkontee Artists Theatre at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in July



As a precursor to the July 26th celebration, Liberia’s leading and longest surviving theatre company Dehkontee Artists Theatre will kick off its pre- 40th Anniversary Gala with a two-day workshop and performance on Thursday, July 13th and Friday, July 14th, in collaboration with the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington, D. C., under the theme: “The Art of the Masquerade from the African Perspective”. Dr. Gbaba will present a lecture which will be followed by a simulation of a traditional West African masquerade from the Krahn ethnic group of Liberia to be performed by actors and actresses of DATI, including the theatre mogul himself. The simulation will focus on Dr. Gbaba’s maternal great-grandfather Prince Wrihyee-Kpodeah’s traditional Krahn war mask called Garlay-boo Gleh, to pay respects to his royal

ancestry and commemorate Liberia's vital role in the preservation of the human dignity and independence of the Black Race.

Thus, guests of the National Museum of African Art should ready themselves to receive a pre-celebration treat from gifted thespians of Dehkontee Artists Theatre like they have never had before! Against this backdrop, DATI will feature some of its finest artists the likes of Lars Tomo McCritty, Prince Julian Gbaba, DATI's Cultural Ambassador Madam Kormassa Bobo, Sierra Leone American artist Alie Kamara, Annette Landers, Hawa Porte-Quaye, Princess Ariminta Gbaba, and the Master of Ceremonies for the event is Prince Jacques Tomoonh Yeleyon Gbaba. Some items on the agenda of the program include a power-point presentation by Dr. Gbaba, three monologues that reflect the impact of African history and culture and Black Identity on world civilization, and some traditional dance renditions by DATI's Ambassador Kormass Bobo.



A traditional Liberian helmet mask common among the Mende, Vai, Gola, Deiweion peoples of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea.

As a sequel to the Smithsonian event, DATI will celebrate its 40th Anniversary on September 16th, 2017 at the African Cultural Center, 5000 Springfield Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the birthplace of America's democracy. Distinguished guests, including foreign diplomats, U.S. government officials, patriotic Liberians, Africans, and diehard fans of DATI have begun to make reservations for the September gala which is expected to pull Liberians, African Americans, and citizens from various spheres of the globe to this memorable and historical event. Admissions to DATI's 40th Anniversary Gala are as follows: (1) Grand Patron: \$100; Patron: \$50; and Ordinary: \$25. The event starts at 6 p.m. until 2 a.m. the next morning.

It will include a book signing ceremony of Dr. Gbaba's *Conflict Resolution and the Concept of Change*, 40th Anniversary Dinner, talent and fashion show, a fundraiser, and the 40th Anniversary Ball! Funds raised will be used to launch a national peace and reconciliation campaign in Liberia in 2018. All patriotic and peace-loving Liberians, Africans and citizens of the world are cordially invited.

Our Twenty-Six on Your Oh, Liberian People!

This year, DATI's "Twenty-Six" is on all Liberians, particularly those who trained under Dr. Gbaba and benefited from his artistic and scholarly prowess during their formative years at the University of Liberia and The University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Cuttington University, respectively. This also includes all students of Dr. Gbaba's over the years who sipped from his fountain of knowledge at the various institutions of learning where he taught them advanced communication skills, civic education, and ethics. It is time to give back and to support a worthy cause! Below are some reasons why your swift nationalistic action is solicited.

The Role of Dr. Gbaba in the Preservation of Liberian History and Culture



The role of Dr. Gbaba in the preservation of Liberian history and culture cannot be denied or overlooked. We should all be appreciative that a stalwart son of Liberia has devoted his entire life to teaching and educating Liberians, Africans, and the world about our African cultural and historical values. This year is the 43rd celebration of Dr. Gbaba as playwright, theatre director, and actor. He started his vocation in 1974 at Carroll High School in Grassfield, Yekepa, Nimba County, Liberia. As a scholar/artist, Dr. Gbaba has trained thousands of Liberian and international scholars in the fields of drama, Literature, and Composition, from elementary

through college levels in Liberia and the United States. Educational institutions where he taught include: St. Patrick's, St. Teresa's Convent, College of West Africa, A.M.E. Zion Academy, A.M.E. Zion Community College, Mother Pattern College of Social Work, the University of Liberia, Cuttington University, Zwedru Multilateral High School, Jay Cooke Middle School, and Grover Cleveland School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

A Partial List of Dr. Gbaba's Students and Those He Trained over the Decades

Some of DATI members and students Dr. Gbaba trained include among others: Drs. Henrique Zobon Scott, Nathaniel Sieh Doe, and Maude Major; Claude Langley, Eric Goll, James Francis Clarke, Jr, Herbert Elliott, Josephine Gibson, Jestina Gibson, Justice Jamesetta Howard Wolokolie of the Supreme Court of Liberia, Timotheus Weeks, Blidi Elliott, Isaac Collins, Jr., Wilmot Collins, Nyema Elliott, Calvin Harris, Joseph Butler, Ambassador Mohammed Sherif, Pearl Banks-Williams, Rita Pierre, Christian Fenning aka Fumbah, Dean Eugene Wilson, Guy Melvin Smith, Alvis Vaskinda, Lawrence Sharpe, Joshua Howard, James Wah, Julian Gbaba, Jacques Gbaba, Andre Minkins, Timothy Gardiner, Keith Hill, Scott Carter, Caleb Domah, Emmanuel Lewis, Emmanuel Tulay, Merrill Badio, Felicia Badio, Nyama Warietay, Mai Quipoo, Eugene Doloopa, Edward Greene, Bushuben Keita, Joel Williamson, Foleybole Kromah, Chanchan Paegar, Esther Kartwe-Brown, Charmaine Kromah, James Draper, Gregory Tugbeh, Williette Musgrove, Quentin Jackson, Fred Deshield, Gessler Murray, Alicia Murray, Kathy Lokko, William Travell, William Azam, Lars Tomo McCritty, Lysander McCritty, Benjamin Payne, Sweetie Martin, Comfort Innis, Sondia Tubman, Joseph Kappia, Williette Mooney, Nathaniel Gbaba, Tilman Collins, Charles Boimah Blake, Sr., Alexander Yallah, Bernard Goah, Chesiah Grant, Ambassador Isaac Nyanabo, Magnus Cassell, Ayan Cassell, John Cuffey, Hassan Tull, Allen Dolo, Constance Tulay, Mai Gibson, Effua Karua MCGowan, Stephen Addo, and the list goes on. More names will be published in the next edition of our press release to demonstrate the immense contributions Dehkontee Artists has made in the manpower development of Liberia through the performing arts and literacy.

Dehkontee Artists Theatre Needs the Financial Support of Its Former Members and Trainees

It is our expectation that the individuals mentioned above, as well as others whose names are not mentioned in this press release, will show up in a spirit of patriotism and gratitude for the selfless service Dr. Gbaba and Dehkontee Artists Theatre rendered them during their formative years at the University of Liberia and The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and Cuttington University, respectively. Providing the necessary financial support will help Dr. Gbaba and his present staff to train younger Liberian, African artists and make them productive citizens of the world tomorrow! Therefore, if you are unable to attend, please be kind and grateful enough to financially support the work of the organization that helped to harness your talent and shape your personality by visiting the DATI official website: www.dehkonteeartists theatreinc.com and click on the "Donate" button to make your tax deductible contribution. You may also deposit your contribution in DATI's Wells Fargo Checking Account #: **3931972677**.

This year Dehkontee Artists Theatre's Twenty-Six is on all Liberians. Come and patronize the longest surviving theatre organization that continues to raise the Lone Star banner on the world cultural stage. We look forward to seeing Liberians from all occupations in Philadelphia for DATI's 40th Anniversary Gala on September 16th in the City of Brotherly Love.

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