

***Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI) To Launch National Peace and Reconciliation Radio and Television Recorded Productions in Collaboration with Liberian Artists in Liberia as Its 2018-2019 Performing and Visual Arts Programs***



***Rabbi Prince Joseph Tomoonh-Garlodeyh Gbaba, Sr., Ed. D.***

***Executive Director & Founder***

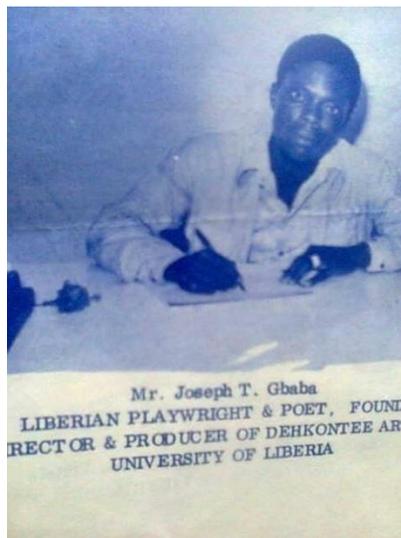
***Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI)***

On July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI) will celebrate forty-one years of its existence and continued contribution toward the preservation and restoration of African/Liberian arts and culture on the continent of Africa and in the United States of America and France. The event will take place at the International Conference Center, 3701 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia PA from 8-10 p.m. Some of the funds raised from the program will be used to launch DATI's National Peace and Reconciliation and Cultural Awareness Campaign in Liberia. Therefore, the public is asked to donate generously toward our fundraising program so that traumatized Liberian war victims may be educated and entertained about their rich cultural heritage. At the same time, the campaign will provide Liberians some healing and bring closure to their traumatic wartime experiences. Admissions to the program are as follows: Grand Patron: \$100; Patron: \$50; and Adult: \$25. Tickets can be purchased online: <https://www.dehkonteeartiststheatreinc.com> and click on the "Donate" button to purchase a ticket of your choice.



You will receive a confirmation email acknowledging receipt of your payment and reserving your seat for the event on July 28<sup>th</sup>. All donations made to DATI are tax deductible because DATI is a 501 ©(3) nonprofit cultural and educational organization.

***The Impact of Gbaba's Legacy in the Transformation of the Liberian Society and People over the Past Four Decades***



One of the secrets to Dehkontee Artists Theatre's success and longevity has been Gbaba's controversial nature and commitment to his vocation: his ability to live what he preaches, stay close to the ordinary people, and plead their cause by providing them with culturally relevant discourses. Also, his philosophical beliefs about living a simple and devout life and respecting the dignity of the human person, are reflected in the plays and literature he produces to educate and entertain Liberians and the international community. Consequently, Liberians and many citizens of the world continue to look up to Dr. Gbaba for leadership and direction, particularly those who have followed his trend of argument about building a Liberian society where the African history and culture of the people must be front and center of Liberia's

and Africa’s development agendas. Accordingly, Gbaba has gradually instilled national consciousness in the minds of some Liberians and foreign nationals, by urging Liberians and Africans to stay connected to their rich cultural roots and embrace one another as fellow citizens of Liberia and the world. Below is a synopsis of his literary contribution to Liberia and the world.

For an example, the central theme of Gbaba’s first play he wrote, directed, and produced, “Life Story of Kekula”, is: ***national unity and integration***. In this literary piece, Gbaba frowns on tribalism and “Who know you” system and concludes his discourse with intermarriage between an Americo-Liberian lady and an indigenous Kpelle boy. The aim of the play was to bridge the socio-political gap created by the status quo to divide Liberians into class strata. Nine years later, Gbaba marries an Americo-Liberian lady and their children are the core-lineage of the Liberian society as are those Liberians born from the union of Americo-Liberians/Congau and Indigenous Liberians.

Gbaba’s “No More Hard Times” underscores the hazardous socio-economic conditions imposed upon the underprivileged of the Liberian society by the status quo. Further, “Love for Mymah” projects the traditional romantic picture of ancient Liberians and reflects the belief systems of the Liberian people. Also, Dehkontee Artists Theatre collaborated with the Tolbert administration to advocate for the total liberation of the African continent through the performance of Gbaba’s “The Chains of Apartheid”, which won him international acclaim as a Liberian playwright and theatre director. “The Chains of Apartheid” addressed racial inequality and decolonization of Africans living under the repressive regimes of white supremacists in Southern Africa (Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, and South Africa) in the 70s and early 80s.



***DATI performing Gbaba’s “The Minstrel’s Tales” at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion in Monrovia, Liberia.***

“The Minstrel’s Tales” warns Liberians about the corruption of its social, political, and cultural structures—i.e., glamorizing decadent behaviors and values of western societies to the sheer neglect of those inherent cultural values handed down to us by our forebears, such as being

law-abiding, remaining committed to nation building, and warmly embracing one another as brothers and sisters and citizens of the same nation.

“The Minstrel’s Tales” criticizes Liberia’s educational system that is far from providing culturally relevant education that will effectively prepare the Liberian child to become a productive and conscientious citizen of Liberia. It describes the Liberian educational system as a **white-washed type education** that prepares a Liberian child from kindergarten up to college level without knowing who Suacoco or Juah-Nimely was! As a result, Gbaba argues that the vast accumulation of **lack of self-knowledge** has catapulted into self-destruction and the total collapse of Liberia’s socio-economic and political infrastructures.

### ***DATI’s Post War Projects and Contributions to the Restoration of Rule of Law in Liberia***



***Dehkontee Artists Theatre performing Gbaba’s “Town Trap” at St. Francis de Sales Auditorium in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.***

During the heat of the Liberian Civil War, Dehkontee Artists Theatre provided valuable services to the war-stricken people of Liberia. DATI used the performing and visual arts to transmit messages of peace and reconciliation through dance, songs, music, drawings, paintings, and to advocate for peace and reconciliation among Liberian war victims. This was a collaborative effort between DATI and the United Nations Children’s Educational Fund (UNICEF) through the formation of the UNICEF/DATI Kukatonon Conflict Resolution and Peace Education Project.



*DATI at the Bowie Center for the Performing Arts in Bowie, Maryland, U.S.A.*

DATI conducted peace education workshops for school teachers and educational leaders around the nation in collaboration with the Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL) and UNICEF. DATI also had a children's peace theatre component to the project which involved children between the ages ten to thirteen participating in the advocacy for the disarmament of child soldiers. This strategy was contingent upon the assumption that since many Liberian children were forcefully conscripted as child soldiers by Liberian warlords and politicians, then it would be effective to use children to tell their own stories and appeal to their colleagues to drop their arms.



*Recruiting children in Monrovia for the DATI/UNICEF Children's Peace Theatre in 1992.*

It was a strategy used to stop blood-hungry-and-thirsty Liberian warlords from forcing Liberian children into adulthood, and to ensure that Liberian children live as regular children whose rights are protected under the laws of Liberia. Fortunately, the project was a booming

success and its model was subsequently used by the United Nations in other conflict zones in Africa!



*Zwedru Multilateral High School Drama Club performing Gbaba's "Yah" ("Vision") at the Relda Theatre in Monrovia.*

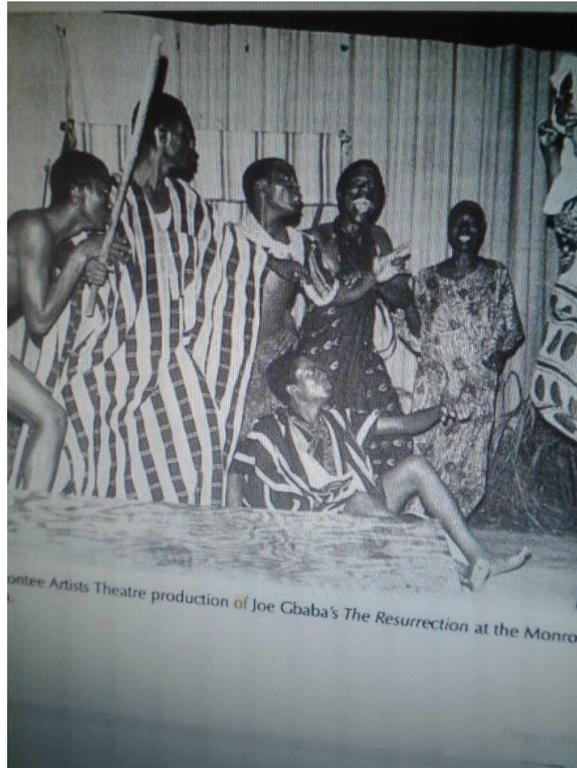
Other UN-sponsored projects included the HIV/AIDS project entitled "Wheh-gba" (a Bassa expression that translates as "Big Sickness" in the English language). The project was a live traveling theatre production educating postwar Liberians on safe sex and sexually transmitted diseases through dance, drama, and traditional music. DATI covered a total population of over a hundred thousand displaced Liberians around Liberia between 1992-1997.

In addition, DATI also ran a couple of radio drama series: "Road to Recovery" and "Mardea" that helped traumatized victims get some closure to their traumatic experiences while at the same time promoting gender equity and women empowerment. Also, there was the bi-weekly "Dehkontee Artists Theatre" Talk Show that was aired on ELBC and Veritas FM stations. The radio talk show provided Liberian citizens civic education and peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliatory tips. All these programs were implemented and warmly received and appreciated by the Liberian people from 1992-1997 prior to the flight of Dr. Gbaba into exile due to threat of life and his stance against rebel activities and lawlessness in postwar Liberia.

***Support Dehkontee Artists Theatre's National Peace and Reconciliation and Cultural Awareness Campaign in Liberia!***

Dehkontee Artists Theatre's National Peace and Reconciliation and Cultural Awareness Campaign is intended to provide some psychological relief for war victims, to provide through the performing and visual arts, mental health services for traumatized citizens of Liberia whose mental health state has been seriously affected by the *Stockholm Syndrome*. It is a psychological condition in which victims subconsciously pledge allegiance to their perpetrators as was the case with Liberians saying, ***"You killed my ma, you killed my pa, I will vote for you!"***

Seriously, one wonders what human being in his right frame of mind would want to vote into power and high office someone that slaughtered his parents other than someone who has a mental health problem? On a more serious note, this condition was intentionally created in the Liberian society in the past nearly thirty years by the status quo in collaboration with international “peace negotiators”, so that the bulk of the Liberian population traumatized by the atrocities committed by their perpetrators may remain subservient to their oppressors.



In this way the status quo would succeed in breeding a new generation of loyal and ignorant citizens with little or no solid education that will be ill-prepared to the point of being dependent on hand-outs from their oppressors and perpetrators! Consequently, this is the true reality on the ground in Liberia. Liberian warlords are the executives, the law makers, and the interpreters of the law in Liberia, while those they victimized during the war stand at the front of their high-gated and fenced-in mansions daily to beg for the crumbs from their perpetrators’ tables! Thus, the DATI National Peace and Reconciliation and Cultural Awareness Campaign aims to reverse this unbearable condition of the Liberian people, to help reinstate genuine rule of law by educating the citizens about their inalienable rights and privileges.

In view of the foregoing, the Management of Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI) is appealing to all Liberians, friends of Liberia and the international community to provide financial and material support for the implementation of the DATI National Peace and Reconciliation and Cultural Awareness Radio and Television Campaign in Liberia. The goal of the program is to help promote peace and reconciliation and national consciousness among traumatized Liberian war victims.

You can make a donation online: <https://www.dehkonteeartists theatreinc.com> and click on the "Donate" button to make a donation. You can also make a check or money order payable to Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. via mail: P.O. Box 143, Clifton Heights, PA 19018; or, through our Wells Fargo Checking Account # 3931972677; Routing #:031000503

Produced by the Public Relations Section of Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI)

June 28, 2018