

***DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Liberia Gains Momentum: Patriotic Liberians Support Peace Process***



***DATI Montserrado Chapter***



***DATI Maryland Chapter***

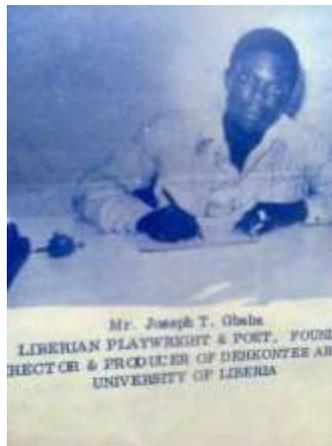
The Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI) has launched a fund drive to raise One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000) to purchase two used twenty-four-seater buses and provide logistical supports (per diems, lodging, food) for fifty Liberian youth Peace Advocates to go on a peace performance tour in Liberia. Funds generated will also be used to train more Liberian youths to actively engage in peacebuilding in Liberia. You may donate to the DATI Kukatonon Peace Project Fund in the following ways:

1. Log on DATI’s website: <https://www.dehkonteeartiststheatreinc.com> and click on the “Donate” button to make your tax-deductible donation because DATI is a 501 ©(3) nonprofit African-centered educational and cultural organization.
2. You can also donate through DATI’s Wellsfargo Checking Account # 3931972677; Routing Number: 055003201; Wire Transfer # 121000148.

3. You may mail out your donation and make check or money order payable to: Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI), P. O. Box 143, Clifton Heights, PA 19018.

We are pleased to inform you DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Liberia is gaining momentum each day as peace-loving Liberians and citizens from other nations step up to provide financial support to assist DATI implement its peace and reconciliation project in post-genocide Liberian society. In recent times, the following individuals have contributed to DATI's peace fund: Felicia Gaye-Wright, Cedia Okon, Irene Roberts-Gulley, Juliana Koffa-Dixon, Patrick Cooper, William Kromah, Habib Dorley, Joshua Browne ("the Governor"), Alfred Bedell, Dr. James Nmlawah Elliott and Archie Wilson. We appeal to all Liberians and citizens of the world who genuinely crave for the restoration of peace and national unity in Liberia to donate to the DATI Kukatonon Peace Project Fund.

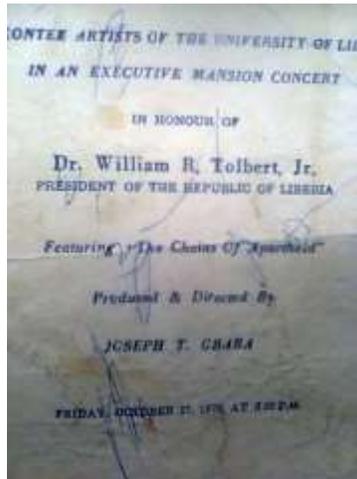
### *About Us*



*The original Dehkontee Artists Theatre at the University of Liberia forty-two years ago.*

Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI) is the longest surviving private nonprofit theatre organization in Liberia. It was established in 1977, forty-two years ago at the University of Liberia (UL) by Liberian playwright, theatre director and actor, Dr. Joe Gbaba and a group of

conscientious UL students. Dr. Gbaba and his colleagues felt there was a dire need to nationally and globally promote and preserve Liberian and African culture and history through the performing and visual arts and literacy. The timely decision was taken due to the denigration of indigenous Liberian history and cultures at that time by the ruling elites of Liberia. Accordingly, since its founding, DATI has persistently upheld its mission statement to promote Liberian and African arts and culture continentally and globally.



During its nascent years (1977-1979), DATI held several presidential and diplomatic performances for some West African Presidents and Vice President (William R. Tolbert of Liberia, Ghanaian Heads of State Fred Akkuffu, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, First Vice President S.I. Koroma of Sierra Leone). The organization also had the privilege to entertain and educate members of the diplomatic corps accredited near Freetown, Sierra Leone and Monrovia, on the diverse and rich cultures of Africa and Liberia (1977-1980).

A branch of Dehkontee Artists Theatre was organized at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G) in 1982. That year, the group performed a mainstage production of Gbaba's "Chains of Apartheid" at the UNC-G Aycock Auditorium. The play depicts the Apartheid system in South Africa during the Pete Botha regime. DATI also participated in the Greensboro Annual City Stage Events in 1982. Gbaba subsequently earned his MFA in Directing and Acting in 1983 and returned to Liberia to contribute towards the development of culture and education in his native land.



*A scene from Joe Gbaba's "The Resurrection at the Monrovia City Hall in 1984.*

1983-1989: Gbaba revived DATI-Liberia and it conducted national performance tours. Several Gbaba plays including "The Resurrection", "The Minstrel's Tales", "Yah" ("Vision") were staged prior to the beginning of the Liberian Genocide. However, DATI's operations were suspended during the heat of the Liberian Genocide; and several years later, regular artistic and educational activities resumed in 1992 after the cessation of hostilities.

### ***DATI's Pivotal Role during the Early Stages of the Liberian Peace Process***

DATI played a pivotal role in the early stages of the Liberian peace process in collaboration with several international and local NGOs, including but not limited to: (1) the United Nations Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF), (2) the United Nations Military Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), (3) the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL). Below are some projects DATI implemented during the negotiation period of the Liberian peace process:

- I. Projects DATI jointly implemented with UNICEF included:
  - A. UNICEF Kukatonon Conflict Resolution and Peace Education Project which consisted of two main components:
    1. A week-long conflict resolution and peace education workshop for schoolteachers and local education officers across Liberia. The workshops were conducted across the country in collaboration with UNICEF, the Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL) and DATI. Nearly five thousand local education officers and schoolteachers participated in the program.
    2. The UNICEF/DATI Children's Peace Theatre comprised children between the ages 8-12. They performed in rebel-held territories across Liberia to appeal to child soldiers and former combatants to lay down their arms through music,

dance, and drama. The program reached an approximated 10,000 audience members across the nation.

- B. Mardea” (A Bassa expression that means, “New Woman”). It was a radio drama series that played on local radio stations to educate Liberians about gender equity and women empowerment. The drama emphasizes the need for Liberian females to have access to equality of educational opportunities and to actively participate in the decision-making processes that affect their destiny. This program reached nearly a million people.
- C. “Wheh-gba”, a Bassa expression that literally means “Big sickness!” It was an HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) prevention drama educating Liberians on the dangers of unsafe sex and the use of unsterilized medical utensils that result to HIV/AIDS infection. The troupe traveled from county to county and displaced persons centers around the country. The troupe performed for approximately ten thousand Liberians in a period of three months.
- II. “Borh Fufuenh” (Kru expression meaning, “Stop fighting”): is a DATI/UNMIL disarmament radio drama promoting the disarmament of combatants during the Liberian Genocide. This project was not aired.
- III. “Basic Health Care” is a DATI/WHO radio drama program designed to educate Liberians on basic health care. Unfortunately, the program did not air due to the outbreak of violence among belligerent warring factions.
- IV. “Road to Recovery”: a radio drama series sponsored by the Christian Health Association and implemented by Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. It ran for one calendar year on national radio station (Liberia Broadcasting System) and other local FM stations. The program reached approximately 2.5 million people.
- V. DATI Public Performances and Cultural Awareness Programs: DATI staged many public performances during the cessation of hostilities in Liberia to help traumatized genocide survivors regain sobriety and to instill national consciousness in Liberians through the performing and visual arts.

## ***DATI USA***



***DATI U.S.A.***

DATI was incorporated as a nonprofit in the State of Delaware in 1998 and it obtained its nonprofit status from the IRS 2002. Our goal is to promote Liberian/African arts and culture worldwide through the performing and visual arts and Afrocentric literacy. Our motto is: “Education and Entertainment through Cultural Awareness”. Forty-two years fast forward, DATI is still pursuing its goals and objectives, this time creating national consciousness among post-genocide Liberian citizens and foreign residents that live in Liberia, as well as Liberians living abroad.

### ***DATI’s Peacebuilding Project in Liberia and Abroad***



***Liberian child soldier during the Liberian Genocide***

Presently, there are three branches of DATI. Its headquarters is in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. The other two DATI chapters were recently established to launch the DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Liberia. They are: DATI Montserrado Chapter which is in Southcentral and western Liberia and DATI Maryland County Chapter located in Maryland County, Southeastern Liberia.



*DATI Montserrado Chapter*

Combined, the two DATI chapters consist of fifty Liberian college students and some youths with their first degrees from various universities in Monrovia and Harper, Maryland County, Republic of Liberia. These Liberian youths signed up to train and serve as DATI Peace Advocates so that they may travel around Liberia to promote peace and reconciliation through the performing and visual arts and literacy after the completion of their training. Their training entailed over two months of virtual instruction in mediation and cultural competency, writing and composition, theatre arts, and public speaking skills, among others.



*DATI Maryland County Chapter*

It can be recalled that during the Liberian Genocide Liberian youths were forcibly conscripted as child soldiers and combatants by Liberian warlords and politicians to help usher them in power. Thus, what makes DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Liberia unique is the use of Liberian youths as Peace Advocates instead of combatants. This indeed is a reversal of Liberian warlords giving underage children guns to kill innocent and unarmed civilians, women and children and the elderly, to regain political and economic power in Liberia.

Besides the Peacebuilding and Advocacy Program, there is also the DATI Playwright Apprenticeship Program. It provides young Liberians who want to become playwrights and theatre directors the opportunity to learn some basic knowledge about writing and directing a one

act play. Each participant is required to write and direct a play on a topic or subject matter of his or her interest as a final project.

Recently, several DATI members trained under Dr. Joe Gbaba for a month as playwright apprentices. They included Statesmen Albert Tito Ninneh of the Montserrado Chapter and Alfred Jluewehtee Kolgee Nugba and Jeremiah Mayein Clayea of the Maryland Chapter.

### **Formal Launch of DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Liberia**

Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. is formally launching its peace project in Liberia on November 16<sup>th</sup> in Monrovia and November 22<sup>nd</sup> in Harper, Maryland County, respectively. The program in Monrovia will entail the premiere production of “Our Women Are Not Your Chickoos and Iron Titties”, written and directed by Statesman Albert Tito Ninneh. It is a play that promotes gender equity and women empowerment. It speaks against and calls for an end to sexual abuse, harassment and prostitution of Liberian girls.

The launch of DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Monrovia will take place at the historic Old Providence Baptist Church edifice on Broad and Center Streets, from 12 noon till 2 p.m. Other activities include the induction of twenty-one candidates who successfully completed their training in mediation and cultural competency to serve as DATI Peace Advocates.

DATI Kukatonon Peace Project launch in Harper, Maryland County, in Eastern Liberia, will take place on Friday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>. It will begin with a peace parade in the streets of Harper City and end with an indoor program at the Harper City Hall where DATI will present the premiere production of Statesman Alfree Jluewehtee Kolgee Nugba’s “Bah Noo Deh Doh” (a Grebo expression that means, “Let us be one”).

The play focuses on the peaceful settlement of land disputes in Liberia. It draws its background from the proliferation of land disputes that emerged during and after the Liberian Genocide due to internal displacement of Liberians or the mass exodus of Liberians from their homeland. Overtime, those who remained on the ground in Liberia during the displacement or exodus of their fellow countrymen and women from Liberia developed the habit of selling or building structures on lands that do not belong to them.

Other events marking DATI’s cultural festivities include the display of the famous Grebo War Dance Masquerade to be performed by DATI members and elders of Gbenelue, and the induction of twenty-six Peace advocates. It is a once in a lifetime event to watch!

Thank you for your support.

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