



DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Liberia May 2023 Newsletter



*DATI's Voter and Civic Education and Nonviolence Campaign in Liberia*



*DATI Montserrado Chapter recently visited the women of Barnersville-Kebbah to engage and encourage them to cast their ballots during the 2023 presidential and general elections.*

The Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. has initiated its live civic and voter education and nonviolence campaign in rural communities in Montroserrado and Maryland Counties and parts

of Southeastern Liberia, including River Gee, Sinoe, and Grand Gedeh through community engagement/townhall meetings and the “DATI Civic and Peace Education Audiovisual Series” that already airs weekly on Radio Phoenix 102.7 FM in Harper Friday and Sunday at 9 PM, and on Catholic FM Radio Paraclete 93.7 every Wednesday 7:30-8:30 PM in Gbarnga, Bong County.



The pre-election activities recently kicked off with Dehkontee Artists theatre, Inc. (DATI) Montserrado Dougbor Chapter hosting a civic and voter education community engagement and awareness meeting with elders of Barnersville-Kebbah, Gardinersville Township, on Saturday, May 13, 2023. The purpose of the gathering was to encourage voters to actively participate in the forthcoming presidential and general elections and to emphasize the need for a peaceful electoral process on October 10, 2023. The theme of the meeting was “The Path to a Peaceful Election

The DATI delegation was headed by its Acting County Director Henry Fayiah Tamba and he was accompanied by several DATI Peace Advocates, including Regional Director Hillaryson Soe, Jr., Public Relations officer, Lamie TJ Munyah, Precious Sampson, Deputy County Director for Administration, Fawen Varmah, Farm Manager, Henry Garjay Brumskine, former DATI Montserrado County Director, and Hawa Promise Guwor, Deputy County Director for Operations and chief organizer of the community engagement meeting.

Mr. Tamba thanked the elders for responding positively to DATI’s invitation to hold discussions with the elders of Barnersville-Kebba regarding civic and voter education awareness and he stressed the need for all Liberians to maintain peace during the electoral process. He also asked for the elders’ continued support and prayers as DATI endeavors to carry out its peacebuilding and civic and voter’s education campaign throughout the length and breadth of Liberia.

Further, H. Fayiah Tamba also outlined progress DATI has made thus far since the formal launch of the DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Liberia in 2019, such as hosting “the Rabbi Joe Gbaba Peace and Cultural Festival” in Harper April 15-17, 2022, food distribution to poverty-stricken communities in Monrovia, and outreach to traditional elders in rural communities, etc. Mr. Tamba urged the elders to join DATI to spread the message of peace, reconciliation, and national



unity, and nonviolence as stakeholders in the maintenance of peace in Liberia. Other members of the delegation including Hillaryson Soe, Jr. and Henry Brumskine took turns to thank the elders for their partnership and support over the years.

DATI's Executive Director, Dr. Joseph Gbaba delivered a resounding message of peace and national unity from the United States to attendees and citizens of Liberia that watched the livestream on Facebook. He expressed his profound gratitude for their continued support and urged them to exercise their franchise in their own best interest. Rabbi Gbaba also stressed that in a democratic society, the full participation of all citizens is required and that it is very important for the citizens to be properly informed so that they may vote wisely and to be forerunners of their own destiny through the decisions they make at the polls.

In response, two elders of Barnersville-Kebbah (Mr. Smallwood and Pa Amos Tuah) thanked the DATI family for keeping them in mind always. They stated that they were impressed to see young Liberians take on the responsibility to promote peace, rule of law and nonviolence in a society where Liberian youth are used as stooges to put politicians in power. The elder concluded by reassuring DATI that they will continue to lend their support to DATI and that they will actively participate in the forthcoming elections on October 10 this year. The meeting ended with refreshments being served by the DATI Dougbor Chapter for their guests. Below is a video clip of the gathering held in Barnersville-Kebbah.,

<https://www.facebook.com/henry.tamba.125/videos/6180887578670544/?app=fbl>

<https://www.facebook.com/meshach.elliott.7/videos/914069896339371/?app=fbl> (Meshach Elliott, DATI Maryland Gbenelue Chapter Director speaking to elders and townfolks of Big Town Maryland County, Republic of Liberia.)



***DATI Maryland Gbenelue Chapter Hosts Civic and Voter Education Awareness in Big Town, Maryland County***



In a related event, members of DATI Maryland Gbenelue Chapter also held their voter and civic education and community engagement meeting with elders and residents of Old Town (Gbenelue) in Maryland County. The event was attended by a huge number of elders, including women, youth of voting age and first-time voters, and individuals with disabilities .

Four years ago, DATI Peace Advocates established rapport with the elders in Big Town as part of their training curriculum in 2019. The rationale for the field trip to Gbenelue was to connect Liberian college youth and college graduates with their history and culture so that as future leaders of Liberia they may not be detached from their culture and history, as well as the citizens that they might serve. The second reason was to give the youth an opportunity to meet their traditional elders face-to-face, and to seek the elders' blessings and advice.



During their first visit to this rural village, the youth joined the elders in pouring libation and participated in sharing and eating white kola nuts and pepper as a traditional sign of welcome and pureness of heart. The elders also coached DATI Peace Advocates how to perform the famous Grebo War Dance and they joined the youth in DATI Peace Parade throughout the

principal streets of Harper City in 2019 during the formal launch of the DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Liberia. Last year, the Big Town Marching Band and traditional cultural performers participated in the Rabbi Joe Gbaba Peace and Cultural Festival in April 2022.

The cultural festival also included sporting events in which six high schools in Harper vied for the coveted Timothy Gardiner Peace Soccer Tournament and Trophy that was captured by Jared Faith High School. In addition, members of the Maryland Artists Union took part in the Rabbi Joe Gbaba Performing Arts Concert at the Harper City Hall. The Mariam Cultural Troupe won the Rabbi Joe Gbaba Performing Arts Trophy. The Rabbi Joe Gbaba Peace and Cultural Festival ended with a Thanksgiving Service at the St. Theresa Catholic Cathedral on Sunday, April 17<sup>th</sup>.

***DATI Maryland Gbenelue Chapter's Homecoming to Big Town after Four Years!***



***Gallant DATI Peace Advocates and volunteers, very determined and resilient in their efforts to promote peace, reconciliation, national unity through voter and civic education, and the promotion and preservation of Liberian history and culture through the performing and visual art and Afrocentric literacy. L-R: Daniel M. Seatine (graduating senior (Public Health, Tubman University), Jeanet Toe, B.Sc. (Public Health, Tubman University), Alfred J.K. Nugba, BBA (Accounting, Tubman University), Oliver P.K. Griffiths (Graduating Senior, Environmental Science, Tubman University), Emmanuel D. Elliott, B.Sc. (Tubman University), Meshach Sieh Elliott, B.Sc. (Public Health, Tubman University), Philomena M. Arkue, B.Sc. (Education, with emphasis in Guidance Counseling).***

Monday, May 15, 2023 was like a homecoming visit for DATI youth as the elders and townfolks warmly welcomed them in their midst. The community engagement activities began with the usual traditional ritual of sharing white kola nuts, pepper and salt and pouring of libation. Thereafter, the elders listened attentively to DATI officials to receive their message. DATI Gbenelue Chapter County Director, Statesman Meshach Sieh Elliott greeted the elders and youth of the town and extended DATI's Executive Director Rabbi Dr. Joseph Gbaba's best wishes to the elders and townfolks. Then there was a moment of silence in remembrance of the

late Chief Nmlawah Prowd who was instrumental in forging the partnership between DATI and the inhabitants of Big Town four years ago.

Afterwards, Meshach delivered his keynote message regarding the forthcoming elections and the role of voters in making the electoral process peaceful, nonviolent, and successful. He informed the townfolks about DATI's upcoming peace rally that is intended to send a clear message to all stakeholders in the forthcoming elections that all those vying for elected positions must abide by the election laws of Liberia and when displeased with the results the aggrieved party (ies) must seek redress through the proper legal procedure, so that the elections may be nonviolent and successful.

Mr. Elliott was assisted by DATI Gbenelue Chapter's Treasurer, Stateswoman Philomena M. Arkue who delivered DATI's voter and civic education message in the Grebo Vernacular. Ms. Arkue urged all Marylanders and Liberians residing in the county, especially females and first-time voters and youth of voting age, to exercise their franchise which she said was their inalienable right as citizens of Liberia. She concluded by thanking the townfolks and elders of Big Town for being very supportive partners of the DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Liberia.

Speaking on behalf of the elders, Mr. Yemenju Dickson thanked the youth for being very responsible citizens. He lauded DATI Peace Advocates for standing up for peace, rule of law and justice in Liberia. He also expressed his profound gratitude to the youth on behalf of the people of Big Town for taking time off their studies and busy schedules to travel to their rural community to educate them about their civic responsibilities and their right to vote.

Mr. Dickson closed his remarks by showering blessings upon the youth and assured them they would be in full attendance at DATI's Peace Rally which is slated to be held in early June. More details will be published in subsequent publications of the DATI Monthly Newsletter. Below are some video clips from DATI Maryland Gbenelue Chapter's visit to Big Town on Monday, May 15, 2023.

<https://www.facebook.com/meshach.elliott.7/videos/1012707180138702/?app=fbl> (Elder of Big Town Responding to DATI's request for the elders to join them in launching a peace rally)

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0xGueUXHFepxiDRFD1KhTRaKVuSracU5dWXjTv5gAd5Vqbe8LPLvVALkqNoCis53Ql&id=100016895467392&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0xGueUXHFepxiDRFD1KhTRaKVuSracU5dWXjTv5gAd5Vqbe8LPLvVALkqNoCis53Ql&id=100016895467392&mibextid=Nif5oz) (a collage of videos with various speakers)

### ***How to Donate to DATI Kukatonon Peace Project in Liberia***

1. Write a check or money order to: Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc., P. O. Box 143, Clifton Heights, PA 19018
2. Cashapp: \$Joseph Gbaba, tel. (267) 973-1709
3. Through our Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. Checking Account: 3931972677; Routing Number: 055003201 (direct deposits); 121000248 (wire transfers--domestic)

*Contact us:*

*Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI), P. O Box 143, Clifton Heights, PA 19018, USA*

*Website: [www.dehkonteeartists theatreinc.com](http://www.dehkonteeartists theatreinc.com)*