

What to Expect at the DATI Tripartite Anniversary Gala and Fundraiser



The DATI Tripartite Anniversary is about three major milestones: 1. 49 years of dedication to the preservation of Liberian history and culture through the performing and visual arts; 2. Resilience in the pursuit of one's lifelong dream to give back to society and keep the cultural values of Liberia alive against the predominance of western cultural influence; and 3. family values. These three components combine to form the DATI Tripartite Anniversary which will be highlighted by a fundraiser to generate funds to construct the first school of the performing and visual arts in Liberia.

49 Years of Resilience in the Pursuit of My Career and Determination to Unite All Liberian



The source of my resilience to pursue my career and determination to unite all Liberians originates from a vision I had forty-nine years ago. In addition, I was also inspired by the vision of President William V. S. Tubman, the sitting President of Liberia at the time, to unite all Liberians through his National Unification and Integration Policy. So, nearly half a century ago I started my journey as a playwright, theatre director, producer, and actor. Not that many people stick with their dreams that long but over the years, the Lord blessed me with wonderful people

who nurtured my talent to reach thus far. Therefore, the DATI Tripartite Anniversary is about thanking all of you (dead or alive) that supported my career as an artist/scholar and my dream to unite all Liberians.



President William V. S. Tubman, 18th President of the Republic of Liberia

Forty-nine years ago, I had a divine vision, and, in that vision, I was directed by God to write, direct, and produce my first play called "Life Story of Kekula" when I was a senior student at Carroll High School in Grassfield, Yekepa, Nimba County, Northern Liberia. The theme of the play was "*National Integration and Unification.*" This was the policy that President Tubman, the 18th President of Liberia designed to unite Liberians and to discourage tribalism and eliminate the negative and divisive "Congau vs. Country" slogan that continues to hinder Liberia's progress. Forty-nine years thereafter, Liberians are still bugged down with the sickening mindset of "Country and Congau" divide.

In "Life Story of Kekula", a Kpelle boy named Kekula was given to a Settler family so he could be reared and taught western cultural values, to be educated and become a "kwi." Kekula fell in love with his adopted sister named Sussie and when his adopted parents found out, they insisted that Kekula and Sussie must be married so that their grandchild would not be a bastard, even though back then it was uncommon for an Indigenous Liberian to wed a descendant of Settlers and vice versa. Consequently, this led to Kekula and Sussie having children who were related to both sects of the Liberian cultural divide: descendants of indigenous Liberians and Settler Liberians.



A scene from Dehkontee Artists production of Dr. Joe Gbaba's "Love for Mymah" at the Ibrahim Theatre in Philadelphia.

Overall, forty-nine years ago, I appeared on the literary scene with a resounding message of national unity and integration. Nine years later, I, an indigenous Liberian married the daughter of descendants of Settlers, and our children are related to both Indigenous and Settler Liberians, just like the children of my characters in "Life Story of Kekula". Therefore, the DATI Tripartite Anniversary is about celebrating national unity and reconciliation among all Liberians at home and abroad.

46 Years of Building Institutions and Giving Back to One's Society



The original Dehkontee Artists Theatre cast at the University of Liberia forty-six years ago.

Forty-six years ago, some conscientious University of Liberia students and I organized Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI) at the University of Liberia. DATI was organized at the time when there was a political whirlwind of change in Liberia. Liberia had a new President

named William R. Tolbert, Jr. He was dynamic, farsighted, and very pragmatic. Even though President Tubman initiated the concept of national integration, President Tolbert would enforce it by appointing indigenous Liberians to positions of high public trust. He openly and proudly spoke Kpelle, one of the indigenous languages of Liberia. Consequently, this created cultural awareness and the development of a middle class in Liberia, and intellectualism, freedom of speech, and national development and self-initiatives surged. Part of that self-initiative led me to establish the longest surviving collegiate theatre organization (Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc.) in the Republic of Liberia.

Above all, President Tolbert was an avid lover of the performing arts and so DATI became one of his favorite cultural organizations. We had the privilege to perform for President Tolbert at the Executive Mansion Theatre twice--the first was a private performance for the President, Speaker Henries, Chief Justice James A.A. Pierre, some members of his cabinet and members of the diplomatic corps, and the second performance was held during the state visit of Ghanaian Head of State General Fred Akkuffo. DATI also held a State House performance in Freetown, Sierra Leone for the



President William R. Tolbert, Jr., 19th President of the Republic of Liberia, & 2nd Grand Patron of the Honorable Body of Dehkontee Artists Theatre

Acting President of S.I. Koroma on July 26, 1978, and all members of the diplomatic corps accredited near Monrovia in 1979. DATI also held a private performance for Interim President Amos Claudius Sawyer at the Ducor Palace Hotel in 1992.



Dr. Amos Cladius Sawyer, Dr. Gbaba's Social Science Professor at the University of Liberia

Other prominent Liberians and organizations that supported my efforts included but not limited to my kindergarten teacher Margaret Karpeh-Koffa, my surrogate mother, Dolly McCritty-Massaquoi, Charles B. Roberts, John G. Rancy, Sr., Jocelia Cranshaw-Rancy, Dr. Togba-Nah Tipoteh, Dr. Amos Sawyer, Professor Dew Tuan-Wleh Mayson, Dr. McKinley A. Deshield, Jr., the Student Unification Party at the University of Liberia, Liberia's Foreign Minister C. Cecil Dennis, Jr., Liberia's Ministers of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism, J. Jenkins Peal, Honorable Bai T. Moore, Dr. Beyan Kesselly, Kona Khasu (aka James Roberts), Archbishop Francis J. Carroll, Archbishop Michael Kpakala Francis, Dr. Stephen Yekeson, Dr. William Saa Salifu, my mother Princess Martha Gbeh-Nyennonh-Garh Gaye, my aunts: Mama Solo, Zulu Lasannah, Madam Kowoo Tweh, Voowornyennonh Wilkins, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the SMA Priests of the Catholic Church, and the Christian Brothers of Edmund Rice, among many others.



Archbishop Michael Kpakala Francis

My apologies if I omitted names of other family members and sponsors. However, what is more paramount is that DATI is celebrating 46 years of existence, something that is very rare for Liberian organizations. We will be celebrating the spirit of entrepreneurship that President Tolbert fostered during his administration as President of Liberia.



**Rabbi Prince Joseph Tomoonh-Garlodeyh & Princess Ariminta Gbaba, November 19, 1983
at St. Peter's Episocal Church in Gbarnga, Bong County, Liberia**

The DATI Tripartite Anniversary is also about celebrating Liberian family values and the integration of Indigenous and Settler Liberians through interethnic marriage. It is an occasion for Liberians to soberly neglect the practice of tribal/ethnic segregation and promote national unity. We look forward to seeing all of you coming under one roof to celebrate our diversity as a people and nation, instead of using our individual and cultural differences to separate or divide us. Amen.

**Purpose of Fundraiser and How to Donate: To Construct the First School of the
Performing & Visual Arts in Liberia**



**Interior of the Aycock Auditorium at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
where Rabbi Gbaba studied in the early '80s.**

The purpose of the DATI Tripartite Anniversary and Fundraiser is to generate funds to construct the first school of the performing and visual arts in Liberia. It is time to institutionalize Liberian culture, to provide a space especially devoted to preserving and teaching Liberian history and culture. We appeal to all Liberians, Africans, and lovers of the arts to lend their unwavering financial and material support to this worthwhile national project. Below are ways in which you can donate even if you are unable to attend.

Save the Date: **December 16, 2023 for
DATI/Rabbi Joe Gbaba
Tripartite Anniversary Fundraiser**



The family, friends, fans, and supporters of Rabbi Joe and Princess Ariminta Gbaba and Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI), cordially invite you to their Tripartite Anniversary and Fundraiser on:

DATE: Saturday, December 16, 2023

VENUE: Merion Tribute House

ADDRESS: 526 Hazelhurst Avenue, Merion Station, PA 19066

TIME: 6-11 PM

PURPOSE: To generate enough funds, material and moral supports, to construct the first school of the performing and visual arts and center for cultural studies in Liberia.

ADMISSIONS

I. Grand Patrons: \$1,000. (Can be paid in installments when registered with Chief Project Financial Officer, Mrs. Juliana Koffa-Dixon @ julianakd69@gmail.com).

PACKAGE INCLUDES: 1. Photo of the Grand Patron & brief statement of support published in the ad journal; 2. Flashing photos and names of Grand Patrons in the hall during DJ musical interludes; 3. Names of the Grand Patrons to be engraved on cornerstone of the DATI School of the Performing and Visual Arts and Center for Peace and Cultural Studies.

II. Patrons: \$500

PACKAGE INCLUDES: 1. Photo of Patron in ad journal and brief statement of support for the project. 2. Flashing photos and names of patrons during DJ musical interludes; copy of official brochure

III. SUPPORTERS: \$250

Package includes: 1. Flashing Supporters' names during DJ Musical interludes.

IV. GENERAL ADMISSIONS: \$100

Package: A copy of the official Tripartite Anniversary Brochure

V. HOW TO DONATE TO DATI: 1. Via cashapp: \$Josephgbaba (267) 973-1709;

2. Via U.S. postal mail: Send check or money order to:

Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc., P. O. Box 143, Clifton Heights, PA 19018;

3. Deposit your donation in DATI's Wells Fargo

Account # 5730834990; Routing # 031000503;

Domestic Wire Transfer # 121000148; International Transfer #WFBUS65.

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