

PROJECT



No 2nd Chance to Squander

PLAN TO GET A LIBERIA THAT WORKS FOR ALL

I. Backdrop

Liberians like to speak of normal days. But if history is anything to go by, Liberia has never really had “normal days”. From a minority domination of our body politics, as embodied by the True Whig Party’s century-plus rule, to the brutal military dictatorship of Samuel K. Doe, to the Charles Taylor/NPFL/NPP senseless mayhem, Liberia has seen it all. Each latter group that was meant to correct the misdeeds of the previous regime ended up being worse than its predecessor. The civil wars of 1989-2003 are a constant reminder of how bad things can get if we don’t get our act together.

In 2005, when Liberians elected Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, they felt they had bid a final farewell to bad governance, corruption, and the attending negative consequences. But that was not to be. Mrs. Sirleaf loves to remind us that she took the Government of Liberia’s (GOL) fiscal budget from USD80m in 2005 to 600m by 2017. And that she restored Liberia’s respect and standing in the international community. And that’s all factual, truth be told, that’s only one-half the story. The other half not being told is that instead of continuing with comprehensive reforms and laying the groundwork for sustainable growth and development, she amplified the bureaucratic state, burdening state finances, and reinstated the politics of patronage, nepotism, and corruption. Yes, her high international profile did attract billions of dollars in international aid, grants, and foreign investments – but a lot of that money ended up in Liberia’s corruption rabbit hole. Regarding foreign investments and concessions, particularly, our National Legislature struck very corrupt deals (*ref: Moore Stephens’s Audit, May 2013*). In the end, Mrs. Sirleaf justly earned her place amongst the global elites, but ordinary Liberians remained mired in poverty and destitution.

In 2017, disappointed with Mrs. Sirleaf and her global adulation, Liberians turned to Mr. George Weah and the CDC – the Congress for Democratic Change. Liberia’s most iconic footballer had always been immensely popular in Liberia and no less so after his pivot into politics. By choosing Mr. Weah, Liberians had hoped to return to the politics of common sense. But from the day Mr. Weah and his CDC took power, it was clear to all that they lacked common sense. Mr. Weah and the CDC were hellbent on stealing as much they could– in the shortest time possible. Unsurprisingly, Mr. Weah and the CDC spent their six years misusing and abusing power. They also institutionalize violence at every level of law enforcement and even nurtured and co-opted CDC thugs terrorize opponent and critics.

By 2023, Liberians, again disillusioned by the Weah/CDC government, which had turned into a violent kleptocracy, were in search of deliverance. They pinned their hopes on a Coalition of Political Parties (CPP), which, coincidentally and perhaps unfortunately, included the Unity Party of Joseph Nyumah Boakai. Ultimately, the CPP fell apart – thanks (largely) to Unity Party’s arrogance and intransigence. Notwithstanding, positive public sentiments for the group gravitated towards Mr. Boakai. Eventually, Mr. Boakai was victorious and became Liberia’s President (2024-Present). However, his ascendancy has brought back the nagging reality that neither Mr. Boakai nor the UP has what it takes to transform Liberia. Mr. Boakai continues to demonstrate poor leadership, a lack of vision, ineptitude, divisiveness, and fiscal recklessness. Liberians must now find a path to a prosperous future that **does not include Mr. Boakai and the Unity Party nor a return to Mr. George Weah and his CDC**. This is now the ‘only way out’ for Liberia!

II. *The Contemporary Unpleasant Reality*

Mr. Boakai, notwithstanding his lofty campaign promises, continues to abuse power, just as UP did from (2005-2017), and for which they were removed from power. The loudest critics were the CDC and Mr. Weah, who, when entrusted with power, equally abused and misused power (2018-2023). Mr. Weah and the CDC now want to present themselves as the alternative, doing everything they can to cement in the minds of Liberians that, regarding national leadership, there are only two choices – UP vs CDC. As far as these two parties are concerned, Liberia's only option is to go from UP to CDC back to UP – a vicious cycle of corruption, plunder, state-sponsored-violence and impunity.

But how true is the claim that Liberia's choices are limited to just the CDC and UP? Going by the election results, one would think so. Election results speak conclusively of the past and the present but not so conclusively of the future. ***What is clear in Liberia is that there is a longing for a limited number of options (parties) at the ballot box.*** Given that it has been manifested that both the CDC and UP are bad for Liberia, what is necessary now is for all independent forces and other actors to mend fences and forge a winning coalition or merger. ***The strength and dominance of the two parties give pointers that all other political actors must unite, as a matter of necessity, to build confidence and operational strength.*** There is no other way. It's either unity now or the perpetuation of the status quo. If there is no viable and strong alternative, it should come as no surprise if the people, shunning UP, revert to the CDC – citing the pragmatism in the “lesser of two evils” doctrine. The return of George Weah and the CDC will be a monstrous calamity!!! All well-meaning Liberians must reflect soberly on this possibility and start to think and act differently, so has not to have this calamity visited upon our homeland.

III. *Objective*

This Project is a determined attempt:

- 1 to get all independent non-CDC and non-UP actors to merge and operate under one command, one goal, and a common strategy;
- 2 to use the material and intellectual resources of Liberians, abroad and at home, to forge a united front to wrest control of the state from the current miscreants;
- 3 to devise a clear, fair, open, and transparent process in which a national leadership team can be chosen that will meet the aspirations of all Liberians;
- 4 to marshal all resources to give that chosen leadership the unanimity of support necessary to take on the forces of darkness and win back control of Liberia;
- 5 to build upon this winning strategy and platform to push for meaningful constitutional and institutional reforms of Liberia's socio-political governance and economic development architectures.

IV. Guiding Principle

In this dogged pursuit to dislodge the UP and the CDC from the pinnacle of power in Liberia, the following guiding principles shall apply:

1. No individual or group has a divine right to the Liberian presidency or other top GOL posts. For all intents and purposes, it is only a privilege to be conferred.
2. This search for a genuine transformative leadership to remake Liberia shall expressly exclude CDC, UP, and their aliases, partners and reincarnations.
3. Activists commit to constitutional, institutional, and other significant structural reforms of Liberia's state institutions.
4. The reforms' overarching purpose shall be to reduce the cost of governance so as to free up resources for infrastructures, socio-economic development, unbiased law enforcement, and the promotion of private sector development.
5. Activists shall dedicate themselves to the full implementation of the laws of Liberia – including pursuing all disclosed and open documented cases of corruption.
6. Activists commit to ending the loathed practice of recycling old and corrupt politicians and, alternatively, the testing of fresh ideas and fresh faces not affiliated with previous kleptocratic regimes.
7. Activists shall dedicate themselves to the redesign of the Liberian economy, giving top priority to manufacturing, scientific research, industrial development, technological advancement, and the promotion of agro-industries, amongst other productive ventures.
8. Activists commit to reforming the institutions of police, prosecution, and judicial services to ensure that these services remain apolitical, professional, and unbiased – learning and adapting international best practices where relevant and necessary.
9. Activists commit to dismantling the deleterious effect of presidential powers in county administrations and to effecting constitutional rewrite and other statutory reforms to devolve more powers to county officials to administer their own affairs.
10. Activists commit to reviving the educational system, focusing more on technical skills, innovation, industrial development, agriculture, and the teaching of patriotism, culture, accountability, and a culture of the respect for the rule of law.

V. Strategy

1.0 Rationale

The core of the strategy is to have all of those who dislike the dominance of our body politics by the CDC and the UP to come together and work under one command structure. These two parties, notwithstanding their disastrous impact on the lives of Liberians, are generally the two most popular parties now. Perhaps this is down to the pragmatism of sticking to the devil one knows. But this unpalatable situation does not have to continue *ad infinitum*.

Understandably, removing this malignant tumor in our politics cannot be executed by a dozen disjointed voices. It can only be done by a single united front – where personal egos and failed legacies are utterly abandoned – for the strength in unity and the good of country. Either we band together and succeed, or we submit to the continued doomsday scenario of going from UP to CDC and back UP in a never-ending vicious cycle of bad governance, degeneracy, poverty and utter hopelessness. ***There's got to be a better way!***

With UP and CDC dominating, no doubt we will continuously have this vicious cycle of corruption, poverty, and destitution. To break this vicious cycle, all well-meaning Liberians must unite politically. Across Africa and beyond, in nearly every instance that an opposition party/grouping has wrested power from long-standing ruling parties/elites, this has been on the back of a united opposition coalition. As we progress to 2029, this is the only way forward for Liberia, and it's now or never. The strategy must remain consistent: ***to forge a common front now, win state power, and then effect significant constitutional and institutional reforms in our native Liberia.***

2.0 Operational Strategy

This is how we can go about getting forces of decency and common sense to unite politically:

1. Start with a core of ten persons across the political spectrum who have demonstrated passion for salvaging Liberia from its current state of misery.
2. Expand this core working group to at least 100 like-minded individuals.
3. Create a movement – register it and have an operational website.
4. Expand the movement's membership to at least a thousand people, who will be given unique IDs; Continue to expand the list of active participants to 50,000 or more. Segment the membership into district chapters (in Liberia) and city chapters (in the diaspora).
5. Have a system to weed out naysayers, saboteurs, and other identified unrepentant members of UP and CDC, their collaborators and partners.
6. Use the website and radio to grow membership; issue out unique IDs to secure the voting process – in cases where collective decision is necessary and/or mandatory.
7. Devised and utilized a web-based data system that solicits and profiles top contenders for the presidency and other public posts (elected and unelected); this system may be beefed up with direct local canvassing – given adequate safeguards.
8. Devised and utilized a web-based system that allows for routine voting to narrow down the list of top candidates; allow for multiple rounds of voting to build momentum and win more support.
9. Set a timeline for final decision/vote (primary)
10. Commence and build up operational command to marshal resources and promote the selected individual to deliver on the promise to retake Liberia from current cadres of political bandits running the country into the ground.

2.1 Mapping with way forward to state power and reforms in Liberia

Organization

- Form a core working group of dedicated people who **don't** want to see UP or CDC capture state power in 2029
- Expand affiliates and participants from across the Liberian diaspora across the globe and at home. Create a chapter-based organization that can mobilize (locally & internationally) in multiple locations simultaneously.

Operations

- Solicit recommendations for 2029 potential contenders
- Develop an institutional mechanism for online and direct surveys and ratings system to get to a definitive list of top-10 contenders (a sort of people's referendum)
- Develop a timeline to go from top-10, to top-5, top-3 to last person standing- up to and including the "last person standing"
- get as many locals and diasporans Liberians as possible to participate, up to 50k persons participants should be a good signal of legitimacy

Decision

- Conduct several primaries or country-by-country (diaspora), state-by-state (USA), county-by-county (Liberia) primaries
- Ultimately, decide on a single candidate that local & diasporans can coalesce around and promote as the united face for directing resources on the ground to take on the task of winning state power and instituting constitutional and institutional reforms in Liberia.

VI. Final Thoughts

Liberia is bleeding. Greed, lawlessness and poverty have taken over. Most of what's wrong with Liberia is the result of our bad choices – at the ballot box. We keep putting the very wrong people in power. We put people on power whose sole interest is to loot the country for their personal benefits. It's high time we change course before it's too late. Doing nothing is not an option. Simply criticizing the status quo is not enough. Hoping and praying things will work out by itself is a certified exercise in futility. The only way out is for Liberians at home and abroad to take matter into their own hands. We must act and act decisively and unitedly. We must be inflexible in principles and flexible in strategy. In so doing, we must strategize, evaluate or strategy and re-strategize. This is the path to success. People who have been given power and abused the privilege must never again be allowed to return to power. The message of **“NO 2nd CHANCE TO SQUANDER”** must be taken to every house and every hut. This is a winning message. Together, let's do whatever it takes to make this **“Plan to get a Liberia that works for all”** is a resounding reality.