

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
C. GYUDE BRYANT
AT A DINNER TENDERED BY
THE SULLIVAN FOUNDATION
NEW YORK CITY
(THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2004).**

MS. HOPE SULLIVAN & MEMBERS OF THE
SULLIVAN FAMILY,
AMBASSADOR YOUNG & OTHER MEMBERS OF
THE BOARD,
DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

In the preparation and review of the itinerary for our visit to the United States, I have looked forward with great expectation to this opportunity for Mrs. Bryant, myself, members of our Party and other Liberians to renew contact and fellowship with our old friends of the Sullivan Foundation, as well as others present here tonight.

Of course, it came as no surprise to us that this Foundation, which continues to carry the torch of the late Dr. Leon Sullivan, had expressed an interest in hosting us tonight; nor are we surprised that the Foundation is among the many friends and supporters identifying with us as we begin to “Celebrate a New Liberia.”

It is always a warm and pleasant experience to be in the company of family and friends; and in our African culture, when we share a close, sincere and dependable friendship with someone, you refer to him or her as family. Such was the relationship between the late Rev. Leon Sullivan and Liberia, Ambassador Young and Liberia, and other prominent African-Americans.

The late Rev. Leon H. Sullivan established himself as a great African-American Statesman, human rights pioneer and international humanitarian with deep concern about the social inequity, poverty, daily indignities and exploitation faced by ordinary people, particularly unskilled workers and unemployed impoverished people.

He decided to make a difference not only here in the United States but in the worldwide community, initiating and fostering programs through which opportunities were made available for people to equip themselves with the skills necessary to make a livelihood, thereby restoring human dignity and building societies capable of sustaining themselves rather than relying on handouts and negating one's own self-worth. Accordingly, he evolved the well-known Sullivan Principles and the Global Sullivan Principles of Corporate Social Responsibility. The first Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) in North Philadelphia was built to accomplish that same purpose, to train and empower the disadvantaged and other victims of social injustice.

This concept effectively enabled and equipped many victims of civil rights abuse here in the USA; and so profound was the effect that the model was readily promoted and accepted on a global scale.

Liberia, among fifteen African countries, was an early beneficiary of Rev. Sullivan's visionary programs, dating as far back as 1978. Eventually, nine OIC training centers offering vocational education, agricultural and technical courses were established all over our country and 18,000 unskilled workers received training and became active in Liberia's commercial sector.

As all of you know, with the onset of the Liberian Civil War in late 1989 our society began a slow but steady decline into utter madness and destruction, to the point where every infrastructure was adversely affected. A heavy price was paid in lives lost in this senseless war with no winner. We were all losers and our country is now in ruin. The centers founded by Dr. Sullivan were casualties in our wicked war, with virtually all of them looted or destroyed at a total loss of approximately \$25 million.

Our challenge today is to resurrect Liberia from her self-inflicted wounds, and in meeting this challenge, the Sullivan Foundation has a vital role to play.

Most of the victims of our civil crisis are young people; young people who need to be taken away from the culture of violence and reintegrated into normal life. Necessarily, the process of reintegration should entail opportunities for general education or skills-training so that these young people will become gainfully employed or productive citizens, people who feel they have a stake in the future of Liberia, lest they view a return to violence and looting as a viable alternative.

Other population groups that were seriously affected by the civil crises are women and children. Their vulnerability during situations of violence and lawlessness is well known; they are easy victims of various kinds of abuses, and they, too, need to be rehabilitated through the Liberia Opportunities Industrialization Centers and other Sullivan activities.

The Leon D. Sullivan Foundation is well suited to assist Liberia both in setting up programs geared towards the rehabilitation and reintegration of these two groups of victims of Liberia's civil crisis and in mobilizing resources to empower them to being gainfully employed or productive citizens.

But these are challenges which the Foundation cannot meet alone or without assistance and support from others.

On behalf of the Liberian people we solicit the cooperation of all of our friends - Governments, non-Governmental organizations and the international business community - in providing assistance to the Foundation for the reestablishment of Sullivan activities in Liberia, including LOIC and IFESH, to train young Liberians, especially former combatants and other victims of the crisis, and equip them with skills to become mid-level technicians.

Because of our close historical relationship to the United States, particularly the African-American community, Liberia could again be made an example of the possibilities that exist in Africa, with the assistance and cooperation of the Foundation and others.

Ms. Sullivan, Ambassador Young, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, not too long ago our country was a steadily growing and promising example of self-help in nation-building on the African continent, and served as a beacon to others on the continent and people of the negro race worldwide.

Today, it is in almost complete ruin and is characterized as one of the poorest nations on earth by almost any standard.

But I say to you tonight that all is not lost. Instead, there is hope immediately beyond the horizon.

It only requires the resolve and determination of the Liberian Government and people, and the support of all of our friends and supporters, to turn a bleak situation into one of hope, something that has already begun to happen.

And so, in closing, let me challenge all of you to join hands with us to do whatever we can to truly “Celebrate a New Liberia”, as a tribute to the late Dr. Sullivan and the tens of the thousands who have lost their lives over the past decade in Liberia.

Once again, we express to you our deepest thanks and appreciation for your kind gesture this evening, and wish all of you here the very best.