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## A Call to Increase Economic and Educational Cooperation Between

***Embassy of the Republic of Liberia in the United States***,

Wed, Sep 12, 2018

**Washington:** The Minister Counselor for Press and Public Affairs at the Embassy of Liberia in the United States, Gabriel I.H. Williams, has called for strong partnership between the Republic of Liberia and the State of Virginia, USA, especially in the area of education and in economic activities.

Hon. Williams noted that an enhanced relationship between Liberia and Virginia with a focus on education and business would be mutually beneficial. He added that Liberia is well endowed with natural resources, and the country is also ideal for the establishment of light and heavy manufacturing industries in agriculture and other areas to add value to the resources, which could expand more Virginia business outreach into West Africa. On the other hand, he added, Liberians could benefit from the education and training for empowerment, as well as the employment and revenue that could be realized from such partnership with the State of Virginia.

According to a dispatch from the Liberian Embassy in Washington, D.C., Hon. Williams was speaking on Sunday, September 9, 2018, when he deputized for Ambassador Lois Brutus at the dedicatory ceremony of a historical marker in memory of Ms. Margaret Mercer, an educator and abolitionist. Ms. Mercer, who worked for the freedom and dignity of all people, educated children of slave and ex-slave. She also arranged and financed the repatriation of many former slaves from the United States to Liberia in the 1830s.

Hon. Williams recalled the longstanding historical ties between the Republic of Liberia and the State of Virginia dating from the founding of Liberia, as many of the country's founders from the United States originated from Virginia. He added that out of the ten former presidents of Liberia who were American born, three were from



[1]  
Minister Counselor for Press and Public Affairs at the Embassy of Liberia in the United States, Gabriel I.H. Williams

Virginia, including Joseph Jenkins Roberts, the first President.

The Liberian diplomat applauded St. David's Episcopal Church for what the church does to keep alive and celebrate the lasting and important ties between the historic church and Liberia. In so doing, he indicated, the church is keeping alive and celebrating the historic connections between Liberia on the one hand, and the State of Virginia and the United States as a whole, on the other.

He also lauded St. David's for continuing to support Bromley Mission, a boarding school for girls in Liberia operated by the Episcopal Church of Liberia, and expressed the need for such partnership to be further deepened.

The historic marker stands on the grounds of St. David's Episcopal Church and School in Ashburn, Virginia. According to historical accounts, Ms. Mercer gave the land on which St. David's Church and School is built to the Episcopal Church.

As a result of Ms. Mercer's work, there has been a longstanding historical ties between the Republic of Liberia and St. David's Episcopal Church and School.

An example of the special ties between Liberia and St. David's is the critical support being provided to sustain Bromley Mission. Another example was the Very Rev. Dr. Emmanuel W. Johnson, former Dean of Trinity Cathedral in Monrovia and former President of Cuttington University College, now Cuttington University, who served for 16 years as priest associate, spiritual leader and mentor at St. David's until his death in March 2018.

Following his funeral at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., Father Johnson was laid to rest at a cemetery on the grounds of St. David's Church and School, where many prominent citizens of Virginia are also buried.

St. David's also has many Liberian parishioners, some of whom are prominent members of Liberia's Diaspora community.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of several state and local officials of the Commonwealth of Virginia, especially in Loudoun County. Those who made remarks at the well-attended event included the following: Virginia Congresswoman Barbara Comstock; the Chair of the Board of Loudoun County Supervisor, Ms. Phyllis Randall; Loudoun County Supervisor Koran Saines, who is a Liberian descendent; and Ms. Julia Randle from the office of the Diocesan Bishop of the Episcopal Church of Virginia, among others.

Earlier, the Rev. Mary K. Brown, Rector of St. David's, and Mr. W. Conrad Jones, Chair of the Vestry of St. David's recalled the historical ties between St. David's Church and Liberia through the foresight and sacrifices of Ms. Mercer.

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors issued a proclamation extolling the work of Ms. Margaret Mercer for the betterment of humanity. The proclamation was read and presented to the church by Loudoun County Board of Supervisor Chair Randall and Supervisor Saines.

The ceremony began with a march-in of the flags of the Republic of Liberia, the United States, the Church and the Boys Scouts of the U.S.A. by the Scouts Color Guard, followed by the singing of the national anthems of both countries.

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