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[Home](#) > Liberian Diaspora Group Spearheads Architectural Design for Tubman University Library

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# Liberian Diaspora Group Spearheads Architectural Design for Tubman University Library

***Embassy of the Republic of Liberia in the United States*** , Wed, Nov 27, 2013

Washington, D.C. – Nov. 25, 2013: On Friday November 8, 2013, architecture students from three Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in the United States gathered at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland for the W.V.S. Tubman University E-brary and Learning Center Design Challenge.

The W.V.S. Tubman E-brary, being designed as a state of the art and futuristic project, will be a regular library with electronic books, which will enable students, faculty and researchers to have access to books and other academic materials globally through the Internet.



There are two unique aspects about the project. The first involves senior students from the schools of architecture at Howard University in Washington, D.C., Morgan State University, and Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama.

The students are engaged in a design challenge with each proposing an innovative design for the E-brary and Learning Center. The winners, one team from each of the three universities, will come together and form teams that will propose a final design.

The teams will travel to Maryland County in Liberia in early 2014 to view the site designated by the University for construction of the E-brary.

The total cost of the project will be determined after completion of the final design

The design process involving the three higher institutions of learning is named the Harriett Tubman Centennial Architectural Design Challenge, in honor of the legacy of Harriet Tubman, an American born in the State of Maryland, who led the Underground Railroad movement, liberated herself and other enslaved African American moving north to freedom.

Liberian-American and American professional architects reviewed the proposals and selected the work of the three winning teams.

The second unique aspect of the project is that it is being sponsored and promoted by Marylanders for Progress (MFP), a non-profit organization established in the State of Maryland by Marylanders in the USA to bring economic development to Maryland County, Liberia.

MFP is working with the first president of the William V.S. Tubman University, Dr. Elizabeth Davis-Russell, to develop Tubman University as a center of excellence for education in Liberia. With the William V.S. Tubman Foundation Board, MFP is assisting Tubman University in addressing its need to expand its library resources.

The Harriet Tubman Centennial Architectural Design Challenge program was attended by Dr. David Wilson, President of Morgan State University; Hon. Jeff Dowana, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Liberian Embassy; and Hon. John McDonough, Secretary of State for the State of Maryland. Secretary McDonough presented the Governor's Citation to the W.V.S. Tubman Foundation for the Harriet Tubman Centennial Architectural Design

Challenge.

Also speaking at the program, Honorable Dowana described education as the bedrock of society. He lauded the institutions and individuals involved in the effort to establish the E-brary at Tubman University, noting that the government and people of Liberia are grateful for this futuristic project that will help to better prepare students. Commenting on MFP's achievements, Mrs. Roberta Brown Cooper, president of MFP stated: "This is just another effort by the membership of MFP and Marylanders to give back to our County and Country some of the blessings God has provided for us here in the United States of America."

Mrs. Cooper lauded the Embassy of Liberia in Washington for being very supportive of efforts of Liberian Diaspora organizations, including the MFP.

It may be recalled that in October 2012, the Planning Chair of MFP, Mr. Gerald F.B. Cooper, who is a member of the W.V.S. Tubman University Foundation Board in the U.S., and newly appointed Dean for International Education at Tubman University, Mrs. Barbara Simmons, contacted Howard University's School of Architecture to determine if there was an interest in having their students design Tubman University's future library. The head of the Architecture Department, Dr. James Mitchell, and his team enthusiastically embraced the idea and pledged Howard's full support to take the lead in implementing the project.

It was Howard University's suggestion that the design competition be futuristic, innovative, state-of-the-art, and referred to as an E-brary. Liberia and Howard University have had a long history; many Liberians have attended the University.

At Morgan State University, with the support of Dr. Maryanne Akers, Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning, Dr. Willie A. Bragg, Assistant Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, and the entire university embraced the concept of the E-brary and were the champion host for the event. It was Morgan State University's team that made the wise suggestion that rather than calling the project a "competition", we instead use the term "challenge" and then create final teams consisting of a student from each of the universities.

Tuskegee University's Department of Architecture welcomed the concept and the university became the first of the three to provide Tubman University with a fully executed MOU. Tuskegee was represented by Mrs. Daya Taylor, Interim Head, Taylor School, and Mr. Roderick Fluker, Assistant Professor. Tuskegee's historical ties to Liberia date back to the 1920s.

The Harriet Tubman Centennial Architectural Design Challenge is an ongoing program aimed at bringing together the collective talents of African Americans from HBCUs to the growing market place of Africa's development. Tubman University in Maryland County, Liberia was selected as the initial model because of its President, Dr. Davis Russell's dedication and commitment to transforming lives in Liberia, Africa and the world.

Signed

Gabriel I.H. Williams

Minister Counselor for Press and Public Affairs

Embassy of Liberia

View slideshow of some pictures from the event:

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**Source URL (modified on Dec 4 2013 - 4:44pm):**<https://liberianembassyus.org/in-the-news/liberian-diaspora-group-spearheads-architectural-design-for-tubman-university-library>