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[Home](#) > Liberian Ambassador Delivers Commencement Addresses at 2 Universities

Liberian Ambassador Delivers Commencement Addresses at 2 Universities

Embassy of the Republic of Liberia in the United States , Tue, May 26, 2015

His Excellency Jeremiah C. Sulunteh Ambassador of the Republic of Liberia to the United States recently delivered the commencement addresses of two prominent Universities. Ambassador Sulunteh, who was introduced at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette as a prominent Liberian politician, administrator and classroom teacher on May 15, 2015, had also delivered an address to the graduating class of 2015 at The Georgia Gwinette College on May 14, 2015. Here is the Address as delivered at Georgia Gwinnett College:

Speech delivered by H.E. Jeremiah C. Sulunteh Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Liberia to the United States on the occasion of the Commencement Convocation of Georgia Gwinnett College, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, May 14, 2015

Topic: IMPACTING A GLOBAL SOCIETY

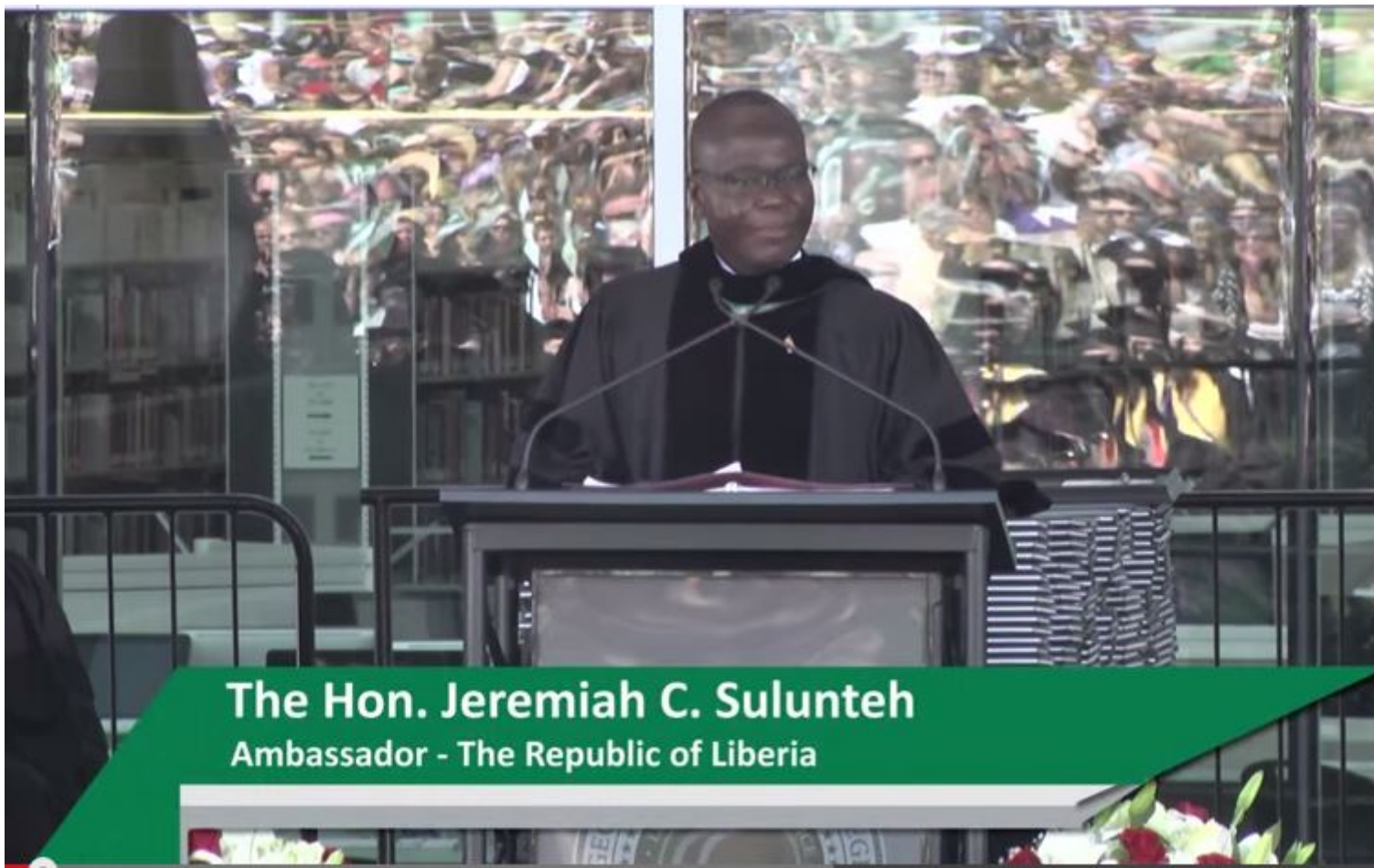
Salutation: * The Chair and members of the Board of Trustees * Dr. Stas Preczewski, President of Gwinnett College and members of the Faculty and Staff, * Officials of State and local Government, * Distinguished invited guests and dignitaries, * Family and friends, members of the graduating class, * Ladies and gentlemen

I bring you sincere greetings and best wishes on behalf of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Government and people of Liberia and the Liberian Embassy in Washington DC on this great occasion. Let me recognize Liberia's Defense Minister Brownie Samukai, one of the many proud parents at this unique occasion. I am honored by your request to serve as guest speaker for what I consider, one of the most important and significant days of your lives. Although today marks a crucial phase in a continuous journey, you can now expect to start making some "real" money for the first time. Congratulations! While it is true that all who are eligible don't choose education as an option, it's undeniable that those who do, like yourselves are involved in a tremendous and exhilarating experience, which starts today. I bet most of you, if not all of you are asking yourselves the question: After spending all of these years of preparation in school and today I stand with family, loved ones and friends to receive my awards, why in the world should it be called a commencement? But I come by today to tell you that your real life is just beginning today; welcome to the university of life! As we engage you in the next few minutes on how you could impact a global society, I like to tell you a brief story on how I have impacted my village community in Liberia. Story..... I was born in a little village, about 145 miles outside of Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. With no motor roads, electricity, safe drinking water or school in my community, I was born before the first hospital was ever built in my district of Suakoko. I did not start school until I was at the age of ten in order to walk the 3.5 miles of forest road to the only school then in proximity to my community. At the age of 15, I was sent to the city to live with a family I did not know. I was later supported in college by another family, as my illiterate and poor parents could not afford my college tuition. With perseverance, I began not only the first



college graduate in my family, but from the village community. Later in life, I soon began to think on how I could impact my community, and in 2007, while serving as President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's first Minister of Transportation, I engaged some Liberians in Sweden for a fundraiser to build a school in my village. And today, there is a 9 classroom school in my village catering over 300 children. I believe that all the other children that are being born today do not have wait until they are ten years old, or do not have to walk the 3.5 miles as I did. That is the impact of which I speak. Indeed, today should energize you like very few others in your lives, as I seek to encourage you through the Topic: "Impacting a Global Society". By now, you all must realize how small and personal the world has become. The Internet as you know, in addition to other advanced systems of communication and technology, removes borders and enables a virtual global existence. Your challenge as you leave these walls is to determine what your impact as an individual and as a collective group of College graduates will have on your world. Indeed, the World is yours and you must own it with all of its challenging difficulties; including the pressing and insurmountable needs of humanity; and the uncompromising and demanding voice of social justice that refuses to be quieted by traditional means. Just as there are competing groups of priorities in global economic development all across the world; there are domestic and social issues that are no longer localized, but have, out of necessity, assumed international dimensions. This reality requires a more enlarged mindset that must immediately consider the concept of "Impact", both personally and collectively, even as you explore career and professional options for your lives. Seek to measure your success by the level of impact you are able to make on any given situation. How we manage our impact on society is important for sustainability. For example, the way industries manage their socio-economic impacts has consequences for people's health, wellbeing, culture and livelihoods. Oil and gas projects and operations have the potential to affect local communities in a positive way by creating jobs, generating tax revenues, providing opportunities for local suppliers and supporting community developments initiatives. Negative impacts of such projects and operations may occur however, if such company does not appropriately consider the concerns of the nearby communities, or if employees lack awareness and training on anti-bribery and corruption policies. In our contemporary world, we are all aware of the tremendous impact the social media has on our culture, in business, on the world -at-large. Social media websites have revolutionized the way people communicate and socialize on the web. Social networks offer the opportunity for people to re-connect with old friends and acquaintances, make new friends, trade ideas and see your friend's new baby on face book or follow people on twitter. Certainly, there are many ways we can impact the world. What way or how you impact the world will depend largely on the leadership you bring along with the method. Leadership is not about title or designation. Leadership is about impact, influence and inspiration. Impact involves getting results, influence is about spreading the passion you have for your work and you have to inspire team-mates, as well as, customers. I encourage you to leave everywhere you serve in a better condition than you found it. The United States is not the world, and as you graduate here in the United States, allow the world to experience the greatness of an American education. Unfortunately, your participation is no longer optional, it has become imperative. You will inevitably be confronted with various and diverse issues that will provide opportunities for expression of what lies inside of each of you. Indeed, I challenge you to see these difficulties as opportunities to make impact and change your world. The world has now become a global village that all of us belong. Therefore, what impact each of us make every day makes a lot of difference in our communities, our society and our one world. Distinguished graduates, today, the Board of Trustee has endorsed the recommendations of the President and Faculty of Georgia Gwinnett College to certificate you as ambassadors of the college to go out there and impact your world. As you leave these walls of Gwinnett College today, you have been given the requisite tools, the knowledge and skills that are not only necessary, but sufficient to positively impact the world. Whichever continent you will go, make the best representation of your Alma Mater and America's dream to make the world a better place for all mankind. Let me use this opportunity to recognize Capt. David Preczewski, the son of President Preczewski, who recently returned from Liberia as a US Military helicopter pilot that positively impacted the Liberian society. I should also like to recognize one of your graduates, Ms. Michelle Samukai, the daughter of Liberia's Defense Minister, Brownie Samukai. Ms. Samukai was an intern with the Liberian Embassy in Washington DC last Summer. We are grateful to these two young people, who have impacted the Liberian society in separate ways. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, fellow academics, permit me to further use this

occasion to extend on behalf of the Government and people of Liberia immense thanks and appreciation to the people of the United States and the international community for the tremendous support to the fight of the deadly Ebola Virus Disease that attacked the West Africa Region, specifically, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The outbreak of this deadly disease in March 2014, and the robust response of the world is an example of this extraordinarily new global realization of which I speak. As a direct consequence of this, over 4,700 of our compatriots, including 92 health-care workers lost their lives, while helping to save lives. In Sierra Leone, over 3,900 have lost their lives and in Guinea, over 2,300 are reported to have died so far. When an infected individual traveled to Texas and infected others, the problem, seeing initially as an African problem instantly became a global, health and security threat. Just as instantly, resources in the form of funding, equipment and personnel were connected to the fight and within a reasonable time, Ebola succumbed and as I speak to you now, Liberia is Ebola free. We like to pay homage to the gallant men and women of the medical profession, the Center for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, the International Community and moreover, the American people for your support to this effort. I should also like to mention that the leadership of President Sirleaf and the resilience of the Liberian people were very critical in the defeat of Ebola in Liberia. Thank you for impacting the Liberian society. As I position to close my remarks, let me remind all of us here today that Liberia needs you than ever before in its post-Ebola Recovery effort. Liberia, this tiny West African country founded by Freed American slaves in the 1800th, is of the size of Ohio, but a bit larger than Tennessee, with a population of 4.1 million. About 62% of the population comprise of youth, between the ages of 15-35. Unfortunately however, about 70% of Liberia's youthful population lack basic skills and training. Liberia's post-Ebola challenges include education, health and infrastructure. Education and health are two top priorities for the government.



Mr. President, as we join you today in celebrating the achievements of these young students, our hearts are aching that many Liberian youths would wish that someday somehow, they too could see such opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that will prepare them for service to their villages, communities and the larger Liberian society. It is in this regard, Mr. President, that we would wish to seek a partnership with Georgia Gwinnett College that would afford some of our young Liberians the opportunity to drink of the great fountain of

knowledge at your college. We will welcome the opportunity to further discuss such a partnership. Ladies and gentlemen of the graduating class, the whole world beckons you and expects to feel the weight of your presence in their local and national affairs, not only when there exist a threat to our global existence, but as always. Distinguished invited guests, parents, faculty and staff, Mr. President and Members of the Board of Trustee, thank you so much for the opportunity given me to share these little thoughts of mine at this great commencement convocation! I thank you. Click to << [watch video](#)>> [1]

Speech delivered by H.E. Jeremiah C. Sulunteh, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Liberia to the United States, on the occasion of the 149th Commencement Convocation of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana, USA, May 15, 2015. Click to read =====> [2] Please read about the Commencement day guest speaker ==>> [3]

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