

CULTURAL ARTS: THE GATEWAY TO HEALING FOR URBAN YOUTH  
IN POST-CONFLICT LIBERIA

BY

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CULTURAL ARTS: THE GATEWAY TO HEALING FOR URBAN YOUTH IN POST-  
CONFLICT LIBERIA

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### **Abstract**

“Drumming for Reconciliation” is a three-phase, project-based thesis utilizing cultural arts, especially traditional music, to further the healing of young, urban Liberian women and men ages 15-24. These youth, survivors or perpetrators of violence during the fourteen years of war from 1989-2003, are falling through the cracks of Liberia’s recovery. Phase One of the project is the formation and onset of the working group’s advocacy for a nationwide commitment to cultural arts. Phase Two is a pilot drumming project in the West Point area of Monrovia. Phase Three is a community-based cultural arts center with layers of educational, vocational, entrepreneurial, and health care resources. The African proverb says, “The young sprout permits one to predict the height of the tree”; Liberian communities are only as strong as their youth. Cultural arts are the gateway to the healing and social access needed by urban youth in post-conflict Liberia.

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to thank the kind women and men of Bo who embraced this “Peace Corps” from Kansas, tolerated my questions and strange ideas, and showed me that life without all the “stuff” can truly be people-centered and fulfilling. They opened my eyes to how much we are all the same. I hope to find some of them safe when I return to Liberia for this project.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Young urban Liberian women and men ages 15-24 years old are falling through the cracks of Liberia's efforts to recover from the 1989-2003 civil wars.<sup>1</sup> The unemployment rate of these young people is over 80% and only 23% of urban secondary-aged students attend school.<sup>2</sup> Many of these young adults are survivors or former perpetrators of violence, living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), drug addiction, or some form of mental illness. Gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) constitutes a significant problem. Reports estimate that nearly 80% of Liberian women have experienced "some form of sexual violation", a reality discussed by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in her Inaugural address on January 16, 2006 (Goodfriend, 2009).<sup>3</sup> Seventy percent of the population was displaced during the war with over half moving to Monrovia, the capital city (UNHCR, 2006). The war ended in 2003, but these youth continue to struggle. Their childhood was defined by war and the loss of their homes and the absence of caring adults.

The devastation spewed from the words of hundreds who testified at the 2008 Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings held in five sites within Liberia, one site in Ghana, and

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<sup>1</sup> The wars were triggered by the 1980 coup d'état resulting in the overthrow of William Tolbert by Army Sgt. Samuel Doe. The first civil war was waged from 1989-1996 with the second civil war lasting from 1997 until the 2003 Accra Peace Accord, signed August 18, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> "Unemployment is difficult to gauge in non-industrialized countries due to the existence of the formal (wage labor) and informal sectors. Some estimates are between 40 and 70 per cent of the urban labor force works in the informal sector (both legal and illegal activities), so not really unemployed but certainly underemployed" (Dicken, 2007, p. 506).

<sup>3</sup> In her inaugural address, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf acknowledged the pervasive problem of sexual violence against women, "During the years of our civil war, [women] bore the brunt of inhumanity and terror. They were conscripted into war, gang raped at will, forced into domestic slavery....My Administration shall empower Liberian women in all areas of our national life... and increase the writ [*sic*] of laws that restore their dignities and deal drastically with crimes that dehumanize them" Inaugural Address, Jan. 16, 2006 (accessed from: [http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/inaugural\\_add\\_1.pdf](http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/inaugural_add_1.pdf))

three sites in the United States. Stories of inhumane treatment of elders, of rape and murder, of civilians and combatants forced to watch or participate in the murder or dismembering of family members, as well as of other atrocities leap from the pages of testimony (*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia*, 2008).

While estimates that over 10,000 Liberian youth fought in the war, the devastation was not limited to child combatants.<sup>4</sup> In 2008, 1,666 Liberian adults ages 18 and over were interviewed over a three week period. Of the respondents, one-third admitted to combatant status and one-third of those were female. Forty percent of all interviewed met the symptom criteria for major depressive disorder. Forty-four percent met the symptom criteria for PTSD. Both combatants and noncombatants interviewed found accessing health care problematic (Johnson et al., 2008). Few of these young people had access to traditional or formal education and the adult mentoring these systems provide. In a culture based on elder respect and mentoring of the young, the devastation on communities from the disruption, the violence, the death, and the displacement is immeasurable. Healing is needed. The Liberian government and its international partners are working on reconstruction efforts such as rebuilding infrastructure and providing basic services to people, but the focus has not been on the needs of urban young adult women and men. They continue to fall through the cracks.

Previous to the war, the majority of Liberians lived in rural areas with farming as their main livelihood. Life was much different for young people in small towns than it is today in Monrovia, the capital city. As a Peace Corps Volunteer from 1978-1980 living in Bo, my image of life there remains vividly etched in my memory. Though categorized as dependent upon

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<sup>4</sup> Note that the use of the term *youth* specifically includes both young women and young men.

subsistence farming, people had or shared plentiful rice, cassava, nut, vegetable, fruit, beans, poultry, and fish supplies. Youth were nurtured by mentors, cultural arts, and spiritual traditions.

*It is 1979 in Bo, a village of 300 Vai-speakers across the Mano River from Sierra Leone in western Liberia, West Africa. People have come in from their rice farms, bathed, and eaten their meal of rice, soup and fruit. Children are kicking around a soccer ball. Young women are braiding each other's hair. People are ambling from porch to bench discussing the day. Laughter and conversation fill the air. As the daylight wanes, a large full moon begins to rise above Bo. Suddenly, the conversation becomes more animated and there are calls of, "We'll have lights tonight," referring to the moonlight. Soon the children are running into the center of town as the drums begin to play, their rhythms evoking visceral responses of anticipation and movement. A large circle forms with the drummers and sasaa players. Young and old jump into and out of the circle with their feet, arms, and heads in constant motion. Sometimes two or three young women jump in to dance the movements learned in synchrony in bush school. Old women mimic the patterns in slow motion. Men, alone, or with others, dance and then seem to spin nonstop for unbelievable lengths of time. Oohs, aahs, and claps applaud skillful moves. Chants and an occasional song are heard over the drums with uniform responses from the older participants. Children watch wide-eyed, absorbing the sights and sounds, their bodies gyrating constantly to the beat. Sleep will come late tonight.*

*It is early 1980 and a Bo family is hosting a forty-day feast celebrating the life of someone who has died. The Vai honor the death of a loved one with three-day, seven-day and forty-day feasts assembling friends and relatives to show respect for the deceased as well as comforting the family and acknowledging their grief. There is food. There are words offered up to the ancestors by the elders. And there is music and dance. This time, the laughter, tears, and*

conversation are interrupted by the appearance of the masquerades. The Sande masquerade, or Soweï, arrives if the deceased is female. One or more Poro masquerades arrive if the deceased is male. Accompanied by a companion, as the masquerades are nonverbal, the masquerades in their dyed raffia costumes with finely-carved wooden masks begin to dance with the onset of the drums. The rhythms and movements passed on from generation to generation transmit specific messages to both the deceased and the living. Songs sung tell stories about ancestors and honorable ways to live one's life. Children grow up surrounded by these messages literally drummed into their psyches. In a culture built on respect for elders and ancestors, old people find comfort in these familiar rhythms assured that upon their deaths, the same traditions will occur.

The small government clinic in Bo has brought malaria medicine, tetanus toxoid immunizations for pregnant women, de-worming medicine, and measles vaccine to people who acknowledge the positive impact for themselves and their children. Infant mortality has been significantly reduced through health education supporting breastfeeding over formula, boiling river water before use, and malaria prevention efforts. The Vai are descendents of the Mandingo, or Muslim dyulas who migrated from the gold fields of ancient Mali to Liberia in the 1500's. These Muslim people observe the basic tenets of their religion - pray 5 times a day, seriously fast during Ramadan, teach their children Arabic, and some have made hajj to Mecca. But the basis of health care in Bo remains the Zo, the Sande elder, who all consult about illness, relationship and behavioral issues, infertility, and anger. Through a combination of secret herbal recipes, chants, rhythms, 'throwing the bones', and dance, treatment is prescribed. The Zo, acknowledged at an early age as a healer, has learned these treatments from either an older relative or Sande member. The basic premise is that illness, whether physical or emotional is

*related to one's relationship with the ancestors and with others. Angering the ancestors or insulting a peer leads to physical or mental illness symptoms.*

*In Bo, there is also a sprain fixer, a snake bite healer, and a bone setter. Remarkably in a rainforest ecosystem home to some of the most poisonous snakes in the world, the green and black mambas, rarely has there been death from a snake bite. Hospitals in Robertsport, the county seat, and Monrovia hire traditional snake bite healers and bone setters to manage the care of people with snake bites or fractures. Medical professionals found that people healed faster.*

*As a Peace Corps Volunteer working and living in Bo, I observed the traditional customs, and as my Vai improved, asked some questions for which I sometimes received answers. After all, much of what I was observing was information only privileged ones in the village could access. I was literally told that there was some information that would require my death if it were shared with me. The roots of the belief systems in Bo were deep, rhythmic, ancient, and closely held.*

*"Modernity" had arrived in Bo by 1978, a village on the international road between Monrovia and Freetown, Sierra Leone. While there wasn't electricity, people listened closely to the BBC, VOA, and popular West African stations on their battery-operated radios. Kerosene-powered generator dances featured the latest music from around West Africa. Students in our rudimentary village elementary school who already spoke two or three ethnic languages learned English, French, and Arabic. The Baptist Mission school, considered one of the best in the area, often enrolled students from Bo, even though the school required Christian baptism of these Muslim children in order to attend. Parents valued education. For high school, students had to move away to larger towns. Yet everyone, even those Bo residents who had moved to*

*Robertsport or Monrovia, still returned to consult Zo and other “African science” practitioners when something was amiss in their lives. And they returned to Bo to dance and drum and sing without embarrassment or reluctance. Then the violence began.*

**Liberian background.** The Republic of Liberia, colonized in the early 1800’s by freed U.S., Caribbean, and Congolese slaves, is a coastal, resource-rich West African country about the size of Tennessee with a current population of 3.4 million people (Government of Liberia, 2008a).<sup>5</sup> The population consists of 16 major indigenous ethnic groups living with a small number of Americo-Liberians, the name given to descendants of the freed slave colonizers. While Liberia is classified as one of two independent countries in Africa, those considered to have never been “colonized” by a Western power, the influence of the United States has been considerable. Each ethnic group has a distinct language and there is a religious mix of animist (12%), Christian (69%), and Muslim (19%) (Pew, 2010, p. 63). Liberia is rich with natural resources – timber, diamonds, iron ore, barite, cyanite, gold, graphite, lead, manganese, as well as rubber, bananas, cacao, cassava, coffee, kola, mango, okra, palm oil, and papaya. Cote d’Ivoire borders Liberia to the east, Guinea to the north, and Sierra Leone to the west, all three neighbors coping with civil unrest between the 1990’s and the present.

Until the violent military coup d’état in 1980 organized by Sgt. Samuel Doe, a member of the Krahn ethnic group, Liberia’s presidents had been exclusively Americo-Liberian. Much of the government and infrastructure is still centralized in Monrovia. Indigenous people were excluded from citizenship until 1904 and could not vote until 1946 (US Dept. of State, 2007). Previous to the 1970’s, there was little health care or educational programming “up-country,”

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<sup>5</sup> “Liberia was never intended by...the wealthy white members of the American Colonization Society as a solution to the problem of slavery. Rather, it was a solution to the problem of free people of color, whose very existence slave owners found so threatening” (Moran, 2006, p. 53).

outside of Monrovia. Liberia's government is patterned after the United States.<sup>6</sup> The Liberian Constitution currently restricts citizenship only to people of "Negro descent", and land ownership is restricted to citizens.<sup>7</sup>

Samuel Doe's government was marked by increasing militarization, ethnic tensions and decreasing standards of living (US Dept. of State, 2007).<sup>8</sup> By 1989, several rebel groups had formed against Doe's government including Charles Taylor (an Americo-Liberian educated in the U.S.) and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Taylor invaded Liberia from Sierra Leone beginning an eight-year civil war. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) mediated a peace agreement ending with Taylor being elected president in 1997.<sup>9</sup> Heavy UN Sanctions and continued violence resulted in Taylor's exile in 2003. He is currently on trial for war crimes in The Hague. A religiously-diverse group of women organized for peace and ended the stalemate at the Accra peace talks. Their story is well-documented in the film, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (Reticker, 2008).

As part of the Accra Peace Accord, a National Transition Government of Liberia (NTGL) was established on August 18, 2003 with Chairman Gyude Bryant as acting President.<sup>10</sup> With continuing UN peacekeeping involvement, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected President on

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<sup>6</sup> It consists of a 26 member Senate (nine year terms) and a 64 member House of Representatives (six year terms). The President serves for six year terms, and there is a four-layer judicial system including a Supreme Court.

<sup>7</sup> Includes indigenous and Americo-Liberian citizens

<sup>8</sup> "During this period, national holidays were celebrated with displays of military-style drilling by school children...image of a soldier appeared on currency" (Moran, 2006, p. 151).

<sup>9</sup> "2008 The Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) reveals that under the presidency of Charles Taylor over US\$5 billion had passed through two Citibank accounts in the USA" (Hetherington, 2009, p. 116).

<sup>10</sup> Gyude Bryant, who had been named as the leader of the interim government in 2003, was arrested along with others in 2007 amidst allegations of stealing US \$923,500. In 2008, "the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) reveals that under the presidency of Charles Taylor over US\$5 billion had passed through two Citibank accounts in the US" (Hetherington, 2009).

October 11, 2005 becoming Africa's first democratically elected female head of state.<sup>11</sup> The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), currently deploys 9644 international peacekeepers, down from 15,000 in 2003 (UNMIL, 2010). The UNMIL authorization is up for renewal each September. Many fear the withdrawals threaten the fragile seven-year peace. Also at stake are the efforts against gender violence. "Humanitarian workers in Liberia worry that as the UN and NGOs scale down aid operations, the fight against sexual violence will suffer, given a limited capacity in national institutions to take it on"(IRIN, 2010). The article goes on to name numerous NGOs planning to decrease involvement in Liberia following the 2011 elections.

The cost of the war in Liberia has been devastating. Loss of human life is the most horrific consequence of war. Between 1989 and 2003, an estimated 270,000 people died from war-related causes (UNHDR, 2006).<sup>12</sup> People were displaced by the violence. Collier noted that official estimates for Internally Displaced Persons and refugees included 70% of the population for "at least 750,000 people fled to neighboring or distant countries, an additional million have been displaced internally"(Collier & Bannon, 2003, p. 20). The war impacted people, infrastructure, neighboring countries and also had a global impact in terms of the international arms and illegal drug trades.<sup>13</sup>

Liberia's recovery from the decades of conflict is slow. The repair to damaged roads, bridges, health clinics, schools, homes, and businesses is inconsistent. In a country with land,

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<sup>11</sup> President Johnson Sirleaf, a Harvard educated, former World Bank economist, originally pledged to step down after one term. With the elections looming in October, 2011, the President has announced that she is running for a second term. Her ethnic background is Gola, Kru, and German.

<sup>12</sup> Of the estimated 101,000 combatants, there were 21,500 battle deaths (World Bank Country Brief). As in many conflicts, 90% of the deaths were civilian deaths (Collier, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Liberia's porous borders, "lootable" diamond, timber, and mineral resources, and weak governmental institutions have provided opportunity for international arms, drug, and human trafficking cartels to infiltrate (Mazzitelli, 2007, p. 1074).

water, and weather conducive to food self-sufficiency, most Liberians remain dependent on foreign food aid seven years after the peace accord (UNDP, 2009). Communities are permanently altered by the death and displacement.

After I left my border community suddenly in 1980, five days after the military coup d'état, I corresponded with the English-writing son of my clinic colleague, Mohammed (Momo) Kpaka, for many years. Then communication stopped. The next time I heard from Momo was in the early 1990's via an International Red Cross telegram from a refugee camp in Sierra Leone requesting help for his family. For unstated reasons, the Red Cross would not assist refugees in Sierra Leone or Liberia with U.S. remittances, and letters sent to the address Momo gave me in Sierra Leone went unanswered. I do not know if any of them survived the Sierra Leone war or were able to return and remain safely in Liberia.<sup>14</sup> I do know that Bo with its position on the Mano River Bridge and the porous Liberia/Sierra Leone border was a headquarters for several fighting forces during the war. My efforts, to date, have been unsuccessful in locating anyone from that area that I knew before the war. When I ask Liberians about Bo, if they've been there, or what they know, I've only heard that it is now the site of a large car sales lot. People with money go there to buy a car. The fate of the drums, the dancers, and the musicians is unknown.

Monrovia, the capital city, also changed significantly after the war. Due to the conflict and the continent-wide rural to urban population shift, the population of the city has doubled to over one million people. Nearly one-third of Liberia's entire population lives in Monrovia. Extrapolating the population of urban young adults between the ages of 15 and 24 from the 2008 census percentages results in an estimate of more than 214,000 urban young women and men,

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<sup>14</sup> The Sierra Leone war lasted from 1991-2002.

most of them living in Monrovia (Government of Liberia, 2008a). Unemployment, food insecurity, and lack of educational opportunities are common (UNDP, 2009).

During and after the war, youth flocked to the city, many without families. Based upon newspaper reports and other eyewitness accounts, I have developed an image of life in West Point for the youth that live there.<sup>15</sup> A typical day, for example, might see older teens and young women and men emerge slowly from tin or cardboard structures to mill about with a cigarette, joint, or bottle in hand. Sleepily, they ponder their options for the day – remain where they are in an increasingly drug-clouded state that masks their hunger, move on to hustle a few dollars for day labor from expatriates or wealthy Liberians, head to the markets or the street to sell their meager wheelbarrow-full of household goods, pirated C.D's, firewood, etc. Some are being recruited to the Cote d' Ivoire border to fight in exchange for food or something to do (UNICEF, 2009). Some are returning to their "homes" to sleep after a night of prostitution, drug deals, or walking about in search of food. Some of these young adults are still are in contact with family members, but many are orphans. Few have regular contact with adults or elders who are positive role models. Few have attended formal school for an extended period of time, if at all. Many have grown up in Monrovia after their families were displaced from the rural areas during the war. HIV transmission, pregnancies, and the challenges of parenting are part of life in West Point.<sup>16</sup> In a country in which conflict and war have been the norm from 1980 until 2003, these youth born after 1986 have known little outside of violence, coercion, hunger, and survival in the Monrovia slums to which they awoke or return to today. Yet even in this impoverished,

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<sup>15</sup> *Chicago Tribune* photographer, Kuni Takahashi, followed several Liberian children's post-war lives from 2003-2008 (Takahashi, 2008). Harvard cultural anthropologist, Sharon Abramowitz, wrote about life in West Point in her dissertation addressing the psychosocial needs of Liberians (Abramowitz, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Half of the 100,000 estimated HIV-positive Liberians are women (IRIN & Network, 2009).

crowded, hungry place there is music. The music is mostly West African “highlife” or West African or American hip hop or rap and the feet of these youth move to the beat just like their rural counterparts decades ago in Bo.

The UNDP’s Human Development Report for 2009 ranked Liberia number 169 out of 182 countries with 182 being the most in need (2009).<sup>17</sup> The four pillars of Liberia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) include: Consolidating Peace and Security; Revitalizing the Economy, Strengthening Governance and the Rule of Law, and Rehabilitating Infrastructure and Delivering Basic Services (Government of Liberia, 2008b). Which pillar includes the healing of youth and re-building of communities?

“Lift Liberia,” a program bringing transparency to development efforts, showed inconsistent completion of tasks mandated by the PRS. Three of eight bridges to be completed in 2009 were completed. The new elementary and secondary school curriculums were developed but never piloted. Corruption remains a struggle with youth reporting that getting a job is dependent on who you know or how much you can pay. Accountability for international loans and donations is sporadic. Tracking of revenue from timber, diamonds, iron and rubber concessions remains tenuous (Liberian Reconstruction and Development Committee, 2010) . Even with Liberia’s participation in the international Kimberly Process, the Deputy Minister of Lands, Mines, and Energy, Mr. A. Kpandel Fayia, recently revealed “that 65% of the revenues

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<sup>17</sup> “The Human Development Index measures the average progress of a country in human development. The Human Poverty Index (HPI-1) focuses on the proportion of people below certain threshold levels in each of the dimensions of the human development index - living a long and healthy life, having access to education, and a decent standard of living. By looking beyond income deprivation, the HPI-1 represents a multi-dimensional alternative to the \$1.25 a day (PPP US\$) poverty measure” (UNDP, 2009)

collected from the mining of diamond[sic] in the country were being smuggled out of Liberia and that only 35% the country [sic] was benefiting from” (Kamara, 2010).<sup>18</sup>

The brain drain has been significant. Many of the more educated who sought safety in other countries have not returned. The Liberian Diaspora numbers around 450,000 with a large percentage of these people holding college or post-graduate degrees (Government of Liberia, 2008b). The impact of this loss of “social capital” on Liberia’s recovery, the loss of people trained to immediately contribute in a civil service or a professional capacity, is immense. Unfortunately, remittances to Liberia from the Diaspora have been small, ranking Liberia 124 out of 182 countries in Diaspora financial support (UNDP, 2009).<sup>19</sup> For those remaining in Liberia, how do young women, men, and communities recover or heal from 270,000 deaths, the loss of family members, horrible atrocities, and the displacement of seventy percent of the citizens away from their homes?

The African proverb says, *the young sprout permits one to predict the height of the tree*, “from the conduct of the young, one can foresee [sic] the future of the community” (Diallo, 1989). This proverb speaks to the connection between youth and elders fundamental to pre-war Liberia. It speaks to the troubled or “shortened” future Liberia faces if the youth, or “young sprouts,” continue to fall through the cracks.

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<sup>18</sup> “The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) imposes extensive requirements on its members to enable them to certify shipments of rough diamonds as ‘conflict-free’. As of December 2009, the KP has 49 members, representing 75 countries, with the European Community and its Member States counting as an individual participant” (accessed from [http://www.kimberleyprocess.com/home/index\\_en.html](http://www.kimberleyprocess.com/home/index_en.html)).

<sup>19</sup> The UNDP report states that Liberian remittances in 2007 totaled US\$65 million and averaged US\$17 per capita in comparison to the average for Sub-Saharan Africa of US\$26 per capita. In contrast, Nigeria totaled over US\$9 billion and Swaziland US\$99 million. This poses an complicated research question.

Many lack the fertile soil of a healthy community, cultural identity, adult mentoring, sense of belonging, and educational and employment opportunity. “With life expectancy rapidly declining to as low as 45 years of age due to factors including the spread of HIV/AIDS, those aged between 15 and 24 years are now a dominant group in society. Liberia’s youth are most affected by change and also have the potential to be the most powerful agents of change. As such, they could either sustain peace or generate further instability in the country” (Liberian Ministry of Youth and Sports). If neglected by the community, both the youth and the community will wither. If nurtured by the community, both the youth and the community will thrive.

Authors of a recent British development agency report entitled, *Youth Exclusion, Violence, Conflict and Fragile States*, asked, “How can resilience to violence be built at a community level and what community processes and mechanisms protect young people from becoming involved in violent groups?” (Hilker & Fraser, 2009, p. 47). One answer is that “cultural identity is positively related to resilience, which has potential for healing individuals and communities” (Quinn, 2007, p. 76). Several studies have found that “ethnic identity was positively related to higher levels of self-acceptance and personal growth and to lower levels of depression and anxiety, again affirming its protective value” (Ungar, 2005, p. 36) (McCubbin, 2003) (Phinney, Cantu, and Kurtz, 1997). Liberia’s answer to reinforcing cultural identity and building resilience among its youth lies within the country’s rich but disrupted history of traditional music and other cultural arts.

The Transitional Justice Working Group, meeting in Monrovia in November 2009, found sixteen obstacles “to coexistence and social inclusion” in Liberia. One of them was “breakdown of family values” and one was “lack of trust between youth and older generations” (Transitional

Justice Working Group of Liberia, 2009). Causes listed included youth forced to be breadwinners of the family, parents not respected by youth, and youth holding adults responsible for the war itself as well as the delays with rebuilding. Included in the Working Group's recommendations for building social cohesion in the community are several references to cultural traditions:

Devise a national curriculum in schools that promotes a Liberian national identity; community outreach engaging youth, women, traditional leaders, and ex-combatants; support dialogues between the younger and older generations and encourage mentorship between them; raise awareness among youth about traditional values; and organize a national dialogue on national symbols, including the coat of arms, flag, and motto. (Transitional Justice Working Group of Liberia, 2009)

Cultural arts and traditional music enrich the soil from which elders can mentor and cultivate connections with youth.

### **Youth, Gender and Social Access**

The "Drumming for Reconciliation" project focuses on young urban Liberian women and men ages 15-24. The civil wars lasted for fourteen years, from 1989-2003, with instability beginning in 1980. The oldest of this age group was three years old when the wars began, and the youngest was eight years old when the wars ended. These children spent their childhoods and now their adolescence and young adulthood surrounded by trauma and unpredictability.

With 70% of the population displaced either internally or out of the country, nearly every family moved at least once to avoid the violence. Schools, health clinics, farms, shops, roads and utilities were destroyed. Teachers, health care staff, and other civil servants were killed or

fled. The population of Monrovia doubled as people fled the war-ravaged rural areas in search of safety. Today one-third of the nation's populace, over one million people, lives in Monrovia. Over 200,000 of these people are estimated to be ages 15-24, most of whom have never attended school, do not know how to read, have not learned a trade or held a job in the formal job sector, have not been mentored by caring adults, and have endured the physical or emotional trauma of war, violence, sexual violence, and neglect (Walker, Millar Wood, & Allemano, 2009).

Young women, as combatants or civilians, "bore the brunt" as President Johnson Sirleaf said in her Inaugural speech. One study of young women during the first five years of war found that 49% of the women interviewed "reported experiencing at least one act of physical or sexual violence from a soldier or fighter during the years 1989-1994" (Swiss et al., 2005). Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) continues to be a problem. "Sexual violence consistently comes first or second (after armed robbery) in monthly crime statistics in Monrovia, with most victims being children, according to MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières]" (IRIN, 2010).

In 2000, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325 concerning women, peace, and security. Liberia just began implementing the Resolution in 2009 with a four-part action plan largely implemented by international aid and donor groups that plan to begin phasing out after the October 2011 national elections. There is fear that the Liberian government will not have the capacity to enforce the 2006 rape law or continue implementing the SGBV action plan (IRIN, 2010).

One major health issue resulting from sexual trauma is fistulas, a vaginal tear resulting in loss of bladder control, difficulty bearing children, and social stigma. In 2008, the Women of Liberia Peace Network surveyed 600 female rape victims and found that 90% of them had fistulas. Liberia does have a Fistula Project with funding through the UN Population Fund, but

the few medical personnel trained to surgically repair fistulas are in Monrovia, creating a barrier for rural women (IRIN, 2008).

Rape has long been considered a crime of power and aggression rather than sex (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979). While it is difficult to estimate the prevalence of gender-based violence before the war, SGBV was clearly a frequent traumatic event during the war, and continues to be reported. I contend that the violence of the war exacerbated the growing imbalance between men and women. I would add that poverty, unemployment, and an inability to feed one's family in the aftermath of war's chaos also shifted the male need-for-power balance making GBSV much more likely.

Professor Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka asserted that African women also bear the weight of "double patriarchy" that hampers their path to social access. The discrimination from "double patriarchy" results from the indigenous patriarchy of rigid gender roles layered with the patriarchy from the colonial powers. As a result, women confront discrimination in education, employment, property rights, child custody, and other venues (Ajayi-Soyinka, 1993).

The "Drumming for Reconciliation" project with its goals of healing, community building, and social access for young people cannot address all of Liberia's challenges. The project can encourage both young women and men to learn and participate in traditional cultural arts, especially traditional music, together. Perhaps in drumming and dancing together, inclusively without rigid gender roles, and according to participants' comfort levels, will help build balance, healing, and what Marcia Greenberg called, "transformative opportunities" by "encouraging men and women to engage together in collaboration and with respect" (Greenberg, 2009).

I use the term “youth” to mean *those young women and men between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age* stressing the inclusion of both genders in the use of the term *youth*. I define “traditional” to mean *that which is changing, but based upon what has been taught for centuries within Liberia*. The war affected traditional gender relationships, particularly those sustained by the Poro and Sande social institutions, as well as the performing and recreational arts that held communities together. Traditional music in Liberia is a significant component of those community-building pillars. “Traditional music” is *inclusive of drums, dance, other instruments, song, and dramatic performance*. Ruth Stone, an ethnomusicologist who grew up among the Kpelle people of northern Liberia, writes,

Music and dance are so closely bound together in the thinking of many West Africans that it is difficult to separate song from movement or playing the drum from speech..... It is, in fact, difficult to find a word in any of the West African languages that is equivalent to the Western idea of "music". (Stone, 2005)

The term *biomedical* is equivalent to that which is science-based, sometimes referred to as “Western,” or “official,” and frequently viewed as opposite of *traditional healing or traditional medicine*. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines traditional medicine as:

the sum total of knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement of treatment of physical and mental illness. (WHO, 2001)

I describe *social access* to be a connection with a community, with resources, with possibilities for education and employment. I recycle the definition for *cultural sustainability* from Goucher College’s graduate program in Cultural Sustainability: to “identify, protect, and enhance

important traditions, ways of life, cherished spaces, and vital relationships to each other and the world” (Goucher College, 2010).

### **The “Drumming for Reconciliation” Project Overview**

Liberian challenges are best addressed by Liberian-based solutions. The use of cultural arts, especially traditional music, to foster healing, build communities, and cultivate resilience, is a powerful and uniquely Liberian solution. In the biomedical sphere, research supports the use of music, dance, drama, and art therapies with people living with addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), mental illness, brain injury, and other health conditions. In the traditional healing sphere, research acknowledges the legitimacy and spirituality of traditional healers and the efficacy of their techniques including drumming, song, dance, dramatic performance, medicinal herbs, and community building. International donors and most humanitarian aid groups have often ignored the need for culturally-based, spiritually-potent traditional forms of healing indigenous to post-conflict countries like Liberia.

**Project structure.** The project, a preventive program in its design, consists of three phases whose goals are healing and community-building. Phase One is advocacy for a nationwide commitment to Liberia’s cultural arts. Its objective is to advocate for the incorporation of drumming and other cultural arts into every Ministry project, every classroom, every religious venue, every Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) , UN, or humanitarian aid venture, every community endeavor, every musician or youth event, and every market, chop shop, and street corner.

Phase Two is a pilot drumming project in the West Point community of Monrovia, the capital, a community known to be home to a large number of 15 to 24 year old young adult women and men, many of whom are ex-combatants (Abramowitz, 2009).

Phase Three, following a successful pilot drumming project in West Point, is the creation of a cultural arts center in the community that features progressive layers of programming. The center's focus is teaching Liberia's cultural arts to youth. Surrounding this teaching will be four layers of resources – mentoring, education/employment, health care, and a Drum/Dance Troupe.

The “Drumming for Reconciliation” theme was suggested by Mr. Joseph Sankaituah, former officer of the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY). Mr. Sankaituah also recommended an accompanying slogan of “We Will Listen” which reflects the use of drums to communicate with ancestors as well as mediate conflict (J. Sankaituah, personal communication, July 3, 2010).

Phase One is the advocacy effort which will be ongoing for the project's duration. Beginning with a small group of committed Liberian women and men and others who care about Liberia, the person-to-person organizing and marketing to make the “Drumming for Reconciliation” commences. This group, known as “the working group,” communicates with people they know, encourages those to join the effort as well as selects the appropriate person to contact a given funding, governmental, or community source. The working group will focus on networking and funding sources.

Promotion of the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project to members of the Liberian Diaspora, especially in the U.S., is advisable for two reasons. First, Liberians in the U.S. continue to have contacts within Liberia. Secondly, the project can be utilized with Liberian youth living in American communities. Minneapolis, Minnesota and Staten Island, New York are home to large Liberian communities.

The working group, citing the project's two goals of healing and community-building, is equipped with research-based information about the use of cultural arts to achieve these goals. From numerous personal conversations, the project will find its way to the desks of Ministers,

youth, religious and community leaders, directors of UNICEF and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), humanitarian aid groups, and any Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) involved with Liberian youth. Determined follow-up communication will move the project from desks to communities and youth. The working group will work continuously through the project's duration to network, seek volunteers and obtain funding.

I am intrigued by the words of Mr. Sankaituah, who wrote in an email from Monrovia, "There are people who played traditional music in Liberia, but it has been of less importance to the larger society. I think it is so because there has been no added value. I strongly believe that it is possible to develop this industry" (J. Sankaituah, personal communication, June 1, 2010). The "added value" of cultural arts that needs marketing is the healing they can bring to individuals and communities post-conflict, and their role in preventing further conflict. Marketing these connections will be the role of the working group volunteers.

Phase Two is the pilot drumming project. The West Point section of Monrovia has been chosen due to its large population of ex-combatants and other disenfranchised youth. In preparation for the pilot drumming project, a wide variety of male and female West Point community leaders and elders will be invited early on to be involved with the project. Gaining support for young women to take time to participate in drumming is essential. Child care will be provided during the sessions. The project's implementation depends upon the blessing of the community leaders and their selection of a location for the drumming session. Hiring musicians willing to drum and teach drumming is the next step. Finding a local hip-hop artist or rapper who is willing to participate and incorporate traditional beats serves as a contemporary "hook" to

grab youth attention.<sup>20</sup> The musicians will meet at the same spot, at about the same time, three times a week for a month to teach drumming to about twenty-five youth ages 15-24. The pilot project evaluation includes the number of young women and men participating and how many come back for more sessions. Popular Liberian dishes like rice and soup will be provided if more incentive is needed. Marketing will involve posters, word-of-mouth, and the sound of the drums.

Phase Three, the cultural arts center, is the most costly and involved phase. Its implementation will depend upon a successful pilot drumming program, the embrace of the project by a specific community, and the working group's successful funding efforts. The community-based cultural arts center incorporates five layers of programming. The first layer is teaching cultural arts. Gradually, given youth interest and artist availability, dance, dramatic performance, other instruments, singing, weaving, carving, drum-making, story-telling, painting, sculpture, and writing will be added.

The second layer, adult mentoring, begins as the musicians form relationships with some of the youth. Male and female elders and artisans will be encouraged to mentor as they teach, tell stories, and demonstrate for the youth.

In the third layer, participants will be guided to available educational and vocational resources. Entrepreneurial mentors and microfinance possibilities will be encouraged. The focus is on mentoring, relationship-building, and nurturing youth potential. One possible link is urban community gardening with mentors teaching youth how to grow food for eating and selling.

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<sup>20</sup> Senegalese singer, Omar Pene, was the first to play traditional *sabar* rhythms in contemporary music. Senegalese musician, Youssou N'Dour transposed the *sabar* rhythms to piano and guitar (Bassett, 2010).

Recognizing that many of these young adults have mental health, gender-based sexual violence, or addiction issues,<sup>21</sup> another layer added would be health care resources, both biomedical and traditional. Given the dearth of mental health professionals in Liberia, the artists, elders, and mentors will receive training as community health workers.<sup>22</sup> Based upon the research support of cultural arts and healing, higher-risk youth will be steered towards more intensive drumming, dancing, and dramatic performance sessions as well as referred to available biomedical or traditional healers.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, if there are youth and mentors skilled and committed, a fifth layer will be added. This layer will involve securing funding and travel opportunities within and without Liberia for a Liberian Dance/Drum Troupe. The three phases of the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project will urge Liberians and the government to reclaim and celebrate their cultural identity in order to help their young people.

### **Why Encourage Drumming?**

The project, “Drumming for Reconciliation,” begins with drumming because of the visceral response most people have to the rhythmic beat. On several occasions, I have observed uninterested teens and young adults reluctantly begin a drumming session only to be transformed not only by their own drumming, but by the effort to listen and synchronize with the rest of the group. Body language tightens from slumped and sideways to upright and frontward. Focus increases from grumbling to a neighbor to full attentiveness and concentration. Alertness

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<sup>21</sup> UN reports that twenty-seven percent of the young Liberians surveyed are dealing with substance abuse issues, and little funding for treatment programs (Ofori, May 4, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> This concept of trained “community health workers” or “village health workers” has long been part of Liberia’s health care plan. Adding mental health training will be new as well as officially incorporating traditional healers.

<sup>23</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) determined in 1993 that traditional healing practices were equally or more successful and more cost-effective than “official” treatment with respect to substance abuse (WHO, 1993).

improves from yawning sleepiness to smiling engagement. And people who have not spoken a word to one another through hours of class walk out of the room in animated conversation.

Drumming is the hook to persuade recalcitrant urban Liberian youth to engage with the drums, to engage with the musicians or elders, and to engage with each other.

Drumming is an inexpensive and accessible art. In traditional music settings, specific types of drums are used for certain purposes. However, lacking “real” drums, drumming a beat only requires something to drum upon. One University of Kansas percussionist who goes into classrooms to teach rhythm (and listening and cooperation skills) uses plastic buckets and wooden sticks so that everyone can drum. Having participated in one of his sessions with college students, there appeared to be little difference between the focus of those drumming the *djembe* and those drumming the buckets (Bassett, 2010).

Drumming heals. One of the critical components of traditional healing in Liberia and many cultures is drumming. Schumaker wrote, “In Africa the role of drums in healing is central, so central that the term for drum, *ngoma*, refers to a widespread and ancient complex of healing activities” (Schumaker, 2000). The research on drumming and its healing potential spans the gap between biomedical and traditional healing models. Because of the body of research, the relationship between drumming and healing helps span the credibility gap between biomedical and traditional healing. What is the scientific or biomedical explanation?

**Drumming and healing.** One explanation may be that drumming affects the brain at a cellular level. Bittman, et al scientifically analyzed neuroendocrine and immunologic markers in a controlled study of 111 people and found that “group-drumming music therapy, carried out according to this protocol and using a specific approach for facilitating sessions that emphasizes camaraderie, group acceptance, lighthearted participation, and nonjudgmental performance,

appears to attenuate and/or reverse specific neuroendocrine and neuroimmune patterns of modulation associated with the classic stress response” (Bittman, Berk, Felten, & Westengard, 2001). Drumming helps people relax.

Creutzfeldt and colleagues measured neuronal activity with microelectrodes in patients undergoing open brain surgery for temporal lobe epilepsy. The surgery was done with a local anesthetic, so the patients were alert and awake. They recorded the neuronal activity while playing three kinds of music for each patient: “A) Simple familiar or unknown classical tunes at a simple rhythm and harmony, played on piano; B) Orchestrated folk music; C) Drumming without a tune.” Interestingly, the drumming caused a 74% increase in neuronal activity while type A’s increase was only 17% and type B’s was 22% (Creutzfeldt, 1989). Drumming significantly increases brain activity in the temporal lobe which is associated with hearing and integrating memories, both important for learning and coping with trauma.

Szabo (2004) divided 188 university students into 4 groups: 1) those listening to monotonous drumming during imagery, 2) those just with imagery, 3). those undergoing hypnosis and 4) those with alert control (spent 3 minutes in silence with eyes closed). He found that those listening to the drumming had significantly changed subjective experiences indicating that “drumming can induce an altered state of consciousness,” similar to those in the hypnosis group. Students in the other two groups did not experience this change. Szabo’s findings lead us to ponder the usefulness of drumming and imagery in treating victims of trauma (Szabo, 2004). Traditional healing techniques include the ritual, the dance, and the drumming which place the person in a trance-like state during which healing can occur (Friedson, 2000).

Drumming continues to be used with soldiers suffering from PTSD. Moshe Bensimon et al studied the effects of drumming with Israeli soldiers with PTSD. He found that “some

reduction in PTSD symptoms was observed following drumming, especially increased sense of openness, togetherness, belonging, sharing, closeness, connectedness and intimacy, as well as achieving a non-intimidating access to traumatic memories, facilitating an outlet for rage and regaining a sense of self-control” (Bensimon, Amir, & Wolf, 2008). Drumming helps people heal and connect with others.

Drumming has been found to create new neural pathways in the brain. Dr. Wendy Magee of the Institute of Neuropalliative Rehabilitation in London noted, “When neural pathways are damaged for one particular function such as language, musical neural pathways are actually much more complex and much more widespread within the brain. Music seems to find re-routed paths and that is why it is such a useful tool in terms of helping people with different kinds of brain damage because it can help to find new pathways in terms of brain functioning” (Black, 2009).

A treatment modality that creates new neural pathways is of particular benefit for those suffering from trauma, PTSD, addiction, anxiety, depression, and stress. The brain works hard to compensate by limiting chemical messages, increasing sleepiness with respect to depression, creating periods of amnesia that unfortunately still may erupt in night terrors with respect to trauma and PTSD, and the need for increased levels of drug ingestion due to the brain’s increasing tolerance with respect to addiction. New neural pathways in the brain that circumvent the damaged or affected ones, like coronary bypass surgery in the heart, create opportunity for healing.

Another analogy would be the different neural pathways that young people in the U.S. have developed growing up with the internet, cell phones, texting, and other technologies that their parents have had to learn as adults, admittedly for many, much more slowly. Michael

Castells acknowledged that the new “digital networking technologies” have created a “generational divide” particularly between those born before 1969 and those born afterwards (Castells, 2010, p. xviii).

**Drumming and addiction.** The use of drumming with people suffering from addiction is supported by biomedical research. Winkelman reviewed the growing body of literature and wrote:

Research reviews indicate that drumming enhances recovery through inducing relaxation and enhancing theta-wave production and brain-wave synchronization.... Drumming alleviates self-centeredness, isolation, and alienation, creating a sense of connectedness with self and others.... Conclusions: Drumming circles have applications as complementary addiction therapy, particularly for repeated relapse and when other counseling modalities have failed. (Winkelman, 2003)

**The arts and adjudicated youth.** Working with high risk youth, while incorporating many of the arts, Kansas City, Missouri’s “Sentenced to the Arts” program diverts adjudicated youth from traditional diversion or probation programs and sentences them to work with an artist in a drumming, dance, dramatic, musical, or other arts organization in order to fulfill their court order. Facilitators have found that recidivism, or repeat offenses, are fewer for these youth than for youth with traditional sentences (Associated Press, 2007). Introducing traditional arts to young perpetrators or victims of violence in Monrovia may help not only the psychological effects of war on the individual, but may also help the individual reject illicit activity and positively reintegrate into the community.

The effects of war are so diverse that this project cannot address all of them. The Liberian government and its development partners continue to push recovery efforts, but cracks remain. The main focus of the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project is to help urban young adults, women and men, transcend the trauma of war in order to become productive citizens.

Targeting urban youth ages 15 to 24, this three-phased project is directed at the group of young Liberians who neither had the opportunity to experience a stable form of childhood, nor the sense of a safe community in their critical formative years. By deploying both the cultural and scientific healing powers of traditional music, the project aims to help the youth heal and help communities re-build following decades of war as outlined in the following chapters. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature about the concept of healing, the use of cultural arts, especially traditional music, in traditional healing practices and biomedical treatment programs, and an introduction to the field of medical ethnomusicology. Chapter 3 explores the cultural arts indigenous to pre-war Liberia that will be included in the project. Chapter 4 describes the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project in detail, and Chapter 5 concludes with project challenges and strengths, and other culturally sustainable projects that would be beneficial for urban Liberian young adult women and men.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### What Is Healing?

Mosby's Medical Dictionary defined healing as "*the act or process in which the normal structural and functional characteristics of health are restored to diseased, dysfunctional, or damaged tissues, organs, or systems of the body.*" The biomedical community focuses on healing as a process from *diseased to normal, from dysfunctional to functional* in terms of body parts. However in hearing from Liberians and reviewing the TRC testimony transcripts, there is acknowledgement that while the physical wounds and body parts might be healed, the decades of violence and displacement have left scars on the emotional well-being of individuals, communities, and the country (*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 2008*).

Considering the healing needs of Liberian youth specifically, the 2009 *Mental Health Needs Assessment of Liberian Children, Adolescents and Young Adults* found that "adolescents and young adults between 13 and 22 years old were felt to have high rates of unsafe sex, alcohol and drug use, a lack of respect for the law, delinquent behavior, gang participation, sexual violence, poor concentration, bullying of others and hopelessness" (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2009). Many urban Liberian youth are in a state of *dysfunction* but I contend that the health needs of these disenfranchised youth go beyond physical needs. Therefore, I would like to look further than the biomedical definition of healing. I would like to use the Webster Dictionary's definition of healing as *the process of making sound or whole*. I extend the definition to that process which focuses on the *soundness or wholeness* of the community as well as of the individual.

In Liberia, there is a spiritual basis for this concept of *wholeness and soundness* when defining health. It is important to acknowledge that many Liberians who identify themselves as Christian or Muslim continue to also embrace deeply held animist beliefs. The Pew Forum on

Religion and Public Life found that “many Christians and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa retain beliefs and rituals that are characteristic of traditional African religions. In most countries, however, less than one-in-twenty say this is their primary religious affiliation. Liberia is the only country where more than one-in-ten (12%) identify primarily with an African traditional religion” (Pew, 2010, p. 20).

Animism is the belief that everything has a soul, or *animus*, whether human or animal or rock or river, and that “the universe is a unity of being” (Lystad, 1987). The world consists of the visible, what can be seen and felt, and the invisible, consisting of the souls of one’s ancestors. “At death, people move into the invisible domain, where they exert a powerful force on those remaining in visible communities” (Vontress, 1991, p. 242). Significant celebrations and ceremonies revolve around paying homage to ancestors. Animists believe that illness, whether physical or mental, is caused by angering the ancestors in the invisible world, or by damaging a social relationship in the visible world. Horton noted, “... an important part of traditional religious theory posits and attempts to explain the connexion [*sic*] between disturbed social relationships and disease—a connexion whose reality and importance Western medical scientists are only just beginning to see” (Horton, 1967, p. 172).

Unlike the biomedical emphasis on the illness of the individual, illness from the animist cosmology involves the “entire social sphere – and this includes the ancestors and spirits” (Pavlicevic, 2002, p. 1248). Illness then results from imbalance in those relationships. Treatment consists of consulting a traditional healer. Traditional healers are those who possess the ability to move between the visible and invisible worlds. They offer ancient knowledge of herbs, chants, music, dance, performance, divining, and counseling to help people recover

balance and mend damaged relationships (Awanbor, 1982). To many Liberians, balance is synonymous with healing.

**Do people heal after violence?** There is an anthropological perspective that people never heal from violence, that they simply “submerge the scars and move on with their lives” (J. Janzen, personal communication, June 3, 2010). One could argue that when people are capable of functioning and moving on with their lives, some healing has occurred. In a spiritual culture like Liberia, where health is viewed as balance and illness as imbalance, submerged scars do not constitute healing. In an animist Liberian view, something submerged will eventually rise to the top as illness. “According to holistic theory, a healthy person is one whose total system – both mind and body – is in a state of dynamic equilibrium...During an illness, the person’s total system is upset...Healing, then, is the process by which a healthy equilibrium is restored; it may occur spontaneously or with the aid of a medical or nonmedical healer” (Frank, 1978).

Carolyn Nordstrom noted the following after fieldwork in war-torn Mozambique:

Traditional Western approaches to violent conflict do not often recognize the creative strategies people on the front lines employ to survive the war. I was little prepared for the way in which people tried to reconfigure the destructive violence that marked their lives and to rebuild worlds so wrenchingly taken away from them by violence. (Nordstrom, 1995, p. 143)

Nordstrom observed that the people she lived with used art including songs, myths, parables, as well as focusing on doing normal tasks to attempt to “construct social order out of chaos.” The people also relied heavily on *curandeiros*, or traditional healers, “to have the violence taken out of them” (Nordstrom, 1995, p. 146).

I contend that the recovery or healing of young urban Liberian women and men from their violent past and the resultant disenfranchisement may fall somewhere between the “never heal but move on” view and Nordstrom’s “creative strategies” approach. What is important to remember about these youth ages 15-24 is that they have not experienced communities untouched by violence. The war lasted from 1989- 2003 with militarization, conflict, and uncertainty beginning with the 1980 coup d’état. These youth have not lived amid a peaceful, mentoring community. Whether they grew up in the city or moved to the city alone or with family, these urban youth have had limited opportunities to learn or observe Nordstrom’s “creative strategies” from mentors and elders. Nordstrom’s discussion of the use of traditional healers in Mozambique has special relevance for Liberia. There are reports that some ex-combatants did undergo reconciliation ceremonies or healing rituals with traditional healers before returning to their rural communities (Utas, 2003). The vast majority of urban youth, ex-combatants or survivors, living in places like West Point, however, did not return to intact communities with expectations of reconciliation or healing.

### **Previous Efforts to Help Liberian Youth Heal**

**Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration program.** As part of the 2003 Peace Accord, the Disarmament, Demobilisation[*sic*] and Reintegration (DDR) of combatants, another program monitored by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was initiated. The program was quickly halted due to ensuing violence among participants, but reinstated in 2004. Its goal was to get combatants to turn in their weapons, to leave their combat group to return to their communities and to be welcomed or reintegrated back into the community.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “The process is driven by a financial incentive with each ex-combatant receiving US \$150 when handing in a form of weaponry and a further US\$150 on completion of a six-week demobilization and rehabilitation program. Operated by UNMIL, ex--combatants are

There was dissatisfaction with the DDR program following the war. Ex-combatants claimed that the promised jobs, educational opportunities and financial support did not appear. Concerns were raised by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that only a small number of ex-combatants were enrolled in the program. After interviewing ex-combatants and reviewing the DDR reports, Kathleen Jennings suggested that “in some post-conflict countries, a better use of international community resources may be to delink disarmament and demobilization from reintegration, focusing reintegration resources instead on open-access jobs programmes[sic] with discrete, complementary bilateral or multilateral programmes for particularly vulnerable groups” (Jennings, 2007).

Reintegration and rehabilitation were attempts to help ex-combatants return to their communities. Jennings noted, “Rehabilitation, which was included in the Liberian programme, is not well defined, and seems to refer primarily to psycho-social and related services. .... no informants reported receiving counseling or other rehabilitation benefits, either at cantonment camps or afterwards” (Jennings, pg 205). Abramowitz’s study of psychosocial needs in post-conflict Liberia confirmed the continued gap and need for services (Abramowitz, 2009).

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission.** Following the peace accord in 2003 which brought a halt to the fighting, there was a call for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The Commission, modeled after the TRC in South Africa upon the ending of apartheid, was to allow people to tell their story and be able to either ask for forgiveness for their actions or to forgive. The TRC listened to testimony from Liberians and non-Liberians whose lives were

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"barracked" for three days instead of several weeks as initially intended. No money is left for rehabilitation after an estimated 105,000 ex-combatants receive payments. Publicly the UN hails the program a success while only thirty-five percent of weapons are actually surrendered and widespread fraud by factional commanders is acknowledged to have taken place. Non-combatants, arguably those who suffered most during the war, receive nothing”(Hetherington, 2009, p. 91).

impacted by the war. Hearings were held throughout Liberia, in Ghana, and the U.S. where large numbers of Liberians fled. The final results were published in July, 2009 with varying reactions and attempts to discredit or embrace the Commission's report. Politics cannot alter the impact of the words of youth whose lives were forever altered by the events of the war.

A young woman who was sixteen in 1993 testified in Monrovia,

While going they started killing old people. By the time that they know you are not able to walk, they will kill you. You old they kill you, you sick they kill you. We reached certain place my mother was holding my grand ma hand, they told my ma to gave my grand ma so that they can sit her down somewhere, and when they were going back, they took the Oldma to Bellah Fassama. So my mother left my grand ma hand and they sit her down by the road. Before we could look, hey fired her and she fell down and died. My mother wanted to cry and I begged her not to cry and they told my ma to laugh or they will kill her too, so she had to laugh. (*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 2008*)

**Médécins du Monde.** Emilie Medeiros worked as a mental health coordinator in Liberia with French-run Médécins du Monde from 2004-05. She found children separated from their communities and “marginalized” by the atrocities that surrounded them. Using the youth's words, these children believed themselves to be “above the ‘human-being’ world,” or not answerable to the law. Ex-combatants told her, “‘when you're in the bush, you don't see civilians in the same way. They are like chickens or ants, so you can kill them anytime... you just don't care,’ (child soldier, age 16) and, ‘We used to do check points with the intestines of people....Heads were put on the gates of the military camp and we had to greet them each time we would see them’ (child soldier, age 10)” (Medeiros, 2007).

Acknowledging the lack of trained mental health care professionals and the value of traditional healers, Médecins du Monde incorporated “community groups of traditional women and healers (*Zoes*)[*sic*]...when available, in order to understand and reactivate their traditional strategies of care for the most distressed community members" (Medeiros, p. 499). Based on Medeiros’ observations, she recommended basic mental health training for decentralized primary care health givers “as well as the ability to conduct analyses of indigenous ways of experiencing and dealing with distress”(Medeiros, p. 502). She also recommended a national mental health policy be developed utilizing the experience of WHO and UNICEF.

Biomedical mental health care treatment continues to be very limited in Liberia (Abramowitz, 2009) . There are currently only two mental health treatment facilities in Liberia, Cap Anamur, run by a German NGO, and Médecins du Monde, the French organization noted above which also operates ten primary health clinics in four areas of Liberia. There is also a shortage of mental health professionals. UN Radio reported, “Dr. Benjamin Harris is Liberia's sole psychiatrist” (Ofori, May 4, 2010). The mental health facilities do not have medical directors who are physicians. There are no psychiatric nurses (Abramowitz, 2009).

**Liberia’s first National Mental Health Policy.** In May, 2010, UN Radio reported the “recent launch of a new mental health plan produced with the support of the World Health Organisation[*sic*]. The plan focuses on community-based care, increased training of medical personnel and reforms in the provision of prescription drugs.” The UN Radio transcript noted that “the next challenge for the government of Liberia is raising funds to implement the new health care plan” (Ofori, May 4, 2010). The first National Mental Health Policy approved in November, 2009, features County Mental Health teams that will incorporate mental health care into existing primary health care clinics. It lays out a short term goal of training existing health

care workers, while the long term goal aims to increase the number of highly qualified mental health care workers.

The 131-page policy does refer to traditional healers four times. First, that “the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) will partner with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and traditional healers”(Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2009). Secondly, under the “Values and Principles” portion of the policy:

Services will be culturally appropriate and will reflect the values of the community.

ii. Traditional healers and religious and community leaders will be involved in prevention and detection, and will collaborate with the formal mental health system . (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2009, p. 31)

Later the policy acknowledges that “traditional healers, who account for a significant extent of mental health care, will be trained to improve their skills and services” (Ministry, p 59). There are several paragraphs devoted to “complementary medicine” which discuss the role of traditional healers, the need for further training, and the inclusion of a member of the complementary medicine team in the Mental Health Task Force (Ministry, p 70).

Traditional healers and their practice of traditional medicine or traditional healing are not currently formally integrated into Liberian governmental policy, as they are in six other West African countries, so how the partnership will look is unclear at this time.<sup>25</sup> Funding and the

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<sup>25</sup> Six West African countries have at least some of the following policies with reference to traditional medicine: a legal framework, a national coordination body, an association of traditional practitioners, a directory of traditional practitioners, and a national budget. Mali has all five components. Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire, and Nigeria only lack the directory, and Senegal and Gambia have two of the five components. Liberia is not listed.

lack of trained personnel also appear to be significant challenges for the mental health policy to be implemented.

### **What is Traditional Healing?**

Numerous scholars have studied traditional healing practices in various parts of Africa (Awanbor, 1982; Berg, 2003; Friedson, 2000; Janzen, 2000; Maiello, 2008; Pavlicevic, 2002; Schumaker, 2000; Vontress, 1991). Clemmont Vontress studied traditional healing in Senegal, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire over a five year period, 1984-1989, utilizing field visits, interviews with West African students studying at U.S. universities and other African professionals in the U.S. and Africa, as well as communication with people from all walks of life during his field visits. He found that people who consult traditional healers, called different names by different ethnic groups, believe that "the healer acts...as an intermediary between the visible and the invisible worlds to determine which spirits are at work and how to bring the ill person back into harmony with them" (Vontress, 1991, p. 243).

**Categories of traditional healers.** Vontress described several traditional healing specialists who were both male and female: the herbalist, the fetish person, the medium, the healer, and the sorcerer. Some healers possess multiple abilities. The *herbalist* chooses from a wide variety of herbs and medicinal plants as healing treatments. The *fetish person* provides objects or "spells" to people seeking protection, or any number of attributes such as "virility, courage, intelligence, wisdom, prosperity, or popularity" (Vontress, 1991). The *medium*, frequently female, is believed to have the power to mediate or send messages between those living and those dead. Mediums often use drums, songs, and chants to go into a trance in order to "summon the spirits." The *healers* are consulted for a wide variety of issues, from fractured bones to mental health concerns. They sometimes rely upon divining techniques like throwing

bones or cowry shells as a basis for their treatment advice. The *sorcerer* is the person who is blamed for evil or bad luck in a community. The person believed to be a sorcerer is often unaware that he/she possesses these evil powers, also called *juju*, magic, or *African science* (Vontress, 1991).<sup>26</sup>

Traditional healing specialists hold revered positions in the community. MacCormack noted that indigenous or traditional healers have “traditional legitimacy” versus the “rational-legal legitimacy” of biomedical medicine. Traditional legitimacy is “often associated with the wisdom of ancestral time...and arises from personal loyalty to those recognized as the heirs and bearers of legitimacy.” Because of this type of legitimacy, traditional healers “may have more flexibility to respond to changing conditions than one based upon rational-legal bureaucracy...and are quite free to innovate” (MacCormack, 1981, p. 425). Given their standing with the people they serve, traditional healers are involved in post-conflict healing, whether acknowledged by the biomedical practitioners or not.

**Traditional healers and war survivors.** Alcinda Honwana looked at programs to help children in war-torn Angola and Mozambique and found that

...community leaders, traditional healers and families showed tremendous knowledge of how to heal the social wounds of war in war-affected children and adults. Such disorders are in fact quite treatable by traditional healers, based on indigenous understandings of how war affects the minds and behavior of individuals, and on shared beliefs of how spiritual forces intervene in such processes. (Green & Honwana, 1999)

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<sup>26</sup> Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that 24% of Liberians have high levels of traditional African Religious Beliefs and Practices with 30% consulting traditional healers (Pew, 2010, p. 34)

Honwana cited projects in Mozambique as models for how indigenous and biomedical psychosocial approaches can work together to help children heal. Community members there said that the priorities for international funders and NGO's should be job creation and other community development necessary to engage the youth, and that healing should be left to the traditional healers.

She offered an example of a healing ritual for a child combatant from her Mozambique field notes. Unlike some biomedical approaches to trauma in which the victim is asked to recall the details of the trauma in order to hopefully expunge them, the traditional Mozambique approach is to be purified, to not look back, and to forget. The ritual is as follows:

In the day of his arrival his relatives took him to the *ndumba* (the house of the spirits). There he was presented to the ancestral spirits of the family. The boy's grandfather addressed the spirits informing them that his grandchild had returned and thanked the spirits for their protection as his grandson was able to return alive.... A few days later a spirit medium was invited by the family to help them perform the cleansing rituals for the boy. The practitioner took the boy to the bush, and there a small hut covered with dry grass was built. The boy, dressed with the dirty clothes he brought from the RENAMO [rebel] camp, entered the hut and undressed himself. Then fire was set to the hut, and an adult relative helped out the boy. The hut, the clothes and everything else that the boy brought from the camp had to be burned. A chicken was sacrificed for the spirits of the

dead and the blood spread around the ritual place After that the boy had to inhale the smoke of some herbal remedies, and bath [*sic*] himself with water treated with medicine. (Green & Honwana, 1999)

Some scholars find that the culture is not always right. Dyregrov et al contended that not all traditional approaches to helping children heal from trauma are appropriate. They purported that sometimes the culture's healing structure has been disabled by the conflict, giving the example of the misuse of the church in the Rwanda massacre. They raised the point that just like children's real suffering from trauma had been denied for centuries by Western psychiatry, there are traditional healers who insist on denial and even engage in blaming the victim. The authors held training sessions for traditional healers and found many of them interested in altering their use of blame. While biological responses to trauma appear to be the same across cultures, "culture to a larger extent will determine reactions over time" (Dyregrov et al, p 140). The authors expressed concern that especially with respect to children and conflict, it is important to recognize that culture does not remain static, nor is it always able to adequately support the needs of troubled and grieving children. In the children's best interest, the authors encouraged a more open-minded approach that may embrace both "Western" and indigenous modalities (Dyregrov, Gupta, Gjestad, & Raundalen, 2002) .

Music is an integral part of traditional healing. Steven Friedson lived with the Timbuka people. He wrote, "Healing is still an art form in northern Malawi. From all-night divination sessions, with their virtually continuous singing and drumming, to the intense experience of spirit possession, music gives form to a sacred clinical reality" (Friedson, 1996).

**Traditional healers and music.** Numerous scholars have observed the use of music, and especially rhythm, in traditional healing rituals. Marian Roseman's observations of the

Temiar in the Malaysian rainforest highlighted this relationship between music and traditional healing practices. “When Temiars sing and play bamboo tubes during healing ceremonies... the music of the beating tubes mediates between the rainforest's pulsing sounds and the body's beating heart, bringing nature spirits into conjunction with the human spirit, collapsing the boundaries between nature and culture... (Roseman, 1991).

John Janzen studied the *ngoma* rituals of southern and eastern Africa which he defined as “a sung, danced, healing ritual around a particular song/call-response set, usually focused on a particular person at a time, within a larger setting of a group of healers, their patients, and sometimes their families and other community members.” Janzen noted that *ngoma* and the specialists, *ganga*, who oversee it can be traced back thousands of years to West Africa. He interviewed two Muslim *ngoma* healers about how the music heals. They responded via a Swahili translator:

The aim of healing ngomas is to make the patient talk, to *heighten emotions*. If that fails, you go to the forest for roots, give them medicine. Either way, talking is important. The purpose of the *drumming is to know the particular spirit, so it speaks out in the patient*, so the healer knows how many, which, where they come from, what they want. When the patient speaks, it's the *spirit speaking*. Spirit and person are one and the same. After medicine is taken, and *ngoma* is played, the patient must *sing in increasing tempo*, the song of the particular spirit. It's thus the patient *who directs the healer* on the type of treatment...How then does an ngoma help a person? The *music enchants the sufferer* so he can express himself better, and reveal the spirit. (Janzen, 2000, p. 59)

Janzen cautioned Westerners to look beyond the term *music therapy* when discussing *ngoma*, noting that “to restore our picture of a music like *ngoma* to its integrative classical fullness...we will have to step outside the ...constraints of the modern university to behold it for what it is, a valid tradition of musical healing in its own right” (Janzen, 2000, p. 65).

Friedson, observing the trance-dancing healers of the Tumbuka people, sought to “understand a health-care system where musical experience is a defining feature of medical praxis, where therapeutics and diagnostics are danced” (Friedson, 2000, p. 69). Like *ngoma*, there is singing, and clapping, and it is the drumming that is the essence as each spirit has its distinct rhythm.

From the West African perspective, Yaya Diallo, a musician from Mali, wrote in *The Healing Drum*, “...music serves a sacred, healing function for the individual and the society. A remedy for both physical and psychological imbalances, music facilitates communication with the ancestors, the spirits, and the Creator. Music harmonizes forces of the visible and invisible worlds” (Diallo, 1989, p. 4). In other words, music creates balance and helps mitigate imbalance.

How does music affect the body in such a healing manner? Dialo responded, “Music profoundly affects muscle tone, body rhythms, and emotions; respiration, heartbeat, digestive peristalsis, and brain waves tend to become synchronized to music. By playing appropriate rhythms the Minianka musicians stabilize and synchronize the physiological and motor rhythms of their patients through the audible vibrations of music”(Diallo, 1989). Remembering that traditional music includes song, drumming, other instruments, dance, and dramatic performance, in Liberia and many parts of the world, traditional music is inextricably linked to traditional healing.

## **Cultural Arts and Biomedicine in Post-Conflict Countries**

The axiom that music is the universal language becomes important when looking at strategies to assist people in post-conflict countries, particularly in countries with many ethnic groups and languages. The history of music therapy as a discipline provides a biomedical rationale for Westerners trying to understand the efficacy of the more mystical traditional healing practices, or *ngoma*, particularly in post-conflict settings. The World Federation of Music Therapy, founded in 1985, advocates for the global use of music therapy. The World Congress of Music Therapy convenes periodically to bring together researchers and presenters from around the globe.

**Music therapy and war survivors.** In the United States, music therapy originated as a treatment response to returning World War II veterans with “combat fatigue,” or what is now called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Burt studied the use of drumming with returning Vietnam veterans living with PTSD. He found that the drumming did help relieve many symptoms of PTSD, especially rage (Burt, 1995). While music therapy got its start treating combatants, the changing face of war and the impact on civilians has expanded its focus. Music therapy in general has been used extensively over the past few decades with victims of trauma, and specifically with victims of conflict and war.

Jaap Orth (2005) developed a methodology for the use of music therapy with traumatized refugees. His four approaches included:

- 1). Composing one’s own relaxation music by making a tape or live recording
- 2). Learning to play a new instrument and playing together with others
- 3). Making your own musical product
- 4). Expressing thoughts/feelings through musical improvisation.

Orth acknowledged that some of the barriers to using music therapy with victims of war are the language barrier, cultural nuance, ensuring that people feel safe, and for some, reactions to the loud sound of music that trigger images of war (Orth, 2005).

Music therapists are also expanding their role to include using music to maintain or create peace in conflict-ridden places. The Pavarotti Music Center and the Sunflower Project have been involved in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Music therapists have been working in the Gaza Strip, South Africa, Sierra Leone, as well as with war refugee immigrants in the United States. They have advocated for the provision of music therapy services to children traumatized by war by submitting a proposal to the UN (Ng, 2005).

Edith Hillman Boxill founded Music Therapists for Peace and one of its main projects, “Students Against Violence Everywhere – S.A.V.E. – Through Music Therapy.” She worked to create an awareness of the violent language that predominates our conversation and encouraged us to re-think our word choices. For example, instead of saying “Shoot for it,” say “Go for it.” Instead of saying “Take a stab at it,” say “Try it out.” Peace-loving language is important for lyricists. Using drumming and verbalizations, people can learn to communicate better during a conflict and find peaceful resolution (Boxill, 2003).

Zharinova-Sanderson working with refugee victims in a private clinic in Berlin noted that for many, the effects of the trauma in their home country was matched by the trauma of the relocation, lack of funds, struggle to survive, and fear of reprisal in their new homes. She simply let people sing and teach their songs to her. Once a relationship of trust was established, some added dance and were willing to “perform” for center staff. Working with refugees from around the world, Zharinova-Sanderson acknowledged the challenge of language and cultural barriers. She also noted the ability of music and appreciating others’ music to break down some of the

fear and anger. Music allowed the refugees to form relationships both with staff, and with each other (Zharinova-Sanderson, 2002).

Verena Heidenreich looked at the interventions of music therapists in the context of international humanitarian aid. She contacted three music therapists working in Romania, Sierra Leone and the former Yugoslavia. Plan International in Sierra Leone began their three month “Rapid Education Plan” with a four-week “trauma healing programme”[*sic*] that included music therapy. “Tests before and after these four weeks showed a strong decrease in problematic symptoms that made it possible to then start with the actual education project”(Heidenreich, 2005, p. 132).

**Dance/Movement therapy and Sierra Leone ex-combatants.** David Harris, working for the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) looked specifically at Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT) and its effectiveness in helping African child soldiers reintegrate into their communities. One project involved nearly 100 southern Sudanese children who had resettled in Pennsylvania. The other project worked with a smaller number of boys in the Kailahun District of Sierra Leone. Engaging in nine weekly sessions, children participated in creative movement exercises. One of the challenges therapists found in Sierra Leone is that rebels often “forced their conscripts to laugh – and indeed, to dance and sing – after committing such acts as killing, raping, or mutilating civilians”(Harris, 2007a, p. 150). The result was that children displayed little emotion or affect and caused the therapists to revise their treatment plans with regard to movement. Creative “vigorous improvisatory dancing and more contained exercise” movements were devised to help increase comfort (Harris, p 154). Therapists found that with most of the participants living on the street and concerned about basic survival, building the trust and safety the children needed to connect took much longer than expected. “Members chose for themselves

a group name, *Poimbo Veeyah Koindu*, meaning Orphan Boys of Koindu in Kissi, their mother tongue, and invested more and more in sharing a group identity. In time, even sadness and the desire for forgiveness emerged as themes to be shared aloud. Indeed, by the ninth session, all of the dozen participants had expressed feelings of remorse in both action and word” (Harris, p 151).

Facilitators offered to add on five more sessions after the facilitators had to be away from Sierra Leone for twelve weeks. Concerns about attendance and renewed participation after such a long break were alleviated by a 90% attendance rate and evidence that the group had remained supportive of one another. For the last five sessions, the participants were empowered to take over session agendas. For the final session, publicized as a Community Cultural Healing Event, the youth unanimously agreed, created and performed a 25-minute dramatization of their wartime experiences, experiences that had previously been guarded secrets. The final scene was of a child returning to his village and asking forgiveness of the elders, asking to be accepted again as “your children.” Audience response was dramatic, including several impromptu speeches by elders welcoming the young men back into the community. “One townswoman told facilitators that witnessing such former combatants renouncing their violent past had helped her feel safer” (Harris, p 153).

Facilitators surveyed the teens at intake, 1 month, 3 month, 6 month, and 12 month intervals, showing continued reduction in symptoms such as anxiety, depression, intrusive recollection, elevated arousal, and aggression. Harris concluded that the teens, “not physically segregated from their home culture yet suffering nonetheless a stigma that excluded them from its heart, developed an innovative way to reconcile themselves with the community to which they had returned after years of violence. Having found in dancing a culturally acceptable

release of long held muscular and psychic tensions, the former soldiers reclaimed a capacity connecting to the reality of the present moment” (Harris, p 154).

This project incorporated music, dance and dramatic performance while helping former soldiers reintegrate into a community. It’s significant because the facilitators worked with the youth for over a year. Even with significant gaps in treatment time, the young men continued to show motivation, interest, and a commitment to a different way of living. The project’s positive results with very high risk youth provide support for the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project’s target location of West Point and its high risk residents.

**Music therapy and traditional music.** Two of the criticisms of music therapy are that the field has consistently used Western music in its programs and has been slow to encompass traditional music and its spiritual or religious significance within a community (Chiang, 2008). For those Liberians who embrace healing from an animist view, there is a need for incorporating music indigenous to Liberia. Teaching and performing traditional music involves more than one or two individuals, often involving the entire community. Traditional music is also inclusive of music, dance, song and dramatic performance unlike the biomedical approach of individual music, dance, or drama therapy disciplines. Traditional music impacts more than the healing of one individual; it impacts the healing of a community. The number of music therapists in Liberia is few to none. Involving expatriate music therapists limits the length of available programs to the in-country stay of that particular therapist, as David Harris found in Sierra Leone (Harris, 2007a). Penelope Gouk, editor of *Musical Healing in Cultural Context*, argued:

There is, it seems, an inescapable relationship between the way we configure our inner and outer worlds, not only as individuals but as larger communities and even nations. ‘Music’ (and all the activities this term may encompass) is itself a

powerful expression of that configuration, as well as a means of altering it. Yet, although music's cathartic and transformative powers may be universal, the ways such powers are harnessed and directed appear to be culturally specific. Indeed the forms musical healing may take within a given community are determined by how its members conceive of health and illness, as well as their relationship to the material and spiritual realms. (Gouk, 2000, p. 23)

Traditional music in Liberia is integral to traditional healing practices. With Liberia's widely-held animist view of illness as imbalance, disregarding the possibilities for musical, or traditional, healing overlooks a potent resource for youthful war survivors. With Liberia's limited resources and multiple challenges, I argue that the country, and its international development partners, cannot afford to continue ignoring or overlooking traditional music and its healing potential any longer.

### **Medical Ethnomusicology**

The emerging academic field that is studying how science, medicine, spirituality, music, and culture are connected when it comes to healing is medical ethnomusicology. The following definition may be helpful:

Medical ethnomusicology can be briefly defined as a branch of research grafted onto ethnomusicological and biomedical studies that focuses on factors that cause, maintain, or contribute to disease, illness, or other health-related issues, and the complementary, alternative, or supportive musical strategies and performative practices that different communities have developed to respond to cultural conceptualizations of disease and illness, health and healing.

(adapted from Baer et al,1997)

There is still work to be done to increase the cooperative research and communication between health care professionals, music therapists, medical anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, and traditional healers (Chiang, 2008). Medical ethnomusicology can help us bridge the gap between the biomedical mental health treatment model, which is currently understaffed and underfunded in Liberia, and the animist or traditional healing model which has been disrupted, especially in the urban areas, but is still a prevalent and effective health treatment model.

**Music and AIDS in Uganda.** One example of a medical ethnomusicology field project is Gregory Barz's account of Ugandans "singing for life" as an effective means of addressing the AIDS epidemic. Barz found that for several decades, rural women's groups, traditional healers, youth groups, and community groups have created lyrics and dances to traditional music that address HIV prevention, treatment, and ways to live with the disease. One traditional healer said, "Concerning the best way of controlling the spread of HIV, now this is a difficult question. People are difficult. For us, in the songs we sing we ask people to restrict their sexual desires...those who are able to pick these messages have changed" (Barz, 2006, p. 162).

In speaking of the way music gets the message across, Rev. Muteeba told Barz, "... the music comes as entertainment...then it goes deep into you, especially when you know people are suffering from it" (Barz, p 216). A rural woman, Aida Namulinda, said, "No one will listen to us unless we bring our drums! No one will listen to us talk about Silimu – AIDS – unless we dance!" (Barz, p 80). Finally, Mama Noelina, working with women living with AIDS, told Barz in the midst of a meeting full of drums and dance, "These women come here for help, for community, and to dance. See. Look at them. It makes them feel better when they dance. They're *dancing their disease!*" (Barz, p 78).

Barz's record of his interviews, the songs, the dances, and the case studies from a medical ethnomusicologist's viewpoint increased understanding of how people use their culture, their music, to educate and to heal. He has created a blueprint to help communities, biomedical clinicians, international funders, and traditional healers embrace and use the cultural resources that surround them. To further understand how Liberia's cultural resources can help young women and men heal and help communities rebuild, we must first understand more about the arts indigenous to its people.

### **Chapter 3: Cultural Arts Indigenous to Liberia**

Previous to the wars of the past two decades, Liberians, particularly in the rural areas, celebrated the secular and the sacred through the traditional arts. Music, dance, singing, weaving, basket-making, pottery, carving, painting, poetry, and textiles created a tapestry intricately woven into the spiritual and daily lives of the people. The traditions brought to life by the art amid the pulsations of the drum rhythms were the essence of the community. This cohesion of secular and sacred brought security, reassurance, and boundaries to communities caught in the midst of Liberia's black-on-black, apartheid-like conflict between the descendants of freed slaves who colonized the country in the 1840's and the sixteen or so other ethnolinguistic groups, most of whom had been in Liberia for centuries.

Liberia's cultural arts were used to build community as well as to provide a level of structure or "social control," according to George Harley, for both children and adults (Harley, 1950). The use of cultural arts to promote healing and community cohesion in the "Drumming for Reconciliation" project is not a new idea for Liberia. For centuries, Liberians have turned to their cultural traditions to grieve a loss, recover from a battle, survive trauma, to heal. What is different for Liberia's urban youth today from those rural youth I knew before the war is that youth today need to be taught both the meaning of the cultural art and the skill. The "Drumming for Reconciliation" project through the mentoring process strives to teach both. Liberians have historically used masks, masquerades, and oral traditions to teach, so too will the project use these techniques to teach. Understanding the meaning of cultural arts, for most ethnic groups in Liberia begins with understanding the significance of the Poro and Sande societies.

## **Poro and Sande Societies**

Fueling much of the artistic creativity were the Poro and Sande secret societies characteristic of many, but not all, Liberian ethnic groups. These gender-specific groups were responsible for coming of age instruction, spiritual leadership, healing, moral judgment, economics, politics, and the oral traditions of the community. Most importantly, the Poro and Sande societies were responsible for the traditional or informal education of the children. This informal education of children was under the tutelage of the leaders of the Sande, for the girls, and Poro, for the boys and used to occur during a three to four year period in which the boys and girls were secluded and separated from their families in sacred areas of the “bush” or forest.<sup>27</sup>

Though “bush school” specifics were kept secret, education about what it means to be an adult, life skills, musical training, and spiritual meaning was known to be included. Age groupings were important. Often the timing of bush school occurred when a chief’s or important leader’s child reached a particular age and was viewed as the leader of his/her age group. Male and female circumcisions were performed during this time as well as scarification for some ethnic groups in Liberia. New initiates presented themselves back in the community with white clay on their faces and bodies. White is the color of the spirit world. I have new appreciation for the fear and awe on the faces of children and adults in villages I walked to with my Liberian health education counterpart who had never seen a white person. Did they see me with my white skin and brown hair as a spirit? I also understand the sacredness of albinism, whether in a person or an animal, as one who is not just representative, but actually **of** the spirit world.

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<sup>27</sup> More recently, “bush school” lasted only three or four weeks in many areas of Liberia, thus considerably shortening the amount of information passed on.



Great White Owl (photo by Kay Heley)

Recognizing the significant role of the Sande and Poro societies in providing structure, informal education of children, and social control for the community is vital to understanding the cohesiveness indigenous to many Liberian communities. Social control extends beyond reprimanding those who don't follow the community rules. Previous to the war, with gender roles circumscribed, the Poro and Sande leaders maintained a balance of power between women and men. Harley observed that bush schools for the boys and the girls were not held at the same time to preclude all of the community leaders being absent at the same time (Harley, 1950). Sande leaders were a potent economic force in the community and were frequently consulted, along with the men, about important issues of the day (Monts, 1984). In Bo and Bendu, where my Peace Corps group trained, women sat on the town council and in the "palaver hut" where townspeople sought verdicts on grievances. While there were some things that were taught and required by these leaders that are out-of-date, there are some intrinsic values still relevant to contemporary times. The emphasis of the "Drumming for Reconciliation" project will be on the positive aspects of the Poro/Sande structure, such as the mentoring, the balanced gender relationships, and the teaching of the arts, the music and dance, and the traditional healing practices.

The Sande society is the women's society. According to Robin Poynor,

*Sande/Bondo* is an institution that is central to the community exerting spiritual, economic, social, and political power. Its higher offices are hereditary. Each group is led by a powerful woman who has control over the "medicine," or *halei*, a sacred power given by a supreme being. She also controls the masks. Initiation of girls takes place outside the limits of the village. Here they are taught basic female values and trained for marriage, domestic life, and economic pursuits. They are also trained in the mysteries of the women's society and taught its songs and dances. (Poynor, 1995)

Interestingly, outside of Liberia and Sierra Leone, there is little documented by Westerners about women-only societies in other African countries. In numerous books and museum collections of African masks from throughout the continent, the Sande mask stands alone as one known to be controlled by women.

The men of the Poro society filled the same responsibilities as the Sande leaders with respect to education of the boys and traditional healing. There was a gender difference in artistic production in that men did the carving, the weaving, individual dancing, and the drumming. Women created the costumes, sang, danced in groups, and played the *sasaa*.

Members of the Poro and Sande societies were the traditional healers or *zo's*. Accompanied by musicians and utilizing herbs, drumming, dance, performance, and special songs, healing ceremonies had many components and sometimes lasted days. As noted earlier, some of the healers, specifically the bone setters and snake bite healers, were even hired as staff in the hospitals to treat patients due to the positive outcomes they were able to achieve.

The functions of the Poro and Sande societies determined the art created in the community. Poro and Sande members were the mentors for youth on how to make a costume, how to carve or weave, which songs to sing or dances to dance and for which occasions, how to play certain drum rhythms, and for those chosen to be *Zo*'s, how to be a healer. "Drumming for Reconciliation" will teach and use as many of the cultural arts as there are musicians, elder instructors of both genders, and interest by young adults in its programming.

### **Masquerades.**

Along with the songs and dances are the masquerades of the Poro and Sande societies. The masquerades supervised the "bush school" of the young initiates, danced at important community events like funerals, weddings, installation of leaders, harvest celebrations, and other community rituals. The Sande masquerade, *Sowei, or Bundu*, was represented by an all-black figure with a carved black helmet mask and dyed raffia costume. The dancer was anonymous, known only to Sande members. The carvings on top of the raffia differed among ethnic groups and often included Islamic symbols for those groups who are practicing Muslims.



Photo by Kay Heley

The following photo is of female initiates dancing to celebrate their successful completion of bush school and their initiation into the Sande society. All learned the dances but only the most gifted became *Sowei*.



Photo by Kay Heley

The Poro society in Bo created several masquerades, *Gbini*, *Nafali*, *Jobai*, and *Yavi*, as well as the masks and costumes associated with them. Men generally carved the masks for specific families that commissioned their creation. Like the Sande masquerade, the Poro Society dancers danced at important community events and supervised the “bush school” for new initiates. There was at least one Poro masquerade that did not come out in public and was only seen by those males who had been initiated. George Harley, a physician who lived with the Mano and Gio people of northeastern Liberia from 1926-1960 describes this most powerful

mask to be that of the *go ge* called different names by different ethnic groups. This mask was carved for and possessed by the man holding the highest position in the secret society.



*Go ge, Gio (Harley, IVa)*

*It is dry season in 1979 and we had walked for over two hours on a small, dirt path through the bush to Hawa's village for a feast honoring her father's death. The parrots and monkeys squawked and chattered in the tree overhead. This village of less than a hundred residents had swelled to three or four times that number. There were speeches, beautifully-woven robes, colorfully embroidered gowns and head scarves, drumming, dancing, masquerades, crying, laughter, conversation, and food. As the evening waned, there was the sound of some kind of horn. Immediately, mothers grabbed their children and ran for houses. Hawa's son Lissa grabbed me and shoved me into a house full of women and children. Windows and doors were shut or covered with cloth. People huddled on the floor covering their eyes. Crying children were severely hushed. Fear emanated from every person. I felt afraid. After some time had passed, I was told in hushed whispers that "he" was coming. He was a Poro masquerade that only initiated men were allowed to see. I was not even told "his" name. Those who tried to peek or see him would die. We waited like this for seemingly hours. Finally, some*

*signal was given and those still awake emerged from their homes. I was told later that “he” had come to choose the boys for bush school. Mothers were not allowed to say goodbye, they just assumed their son had been chosen if they weren’t able to find him the next morning. I was told that during bush school, which lasted for several months in our area for both boys and girls, mothers prepared and left food at a certain spot in town to be taken to the children, but were not allowed any contact with them.*

There were the Poro masquerades, *Nafali* in particular, that were entertainers. Their antics made people laugh and they danced for all to enjoy.



*Yavi* masquerade  
(photo by Kay Heley)



*Joobai (back) and Nafali*  
(photo by Kay Heley)

*Joobai's* dance consisted of twirling and twirling for long periods of time. I was told that *Joobai* put some special “medicine” under his tongue that allowed him to spin without getting dizzy.

As mentioned earlier, the structure that the men’s and women’s societies provided the Liberian communities influenced the art produced within the community. Most recognizable to Westerners, is the art of the mask. How many of us know that a mask, very much a part of traditional music, is meant to be danced? How many of us have looked at African masks with little curiosity about their purpose and assumed that this was simply art that we were not able to fully appreciate? Liberia’s history is full of masks.

### **Masks**

Liberians define “mask” as the mask and costume worn by the masquerade and each mask had a name. As evidenced by combatant behavior, masks remain potent reminders of power and control within many Liberian communities. Significant to the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project is the connection between masks and dance, between masks and traditional healing, and between some masks and humor. Because masks hide the identity of the

wearer, reluctant or resistant youth may share or discover feelings during a dramatic performance that they might not otherwise (Emunah, 1985).

In 1988, the African Art Museum of the S.M.A. Fathers in Tenafly, New Jersey hosted an exhibit entitled, *The Masks of Liberia: Appreciating a Heritage*. This exhibit grouped Liberian masks into seven categories: the helmet mask, the anthropomorphic mask, the zoomorphic mask, the grotesque mask, the deformity mask, the miniature mask, and the fabric/fiber mask (Bordogna, 1989). Unfortunately, as with many examples of African art, rarely is the artist credited by name. Perhaps this reflected the colonial bias, or perhaps it is a function of the secrecy within which masks existed.

Adding more substance to this exhibition of Liberian masks are two articles written by George Harley in 1941, *Notes on the Poro in Liberia*, and in 1950, *Masks as Agents of Social Control in Northeast Liberia*. Dr. Harley amassed a collection of over 500 Liberian masks and many of the stories that accompanied them. Dr. Harley had to rely on the knowledge and truthfulness of those sharing the masks and the stories, especially since it was forbidden for anyone to sell Poro masks. Keeping in mind that some of the Poro secrets would not be revealed to an uninitiated non-Liberian, Harley's discussion of the symbolism and uses of many of the masks is illuminating as to their spiritual and community significance (Harley, 1941, 1950).

**Helmet masks.** The helmet mask was found among the Sande women's society of the Vai and Mende people in northwestern Liberia and was discussed previously. Helmet masks were worn over the top of the head.



(Michigan State University, accessed 2009)

**Anthropomorphic masks.** Many of the ethnic groups carved anthropomorphic masks, with Dan carvers especially noted for their skill at capturing the human face. Portrait masks were carved upon someone's death and kept by loved ones to honor them. Sometimes a portrait mask of someone remembered for a special characteristic became a mask used in ceremony. *Ma die*, was carved upon the death of a woman noted in the community for her generosity and danced at the time of rice-planting (Harley, 1950).



Dan *deangle* mask  
(Bordogna, Fig 16)

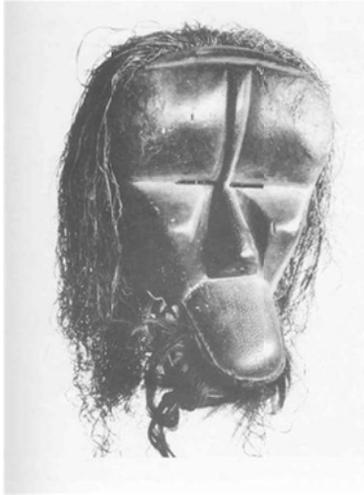


Mano or Gio portrait mask  
(Harley, XII:f)



*Ma die*, Gio patron of  
rice planting (Harley, XII:e)

**Zoomorphic masks.** The zoomorphic masks, sometimes playful, represented spirits that were special to certain groups of people, like fishermen, medicine-makers, and warriors.



Dan *geayagle* or crocodile  
(Bordogna, Fig 24)



Crocodile – patron of  
fishermen (Harley, XI: a)



'Road-making' elephant  
(Harley, XI:c)

**Grotesque masks.** The grotesque masks were those that demanded the utmost respect and attention. Bordogna noted:

The grotesque masks...thrust us into a maelstrom of violent and awesome spirits, for they must be so rendered to respond to the turbulent events of life. Rather than offering us a sedative from life's enigmas and a gentle repose into beauty, the grotesque masks acknowledge the reality of evil and attempt to evoke a force sufficiently potent to confront it. (Bordogna, 1989)



We Mask  
(Bordogna, Fig 30)



We Mask  
(Bordogna, Fig.33)



*Blo ge*, Mano god of war  
(Harley, X:f)

**Deformity masks.** The deformity masks illustrated either flaws in a person's character, or an actual physical disability or illness. Liberians adhering to an animist religious tradition believe that everything, living or inanimate, has a soul. That soul is in constant communication with ancestral souls. Illness or deformity is viewed as a breach in that communication. Someone with a tumor or someone who is psychotic has angered the ancestors or disrupted a close personal relationship creating an imbalance in one's health. Harley recalled only five deformity masks in his collection of over five hundred. He was told that these masks were carved in memory of one suffering from an ailment and prayed to by others suffering from a similar disfigurement for healing.



Jaw tumor patron mask  
(Harley, Plate IX:d)

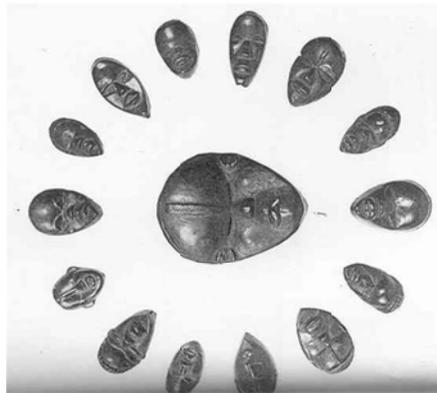


Bassa facial paralysis mask  
(Bordogna, Fig 36)



Gio facial paralysis mask  
tumor (Harley, Plate IX: a)

**Miniature masks.** The miniature masks, or *ma's*, were carried to bring protection and safe travels to the owner. They were carved as replicas of full-size masks of the owner. Monni Adams noted that another possible use for these miniature masks was to gain access to Poro meetings in other communities. By revealing his miniature mask, the owner legitimized his standing in the Poro of his own community (Adams, 2010, p. 36). Some masks had openings in the back in which the *Zo* or healer could place herbs or medicines for protection.



*Ma's*, or miniature masks of the owners  
(Harley, Plate II: i)

**Fabric/Fiber mask.** The final grouping of Liberian masks is the Fabric/Fiber mask. Most Liberian masks certainly those that were kept for generations were made of wood. The *yavi* and *navali* masks of the Vai pictured previously were made of fur, yarn, leather, and cloth. The *wenilegei* of the Loma is made of raffia and blue feathers. With the heat, humidity, and insects of Liberia, these Fabric/Fiber masks did not remain intact for long and required frequent reconstruction.

**Continued influence of the Poro and Sande societies.** In 1913, the Liberian government began to ban the Poro and Sande secret societies. By 1950, when George Harley published *Masks as Agents of Social Control in Northeast Liberia*, he noted that while the Poro was still “alive,” there had been many changes including the ceasing of human sacrifice. Masks served the purpose of covering up the wearer’s identity so that actions were not the responsibility

of the person, but of the mask, or the spirit it embodied. Masks also were viewed as the spirit itself and the source of much power. As I saw in Bo between 1978 and 1980, Poro and Sande societies retained a powerful presence in the area, and the masks continued to be danced.

During the recent war, there were photos and reports of combatants wearing women's clothing, hats, facial coverings, "costumes" characteristic of the masks and their power. The world was shocked by the reporting of combatants cutting out and eating the hearts or livers of enemy combatants. Harley discussed this practice in the spiritual context of the heart being the locus of a person's power. Eating the heart of a rival transfers his power to the victor. Harley noted that other sources of power include the forehead, the liver, and the larynx or voice box (Harley, 1950). Clearly, combatants in the war received counsel from elders about the religious and deeply seated secret society beliefs about how men wage war. As abhorrent as this practice is for many Liberians and others, we must understand that these were not random acts of violence. Even though some might say that the spiritual hold of Poro and Sande societies has been erased by modernization, the behavior of combatants in the war posits otherwise.<sup>28</sup>

Addressing this behavior with ex-combatants, survivors, and their communities requires a cultural and spiritual sensitivity currently not encompassed by Western biomedical modalities. The "Drumming for Reconciliation" project will include masks as part of dance or dramatic performance for healing as well as for teaching carving techniques. As part of the project, masks will be used under the supervision of traditional healers and elders as part of healing ceremonies. As mentioned before, masks, and the hidden identity they provide, will be used as part of

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<sup>28</sup> See Steven Ellis' book, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*, for more discussion about the uses of masks in the wars (Ellis, 1999).

dramatic performance or role play to allow youth to more comfortably explore a range of emotions.<sup>29</sup>

Though the cultural arts were heavily influenced by the Poro and Sande societies, Liberians incorporated music into their everyday lives. Chanting and singing were often heard as people walked from village to village to break up the monotony as well as scare the snakes away. Women pounding rice or cassava often sang as they worked. Men clearing brush and trees for the farms would sing. Rural people fortunate to have a battery-powered radio, or urban people on the street danced and sang to the popular music of the day. One of the highlights of rural communities would be the occasional community dance to West African “high life” or popular music. People would dress up and come from distant towns to dance until the “wee, wee hours” with lights and music powered by a generator.

### **Traditional Music**

As defined earlier, traditional music includes drumming, dance, song, other instruments, and dramatic performance. Ethnographers, Lester Monts and Ruth Stone, studied the music of the Vai in western Liberia and the Kpelle in north-central Liberia, respectively. Both ethnographers stressed the rich layers of polyrhythms created by the drums, the singing, and the other instruments. Both stressed the relationship of the music to the Poro and Sande societies.

In the Vai town in which Monts studied, the men played several instruments: “the conical-shaped drum, *sangba*, the conical drum, *gbengben*, the wooden slit-gong, *kelej*, the box-shaped lamellaephone, *kongoma*, and a set of basket rattles, *jeki* (Monts, 2007). The Vai people in Bo also played the *djembe*, and *dunun* drums. The *djembe* has been traced back to the

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<sup>29</sup> Emunah found that “drama therapy can be seen as catalytic and precursory, paving the way for the client to benefit from other areas of the treatment program or other forms of psychotherapy. It can also be used as the primary treatment of choice for the resistant adolescent” (Emunah, p. 79).

blacksmiths of the Mali Empire in the fourteenth century (Bassett, 2010) . In both Vai towns, the women played the *sasaa*. Both men and women sang, often in a call-and response manner, and danced dances they learned in the Poro and Sande bush school.

In 1984, Monts studied the dances of the Sande women and younger initiates. Initiates learned and performed many lengthy dance-dramas, in which the girls acted out stories in dance. The *Sowei or Zooba* Sande masquerade originally only danced to the *sasaa*, but sometimes danced to the men's drums. Monts wrote:

One of the hallmarks of the Sande experience is the emphasis [*sic*] placed on dance. The significance of Sande dance (*sande tiimbiib*) in the female socialization process is paramount; it is a key element in the activities that occur throughout the three-year initiation session, and it provides a focal point for the expression of social responsibility and loyalty among women. Equally important is its entertainment aspect.  
(Monts, 1984)

Ruth Stone lived among the Kpelle people as a child and has made numerous trips back to the area. The Poro and Sande societies were present in this area as well. She noted that the Kpelle have two categories for their instruments; those that are blown and those that are struck. The Kpelle use ivory horns blown like a trumpet, and also blow on bottles.<sup>30</sup> They play the single-headed conical drum, *fêli*, with their hands, and the two-headed cylindrical drum, *gbung-gbung*, with a stick. They pluck the strings of the *konîng*, the triangular frame-zither. Dancing, singing, and performance-based choral responses accompany the “epic pourer” or griot as he tells stories meaningful to the community (Stone, 2005).

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<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the ivory horns are the precursor to the 2010 South Africa World Cup's vuvuzela?

## **Traditional Dance**

Masks were created to be danced. Like ballet, Liberian dancers integrate the costumes and the music to communicate a feeling or tell a story.

The importance attached to the dance does not lie only in the scope it provides for the release of emotion stirred by the music. The dance can also be used as a social and artistic medium of communication. It can convey thoughts or matters of personal or social importance through the choice of movements, postures, and facial expression. (Nketia, 1974, p. 207)

Ajayi-Soyinka referred to African dance as “polyrhythmic” because the dancers respond to the different rhythms created by several different voices or instruments performing at the same time. African dance is also “polysegmented” referring to the dancer’s distinct and separate movements of the upper and lower segments of the body. The upper body responds to one rhythm and the lower body to another. If the dancer moves lower to the ground, the message is of the earth, plants, agriculture. If the dancer raises arms or trunk higher, the message is of the sky, spirits, the wind (Ajayi-Soyinka, 2010). The movements of the dancer communicate images to the observer. The movements of the dancer release emotions and feelings that help the dancer heal.

The ability of traditional dance and body movement to help survivors of trauma is important to note. The Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) found that dance helped Sierra Leone child soldiers release feelings, improve peer relationships, and reintegrate into the community (Harris, 2007a). Ethnologist and dance therapist, Judith Lynne Hanna, found five “specific functions” in traditional dance related to “healing from organized violence:”

- (a) the mediation of unknown and uncontrollable forces within participants and their environment,
- (b) a safe way of acting out negative or deviant emotions and behaviors,
- (c) a means for self-transformation or for enacting changes in adopted role or status,
- (d) a way of releasing emotions arising from personal conflicts or pent-up frustrations
- and (e) the reaffirmation of an individual's inclusiveness within the communal group. (Harris, 2007a, p. 139)

The Ugandan women living with AIDS “dance their disease.” The Sande initiates dance to celebrate their womanhood. The traditional healer dances to mediate a conflict between an ill person and his ancestors. The Bo community dances to welcome the full moon. Traditional music and dance facilitate mediation, change, transformation, release, and inclusiveness; all necessary for the healing and community cohesion goals of the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project.

### **Traditional Crafts**

The weaving of country cloth done by men was often used for robes worn by the Poro or Sande leadership and both men and women created the costumes for the masquerades (Monts, 2007). The Vai, Mandingo, Mende, Kissi, and Gola are noted for their distinct patterns and designs. Weavers use horizontal looms to weave narrow strips of cloth that are then sewn together. It might take three weeks to weave enough cloth to make a robe for a Poro gathering or installation of a chief (Olukoju, 2006, p. 72). Natural dyes like indigo from berries are frequently used.



Country cloth weaver in Bo, Momo  
(Photo by Kay Heley)

Other traditional crafts like basket-making, doll carving, weaving of hammocks, painting on houses were also created by different ethnic groups in different parts of Liberia. As noted earlier, carving of masks, dolls and other objects were done by men. Women made baskets from local sisal or reeds and used natural dyes.

### **Parables, Fables, Literature and Humor**

**Griots.** Three of Liberia's ethnic groups have written scripts which were created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Arabic was taught in Muslim communities. Townspeople, usually men, were taught these scripts and used them for trade and record-keeping. The majority of cultural knowledge continued to be passed on through oral tradition. The community historians, griots, or praise singers, memorized stories, tales, fables, and historical tradition and passed them on to the younger members of the community.

Contemporary African writer, D.T. Niane, spoke of griots in his telling of the story of Sundiata, the great Malian leader of the fourteenth century:

I am a griot . . . master in the art of eloquence . . . we are vessels of speech, we are repositories which harbour secrets many centuries old . . . we are the memory . . . I teach kings the history of their ancestors so that the lives of the ancients might serve them as an example. For the world is old, but the future springs from the past. . . Listen then... children of the black people . . . (Niane, 1970)

**Parables.** One of the frequent techniques griots used was the parable. Horton described parables as the traditional African use of metaphor “no longer familiar in the scientifically oriented cultures of the modern West.” By implying the meaning through a parable, the griot or elder was able “to underline, emphasize, and give greater impact to things which can be said literally” (Horton, 1967, p. 167).

Some common Liberian parables include: “A little rain each day will fill the rivers to overflowing.” “You can never be taller than your head.” “Do not look where you fell, but where you slipped.” “If the townspeople are happy, look for the chief.” “Only when the tree is big and strong can you tether a cow to it.” “To the patient man will come the riches of the world.” “When building a house, don’t measure the timbers in the forest.” “The young sprout permits one to predict the height of the tree” (Diallo, 1989). And “one [wo]man can’t drink a creek dry” (Haskett, 1967). It was not uncommon for elders to teach in parables, encouraging youth to think more critically and more creatively, while clearly establishing the community mores.

**Fables.** Elders also taught with fables. A short fable used to educate about friendship is called, “Catfish and His Terrible End.” Catfish loans RiceBird his feathers so they can fly to the

top of the palm wine tree to drink something other than water. Catfish gets caught and fried by the owner of the tree. The fable ends with:

Sometimes a friend.

Does not intend.

To help one faithfully.

Those with such friends,

Will meet their ends,

And terrible ends they will be.

And terrible ends they will be. (Haskett, 1967)

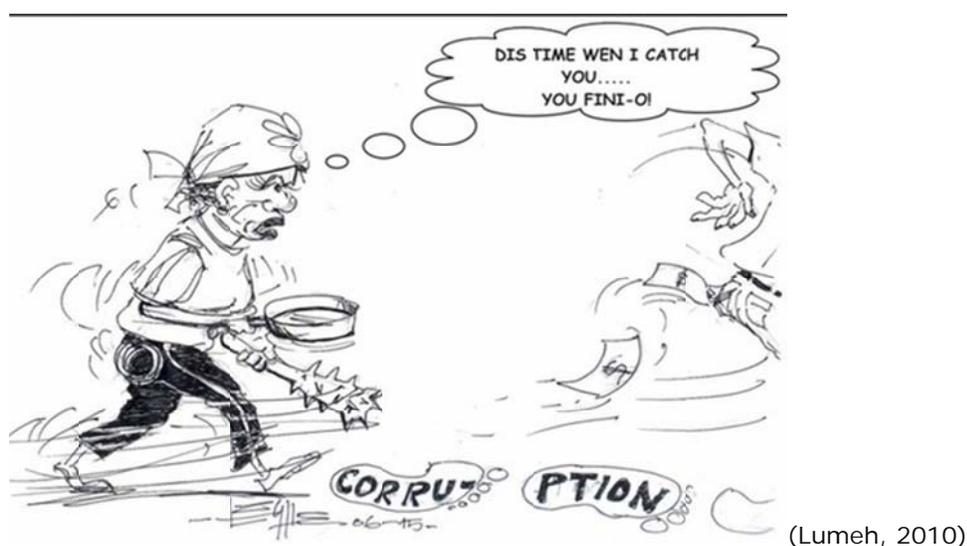
**Literature.** Liberian literature has suffered from the distinction between the indigenous ethnic groups and the Americo-Liberians who settled there. The word for “civilized” in Liberia is *kwi*. David Brown typified the divide in his definition of *kwi*, “To be *kwi* is above all to be educated, and to move in the world of western tastes, motor travel and the English language which distinguishes the *kwi* from the ‘country people’, and qualifies them for salaried employment” (Brown, 1982). The word *kwi* embodied the separation between the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous groups.

Along with the discrimination were legal constraints in the form of the Unification and Integration Policy initiated by then President William V.S. Tubman in 1960 for the “assimilation and unification of our various populations comprising the body politic” (Singler, 1980). While seemingly aimed at unifying, the Policy banned literature that highlighted the divisiveness between the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous ethnic groups. Novels found in violation include *Love in Ebony* written by Varfelli Karlee in 1932, *The Rain and the Night* written by Wilton Sankawulo in 1979, and several novellas by Bai T. Moore, *Murder in the Cassava Patch*

(1968), and *The Money Doubler* (1976). Today, the *Sea Breeze Journal of Contemporary Liberian Writings* is published twice a year online and features poetry, essays, photographs, short stories, and commentary.

Contemporary Liberian writers, like Elma Shaw, are writing about the consequences of the violence on the Liberian spirit. Shaw wrote *Redemption Road: the Quest for Peace and Justice in Liberia*. This novel, published in 2009, describes the time right after the war from the perspective of a female “bush wife”/ex-combatant whose family did not know the extent of her involvement or the reality that she had abandoned her child in the rebel camp.

## CORRUPTION



**Humor.** Other Liberians are using humor. Humor, whether in a joke, cartoon, proverb, masquerade’s dance, or griot’s tale, helps people “reclaim their humanity” as well as provides a “means for rallying people at the margins of power,” according to Ebenezer Obadare (Obadare, 2010). The impact of humor, specifically laughter, on healing has expanded in the American healthcare landscape since the 1979 publishing of Norman Cousins’s book, *Anatomy of an Illness*, chronicling how laughter helped his recovery from a serious illness. Obadare concluded that in

Africa, people need jokes for emotional healing, to cope with the difficulties of daily life, as well as to “push back” and “exercise our agency” as citizens (Obadare, 2010). Leslie Lumeh is a political cartoonist for the *Daily Observer*, a prominent Liberian newspaper. Lumeh’s cartoons cover the gamut and illustrate Obadare’s analysis of the ability of humor to “push back.”

Traditional music, dance, crafts, parables, fables, literature, and humor are all Liberian cultural arts capable of healing and bringing communities together. Teaching these cultural arts as part of the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project, will also help preserve or sustain them.

### **Cultural Sustainability**

Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland recently established a post-graduate program in Cultural Sustainability. The program’s goal is to “teach our students how to work closely with individuals and communities to *identify, protect, and enhance* their important traditions, their ways of life, their cherished spaces, and their vital relationships to each other and the world,” whether it’s a village in Liberia or an inner city neighborhood in Baltimore (Goucher College, 2010). With this new scholarly commitment to cultural sustainability, what must be done to preserve the traditional music, dance, and other arts in Liberia? Are there still elders with the knowledge who are able to recreate the skills and teach them to interested people? Are these elders mainly in the rural areas, or are there elders in the urban areas? Are there people interested in learning? What must be done to trigger an interest amongst youth in traditional Liberian cultural arts? The “Drumming for Reconciliation” project is one effort to address these questions.

**Obstacles to sustaining cultural arts.** Liberia’s cultural arts have fallen victim to several serious challenges. Prior to the war, urban Liberians were facing the challenge of “tradition versus modernity”. Strong American media influence and Western educational

exposure promoted a sense of “what is Liberian is bad and what is Western is good” without analysis of the impact. Insensitive international development workers reinforced the materialism, sense of individualism, and disrespect for elders that hastened youth’s disregard for traditional arts. Christianity and Islam have played a part in dampening the animist traditions, particularly with respect to the Poro and Sande societies, and traditional music and healing practices in some communities (Monts, 2007) (L. Monts, personal communication, November 15, 2009).

With the first coup d’état in 1980 until the final peace accord in 2003, Liberians and their traditional arts suffered from the uncertainty, the displacement of entire families and villages, and the death and destruction from the violence. Seventy percent of Liberians were displaced during the violence, either within the country or to a neighboring country (Collier & Bannon, 2003). Many of the displaced ended up in refugee camps in Monrovia. The system of apprenticeship, the educational structure maintained through the Sande/Poro societies broke down and the continuity of passing on the knowledge of the cultural arts was severed.

**Governmental priorities.** Finally, Liberia is facing massive infrastructure, economic, health, educational, and good governance needs. The Liberian government, in the face of all of these human development issues, may have difficulty supporting traditional arts at the expense of funding other programs. International funders, perhaps unaware of the role of traditional arts in healing and community-building, have not been funding programs involving traditional music or traditional healing in Liberia.

**Liberians call for a cultural arts renaissance.** In addition to the Transitional Justice Working Group, several Liberian writers are calling for a new cultural arts renaissance. The

Liberian poet George Crayton mourned the loss of cultural tradition in the first and last stanzas of his poem “Lost Culture”:

Riches forgotten, loose tongues tied, an everlasting echo silenced, pushing a culture to die

We now the fruits of Sinoe, Bassa, Grand Cess and Gedeh

We now the fruits of Cape Mount, Gibi, Nimba and Montserrado

Yearn for Beautiful words once spoken in the wind

“Mein ya fohn ne fohn tuhn nuum”

Mother, we hear your vibration delivered in voices of our babies born now

Our minds are turning back

Our faces show prints of your touch

And we answer you in the hum of bees....(Crayton, 2008)

Writer Doeba Bropleh called for a return to traditional cultural arts as a means of recovery from the war. He suggested the following:

1. “Infant industry” treatment for things traditional
2. Subscribe to Culturally Based Teaching
3. Active transfer of information (from elders to younger)
4. Implement a Liberia Memory Project
5. Document National Folklore
6. Create a Vibrant Historical and Cultural Museum
7. Develop Cultural Tourism.” (Bropleh, 2009)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The Kendeja Cultural Arts Museum that had existed for over 40 years was damaged in the war, bulldozed in 2007, and is now the site of the new RLJ Kendeja Resort and Villas built by BET founder Robert L. Johnson.

Bropleh enumerated ways that Liberians might sustain the traditional arts while also developing some income-generating “infant industries.” Acknowledging the symbiotic relationship of traditional arts with traditional healing may help blend indigenous healing practices with Liberia’s biomedical mental health care policy. The Poro and Sande societies used these traditional arts for healing and teaching. Combatants in the recent wars utilized some of the warrior lore to commit atrocities that will require indigenous methods to understand and forgive. Teaching the traditional arts, traditional music, crafts, oral traditions and humor will spur on Bropleh’s “active transfer of information” from elders to youth. This “active transfer” of cultural arts from adults to youth forms the basis of the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project.

## **Chapter 4 “Drumming for Reconciliation” Project Detail**

The following is a detailed presentation of the “Drumming for Reconciliation” three-phased prevention project, which utilizes cultural arts to promote healing and social access amongst urban Liberian youth. Phase One is advocacy; Phase Two is the pilot drumming project; and Phase Three is the community-based cultural arts center. Advocacy will continue throughout the duration of the project. The success of Phase Two, the pilot drumming project, in attracting and retaining 15-24 year old youth and stimulating community support will determine whether Phase Three, the cultural arts center, will be implemented.

Biomedical research supports the teaching of cultural arts to high risk youth for prevention and as an intervention for mental health issues and as a means to link youth with caring adults. As a result, the project is a proactive prevention program. By reinforcing cultural identity and encouraging healthy behaviors and positive engagement with their communities, high risk youth are discouraged or distracted from engaging in illicit or unhealthy behaviors.

Prevention pays. A review of research literature on the “cost-benefit of prevention” by the University of Oklahoma’s Southwest Prevention Center found that “for every dollar spent on prevention programs, from \$2 to \$20 is returned in benefits. Benefits are estimates of savings over a period of time resulting from reduced demand for health and social services” (2004). In a country struggling to provide basic health care services to its people, the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project is a sound investment of precious health care dollars.

### **Advocacy**

The first phase begins with “grassroots organizing,” an organizing tool that begins from the bottom, the “roots of grass,” the community, and moves up towards the political seats of power. The hope is that by organizing from the grassroots up, the community groups or organizations will incorporate cultural arts into their programs right away. Enthusiasm will build

and, as a result, help shape governmental policy. Starting with the political bureaucracy at the top and working back down to the community groups takes significantly longer. Another advantage of the grassroots tactic is that people involve their friends and family and the number of supporters grows geometrically. This person-to-person organizing creates enthusiastic groups of people who are more likely to remain committed and loyal to the project.

**Goals.** The goals of Phase One are 1) To contact and manage as many potential working group members as possible, 2) To advocate for the inclusion of cultural arts in the programming of a long list of civic and governmental organizations, community groups, community leadership, the artist community, academia, media, and national and international funding groups, 3) To recruit musicians, artists, and mentors, and 4) To find funding for the project.

**Working group.** The first step in Phase One is recruiting a volunteer working group, or steering committee. The members join based on their interest in the project, their willingness to make phone calls or appointments to discuss the project, and their level of commitment. The working group's responsibilities are on-going for the duration of the project and include recruiting other volunteers; communicating the project idea and funding needs to sources within and outside of Liberia; recruiting musicians and artists; creating time tables for the pilot drumming project; and, if that is successful, establishing the cultural arts center.

**Project advocacy packet.** The second step is the creation of a "project advocacy packet" that includes:

- a contact list for working group members,
- a sample phone or email script to help those new to advocacy work,
- a list of "talking points" about the project that could be tailored to the contact; for example, project goals; project details; research studies linking cultural

arts to healing, increased brain activity, stress reduction, and addiction treatment; statistics about urban Liberian youth; and sample questions to trigger the contact's childhood memories of cultural arts,

- a contact record to track contact results, who to contact again, who not to contact again, and who needs more information,
- a fundraising record to track donations and funding proposal results,
- a referral record to track new working group members and new contact ideas.

Depending upon the working group's access to email and for environmental purposes, the advocacy packet will be online as well as in hard copy form.

**Prioritizing the contact list.** The working group brainstorms and prioritizes the list of contacts (see Appendix) and establishes who might be the best person to make a certain contact. A priority will be getting permission from West Point community leaders for Phase Two, the pilot drumming project, and recruiting musicians and funding sources necessary for the pilot project.

Depending upon the comfort level of the volunteers, role playing an actual interview and developing scripted interviews to advocate for the project may be helpful. The working group may choose to delegate certain group responsibilities, such as communicating within the group, keeping track of contact responses and the need for follow-up communication, fund-raising or grant-writing, bookkeeping responsibilities, and other needs to be decided by the group. Finally, a rough timetable with regular check-in dates will be defined.

**Funding needs.** Advocacy, Phase One, will only require limited funds. If a volunteer requires reimbursement for postage, phone usage, or internet time, funding is available and

documentation is required that it is a project expense. A grant proposal for \$500 will be sent to Friends of Liberia or another small NGO to cover these costs.

**Evaluation.** Evaluation of the Advocacy phase will be quantitative including numbers of working group members, numbers of contacts made, numbers of contacts agreeing to incorporate cultural arts, numbers of funding proposals distributed, and numbers and amounts of proposals funded.

The on-going Advocacy portion of the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project will stimulate groups to begin including cultural arts in their youth programming. Because of discussions with government officials and potential funders about the project, mental health care and traditional medicine policy hopefully will be impacted. Finally, the working group will set the stage for the pilot drumming project by talking with community leaders and recruiting the musicians.

### **Phase Two: Pilot Drumming Project**

**Goals.** Phase Two is the pilot drumming project. The goals of Phase Two are 1). Assess the response of targeted youth to the drumming, 2). Assess the incentives required to reach the targeted youth. 3). Assess the level of musician/artist/elder availability, interest, and commitment, 4). Evaluate the return rate of youth to the drumming site. 5). Assess community support for the drumming and for the possibility of the Phase Three cultural arts center, and 6). Begin to assess the budgetary requirements of a sustained drumming project as well as the needs of a cultural arts center. The success of the pilot drumming project will determine whether the cultural arts center, Phase Three, will be implemented.

**Site.** West Point has been selected as the priority site due to the large numbers of disenfranchised youth reported to be living there (Abramowitz, 2009). Piloting the project in an

area of great need and evaluating the results will help determine the future direction of the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project. Every effort will be made to garner the support of the West Point community leaders and elders, especially for including young women in the drumming. These leaders will advise on possible locations. They will also be asked for names of respected people in the community who might serve as security people during the course of the project. The working group will hire a local project coordinator if a volunteer is not available to assist with record-keeping, logistics, and evaluation.

**Musicians.** The working group recruits the necessary drummers and accompanying musicians. As a further draw to the pilot drumming project, a local or well-known rapper or hip hop artist willing to rap or sing to a traditional beat will be urged to participate.

**Logistics.** The project coordinator assesses the location and obtains the needed supplies. Six musicians will teach drumming to no more than twenty-five youth. Too many students hinder the mentoring and instructional process. Drumming sessions will be held from 10-11:00 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for several reasons: younger children should be in school at that time which will help focus on the 15-24 year old population; the humid Liberian heat makes afternoon sessions undesirable; and idle teens and young adults are often late sleepers.

In order to drum effectively, seating is required – a bench, stool, tree stump, or chair. A large cloth shade tied between posts or trees protects from the tropical sun. The unpredictable but often torrential rain during the rainy season will make drumming difficult without shelter.<sup>32</sup> The pilot project will occur in February or March, during the dry season.

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<sup>32</sup> The rainy season is May to October.

The food incentive will require a contract with community people willing to buy and prepare food. The working group will contact local food aid groups for collaboration and donations, decreasing the expense.

Hands-on drumming requires that all participants have something to drum. Ideally, every young person would drum on a *djembe*, *sangba*, *fêli*, or *gbung-gbun*.. However, all a participant needs to drum the polyrhythms is a bucket or similar object along with drum sticks or strong sticks of wood. While 25 participants are drumming, many older adults and children may spontaneously begin dancing in community with the rhythms.

**Marketing.** Marketing the project involves word-of-mouth, posters, and a drumming preview. The community leaders will spread the word and extend personal invitations to more reluctant youth. A budding artist will create posters to put up around the community, pinpointing several locations frequented by the young adults. Several drummers will drum through the area the evening before the first session and let people know when and where the session will take place. Drummers will begin drumming fifteen minutes before the start of each session to “call” the participants.

The youth and adults sign in with their name and age each session, and are encouraged to use the same name each session. The “teaching” sessions will only last one hour for attention and focus reasons. The musicians will be paid to play for fifteen minutes before and thirty minutes after each instruction session to spur interest, “call” the youth to the session, officially end the session, and inspire the community. Following the musicians’ final rhythm, food will be served to the participants.

Participants who attend most of the sessions will be awarded a “certificate of participation” and will be invited to play during an evening “Community Celebration.” Youth

will be able to share with the community what they have learned, and help rouse support for further drumming sessions and the cultural arts center.

**Evaluation.** Evaluation of the pilot drumming project will include quantitative participation results and qualitative interviews. The project coordinator will keep track of:

- the numbers of youth participating,
- the number of musicians,
- the number of youth returning for more sessions,
- the number of elders who participate,
- all expenses.

**Interviews.** Though the interview process is a subjective versus objective tool, it is a necessary tool when evaluating the effectiveness of projects involving youth who may have difficulty reading and/or writing. Brief pre-and post-interviews utilizing easily-answerable Likert Scale surveys will be obtained when possible. The Center for Victims of Torture in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has extensive experience working with Liberian refugees following the war. The Center for Victims of Torture evaluation techniques for healing projects for conflict survivors will be incorporated before writing any funding proposals.

Their evaluation protocol focuses on symptoms, social supports, and behavioral functioning (Torture, 2006). Evaluation of social supports in the West Point setting will include numbers of family contacts, numbers of friend contacts, numbers of other religious or community contacts and a Likert Scale measure of the participant's satisfaction with his/her social support system. Evaluation of behavioral functioning in the West Point setting will include return project participation, community involvement, and daily activities such as income generation, child care and family support, "hanging out time", education, and others.

Acknowledging the concerns and responsibilities of female young adults in Monrovia, and the history of drumming being done largely by males in Liberia, sensitivity and extra effort will be required to include female participants, obtain support from female and male community leaders for the young women's participation, and ensure their comfort in a mixed gender setting.

Some sample questions, which will be shortened and adapted for young people in Liberia from the Trauma Awareness and Treatment Center in Utah and others, are included in Appendix 1. All interviews will be conducted privately, preferably by an adult of the same gender and in the young person's first language when possible. Every effort will be made to keep interviews brief and comfortable thus minimizing barriers to participation. To avoid discomfort about literacy skills, all surveys will be obtained during oral interviews.

In order to fully examine effectiveness of the pilot drumming project, feedback needs to be obtained from:

- young people who participated regularly (more than 6 of the 12 sessions),
- musicians who participated regularly (more than 6 sessions),
- youth who did not return after 1 or 2 sessions,
- youth in the community who chose not to participate at all,
- involved community leaders.

The pilot drumming project has two other functions. One is to evaluate the kinds of interview questions that assess drumming effectiveness without becoming a barrier to participation by higher risk young adults. The second is to look at community support for working towards the establishment of the cultural arts center. This latter function involves working group member meetings with a wide variety of women and men and community groups to assess informal opinions as well as official organizational votes of support.

**Budget.** Budgetary expenses for 12 sessions:

	Musicians' fees:	US\$1600
12 sessions x 3 hours x 6 musicians x \$7.25 per hour=\$1566		
	Project coordinator's fee:	360
12 sessions x 3 hours x \$10 per hour=\$360		
	Child care providers:	174
2 people x 12 sessions x \$7.25 per hour x 1 hour/session=\$174		
	Voice recorders/batteries:	300
	Buckets and sticks:	100
	Food expenses and preparation	<u>1089</u>

Food cost =US\$828 <sup>33</sup>

Food preparation: 12 sessions x 3 hrs x \$7.25=\$261

**Total: US\$3623 for one month**

The budget includes 12 sessions (3 sessions a week for 4 weeks), paying musicians and food preparers the current U.S. minimum hourly wage of US\$7.25, the project coordinator US\$10 per hour, and an estimation of food expenses for over 30 people each session.

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<sup>33</sup> Food costs for 12 sessions for 40 people = 480 servings. Includes 2.5 bags (50 kg) of rice (US\$25/bag) with each bag providing 186 servings (91 cups/bag; 1 Cup of cooked rice per serving)=**US\$65**. Beans – 4 bags (50 kg) at US\$55/bag with each bag providing 218 servings=**US\$138** Palm oil: 30 gallons (US\$4.18/gallon) with each gallon providing 16 servings=**US\$125** Chicken, dried fish, vegetables, spices prices are estimated=**US\$500** **Total: US\$828**  
Information for servings and food costs from (Commodities, March, 2010; Cookbook, 1998; Corps, 2010)

**Resources.** Given funding availability, the drumming sessions will continue as long as there is interest. Replication of the drumming sessions in other communities will be encouraged. The project coordinator will maintain accurate and transparent financial records. The National Youth Volunteer Service (NYVS) , a program which matches recent university graduates with programs that need their skills, will be used to teach these financial skills to the coordinator and other interested community members as needed (Gary Walker, 2009). The working group will solicit funding from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF, USAID, the Clinton Foundation, and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). Other funding contacts are listed in Appendix 2.

### **Phase Three: The Cultural Arts Center**

The implementation of Phase Three, the cultural arts center, depends upon the success of the pilot drumming project in attracting the 15-24 year old youth, the amount of community support for a center, and the ability of the working group to obtain the necessary funding. Elements of the pilot drumming project, the working group's advocacy, the project coordinator, the musicians, and any purchased supplies will be rolled over into the cultural arts center phase.

**Facility.** After consulting community leaders, a facility will be located that can store equipment and supplies in a secure fashion. West Point is the target location due to its large number of at-risk youth, but the center's location may be dictated by funding sources. The initial project budget will assume the use of an existing community building like a school utilizing volunteer community support for materials and labor. Once established, as center needs and community support dictate, the working group may contact organizations like Habitat for

Humanity, Extreme Makeover, or other large donors, for renovation of an existing structure or new construction.

**Center staff.** The cultural arts center staff consists of a director, a bookkeeper, a programming manager, and a security person. One objective is for the center staff to be local community members supported initially by UN, Peace Corps, or NGO volunteers until the Liberians are confident in their financial and management skills. Deciding whether musicians and artists will be staff or contract employees will be determined on-site, according to artist availability and interest. The director is responsible for day-to-day operations, the facility, and hiring and supervising other staff members. Every effort will be made to hire diverse staff and artists in terms of gender for role-modeling purposes. The bookkeeper is responsible for maintaining accurate and transparent financial records needed by funding sources. The programming manager is responsible for planning and supplying daily activities at the center. The security person is responsible for maintaining a safe and drug-free environment during hours of operation. The center will not be responsible for providing food, but serve as a referral resource in partnership with local food aid providers. This policy will be re-evaluated if a need for food as an incentive for center participation develops.

**Programming.** The cultural arts center, Phase Three of the project, consists of five layers of programming: cultural arts, mentoring, educational and vocational resources, biomedical and traditional health care, and the possibility of a Dance/Drum troupe. Because helping youth, females and males, make connections with others is a goal, “team-building” activities will be included throughout the daily sessions to help young people get to know each other in a positive, respectful way. Utilizing resources from the Ministry of Gender and Development will help encourage balanced, peaceful gender relationships.

The first layer of programming is the cultural arts layer. Instructive drumming and dance sessions similar to the pilot drumming sessions will occur daily. Sensitivity to the needs of female participants and community mores will be integrated. Meetings will be held with participants in the pilot as well as those who chose not to participate to help plan programming interesting to the young people. Singing, carving of masks and dolls, basket-making, weaving of country cloth and hammocks, dramatic performance with masks, painting, writing, cartooning, and other cultural arts will be added as youth interest, funding and artist availability dictates. Drum-making will be included as soon as artisans and materials are located. Hours of operation best for the center to reach the target group will be 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday thru Friday. Hours of operation for the center will be altered or extended based on needs of youth and artists. Child care will be provided. Each day's schedule will include six sessions, perhaps three different levels of drumming and dance sessions, one basket-making session, one carving session, and one dramatic performance session. All sessions will be coeducational unless participant comfort precludes that. A typical day at the cultural arts center might look like this:

9 a.m. – 10 a.m. - advanced drumming and dance

10-11 - beginning dance and intermediate drumming

11-12 – beginning drumming

12 p.m. -1 p.m. – carving

1-2 - dramatic performance

2 p.m.-3 p.m. – basket-weaving

Due to the heat, the more physically-challenging sessions will be earlier in the day. With the provided shelter, sessions can take place year-round, in the dry or rainy seasons. The working group will continue to seek volunteer, artist, and funding support.

The second layer is the mentoring layer. Mentors include the musicians, artists, as well as other community elders with stories to tell and skills to share. Incorporating the role of the Poro and Sande leaders as teachers, mentors involved with the center must have an interest in working with youth. Male and female mentors will be recruited and will receive training in anticipatory problem-solving, or projecting how certain situations like disrespectful behavior, an outburst, aggression, or shy or reluctant participation might be handled respectfully. Given the level of trauma and addiction in the target population as well as the limited access to primary health care, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare will be asked to train the mentors as “community health workers.” Training will include basic first aid, physical and mental health triage, and the use of referral resources. The training of “community health workers” is included in both the National Health Policy as well as the National Mental Health Policy (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2009).

The third layer is the addition of educational and vocational resources. The “Liberian Youth Fragility Assessment” repeatedly found that Liberian youth want jobs (Walker, et al., 2009). While the center cannot be responsible for creating jobs for thousands of youth in Monrovia, it will serve as a clearinghouse to help qualified youth obtain available jobs and serve as a motivator to help interested youth obtain skills to make them more job-ready. Given this age group’s disrupted formal education, the center could offer or refer youth to existing formal educational opportunities for “overaged” youth such as literacy programs, computer training, high school GED and vocational programs. Entrepreneurial projects will be encouraged with the working group exhausting microfinance possibilities for youth. One possible project is an urban garden with the mentors teaching the youth how to grow food to eat as well as to sell.

The fourth layer is that of health care. The female and male mentors will be trained as “community health workers,” and able to do basic, non-invasive assessments of youth walking through the center doors and to make appropriate referrals for further care. Special health needs like fistula repair and rape crisis care will be referred to available community resources like the Fistula Project. The Liberian government has made reference to the inclusion of traditional medicine and traditional healers in its health care policies but lacks a funded or legislated commitment. The cultural arts center will include traditional healers as well as biomedical clinics as resources for youth.

The final layer of programming, the development of a performance-quality traveling Dance/Drum Troupe, is dependent upon the skill, commitment, and availability of youth as well as of funding capabilities. There are useful models from the former Kendeja National Cultural Arts Center as well as current performing troupes. The troupe, with its mentors, would serve as an example for communities on how they can use their cultural arts skills to connect with youth. Just like the communities in Uganda utilize song and dance to teach about HIV, the drum/dance troupe could utilize its skills to teach about healing, community cohesion and other community health topics. Trained youth effectively motivate and educate their peers (Medley, 2009). A community-based, youth drum/dance troupe traveling around Monrovia as well as to other areas in Liberia will be able to motivate and inform young people better than most adult-led programs. Entrance fees to some performances would help defray travel costs.

Whether a dance/drum troupe forms or not, an evening Community Celebration will be played periodically through the year to showcase participants’ increasing knowledge of cultural arts. Participants will read original poetry, perform original one-act plays, share crafts they’ve created as well as drumming and dance performances. Participants will be awarded “Certificates

of Participation” and other “prizes” depending on donated items. Community members will be encouraged to participate, bring their own traditional crafts to show and dance or drum with the participants during the evening. At least once a year, the event could be joined with a “craft sale” and participants would sell their products while others drummed and danced. Entrance fees would help defray operating costs of the center.

**Recruitment of participants.** Building on the successful and trust-building pilot drumming project, some of those participants will easily come to the center and bring friends. Meetings with combinations of youth leaders, regular participants, and youth who chose not to participate in the pilot will be held to listen to concerns and modify programming and incentives accordingly. Both female and male participants will be recruited. Incorporating ways for youth to earn some money from the cultural arts either by way of selling crafts, growing food, or charging fees for performances will add incentive. Involving contemporary hip/hop and rap singers will help boost participation for some.

**Evaluation.** Evaluation of the cultural arts center project will be similar and involve the same concerns with respect to young women as that implemented by the Pilot Drumming Project. Sample questions are located in Appendix 1. The Center for Victims of Torture evaluation techniques for healing projects for conflict survivors will be incorporated before writing any funding proposals.

Quantitative analysis gathered by center staff will include:

- the numbers of youth, females and males, attending at least one session,
- the number and gender of musicians and sessions facilitated,
- the number and gender of mentors and sessions facilitated,

- numbers and gender of mentors/musicians trained as community health workers
- numbers of trainings held with numbers of participants
- the number of volunteer elders or adults and sessions facilitated,
- the number and gender of youth returning for multiple sessions,
- the number of referrals made by center staff,
- the number of referrals completed by participants,
- the number of joint projects by mentors and participants, ex, urban gardens, entrepreneurial endeavors, crafts made, artistic performances, craft sales.
- amount of expenses.

Qualitative analysis will be gathered by center staff utilizing Likert Scale surveys conducted by an adult during oral interviews in the participant's first language as appropriate due to literacy concerns. In order to fully examine effectiveness of the Cultural Arts Center, feedback needs to be obtained from:

- young people, females and males, who participated regularly (at least once a week),
- musicians who participated regularly (at least once a week),
- mentors, females and males, who participated regularly (at least once a week),
- mentors/musicians (including gender) who attended training as community health workers,
- evaluators of community health workers including Government, community, or NGO resources,

- youth who did not return after 1 or 2 sessions,
- youth in the community who chose not to participate at all,
- involved community leaders.

**Budget.** Budgetary expenses for 4 weeks, or 20 days, of cultural arts center programming include:

Cost of facility:	US\$ 100
(assumes use of a community building or school and volunteer labor)	
Staff salaries (4 people @ US\$10 per hour):	6400
(4 people x 8 hrs/day x US\$10 per hour x 20 days/month)	
Musician/artists' fees (six sessions per day):	1800
(2 people x 6 hrs/day x US\$7.25 x 20 days= US\$870)	
Mentors' fees (12 mentors per day)	1800
(12 mentors/day x 20 days/month x \$7.25 per hour) =\$870	
Child Care	
(2 staff/day x 20 days/month x \$7.25 per hour)=	290
Supplies (buckets/sticks, paper, etc)	400
Voice recorders/batteries	300
<b>Total:</b>	<b>US\$11090 monthly</b>

**Simple cost-benefit analysis.** If the center schedules the minimum of 6 sessions a day with 20 youth per session and 20 days of service in a month, there will be 2400 youth visits per month. The cost per visit is \$3.54. The center has 4 full-time staff, and 24 mentors and musicians each day plus elders and other volunteers “stopping by.” With at least one adult for every two youth, purposeful mentoring and relationship-building will occur while youth learn

valuable and healing cultural arts. Adding in the other layers of youth resources which prevent and treat health issues as well as prevent criminal activity, the value of this prevention-based project increases significantly.

Utilizing the benefit range of \$2 to \$20 saved for every dollar spent on prevention, the cultural arts center saves the Liberian government **\$7 to \$61 per youth visit**, or a monthly total saved by the decreased need for other health and social services for youth of **between \$17,000 and \$170,000 per month** (Center, 2004). These are figures that will be useful to use in funding proposals and in discussions with policy officials.

**Resources.** The working group will seek funding for the cultural arts center first from the Government of Liberia. Arguing that the “Drumming for Reconciliation” helps prevent and treat mental health issues in high risk youth while saving money, the working group will advocate for the project’s inclusion in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare’s budget under mental health programming. Funding proposals will be submitted. If not incorporated into the governmental budget, funding proposals will be discussed with and delivered to Liberia’s development partners and international funders like UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, SIDA, the Clinton Foundation, and the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID). Other funding possibilities are listed in Appendix 2.

The “Drumming for Reconciliation” project with its three phases provides the gateway for urban Liberian young women and men to heal, while building the community’s capacity to encourage and sustain the positive contributions of youth. By linking cultural arts with healing, this project opens up new avenues for medical ethnomusicological and biomedical research into how youth in fragile, post-conflict countries heal. Youth who have discovered their cultural identity are more resilient, thus more capable of living productive lives. Youth who are

mentored in that discovery build relationships and connect constructively with their communities.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

### Summary

Cultural arts indigenous to Liberia, especially traditional music, are a key component in helping urban Liberian women and men ages 15-24 heal and access resources, as well as helping communities rebuild from the decades of violence. Abramowitz's recent study of Liberia's inadequate biomedical mental health system adds urgency to the challenge of providing services that are low-cost, community-based, sustainable over a long period of time, and that require minimal assistance from scarce biomedical health care professionals (Abramowitz, 2009). Given the level of reported gender-based violence, efforts to assist young women and men in forming respectful, peaceful relationships is warranted.

Research supports the use of drumming, music, dance, and dramatic arts in the treatment of post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), sexual abuse, substance abuse, and behavioral issues (Harris, 2007b; Zharinova-Sanderson, 2002) (Stepakoff, 2006; Winkelman, 2003) (Clair, 2006) (Watson, 2002) (Bittman, et al., 2001) (Akombo, 2003) (Slotoroff, 1994). Research also supports the use of traditional music in community building (Zharinova-Sanderson, 2002) (Harris, 2007a) (Barz, 2006).

Traditional music, an integral part of traditional healing, plays at the confluence of scarce biomedical resources and the more accessible traditional healing resources present in Liberia. The healing properties of drumming, dance, and music backed by the growing body of biomedical research further span the divide between biomedicine and traditional medicine. This bridge should spur increased cooperation between the two disciplines. The mentoring relationship, adults teaching cultural arts to youth, connects youth to a community. This connection dissolves isolation, reinforces cultural identity and builds resilience.

The “Drumming for Reconciliation” project unites traditional music, traditional healing, biomedical healing, mentoring, and the needs of young women and men who have grown up with war. Utilizing grassroots organizing and advocacy for a national commitment to incorporate and sustain Liberia’s rich cultural arts, the project combines policy talk with hands-on rhythm. Culminating with a community-based cultural arts center programmed to enfold youth in layers of resources, the project working group urges the Liberian government and its funding partners to think outside the biomedical box. Liberia’s strength, its cultural arts, is the gateway to healing and social access for urban youth.

Time is of the essence for Liberia and her young people. As international security forces and international NGO involvement dwindle and numbers of idle youth rise, the risk of renewed conflict increases.<sup>34</sup> Each day, more elders die who have the knowledge of traditional arts. If something as simple and visceral as drumming and dancing helps young people rise above the pain of their past and see a glimpse of a productive future, then we need to see if the community will embrace “Drumming for Reconciliation.”

### **Challenges**

The challenges of planning and implementing any sort of project in a “fragile” post-conflict country like Liberia range from bureaucratic blockades to the cynical distrust following broken promises. Without the endorsement of Liberians who are involved with cultural arts and youth, the project could not be viable. Another pressing challenge will be locating female and

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<sup>34</sup> The UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Liberia, Ellen Margrethe Loj, warned in a speech in New York on March 19, 2009: “...without regular and stable jobs, more Liberians, especially the younger generation, could be tempted by the easy money associated with illegal economic activities or potentially by those wanting to recruit for subversive activities once again” (Gary Walker, 2009, p. vii).

male musicians and elders still living who are willing to engage with youth in Monrovia, particularly given the disruption and devastation of the war.

There is a significant difference between handing a drum to an enthusiastic eight year old and offering a drum to a hardened 23-year-old ex-combatant or a fearful survivor of sexual abuse. Targeting the 15-24 year old population requires creativity and care. Most of them are capable of peaceful participation. Some are not. All of them deserve the opportunity to try.

The pilot drumming project, Phase Two, will depend upon approval from the community leaders, access to musicians who are available over the course of a month, and the success of drumming as a hook to draw in youth. Remaining sensitive to the comfort and seeking community acceptance of young women drumming will be important. Funding proposals are required for the estimated US\$ 2400 for a month of drumming.

The community-based cultural arts center, Phase Three of this prevention project, will follow a successful pilot drumming project and require a significant financial and management commitment from a local organization, community consortium, NGO, or governmental agency.. This might prove difficult. Supporting the facility and paying center staff and musicians a living wage, will cost an estimated US\$8500 per month. Seeking funding in tight financial times will be a challenge.

There will continue to be naysayers—people, government officials, directors of aid organizations—that believe every available cent and minute of time needs to be spent on basic needs. Making the connection between prevention dollars spent and benefit dollars saved adds validity. Making the connection between the growing numbers of socially excluded young adults and the return of conflict adds validity. Making the connection between cultural identity,

resilience, and productive youth adds validity. Our challenge, amidst the skepticism, will be to continuously press the connections between music, healing, and social access for these youth.

### **Strengths**

The beauty of Phase One and Phase Two of the “Drumming for Reconciliation” project is that there is no requirement for a government policy, a special building, an enormous fundraising effort, or minimum criteria in order to participate. A few contacts a week by the working group will make a significant impact. The pilot drumming project requires only a drum or bucket or desk, a musician, and a young adult who needs to be only slightly interested in drumming. Communities interested in the Phase Two pilot drumming project do not need to wait for an official proclamation. The people merely decide that they want to drum with their young people, find a willing musician and something to drum, and begin.

While still in its formative stages, the project concept has garnered enthusiasm from former directors of the Kendeja Cultural Arts Museum, Liberian writers, officers involved with the Federation of Liberian Youth, a Liberian Deputy Minister, and a host of African and American graduate students, researchers, and professors around the U.S.

This project lends itself well to local control: there is no right or wrong way to carry out the “Drumming for Reconciliation” concept. The grassroots approach spreads the project information well beyond the support of one agency or organization. The Liberian proverb says, “One [wo]man can’t drink a creek dry”; it takes more than one person to do a big piece of work (Haskett, 1967). The more people involved who are passionate and willing to market the idea of teaching cultural arts for health and social access for youth, the more likely drumming and other cultural arts will happen.

Internationally, the concept of funding culturally sustainable projects with respect to youth, violence prevention, and empowering community resilience is gaining ground. Some funding will be needed for the pilot drumming project, but most of the funding needs will be for the cultural arts center facility and staff salaries. Working group members need to remind funders of the cost-benefit analysis of each prevention dollar reaping a two to twenty fold return in savings on other scarce service expenditures.

### **Other Culturally-Sustainable Programs with Promise for Youth**

**Blended biomedical and traditional mental health program model.** From 1999-2005, the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT), based in Minneapolis, sent expatriate clinicians to refugee camps in Guinea to work with survivors from the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The program had three goals: “a) to provide mental health care, (b) to train local refugee counselors, and (c) to raise community awareness about war trauma and mental health” (Stepakoff, 2006, p. 921). The Center purposefully “integrated contemporary expressive therapy techniques with indigenous healing practices,” and provided counseling for 4,000 clients and supportive services for 15,000 more (Stepakoff, 2007, p. 400). Indigenous songs and dances were two integral pieces of the program. CVT recognized three stages of recovery from trauma: safety, grieving, and reconnection. They have a model for training “community mental health workers,” as well as experience working with Liberian war survivors.

CVT’s program with ex-combatant youth in eastern Sierra Leone using dance movement therapy (DMT) successfully modeled incorporating dance, music, and dramatic performance to help youth and communities heal. Participants noted reduced symptoms and successful reintegration into a community (Harris, 2007a). The Liberian Government should include and

fund these established and effective programs within the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare budget, at the least, the training curriculum for community mental health workers.

**“Junior Farmer Field and Life Skills School.”** There is a U.N. Food and Agriculture (FAO) program currently operating in Africa that combines agricultural skills, life skills, and traditional arts for young women and men ages 12-18. Ghana and fifteen other African countries have launched “Junior Farmer Field and Life Skills Schools” (JFFLS). Interestingly, “participatory field activities include crop selection and cultivation, land preparation, pest management, cultivation of medicinal plants and income generation; local theater, art, dance, and song are integral aspects of each JFFLS day” (DallaValle, 2009). Mozambique, which piloted the program in 2004 with 120 students at 4 sites with 12 facilitators, served 1740 youth at 58 sites with 174 facilitators in 2009.

The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) is contemplating adapting the “Junior Farmer Field and Life Skills School” program to Liberia’s urban settings. Seventy percent of Monrovia residents had vegetable gardens before the war; today, fewer than 15% grow any food (Walker, et al., 2009). An urban program like this would match youth with mentors, provide experiential learning while students remain in the preferred urban area, and produce food for their own consumption or as an income-generator. The Ministries of Agriculture, Education, or Youth and Sports should incorporate this established and effective curriculum into their own programming or expedite SIDA’s implementation of the project.

**Forestry, fisheries, and ecotourism.** Forestry and fishery industries are mentioned in the Liberian Youth Fragility Assessment as strong possibilities for engaging urban youth, especially young women, and providing job training skills (Walker, et al., 2009). The ecotourism industry, especially along the beautiful coastal beaches and around Lake Piso, a large

salt water inlet in Grand Cape Mount County, has great potential for youth employment. As Liberia develops these industries, there is the challenge to remain environmentally-sustainable. Liberia, unlike many countries, has the chance for sustainable development from the outset with the appropriate advice from environmental experts and involvement from Liberian communities. Conserving the forests and ocean can create livelihoods for youth. Preserving the beaches can promote ecotourism and jobs for youth. Both are means of cultural sustainability and meet the needs of youth.

### **What Can Be Done Now?**

Advocacy, Phase One of “Drumming for Reconciliation” has begun with recruitment for the working group, discussions about publicity, solicitation of support from key Ministries and the Liberian Diaspora, and the encouragement of person-to-person dissemination of the project. There are four strategic targets for which timing is critical. Establishing communication with governmental or community contacts associated with each target is a priority. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare launched Liberia’s first national mental health policy in May, 2010, focusing on community-based initiatives. The first target should be incorporating cultural arts and traditional healers into the new mental health policy, particularly as the Ministry seeks funding from national and international donors.

The second target, incorporating cultural arts into the public elementary and secondary school curriculums, is timely. The Ministry of Education recently completed new curriculum for elementary and secondary education but was not able to pilot the curriculums this past school year as had been planned. Perhaps there is time for a small adjustment in the curriculum.

Thirdly, getting the “Junior Farmer Field and Life Skills School” up and running in Monrovia would bring an established curriculum incorporating traditional arts, agricultural skills,

mentoring, and life skills to some of the younger girls and boys in our target group. Contacts within the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and SIDA will be made.

Finally, the second round of elections since the conflict ended in 2003 will be held in October, 2011. Liberian members of the working group will encourage candidates to include cultural sustainability and a commitment to teaching cultural arts to youth in their position papers as part of the nationwide election discussion. President Johnson Sirleaf, who had originally committed to only one term, has announced her candidacy for re-election, as has George Weah, her primary opponent in 2005, along with numerous others. All thirty senatorial and sixty-four representatives seats are up for election as well. Liberian citizens over the age of 18 are eligible to register and vote, many of whom will be voting for the first time.

I'm heartened by the words of ethnomusicologist Ruth Stone (2010): "My own research in 2007 indicated there is a lively performing climate in Liberia. Music making is alive and well in Monrovia and in the rural areas" (R. Stone, personal communication, May 11, 2010). Liberian writer, Doeba Bropleh, who called for a new cultural consciousness, wrote, "I think your idea is a good one that would have a myriad of benefits as you alluded to" (D. Bropleh, personal communication, April 25, 2010). Former co-director of Liberia's Kendeja Cultural Center, Naomi (Johnson) Washington wrote, "The drums have been known to work wondrous [*sic*], because it combines with the rhythm of the heart to soothe and create peace and calm. I teach high school students dance, drum and culture [in Oakland, California]. Let's discuss your project. It sounds like the thing to be involved with" (N. Washington, personal communication, May 3, 2010).

"Drumming for Reconciliation" is a Liberian-based solution for the post-conflict Liberian dilemma of urban youth disconnected from their culture and their communities. The project

relies on the ancient but ever-changing rhythm of the drum and the wisdom of those who play it, dance, and sing with it. Traditional music has a physiological as well as a deeply spiritual basis for healing, for *making sound or whole*, for creating balance. During the process of playing, singing, dancing, or performing to the drum's rhythms individuals heal and communities come together.

As the proverb says, "The young sprout permits one to predict the height of the tree." Young women and men still require that their basic needs be met. Drumming and dancing cannot fill a stomach. Yet even a full stomach cannot nurture an empty spirit. Cultural arts, especially traditional music, may be the key to Liberian youth finding healing, wholeness, and social access. The beat of the healing drum may do nothing for some. But for others, the rhythm will resonate, creating new neural pathways, cultivating resilience, and awakening the young people to new possibilities. Just as drumming contributes to increased brain activity, so too can focused, connected youth contribute positively to their communities. The tree will grow tall.

## Appendix 1

### Sample Evaluation Forms

#### A. Sample questions assessing participant interest

1. Have you ever learned to drum before this project? Yes No
2. Did you learn something new today? Yes No
3. Tell me one word that describes/says how you feel after you drum.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. With 5 being very, very happy, and 1 being very, very sad or angry, what number between 1 and 5 tells me how you felt when you got to the drumming session.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. With 5 being very, very happy, and 1 being very, very sad or angry, what number between 1 and 5 tells me how you felt when you got to the drumming session.

#### B. PTSD Scale

Trauma Awareness & Treatment Center TATC (Center, 2010)

# PTSD Scale

## Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Scale

Instructions: Put a check to indicate how much you have experienced each symptom in the past week, including today.  Please answer all the items.	Not at all  1	Somewhat  2	Moderately  3	A Lot  4	Extremely  5
1. Upsetting memories of a traumatic event that come into your mind over and over					
2. Avoiding things, places or upsetting thoughts associated with the trauma					
3. Loss of interests or participation in activities					

4. Feeling isolated or alienated from other people					
5. Flashbacks (feeling like the past upsetting event is happening in the present)					
6. Always being on the lookout to make sure you don't experience the upsetting event again					
7. Feelings of guilt or distress about the traumatic event					
8. Strong physical sensations (increased heart rate, sweating, etc.) when you are reminded about the event					
9. Feelings of numbness					
10. Difficulty falling or staying asleep					

**Please Total Your Score on Items 1 to 10 Here**

**Scoring Key for the 10-Item PTSD Test**

Score	Interpretation
0	No symptoms of PTSD
1-5	Minimal anxiety possibly associated with a traumatic event
6-10	Mild symptoms of PTSD
11-20	Moderate symptoms of PTSD
21-30	Severe symptoms of PTSD
31-40	Extreme symptoms of PTSD

### C. Adolescent Dissociation Scale

## Trauma Awareness & Treatment Center TATC (Center, 2010)

### Adolescent Dissociation Scale

#### DIRECTIONS

These questions ask about different kinds of experiences that happen to people. For each question, circle the number that tells how much that experience happens to you. Circle a "0" if it never happens to you, circle a "10" if it is always happening to you. If it happens sometimes but not all of the time, circle a number between 1 and 9 that best describes how often it happens to you. When you answer, only tell how much these things happen when you HAVE NOT had any alcohol or drugs.

*Example:*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

1. I get so wrapped up in watching TV, or playing video games, that I don't have any idea what's going on around me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

2. I get back tests or homework that I don't remember doing.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

3. I have strong feelings that don't seem like they are mine.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

4. I can do something really well one time and then I can't do it at all another time.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

5. People tell me I do or say things that I don't remember doing or saying.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

6. I feel like I am in a fog or spaced out and things around me seem unreal.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

7. I get confused about whether I have done something or only thought about doing it.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

8. I look at the clock and realize that time has gone by and I can't remember what has happened.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

9. I hear voices in my head that are not mine.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

10. When I am somewhere that I don't want to be, I can go away in my mind.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

11. I am so good at lying and acting that I believe it myself.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

12. I catch myself "waking up" in the middle of doing something.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

13. I don't recognize myself in the mirror.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

14. I find myself going somewhere or doing something and I don't know why.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

15. I find myself someplace and don't remember how I got there.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

16. I have thoughts that don't really seem to belong to me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

17. I find that I can make physical pain go away.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

18. I can't figure out if things really happened or if I only dreamed or thought about them.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

19. I find myself doing something that I know is wrong, even when I really don't want to do it.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

20. People tell me that I sometimes act so differently that I seem like a different person.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

21. It feels like there are walls inside of my head.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never)

(Always)

22. I find writings, drawings or letters that I must have done but I can't remember doing.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

23. Something inside of me seems to make me do things that I don't want to do.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

24. I find that I can't tell whether I am just remembering something or if it is actually happening to me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

25. I find myself standing outside my body, watching myself as if I were another person.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

26. My relationships with my family and friends change suddenly and I don't know why.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

27. I felt like my past is a puzzle and some of the pieces are missing.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

28. I get so wrapped up in my toys or stuffed animals that they seem alive.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

29. I feel like there are different people inside of me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

30. My body feels as if it doesn't belong to me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Never) (Always)

**Appendix 2**

**Resources**

**List of the Government of Liberia Ministries**

1. Ministry of Youth and Sports
2. Minister – Ms. Etmona D. Tarpeh Deputy Minister – Mr. Sam E. Hare
3. Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
  - a. Minister – Dr. Walter Gwenigale
4. Ministry of Education
  - a. Minister – Joseph Korto
  - b. Assistant Minister for Curriculum – Ketarah Siebu
  - c. Assistant Minister for Secondary Education – Felecia S. Doe Somah
5. Ministry of Agriculture
  - a. Minister – J. Christopher Toe
  - b. Assistant Minister for Research and Planning – Emmet Metzger
6. Ministry of Information and Culture and Tourism
  - a. Assistant Minister for culture – Jailee Quiee
7. Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs
  - a. Director of Information Technology – Philajua Boima –

### **List of Musicians**

1. Alpha (rapper) – Newtown, Pennsylvania
2. Pircarlo (rapper) – Monrovia
3. Bentman (rapper) – Charles Taylor’s son
4. Luckay Buckay (Hipco – a rap style)
5. Akon is popular in Liberia
6. Search for Common Drum/Talking Drum Studio – [oscarbloh2004@yahoo.com](mailto:oscarbloh2004@yahoo.com)

### **List of Ethnomusicologists**

1. Lester Monts, University of Michigan – [lmonts@umich.edu](mailto:lmonts@umich.edu)
2. Ruth Stone, University of Indiana – [stone@indiana.edu](mailto:stone@indiana.edu)

### **Higher Education Colleges and Universities in Liberia (recognized by the Government of Liberia)**

1. University of Liberia
2. Cuttington University
3. United Methodist University
4. African Methodist Episcopal Zion University
5. African Methodist Episcopal University
6. Stella Maris

### **List of Organizations and NGO's Working in Liberia**

1. Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY)
  - a. President – Augustus M. Zayzay, Jr.
  - b. Secretariat General -
  - c. Former officer - Jimmy Joseph Sankaituah –
2. Andrew Tulay – mental health consultant, Minnesota –
3. Cooperaxion – [info@cooperaxion.org](mailto:info@cooperaxion.org) (Switzerland)
4. CESLY – Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth  
International Development Division(IDD) a division of Education Development Center (EDC)  
<http://idd.edc.org/wherewework/country.php?id=387&pg=1>  
Karen Cassidy –  
Lyn Gray – Education Program Manager phone: 06-540538  
Collaboration with USAID project
5. Youth Action International – Liberia  
<http://www.youthactioninternational.org/yai/index.php/projects/liberia/>  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Fofana Bldg  
Benson St.

Monrovia, Liberia  
[martina@peaceforkids.org](mailto:martina@peaceforkids.org)  
 011-2316-811-222

6. UNICEF – Liberia  
 Monrovia@unicef.org  
 Sekou Tour Avenue  
 Mamba Point  
 Monrovia, Liberia 231-44-207-084-9761 phone:  
 Fax: 44-207-084-9760
7. Friends of Liberia (I'm a member) \$2000 grant – FLY applied
8. Médecins du Monde (operates clinics and 1 mental health center)
9. Population Services International (does teaching programs)
10. The Clinton Global Initiative – emailed
11. YWCA, Liberia – emailed but no response

**From the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat**

12. Academics for Higher Education and Development
13. ACDI/VOCA
14. Action Aid International
15. Action Contre la Faim
16. Actions for Genuine Democratic Alternatives
17. Adventist Development and Relief Agency
18. Africa Humanitarian Action
19. Africare
20. Alfalit
21. American Bar Association
22. American Refugee Committee
23. BRAC
24. CARE Liberia
25. Carter Center
26. Catholic Relief Services
27. Center for Global Development
28. Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia
29. Center for Victims of Torture
30. Child Fund International
31. Christian Aid Ministries
32. Christian Children's Fund
33. Christoffel Blinden Mission
34. Concern Worldwide
35. Conservation International
36. Cooperative Housing Foundation
37. Danish Refugee Council
38. Diakoni Katastrophenhilfe
39. Equip
40. Fauna and Flora International
41. FinnChurchAid

42. Finnish Refugee Council
43. Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy
44. Foundation for International Dignity
45. Handicap International
46. Ibis
47. International Alert
48. International Medical Corps
49. International Republican Institute
50. Rescue Committee
51. JSI John Snow, Inc
52. Landmine Action
53. Liberia Democracy Watch
54. Liberia Media Center
55. Liberia Prevention of Maternal Mortality
56. Lutheran World Federation
57. Medicia Mondiale
58. Medical Teams International
59. MENTOR Initiative
60. Mercy Corps – emailed that they do not work with children; (Bija Guttoff writes) but has Youth Education for Life Skills program on web:  
<https://www.mercycorps.org/contributors/bijaguttoff>
61. Merlin-Liberia
62. Norwegian Refugee Council
63. Open Society Initiative for West Africa
64. Overseas Private Investment Cooperation
65. Oxfam GB
66. Peace Winds Japan
67. Plan Liberia
68. Right to Play
69. Samaritan's Purse
70. Save the Children, UK
71. Search for Common Ground
72. Sight Savers International
73. Solidarités
74. Tearfund
75. TRÓCAIRE
76. Visions in Action
77. Water of life
78. Welthungerhilfe
79. Women and Children Advocacy
80. World Affairs Council
81. World Hope International
82. World Vision International (\$1million dollar corruption investigation on-going)
83. ZOA

**PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS (from Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat)**

1. AllAfrica Foundation
2. Belinda Stronach Foundation
3. Daphne Foundation
4. David A. Straz, Jr. Foundation
5. Global Philanthropy Foundation
6. Humanity United
7. Nike Foundation
8. NoVo Foundation
9. Open Society Institute
10. Pan African Capital
11. RLJ Companies
12. The ArcelorMittal Global Foundation
13. The Brenthurst Foundation
14. The Gloag Foundation
15. The Hess Foundation
16. The Scott Family Foundation
17. TrustAfrica
18. William J. Clinton Foundation
- 19.

#### **List of Liberian Artists**

1. Nimely Napla- (Oakland) Former director of Liberian National Cultural Center
2. Naomi Washington – (Oakland)  
  
Former Co-director of Liberian National Cultural Center  
  
Currently teaching with the Diamano Coura West African Dance Company  
  
1428 Alice St. 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Oakland, CA 94612
3. Doeba Bropleh – writer –(California)
4. Leslie Lumeh, cartoonist – [leslielumeh@yahoo.com](mailto:leslielumeh@yahoo.com) (Monrovia)
5. Benjamin Ofori – master percussionist – Sacramento, CA

#### **List of International Funding Sources**

1. USAID USAID/Liberia  
  
Director Pamela White 8800 Monrovia Place  
  
P.O. Box 10-1445 Monrovia

WDC 20521-8800

231-77-054-825

2. UNICEF – [Monrovia@unicef.org](mailto:Monrovia@unicef.org)  
44-207-084-9761
3. UNMIL - UNMIL Headquarters  
Pan African Plaza Tubman Blvd 1<sup>st</sup> St. Monrovia, Liberia  
NY – 212-963-9925
4. KIVA (microfinance) 828-479-5482  
KIVA Microfunds 3180 18<sup>th</sup> St. Suite 201 San Francisco, CA 94110 – email received from KIVA asking us to let them know about interested/qualified field partners in Liberia.
5. Clinton Foundation- <http://www.clintonfoundation.org/>  
55 West 125th Street  
New York, NY 10027
6. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation [info@gatesfoundation.org](mailto:info@gatesfoundation.org) 206-709-3100 (Seattle)
7. DFID – Department for International Development (UK)
8. SIDA - Swedish International Development Agency
9. World Bank - Florence Baingana, [fbaingana@worldbank.org](mailto:fbaingana@worldbank.org), Ian Bannon –  
[healthpop@worldbank.org](mailto:healthpop@worldbank.org) – 2004 –mental health/psychosocial/traditional healing

### **Liberian Diaspora Advisory Board**

**(from the Embassy of the Republic of Liberia in Washington, DC)**

1. Mohamedu F. Jones, Esp, Chairman of the Board; Practicing law in Providence, Rhode Island

2. Mohammed Konneh – Co-Chair Infrastructure and Basic Needs; Specialist in Clinical Psychology and Trauma in Philadelphia
3. Seward B. Cooper – Co-Chair Economic Revitalization; Marketing; financial services
4. John Lloyd – Governance/Rule of Law; Currently Commissioner of the Office of African Affairs for the Govt. of District of Columbia
5. Valerie Dickerson-Horton – Board member, National Security Committee  
Former USAID administrator
6. Robtel Pailey, Board member Governance and Rule of Law Committee; Activist/writer, involved with Foundation for International Dignity, curriculum development
7. Stephanie Vickers, Board member Infrastructure and Basic Needs  
RPCV, educator K-12, Friends of Liberia, Portland, Oregon

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