

FINAL speech for the 60th Commencement of Cuttington University

Held on June 17, 2022

By Her Excellency Chief Dr. Jewel Howard Taylor, Vice
President of Liberia

THEME: SEEING BEYOND THE LIMITS OF YOUR
CIRCUMSTANCES

GREETINGS

Excellencies,

The Rt. Reverend Bishop Tamba Bombe Selee, Head of the
Episcopal Church of Liberia and other officials present,
Heads of Religious Institutions, Prelates and other Officials
present,

Officials of Government present,

The Superintendent of Bong County and other local
Government Officials present,

Members of the National Legislature present,

Members of the Judiciary present,

Members of the Bong County Legislative Caucus and other
County Caucuses present,

The Chairman and members of the Board of Trustees of
Cuttington University,

Heads of other Higher Institutions of Learning,

Dr. Romelle Horton, acting President, Faculty, Staff and other
members of the Cuttington University Family,

Officials and Members of the 2022 Graduating Class,

Graduating Seniors under the sponsorship of the Office of the
Vice President,

Parents, Guardians, Sponsors, Well Wishers and Friends,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman,

Members of my Family present,

Members of the Fourth Estate,

All other Protocols Observed.

This is the day that the Lord has made, and we will be glad and
rejoice in it.

For the Lord our God has done great and mighty things for US.
So as we come to celebrate this milestone 60th Convocation; all
Praise and Power

belong to HIM ALONE.
Amen.

APPRECIATION

I am pleased to admit, that today is a very special day for me to have been given this unique opportunity to serve as the 60th Commencement Speaker of Cuttington University.

For several reasons; Firstly, because I am an proud Alumni of Cuttington University; secondly because this Institution in located in my maternal County and I am being honored as a Daughter of Bong County and lastly but never least; because I am the first Female Vice President of Liberia to be so Honored.

I am truly humbled, and ask your indulgence for a moment to express my gratitude to those to whom it is due.

Firstly, to Yahweh, the God of the Universe, who still dwells in the affairs of men.

For indeed HE has set times and seasons for ALL things according to HIS will.

And when I look back from how far God has brought me; all I can do is to praise him and testify that ALL POWER TRULY BELONGS TO HIM.

With this realization, I can safely say that GOD is no respecter of persons, but HE instead provides opportunities for men and women to avail themselves as vessels in order to SHOW HIS GRACE AND MERCY TOWARDS HIS CREATION.

Secondly, I am truly grateful to the officials of the Episcopal Diocese, the Chairman, Members of the Board of Trustees and the Acting President of Cuttington University for the recommendation and subsequent approval of me as the 60th Commencement Speaker .

Please allow me to say in all humility; that said approval has changed for me, the negative saying that "Prophets are not honored in their own Homes."

For although, over the past 10 years ; I have been the proud recipient of several Honorary Doctorate Degrees from Costa Rica, to Nigeria to Accra and others; this HONORARY

DEGREE bestowed upon me by Cuttington University is by far the most valuable one.

Because it has been given to me by my own people, and given in my own Home by my ALMA MATER.

This is indeed a rare gift which I do not take lightly.

I am truly grateful and am compelled to say in our local dialect - ka sheh kpoh a damah.

Permit me, lastly but never least, to express my gratitude to the people of Bong County and the citizens of the Kpelle Tribe of Liberia, (as Kpelleh persons can be found in all of the 15 Political sub divisions of Liberia) especially the Youth and Women, for their constant love and unwavering support given to me over the past 25 years. I thank you from the bottom of my heart; for your unwavering support which has enabled me to continue to be relevant and contribute my quota to the rebuilding of my beloved Mama Liberia.

I am truly, truly grateful.

CONGRATULATIONS

Excellencies, Bishop Tamba Bombo Selee, the Cuttington University Family, Officials of Government present, Family members, Sponsors, Well Wishers and Friends; it is customary at special occasions, especially Graduation Convocations, for the Guest Speaker to do 3 simple things:

1. To appreciate those who made this day possible; which has already been done;
2. To congratulate those who have completed their course of study; and
3. To use the platform given to inspire; not only the graduates; but all in attendance to stretch their minds a bit more; reframe their thinking; and with new dynamism go out into the world and become agents of transformative change in their chosen sphere of life.

I promise to keep this formula, perform said responsibilities and take my seat.

In performing my 2nd assignment - I gladly extend my heartfelt

congratulations to the CU Family, for making sure this 60th Convocation is held with all the pomp and pageantry it deserves. For this august gathering is a cause for celebrations indeed.

I am also grateful to extend congratulations and best wishes; firstly to the Newly Consecrated Bishop and Head of the Episcopal Diocese in Liberia; Bishop Tamba Bombo Selee; for his preferment; and to the Episcopal Church Family for the persistence with which the Board of Trustees, Administration and Faculty has continued to build upon the legacy of this Stellar University; which has risen from the ashes of Liberia's challenging war years into what it has become today.

My prayer is that God will reward your consistency and persistency by allowing this University to become second to none as it focuses its attention not only to transforming the minds of those who study in these hallowed halls; but also to instill in them the lofty characteristics of - JUST MEN MADE PERFECT, so much needed for current challenging National Tasks at hand.

I am also compelled; on behalf of Bong County Citizens in particular and Liberians in general; to express our gratitude to this Institution; under the guidance of the Episcopal Church of Liberia; which continues to provide unique educational opportunities needed for the Youth of Bong County and beyond; as they strive to prepare themselves for the task of building -A BETTER LIBERIA.

I can see thru the eyes of Faith, the towering figure of Madam Sua Coco in the midst of us; smiling because the decision made by her many years ago; continue to yield many fruits for the people of Bong County and beyond.

Last but never the least; I extend hearty Congratulations to the members of the 60th Graduating Class for a job well done. For each of you, by your commitment and fortitude to completing this journey; has further cemented the TRUISM that "A sound Education is the surest way out of Poverty."

Thank you for taking this bold step, for by so doing you have set a new generational pattern for the success for your Families , Communities and Nation.

Excellencies, Bishop Selee and other Prelates present, the Chair and Members of the Board, Madam acting President and I hope soon to be the first Female President of CU, Honored Guests, Members of the 60th Graduating Class, Family members, Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman; let me confess that as I pondered on what to say to this great company of witnesses; I was forced to look around me to see ; hear the musings of the people; and consider a theme which I hope will inspire all of US present here today and those under the sound of my voice.

I therefore was left with no choice but to consider a positive MESSAGE for this 60th Convocation; which also happens to be my 60th year. This simple yet profound theme is - SEEING BEYOND THE LIMITS OF YOUR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

I hope you will agree with me that our Nation is indeed still in the throes of challenging times.
And together we must continue to work to lift our Nation to the ideals expressed in our National Anthem.

With this compelling need to be inspired for greater Works; I hope you wont be disappointed, but the answers as to the commonly asked questions of - WHY, HOW and WHEN; thankfully are not the subject of my presentation.

I choose instead to center my message on how each individual- as the master of his own destiny can SEE BEYOND THE LIMITS OF THEIR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, RISE TO THE OCCASION AND CHANGE THE TRAJECTORY OF THEIR LIVES FOR THE BETTERMENT OF ALL.

I beg your indulgence to keep this thought in mind; as I ask you to kindly follow the logic as I draw your attention to the meaning of 4 critical words which form the rational of my Theme.

The definitions were drawn from the Free On line Dictionary; which will hopefully put you in the right frame of mind to rationalize and accept the concept that indeed anyone can - SEE BEYOND THE LIMITS OF THEIR CURRENT CHALLENGES and CHANGE THE NARRATIVE FOR BETTER.

My first point considers 2 Words - LOOKING : which commonly

means to VIEW
and SEEING : which means to PERCEIVE THINGS
MENTALLY.

It is common practice especially here at home, to interchange both words as we speak. But the truth of the matter is that the meanings or definitions of both words are very different.

I pray that after my presentation today, each of us, will grasp a new and exciting way to view not only both words but to how we view our lives and see the limitless possibilities all around us.

The second point of focus is the word - BEYOND : meaning in EXCESS OF or OVER AND ABOVE.

This implies that once WE ARE ABLE TO PERCEIVE NEW DIMENSIONS, AUTOMATICALLY OUR MINDS WILL SHIFT TO A NEW LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS; WHICH TAKES US BEYOND OUR CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES; THUS OPENING UP OUR CAPABILITIES TO SEE NEW DIMENSIONS OF VIABLE OPTIONS WHICH CAN THEN BE USED TO TRANSFORM OUR LIVES FOR THE BETTER.

The third point of focus is the word - LIMIT : WHICH MEANS A RESTRICTION ON WHAT IS GENERALLY POSSIBLE.

Please keep in mind the common saying that -there are people in our world who just watch things happen; others wonder what has happened and yet others in the same time and space - make things happen.

The difference between them is simply the ability of the mind to either see only limitations or see possibilities.

And the Final word is - INSPIRATION - meaning the highest level of mental stimulation which enables one to soar in higher realms, enabling them do great things.

At this point, I hope you agree with me that this level of consciousness SHIFTS OUR MINDS, BODIES AND SOULS INTO THE SUPERNATURAL REALM OF MAGIC LIKE REWARDS.

ARE YOU STILL WITH ME?

You see, these words and their meanings are very important to today's achievements ; as a Nation, a University, as Graduates and as a People.

For our THOUGHTS and or PERCEPTIONS become WORDS and WORDS produce ACTIONS - both positive and negative; depending on the choices made.

After having said all I have said earlier; I know that there may still be some amongst us who are still wondering - WHAT is she saying; and in fact WHY are these WORDS or concepts even important to where we find or perceive ourselves to be today; and in fact HOW DO THEY CHANGE A LIFE FROM BEING A CHALLENGING ONE TO ONE OF SUCCESS?

The simple answer is that - Humans are Spiritual beings housed in bodies which can be compelled to move beyond current circumstances by an inner spring called INSPIRATION.

And INSPIRATION is fueled by what one sees thru the inner EYE.

Once INSPIRATION is ignited, the heart can be LIFTED or DEPRESSED.

If it is LIFTED, it causes the entire body to MOVE beyond the ordinary, conjuring new and better ways to transform a challenging situation into an opportunity of greatness.

With this being said; I AM PLEASED TO SAY THAT AFTER ALL I HAVE READ, SEEN, HEARD and EXPERIENCED, I HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION and hope you will agree with me THAT:

“ THOSE WHO CHANGE HISTORY ARE ONES WHO SEE BEYOND THE ORDINARY;
IGNORE THE LIMITS OF PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND TIMES; AND BY THEIR AMAZING ACTIONS, INSPIRE A GENERATION TO WORK TOGETHER TO CHANGE THE STATUS QUO.”

With that being said; I believe each one of us present here

today; truly desires to be a part of this magnetic force that has the capacity to catapult us from our present circumstances into a better WORLD of unlimited and successful possibilities.

But before we jump to HOW this can be achieved; let me quickly tell you 2 of the EFFECTS of this magnetic FORCE:

Its first effect if you have never experienced it before; CAUSES ONE TO be in a state of TOTAL SHOCK OR DISBELIEF.

With some thinking that what they see or perceive whilst in this state is only a mirage.

Causing them to EITHER SHUT DOWN IN FEAR; OR CONVINCING THEMSELVES THAT THIS IS AN IMPOSSIBILITY.

If you have experienced this magnetic force, your mind is transformed FOREVER; making you a part of the movers and shakers of history.

The second effect CAUSES AN INNER ILLUMINATION WHICH LIGHTS UP THE WHOLE MAN. MAKING HIM BELIEVE THAT NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE.

THIS LEVEL OF ILLUMINATION CAUSES HIM TO MOVE BEYOND THE LIMITS OF HIS CIRCUMSTANCES, BRINGING TO LIFE UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES; THUS ALLOWING HIM TO BE MAGICAL, to the awe of others.

Some common examples are Athletes who seem to defy gravity and fly through the air. Or others who dream and create the most amazing systems which baffle most of mankind.

It would surprise you to note that this concept is found all around us; as stated in the Holy Bible and recorded in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 18 :

“ Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you; to the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.”

The Quran also has an explicit description which says :
“ that the heart is the most important part of the body, as it controls the actions of every person.”

And “indeed in the body there is a piece of flesh, if it is reformed, the whole body becomes good; and if it is spoilt then the whole body becomes spoilt. That organ is the heart.”

Both Books of wisdom and knowledge generalize and simplify this mystery, because the simple truth is that anyone who desires and seeks this MAGIC can access it for good or evil.

The only requirement for operating in this sphere lies in decisions made.

Excellencies, Bishop Selee, Madam Acting President, Honored Guests, Members of the 60th Graduating Class, Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman; having set the basis for my argument; I believe each of you now see a light at the end of the TUNNEL through which I am taking you; as we consider the theme:

-“SEEING BEYOND THE LIMITS OF OUR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.”

I believe that concept is appropriate for our gathering here today, especially as the hope of members of this graduating class is to use the knowledge acquired as a spring board to SUCCESS.

Desiring to DO MORE, ACHIEVE MORE, BE MORE and PERHAPS RISE TO THE CATEGORY OF THOSE IN OUR WORLD - WHO MAKE MAGIC; making us to BELIEVE IN THE IMPOSSIBLE.

With this understanding, I hope you will agree with me that Life constantly presents each of us with circumstances which are beyond our normal ability to change. Which we unfortunately did not have the freedom to choose; yet we are forced to deal with them and make choices for our lives.

A few of these are the circumstances of our birth, our family ties, our genetics and the day we will die. These basic fundamentals cannot be altered and we must live with them for the rest of our lives.

These sometimes unwanted circumstances take many forms. A child born in the hinterland to poverty stricken parents; A girl child born in a family that desperately desire a male child; A child born in a family whose parents carry stigmas perceived

or real ;of disgrace and dishonor; A child born of genetic defects which make them outcasts;
A person who never seems to be able to find their way;
A person who makes the wrong turn and end up as an addict;
A woman who is rape and conceives a child from the rape;
A man who works hard yet seem to be passed over each time there is an opportunity for a raise;
A person who desperately wants to change the situation, yet the wrong persons remain in charge;and the list could go on and on.

These circumstances automatically thrust affected persons into situations which seem beyond their control, possibly darkening one's skies and as perceived by them; leaving them in a life of desolation and hopelessness.

Howbeit, the reverse is also true, that many others are born under bright skies with the fate of life seemingly already in their favor. They grow up believing in unlimited opportunities and possibilities, growing up with the notion that Life is at their beck and call; and that they have the Midas touch - turning everything they touch into GOLD. BUT If they are not conscious of the reality that LIFE ALWAYS REQUIRES ONE TO MAKE A DECISION IN ORDER TO GROW, they could squander these opportunities.

The great equalizer between both points of view is that - regardless of which side of the coin a person finds themselves, each one has to make a CHOICE ; as they perceive how the circumstances life has handed them can be used to either remain stagnant, change their situation around for the better in spite of challenges or move from a life of dreams into a realm of unlimited possibilities.

This concept of CHOICE is considered by some as the greatest burden of the Human life - Solomon the wisest Man in human history said -

In Ecclesiastes Ch 2 verse 17 :

“Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

But be that as it may, God has put eternity into the heart of all men; so then THE ONLY CHOICE is to master the art of looking beyond one's circumstances and making MAGIC.

Keeping in mind that the ultimate test of the success of man is how they respond to circumstances which life throws their way; thus putting people in categories of the WEAK or the STRONG.

I believe it is only fair to remind one another at this point, as we each ponder the many questions in our hearts - that after all the studies, exams, pomp, pageantry and the celebrations:

THE MAIN ISSUE REMAINS “WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?”

and

“HOW CAN WE USE THE MAGNET OF ILLUMINATION TO MAKE MAGIC IN OUR LIFETIME?”

The Answer for those who see the glass as half empty - is the realization that their situation is a result of past and or present choices made.

Whereas the Answer to those who see the glass half full - is the realization that by sheer human will, all one has to do is CLOSE THEIR EYES , IMAGINE THE WORLD THEY WANT TO LIVE IN ; SEE BEYOND THEIR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES ; AND PUT IN PLANS TO BUILD THEIR DREAMS. KNOWING THAT ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE ONCE YOU BELIEVE.

TELL A STORY ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY from THE US back HOME TO LIBERIA - From Dobbs to the Banking sector.

What then are the benefits of -Seeing beyond the Circumstances of your Condition?

1. ANS - It helps one consider the whole picture. Not in bits and pieces as times and circumstances show; but one complete piece; seeing the entire spectrum - from beginning to the possibilities of a great finish.

For the minute one is able to see beyond their current circumstances and view the entire spectrum of possibilities, their perception changes and hope is ignited.

As for me, initially I LOOKED at the position of VICE PRESIDENT as a BEAUTIFUL PARKED CAR IN A GARAGE.

Then I asked myself; why had a country girl from very humble beginnings been lifted to this high Office?

I then PERCEIVED that I was an AGENT OF CHANGE whose prime responsibilities was to spread INSPIRATION WHEREVER I FOUND MYSELF; and HELP LIFT THE SPIRIT OF INSPIRATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AND YOUTH ACROSS THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD. You see upon this changed mindset - from a beautiful parked car TO a even more beautiful vessel of INSPIRATION my focus changed.

2. ANS- It helps one see that a particular situation, however tragic is not unique. And that there is nothing new under the sun. With that in mind he has the hope to consider others and See what choices were made and the outcomes. For whatever has been done before can be done again. And the destiny of MAN is not in the low places of the but on the high mountains and elevations.

3. ANS- It helps one see the ultimate triumph of an inspired heart, which can master every circumstance; thus turning it around from one of despair to triumph.

4. ANS - It helps one see that there is always a solution to every challenge no matter what.

5. ANS - It helps one see that life is a process of ups and downs and not an event. And that this process can be mastered for predictable success if one is willing to work thru the challenges which will come with diligence, honesty, hard work and commitment ; into a brighter day.

6. ANS - It helps us harness the inner strength born of Inspiration, which helps us survive the difficult days and lift us to build back for better days.

7. ANS - It helps us learn to cultivate and use all of our gifts and talents; thus building a new foundation which sets a sure path for a brighter destiny.

8. ANS - It helps us readjust or realign our priorities, in order to achieve our highest aspirations; raise the bar and stretch your

capacity to do more. It is what will enable you to live beyond your current limitations. Keeping in mind that this process is not about who you were yesterday or who you are today, but who you have the potential to become.

Excellencies, Bishop Selee, the Chair and Members of the Board, Madam acting President, Honored Guests, Members of the 2022 Graduating Class, Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman; in closing I believe each of us now sees the the crux of the whole matter - It is simply - TO USE THE INNER INSPIRATION GIVEN TO ALL MEN AND BE THE CHANGE YOU DESIRE.

In order to grasp this amazing, unlimited yet special concept one must:

1. SEE DIFFERENTLY AND LET THE POWER INSIDE RISE TO YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS
2. STEP FORWARD AND DO NOT FEAR FOR THE ONLY PLACE ONE CAN GO IS UP
3. REMAIN CONSCIOUS THAT WHAT IS HAPPENING INSIDE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT IS HAPPENING OUTSIDE
4. FOCUS and REMAIN DETERMINED
5. DO NOT JOIN THE CHORUS OF COMPLAINERS and NAYSAYERS, it saps your energy
6. LET THE CHANGE BEGIN WITH YOU AS YOU ARE THE CARRIER AND CREATOR OF YOUR DESTINY
7. NEVER ALLOW OTHERS TO CHANGE THINGS FOR YOU, YOU MUST BUILD WHAT YOUR EYES HAVE SEEN AND YOUR HEART BELIEVES. FOR THOUGH DAILY REALITIES ARE CONSTANTLY CHANGING , EVERYDAY MIRACLES ARE HAPPENING ALL AROUND US, DESTINIES ARE BEING FORGED AND WONDERS ABOUND EVERYWHERE.

SO FIND YOUR STAR AND REACH FOR IT.

REMEMBER THAT THE VISIONS IN YOUR HEAD, TRANSLATE INTO THE WORDS YOU SPEAK, WHICH CREATE EITHER THE LIMITS OF YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES OR THE EXPANSION OF YOUR GROWTH INTO THE MAGICAL REALM.

THE CHOICE IS ALWAYS YOURS ALONE.

MARK TWAIN ONCE SAID - THAT THE MOST POWERFUL
AGENT OF CHANGE IS THE RIGHT WORD. AND
WHENEVER WE COME UPON ONE OF THOSE INTENSELY
RIGHT WORDS, THE RESULTING EFFECT IS A SPIRITUAL,
PHYSICAL AND ELECTRIC PROMPT.

AS YOU BEGIN A NEW PHASE OF LIFE, JUST BELIEVE
THAT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE AND GO WORK IT.

CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES.

I THANK YOU.