

## HIGH SCHOOL LESSON PLAN OUTLINE

Submitted by the Maryland-Liberia Sister State Education Subcommittee

April 10, 2008

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### MUSEUM CONNECTION: [TBD]

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**Purpose:** By analyzing the role of Marylanders – whites and freed blacks– in the formation of the republic of Liberia, students will understand the past and present connections between the state of Maryland and Liberia’s Maryland and Bong Counties. Students will recognize the importance of global citizenship as exemplified in the Maryland-Liberia Sister States project. Students will appreciate the importance of genealogy, using the example of the prominent Bowen family of Maryland, whose ancestors traveled to Maryland County in Liberia in the early 1800’s and whose later descendants include the first African American to serve in the US Congress.

**Grade Level and Content Area:** High School 9-12, Social Studies and English Language Arts

**Time Frame:** Two Class Periods (plus extension lesson options)

#### Social Studies VSC

- The student will evaluate the effectiveness of international alliances and organizations from the perspective of the United States (2.1.2).
- The student will analyze the economic, political and social consequences of Reconstruction. (5.1.2)

#### English Language Arts VSC:

- The student will use after-reading strategies appropriate to both the text and purpose for reading by summarizing, comparing, contrasting, synthesizing, drawing conclusions, and validating the purpose for reading. (1.1.3)
- The student will compose to inform by using appropriate types of prose (2.1.1).

**Objective:** Students will examine historical and cultural connections between Maryland and Liberia. Students will appreciate the Bowen family ancestral links to Liberia beginning with the Maryland-based emigration movement to Africa initiated by the American Colonization Society and engage in their own genealogical search through an oral history interview with a family member.

### VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS

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- **American Colonization Society (ACS)** – An organization of white clergymen, abolitionists, and slave owners founded in 1816 that led the resettlement of Black Marylanders in Africa and governed the Commonwealth of Liberia until its independence in 1847.
- **Americo-Liberians** – They are a Liberian ethnicity of African American descent whose ancestry can be traced to free-born and formerly enslaved African-American immigrants who became founders of Liberia and other colonies along the coast in places that would become Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.

- **Appropriate/Appropriation** – Appropriation is the act of taking possession of or assigning purpose to properties or ideas
- **Bilateral Agreement** – An agreement between two countries or a government-to-government agreement as in the case of Bong County, Liberia and Baltimore County, Maryland (US).
- **Civil War** - A civil war is a war in which parties within the same culture, society or nationality fight against each other for the control of political power.
- **Colonization** - Colonization occurs whenever any one or more species populates a new area and establishes settler colonies, trading posts, and plantations with the its own population, ruling the natives' territories.
- **Coup d'état** - It is the sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group.
- **Emigration** – Emigration is the act and the phenomenon of leaving one's native country or region to settle in another.
- **Genealogy** – Genealogy is the study of a family's lineage.
- **Grebo** – An ethnic group within the larger Kru group of West Africa whose members are primarily found in Maryland County, Liberia.
- **Indigenous** – Indigenous means that something or someone is native to or originally from a particular area.
- **Kru** – An ethnic group who live in the interior of Liberia, whose history is marked by a strong sense of ethnicity and resistance to occupation.
- **Maryland Colonization Society** – A division of the American Colonization Society (ACS) that broke away from the ACS during the 1830s, ran its own colony of Maryland, in Liberia, and issued its own currency.
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** – An official agreement whose purpose is to define the expectations, terms and conditions of the working relationship between two (2) parties. It is frequently the predecessor to a formal agreement.
- **Proclamation** – An official declaration or a formal announcement.
- **Repatriate** - A person who has returned to the country of origin or whose citizenship has been restored.
- **Republic** – A democratic political system in which the supreme power lies in a body of citizens who can elect people to represent them.
- **Sister State Relationships** - Initiated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956, Sister State relationships are official international partnership links between local governments enacted by the Mayor or Governor of each region created to involve people and organized groups at all levels of society in diplomacy and minimize world conflicts.

## **MATERIALS**

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### **FOR THE TEACHER**

- WBAL-TV video clip, “Africa’s Maryland” (website address below)
  - Materials: Computer, computer projector, screen (optional)

### **FOR THE STUDENT**

- **Student Resource Sheet 1** – Assignment Sheet
- **Student Resource Sheet 2** – Data Collection Sheet - Historical Facts

- **Student Resource Sheet 3** – Map of Liberia
- **Student Resource Sheet 4** – A History of Liberia: From Past to Present
- **Student Resource Sheet 5** - Memorandum of Understanding Sister State Program Agreement
- **Student Resource Sheet 6** – Data Collection Sheet
- **Student Resource Sheet 7** – Oral History Description/Guidelines/Assignment
- **Student Resource Sheet 8** – Former Senator Michael Bowen Mitchell Oral History And Interview Sample

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY – RESOURCES**

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- Callum, Agnes Kane, *Flower of the Forest: Black Genealogical Journal*. Sandy Springs Museum, 1984.
- Hall, Richard. *On Africa's Shore: A History of Maryland in Liberia, 1834-1857*. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Historical Society, 2003.
- Jackson, Ranney B. (Superintendent of Bong County, The Republic of Liberia), Speech delivered in Annapolis, MD, 09/27/2007.
- Memorandum of Understanding Sister State Program Agreement between State of Maryland of the United States of America and Bong County and Maryland County of the Republic of Liberia

### **WEB SITES:**

- *"Maps of Liberia, 1830 to 1870" from The Library of Congress American Colonization Society Collection* <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/libhtml/libhome.html>
- *"History of Liberia: A Timeline" from The Library of Congress American Colonization Society Collection* <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/libhtml/liberia.html>
- *The African-American Mosaic: A Library of Congress Resource Guide for the Study of Black History & Culture* <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/afam003.html>
- *"Colonization" – The African-American Mosaic: A Library of Congress Resource Guide for the Study of Black History & Culture* <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/afam002.html>
- *WBAL-TV video, "Africa's Maryland"* [http://www.wbaltv.com/video\\_legacy/11260264/index.html](http://www.wbaltv.com/video_legacy/11260264/index.html)
- *You Tube Video on "The New Liberia"* [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivWnZIJ\\_EOQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivWnZIJ_EOQ)

- *Embassy of Liberia in the United States*  
<http://www.embassyofliberia.org/>
- *Stanford University's List of Websites on Liberia*  
<http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/liberia.html>
- *U.S. Department of State Overview of the Nation of Liberia*  
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm>
- "Liberia: Maryland (USA) Signs Bilateral Agreement with Bong County"  
<http://allafrica.com/stories/200708211124.html>
- "Maryland Signs Compact with Liberian Counties"  
<http://www.wbaltv.com/news/13987134/detail.html>
- *DeBartolo Carmack, Sharon, "Interviewing Mom and Grandma: Oral History Tips"*  
[http://www.genealogy.com/95\\_carmack.html](http://www.genealogy.com/95_carmack.html)
- *UCLA Library: Center for Oral History Research*  
<http://www2.library.ucla.edu/libraries/6445.cfm>
- <http://www.pbs.org/wqmh/globalconnections/liberia/essays/history>
- <http://personal.denison.edu/~waite/liberia/history/acs.htm>
- <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/afam002.html>
- <http://www.mfp-liberia.org>
- <http://www.sos.state.md.us/International/MDSSP.htm>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ElLEN\\_Johnson-Sirleaf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ElLEN_Johnson-Sirleaf)

## TEACHER – HISTORIC BACKGROUND

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Six thousand miles from the United States lies a country whose flag bears a striking resemblance to the American one: alternating red and white horizontal stripes and, in the upper left-hand corner, a dark blue square. Against this blue background is a lone white star -- the star of liberty. The flag is a symbol of the history of the Liberian state, its relationship with America, and its search for its own identity.

The present-day Republic of Liberia occupies 43,000 square miles (slightly more than Tennessee) in West Africa. It is bordered on the southwest by the Atlantic Ocean and surrounded by Guinea, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast. From antiquity through the 1700s, many ethnic groups from the surrounding regions settled in the area, making Liberia one of Africa's most culturally rich and diverse countries. Settled in the early 1800s by freeborn Blacks and former slaves from America, Liberia, whose name

means "land of freedom," has always struggled with its double cultural heritage: that of the settlers and of the indigenous Africans.

### **From America to West Africa**

In 1816, a group made up mostly of Quakers and slaveholders in Washington, D.C., formed the American Colonization Society (ACS). The Quakers opposed slavery, and the slaveholders opposed the freedom of Blacks, but they agreed on one thing: that Black Americans should be repatriated to Africa. The Quakers felt that freeborn Blacks and former slaves would face better chances for freedom in Africa than in the United States. They also saw repatriation as a way of spreading Christianity through Africa. The slaveholders' motives were less charitable: They viewed repatriation of Blacks as a way of avoiding a slave rebellion like the one that had taken place on the island of Santo Domingo, today's Haiti.

Despite opposition from many Blacks and from white abolitionists, the repatriation program, funded by ACS member subscriptions and a number of state legislatures, moved forward. In 1822, the first 86 voluntary, Black emigrants landed on Cape Montserrat, on what was then known as the Grain Coast. They arrived with white agents of the ACS who would govern them for many years. Many others followed, settling on land sometimes purchased, sometimes obtained more forcefully, from indigenous chiefs.

### **The American Colonization Society**

The roots of the colonization movement date back to various plans first proposed in the eighteenth century. From the start, colonization of free blacks in Africa was an issue on which both whites and blacks were divided. Some blacks supported emigration because they thought that black Americans would never receive justice in the United States. Others believed African-Americans should remain in the United States to fight against slavery and for full legal rights as American citizens. Some whites saw colonization as a way of ridding the nation of blacks, while others believed black Americans would be happier in Africa, where they could live free of racial discrimination. Still others believed black American colonists could play a central role in Christianizing and civilizing Africa.

The American Colonization Society was established in 1816 by Robert Finley to send free African-Americans to Africa as an alternative to emancipation in the United States and as an attempt to satisfy two groups in America. Ironically, these groups were on opposite ends of the spectrum involving slavery in the early 1800's. One group consisted of philanthropists, clergy and abolitionists who wanted to free African slaves and their descendants and provide them with the opportunity to return to Africa. The other group was the slave owners who feared free people of color and wanted to expel them from America.

Both of these groups felt that free blacks would be unable to assimilate into the white society of this country. John Randolph, one famous slave owner called free blacks "promoters of mischief." At this time, about 2 million Negroes lived in America of which 200,000 were free persons of color. Henry Clay, a southern congressman and sympathizer of the plight of free blacks, believed that because of "unconquerable prejudice resulting from their color, they never could amalgamate with the free whites of this country."

On December 21, 1816, a group of exclusively white upper-class males including James Monroe, Bushrod Washington, Andrew Jackson, Francis Scott Key, and Daniel Webster met at the Davis hotel in Washington D.C. with Henry Clay presiding over the meeting. They met one week later and adopted a constitution. During the next three years, the society raised money by selling membership. The Society's

members relentlessly pressured Congress and the President for support. In 1819, they received \$100,000 from Congress and in January 1820 the first ship, the *Elizabeth*, sailed from New York heading for West Africa with three white ACS agents and 88 emigrants.

In 1822, the ACS established on the west coast of Africa a colony that in 1847 became the independent nation of Liberia. By 1867, the society had sent more than 13,000 emigrants. Beginning in the 1830s, the society was harshly attacked by abolitionists, who tried to discredit colonization as a slaveholder's scheme. After the Civil War, when many blacks wanted to go to Liberia, financial support for colonization had waned. During its later years the society focused on educational and missionary efforts in Liberia rather than emigration.

In 1913 and at its dissolution in 1964, the society donated its records to the Library of Congress. The material contains a wealth of information about the foundation of the society, its role in establishing Liberia, efforts to manage and defend the colony, fund-raising, recruitment of settlers, and the way in which black settlers built and led the new nation.

The ship arrived first at Freetown, Sierra Leone then sailed south to what is now the Northern coast of Liberia and made an effort to establish a settlement. All three whites and 22 of the emigrants died within three weeks from yellow fever. The remainders returned to Sierra Leone and waited for another ship. The *Nautilus* sailed twice in 1821 and established a settlement at Mesurado Bay on an island they named Perseverance. It was difficult for the early settlers, made of mostly free-born blacks, who were not born into slavery, but were denied the full rights of American citizenship. The native Africans resisted the expansion of the settlers resulting in many armed conflicts. Nevertheless, in the next decade 2,638 African-Americans migrated to the area. Also, the colony entered an agreement with the U.S. Government to accept freed slaves captured from slave ships.

During the next 20 years the colony continued to grow and establish economic stability. Since the establishment of the colony, the ACS employed white agents to govern the colony. In 1842, Joseph Jenkins Roberts became the first non-white governor of Liberia. In 1847, the legislature of Liberia declared itself an independent state, with J.J. Roberts elected as its first President.

J. J. Roberts, Liberia's first President, spent his first year as Liberia's leader attempting to attain recognition from European countries and the United States. England and France were the first countries to accept Liberian independence in 1848. In 1849, Portugal, Brazil, Sardinia, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Hamburg, Bremen, Lubeck, and Haiti all formally recognized Liberia. However, the United States withheld recognition until 1862, during the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, because the U.S. leaders believed that the southern states would not accept a black ambassador in Washington D.C. Roberts was re-elected three more times to serve a total of eight years. During his leadership, the coastline was extended to over 600 miles and an institution of higher learning, later to become Liberia University, was established. By 1860, through treaties and purchases with local African leaders, Liberia had extended its boundaries to include a 600 mile coastline.

Following Roberts, Stephen Allen Benson served as president for eight years. His biggest accomplishment was the annexation of the Colony of Maryland, now Maryland County, into the Republic of Liberia in 1857. He also obtained the recognition of Liberia from the following countries: Belgium, 1858; Denmark, 1869; United States and Italy, 1862; Norway and Sweden, 1863; and Haiti, 1864.

The president from 1864 to 1868 was Daniel Bashiel Warner. His main concern was how the indigenous people, particularly the natives in the interior, could be brought into the society and become useful citizens. He organized the first expedition into the dense forest lead by J. K. Anderson.

The society in Liberia developed into three segments: The settlers with European-African lineage; freed slaves from slave ships and the West Indies; and indigenous native people. These groups would have a profound affect on the history of Liberia.

### **Early Independence**

The first years were a challenge: The settlers suffered from malaria and yellow fever, common in the area's coastal plains and mangrove swamps, and from attacks by the native populations who were, at various times, unhappy -- unhappy with the expansion of the settlements along the coast; with the settlers' efforts to put an end to the lucrative slave trading in which some ethnic groups were engaged; and at the settlers' attempts to Christianize their communities. Despite these difficulties, the Black settlers were determined to show the world that they could create, develop, and run their own country. And so they kept arriving.

In 1824, the settlement was named Monrovia, after the American president (and ACS member) James Monroe, and the colony became the Republic of Liberia. Over the next 40 years, 19,000 African American repatriates, sometimes known as Americo-Liberians, settled in Liberia, along with some 5,000 Africans recaptured from slave ships, and a small number of West Indian immigrants.

### **A two-tiered society struggles to stand on its own feet**

The settlers recreated American society, building churches and homes that resembled Southern plantations. And they continued to speak English. They also entered into a complex relationship with the indigenous people -- marrying them in some cases, discriminating against them in others, but all the time attempting to "civilize" them and impose Western values on the traditional communities. After Liberia declared its independence in 1847, Joseph J. Roberts, a freeborn Black who was born in the American state of Virginia, was elected Liberia's first president. It had taken fewer than 25 years for the Blacks from America to begin to govern their own, free country. Soon after his inauguration, President Roberts traveled to Europe, where he was received in the courts of Queen Victoria and Napoleon III. Queen Victoria gave him a gunship to combat slavery, which had continued along the coast with unscrupulous native traders who preyed on weaker ethnic groups. Not surprisingly, England and France were the first countries to recognize Liberia's independence in 1848. Roberts and his senators, all American-born, resolved to create a country based on the principles of justice and equal rights.

The settlers built schools and a university, and during the early years, agriculture, shipbuilding, and trade flourished. Yet as Liberia expanded its borders, a government of repatriates located largely on the coast attempted to establish control over a growing native population located largely in the interior. Over the next few decades, escalating economic difficulties began to weaken the state's dominance over the coastal indigenous population. When the financially burdened ACS withdrew its support, conditions worsened as Liberia tried desperately to modernize its largely agricultural economy. The cost of imports was far greater than the income generated by exports of coffee, rice, palm oil, sugarcane, and timber. Liberia was also struggling under the burden of heavy loans, primarily from Britain. By 1909, the government was bankrupt and forced to borrow further, in large part from the United States.

To bring in more revenue, the Liberian state leased large areas of land to American companies such as Firestone, which operated a massive rubber plantation in the African nation. The terms of the leases

were strongly in favor of the private companies. The final straw came in 1930 when an accusation by the League of Nations, of "forced labor ... hardly distinguishable from slavery," turned out to be true. The government collapsed, and the new president, Edwin Barclay, dealt with the mounting discontent among his people by introducing increasingly repressive laws.

### **An international profile, and trouble at home**

Despite its political, economic, and social troubles, Liberia, as the only free republic in Africa, was a model for African colonies struggling to achieve independence. William V.S. Tubman, elected president in 1944, further highlighted the country's world profile by traveling abroad and allowing international investment in Liberia. With this investment and the income from the newly discovered mineral deposits, he modernized parts of Liberia (mostly along the coast) and built schools, roads, and hospitals. Tubman also expanded the incorporation of indigenous populations into the social and economic mainstream, granting them, for example, the right to vote. Under Tubman, Liberia was a founding member of the United Nations as well as of the Organization of African Unity, and he strongly championed the independence of other African states.

Despite these developments, the gap between the ruling elite and the indigenous populations increased. Tubman was criticized for being too influenced by the United States and its interests in the area (i.e., the fight against communism), and for repressing political opposition. Tubman's rule became gradually more authoritarian : He changed the constitution to allow himself to remain in office for seven consecutive terms, gagged the press, and introduced a system of government spies to report on all political activity.

By the time Tubman died in 1971, frustrations in Liberia were running high. His vice president and successor, William R. Tolbert, attempted to improve the economic and political climate by introducing many new changes. But the damage of the past seemed irreparable. The majority of the population was poor and lacked basic amenities such as access to safe water and electricity. Tolbert's attempt to liberalize Liberian society backfired -- some thought he was moving too quickly, while others thought he wasn't moving quickly enough. Many could no longer bear the political dominance of the descendants of American settlers. At the same time, Tolbert's own administration opposed his efforts to bring more indigenous Liberians into the upper echelons of government. Tolbert's proposal in 1979 to increase the price of imported rice, a basic part of the Liberian diet, as a tactic to encourage local production was interpreted negatively, and this provided the spark for demonstrations which rapidly turned violent.

### **Violence spreads**

Some soldiers in the army sympathized with the demonstrators, but others strongly believed in the power of the military. In 1980, a group of enlisted men led by Samuel K. Doe, a 28-year-old indigenous master sergeant, fought their way into the presidential mansion and shot Tolbert to death. Shortly afterwards, 13 members of the Cabinet were publicly executed. Hundreds of government workers fled the country, while others were imprisoned.

Many people welcomed Doe's takeover as a shift favoring the majority of the population that had been excluded from power. The new government, led by the leaders of the coup d'état and calling itself the People's Redemption Council (PRC), lacked experience and was ill prepared to rule. Soon there were internal rifts, and Doe began to systematically eliminate Council members who challenged his authority. Paranoid about the possibility of a counter-coup, Doe began to favor people of his own ethnic background, the Krahn, placing them in key positions. Among ordinary Liberians, support for Doe's government soon dampened.

In 1985, Doe declared himself the winner of a presidential election he had actually lost. His corrupt government became more repressive, shutting down newspapers and banning political activity. The government's mistreatment of certain ethnic groups, particularly the Gio (or Dan) and the Mano in the north, resulted in divisions and violence among indigenous populations who until then had coexisted relatively peacefully.

### **Civil war**

The brutal treatment they faced at the hands of the Liberian army drove some indigenous northerners across the border to the Ivory Coast. There, a man named Charles Taylor organized and trained many of them. Taylor had previously served as deputy minister of commerce under Doe, but was imprisoned for allegedly transferring millions of government funds into his own account. He was reported to have bribed his way out of a Massachusetts jail. When Taylor and his force of 100 rebels reentered Liberia in 1989, on Christmas Eve, thousands of Gio and Mano joined them. While they formed the core of his rebel army, there were many Liberians of other ethnic backgrounds who joined as well. A brutal civil war ensued.

In September 1990, Doe was captured and tortured to death by another rebel group originally associated with Taylor, while fighting between the rebels and the Liberian army escalated into civil war. Entire villages were emptied as people fled. Soldiers, some of them still children, committed unspeakable atrocities, raping and murdering people of all ages, in what became one of the world's worst episodes of ethnic cleansing .

Five years later, at a conference sponsored by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations and the United States, the European Union, and the Organization of African Unity, Charles Taylor agreed to a cease-fire and a timetable to demobilize and disarm his troops. In a climate hardly conducive to free movement and security of persons, he won a 1997 presidential election against 12 other candidates. Liberians had voted for him in the hope that he would end the bloodshed. Taylor, furthermore, has been accused of backing guerrillas in neighboring countries and funneling diamond monies into arms purchases for the rebel armies he supported, and into luxuries for himself.

### **The end of the turmoil**

Seven years of civil war undid much of what Liberia had achieved. Most of the country's infrastructure and public buildings were destroyed. Two hundred thousand people were killed, and another 800,000 displaced from their homes. Close to another 700,000 became refugees in neighboring countries. Recent reports from international political, environmental, and humanitarian groups point to Liberia's sky-high unemployment, continuing human rights violations, and the uncertainty of the upcoming 2003 elections.

Today, the Liberian people are just beginning the slow process of recovering from the economic, social, political, and psychological trauma of the war. With the election of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in 2005, Liberia has promise of sustained economic development and political stability. Born October 29, 1938, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is Africa's first elected female head of state and Liberia's first elected female president. Elected President in the 2005 presidential election, she took office in January 2006. She is often referred to as the "Iron Lady", which comes from her iron will and determination.

On March 15, 2006, President Johnson-Sirleaf addressed a joint meeting of the United States Congress, asking for American support to help her country "become a brilliant beacon, an example to Africa and

the world of what love of liberty can achieve.” On July 26, 2007, President Sirleaf celebrated Liberia's 160th Independence Day under the theme "Liberia at 160: Reclaiming the future."

### **Maryland County, Liberia and Maryland, USA - A Shared History**

Maryland County is the southern and easternmost county of Liberia's 15 counties. It borders the Atlantic Ocean on the south, Côte d'Ivoire on the east, Grand Kru County on the west and River Gee County on the northwest. It is named after the state of Maryland in the United States, and its capital city is Harper. The port city of Harper, previously known as Cape Palmas, is the capital of the County and is named after US Congressman Robert Goodloe Harper who assisted the Maryland State Colonization Society to facilitate the return of freed slaves to Liberia. A May 2004 census estimated the county's population to be 107,100.

Established as an African Republic in 1827, the “Colony of Maryland in Africa” was founded by the Maryland State Colonization Society in the United States of America as a homeland for freed American slaves in 12 February, 1834. It later gained independence and became the “State of Maryland in Africa” on 29 May 1854. In 1857, what was then the Republic of Maryland united with the country of Liberia to become Maryland County. Significant Dates in Maryland County's history include:

*February 12, 1834 - Establishment of Maryland-in-Africa - a colony of the Maryland State Colonization Society*

*February 2, 1841 - Establishment of The State of Maryland-in-Liberia*

*May 29, 1854 - Independent State of Maryland in Liberia*

*March 18, 1857 - Incorporation into the Republic of Liberia as Maryland County.*

The longest serving president in Liberia's history, William V.S. Tubman, and the first indigenous Vice President of Liberia, Henry Too Wesley, were born in Maryland County.

Maryland County today is divided into four districts --Barrobo District, Harper Commonwealth, Karluway District and Pleebo/Sodoken district. The main ethnic group in the county is Grebo. Since UNMIL's (The United Nations Mission in Liberia) deployment of the Senegalese Contingent, Military Observers and UN Police in July 2004, Maryland County has remained relatively calm. Peacekeepers vigilantly monitor the border along northern Maryland and southern River Gee in view of the unresolved political impasse in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire. Local security personnel from the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization as well as Customs and Internal Revenue officials are deployed at strategic border crossing points.

### **Maryland- Liberia Sister States Relationship**

On August 27, 2007, the governors of Bong County and Maryland County (Liberia) and Maryland State (USA) signed a sister state agreement for the purpose of maintaining diplomatic relations, developing and maintaining business, cultural and educational exchanges, hosting and co-sponsoring networking and informational events and serving as a clearinghouse for information and contacts related to the Sister States.

Located northeast of the capital of Monrovia, Grbanga of Bong County was founded in 1821. It established a sister city relationship with Baltimore City, MD in 1973 to promote international cultural, educational and economic exchanges.

In fact, the Maryland (USA) Sister States Program provides its Maryland citizens and businesses a unique opportunity to build relationships in other parts of the world. Each Sister State relationship is

strategically chosen to enhance the economic, cultural, and educational interests of the people of Maryland. The Sister States Program provides a forum for economic development, international trade, and increased global understanding. Additionally, the program promotes cultural understanding through high school, college, and university exchanges, and a variety of cultural and athletic exchanges.

**Sources:**

- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/liberia/essays/history>
- <http://personal.denison.edu/~waite/liberia/history/acs.htm>
- <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/afam002.html>
- <http://www.mfp-liberia.org>
- <http://www.sos.state.md.us/International/MDSSP.htm>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellen\\_Johnson-Sirleaf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellen_Johnson-Sirleaf)

## LESSON DEVELOPMENT

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### LESSON I FOCUS: LIBERIA'S HISTORICAL & PRESENT DAY CONNECTIONS WITH MARYLAND, USA

1. **Motivation:** Distribute and read aloud lesson instructions to students (**Student Resource Sheet 1**).
2. Engage students in a discussion of questions they would like to answer over the course of their research. Students will write their individual questions on Student Resource Sheet 1. Invite students to share some of their questions with the class and then write significant questions on the board.
3. Review key terms/concepts with students (**Student Resource Sheet 1**).
4. Distribute Historical Data Collection Handout (**Student Resource Sheet 2**) and explain how it is to be used to collect historical data on Maryland and Liberia. Then distribute the map of Liberia (**Student Resource Sheet 3**) along with the Student Resource Sheet 5.
5. Alternate (a) reading **Student Resource Sheet 4** aloud with the class with (b) showing WBAL-TV video, "Africa's Maryland" at appropriate or designated prompts. Using **Student Resource Sheets 2 and 5**, students will gather and record historical data from textual and video sources.
6. **Assessment:** Divide students into groups representing the different groups of people involved in the emigration to and the formation of the republic of Liberia – freed black Marylanders, white ACS members (slaveholders and Quakers), black and white abolitionists, and the indigenous Africans. A fifth group will be comprised of modern day Maryland and Liberian Sister State and Sister City officials. Using **Student Resource Sheet 6**, students will discuss and record the interests and arguments of each group.
7. **Closure:** Designate a spokesperson from each group to articulate the perspective of his/her group to the class.

## LESSON II FOCUS: GENEALOGY AND ORAL HISTORY

1. **Motivation:** Using **Student Resource Sheet 7**, explain what “oral history” is and its role within genealogical research.
2. Introduce former Senator Michael Bowen Mitchell as a living example of a Marylander who has ancestral ties to Liberia, using **Student Resource Sheet 8** as an oral history sample.
3. Assign students to conduct an oral history interview with a family member to discover their own background or with a person within their local community to research their family background.
4. Discuss guidelines for obtaining and writing an oral history account (**Student Resource Sheet 7**).
5. **Assessment:** Students will write and submit written oral histories of their subjects.
6. **Closure:** Students will share excerpts of their subject’s oral history through oral presentation activity.

## THOUGHTFUL APPLICATIONS

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- What role do the current Sister State and Sister City relationships play in modern day Liberia? If you were involved in one of the Maryland-Liberia’s Sister State/Sister City projects, explain why and how you would be involved.
- In light of past conflicts between Americo-Liberians and indigenous Africans, what perceptions might today’s Liberians have about US aid towards the redevelopment of Liberia?

## LESSON EXTENSION(S):

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- **Writing Assignment:** Suppose you are a native African witnessing the arrival of Maryland’s Black Colonists on your country’s shores. Write an original letter in the voice of a native Liberian in response to their arrival.
- **Research Paper:** Students can explore modern day cultural similarities between Liberia and America (i.e. food, language, architecture, etc.) through historical research.
- **Cross-Cultural Activity:** Maryland HS students engage in pen pal writing and exchange Bong or Maryland County HS students as an opportunity to make cultural connections in support of the MD-Liberia Sister State relationship.
- **Research Project:** Students engage in an in-depth genealogical search of their family histories using on-line search tools, databases and local resources.

## STUDENT RESOURCE SHEET 1:

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### ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Suppose you recently discover that your ancestors were one of several freed Black Marylanders who immigrated to Africa and helped establish the republic of Liberia in the early 1800s. As a result of your discovery, you eagerly decide to embark on a quest to learn more about your Liberian ancestral history through a genealogical search. In order to conduct your search, you must gather information about this history through:

- Documented Historical Facts about the Maryland-Liberian Ancestral Link, and
- Oral History Narratives

However, every successful genealogical search must begin with a few fact-finding questions. Therefore, write at least three to four questions you would like to find the answers to over the course of your historical search (i.e. “Why did black Marylanders immigrate to Africa?”).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Lastly, before you start your research process, you must become familiar with the following terms/concepts:

- **American Colonization Society (ACS)** – An organization of white clergymen, abolitionists, and slave owners founded in 1816 that led the resettlement of Black Marylanders in Africa and governed the Commonwealth of Liberia until its independence in 1847.
- **Americo-Liberians** – They are a Liberian ethnicity of African American descent whose ancestry can be traced to free-born and formerly enslaved African-American immigrants who became founders of Liberia and other colonies along the coast in places that would become Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.
- **Appropriate/Appropriation** – Appropriation is the act of taking possession of or assigning purpose to properties or ideas
- **Bilateral Agreement** – An agreement between two countries or a government-to-government agreement as in the case of Bong County, Liberia and Baltimore County, Maryland (US).
- **Civil War** - A civil war is a war in which parties within the same culture, society or nationality fight against each other for the control of political power.
- **Colonization** - Colonization occurs whenever any one or more species populates a new area and establishes settler colonies, trading posts, and plantations with the its own population, ruling the natives' territories.

- **Coup d'état** - It is the sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group.
- **Emigration** – Emigration is the act and the phenomenon of leaving one's native country or region to settle in another.
- **Genealogy** – Genealogy is the study of a family's lineage.
- **Grebo** – An ethnic group within the larger Kru group of West Africa whose members are primarily found in Maryland County, Liberia.
- **Indigenous** – Indigenous means that something or someone is native to or originally from a particular area.
- **Kru** – An ethnic group who live in the interior of Liberia, whose history is marked by a strong sense of ethnicity and resistance to occupation.
- **Maryland Colonization Society** – A division of the American Colonization Society (ACS) that broke away from the ACS during the 1830s, ran its own colony of Maryland, in Liberia, and issued its own currency.
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** – An official agreement whose purpose is to define the expectations, terms and conditions of the working relationship between two (2) parties. It is frequently the predecessor to a formal agreement.
- **Proclamation** – A proclamation is an official declaration or a formal announcement.
- **Repatriate** - A person who has returned to the country of origin or whose citizenship has been restored.
- **Republic** – A democratic political system in which the supreme power lies in a body of citizens who can elect people to represent them.
- **Sister State Relationships** - Initiated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956, Sister State relationships are official international partnership links between local governments enacted by the Mayor or Governor of each region created to involve people and organized groups at all levels of society in diplomacy and minimize world conflicts.

## STUDENT RESOURCE SHEET 2:

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### DATA COLLECTION SHEET - HISTORICAL FACTS

KEY HISTORICAL FACTS:	
Directions: Using the materials provided, complete this worksheet with key historical facts.	
<b>Freed Marylanders' Reasons for Leaving America</b>	
<b>Perspectives on Immigration of Freed Marylanders to Africa</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-Emigration</li> <li>• Anti-Emigration</li> </ul>	
<b>Responsible Parties for Organizing and Funding Emigration to Africa</b>	

<b>US Departure Point(s) and African Coast Arrival Point(s)</b>	
<b>Reactions to New Settlers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous Africans</li> <li>• New Settlers'</li> </ul>	
<b>Living Conditions in Africa</b>	
<b>When and How was Maryland County in Liberia Established as a Republic</b>	
<b>When and How was the Republic of Liberia Established as a</b>	
<b>Key Presidents in the History of Liberia (years of term, ethnic origins, most notable accomplishments/acts)</b>	
<b>Existing Sister State/Sister City Relationships</b>	
<b>MY FACT-FINDING QUESTIONS:</b>	
<b>1.</b>	
<b>2.</b>	
<b>3.</b>	
<b>4.</b>	
<b>5.</b>	

## STUDENT RESOURCE SHEET 3:

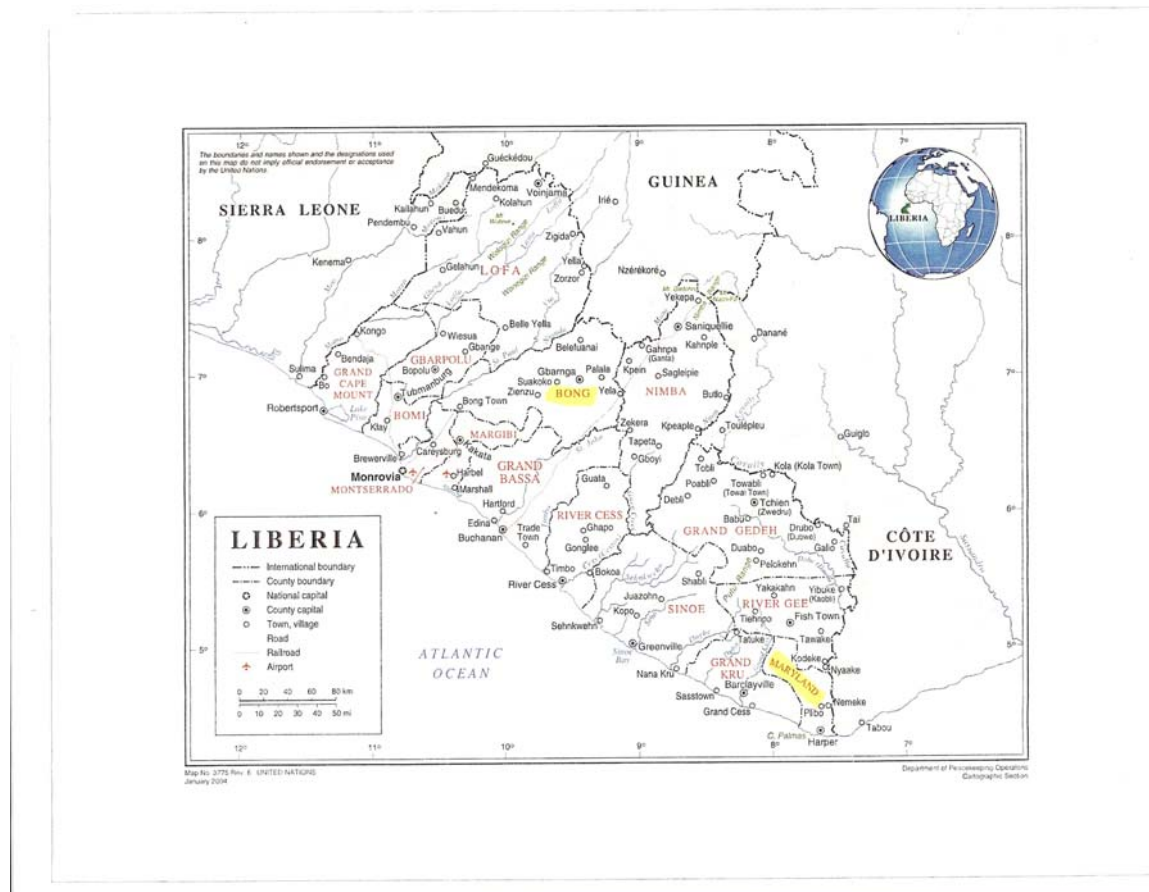


Figure 1: Map of Liberia

## STUDENT RESOURCE SHEET 4:

### A HISTORY OF LIBERIA: PAST TO PRESENT

Six thousand miles from the United States lies a country whose flag bears a striking resemblance to the American one: alternating red and white horizontal stripes and, in the upper left-hand corner, a dark blue square. Against this blue background is a lone white star -- the star of liberty. The flag is a symbol of the history of the Liberian state, its relationship with America, and its search for its own identity.

The present-day Republic of Liberia occupies 43,000 square miles (slightly more than Tennessee) in West Africa. It is bordered on the southwest by the Atlantic Ocean and surrounded by Guinea, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast. From antiquity through the 1700s, many ethnic groups from the surrounding regions settled in the area, making Liberia one of Africa's most culturally rich and diverse countries. Settled in the early 1800s by freeborn Blacks and former slaves from America, Liberia, whose name means "land of freedom," has always struggled with its double cultural heritage: that of the settlers and of the indigenous Africans.

### **From America to West Africa**

In 1816, a group made up mostly of Quakers and slaveholders in Washington, D.C., formed the American Colonization Society (ACS). The Quakers opposed slavery, and the slaveholders opposed the freedom of Blacks, but they agreed on one thing: that Black Americans should be repatriated to Africa. The Quakers felt that freeborn Blacks and former slaves would face better chances for freedom in Africa than in the United States. They also saw repatriation as a way of spreading Christianity through Africa. The slaveholders' motives were less charitable: They viewed repatriation of Blacks as a way of avoiding a slave rebellion like the one that had taken place on the island of Santo Domingo, today's Haiti.

Despite opposition from many Blacks and from white abolitionists, the repatriation program, funded by ACS member subscriptions and a number of state legislatures, moved forward. In 1822, the first 86 voluntary, Black emigrants landed on Cape Montserrat, on what was then known as the Grain Coast. They arrived with white agents of the ACS who would govern them for many years. Many others followed, settling on land sometimes purchased, sometimes obtained more forcefully, from indigenous chiefs.

### **The American Colonization Society**

The roots of the colonization movement date back to various plans first proposed in the eighteenth century. From the start, colonization of free blacks in Africa was an issue on which both whites and blacks were divided. Some blacks supported emigration because they thought that black Americans would never receive justice in the United States. Others believed African-Americans should remain in the United States to fight against slavery and for full legal rights as American citizens. Some whites saw colonization as a way of ridding the nation of blacks, while others believed black Americans would be happier in Africa, where they could live free of racial discrimination. Still others believed black American colonists could play a central role in Christianizing and civilizing Africa.

The American Colonization Society was established in 1816 by Robert Finley to send free African-Americans to Africa as an alternative to emancipation in the United States and as an attempt to satisfy two groups in America. Ironically, these groups were on opposite ends of the spectrum involving slavery in the early 1800's. One group consisted of philanthropists, clergy and abolitionists who wanted to free African slaves and their descendants and provide them with the opportunity to return to Africa. The other group was the slave owners who feared free people of color and wanted to expel them from America.

Both of these groups felt that free blacks would be unable to assimilate into the white society of this country. John Randolph, one famous slave owner called free blacks "promoters of mischief." At this time, about 2 million Negroes lived in America of which 200,000 were free persons of color. Henry Clay, a southern congressman and sympathizer of the plight of free blacks, believed that because of "unconquerable prejudice resulting from their color, they never could amalgamate with the free whites of this country."

On December 21, 1816, a group of exclusively white upper-class males including James Monroe, Bushrod Washington, Andrew Jackson, Francis Scott Key, and Daniel Webster met at the Davis hotel in Washington D.C. with Henry Clay presiding over the meeting. They met one week later and adopted a constitution. During the next three years, the society raised money by selling membership. The Society's members relentlessly pressured Congress and the President for support. In 1819, they received \$100,000 from Congress and in January 1820 the first ship, the *Elizabeth*, sail from New York headed for West Africa with three white ACS agents and 88 emigrants.

In 1822, the society established on the west coast of Africa a colony that in 1847 became the independent nation of Liberia. By 1867, the society had sent more than 13,000 emigrants. Beginning in the 1830s, the society was harshly attacked by abolitionists, who tried to discredit colonization as a slaveholder's scheme. And, after the Civil War, when many blacks wanted to go to Liberia, financial support for colonization had waned. During its later years the society focused on educational and missionary efforts in Liberia rather than emigration.

In 1913 and at its dissolution in 1964, the society donated its records to the Library of Congress. The material contains a wealth of information about the foundation of the society, its role in establishing Liberia, efforts to manage and defend the colony, fund-raising, recruitment of settlers, and the way in which black settlers built and led the new nation.

The ship arrived first at Freetown, Sierra Leone then sailed south to what is now the Northern coast of Liberia and made an effort to establish a settlement. All three whites and 22 of the emigrants died within three weeks from yellow fever. The remainders returned to Sierra Leone and waited from another ship. The *Nautilus* sail twice in 1821 and established a settlement at Mesurado Bay on an island they named Perseverance. It was difficult for the early settlers, made of mostly free-born blacks, who were not born into slavery, but were denied the full rights of American citizenship. The native Africans resisted the expansion of the settlers resulting in many armed conflicts. Nevertheless, in the next decade 2,638 African-Americans migrated to the area. Also, the colony entered an agreement with the U.S. Government to accept freed slaves captured from slave ships.

During the next 20 years the colony continued to grow and establish economic stability. Since the establishment of the colony, the ACS employed white agents to govern the colony. In 1842, Joseph Jenkins Roberts became the first non-white governor of Liberia. In 1847, the legislature of Liberia declared itself an independent state, with J.J. Roberts elected as its first President.

J. J. Roberts, Liberia's first President, spent his first year as Liberia's leader attempting to attain recognition from European countries and the United States. England and France were the first countries to accept Liberian independence in 1848. In 1849, Portugal, Brazil, Sardinia, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Hamburg, Bremen, Lubeck, and Haiti all formally recognized Liberia. However, the United States withheld recognition until 1862, during the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, because the U.S. leaders believed that the southern states would not accept a black ambassador in Washington D.C. Roberts was re-elected three more times to serve a total of eight years. During his leadership, the coastline was extended to over 600 miles and a institution of higher learning, later to become Liberia University, was established. By 1860, through treaties and purchases with local African leaders, Liberia had extended its boundaries to include a 600 mile coastline.

Following Roberts, Stephen Allen Benson serves as president for eight years. His biggest accomplishment was the annexation of the Colony of Maryland, now Maryland Country, into the Republic of Liberia in 1857. He also obtained the recognition of Liberia from the following countries: Belgium, 1858; Denmark, 1869; United States and Italy, 1862; Norway and Sweden, 1863; and Haiti, 1864.

The president from 1864 to 1868 was Daniel Bashiel Warner. His main concern was how the indigenous people, particularly the natives in the interior, could be brought into the society and become useful citizens. He organized the first expedition into the dense forest lead by J. K. Anderson

The society in Liberia developed into three segments: The settlers with European-African lineage; freed slaves from slave ships and the West Indies; and indigenous native people. These groups would have a profound affect on the history of Liberia.

### **Early Independence**

The first years were a challenge: The settlers suffered from malaria and yellow fever, common in the area's coastal plains and mangrove swamps, and from attacks by the native populations who were, at various times, unhappy -- unhappy with the expansion of the settlements along the coast; with the settlers' efforts to put an end to the lucrative slave trading in which some ethnic groups were engaged; and at the settlers' attempts to Christianize their communities. Despite these difficulties, the Black settlers were determined to show the world that they could create, develop, and run their own country. And so they kept arriving.

In 1824, the settlement was named Monrovia, after the American president (and ACS member) James Monroe, and the colony became the Republic of Liberia. Over the next 40 years, 19,000 African American repatriates, sometimes known as Americo-Liberians, settled in Liberia, along with some 5,000 Africans recaptured from slave ships, and a small number of West Indian immigrants.

### **A two-tiered society struggles to stand on its own feet**

The settlers recreated American society, building churches and homes that resembled Southern plantations. And they continued to speak English. They also entered into a complex relationship with the indigenous people -- marrying them in some cases, discriminating against them in others, but all the time attempting to "civilize" them and impose Western values on the traditional communities. After Liberia declared its independence in 1847, Joseph J. Roberts, a freeborn Black who was born in the American state of Virginia, was elected Liberia's first president. It had taken fewer than 25 years for the Blacks from America to begin to govern their own, free country. Soon after his inauguration, President Roberts traveled to Europe, where he was received in the courts of Queen Victoria and Napoleon III. Queen Victoria gave him a gunship to combat slavery, which had continued along the coast with unscrupulous native traders who preyed on weaker ethnic groups. Not surprisingly, England and France were the first countries to recognize Liberia's independence in 1848. Roberts and his senators, all American-born, resolved to create a country based on the principles of justice and equal rights.

The settlers built schools and a university, and during the early years, agriculture, shipbuilding, and trade flourished. Yet as Liberia expanded its borders, a government of repatriates located largely on the coast attempted to establish control over a growing native population located largely in the interior. Over the next few decades, escalating economic difficulties began to weaken the state's dominance over the coastal indigenous population. When the financially burdened ACS withdrew its support, conditions worsened as Liberia tried desperately to modernize its largely agricultural economy. The cost of imports was far greater than the income generated by exports of coffee, rice, palm oil, sugarcane, and timber. Liberia was also struggling under the burden of heavy loans, primarily from Britain. By 1909, the government was bankrupt and forced to borrow further, in large part from the United States.

To bring in more revenue, the Liberian state leased large areas of land to American companies such as Firestone, which operated a massive rubber plantation in the African nation. The terms of the leases were strongly in favor of the private companies. The final straw came in 1930 when an accusation by the League of Nations, of "forced labor ... hardly distinguishable from slavery," turned out to be true. The government collapsed, and the new president, Edwin Barclay, dealt with the mounting discontent among his people by introducing increasingly repressive laws.

### **An international profile, and trouble at home**

Despite its political, economic, and social troubles, Liberia, as the only free republic in Africa, was a model for African colonies struggling to achieve independence. William V.S. Tubman, elected president in 1944, further highlighted the country's world profile by traveling abroad and allowing international investment in Liberia. With this investment and the income from the newly discovered mineral deposits, he modernized parts of Liberia (mostly along the coast) and built schools, roads, and hospitals. Tubman also expanded the incorporation of indigenous populations into the social and economic mainstream, granting them, for example, the right to vote. Under Tubman, Liberia was a founding member of the United Nations as well as of the Organization of African Unity, and he strongly championed the independence of other African states.

Despite these developments, the gap between the ruling elite and the indigenous populations increased. Tubman was criticized for being too influenced by the United States and its interests in the area (i.e., the fight against communism), and for repressing political opposition. Tubman's rule became gradually more authoritarian : He changed the constitution to allow himself to remain in office for seven consecutive terms, gagged the press, and introduced a system of government spies to report on all political activity.

By the time Tubman died in 1971, frustrations in Liberia were running high. His vice president and successor, William R. Tolbert, attempted to improve the economic and political climate by introducing many new changes. But the damage of the past seemed irreparable. The majority of the population was poor and lacked basic amenities such as access to safe water and electricity. Tolbert's attempt to liberalize Liberian society backfired -- some thought he was moving too quickly, while others thought he wasn't moving quickly enough. Many could no longer bear the political dominance of the descendants of American settlers. At the same time, Tolbert's own administration opposed his efforts to bring more indigenous Liberians into the upper echelons of government. Tolbert's proposal in 1979 to increase the price of imported rice, a basic part of the Liberian diet, as a tactic to encourage local production was interpreted negatively, and this provided the spark for demonstrations which rapidly turned violent.

### **Violence spreads**

Some soldiers in the army sympathized with the demonstrators, but others strongly believed in the power of the military. In 1980, a group of enlisted men led by Samuel K. Doe, a 28-year-old indigenous master sergeant, fought their way into the presidential mansion and shot Tolbert to death. Shortly afterwards, 13 members of the Cabinet were publicly executed. Hundreds of government workers fled the country, while others were imprisoned.

Many people welcomed Doe's takeover as a shift favoring the majority of the population that had been excluded from power. The new government, led by the leaders of the coup d'état and calling itself the People's Redemption Council (PRC), lacked experience and was ill prepared to rule. Soon there were internal rifts, and Doe began to systematically eliminate Council members who challenged his authority. Paranoid about the possibility of a counter-coup, Doe began to favor people of his own ethnic background, the Krahn, placing them in key positions. Among ordinary Liberians, support for Doe's government soon dampened.

In 1985, Doe declared himself the winner of a presidential election he had actually lost. His corrupt government became more repressive, shutting down newspapers and banning political activity. The government's mistreatment of certain ethnic groups, particularly the Gio (or Dan) and the Mano in the

north, resulted in divisions and violence among indigenous populations who until then had coexisted relatively peacefully.

### **Civil war**

The brutal treatment they faced at the hands of the Liberian army drove some indigenous northerners across the border to the Ivory Coast. There, a man named Charles Taylor organized and trained many of them. Taylor had previously served as deputy minister of commerce under Doe, but was imprisoned for allegedly transferring millions of government funds into his own account. He was reported to have bribed his way out of a Massachusetts jail. When Taylor and his force of 100 rebels reentered Liberia in 1989, on Christmas Eve, thousands of Gio and Mano joined them. While they formed the core of his rebel army, there were many Liberians of other ethnic backgrounds who joined as well. A brutal civil war ensued.

In September 1990, Doe was captured and tortured to death by another rebel group originally associated with Taylor, while fighting between the rebels and the Liberian army escalated into civil war. Entire villages were emptied as people fled. Soldiers, some of them still children, committed unspeakable atrocities, raping and murdering people of all ages, in what became one of the world's worst episodes of ethnic cleansing .

Five years later, at a conference sponsored by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations and the United States, the European Union, and the Organization of African Unity, Charles Taylor agreed to a cease-fire and a timetable to demobilize and disarm his troops. In a climate hardly conducive to free movement and security of persons, he won a 1997 presidential election against 12 other candidates. Liberians had voted for him in the hope that he would end the bloodshed. Taylor, furthermore, has been accused of backing guerrillas in neighboring countries and funneling diamond monies into arms purchases for the rebel armies he supported, and into luxuries for himself.

### **The end of the turmoil**

Seven years of civil war undid much of what Liberia had achieved. Most of the country's infrastructure and public buildings were destroyed. Two hundred thousand people were killed, and another 800,000 displaced from their homes. Close to another 700,000 became refugees in neighboring countries. Recent reports from international political, environmental, and humanitarian groups point to Liberia's sky-high unemployment, continuing human rights violations, and the uncertainty of the upcoming 2003 elections.

Today, the Liberian people are just beginning the slow process of recovering from the economic, social, political, and psychological trauma of the war. With the election of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in 2005, Liberia has promise of sustained economic development and political stability. Born October 29, 1938, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is Africa's first elected female head of state and Liberia's first elected female president. Elected President in the 2005 presidential election, she took office in January 2006. She is often referred to as the "Iron Lady", which comes from her iron will and determination.

On March 15, 2006, President Johnson-Sirleaf addressed a joint meeting of the United States Congress, asking for American support to help her country "become a brilliant beacon, an example to Africa and the world of what love of liberty can achieve." On July 26, 2007, President Sirleaf celebrated Liberia's 160th Independence Day under the theme "Liberia at 160: Reclaiming the future."

### **Maryland County, Liberia and Maryland, USA - A Shared History**

Maryland County is the southern and easternmost county of Liberia's 15 counties. It borders the Atlantic Ocean on the south, Côte d'Ivoire on the east, Grand Kru County on the west and River Gee County on the northwest. It is named after the state of Maryland in the United States, and its capital city is Harper. The port city of Harper, previously known as Cape Palmas, is the capital of the County and is named after US Congressman Robert Goodloe Harper who assisted the Maryland State Colonization Society to facilitate the return of freed slaves to Liberia. A May 2004 census estimated the county's population to be 107,100.

Established as an African Republic in 1827, the "Colony of Maryland in Africa" was founded by the Maryland State Colonization Society in the United States of America as a homeland for freed American slaves in 12 February, 1834. It later gained independence and became the "State of Maryland in Africa" on 29 May 1854. In 1857, what was then the Republic of Maryland united with the country of Liberia to become Maryland County. Significant Dates in Maryland County's history include:

*February 12, 1834 - Establishment of Maryland-in-Africa - a colony of the Maryland State Colonization Society*

*February 2, 1841 - Establishment of The State of Maryland-in-Liberia*

*May 29, 1854 - Independent State of Maryland in Liberia*

*March 18, 1857 - Incorporation into the Republic of Liberia as Maryland County.*

The longest serving president in Liberia's history, William V.S. Tubman, and the first indigenous Vice President of Liberia, Henry Toole Wesley, were born in Maryland County.

Maryland County today is divided into four districts --Barrobo District, Harper Commonwealth, Karluway District and Pleebo/Sodoken district. The main ethnic group in the county is Grebo. Since UNMIL's (The United Nations Mission in Liberia) deployment of the Senegalese Contingent, Military Observers and UN Police in July 2004, Maryland County has remained relatively calm. Peacekeepers vigilantly monitor the border along northern Maryland and southern River Gee in view of the unresolved political impasse in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire. Local security personnel from the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization as well as Customs and Internal Revenue officials are deployed at strategic border crossing points.

### **Maryland- Liberia Sister States Relationship**

On August 27, 2007, the governors of Bong County and Maryland County (Liberia) and Maryland State (USA) signed a sister state agreement for the purpose of maintaining diplomatic relations, developing and maintaining business, cultural and educational exchanges, hosting and co-sponsoring networking and informational events and serving as a clearinghouse for information and contacts related to the Sister States.

Located northeast of the capital of Monrovia, Gbanga of Bong County was founded in 1821. It established a sister city relationship with Baltimore City, MD in 1973 to promote international cultural, educational and economic exchanges.

In fact, the Maryland (USA) Sister States Program provides its Maryland citizens and businesses a unique opportunity to build relationships in other parts of the world. Each Sister State relationship is strategically chosen to enhance the economic, cultural, and educational interests of the people of Maryland. The Sister States Program provides a forum for economic development, international trade,

and increased global understanding. Additionally, the program promotes cultural understanding through high school, college, and university exchanges, and a variety of cultural and athletic exchanges.

## **STUDENT RESOURCE SHEET 5:**

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**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**  
SISTER STATE PROGRAM AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN  
STATE OF MARYLAND OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
AND  
BONG COUNTY AND MARYLAND COUNTY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

In order to further friendly diplomatic relations, enhance cultural and historic understanding and cooperation, and to promote international trade between the State of Maryland of the United States of America and the Republic of Liberia, especially Bong County and Maryland County, the parties hereto have resolved to enter into an agreement of friendship and exchange under a Sister State relationship.

Recognizing the mutual interests of the State of Maryland, USA and Bong County and Maryland County of the Republic of Liberia and the many opportunities for cooperation in business and industry, arts and culture, education, and health, it is our objective to build long-term relationships, promote commercial cooperation and develop joint programs of exchange in all of these areas and in others that may be identified in the future.

Within this agreement, both the State of Maryland and Bong County and Maryland County of Liberia agree that a Maryland-Liberia Sister State Executive Committee will be established in both regions to administer this relationship and each shall be chaired by a permanent member of the respective Committee.

It is also agreed that this agreement envisages and is designed to benefit the State of Maryland, USA, Bong County and Maryland County, Liberia and other Counties of the Republic of Liberia with whom these bonds of culture, health, commerce and education may be shared because of its centuries old historical ties, and deep ethnic/social connections, with the State of Maryland, USA.

The State of Maryland, Bong County and Maryland County each recognize and acknowledge the instrumental and formative role the Liberian International Development Foundation (LIDF) and the Association of Maryland Africa Societies, Inc. (AM AS) played in advancing and cementing this relationship.

In witness whereof, the Governor of the State of Maryland and the Superintendents of Bong County and Maryland County have signed this agreement of mutual cooperation.

Agreed upon in Annapolis, Maryland the United States of America, the 27<sup>th</sup> day of August 2007.

Martin O'Malley  
Governor, State of Maryland  
United States of America

Ranney Banama Jackson  
 Superintendent, Bong County  
 Republic of Liberia

Sie-Teba Neufville  
 Superintendent, Maryland County  
 Republic of Liberia

In the presence of  
 Ambassador of the Republic of Liberia  
 to the United States of America  
 Witness

In the presence of  
 Dennis C. Schnepfe  
 Interim Secretary of State  
 State of Maryland  
 United States of America  
 Witness

**STUDENT RESOURCE SHEET 6:**

**DATA COLLECTION SHEET – HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES**

Directions: Using the materials provided, provide a thorough assessment of your group’s perspective on the emigration of freed Marylanders to Africa.	
<b>Group Assignment:</b>	<b>Circle your assigned group:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freed Marylanders</li> <li>• ASC (Quakers &amp; Slave Owners)</li> <li>• White/Black Abolitionists</li> <li>• Indigenous Africans</li> </ul>
<b>List key historical person(s) or group(s) of people who represent your group</b>	
<b>Does your group <u>support</u> or <u>oppose</u> the freed Marylanders’ emigration to Africa? Explain why.</b>	
<b>Describe the impact of the</b>	

emigration on your group (e.g. explain what your group will <u>gain</u> or <u>lose</u> as a result)	
Describe the <i>future</i> impact of the emigration on your group	
Summarize your group's main arguments <u>for</u> or <u>against</u> the emigration to Africa in at least 2-3 key points	

**Directions: Using the materials provided, provide a thorough assessment of your group's perspective on the emigration of freed Marylanders to Africa.**

Group Assignment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sister State/Sister City government officials</li> </ul>
List key persons who represent your group	
Describe the significance of Marylanders' emigration to the current Sister State relationship between Liberia and Maryland	
Describe key events in Liberia's history that led to the formation of a Sister State/Sister City relationship between Bong and Maryland Counties in Liberia and	

<p><b>the State of Maryland</b></p>	
<p><b>List benefits of the Sister State/Sister City relationship for Bong and Maryland Counties in Liberia and the State of Maryland</b></p>	
<p><b>List potential contributions your group can make to Liberia through the Sister State/Sister City relationship (at least 2-3)</b></p>	

**STUDENT RESOURCE SHEET 7:**

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**WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?**

Oral history is the systematic collection of living people’s testimony about their own experiences. Your stories and the stories of the people around you are unique, valuable treasures for your family and your community. You and your family members can preserve unwritten family history using oral history techniques. Likewise you and your community can discover and preserve unwritten history large and small. Oral history is so flexible that people of all ages can adapt the techniques of asking and listening to create and learn about history and historical narratives.

Oral history is not folklore, gossip, hearsay, or rumor. Oral historians attempt to verify their findings, analyze them, and place them in an accurate historical context. Oral historians are also concerned with storage of their findings for use by later scholars.

In oral history projects, an interviewee recalls an event for an interviewer who records the recollections and creates a historical record.

**event ► interviewee ► interviewer ► historical record**

Oral history depends upon human memory and the spoken word. The means of collection can vary from taking notes by hand to elaborate electronic aural and video recordings.

## RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH

1. Develop a central question or issue.
  - a. The first question you need to ask — yourself — is "What is the purpose of conducting an oral history interview with \_\_\_\_\_? Is my goal to just "get the facts" or to learn about what life was like for my interview subject?"
2. Conduct background research.
  - a. Conduct preliminary research using non-oral sources. Start with the basic facts — the *who*, *when*, and *where*.
3. Prepare for the Interview.
  - a. Determine who you will interview, then contact potential interviewees. Explain your project to them, and ask if they can assist you.
  - b. Always prepare before an interview with questions you'd like to ask, seeking to learn your subject's thoughts, feelings, and motivations — the *why*, *how*, and *what*. Consider subdividing questions into categories, such as: Family history, Childhood, Youth, Middle age, Old age, Narrator as parent, Grandchildren, Historical events, General questions, unusual life experiences, and personal philosophy and values. Develop open-ended questions. Instead of asking *who*, *where*, and *when*, ask the *why*, *how*, and *what*. For example, some sample questions for an interview with one's mother are: What was your wedding day like? How did your mother prepare you for the wedding night? What were some of your mother's positive qualities? None of these questions can be answered with just a simple "yes" or "no." These questions require the person to think about the answers and will give you interesting information that you won't find in any records.
4. Assemble the appropriate equipment and supplies to fit your purposes (i.e. notepad, pen/pencil, tape recorder, digital voice recorder, video recorder, etc.).
5. Research and choose the kind of recording that you need to produce and then choose your equipment. For example, does it need to be broadcast quality? Does it need a long life? What can you afford?
6. Practice interviewing.
7. Make a personalized checklist of things you must remember to do before, during, and after the interview, and verify your appointment a day or two before the interview.
8. On the day of the interview, give yourself extra time to get there.
9. Interview and record in a quiet place. When setting up, listen for a moment. Make adjustments, such as stopping the pendulum on the tick-tock clock, putting out the dog that's chewing noisily on the recorder cord, and closing the door on the noisy traffic.
10. Make sure the interviewee understands the purpose of the interview and how you intend to use it. This is not a private conversation.
11. Start each recording with a statement of who, what, when, and where you are interviewing.
12. Listen actively and intently.

13. Allow silence. Give the interviewee time to think. Silence will work for you.
14. Ask one question at a time.
15. Follow up your current question thoroughly before moving to the next.
16. Usually ask questions open enough to get "essay" answers unless you are looking for specific short-answer "facts."
17. Start with less probing questions. Ask more probing questions later in the interview.
18. Wrap up the interview with lighter talk. Do not drop the interviewee abruptly after an intense interview.
19. Limit interviews to about one to two hours in length, depending on the fatigue levels of you and your interviewee.
20. Label and number all recordings immediately.
21. Write a thank-you note.

**Sources:**

- DeBartolo Carmack, Sharon, "Interviewing Mom and Grandma: Oral History Tips" [http://www.genealogy.com/95\\_carmack.html](http://www.genealogy.com/95_carmack.html)
- UCLA Library: Center for Oral History Research, <http://www2.library.ucla.edu/libraries/6445.cfm>

## YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Following the guidelines for conducting oral history research, find an older family member or local community member and ask them what they stories they know about their genealogies. Once you conduct your oral history interview, analyze and compile your data into a written narrative.

## STUDENT RESOURCE SHEET 8 – ORAL HISTORY AND INTERVIEW SAMPLE

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**FORMER SENATOR MICHAEL BOWEN MITCHELL ON HIS ANCESTRAL ORAL HISTORY AND LINKS TO LIBERIA • Recorded by MD-Liberia Sister State Education Subcommittee, April 8, 2008**

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

**Q: How did you discover your ancestral link to Liberia?**

**Sen. Mitchell (SM):** Through oral history. My grandmother was a freedom fighter. She was the head of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. Langston Hughes did a summary of her life. She was one of the outstanding Marylanders of the century. She told me [about] the African oral history and wrote in long hand her history. In the *Afro-American* newspaper, she wrote her own story in 1955.

**Q: What was your grandmother's name?**

**SM:** Lillie May Carroll Jackson, great granddaughter of Charles Carroll, who signed the Declaration of Independence. Generations of her family were free. She threatened that if I didn't follow our link to Liberia, she would haunt me from her grave.

**SAMPLE ORAL HISTORY ACCOUNTS:**

**Sen. Mitchell Comments on Syrus Bowen:**

**SM:** [My grandmother] talked about [Syrus] Bowen. None of the Bowen line were slaves. He married white indentured servants. Barnes, a genealogist in Maryland...court...initially called him "African" and his children "mulatto".

Charlie's Forest was an oasis in Montgomery County that Quakers had provided to Africans. I have a Charlie's Forest reference that lists [Syrus] as an African living with a white woman. I have ready access and verification of all that. He purchased 45 acres of land in 1801 [according to] Montgomery County records. He landed in Sandy Spring, MD. I have the census data.

***Sen. Mitchell's Comments on Maryland and Liberian History:***

**SM:** I want students to get the whole premise that Liberia is 150 years old. You need to talk about how it started. Liberia was not founded by former slaves but instead free men of color. This was a very proud people. Young people need to know that these were freed men and proud men.

The first ASC was headed by George Washington's nephew, who went to the coast of Africa, because he learned that freed blacks ended up in either England or Sierra Leone. The Maryland emigration effort came about through the Quaker movement, which was stronger in Maryland. Some wanted to get rid of free Blacks because they feared they would turn against enslavement. Their interest was to protect southern crops in Calvert County. They weren't trying to help Blacks but trying to thwart freed men's efforts to end slavery. [Blacks were] freed on condition that they go to Liberia. Frederick Douglass was against freed men leaving. Prior to the Civil War, Maryland had largest number of free blacks in the US.

Maryland County [in Liberia] was a state by itself. It was the Republic of Maryland until 1857. When it joined Liberia, it became one of the counties of Liberia.

I have found 40 families between Baltimore and Eastern Shore who can trace their lineage back to Liberia.

**HISTORICAL EVIDENCE SUPPORTING SEN. MITCHELL'S ORAL HISTORY NARRATIVE:**

According to The Flower of the Forest Black Genealogical Journal by Agnes Kane Callum, genealogy is rooted in oral history. In the case of the Bowen family of Maryland, their oral history describes an African chief who settled in the Sandy Spring area of the state. The 1810 census records Syrus Bowen as the head of a household. Sandy Spring had been settled largely by Quakers, who opposed slavery. Six hundred and seventy-seven free blacks resided in Montgomery County in 1810, mostly in Sandy Spring. The Quakers arranged for Syrus to marry a white wife, an indentured servant girl from England, so that his children would not risk becoming enslaved. Syrus is reported in the 1840 census, and again in 1850, as a 78 year old head of household.

One of Syrus' daughters decided to make the journey to Liberia as one of the brave individuals who risked yellow fever, malaria and warring indigenous tribes to settle in a land where they were assured of their freedom. Former Senator Michael Bowen Mitchell, a descendant of the family, shared this information from a letter that the daughter sent home to Maryland, telling of her struggles and her joy in freedom.

