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LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL
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Manuscripts should include a cover page that provides the title of the text, author's name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and affiliation. Anonymous referees will review all works.

Manuscripts are accepted in English and French.

Manuscripts must conform to the editorial style of either the Chicago Manual of Style (CMA), The American Psychological Association (APA), or Modern Language Association (MLA).

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Democracy Dividends, Not Democracy

Sylvester Odion Akhaine

Abstract

Surprisingly, the third wave of democratization in Africa has endured in spite of it being nudged into the grey zone where elections are hardly free and fair. Known authoritarian states, such as Nigeria and Ghana, among others, have achieved democratic turn over in terms of handover of power by one civilian government to another. And despite the general alienation, which the irregularities of the process have engendered on the part of the electorate, they have continued to clamour for the 'dividends of democracy' in ways that challenge the *raison d'être* of state. This paper, using Nigeria as a case study, examines this phenomenon by interrogating democracy's capacity to enhance the material wellbeing of the people. The paper argues that there is a general awareness by the electorate of the social responsibility of government, as well as the failure of state actors to deliver the 'dividends of democracy'. Also, it argues that the persistent clamour for 'dividends of democracy' has become a soft form of resistance to policy failure of politicians, as well as an expression of the desired change by the electorate. In the same way, it is argued that apart from a lurking false consciousness arising from the non-appreciation of the historical constraints on the democratisation process, there is a connection between policy failure and the propensity of a section of the electorate to accept financial inducement from the politicians eager to influence their electoral fortune. The paper concludes that democracy will be meaningful only when it improves the human condition of the elec-

World Bank (2006). New Hope for Liberia: Starting Afresh, Doing Things Differently [Online] Available from: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICA/EXTAFRRREGTOPGENDER/0,content-MDK:20792428~menuPK:502378~pagePK:2865114~piPK:2865167~theSitePK:502360,00.html> [Accessed: 8/9/13].

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On Race, Citizenship, and Property in Liberia: A Sociologist's Point of View

Konia T. Kollehlon

Introduction

As Liberians begin to rebuild various aspects of their material culture (i.e. roads, bridges, buildings, etc.) from 14 years of devastating civil war, I hope that they will also take the time to revisit, repair, and, where necessary, rebuild various aspects of their non-material culture (norms, values, social structure) as well. A particular aspect of Liberia's nonmaterial culture that concerns me in this essay is the norm (law/constitutional provision) regarding the relationship between race, citizenship, and the ownership of real property in Liberia. I propose that the constitutional provision which states that only Negroes or people of Negro descent shall become citizens of Liberia, and that only citizens can own real property, be revisited and repealed. This constitutional provision seems to be inconsistent with the modern view and practice of citizenship today, may be somewhat illogical upon closer examination, may impede the economic development of the country, and simply smacks of racism. The position that I take here is quite consistent with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's view [in her Third State of the Nation Address of January, 2008] that "it is perhaps timely that we begin to think about possible changes to our constitution so as to bring it more in line with modern practices of governance." She further adds that despite the changes that have been made to the original constitution of 1847 and the revised constitution of 1986, "there is still room for improvement and the need for revisions..."

In order to elaborate further on the above, it is necessary to, among other things, first present the verbatim wordings of this constitutional provision, state some fundamentals about culture and its components, as these have important bearings on this constitutional provision and the discussion that follows, and then provide some specific reasons why I think that this constitutional provision should be rescinded. Article 27 (b), page 14, of the 1986 Constitution of the Republic of Liberia states that: "In order to preserve, foster and maintain the positive Liberian culture, values and character, only persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent shall qualify by birth or by naturalization to be citizens of Liberia." With respect to the ownership of real property (i.e, land, immovable infrastructural capital like buildings, etc), Article 22 (a), page 11, of Liberia's 1986 Constitution further states that "Every person shall have the right to own property alone as well as in association with others; provided that only Liberian citizens shall have the right to own real property within the Republic." Article 22 (c and d) makes exceptions for non citizen missionary, educational, benevolent institutions, and foreign diplomatic missions, which may temporarily own real property as long as such property is used for the purpose(s) for which acquired. With this exception, the gist of Article 27 (b) and Article 22 (a) is that for the preservation of Liberian culture, only Negroes (or descendants of Negroes) can become Liberian citizens; and only citizens (who can only be Negroes and/or their descendants) can own real property. From the first provision, one can infer that Liberia bases citizenship rule primarily on the principle of *jus sanguinis* (law of the blood/blood right), which is citizenship acquired on the basis of one being a descendant of a Liberian citizen; since *jus solis* (law of the soil/land right), which is a form of birthright citizenship, applies only to persons, one or both of whose parents is/are already a Liberian citizen. Non-citizen Negroes (whether born in or outside of Liberia) can acquire Liberian citizenship through naturalization (of course, after satisfying other criteria).

Since the preservation of Liberian culture appears to be the primary reason for excluding other races from acquiring Liberian citizenship, it is necessary to provide some fundamentals about culture and its components as a way of providing a context for our discussion. From sociology, we know that generally and briefly, culture refers to the total way of life of a group of people, including all of the material objects that they make as well as all of their ideas. In short then, culture consists of a material component (human made material objects) and a nonmaterial component (all of the ideas). Culture is different from other types of human behavior like reflexes and basic drives in that culture is learned, shared, all-encompassing, integrated, instrumental, and adaptive (although some cultural traits/practices may even be maladaptive in the long run) (see any introductory sociology textbook, especially, Thio, 1992; Henslin, 2013).

The nonmaterial component of culture, which may be the more important of the two components, and the one that is of interest in this essay, in turn consists of such sub-components as the cognitive (consisting of knowledge and beliefs); the normative (consisting of norms and values); and the symbolic (consisting of language and other symbols that are used in communication) (Thio, 1992). These sub-components of nonmaterial culture are anchored in a host of social institutions (like the family, economy, military, religion, etc). Social institutions themselves are nothing more than an organization of norms, values, statuses, and roles designed to meet some specific goals/needs.

It is ironic (if not totally illogical) that Liberia's 1986 Constitution excludes Non Negro races (not other ethnicities) from acquiring Liberian citizenship, for the purpose of preserving Liberian culture. First of all, culture is not a function of race; and, as already noted, since culture is, among others, a learned behavior, any member of any race can learn a different culture. Since ethnic groups (more so than racial groups) are essentially cultural or subcultural

groups, it would have seemed more logical for the Liberian Constitution to exclude non Liberian ethnic groups (of course, such exclusion would be based on the erroneous assumption that non Liberian ethnic groups can not learn and practice Liberian culture) from acquiring Liberian citizenship for the preservation of Liberian culture.

More fundamentally, what are some of the traits (or elements) of this “positive” Liberian culture that are intended to be preserved by excluding Non Negro races from acquiring citizenship? They include, for example, the official language – English – (an aspect of the symbolic subcomponent of nonmaterial culture), which was (and still is) the original language of some members of the so-called white race called Britons (or more specifically English). Other important aspects of the “positive” Liberian culture to be preserved by excluding Non Negro races include two of the primary religions (important aspects of the cognitive subcomponent of nonmaterial culture) – Christianity and Islam – which were original religions of Semites, a subgroup of the so-called white race (some Jews and most Arabs, respectively). Or, take for example Liberia’s national sport (soccer) or what comes closest to its national dance (for the elites, at least) – quadrille, which originated with the English and the French, respectively. The very Constitution of Liberia (an important example of the normative subcomponent of Liberia’s non-material culture) and its flag (perhaps, the most important symbol) were both modeled after those of the United States of America, which was, back then (and still is) a predominantly white country. Liberia’s capital city, Momrovia (named after U.S. fifth president, James Monroe) and other coastal cities like Buchanan (named after Thomas Buchanan) or Harper in Maryland County (named after Robert Harper) and many other places, are named after prominent white Americans who played pivotal roles in giving birth to the country. Not only was Liberia founded by an organization, the American Colonization Society (made up initially of only white

Americans), in the early 19th century, but the very name of the country – Liberia – was given to it by a white member of the American Colonization Society, Robert Harper. So, as one can see from these examples, culture and its various elements can be learned and practiced by members of any race and/or ethnicity. If Negro Liberians can learn and practice these aspects of other (white or Non Negro) cultures, certainly, members of other races/ethnicities can learn and practice any aspect of the “positive” Liberian culture, much of which originated with Non Negroes. Hence, there seems to be no reasonable basis for using cultural preservation as a pretext for excluding other races from acquiring Liberian citizenship. There is more to Liberian culture than the few examples given above imply, and the preservation of Liberian culture is very important. However, Liberian culture can be preserved without excluding other races from acquiring Liberian citizenship.

Who is a Negro, Anyway?

After my attempt above at dismantling the primary reason – cultural preservation – for excluding Non Negroes from acquiring Liberian citizenship, the racially exclusionary Liberian constitutional provision still leaves a number of unanswered questions, which upon critical examination, further make racial exclusion baseless. For example, who (or what) is a Negro? More specifically, what are the essential characteristics that make a person a Negro, as distinct from a Caucasian, a Mongolian, or some other races? Is it the skin color, hair texture, size of lips, shape of nose, “racial” genes, or all of the above? What if a dark skinned Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, or Middle Easterner (and many of these people are as dark or even darker than some Negro Liberians) claimed to be a Negro and applied to acquire Liberian citizenship, will his/her application/claim be accepted? If not, who (the Supreme Court, population geneticists, physical anthropologists, or the “common man”) would ultimately decide who is (or is not) a Negro, for the purpose of acquiring Liberian citizenship? In this

hypothetical example, if this person's application is denied on the ground that s/he is not a Negro, the Liberian Supreme Court would find itself in the unenviable position that the U.S. Supreme Court found itself in the early 1920s. In 1922, Takao Ozawa, a Japanese national who had lived in the U.S. legally for about two decades, applied for U.S. citizenship on the ground that he was white. The U.S. Supreme Court rejected his application for U.S. citizenship on the ground that while he may have been white, he was not a Caucasian. The following year, in 1923, a Hindu (from India), Bhagat Singh Thind, applied for U.S. citizenship on the ground that he (an upper caste Indian) was an Aryan, which at the time was considered a subgroup of the Caucasian race. The U.S. Supreme Court also rejected his application, with justice George Sutherland contending essentially that while Thind may have been remotely a Caucasian, as a brown-skinned Indian, he was not white. Interesting — while Ozawa's application was rejected on the ground that while he may have been white, he was not a Caucasian, Thind's application was rejected on the ground that while he may have been remotely a Caucasian, he was not white (see Cose, 2011; see also the DVD *Race: the Power of an Illusion*, 2003). Whew! Isn't that some contradictory double talk/play on words? The 1952 McCarran Walter Act finally eliminated racial restrictions on acquiring U.S. citizenship, which had been first imposed in March of 1790. When it comes to race, does Negro mean black, or is black different from Negro in Liberia?

Stated otherwise, is the question about race in the 21st century a legal, biological, or socio-cultural question? What if Liberians knew that races, conceived of as biologically distinct subspecies of homo sapiens, were largely a myth, would Liberians still continue to exclude Non Negroes from acquiring Liberian citizenship and owning real property? Where did this idea of racial exclusion from citizenship (and the ownership of real property based on citizenship) come from? We will try to address these questions in order to

provide further reasons for the revocation of the constitutional provision that excludes Non Negroes from acquiring citizenship and real property in Liberia.

From "Biological" to "Social" Race

First, let us attempt to address the much broader question about race and eventually work our way to the much narrower question about where we think the idea of race and racial exclusion in Liberia may have originated. With respect to its origin, historian George Fredrickson (2002) notes that the word, race, was used in the 15th century by the Spanish to refer to people of Jewish and Moslem origins. An early definition of race, which came close to the 1950 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) definition (Montagu, 1972), noted that race referred to a large group of people who had interbred over a long period of time, had developed identifiable physical characteristics, and regarded themselves (and were regarded by others) as a biological unit. Based on this definition, humans were trichotomized into the racial categories of Caucasoïd/Caucasian — characterized by such identifiable physical characteristics (or phenotypes) as white (or lighter) skin, straighter hair, thinner lip, and straighter nose; Negroid/Negroes — characterized by such phenotypical characteristics as black (or darker skin), kinky or curly hair, thicker lip, and broader nose; Mongoloid/Mongolian — characterized by such identifiable physical characteristics as yellowish skin, straight black hair, and epicanthic eye folds (or "slanted eyes"). Shortly after the first 1950 UNESCO statement on race, UNESCO revised its position, stating that, "for all practical social purposes 'race' is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth" (Montagu, 1972: 118). But, as we travel around the world, we quickly find a number of problems with the biological/phenotypical definition of race and the ensuing typology.

First, there are many people in the world who do not fit neatly into one and only one of these racial categories, or for whom the categories do not apply (and how useful is a typology if the categories are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive?) This first problem is due largely to the fact that the identifiable physical characteristics denoting a particular race are not always concordant. For example, there are many natives of southern India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka who have dark skin (a characteristic of Negroes) coexisting with Caucasian physical features – thin lips, straighter noses, straight (black) hair, etc. The Ainu of Japan have Mongoloid facial features coexisting with white or lighter skin (a characteristic of Caucasian); the Vogul of Siberia have Caucasian facial features coexisting with yellowish skin, while some aboriginal groups in Australia have dark skin and other Negroid physical features coexisting with blond or reddish hair (the latter more of a characteristic of Caucasians). And, of course, many indigenous peoples in the Polynesian islands (i.e., Hawaii, Easter Island, New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu) have mixtures of Negroid, Cascaoid, and Mongoloid physical features (see Kottak and Kozaitis, 2008, for these and other examples). Would any of these people pass the “Negro test” and qualify for Liberian citizenship, under the current racially exclusionary Liberian constitutional provision? These examples seem to suggest that even if we were to rely on these phenotypical characteristics, superficial as they are, we would encounter some difficulties in clearly distinguishing some people as Negroes (as distinct from other races), because of the discordant frequency of occurrence of some of these phenotypical characteristics.

The second problem with the “tripartite” racial typology (probably stemming from the first problem) is that the way that some people are classified by race in many countries around the world totally ignores the biological facts/identifiable physical characteristics. For example, what would be the race of a boy born to a

Negro/black man and a Caucasian/white woman today? The race of this boy will vary depending on which country he was born (and lives) in. In Liberia and the U.S.A., that boy/man will consider himself (and will be considered by others) as a Negro or black (even though beginning with the 2000 U.S. census that boy/man could assign himself to a new multiracial category). If this boy were born (and lives) in the Republic of South Africa, he would belong to a racial category called Colored, which is meaningfully different from other racial categories like black/Bantu, white, or Asian. And if this boy were born (and lives) in Brazil, he would most likely be racially classified as a mulato (mulatto) or mulato claro (light mulatto), denoting one of Brazil’s dozens of racial categories along the color gradient. Of course, if this boy grew up to be a wealthy man in Brazil, his racial classification could be elevated to *louro* (blond) or even *claro* (light), since in Brazil we are told that “money whiten.” In Brazil, not only does a person’s racial classification change depending on the person’s socioeconomic status, but a person’s racial classification can change from month to month (or even from week to week), depending on who is making the classification, and whether s/he thinks highly or poorly of you (see Kottak and Kozaitis, 2008). Since this child acquired 50 percent of his genes from his black father and 50 percent from his white mother, why does his race change depending on the country in which he is born? Genotypically, the child could logically be classified as white or black (or at least consistently as a mulatto). Of course, in Liberia and the U.S., for all practical purposes, this child would still be considered a Negro (and treated as such), even if his mother were white and his father were an Octoroon (having only one eighth black ancestry).

The examples that have been presented thus far, not only raise problems (as have already been noted) about reliance on phenotypical characteristics for racial classification, but further give rise to the question about which trait (skin color, hair texture, nose

shape, size of lips, or shape of eyes) should be given primacy in making the classification? Liberia and most countries around the world tend to give greater primacy to skin color as the basis for making the classification. Perhaps, that is why in popular usage we tend to denote races by colors (of the skin), such as black (for Negroes), white (for Caucasians), and yellow (for Mongoloids), etc. However, as Kottak and Kozaitis (2008) note, upon closer examination, even these colors do not accurately describe the skin colors of the various so-called races. The skin color of white people is obviously not as white as a white sheet of paper; it tends to be somewhat more pinkish, while “yellow” people tend to be more tan, and black people are rarely really black; but instead, come in various shades of brown. Liberian citizens, for example, who by definition can only be of the Negro race, come in various shades of skin colors. They range from almost pink, like Liberia’s first president Joseph J. Roberts (who was an octoroon – only one eighth Negro ancestry), through mulattos like the Dunbars, the brown-skinned “kollehs” to the “teh” or black (as in Sulunteh or black boy/man) of the Kpelle ethnic group.

A third problem with reliance on phenotypical characteristics as bases for racial definitions/classification is that such superficial differences are assumed to reflect internal genetic differences for each so-called race that are immutable over long periods of time. There is little evidence for that among population geneticists, physical anthropologists, and other experts on this subject. Simply put, the current state of knowledge on the topic of race is that races, conceived of as subspecies of *homo sapiens* with immutable genetic characteristics that are shared by members of a given race, which distinguish them from members of another race, have little to no scientific basis. These experts emphasize that there is not a single trait or gene that is shared by the members of one so-called race that distinguishes them from another so-called race. The experts further note that most variations (about 85 percent) are within, not

between, so-called races (see Lewontin, 2005; see also the DVD *Race: the Power of an Illusion*, 2003). That is to say that, for example, two randomly selected Liberians may be genetically as different from each other as, say, a Liberian is different from, say, a Lebanese (today, using the tools of modern genetics, we can demonstrate this by taking a small portion of a person’s DNA — blood or cells swapped from their mouth — and compare that person’s mitochondrial DNA with an international data base). If there is any truth to the cliché that “looks can be deceiving”, the case of the so-called races of humankind comes close. Genetically, experts on the topic of race tell us that two randomly selected “look alike” penguins have twice the genetic differences, in comparison to say, a randomly selected Negro and a white (see Wells, 2002; also, the DVD, *Race: the Power of an Illusion*, 2003). Genetically, it is possible for a Liberian Kru, for example, to be more like a Swede or a Chinese than to be like a Liberian Vai, for example. *Homo sapiens* have not been around long enough (or isolated long enough), experts note, to evolve into separate subspecies called races. Skin color is superficial, only skin deep; beneath the skin, the experts tell us, we *homo sapiens* are among the most similar of species (see the DVD *Race: the Power of an Illusion*, 2003).

How Did Our Skins Get Their Colors?

Since skin color appears to be the primary phenotypical trait used to classify the so-called races, it is necessary to briefly inquire into just how we humans got our different skin colors. There is overwhelming consensus among population geneticists, physical anthropologists, and other experts on the topic of race that all of the world’s peoples today are descendants of common ancestors who lived during the early Neolithic Period on the savannah of Africa. The San (often derisively referred to as the Hottentots/Stutters or San Bushmen) of the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa are said to be the direct descendants of our earliest ancestors.

Through migration and diffusion, human populations spread throughout the world (see especially Wells, 2002 and accompanying DVD: *Journey of Man*). Marvin Harris (1989; see also, Kottak and Kozaitis, 2008) attributes variations in skin color partly (if not largely) to environmental/cultural adaptation and natural selection, noting that present day black and white peoples may have had common brown-skinned ancestors as recently as 10,000 years ago. Kottak and Kozaitis (2008) note, for example, that the intense ultraviolet radiation from the sun may confer a selective disadvantage for lighter skinned people, making them more susceptible to sunburn, impairing their bodies' ability to sweat, as well as causing skin cancer. For darker skinned people, the larger granules of melanin in their skin helps to screen out ultraviolet radiation from the sun, offering them a selective advantage, by protecting them (to some extent) against sunburns, skin cancer, and other maladies.

However, to say that race is not biologically real (as we have) does not suggest that race is not socially significant; of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Race, in its current usage, is an example of what sociologists refer to as a social construction of reality (or racial formation), which is a sociohistorical process by which categories [like race] are "created, inhibited, transformed and destroyed" (Omni and Winant, 1994). As a social concept, race refers to a large group of people who are perceived to differ from others in terms of inherited biological characteristics (see Jasper and Goodwin, 2005). This perception is usually shaped by the dominant group in a society, whose members obviously benefit from the racial stratification that develops on the basis of this perception. Furthermore, to say that race is a social construction of reality is not intended to deny the obvious differences in skin color and other external physical characteristics (superficial though they are) that are evident among humans today. It simply means that these differences lie along a continuum and do not reflect innate genetic differences among humans. Skin color (or some other physical

characteristics) is in itself meaningless; it becomes socially significant only because of the meanings and values that humans have assigned to it. These meanings and values create a hierarchy of groups whose members are bearers of these differences, thereby transforming mere differences into disadvantages for some and advantages for others. In the final analysis, the interpretations assigned to physical differences among humans come to serve as rationalizations and/or justifications for racism – which is discrimination of various kinds based on race. Applying the foregoing to the Liberian context would imply that Non Negroes are not only different from Negroes, but may be deficient in some ways when it comes to learning and practicing Liberian culture (perhaps an inability to learn/practice Liberian culture or an ability to overwhelm the culture into oblivion?). Hence, the need to exclude them from acquiring Liberian citizenship

Liberia is quite unique among African countries (and in fact among countries of the 21st century world) in excluding people from citizenship and owning real property solely on the basis of their race. In fact, Liberia is the only African country that excludes people from acquiring [Liberian] citizenship solely on the basis of race (Manby, 2010). This racially exclusionary constitutional provision and practice are clearly "... a violation of international treaties on human rights of which Liberia is a signatory" (Cassell, 2011: 104). The General Recommendation of the 2005 UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination clearly states that "... deprivation of citizenship on the basis of race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin is a breach of States parties' obligations" (quoted in Manby, 2010: 24-25; see also Cassell, 2011: 104). It is important to note that this racially exclusionary provision has existed in every Liberian constitution, from the earliest (1847) to the latest (1986) constitution.

Perhaps, a clue for the origin of this racially exclusionary policy can be found in the origin (the U.S.A.) and history (of brutal

slavery and exclusion) of the Founders of the modern Liberian state. Given the longevity (more than 200 years) and exclusionary practices (all of the African American colonists/immigrants coming to Liberia before 1868 were technically not citizens of the U.S.; those who were freed were simply freed people of color and others who were slaves were freed, specifically for repatriation to Liberia) that these Founding pioneers and their ancestors endured, it is reasonable to expect that they justifiably feared that if they permitted white Americans to become citizens of Liberia, the whites may enslave them in their new country. While such fears may have been understandable during the early period of the Republic, is there any justification for such fears (and exclusion) today, after 166 years of independence? Furthermore, if fear of white enslavement was the only (or primary) reason for the exclusionary policy, why did the policy extend to all Non Negroes (including Asians and other non Negro Peoples)? If fear of white enslavement was the primary reason for the racially exclusionary policy, why were Indigenous Negro Liberians, the overwhelming majority of Liberians (who inhabited the area that later came to be called Liberia), excluded from Liberian citizenship until 1904, more than a half century after Liberia's independence in 1847? It is important to further note in passing that Indigenous Liberians and women were also excluded from voting for almost a century after Liberia's independence (the vote was extended to women in 1945 and to Indigenous Liberians in 1946) (for these and other facts about Liberia's history, see Dunn, Beyan, and Burrowes, 2001).

Hypodescent: the One Drop [of Blood] Rule

Perhaps, there is more to this racially exclusionary policy/practice than the fear of white American enslavement (of the early African American settlers of Liberia). This exclusionary practice may have had its genesis in the social construction of race and racial classification in the U.S.A., from which the Founders of the

modern Liberian state came. The social construction of race and racial classification in the United States have historically followed what Marvin Harris (1964) calls the rule of hypodescent, whereby the offspring of a union between a member of the superordinate group (for example, white) and a subordinate group (for example, black or African American) is automatically affiliated with the subordinate group. This rule is popularly known as the one drop of blood rule, which means that simply having one drop of "black blood" or Negro ancestry automatically makes one a Negro in the U.S. As Harris (1964:56) puts it, "This descent rule requires Americans to believe that any one who is known to have had a Negro ancestor is a Negro. We admit nothing in between... Hypo-descent means affiliation with the subordinate rather than with the superordinate group in order to avoid the ambiguity of intermediate identity."

Coming from a society that excluded them from citizenship (until the passage of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1868) and full participation in the society's mainstream, where they were adversely affected by the principle of hypodescent, it is reasonable to assume that this may have been one of the legacies that the African American Founders of Liberia brought with them. Of course in Liberia, it appears that the Founders of the Republic practiced what I call a reversed form of hypodescent. That is to say that now, as the dominant group in Liberia, the black American Founders elevated themselves to the top, while relegating whites and other races to a subordinate status. Under the rule of hypodescent in the U.S., having any amount of "Negro blood" or black African ancestry (although the amount varied slightly by states) relegated the individual to the minority/subordinate Negro race. In Liberia, under reversed hypodescent, having any amount of Negro Liberian "blood" or ancestry makes the person a Negro, who is entitled to Liberian citizenship and the ownership of real property.

If the argument above is reasonable (even tentatively acceptable), then why did these Founders exclude Indigenous Negro Liberians from citizenship for some 57 years after Liberia's independence in 1847? It certainly could not have been based on fears of Indigenous Liberians enslaving Americo-Liberians. It seems that the exclusion of Indigenous Negro Liberians from citizenship during this period stemmed largely from the existence of a system of status stratification called colorism (in today's language). This stratification system had a status hierarchy that was based on variations in skin color (which was highly correlated with political and economic/class standing in the society). Abayomi Karamga (1923), a scholar and politician, notes that the status division among Liberians eventually evolved into a hierarchical caste system with four distinct orders (or castes). At the top were the Americo-Liberian officials, consisting largely of light complexioned people of mixed black and white ancestry. They were followed next by darker skinned Americo-Liberians, consisting mainly of laborers and small farmers. Then came the Recaptives, the Africans who had been rescued by the U.S. Navy while aboard U.S./New World bound slave ships and brought to Liberia. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the Indigenous African Liberians. Thus, the initial exclusion of Indigenous Negro Liberians from citizenship (and the franchise) may have been due to the simple fact that, as a subordinate group, they occupied the very bottom rung of the stratification system/hierarchy.

However, the endorsement (and subsequent election) of the first Liberian born president, Hilary R. W. Johnson, by the Republican Party (dominated by lighter skinned Americo-Liberians) and the True Whig Party (dominated by darker skinned Americo-Liberians) — the two major political parties that stood on opposite sides of the color divide — signaled a truce of some sort on the issue of color. As such, starting with the Johnson administration (in 1884), status divisions based on skin color ceased to be a divisive issue in

Liberian politics and society. As such, today, in Liberia, just as in the U.S., a mulatto, quadroon, or an octoroon is simply considered a Negro/black. It is this rule of hypodescent (and reversed hypodescent) in Liberia that makes Liberians to consider their first president, Joseph J. Roberts, an octoroon, to be a Negro; when genotypically, he could have logically been considered a white man, since he had more white than black ancestry.

As such, racial classification in Liberia and many other countries around the world sometimes have little or nothing to do with even the perceived biological facts; it is essentially a social construction of reality. To put it simply, race is whatever a group of people in a society say it is. And, as a socio-cultural phenomenon, the definitions and categories of race can change from society to society and from time to time within the same society. The American Sociological Association's (2002) position on the topic of race drives home this point when it defines race as a "social invention that changes as political, economic, and historical contexts change" (quoted in Jasper and Goodwin, 2005:44).

The rule of hypodescent stands in sharp contrast to prevailing practices around the world. In Iberian (Spanish and Portuguese) cultures/societies in the New World, distinctions based on skin color (or races) are made on a continuum, rather than in sharp categories (as in the U.S.). In these Iberian societies, the social class (or economic standing) and status (or social standing) of a person are as important (if not more important) as their perceived phenotypical characteristics in determining their race. In Apartheid South Africa, for example, Japanese (not Indians), Jews, and black Americans were accorded the status of honorary whites (and were treated as whites); in the United Kingdom of Great Britain (at least in contemporary British politics) the label "black" refers to all non whites; in Canada, all non whites (excluding the First Nation or aboriginal Indians) are collectively referred to as visible minorities; while Japan treats the Burakumin (members of a lower caste, who are

physically indistinguishable from other Japanese) as a separate race (see Kottak and Kozaitis, 2008).

Even in the U.S., the rule of hypodescent did vary slightly from state to state and the racial classification of Negroes also varied from time to time. For example, while the state of Alabama defined a Negro/black as a person with any [black]/African ancestry, Florida defined a Negro/black as a person with one eighth [black] African ancestry, and Virginia defined a Negro/black as a person with one sixteenth [black] African ancestry (see the DVD *Race: the Power of an Illusion*, 2003). In the early U.S. censuses (from 1790 to 1810), race was classified into only three categories: Free whites, All Other Free Persons, and Slaves (with the last category including only blacks). By 1890, for reasons it deemed important, the U.S. census provided a more detailed classification of blacks. The racial categories in the 1890 census included White, Black, Mulatto, Quadroon, Octoroon, Chinese, Japanese, and Indians.

The purpose of the preceding examples is to again show that race is not based entirely on biology; it is an idea (somewhat erroneously ascribed to biology) that humans create in order to further their national or group's social, economic, and political interests. By attaching meanings, values, assumptions, and laws to the labels that we create for races in individual countries, we enhance the opportunities and life chances of some groups (the in-group), while diminishing the opportunities and life chances of other groups (the out-group). Since race is more of an idea created by humans, humans can destroy this idea, or at least eliminate the discriminatory exclusionary laws and practices that have been assigned to racial categories.

It is in light of these facts presented so far, that I appeal to the Liberian government (especially the Legislature) and people to abolish this racially exclusionary provision of the constitution that excludes large groups of people from citizenship and the ownership

of real property solely on the basis of their "race". After 57 years of excluding Indigenous Liberians from citizenship, the Liberian government in 1904 took the necessary steps to grant citizenship to Indigenous Liberians. After almost 100 years of excluding women and Indigenous Liberians from exercising the franchise/vote, the Liberian government took the necessary steps to grant women (who were slightly more than half of the population) and Indigenous Liberians (comprising more than 90 percent of the population) the vote in 1945 and 1946, respectively. If it has been done in the past, it can certainly be done today, in this ethnically most inclusive of Liberian administrations.

Perhaps, Liberians have probably forgotten that such an exclusionary provision exists in their constitution; that is why I am reminding you, and will continue to remind you. It would be most honorable if the Liberian government voluntarily took the necessary steps to revoke this exclusionary constitutional provision than doing so under some (implicit or explicit) threats of reciprocity by predominantly white or Non Negro countries (and their governments) that permit Liberians to become citizens and own real/other properties (without any citizenship requirement). It is important to note in passing that, based on numbers from the Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, since 2003, with the Comprehensive Accra Peace Accord that ended the civil war in Liberia, the number of Liberians who have naturalized as U.S. citizens grew from 917 in 2003 to 3,794 persons in 2011 — an increase of 314 percent! During this same period, the number of Liberians who acquired legal permanent [U.S.] resident status/green cards (the final step before naturalization) grew from 1,766 in 2003 to 4,151 in 2011 — an increase of 135 percent. How can Liberians in good conscience request predominantly white Israel and the United States (as the Liberian government did in 2007) not to deport some of their citizens, who were deportable, because of the difficult economic conditions in Liberia, yet would not permit

non Negro citizens of these countries to become citizens or own real property in Liberia? By the way, both countries honored Liberia's request. And, every year since the 2003 Comprehensive Accra Peace Accord, which ended the civil war in Liberia, each U.S. administration has extended the Temporary Protected Status [TPS] for thousands of Liberians living in the U.S, enabling them to live, work, and own property in the U.S.

Is the "Golden Rule" Still Relevant Today?

The upheavals caused by the military coup in 1980 and the ensuing 14 year, on-again, off-again, civil war (1989 to 2003) led many Liberians to spread to just about every corner of the world, in search of refuge. By all accounts, the world has been very generous in accepting and accommodating Liberian refugees. Not only has the world been generous in accepting Liberian refugees, the world – through the United Nations – has sent in soldiers/police officers (from Sweden, Ireland, U.S.A., Jordan, India, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, to name a few) to help preserve the peace in Liberia. Other experts through the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP) have come to Liberia to help Liberia get its economic house back together. Individual countries (most of them predominantly white) and international organizations have "forgiven" Liberia most of its \$4 billion+ debt, thanks in large measure to Liberia's dynamic and well respected leader and her team of ministers. Yet, many of these people who are making enormous sacrifices and helping Liberia to get back on its feet can not acquire Liberian citizenship or own real property, simply because they are not Negroes. Liberians can obtain refugee status (which eventually leads to citizenship, if the refugee so desires, in many countries) and temporary protected status (which enables Liberians to work and own real property) in many countries around the world; yet, because of the racially exclusionary provision of the Liberian constitution, Liberia may find it difficult

giving refugee status to non Negroes from many of these countries, since it would have the potential of leading to future citizenship. What ever happened to the Golden Rule – do unto others as you would have them do unto you? Is it still relevant today? I strongly believe that it is!

Does the repeal of Liberia's racially exclusionary constitutional provision mean that Liberia will simply open its doors to any and all persons wishing to enter the country and become citizens? Most certainly not. Liberia, like other countries around the world, will continue to restrict immigration numerically and to certain categories of individuals, as she is currently doing. Section 5.1 of Liberia's Alien and Nationality Law currently excludes aliens who are feeble-minded, insane, afflicted with psychopathic personality, epilepsy, or mental defect, and aliens with a physical defect, disease, or disability (with some exceptions) from admission to Liberia.

In fact, a carefully crafted immigration policy could probably help in addressing some of the manpower shortages in the country. In Liberia today, there is a shortage of qualified personnel in many sectors of the society (health care, education, law, agriculture, and other sectors of the economy). For example, in a November, 2007 BBC interview with Jonathan Paye-Layleh, Liberia's Health minister, Dr. Walter T. Gwenigale, stated that Liberia needed at least 1,200 doctors to deliver health care in post war Liberia, but currently had only 120 for a (2007) total population of 3.7 million people (70 of the 120 doctors were foreign doctors serving with the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations). The Health minister further noted that "we have a serious shortage of health manpower, not just doctors; we need doctors but we also need more nurses, more midwives and more laboratory technicians." There is no indication that there has been any significant improvements in the health sector of the country since the 2007 interview.

With millions of refugees, some of whom are highly qualified professionals (including Iraqi, Palestinian, and now Syrian doctors languishing in refugee camps (in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan), around the world today, would it not be prudent to devise a "Point system" immigration policy, similar to the Canadian and Australian systems, that would encourage (and give higher priority/points to) certain categories of potential immigrants who are most needed in Liberia? Hundreds of white farmers in Zimbabwe lost their farm lands as a result of Zimbabwe's land reform policy. While some of these farmers immigrated to South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana, Nigeria, and elsewhere, given Liberia's shortage of trained agricultural manpower, wouldn't it be prudent to have an immigration policy that would encourage some of these farmers (who made Zimbabwe an agricultural powerhouse) to immigrate to Liberia, as potential citizens? Teachers from English-speaking India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka could greatly help to relieve the massive teacher shortage in Liberia — as U.S. Peace Corps are currently doing. Obviously, given the poor social and economic conditions currently prevailing in post war Liberia, a "Point System" of immigration may not initially attract as many qualified foreigners as it does in more developed countries like Canada and Australia. But, as social and economic conditions improve, and the Liberian government can provide electricity, pipe-borne water, better roads, health care, and higher salaries for its civil servants (especially teachers), many qualified foreign professionals may find Liberia to be an attractive destination. But, as long as Liberia maintains its racially exclusionary provision that denies citizenship to non Negroes and prohibits foreigners from owning real property, the policy in effect hinders efforts at the long term economic development of the country. Would you invest human and financial capital in a country that denies you the possibility of citizenship and the ownership of real property — simply because of your race?

Liberia has to decide, if it has not already done so, how it intends to incorporate newcomers into the society. Should incorporation of newcomers be based on a policy of cultural assimilation (where newcomers would have to abandon their culture and adopt Liberian culture), or should it be based on a pluralistic/multicultural model (where newcomers can maintain important aspects of their former culture while fully participating in Liberian society)? Some form of religious pluralism has always existed in Liberia, since its founding, with minimal problems, and the matrilineal Fantii (a subgroup of the larger Akan ethnic group in Ghana) have been incorporated as a Liberian ethnic group, without requiring them to become patrilineal like most Liberian ethnic groups. Furthermore, both monogamy (one husband, one wife) and polygyny (one husband, several wives) as well as nuclear and extended families are acceptable, legitimate marital practices in Liberia. These examples tend to suggest the existence of an incipient form of cultural pluralism currently in Liberia. Let Liberia build on this by becoming inclusive of other races.

In summary, from the presentation thus far, it is obvious that there is hardly any reasonable basis for excluding non-Negro races from citizenship and foreigners from owning real property in Liberia. Races, conceived of as subspecies of *homo sapiens*, do not exist and are not biologically real, since we *homo sapiens* have not been around (or isolated) long enough to evolve into separate subspecies. The phenotypical difference in skin color, hair texture, lip size, and nose shape are largely superficial, and do not necessarily reflect internal genotypical differences. The idea of race and the reality of racism are not cultural universals that date back to antiquity, but are rather recent (in the past 400 to 500 years, or so) human creations, which can be discarded. The preservation of Liberian culture is very important; but, Liberia can preserve and maintain its culture without excluding non Negro races from acquiring citizenship, since culture is a learned behavior, and is certainly not a function of race. Experts tell us that all *homo sapiens* today are

descendants of people who lived during the early Neolithic Period on the savannah of Africa, and eventually migrated to every corner of the globe. Perhaps, more importantly, Liberia should repeal this racially exclusionary policy, even if "races" were biologically real subspecies of homo sapiens. Liberians are not racist; they are in fact some of the friendliest and most accommodating of people on earth. But, as long as Liberia's constitution maintains this racially exclusionary policy, this will cast a dark shadow over its government and people.

I therefore appeal to the reason and conscience of the Liberian government and people (especially the religious communities, students, and civil rights organizations) to rescind this racially exclusionary policy now (hopefully before the end of 2020); not because it is popular, but because it is the fair and right thing to do. Now is the time to end this racially exclusionary policy, as Liberians are crafting a long term roadmap for their future in their Vision 2030 Plan and Constitution Review Commission. If not now, after 166 years of independence, when will be the right time? As the saying goes, justice delayed is justice denied. It is really not a question of whether Liberia will repeal this exclusionary provision, but rather, when (and the sooner, the better). I hope that at the very least, this essay will help to elevate this issue into a national debate, where others with different views can express their views. Disagreeing with my position on this issue obviously does not make one a racist. I am keenly aware of the sensitivity surrounding the combustible mix of the issues of race, immigration and property, and the threats that revocation of this exclusionary provision pose to the interests of owners of real estate/property, who benefit financially by renting and/or leasing to foreigners. But, reasonable people can agree to disagree and still move on with the bigger task of rebuilding a modern, 21st century Liberia, free of this anachronistic constitutional provision/practice of racial exclusion from citizenship and the ownership of real property.

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If J.J. Roberts Didn't Finish It, Who Will Finish It? A Survey of Five Sociopolitical Deficits in Liberia's Development Culture

K. Moses Nagbe

Studying a folksy statement, which Liberians typically evoke when they feel the urge to rest from work, or abandon what seems a difficult task, I link four interdisciplinary theories to the subject of national development. I argue that in development matters, what people say and repeat shapes their values, standards, and attitudes. I explain that the J. J. Roberts statement—"If J. J. Roberts didn't finish it, who will finish it?"—provides a window to the causal relationship that runs through language, thought, and action. In that context, I identify five sociopolitical deficits in the Liberian development culture evoked by the J. J. Roberts statement. Besides applying the foursome theoretical framework, I rely on numerous archival resources and many years of observing and writing about the Liberian character to discuss the topic. In a more elaborate version of the paper, I include a possible sociopolitical development framework for postwar Liberia, and a sociopolitical development agenda for the West African nation.

BACKGROUND

Like human beings, language and national development are not mutually exclusive. Language and national development are inextricably bound. Language provides a significant vehicle for socialization, and socialization is the cradle of human development, which extends to national development (Brown, 1998; Cook, 2006; Garrett, 2005). After all, socialization, in basic terms, is the process whereby an individual becomes an acceptable member of a group or a society, demonstrated by the thought, language, and action that