



Friends of Sierra Leone

August 2019 Newsletter

2019 Annual Meeting

Una tenki! This year's annual meeting for the Friends of Sierra Leone was a great success, with countless speakers and a long list of guests, including many new faces. The Embassy of Sierra Leone in Washington DC hosted our annual meeting on Friday, July 19 and Saturday, July 20. To start our annual meeting, we received a welcome address from the **Sierra Leone Deputy Ambassador to the United States, Sheku Mesali**. He gave an overview of initiatives that are happening in the country, including the improved education system that provides free education to all students in Sierra Leone.

Following the Deputy Ambassador, we had the pleasure of having **Kruit Patel**, a Peace Corps representative for the Africa region, who gave us an update on Peace

Corps in Sierra Leone. Currently, there are 73 total Volunteers in Sierra Leone. Of the new PCVs, the numbers break up as such: 23 Health, 6 Math, 13 Science, and 15 English Volunteers.

Before we broke for lunch, we had the honor of hearing from **Madieu Williams**, the Sierra Leonean former NFL football player. He updated us on his Madieu Williams Foundation, which includes the establishment of a school and solar in Calaba Town. Through his partnership with the University of Maryland, Mr. Williams was able to get health and engineering students to travel to Sierra Leone to work on these projects.

Our next guest was **Bill Krist**, who spoke to us about his Ag project in connection with the Bo Rotary Club. They are currently helping three primary



Annual Meeting Participants: Gary Schulze, Mohammed Barrie, Albert Senesie, Jim Hanson, Sam Hill, Jim Sheahan, Tom Johnson, Lawrence Shirley, James Joiner, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Carol Kochheiser

schools outside of Bo, in the small towns of Largo, Barlie and Nguabu. Though West Springfield raised an impressive \$30,000 for the projects, an additional donation from the International Rotary Club brought funds up to \$100,000 to complete these projects.

The next presentation was by **Oscar Martin**, a docent at Smithsonian African Art Museum, where he does education and outreach. Recently, Mr. Martin traveled to Sierra Leone to study the Bundu societies in Kenema, Nomofama, and Little Waterloo. Mr. Martin was granted access to these secret societies to learn more about the Sande Society and discover how and why the Mende women celebrate Sande, the guardian of women. He gave us an in-depth understanding of what happens in the private bush schools throughout Mende land.

We ended our Friday meeting with our regular committee reports, including Treasurer's Report, Membership Report (we have 183 current members), Projects Report, Advocacy Report, and a discussion on where our next annual meeting will take place, either Sierra Leone or Sapelo Island in Georgia. Later that night, we enjoyed dinner at the Bukom Café, a Ghanaian/West African restaurant in the Adams Morgan section of Washington DC.

On Saturday, we continued with our guest speakers, starting with **Linda Thomas-Greenfield**, who spoke about Africa's place in the world. Ms. Thomas-Greenfield noted the tremendous increase in democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2015, half of Sub-Saharan African countries have had transition in presidential power. West Africa is leading the forefront in this movement. She also commented on the increased regional integration with free trade on the continent and the significant effect that Africa's growing youth population will have on the continent. She also discussed

In Memory



Carl Onken

It is with great sadness that Friends of Sierra Leone reports the passing of a much beloved member of the Board. Carl Onken died June 6, 2019 at his home in South Berwick, Maine. Carl served in Magburaka from 1963 to 1966 as part of the Sierra Leone IV group. While serving he met and married Mary, his wife of 54 years. Carl was the newsletter editor for Friends of Sierra Leone for many years. Until recently, he and Mary sold the Wisconsin RPCV calendars for FoSL. In addition to Mary, he is survived by his three children and their families as well as numerous friends. He is missed by all who knew and loved him. May his soul rest in perfect peace.



Front; Patty Bruzek, Gary Schulze, Mohammed Barrie, Albert Senesie
Back: Anthony McMillon, Hilrien Kamanda, Zainab Bangura, Etta Toure, Barbara Sheehan



Tom Hull, Caitlin Orzechowski, Tom Johnson, James Joiner, Lawrence Shirley

the challenges that face Sierra Leone. She noted the importance of groups like Friends of Sierra Leone. Ways we can continue to help include raising the profile of Sierra Leone for the government when issues come up and putting the pressure on the government of Sierra Leone.

After Ms. Thomas-Greenfield, the Sierra Leone Ambassador to the United States, **Ambassador Wai**, gave a surprise address at our meeting. Ambassador Wai said that he was a big beneficiary of Peace Corps in his school days. Ambassador Wai discussed the \$60 Billion Africa Fund, where the United States wants to get more involved for infrastructure development. President Bio has hope to build a bridge to Lungi from Freetown with hopes it will pay for itself as well as the Mano River Rail project connecting all of West Africa.

Following Wai's address, we had the pleasure of hearing from **Joe Opala**, as he discussed his research on the Sierra Leone-Gullah connection, which continues to evolve. This connection is the most important for the history of the Black Seminoles throughout North America (words of Temne are in their Gullah language).

Following the morning presentations, we had cassava leaf, rice, and plantains for lunch, a delicious treat for all our guests. Immediately following lunch, we awarded Board Member, Jamie Brown, with a Friends of Sierra Leone Service

Award, for his continued dedication to the organization as well as to the people of Sierra Leone.

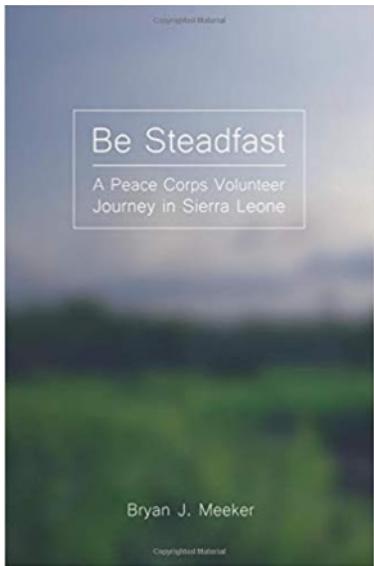
The afternoon included two more presentations from Sam Hill and Tom Johnson. **Sam Hill**, a returned Peace Corps volunteer, who had the opportunity to travel to Sierra Leone nearly 50 years after his service. He is writing a book called *Chasing Ghosts: Looking for Lost Friends and Hope in the African Bush*, based on his experience back in Sierra Leone, noting what he learned, what surprised him the most as well as why Sierra Leone lags behind in development. Mr. Hill discussed various development options Sierra Leone can take. Now, it is important to decide which direction would best serve this great country.

Finally, yet importantly, **Tom Johnson**, a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, gave us an update on his work with Africa Surgery, which provides life-changing spinal and other surgeries to those in Sierra Leone as well as provides them with ways to make an income. Visit <http://www.africasurgery.org/> for more information.

This year's annual meeting was very informative and interesting. It is always a great opportunity to hear new and old stories of Sierra Leone from others who love Sierra Leone as much as we all do. We cannot wait for our next annual meeting; all of us on the board hope to see you there in Sierra Leone or Sapelo! Thank you again to all of our guests and attendees!



For your summer reading



Be Steadfast: A Peace Corps Journey in Sierra Leone

By Bryan Meeker

Reviewed by Peggy Murrah

For almost five years beginning in 2004, Friends of Sierra Leone fought to get the Peace Corps back to Salone. Board members used their own resources to travel to Washington to meet with Peace Corps personnel and staffers from the Senate and Congress to convince them it was time for PCVs to go back. Many of us had already gone back ourselves to visit and we knew it was safe.

I admit that I did have some concerns regarding the changes in Salone in the years following my own time there in the 70s. I wondered if it was even going to be possible for new Volunteers to develop the close personal relationships with their coworkers and neighbors that seemed to be the shared experience among Volunteers from 1962 until the eventual evacuation in 1992. I thought given changes I saw in the general population that it might be an entirely new and different experience that would not relate to my own at all.

I think all the RPCVs I knew from my time and before agreed that our Sierra Leonean friends had treated us as cherished family members. Even though I did not see my Sierra Leone family, the Gbories, in almost 25 years, when we did reunite, it was such a powerful moment that there could be no confusion about the importance we had in each others' lives. I worried there was no way the new PCVs could ever find that.

I apologize to all Sierra Leoneans for doubting their capacity to love strangers until they are no longer strangers, but family. Bryan's book showed me how wrong I was.

Bryan Meeker was in the first group of PCVs to return to Sierra Leone in 2010. While there are obvious differences between Bryan and myself, there were many, many similarities in our experiences even though they were three decades apart. As I read his book, devoured may be a better word, I was delighted to learn that the basic experience hadn't changed much at all. To a certain degree, he could have been writing about being a PCV in the 70s.

I suspect newer RPCVs will read this book for an entirely different reason than the "old" ones. I read it for a couple of reasons. One was to see if we, the board members who actively advocated for the return, had done the right thing. No question at all - we had. I read it to learn about Bryan's experience and try to figure how it compared to my own. And finally, once I started reading it, I couldn't put it down because it was such an enjoyable read!

I highly recommend getting Bryan's book. It is easily available on Amazon. Besides getting a good book, you will be supporting a fellow RPCV SL!

https://smile.amazon.com/Be-Steadfast-Peace-Journey-Sierra/dp/1727870573/ref=sr_1_1?qid=1565798558&s=books

FoSL Advocacy Report

July 18, 2019

Friends of Sierra Leone's Advocacy efforts have been revised since the current Trump Administration took office. In spite of this situation, we have responded to any actions suggested by budget and related issues taking place in Washington, DC. It continues with participation in National Peace Corps Association campaigns to keep our organization in step with government activity and contacts with Capitol Hill.

FoSL was pleased to be part of the effort that resulted in NPCA again setting new records with its annual congressional sign-on letters concerning strong Peace Corps funding. A record 181 representatives signed the House letter, while a record 41 Senators signed the Senate letter.

With the emergence of the 116th Congress, House Democrats gained majority status and some optimism returned. The current Peace Corps budget of \$425 million is about 3.5 percent above last year's allocation. The Senate has not yet made its recommendation.

Additionally, a Peace Corps Reauthorization bill was introduced in the House by RPCV Congressman John Garamendi. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation that proposes a number of improvements for the Peace Corps, including funding of \$450 million, an increased volunteer allowance, disability pay increases for returned volunteers with service-related injuries, and more.

There was also an amendment introduced by a North Carolina representative that called for the elimination of all funding for Peace Corps and other international programs. We joined NPCA and other organizations to defeat this initiative. It was favored by

only 110 members of the House and was soundly defeated. However, it gave emphasis to the need for constant vigilance over the legislative process in both the House and the Senate.

A bi-weekly NPCA Conference Call was established during the Ebola Crisis, and FoSL has been part of that activity ever since. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers from all over the country take part. Each session covers topics that concern current and future opportunities for new country programs. Also, Peace Corps Response is another subject of discussion. It attracts professionals to undertake short-term, high-impact service assignments in communities around the world.

FoSL Membership Report

Our active membership count is currently 183.

We have a total of 1029 members in the database.

2020 Annual Meeting

As reported elsewhere in this newsletter, Friends of Sierra Leone had a phenomenal annual meeting at the Sierra Leone Embassy in Washington, DC in July. But, even before the close of this year's meeting, we were already talking about where to have the 2020 meeting.

There were three suggestions. One was in Freetown, another was for the west coast, and the third was for a return to Sapelo Island, Georgia. We are asking for input from members regarding your opinion and choice if you are intending to join us. Two members have already made suggestions for where we might go on the West Coast. But, we have to have people on the ground to do the planning and preparation. If you would like to host a meeting, please let us know as well. Email info@fosalone.org.

Projects Report - July 2019

by Jim Hanson

Our small projects fund continues to be a popular commodity for many small, community-based projects in Sierra Leone. There seems to be a great demand for small grants to provide a village or community with a well, safe latrines, or to add a classroom or two at their local school. Last year, Friends of Sierra Leone funded over \$26,000 in these kinds of projects.

Our committee received 15 applications for funding by the April 30 deadline. Four of those projects were recommended to the Board of Directors for funding, and they were approved at the June Board meeting.

1. Women in Action \$2419

This Port Loko women's group will refurbish a former Red Cross center to provide a training center for classes in literacy, hairdressing, sewing, and catering.

2. The Dandabu Project \$756

Twenty-six students from this rural Pujehun District village will be provided room and board while sitting for the BECE exams for entry into secondary school. This will eliminate the need for them to travel back and forth during the exam period.

3. Fullah Town Youth Organization \$2639

The grant to this group will be used to install four large water tanks with taps to provide a reliable supply of clean water to this central Freetown community.

4. Kaggungbor Youth Development Organization \$2217

The grant to this community in the Karena District will be used to rehabilitate a local primary school.

These four projects total \$8031, leaving our fund with a balance of just over \$3500 for use later this year. We hope to rebuild our bank account over the summer and fall to be ready for a new round of projects at year's end. Thank you to all who are contributors to our projects fund. Your support will improve the lives of many of our friends in Sierra Leone.



FoS granted \$3000 to this Rural Health Care Initiative @rhcmnsl project in the Tikonko Chiefdom of Bo District in July, 2016. Our funds were used for the well and latrines.

Treasurer's Report

Dear Friends of Sierra Leone Members,

We generally divide our income and expenses between "projects" and "administrative." All "membership dues" contributions, sales, or money collected through arrangements with PayPal, Amazon, etc are earmarked as **administrative**. Administrative funds are used to pay for the newsletter, PO box, internet, awards and gifts, travel, operating fees, annual meeting expenses, and the like.

We had 148 people pay annual dues in 2018. Our administrative spending was modest in 2018, and we brought in \$2,000 more in administrative funding than we paid out. Electronic newsletters have cut our expenses. Sometimes we underwrite big parts of an annual meeting (as this year), but that wasn't the case in 2018.

Any contributions given (over and above \$25 annual membership dues) are earmarked for **projects**, and paid out to projects we select, usually small efforts IN Sierra Leone. We booked about \$28,000 in projects contributions, and paid out about \$27,000:

\$ 3,000.00	Street Child, for mud slide relief
\$ 217.00	Baltimore School kids: Cheshire Home Bo
\$ 2,000.00	Kono District Global, water well
\$ 2,000.00	Ebert Kakua School for the Deaf, solar lighting
\$ 2,928.00	Conscience International, library and solar lights
\$ 2,860.00	Rogbin Community, health clinic with solar lights
\$ 1,426.00	Mama Bainda Women's Group, vegetable farming
\$ 3,000.00	Sierra Environmental Education Foundation
\$ 250.00	Daphne Dunn memorial
\$ 1,200.00	Bumpe Alliance Development Project
\$ 2,000.00	One Village Partners, water well
\$ 1,400.00	Amputee Wounded Camp School
\$ 2,000.00	MADFA Cassava Project
\$ 2,500.00	Niagorehun Health Clinic

We opened 2019 with ample administrative funds (\$9,331.77) and a nice start for projects support. The projects fund had \$8,504.46 at the beginning of 2019, but parts of that is earmarked for Daphne memorials (\$1,675), Solar Electric Initiative (\$1,362; Leslie McKeon), and Bunce digitization (\$1,189; Joe Opala). That left a little over \$4,000 for the projects committee to start 2019. I will leave it to the Projects Committee to report on what's come in so far and what projects we have funded for 2019. Otherwise, except for investment in a Washington DC member meeting and board retreat, 2019 so far has looked much like 2018 and other recent past years.

Mark Hager
Treasurer

Friends of Sierra Leone

Annual Meeting

July 19th - July 20th

2019

Friday, July 19, 2019



9:30 - 10:00 Arrive and sign in (see list of those present at end of minutes)

10:00 - 10:30 Welcome and Introductions by Aiah and Peggy

1. Housekeeping details
2. Tonight, for dinner at Bukom Café
3. Recognition of Carl Onken's service to Friends of Sierra Leone with a moment of silence.
4. Everyone introduced themselves and gave a brief description of service

10:00 - 10:15 Welcome from Ambassador Wai via Sheku Mesali, Deputy Ambassador

1. Deputy Ambassador Mesali welcomed all to the Embassy and gave an overview of initiatives that are happening in the country.
2. There was a discussion about the education system with the new system of free education for all students. There have been efforts to educate the diaspora about the education system in SL.
3. 2017 there were 40% that were "ghost" teachers. Teachers are now being given ID numbers to make sure they are verified. They are working very hard to rectify the mess that was with education.
4. The most recent RPCV, Caitlin, let us know that there is a phone number to call if any corruption is noticed with education.
5. Unemployment among young men in Freetown is about 70%. There is a focus here in the U. S. on the employment of youth in large cities around the world.

6. There is an initiative to build the Lungi Bridge to Freetown.
7. Environment Degradation: This was an issue 10 years ago. There has been a moratorium on logging in Freetown. There are companies that are planting trees upcountry. They are working on dams around Freetown to address the lack of water.

10:45 - 11:05 PC SL Representative: Kruiti Patel

1. Currently there are 73 total Volunteers in SL: New PCV's are: 23 Health, 6 Math, 13 Science, 15 English
2. All of the new Trainees have found out their sites and they will be sworn in 8/24.
3. Funding has been consistent and Jody Olsen is pushing for a total of 8,000 PCV's worldwide.

11:20 - 12:00 Madieu Williams: Update on his Foundation (Bio is attached)

1. He is in the 3rd Year of Law School
2. Majority of his work is based in Calaba Town.
3. He works with University of Maryland and health and engineering students from there travel to SL as one of their countries that they travel to and do a project.
4. 2012 They did a new school building that was retrofitted with solar panels.
5. 2019 They are going over this year and hoping to set up internet access at the school.
6. Discussion about having SL students working alongside with the students who came from Maryland. Students from Fourah Bay College worked alongside the Maryland students, as they do their work.
7. Update on Public Health group that got back just last week: 2019 UMD Raised \$2500 to train 3-4 women as health workers in Calaba Town. Book shelves, raised money for a local librarian.
8. Madieu is often asked if he can replicate this in other places. He said he is just one person and is concentrating on Calaba Town for now.

12:00 - 1:00 Break for lunch onsite

1:00 - 1:45 Bill Krist: On his Ag project (Bio is attached)

1. He is connected to the Rotarians and he did an AiD project in SL after the war.
2. He has been working on a project for a number of years.
3. They are helping 3 primary schools outside of Bo
4. Small towns of Largo, Barlie, Nguabu
5. West Springfield raised \$30,000 and Rotarians brought it up to \$100,000
6. Did an needs assessment and found ones with that had the most support.
7. This what they are doing: 7 teachers getting trained, latrines, training in health and education, solar system in each school, furniture and school supplies to each school.
8. The Latrines are very sophisticated.
9. Nurse from Bo goes out to the schools to teach health and sanitation 2 times a year.
10. Want to set up a solar charging business. They are hoping this will help pay for school supplies.

1:45 - 2:30 Oscar Martin: Bundu presentation

1. Docent at Smithsonian African Art Museum. He also does education and outreach.
2. He mostly works with Mende and just took his first trip to SL
3. 3 areas: Kenema, Nomofama, and Little Waterloo
4. Sande: guardian of women, protector. Mende women celebrate Sande Society. Sowei are the chiefs of the society, instructors of Bush School
5. Oscar was there just as the girls were coming out of their time of initiation.
6. There is secrecy. They have a fence (cement or cloth) that surrounds their area and all know not to go near it. Girls take an oath of secrecy
7. How do they get funding for their society?
8. Bush School: Preparing young girls for adulthood, learning traditional songs and dances, taught practical things,

9. Oscar had a chance to go inside the Bush School.
10. Rivers and Nature are important, as is the color white for clothes.
11. Part of the Sowei power is the helmet mask, Bundu.
12. Music has a lot of power and brings people together.
13. Symbolism of Bundu: forehead—intelligence; downcast eyes—humbleness; birds—messages from spirits and humans; neck rings—health; white—symbolism of sowei
14. This tradition is from the 17th century.

2:30 - 2:45 Break

2:45 - 4:00 Business meeting with reports from committees (These are attached)

1. Treasurer's Report
2. Membership—183 Current Members
3. Projects—See list. Just sent money for April projects last week. One focus is to find projects that won't get funded by other organizations. About \$3500 left in the budget.
4. We are looking for a concert hall in DC or Maryland area. We want to pull together a concert with Emerson to raise money for projects committee.
5. Advocacy—see attached report. NPCA did a lot to encourage all to contact congressmen in regards to Peace Corps budget. There was a NC Congressman who introduced a bill in April to abolish PC. That was defeated soundly. Jim said they will continue their conference calls.
6. Question of Next year's annual meeting: **Sierra Leone or Sapelo** We were trying to find a way to get some of the younger RPCV's involved and come to a meeting. There is an idea to have some kind of service project that the group works on together. Dorcas and Mohammed volunteered to help if we choose to have the meeting in Freetown.
7. Miscellaneous—1st Saturday of the month Sierra Leone has the cleaning initiative.

Friday Evening: Dinner at Bukom Café

Saturday, July 20, 2019

9:00 - 9:45 Linda Thomas-Greenfield (Bio is attached)

- a) Spoke about Africa's place in the world.
 - a) We are at a critical juncture. Here are some of the major trends:
 - b) Tremendous increase in democracy in SubSaharan Africa. Since 2015, half of sub-Saharan has had transition in presidential power. West Africa is leading the forefront in this movement. Elections are the way to go to move toward democracy.
 - c) Increased Regional integration with Free trade on the continent. This will take time but is a step forward. It is hoped that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) - the largest since the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1994 - will help unlock Africa's long-stymied economic potential by boosting intra-regional trade, strengthening supply chains and spreading expertise.
 - d) Youth Bough (have no idea what this word was!): Medium age is 18. This will have a significant effect on the continent. Need to look at ways to engage young people and invest in them. Some are leaving the continent, some joining Boko Haram or other negative organizations. Young African Leaders Initiative network....a great way to connect.
- b) Spoke about how things are in SL
 - a) SL has made some major strides. One major stride was using the Criminal Court to bring Charles Taylor on trial.
 - b) SL has had better elections and this is bringing stability. When Linda is asked about investing in SL by companies, they say that is a good place for this.
 - c) Large rutile and bauxite reserves, diverse agricultural sector, tax incentives.
 - d) Infrastructure remains a challenge in SL.
 - e) SL suffered a serious setback with Ebola. We have to work to build the infrastructure for the health sector.
 - f) Economic Health 2018 SL 3.7 % 2016 6% growth. There have been slow downs in iron ore mining.
 - g) SL is working with IMF and getting distribution of funds \$43.0 Million.
 - h) Does US have a policy toward SL? No new initiatives right now, but feels positive that things will happen.
- c) Spoke about groups like FoSL and what role we can play in Africa:

- a) We raise the profile of SL for the government when issues come up.
- b) We need to put the pressure on the government of SL. People do not want to invest in countries who are known for corruption.
- c) We need to speak frankly. We are the change makers.
- d) PC has a tremendous impact on SL leaders and all people.

Questions: 1. Common Currency in West Africa? 2. Youth unemployment (job creation programs that make sense: training programs that work with the tech sector. Need to build capacity for them within the city.), 3. Locals need to come to US to meet with businesses to convince them to invest in them. 4. How to deal with microfinancing and entrepreneurship? It is working and it is being pushed by large organizations. 5. Influence of China: It is VERY big in Africa. 6. Corruption index in 49% now, 71% in one year. 7. Very hard for US govt to compete with Chinese model. Chinese Govt. boosts up the private sector. Chinese do not play by the rules and African govt's need to demand that they play by the rules.

10:20-11:15 Ambassador Wai

- a) Introductions all around
- b) Ambassador Wai said that he was a big beneficiary of PC in his school days.
- c) Born in the north and raised in the south
- d) How PC helped SL: Gary and Jim S. have been mentors to him throughout the years.
- e) What is happening in SL today?
 - I. We have a major crisis with a whirlwind of deportations: SL, Liberia, Ghana and Senegal. In the past, people have been selling passports, some are in jail, some have torn up their passports (some are not from SL, but coming to SL Embassy for help). American govt. and SL embassy are sitting down to work together on these issues.
 - II. SL gives Americans 3 years on visa, USA gives SL citizens 10-15 days when they come in to US.
 - III. There is a \$60 Billion Africa Fund. America wants to get more involved for infrastructure development.
 - IV. President Bio has hope to build bridge to Lungi and hope it will pay for itself. Will America be able to help?

- V. Mano River Rail project...connect IC, Lib, SL and Guinea by rail. Ambassador Wai gathered people involved to talk about this.
- VI. Working to engage the SL Diaspora
- VII. At Embassy, for Iftar during Ramadan, they invited many to pray together.
- VIII. The President's initiative is a commitment to Education. Amb Wai is appealing that we work together to focus on free education.
- IX. Questions: 1. What stage are they at for bridge from Lungi? Comprehensive study and have put out for bids to build. 2. Who is funding the bridge? SL is open on this. 3. Asking for more info on Rail project: In very beginning stages. It will not be a top down project, but will involve the paramount chiefs. T.Johnson reminded to fairly compensate those who lose land. 4. Work to have initiatives to engage the Diaspora: Need to have transparency and accountability. Also need to be clear about, we are talking about the integrity. 5. Who to do the projects, American or Chinese? Short term, easier to used Chinese, but long term Americans. 6. Bio's first business, as president, was to cancel Airport project, because of connection with Chinese. There is a board (chaired by vice pres), that fights corruption. SL is now 3rd in all of Africa on fighting corruption.

11:30 - 1:30 Joe Opala: Update (Bio is attached)

1. Sierra Leone-Gullah connection: This connection continues to evolve. Both George Bush's have direct linear connection to Slave trader Thomas ("Bo") Walker. Connections with Bunce Island are constantly being found. It is the most important for the history of the US. Many in Black Seminoles and in Texas (words of Temne in their Gullah language)
2. Follow the path of ancestors of Gullah: carried their Gullah language and rice growing.
3. 1670-1807 (6 castles built on this site): possibly exited about 35,000 to US. About 25% made it to North America.
4. Cloth was the single most important item in the trade for slaves from Europeans to Africans.
5. Bence Island (original name after Cap. John Bence), then Bance Island, then Bunce Island.
6. Liverpool was the main place of slave trade in England.
7. They came into Savannah, GA and Charleston, SC (largest port for receiving slaves in the States).
8. In 1700's the coast of GA was inhabited more by slaves than by whites.
9. Florida, Oklahoma, Texas, Mexico 1870 Seminole Indian Scouts

1:30-2:00 Lunch on site

2:00-2:05 Presentation of Award to Jamie Brown

2:05-2:40 Sam Hill: On his trip to SL and upcoming book

1. Book: **Chasing Ghosts: Looking for Lost Friends and Hope in the African Bush**
2. Sharing his story of going back to SL for 4 weeks.
3. Discuss what learned and his surprises
4. Think about a FoSL project where the prewar photos are given back.
5. Talked about why Africa is lagging behind in development. He compared SL to 4 other countries.
6. Talked about different options for the future.
 - a) Sweet Life—simple village life
 - b) Stop Aid—doesn't work. There is a lot of aid dependence. Aid is donor driven, where we are looking for ways to help.
 - c) Marshall Plan—

2:45-4:00 Tom Johnson: Update on his work with Africa Surgery

1. Tom talked about his most recent cases.
2. To learn more about his work, go to: <http://www.africasurgery.org/>

4:00 Clean up and Close

Saturday Evening: Social Event in Columbia, Maryland

Those in attendance:

Peggy Murrah

Aiah Fanday
Michael Lee
Rochelle Jaffe
Dorcas Kamanda
Lawrence Shirley
James Joiner
Tom Johnson*
Tom Hull
Kruti Patel*
Jim Sheahan
Mohammed Barrie
Gary Schulze
Jim Hanson
Patty Bruzek
Oscar Martin*
Caitlin Orzechowski
Zainab Bangura
Albert Senesie
Anthony McMillon
Barbara Sheehan
Carol Kochheiser
Madieu Williams*
Bill Krist*
Sam Hill*
Etta Toure (Saturday)
Hilrien Kamanda (Saturday)
Dave Magnani* (Saturday)
Joe Opala (Saturday)
Fatmata Opala* (Saturday)
Linda Thomas-Greenfield* (Saturday)

Ambassador Wai* (Saturday)
***Speaker**

Ballanta Academy of Music

by Alexa Hartsell

Ballanta Academy of Music was originally founded in 1995 by Mr. Logie Wright and Dr. Kitty Fadlu-Deen and resides at 27 Liverpool Street in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Today Ballanta holds music and dance classes at their location in Freetown, teaches lessons at nearby schools to students who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford the normal class rate, and has a number of performing groups presenting a variety of content from jazz bands to traditional Sierra Leonean dance and music and much more. Ballanta's vision is to be a worldwide beacon for the development, promotion and research of West African music and performing arts, providing first-class tuition in classical, modern and indigenous music and performing arts for the people of Sierra Leone. It exists to provide a center for music and arts education and entertainment of indigenous and international content through practice, training and research to people in Sierra Leone, thereby providing a platform for nurturing talent to be internationally recognized.

As one of the few organizations offering arts training in Sierra Leone, resources are extremely limited. Finding trained and qualified musicians and other people working in the arts to continue teacher development here in Sierra Leone is no small task. In order for Ballanta to continue to grow, its teachers also need to continue to grow. In order to do this it needs people who are able to teach the teachers.

In light of this need, for my third year as a Salone PCV I am living in Freetown and working directly with Ballanta. My background is in Dance Education so I am working more with the dance side of Ballanta to train their teachers more

formally, develop curriculum with them, and hold my own classes for adults and kids in ballet and contemporary dance, along with aiding in producing two concerts for this upcoming school year. My presence helps to fill a need, but it is not enough especially since I don't have backgrounds in areas outside of dance.

Ballanta is looking for individuals with music (choral and instruments), drama, visual arts or dance backgrounds who would be interested in hosting 2-5 day intensive workshops for the teachers here along with our students. We hope that by continuing to have people coming in we can develop the teachers' own abilities along with bringing in more interest for the students in a variety of areas within the arts.

If you are not an artist yourself but are interested in giving to Ballanta, please contact myself or Dr. Kitty Fadlu-Deen at the emails below. Most namely we are in need of 4-10 laptops to host basic computer literacy classes for our students.

If you have any questions or want to learn more about Ballanta Academy of Music please feel free to email myself directly (alexahartsell@gmail.com) or our founder Dr. Kitty Fadlu-Deen (kfadludeen@gmail.com). You can also visit our website at <http://www.ballanta.org> or visit our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/ballanta1996/>.



Bio's of Speakers

FoSL 2019 Annual Meeting

Kruti Patel, Country Desk Officer (Mozambique & Malawi)

Kruti Patel hails from the small New England state of Connecticut. She completed her undergraduate degree at American University in Washington, DC. where she studied International Studies with a double minor in Economics and Chinese Language. Afterwards, she served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Indonesia from 2014-2016. In Indonesia, her primary assignment was to teach English at a local high school. As a secondary project, Kruti partnered with a nonprofit to create Camp SEHAT (Sex Education and HIV/AIDS Awareness for Teens). Kruti then moved to New York City to attend Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs to get her MPA in Development Practice. As a student, she worked on projects with the United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Migration Agency focused on monitoring and evaluating agency policies and practices. In her spare time, Kruti enjoys drinking copious amounts of coffee, reading modern fiction, hiking, running, and spending time with her enormous family network.

Oscar Martin: Docent at Smithsonian National Museum of African Art

Oscar is an architect in the DC area and he is having a program at his home in October to share his collection of Bundu Masks.

He visited Sierra Leone for the first time in May and had a chance to do extensive research on the Sande Society in Kenema, Bo, Shenge, little Bo and Nomofama.

William Krist

William Krist is currently a Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. For the past three years, he has been working on a book on U.S. trade policy including its impact on economic development, the environment, U.S. foreign policy, and employment here in the United States. His book, *Globalization and America's Trade Agreements*, was published in 2013 by Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press.

In addition to his work at the Woodrow Wilson Center, William Krist undertakes consulting projects on issues related to economic development. Examples of his projects include extensive analyses of the implications for Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda of joining the Information Technology Agreement, a project to assist Sierra Leone in adopting the ECOWAS common tariff, training programs in Nigeria, Benin, Senegal, and Ghana on negotiating in the World Trade Organization, and a project for ECOWAS on the implications of notifying their agreement to the WTO.

His previous experience includes 15 years at America's leading high technology industry association, where he was one of the original advocates for the Information Technology Agreement. He also served five years as a senior official in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the White House Office responsible for formulating and coordinating U.S. trade policy, and worked on trade issues in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

- Globalization and America's Trade Agreements (Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013)

- "Making Doha a Development Round: What Do the Developing Countries Want?" (Wilson Center, October 2003)

- Protecting the Environment while

Opening Markets in the Americas (North-South Center, University of Miami, 2002)

- "The WTO and MEAs: Time for a Good Neighbor Policy" - Woodrow Wilson Center's Trade and Environment Forum policy brief (Wilson Center, 2002)

Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Linda Thomas-Greenfield has an extensive background in the foreign service. From 2013 to 2017, she served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs. Prior to that she was the Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources from 2012 to 2013. From 2008 to 2012 she was Ambassador to Liberia. She was Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration from 2004 to 2006.

Currently she is Senior Counselor at the Albright Stonebridge Group in Washington, DC.

Joseph A. Opala

Joseph A. Opala, OR (born August 4, 1950) is an American historian noted for establishing the "Gullah Connection," the historical links between the indigenous people of the West African nation of Sierra Leone and the Gullah people of the Low Country region of South Carolina and Georgia in the United States.

Opala's historical research began with a study of Bunce Island, the British slave castle in Sierra Leone that was a departure point for many African slaves shipped to South Carolina and Georgia in the mid- and late 18th century Middle Passage. He was the first scholar to recognize that Bunce Island has greater importance for the Gullah than any other West African slave castle. He ranks it as "the most important historic site in Africa for the United States."^[1]

Opala has traveled between Sierra Leone and the South Carolina and Georgia Low Country for 25 years, producing documentary films, museum exhibits, and popular publications on this historical connection. He is best known for a series of "Gullah Homecomings" in which Gullah people traveled to Sierra Leone to explore their historical and family ties to that country.^[2] He has drawn on his original research to establish these connections, and the work of earlier scholars, especially Lorenzo Dow Turner, an African-American linguist who in the 1930s and 1940s traced many elements of Gullah speech to West African languages.^{[3][4]}

Opala's research and public history events generated a national dialog in Sierra Leone on the subject of family lost in the Atlantic slave trade. These discussions have continued for almost three decades. The Sierra Leone media first coined the phrase, "Gullah Connection," for the family ties which Opala has brought to light.^[5] He helped generate a similar dialog in the South Carolina and Georgia Low Country, where he has given public lectures and interviews to the local media, and organized workshops for teachers and cultural activists for many years. His work has helped Gullahs recognize their links to African traditions.^[6]

Opala's efforts to bring Sierra Leoneans and Gullahs together through an exploration of their common history have been recognized in both countries. In 2012, Sierra Leone's President Ernest Bai Koroma awarded Opala the Order of the Rokel, that country's version of the British knighthood,^{[7][8]} and Sierra Leone citizenship the following year. Opala is now a dual citizen of the U.S. and Sierra Leone.^[9] Penn Center,^[10] the oldest Gullah community organization in the United States, in 2013 inducted Opala into its prestigious "1862 Circle" for his work in cultural preservation.

Madieu Williams

Madieu Williams was born on October 18, 1981 in Sierra Leone, West Africa. At the age of 8, Madieu and his family moved to the United States, relocating to Lanham, Maryland. Under the watchful eye of his mother, Madieu went on to excel in the classroom and in athletics. His effort resulted in the opportunity for a college education and collegiate football career. After a stint at Towson University, Madieu transferred to the University of Maryland, where he graduated in 2003 earning a degree in Family Science. At University of Maryland he interned at the National Institutes of Health and starred on the gridiron earning honors. In 2004, Williams's efforts resulted in being drafted by the Cincinnati Bengals in the second-round of the NFL Draft. During his nine year career, Madieu spent his first four years in Cincinnati before moving onto the Minnesota Vikings for three seasons and playing two, one-year stints with the San Francisco 49ers and Washington Redskins as a perennial starter for each.

In 2006, he established the Madieu Williams Foundation in 2006. Fulfilling a promise to his late mother to help those in need, the Madieu Williams Foundation focuses on education, health, and wellness for underprivileged youth both in the United States and in Sierra Leone. Beginning in Cincinnati, the foundation has followed Madieu throughout his career to the different cities in which he has played. Free football clinics, health screening and playground builds are among the projects he undertook in Cincinnati. In Minnesota, Williams focused on the academic and life skills for the North Minneapolis program worked with 20 eighth-grade students throughout the season.

Throughout this time Madieu did not forget about his commitment to the people of Sierra Leone, among the poorest and underserved in Africa. In March 2009, Madieu traveled back to his hometown of Freetown, Sierra Leone for the opening of the Abigail D. Butscher Primary School. The school is located in Calaba Town, one of the poorest areas of Freetown and is the first of its kind in that community. The community has grown

around the school as it has become its cornerstone.

In June 2010, Madieu sponsored a Medical, Dental and Educational mission trip to Sierra Leone by taking over 40 professionals to Calaba Town including surgeons, dentists, nurses and teachers. The mission trip brought much needed medical attention and supplies to those in need. Every June since then the Madieu Williams Foundation sponsors a mission trip, with over \$2 million worth of donated medical and school supplies along with volunteers. Madieu continues to strengthen his commitment by partnering with University of Maryland's School of Engineering to install solar panels on the primary school which was completed in 2012. Moving forward a secondary school will begin construction in 2013 and a water infrastructure will be built.

For the past five years, Madieu Williams has partnered with his alma mater, the University of Maryland and its School of Public Health as a part of Maryland Day, providing an annual football clinic to a larger demographic. Additionally, the Madieu Williams Foundation works with Hyattsville Elementary School, operating a free after school program "Dieu's Crew," for at risk youth. Dieu's Crew meets for over six hours a week and will expand in 2013 to a neighboring school. The after school program is consistent with Madieu's past and current foundation principles promoting education, healthy lifestyle and life skills. The three principles are segmented during the after school program, providing balanced attention and participation, perpetuating growth among its participants.

Madieu has received many prestigious awards and accolades for his service to the community and to Sierra Leone. He won the NFL's Man of the Year award in 2010 and has been recognized by the embassy of Sierra Leone as a distinguished citizen among other awards.

Madieu earned his Master's in Business

Administration in 2013 and serves as a representative for the NFL Players Association. Recently, Madieu graduated from University of Baltimore School of Law with his Juris Doctorate Degree.

Tom Johnson

<http://www.africasurgery.org>

In 2003, he founded Africa Surgery, a non-profit organization providing health care and surgical services to needy people in Sierra Leone.

For about 5 months a year I live there working with international and local medical programs and facilities that provide diagnoses and treatment on a wide range of issues.

When not there, I coordinate activities from Morristown, NJ, with help from some in-country assistants, including Mohamed Mansuray in Freetown and Foday Tarawalie in Makeni.

Tom Johnson,
Peace Corps Volunteer, 1989-1991 Jr.

Sam Hill

Sam Hill is a writer and speechwriter. He is particularly skilled at handling complex issues involving business and economics.

He's co-written or written three business books, including the bestselling Radical Marketing, as well as articles, essays and op eds for Fortune, the LA Times, Harvard Business Review, Sloan Management Journal, Strategy + Business, Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, Ad Age, Brandweek and CMO Magazine. He's spoken at business forums and graduate programs in the U.S., Europe, Asia and Latin America. As a ghostwriter, thought-partner and coach, he's worked with CEO's on speeches, op-ed's, board presentations, annual report letters,

blog posts, and advocacy submissions. In addition, Mr. Hill has authored and had published two critically acclaimed novels and six short stories.

Before becoming a full-time writer, he was an international business executive. He served as Director of International Strategy at Kraft. Following Kraft's acquisition by Philip Morris, he rejoined Booz Allen Hamilton (now PwC,) rising to lead partner in the worldwide strategy practice based in Chicago, Sydney and New York. At Booz, he was awarded the Professional Excellence Award, the firm's highest honor. He then was Vice Chairman and Worldwide Director of Strategy for DMB&B (now Publicis Groupe,) before leaving to found a boutique consultancy, Helios, which was acquired by FTI in 2005. At FTI, he was a senior managing director and Vice Chairman of the Strategic Communications business unit. He still works with the firm on a part-time basis.

Some of his better-known clients include World Bank, Allstate, Australian Wheat Board, Blockbuster, Briggs & Stratton, CH2M Hill, Cigna, Diageo, Gap, Giant Eagle, GM, Harley-Davidson, Kellogg's, J & J, Lego, Monsanto, Patron, Pepsi, P&G, Royal Caribbean, Sunkist, Supervalu, Taubman, 3M, Wolters Kluwer, Waste Management, Young & Rubicam, and Zebra. He served on the board of FTI.com.

Mr. Hill began his career in Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, West Africa, where he put in wells for clean drinking water, built a school and installed irrigation systems as part of the Green Revolution.

Sam and his family compete in endurance events. He has completed four Ironmen, two ultra's and eight marathons, qualifying for the Boston Marathon every year (which he's proud of but fails to impress either his son and his wife, both of whom are national-class triathletes.) He splits his time between his farm outside of Bloomington, Indiana and Oahu.

Longest Serving FoSL Board Member



Jamie Brown

A high point of the 2019 annual meeting was recognizing a special member for his years of dedicated service to Friends of Sierra Leone. Jamie Brown, RPCV SL 81-83, has been the FoSL web master for almost 20 years. Additionally, he has been involved in producing the electronic newsletters over the last few years.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer stationed in Freetown, Jamie helped organize and conduct the country's first agricultural survey. He trained agriculture survey enumerator teams, collected their data, and input it. Using the data, he and his coworkers produced reports about the kinds and amount of crops grown.

Jamie continues to volunteer through his work with FoSL. He was presented the Special Recognition Award to commend his continuous efforts to serve the people of Sierra Leone and FoSL. Thank you for your service Jamie! You are greatly appreciated!



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As a reminder to all Friends of Sierra Leone supporters, if you choose to shop with Amazon by using their "Amazon Smile" program, a small percentage (0.5%) of your purchase will be donated to FoSL.

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More images from the 2019 Friends of Sierra Leone Annual Meeting at the Sierra Leone Embassy in Washington DC



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Would you be willing to be part of a network to receive information and contact your members of Congress at important times? (Please include your email address.)

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