



SPEECH BY THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT ELECT
MRS. LOVETTE AZANGO-TUCKER

Speakers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good evening.

I am humbled by the honor you have bestowed upon me to lead this organization for the next two years. This is truly a great testament to your willingness to come together in the cause of upholding our alma mater, Cuttington University. In the past two years, the administration of Mr. Rupel Marshall has brought dynamism back to the alumni association. Through his valiant and unrelenting efforts, the association has made and is making considerable contributions to the university. His tenacity and vision has resurrected this organization from its lethargic status of yesteryears to the vibrancy we have today. Thank you, Rupel, for your wonderful grace under pressure, your willingness to listen, and your consuming love for Cuttington. May God continue to direct your path. You have done a noble thing and I am grateful.

As you already know, I am currently at Cuttington University in Suakoko, Bong County. When this is being read, I would have spent 4 weeks at the school. It has been an enlightening experience for me...an eye-opener...and a validation of what I already suspected. I always knew that our school was great. I just did not understand how a small school, in a rural area, of a small country, devastated by conflict, could be held in such high esteem by the international community. I did not grasp the significance of this university in the larger vision of Liberia and West Africa. I came here wanting to assist. I came with an open mind and a large heart. I believed in the saying that "it only takes one to make a difference". I was unaware of how much of a difference I could make. I only believed that I could lend a hand.

My journey to Cuttington has been wonderful. Cuttington is a university on the move. You should be exceptionally proud of what this school has accomplished in the last fifty years.

1. Cuttington has produced more professionals for Africa and the world than any other institution of higher learning in Liberia. As I write this, there are approximately 45 institutions of high learning in Liberia.

2. Cuttington has been recognized globally as one of the leaders of higher education in Africa. Recently, Cuttington was invited to attend the Global University Leaders Forum (GULF) in South Africa. Gulf is a consortium of twenty Ivy League and well recognized universities in the United States. In other words, Cuttington is now listed as an Ivy League school in Africa. There are only 20 such schools. These schools were selected by Ivy League universities in the United States. Be proud!

3. Cuttington continues to produce leaders for Liberia. Every governmental agency in the country has Cuttington graduates in the top echelons of management. These graduates include people who lived outside of the country during the conflict years, as well as those who remained to participate in the governing of Liberia. Some of Cuttington's graduates include Jonathan B.B. Hart, Bishop of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, Mrs. Ayele Ajavon-Cox, Head of the Dental School at John F. Kennedy Hospital, Dr. Walter Gwenigale, Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Emmet Dennis, President of the University of Liberia, and Benoni Urey, Board Chairman of Lonestar Corporation, the largest Cell phone company in Liberia, Jeremiah Sulonteh, Minister of Postal Affairs,to name a few.

4. Cuttington has spearheaded growth in Liberia, especially in Bong County, where Cuttington provides scholarships to over 300 graduates of high schools in the county, and assists in the construction of clinics and schools throughout the area.

5. Through its service learning and community programs, Cuttington students go into villages and towns providing much needed manpower in the areas of agriculture and nursing.

When I arrived at the school I was filled with awe at the possibilities that exist here. In a country where people are relying on others to get things done, the administration of this university has taken another approach. Together with students, teachers, and other employees, this university is saying "Yes, we can". They returned in 2003 to a campus that was in tatters. There were less than 500 students enrolled, very few teachers and staff, and a huge burden to restore and repair. Houses were without roofs, doors, and windows, there were squatters and overgrown grass, no electricity and no running water and a place practically unlivable. They said "Yes, we can". When students and teachers were afraid to return because of security and the lack of amenities, they said "Yes, we can".

Today Cuttington can boast of a student population of over 1500, an adequate infrastructure and technology. Cuttington is the largest single employer in Bong County. All because a few people said "Yes, we can."

Cuttington has a television station, a radio station and a bi-monthly newspaper. Cuttington enjoys relationships with universities in the US and in Africa. These universities provide study-abroad programs.

Cuttington has possibilities...because they said "Yes, we can".

Ladies and Gentlemen. I want you to stand with me today and be proud. I want you to leave here with a warm feeling that what you received from Cuttington was not only a degree, but a chance at life... a chance at making the impossible possible. Leave tonight with the thought you can put your time spent at Cuttington up against any other institution in the world, even Ivy League schools, because Cuttington is an Ivy League School, and know that you were here.

Now it's the time in your life when you begin to look at the future and how you will be remembered. Now is the time to build your legacy. Build your legacy with Cuttington. There are over 1500 students who are as wide-eyed and full of potential here as you were. There were people like you, at the time, who didn't know you but thought you were worth something. There

were people, before you who knew you could be somebody... even before you realized it yourself. Those people spent their time, talent and treasures to give you a better life.

You may not know anyone on Cuttington but you know this. These students need you to give them a better life. They need you to make their dreams come true...to make something of themselves.

You need this. You need to make a difference in someone's life. You need to live bigger and better than your circumstances dictate. You need to be a role model. I sincerely hope you make the decision to help. This administration has the vision and the passion for Cuttington. We will develop our platform within the next month and inform you of our plans for the organization. However, let me highlight a few things that will be included in the platform:

1. Regional power – I believe that the power of our strength comes from strong regions and we should develop those.
2. Sustainable funding sources – Although our appeals for funds net some money I believe we should research alternate sources of funding.
3. Direct assistance to the university – We should be engaged in recruiting qualified personnel to work at the university and helping to develop additional study-abroad programs. We should also provide more targeted assistance that will improve the image and capacity of the university. These include things like transportation, maintaining roads and buildings, upgrading and improving facilities.
4. Clarity – The current administration has begun the process of providing transparency in the area of finance.

This will continue.

We welcome all assistance. However, remember that all words must be backed up by actions. We are thinkers. We produce brilliant plans and ideas. We must also be willing provide action. If you believe that Cuttington needs a new playground, work with us on funding and building it. Don't just throw the idea out and expect others to do the work. Cuttington needs all of us. Never, for one minute think that you have nothing to offer. If all you can afford is \$25 a month, that is huge. Rally about 5 other people in your circle to give the same. After one year we would have realized \$1500. That amount can purchase lawn mowers and paint to give the school a much needed facelift. If you can afford more, you can reface the basketball and volleyball courts and soccer fields. If your budget can withstand a \$5,000 or more donation, there are streets and buildings on the campus that will be named after you or whomever you designate. Overs and Valentine Halls are named after Episcopal bishops. Remember Legacy building.

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen for your time. God Bless You all.