



# “In Union Strong, Success is Sure; We Cannot Fail”

March, 2010  
Volume 1, Issue 1

LIBERIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

# THE VOICE

On December 12, 2009 the Board of the Liberian-American Community Organization of Southern California (LACOSC) held an election at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Emmanuel Leon, where Mr. Weeks ran uncontested. Mr. Weeks’ administration includes: Mr. Robert Wuelleh (Vice President), Mrs. Ella Gex-Collet (Treasurer), and Mr. Victor Teah (Secretary). Mr. Weeks and his cabinet have all lived in California and are committed to working with the community to create a more “cohesive community”. During his acceptance speech, Mr. Weeks emphasized specific areas that he and his team would like to improve over the next two years. When asked what a

## ELECTION ‘09!

“cohesive community” would entail, Mr. Weeks responded that this task would involve “bringing the community together with participation and support”.



The newly elected officers.

Mr. Weeks also invited the elders and past administrations to lend a hand to his team. The evening came to a close with

some of the elders and board members offering words of advice and encouragement.

### Lorenzo Weeks

(President)– has lived in Southern California for many years. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge about the community as he has been an active participant of each administration thus far. His primary goal for the community in the next two years is to facilitate the formation of a cohesive community, as well as build relationships with other communities.

### Robert Wuelleh (Vice President)

– has lived in Northern and Southern California for a number of years. He brings to the community knowledge of business ideas. He also has

## A LOCAL LIBERIAN SURGEON AND ATHLETES HELP LIBERIAN YOUTH IN ARIZONA

Dr. Gracie Ann Ester Dinkins, a fellow Liberian of Los Angeles, took a united force to Phoenix, Arizona to help motivate Liberian youth. This desire to help stemmed from charges of sexual assault perpetrated on an 8 year old Liberian girl in July of 2009. The girl was allegedly assaulted by 4 other Liberian boys, aged 9, 10, 13, and 14. This incident led Dr. Dinkins to make a decision

to help the families of the children affected, as well as the Liberian Community in Phoenix. Dr. Dinkins collaborated with athletes, as she reflected on her own childhood and the impact that sports had on her life. Dr. Dinkins reports that sports positively influenced her perspective on life, health, as well as her academic performance.

con’t. on pg. 3

### Inside this issue

- What’s new in the community 1
- Youth in Arizona 1
- Letter from the president 2
- Our Condolences 2
- Financial Update 3
- Best wishes to Mr. Free 4
- How to stay connected 6

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

“...stronger  
and more  
cohesive...”



Dear Fellow Liberians,  
I hope this letter finds you and your families in good health and spirit. The purpose of this letter is to welcome your invaluable participation in the Liberian American Community Organization of Southern California. This letter is also being written to provide you a summary of the progress of your newly elected leaders.

In our campaign we mentioned pursuing the following attainable flexible goals: (1) restructure the community into a stronger and more cohesive environment (2) link community members to healthcare resources (3) link community members to

immigration assistance programs.

One of the prospective projects is a community center that will provide services such as housing assistance for elders, child care services, at risk youth assistance.

We believe that these programs will assist in achieving a long term goal of creating an enterprising zone that will empower the community financially and politically. We have begun these endeavors by reinstating the newsletter and updating the contact information, which will then be forwarded to the organization’s administration. Positive change has arrived. With the participation and assistance of every member of this community, we intend to bring tangible counseling resources, and simply a place to gather and fellowship “the Liberian way”.

We are looking forward to two wonderful years of dedicated and diligent work. We realize that we are not an island, and that we need your support and participation to achieve our goals. Therefore, we have opened the above-mentioned lines of communication so that **you** can give us any pertinent information (suggestions, advice, announcements, constructive, criticism etc). In turn, we will

Please look for your invitations to the community’s monthly town hall meetings/seminars. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to lead the Liberian Community

I promise, we will make you proud.

**A. Lorenzo Weeks III  
President**

“we are looking  
forward to two  
wonderful years of  
dedicated and  
diligent work”

## GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Over the past couple of months, several of our fellow friends in the community have lost loved ones. The **Weeks and Saleeby** families lost their brother, Mr. Sport McKay in December in Liberia. **Mrs. Ella Gex-Collet** lost two relatives— her sister-in-law Mrs. Maima Jalarue in Washington D.C. in December and her sister Marilyn Funnebo

in January in Liberia. **Mrs. Gertrude Leon** lost two aunts, Ester Massaquoi and Juma George in January. **Mrs. Katy Gerard-Yhap** lost her aunt Mrs. Fatubah Putu in Maryland in February. **Mr. Peter Sloboh** also lost his father, Mr. Moses Sloboh in Liberia in February. LACOSC sympathizes with other community members who may have also lost loved ones

recently.

As we all know, death is not an easy transition in life for the bereaved families. As each loved one has gone on, they will never be forgotten. Our continued prayers and condolences go out to each family.

## YOUTH IN ARIZONA (con't from pg 1)

**“Highlight the fruitfulness and richness of the Liberian heritage”**

With this motivating factor in her life, Dr. Dinkins decided to gather fellow Liberian athletes to assist. The response was positive and athletes came from all over the U.S. to help the Liberians in Phoenix.

Dr. Dinkins also reached out to the local church where most Liberians and the families of the young girl and boys worship. In doing so, the community expressed concerns about the public view of their community as being “barbaric”. Dr. Dinkins organized an event called “Liberian Sports and Heritage Day Camp”. The purpose of this day was to bring the youth together and bring focus to sports and the important role that it plays in their lives. This event also focused on their heritage, which would highlight the fruitfulness and richness of Liberian heritage. During the first part of the day, athletes

interacted with the youth through various types of sports including basketball, soccer, and tug-of-war to assist with building rapport. After lunch, the youth were

challenges faced by adolescents, change in culture, peer pressure, interaction with parents in the home environment versus interactions outside of the home,

as well as expectations of the youth today. The event also increased awareness in the community in terms of the challenges that the youth are currently facing.

Community leaders have asked that Dr. Dinkins and her group return with more helpful information and resources that



**Liberian Sports and Heritage Team**

divided into different groups by age and gender. These groups discussed some of the challenges Liberian youth face today growing up away from their homeland. Some of the topics discussed included challenges faced by boys and girls in school,

could assist this community in growing to understand the culture in which they now reside. Liberian Athletes For At Risk Youth (LAFARY) is the name of the Organization established after the day camp in Phoenix.

## ‘09 ELECTION! (con't from pg 1)

connections with various other Liberian organizations throughout the U.S. that we can collaborate with.

**Ella Gex-Collet (Treasurer)** – has also resided in California for some years. She brings creativity and dedication in working with the community. Ella is also well connected with leaders in California

which can help to bring awareness to the organization and it’s goals. Ella’s expertise also include a knowledge of book keeping and accounting.

**Victor Teah (Secretary)**- has lived in southern California and also has great knowledge of the organization. He brings dedication and envisions working

together as a community. He believes that this community can help our fellow Liberians back home.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

The previous administration, under the leadership of Mr. Lewis Free, has relinquished all funds from the Liberian-American Community Organization in the total amount of **\$1,613.92**. The new administration will continue to keep the

community abreast of the financial status of this account in an effort to be totally accountable to the Board Members and the Liberian community.

**Please welcome  
the President  
&  
officers elect!**

## WELL WISHES FOR MR. LEWIS FREE

Many family and friends came together on February 6, 2010 for a dinner in Hawthorne in honor of Mr. Lewis Free. This dinner was to commend Mr. Free for his work in the community and to wish him well on new endeavors on his return to Liberia. Mr. Free has been an active member of this community in many aspects. He served on the Board of the Liberian-American Community Organization of Southern California (LACOSC) for 2 consecutive years. In 2002, Mr. Free also assisted the administration under the leadership of Mr. David Beyan. He later became the President of LACOSC in 2004, and served in that position for 2 consecutive terms. During the event, community members were given an opportunity to share and extend best wishes to Mr. Free. Amongst those who shared were Mr. Shaffa Washington, Mr. Emmanuel Leon, Mr. Alex Cummings, Mr. Alfred Beyan, and Mr. Lorenzo Weeks. The evening was highlighted by Mr. Free's daughters, Louthea, Alaika, and Monait, who spoke of their dad's departure. Though they could barely hold back tears, they expressed their love for their dad and believed that this journey was for the best. The girls expressed their gratitude to their dad and stated that they would miss him. Mrs. Dorothea Free also gave thanks to her husband for his support, courage, and commitment to their family as well as the community. Mrs. Free thanked the community for the times when their daughter was sick and the community provided support and prayed for their family.

In closing, Mr. Free gave thanks to everyone for giving him support over the years. Mr. Free also thanked the community for embracing his family during the years they have been in California. He expressed that his journey is being

made with a "heavy heart", but that it is also a good one, as he is going to make things better for his family. Mr. Free also thanked his wife for being his "backbone" while serving the community over the years.



**Mr. and Mrs. Free**



**Monait, Louthea, and Alaika Free**

## Vision for "The Voice"

"The Voice" is a newsletter that was created to be the voice of the Liberian American Community Organization of Southern California. "The Voice" will enable the community to have access to the administration and knowledge of ongoing events in the community.

This newsletter will be provided to the community quarterly. Due to the delay of the first publication, the next newsletter will not be available until July of 2010. In the upcoming newsletters, there will be information about accomplishments, challenges, and upcoming events within the community. The newsletter will also be a resource for those in the community.

In sharing with the community, we would also like to acknowledge birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, births, etc. "The Voice" will also be linked to the LACOSC website; [www.lacosc.org](http://www.lacosc.org). "The Voice" is the voice of the community; we want to hear your input as well.

[www.lacosc.org](http://www.lacosc.org)

As a result of the positive outcome and the desire for more information to help youth, Dr. Dinkins and others are in the process of converting LAFARY into a non-profit organization. The goal of LAFARY is to give athletes a chance to make an impact on Liberian youth via day camps and speaking engagements. LAFARY also strives to give affirmation to at-risk youth and reassure them that there are alternatives rather than becoming a part of the statistics.

**HOW CAN OTHERS GET INVOLVED?**

- Publicize and bring awareness to LAFARY's goals for at-risk Liberian youth.
- Volunteer to travel out of state for 2-3 days where accommodations will be provided in a local hotel. Volunteers will be asked to teach various life skills through workshops. Teachers, social workers, and anyone with the ability to inspire youth are welcome.



**Dr. Gracie Ann Ester Dinkins**

**ABOUT DR. DINKINS**

Dr. Gracie Ann Ester Dinkins was born in California but raised in Liberia most of her life. Dr. Dinkins traveled between Monrovia and California with her parents who were furthering their education in the United States. In 1984, she traveled from Liberia to partake in the Los Angeles Olympics running the 100 meters dash for Liberia. She then transferred as a sophomore to California State University, Dominguez Hill. There, she obtained her Bachelor's degree in Chemistry. She then continued her studies at the University of California, Irvine and obtained her doctorate in Medicine in 1991. During that year, she also represented Liberia in Sydney, Australia in track and field, competing in the 100 meters dash. Dr. Dinkins also represented Liberia in the Atlanta Olympics in 1996. There, she competed in the 400 meters race, qualifying into the quarter finals. As she was compassionate about her athleticism, so she was about medicine. In 1999, she completed her Surgery Residency Program at Martin Luther King Hospital. She remained an additional year in the program. She then completed her trauma surgeon fellowship and became a General and Trauma Surgeon with an emphasis on

Olympics, there again representing Liberia in the 100 meters dash. Thereafter, she retired due to injuries in 2004.

In addition to being a surgeon, Dr. Dinkins is also the Vice President of International Affairs for the Liberian Athletic Federation. Her duty is to recruit and develop Liberian athletes in the United States and other parts of the world and to help them to qualify for high level competition. One of Dr. Dinkins' goals is to see a Liberian athlete as world champion, standing on the podium representing Liberia.

Through her knowledge and skills as an athlete and a surgeon, Dr. Dinkins continues to give back to the Liberian community. The Liberian Community commends Dr. Gracie Dinkins for her contributions to our community and for serving as a positive role model for Liberians.

**ARIZONA YOUTH (con't from page 3)**

Dr. Dinkins is involved with recruiting Liberian youth who are athletic and would like to compete in the first Youth Olympics in Singapore, August 2010.

**WHO DO I CONTACT?**

If you would like to get involved with LAFARY and/or Youth Olympics 2010 please contact Dr. Dinkins at g400m@yahoo.com.

**Through her knowledge and skills as an athlete and a surgeon, Dr. Dinkins continues to give back to the Liberian community.**

**ONE WAY TO GET INVOLVED...JOIN THE BOARD!!**

The board of the Liberian-American Community Organization of Southern California (LACOSC) is looking for members of the community who would like to join the Board.

**WHO IS THE BOARD?**

The Board is the Constitutional arm of the Organization.

**WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF A BOARD MEMBER?**

The Board focuses on 2 very important aspects of the overall Organization.

1. Check and balances of the Organization.
  - \* Making sure the administration is following the guidelines set forth by the constitution of the Organization.
2. Understanding and having the ability to explain the constitution as it governs the Organization.

**WHERE DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?**

If you would like to be involved and obtain more information, please contact Mr. Charles Yarzieh or Mr. Shaffa Washington.

# HOW CAN WE STAY CONNECTED AND INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY?

L  
A  
C  
O  
S  
C

This administration is very eager to stay connected and become more cohesive with the community. In doing so, we would like to ask for your assistance with updating the mailing and contact list. We are aware that some of us have moved and numbers have changed within the last couple of years. Therefore, we are asking that you provide us with your full name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number.

We would also like to open a line of communication to assist the administration with accomplishments within the community. We would like to know about anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, businesses, etc. We have provided several avenues to communicate with the administration; 1. Email, 2. Website, 3. P.O. Box, and 4. Phone.

We encourage each person to contact us with any concerns and/or ideas. We are open to discuss ways of improving our community and we need your input. A community in unity is strong and success is sure to happen.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**EMAIL:**  
**libaorg.inc@gmail.com**

**FACEBOOK:**  
**a friend request can be sent to**  
***Liberian Comm***

**WEBSITE:**  
**www.lacosc.org**

**ADDRESS:**  
**P.O. Box 44941**  
**LA., CA. 90044**

**PHONE: 424-209-0929**

**PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US!!!!!!**

## Quotes Corner

**Rain does not fall on one roof alone.**

**"The happiest people don't have the best of everything.  
They just make the best of everything."**

**No matter how long the night, the day is sure to come.**

**AVAILABLE SPACE  
FOR  
ADVERTISEMENTS  
IN FUTURE  
NEWSLETTERS**

**LIBERIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

**P.O. BOX 44941  
LOS ANGELES, CA. 90044**