



INASLA WEB SITE GOES LIVE!

As promised in the September edition of this newsletter, INASLA's web site - www.inasla.com - went on line on the night of Thursday, 31 October. The event was marked by rapturous acclaim and, judging by reactions from members as well as the already growing number of visitors to the site, a sense of real achievement for the Association as a whole.



At a well-attended monthly general meeting held on Sunday 10 November at the Methodist Church Amphitheatre in Camberwell Road, London SE5, members of the Association gave the site a resounding endorsement. A week ahead of the launch, some members had been given a secret test-link to the site. This was done in order to facilitate last minute checks and tweaking of the site, prior to it going live. In reality, owing to a last minute hitch, the scheduled launch date was overshot by four days but in the end it did eventually go on line to everyone's relief.

INASLA members, some of whom were captured in this picture taken immediately after their latest meeting, congratulated the web designers for "a brilliant piece of technical accomplishment".

Initial reaction from the general public has been nothing short of commendatory. The latest entries in the website's guest book are replete with glowing tributes. Most visitors have praised, in particular, the ease of navigation on the site and its overall manoeuvrability.

Chairman Michael Fofanah described the event as representing yet another phenomenal success in

INASLA's relentless drive to establish itself as a prime achiever. "We are on course to achieve greater things and nothing will stop us now", he said, beaming confidently.

INASLA General Secretary, Patrick Kandeh, seen here (right), echoed this optimistic tone. In an effusive praise for the website, he added: "This will prove to our doubters that we mean business. In particular, it shows that we are a modern organisation moving along with the times, and we will not be left behind. As one who belongs to a young generation of Sierra Leoneans, it steels us to face the future with confidence".



Another Executive member Emmanuel Scott could not hold back his excitement "I have been bragging to my friends at work that we built our site in-house. I posed on them when the site went live. It was fantastic and they were all very, very impressed indeed."

But, why a website just now? (See page 4)



EDITORIAL

WHAT IS INASLA?

Admittedly, we might sometimes sound as if we are repeating ourselves. But the history and experience of Sierra Leonean organisations in the past, notably in the Diaspora, compels us to revisit and restate frequently, those fundamental aspects of INASLA that impact on the impressions that others hold about us.

By doing so, we hope to clear any lingering doubts about INASLA's purpose, and our own intentions, regarding the interests and welfare of the Sierra Leonean community resident abroad. It is in this respect alone, therefore, that we feel bound to restate for the record, why and how we came to be, and what we are.

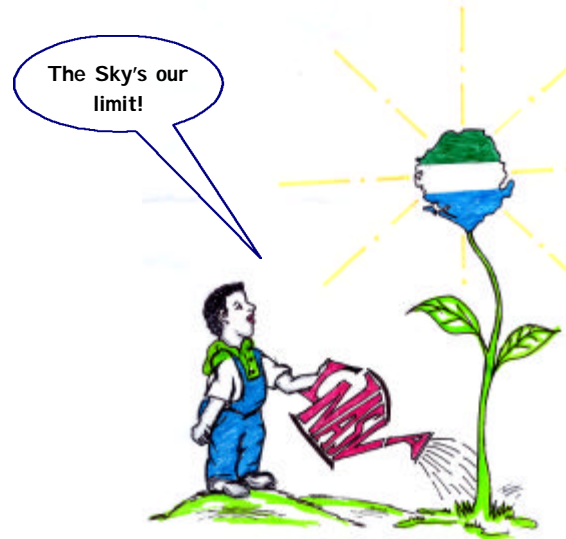
INASLA - the International Association of Sierra Leoneans Abroad - has been formed by, and for all Sierra Leoneans who live or work outside their country, to pursue and protect their interest and welfare in the modern, competitive and combative societies, in which they reside.

Developments in our country's recent history have placed inexorable pressures on us, Sierra Leoneans worldwide, to become responsible, better organised, and responsive to calls from our motherland for an input into its post civil war revival, reconstruction and recovery. Even more pressing than this call is the need for cohesion among ourselves, living outside our country in foreign lands, to enable us to achieve the very best for ourselves individually and collectively.

It was with this in mind that, early in 2001, an energetic and committed group began the process of developing a strategic plan first to explore the options for, and second to create a strong sense of, community organisation among Sierra Leonean residents abroad.

With perseverance, this group was able to identify a critical need for a community association. We inevitably came across hurdles during our research, but met them headlong by researching solutions for them. The issues and concerns of Sierra Leoneans worldwide were looked into. We found out that our problems were similar almost everywhere and in all cases.

It was evident to us therefore, that we could not confine our appeal to UK residents alone, but to all Sierra Leoneans here, there, and everywhere throughout the Sierra Leone Diaspora.



One of the solutions - the key one we thought - was to form a community association that would sponsor and lead on community events and projects, instigate and promote community involvement. At the same time, there was an early recognition of the need for the protection and advocacy for the wider community interests of Sierra Leoneans abroad.

On 27 April 2002, we formally launched the association. Today we are excited, and it is no exaggeration to say, that the newly formed INASLA is up and running fine.

Now, our hard-working pioneer group has completed most of the initial tasks that it set itself up to accomplish. We have a committed executive, and a fully-fledged board of trustees; we produce our own newsletter, of which this one is the fourth issue, which is available free to members of our community; and this month, we went world-wide with our own web site.

As no doubt some of you will have gathered before this, next on the agenda is our plan to develop a community and resource centre, where social events and functions, meetings and workshops, and, it is fervently hoped, a drop-in advice and information centre can be housed. We all know that, within a community as diverse and set in its own ways as ours, there are many hurdles in developing new structures. But we are confident that a new spirit is growing, and our pioneering group, ably supported by the growing numbers who have taken up full INASLA membership, will reach the set goals in the shortest time possible.

INASLA is a non-political, non-government, and community-interest group, representing you, run by you, and for you! Sierra Leoneans everywhere should feel confident to be part of it. Please, come and join us!

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues, I greet you.

My message to you is direct. I pray that God almighty and Allah will enlighten you to acknowledge the vision of our effort to establish an International Association for Sierra Leoneans Abroad.

Our main aim is to establish an umbrella association for Sierra Leoneans and well-wishers. This will provide the base for acknowledging the concerns of every Sierra Leonean abroad, and the contributions made by our multi-talented folks in their respective communities and countries.

I have no doubt that the potential exists for us to do things better. If, for instance, the over eighty thousand Sierra Leoneans in the UK were to contribute one pound each, every month, towards our call for a resource centre, could that not be a significant achievement of our community need?

Such a vision needs dedicated members to start the ball rolling. It is challenges like these that the INASLA Management Committee takes pride in. Honesty, openness, trust, and respect for ourselves and for everyone interested in our beloved country – Sierra Leone – are extremely valued by us.

Thanks to those of you have been praying for this Association, and giving advice on how we can further the INASLA vision. As you may have noted from our Financial Secretary's column in our newsletter, we do not have any regular source of funding or income. Some people have been making regular monthly contributions to the INASLA fund, while others have provided in kind their service and basic material needs. I trust that we can continue to count on their loyal support.

To those of you who have not had an opportunity to do so before now, or are only now hearing about INASLA, I also appeal to you to contribute to our cause by whatever means you can.

We are currently trying to get an office in the South East area of London, where thousands of our compatriots live and work, to help us continue with the promotion and publication of our newsletter, and to make it easy for us to pursue our aims for the Sierra Leone community from a convenient location.



Michael Fofanah

For many Sierra Leoneans, INASLA creates an atmosphere of regeneration and hope, as we refresh from the long-sufferings of the past years. This Association provides a unique forum for everyone to participate and support an all-inclusive but non-political social development agenda.

INASLA will always remain faithful to its principles as an ethnic community charity association, pursuing an NGO pathway.

I firmly believe that collectively, we can establish a heritage that subsequent generations will be proud to maintain. We therefore look forward to work closely with every Sierra Leone group, and to support agencies interested in the development of our community.

Finally, remember that INASLA is first and foremost YOUR organisation. So, please endeavour to contact us at all times.

May God and Allah bless us all.

Michael Fofanah
Chair (INASLA)

TREASURER'S COLUMN

At our last general meeting, I had the opportunity of presenting the summarised financial statement for the period May to October 2002.

A number of members were quite impressed by our ability to raise funds from sources outside our organisation. As a way forward, we need to redouble our efforts to come up with imaginative ways to generate funds for INASLA. Although we have been fortunate to receive strong financial support from other organisations, we need to work even harder to ensure the continued success of this Association.

To date, membership subscriptions have amounted to just under £500, which is a small sum considering the fact that there are over 100 registered members. I cannot emphasise enough that as members of INASLA, we have to bear the financial responsibility for our organisation if it is to succeed. I strongly believe that we have the potential to make a difference to our community and make our organisation the organisation of choice for all Sierra Leoneans in the UK.



Herbert Marlin

The membership drive is still in progress and our newsletter continues to create the necessary impact and raise awareness in the community. The end of this month sees the launch of our website which contains valuable information about our aims, objectives and activities.

We should be proud of what we have achieved to date and encourage fellow Sierra Leoneans to become active members of our organisation. The progress that has been made to date has been achieved through the selfless efforts of individual members, some of whom have been working day and night to ensure that INASLA's vision becomes a reality. I am enormously grateful to these individuals and pray that together we will continue to work for the common good of our community.

As I write, work has already commenced on preparing a Business Plan to support an application for funding our Resource Centre. It is a well-known fact that members of our community are unhappy with the high costs of hiring a hall for functions and the restrictions that are imposed on them with regards to finishing times and noise levels. We have also established beyond doubt that they would dearly like to be able to call at a centre, or a resource library, where they can get information or advice, or spend a quiet time researching or reading about their own special and community interests. We believe the time is now right for Sierra Leoneans to have their own Multi-purpose centre like other communities in the U.K. We are therefore very optimistic about the viability of this project, and I would urge all members of our community and well-wishers to support it when asked.

This message will not be complete without my usual appeal for generous contributions.

Our bank details are as follows: **A/C no. 80566608, Barclays London Bridge Branch, 29 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1LY. The sort code is 20-80-57.** You also have the option of setting up a direct debit mandate with your bank if you prefer to make a regular donation.

BUT WHY A WEB SITE ...NOW?

Long before the web site came to life, the INASLA Web Management Committee, which master-minded its construction, debated the rationale behind the idea at great length. They had to answer the question, whether a website was a priority issue, and came up with reasons why now,

not later, seemed to them to be the right time for the Association to get itself on the world-wide web. They concluded that once Sierra Leoneans got into the habit of visiting the web site, the following advantages would flow for them and the Association:

It will give INASLA prestige. Yes, because this is the modern way forward, and INASLA is a modern organisation with progressive ideas that it wants to share with others. Our Association must be out there with the very best!

Having a web site means that the Association is brought directly on-line to Sierra Leoneans everywhere, and to millions of people around the world with access to the Internet, who may want to know about the way we are doing things for ourselves as a community living abroad.

Being on-line means that our services are on-line 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to all current and prospective members of INASLA.

Since one of our aims is to represent and serve Sierra Leoneans worldwide, what better way than to be on the World Wide Web, through which we are able to reach Sierra Leoneans in every corner of the world where they are geographically dispersed. Trying to reach them via local, national or even international advertising may well be prohibitively expensive or even impossible. A web site is our ideal solution for reaching out to everyone in the Diaspora.

It will afford us a cheap and excellent alternative means of distributing information about INASLA, thus reducing our overheads. For example because of the Internet, INASLA Executive meetings have been cut to a minimum as discussions between Executive members are often conducted on the net. Hence, meetings are only held to either formally endorse agreements already reached, or to discuss sticky issues on which an agreement has not been reached, and also when emergencies arise.

As INASLA is currently without an office, it cannot yet man a telephone service 24 hours. The web site will be the alternative means for members and prospective members to get the information they need about INASLA, and its activities and programmes. If Sierra Leoneans are able to get this on the web site, it will reduce the need for them to



Nol Scott
INASLA's Assistant
General Secretary
bragged to his mates at
work about the website!

reach us by telephone. The latest information will be instantly available to them!

Again, the use of the e-mail means that there is a round-the-clock means of contact. Members will have the option to contact INASLA with their messages and queries, outside hours or when a phone cannot be readily answered.

It is also the most cost-effective way of spreading the news about INASLA and will neatly complement the INASLA newsletter, which will be available in electronic version for members to download, print it or merely read on screen. Thus, the costs of distribution, postage and other costs will be considerably trimmed down.

Finally, being on the web will prove to supporters and sceptics alike that that we are open and have absolutely nothing to hide. **Our transparency, and accountability, will be there for all to see, and can be the subject of scrutiny, envy or commendation ...24 hours a day!**

For all these reason, the Committee unanimously decided to recommend to the general meeting, that a web site should be constructed for the Association. Members endorsed the idea and gave the go-ahead. Today we are all celebrating another important milestone.

<http://www.inasla.com>

IS THIS A CRAZY BUS RIDE OR A MERRY-GO-ROUND?

In the past few months, I have been thinking of writing an article for our monthly newsletter. But as the busy days go by, trying to balance a life of full-time employment, motherhood and squeezing in some overtime to make ends meet, I struggle to complete my daughter's bedtime story before falling off to sleep. This is just one example of a Sierra Leonean woman's busy daily schedule, as we fend for a better lifestyle in the UK.



Velma Davies

However, I sometimes wonder whether, in reality, this is a better lifestyle, or just a crazy bus ride. Life is full of stress, rushing to catch the train or the bus; beating traffic lights in order to get to appointments

on time; or simply leaving home when it is dark and return after another hectic day, again in the dark.

Life is indeed a big struggle and challenge: coping with bringing up our children in an environment where you feel unable to discipline them; or having to worry and being constantly on the look out for them in playgrounds where normally they should be enjoying themselves. Then there is peer pressure, and the often intrusive, semi-official, limitations on how much control you have over your own children. Can this really be a 'better' life or is it not merely a crazy merry-go-round?

Back in Sierra Leone the scene has changed from that of years gone by. Life expectancy used to be three score and ten. Today our people statistically do not, and cannot live that long? Faced with such prospects, we need to improve our life style and conditions swiftly. We must begin to sow the seeds of progress for our children, to enable them to hold on to our own culture and our values. We must make life better for them and for all of us.

We must start by building a strong and lasting community organisations, which every Sierra Leonean can be proud of, and benefit from. We need to weave every strand with care and attention, not for individual ends – but for the benefit and welfare of the whole community.

In the last eight months, we in INASLA have made good progress in pursuing some of these ideas. I am very proud of our achievements so far, and I take this special opportunity to commend the very active and committed members for their time and effort. Some of them are routinely making do with sleepless nights, in their determination to make things happen by given deadlines.

These worthy servants deserve our support. I therefore suggest that we each consider giving up the equivalent of, say, half of our lunchtime, at least once every week, to do something for INASLA, to relieve them of some of the day-to-day burdens they carry on our behalf.

Sierra Leoneans are represented in every sphere of life. Among them you will find doctors, nurses, educationists, sociologists, architects, engineers, successful businessmen, religious men and women, administrators, trade unionist, IT specialists, journalist, lawyers, bankers, pilots and air stewardesses, child carers, social workers, etc., etc., to name a few. Surely, they all possess skills that they can graciously commit, in their spare time, to the service of our community! Is that too much to ask for?

Finally, let me make this direct appeal to some of the still unreconstructed Sierra Leoneans among us, who continue to be negative in every sphere of thinking. Cease the relentless unhelpful criticisms! Stop the habitual backstabbing and backbiting. Do away with the negative 'me nor mix pan dem' attitude and move forward with the fresh and enlightened leadership that INASLA is giving to the rest of us!

Velma Davies
London

It's time to end this myth...

'THE AFRICAN IS CORRUPT THROUGH AND THROUGH...'

I am intrigued by the misconception that all Africans are corrupt. I do not believe this to be so, for reasons that I will discuss in this short article. I take inspiration from the years when I studied literature.



Nigerian Chinua Achebe, in his book 'No Longer At Ease', could not have foreseen the impact of the choice of words he allows the arrogant William Greene, who believes that the African is "corrupt through and through...", to voice his deeply felt belief that, but for the British, we would have been 'uncivilised' and 'uneducated'.

Despite being a work of fiction, the character sketch of Obi Okonkwo has unfortunately grown to haunt Africans ever since. Obi is seen as a complicated African living in a complicated society. His faults, strengths and desires are all controlled by 'adopted' (not indigenous, hence non-African) values in an African setting.

"The African is corrupt through and through so much that equality cannot alter the facts ..." This is the prevalent sentiment among the white British of the 1950's era. They argue that they gave us formal education, somewhat 'equal' status with Whites, improved employment opportunities, Christianity and a host of other tenets of 'civilisation', but that we Africans remain at heart very corrupt.

This story is a neat example of what happens when Africans take on the White man's values and perspectives, as their own. It inevitably leads to conflict between age-old African traditions and the

seemly alien values imposed by the White man. The educated Africans' struggle to wrestle with this dilemma, when caught between acceptance and rejection, is portrayed in the tormented Obi.

In the context of current Sierra Leonean society, one is often tempted to adopt the attitude of Pontius Pilate and wash one's hands, or merely shrug the shoulders with indifference, in defeat at what has, and is still happening. But now is the time to address the negative things that have destroyed our societal fabric - the morality and decency that used to be our stock in trade.

Our formally educated elite and our wise and experienced traditional elders must bridge the gap between them, to forge a more progressive backbone for our society. For a start, we must discard the negative attitudes that we have cultivated and grown accustomed to, namely selfishness, greed, the lack of patriotism, and indifference and lack of respect and appreciation for our roots and culture.

We must overcome Obi Okonkwo's weaknesses and with it, the negative spirit inherent in the 1950's era. We should address the problems holding back the progress of our country, especially those that divide our people.

We must strive to give something worthwhile and valuable, back to Sierra Leone, by emulating great Sierra Leoneans of the past, such as Wallace-Johnson, Sir Milton Margai, Bankole-Jones, Lamina Sankoh, Pa Demba, Bai Bureh, and Kai Londo, etc., to name a few. Imagine if they also had behaved like some of our own generation. See how shamefully we have squandered the rich legacies that they bequeathed to us!

Let us vow to cast off the warped mentality and the personal contradictions of Obi Okonkwo. Let's get back to our roots and add value to our country's cultural heritage and tradition. One way is to show respect for it. The other is to commit us anew to the service of our country and our people. We must not suffer the indignity of running out of patriotic sons and daughters of Sierra Leone. That's one legacy I will personally reject outright.

Sam Jusu
London

INASLA membership is free and subscription is by donation. Cheques can be made payable to INASLA, 18 Keswick House, Crawford Estate London SE5 9NL.

A/C Barclays Bank: Account No: 80566608 : Sort code: 208057; You can phone 0207 733 7872 / 07956 924 864 for a direct debit form. Or email: inasla27@aol.com

PICTURE FILE



ABOVE: No! You are not looking at the killings fields of Cambodia. These are 'The killing fields of Sierra Leone'. With the end of the war, have come some of the most gruesome discoveries in its wake. A team of forensic anthropologists assigned to the War Crimes Tribunal, working on suspected sites in August and September, found evidence of mass graves and killing sites in the districts of Kambia, Port Loko, Kailahun and Kono. Human skulls and bones (as above) were found at such sites. The prospect of sites like these disappearing without trace and a fear that those found, or suspected, might be tampered with by potential witnesses and suspected perpetrators, remains a big worry. In a parallel revelation, victims were allegedly burnt or thrown down into wells. Late September, officials at the Ministry of Health and Sanitation reportedly began clearing corpses from identified wells. Atrocities are alleged to have been committed by and on all sides of the civil war.

BELOW: Lest we are tempted to forget! The sight of large numbers of amputees - ordinary innocent citizens, young and old, men and women, whose limbs were hacked away during the civil war civil, is a constant reminder to us all about this shameful and horrendous phase in Sierra Leone's history. The most that we who survived this barbarous and inhumane treatment can do, is to be forever supportive to these people in every way possible, to make their lives qualitatively better.



HISTORY FILE

October 2002 was Black History Month in Britain. INASLA is proud to recall, honour and venerate an accomplished Sierra Leonean for his remarkable achievement in British society.



Samuel Coleridge Taylor is one of Britain's best in the field of classical music. He was composer, conductor, Professor of Music, and among the earliest pioneers of Pan Africanism.

The ignorance and lack of recognition for him and his music among his Sierra Leonean compatriots, is largely due to the fact that the genre of music in which he excelled, is not the traditional African music that we know. Nevertheless, he often infused and successfully integrated Black traditional music into most of his classical and concert compositions.

He was born on August 15th 1875 in (Holborn) London. His mother was English, white and half Jewish. His father was Daniel Hughes Taylor, a Sierra Leonean who qualified as a surgeon at Kings College London and became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons. Rampant racism forced him to pack up and return to Sierra Leone in 1876, spending his last days in the Gambia where he died in 1904. He did not maintain contact with the son and family he left behind in London.

Like his father, Coleridge Taylor was subjected to racist prejudice and abusive remarks, but he stayed on and fought back. He advocated the importance of a shared African heritage as the acid test of black cultural identity. He was committee member of the first Pan African conference in London, in 1900.

His numerous biographies list *Hiawatha* as his best-known composition. His other works, included the songs: *African Romances*; *African Suite*; and *Five Choral Ballads*, with a backdrop of poems on slavery and influenced by native African music. According to one biography they were "equalled in popularity in England only by *Handel's Messiah* and *Mendelssohn's Elijah*!"

He married Jessie Walmisley, his classmate at the Royal College of Music, a pianist, in 1899. They had two children, who followed them into music.

Taylor died of pneumonia on 1st September 1912 at the tender age of thirty-seven, leaving behind a rich legacy of vocal and instrumental music.

INASLA salutes a great son of Sierra Leone!

Community Notice Board

Obituaries

PROF. AKINTOLA WYSE (RIP)

The month of October cruelly, and prematurely claimed yet another of the best brains ever produced by Sierra Leone.



The death took place of the historian, teacher, scholar and administrator, Professor **Akintola J G Wyse**, on Saturday 5 October 2002. He died of a sudden heart attack in Freetown. His funeral was held on 18 October.

The late Dr Wyse was Professor of History, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Vice Principal of Fourah Bay College, the University of Sierra Leone. Prior to his arrival at Fourah Bay College, he taught for a while at the University of Calabar in Nigeria. For the past two years until his death, he was head of Sierra Leone's Public Service Commission.

Professor Wyse authored many books, book chapters and articles including: *The Krio of Sierra Leone - An Interpretative History (Hurst/International African Institute, 1989)* and *H.C. Bankole-Bright and Politics in Colonial Sierra Leone, 1919-1958 (Cambridge, 1990)*.

A correspondent writes:

In addition to his many hats, Professor Wyse also wore that of Honorary Government Archivist, which made him titular head of the Sierra Leone Public Archives. Just before his death, he and others had just begun to lay plans to rescue some of the country's most valuable archived historical materials, which are in very deplorable conditions.

A project proposal to secure external funding to save the archives has been finalised. Its main objectives include preventing further damage to the documents from fungus (due to high humidity), termites and silverfish; and to identify, organise and catalogue the documents so that the value of the holdings becomes clear, and records can be

accessed in the shortest possible time. The project will have a significant impact on the information management process in Sierra Leone. Above all, it will be a fitting way to honour the memory and hard work of the late Professor Wyse.

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Mrs **Lilian Gorvie** who passed away on 12 October 2002 and was laid to rest on 9 November. May her soul rest in perfect peace. From the Davies Family in London.

In Memoriam – On the third anniversary of the death of **Valena Bakarr** who died on 24 November 1999.

Belated Birthdays

We regret that, due to the unavoidable delay in bringing out this edition of the newsletter, the following birthdays are belated announcements.

5 Oct: Hamusa Sesay of Finchley in North London who was 13 years; from Margaret and Modu Sesay.

5 Nov: Patricia Davies of Cobham, Surrey (UK). Belated wishes from the family in South East London.

5 Nov: Doreen Onekalit of Delaware (USA). Greetings from the family and friends in the UK.

9 Nov: Mrs Esther Davies in New York (USA) who celebrated her birthday on. Belated happy birthday, from your family in London.

13 Nov: Sam Jusu from your INASLA family and friends.

19 Nov: Marion Normansel in Freetown.

24 Nov: Aminata Tejan on her recent birthday.

Forthcoming birthdays:

Nancy (23 Dec.) and **Samina Jusu** (30 Dec); and their mum Mrs **Amina Jusu** (25 December).

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Typeset and layout by Ambali Productions.