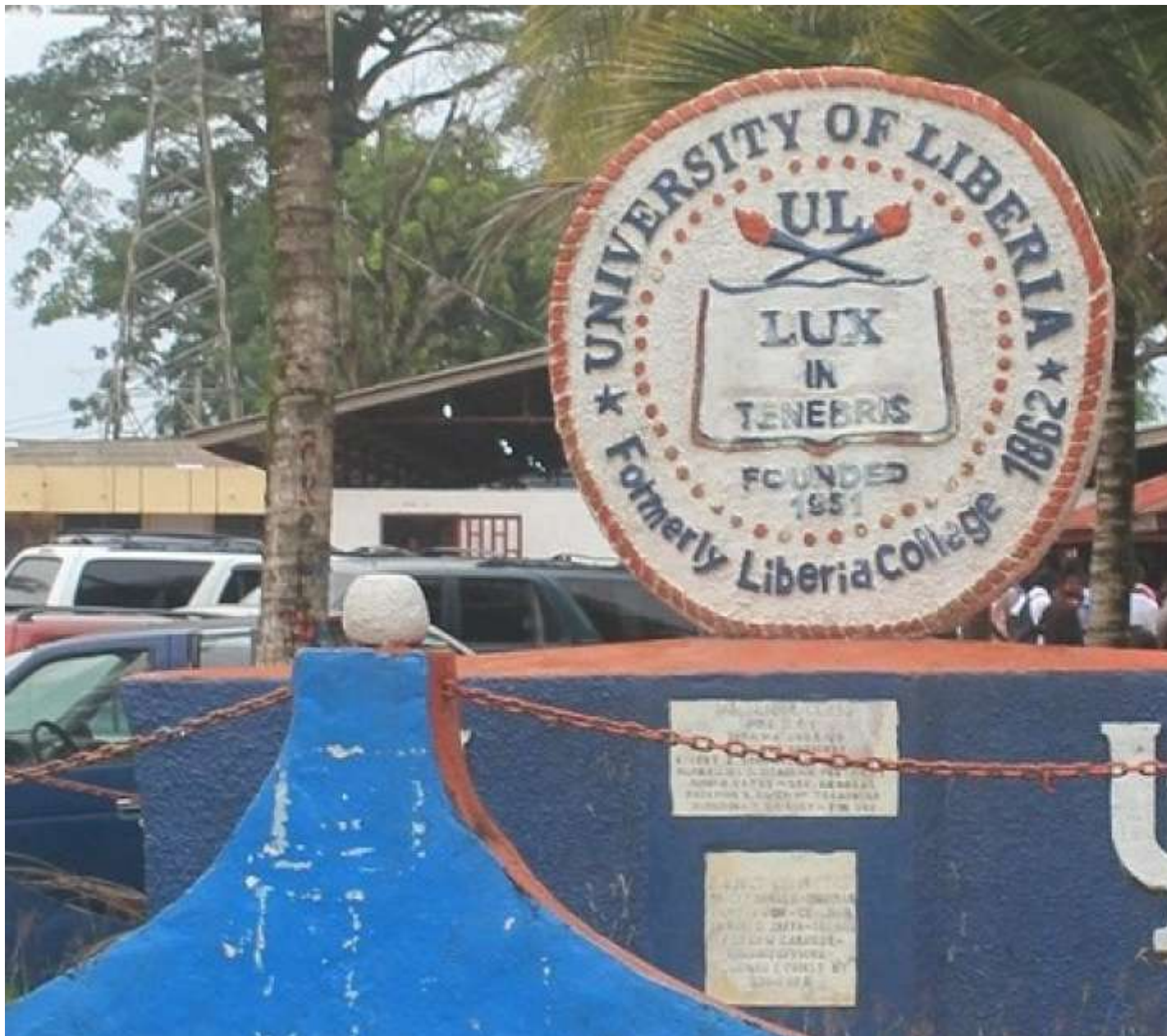


**A Student's Letter From University Of Liberia (UL): Victims Of A Capitalist Government And A Profit-Seeking UL Administration – #FeesMustFall !!!**



*S. Ephraim T. Nyumah writes on the desperate situation and struggles of his comrades and compatriots at the University of Liberia | Monrovia, Liberia | Published by ELA Zambia | [www.elazambia.org](http://www.elazambia.org) | February 20, 2018 |*

**When the agenda of the capitalists and the oppressors is being celebrated by the ignorant masses; conscious revolutionary movements take not the back seat, but the**

front-line in providing the way forward for the ignorant and gullible masses. This is exactly what has been the role of the indomitable Vanguard Student Unification Party (SUP) at the University of Liberia since the 1970.

In the 70's, there was a defined agenda for SUP's struggle not only at the university but in Liberia as a whole. When only the pioneers' children were given the right to acquire higher education in Liberia particularly at the University of Liberia; when the native children were compelled to change their names from *Yarkpaɔwolo* to either Johnson or Weeks; it was only the Student Unification Party (SUP) that persistently advocated for the inclusion of the indigenous children at the university. Of course, the revolution was successful; that was the agenda of inclusion and pluralism.

Those before us fought for a just and genuine cause. The ultimate interest of our ideological predecessors and revolutionary martyrs was to break the barrier of an autocratic and oligarchic state. Now we have a multi-party system and a pluralistic democracy, we, the children of the oppressed still remain victims of the ravenous elite especially the remnants of the old order.

Not only that we are victims of the pioneers' children, disappointingly, we are also aghast and embittered prey of our kind who now control the government but have refused to recollect their arduous and laborious days at the University. It is of no surprise, that many times in society, mostly in Africa; that when those who stood for a just cause are given the stage to confront their oppressors, they betray; if not the struggle, then the stragglers. In this act of betrayal, there will always be a generation of mnemonic.

The University of Liberia, established in 1862 as Liberia College and transitioned to a chartered University in 1951, is not a private or profiteering institution, but a public institution of learning. According to its charter, the government is under statutory responsibility to predominantly fund the State-run institution. The financial burden of UL must never be deferred to economically-challenged and jobless students. This is totally unacceptable and inhumane!

This has not been understood by many people in our society, and at times, they tend to inconsiderately compare the university with private institutions like Stella Maris, UMU, AMEU, Cuttington, AMEZU, etc. Why must people argue that since Stella Maris is paying \$25USD per credit hour and UL is paying \$4 USD, the University of Liberia students must consider themselves blessed. Such analysis or comparison is enormously a product of faulty thinking and tactless conclusion.

In 2016, South Africa had the third biggest economy in Africa with a GDP of US\$294.8 billion while Liberia had a GDP of US\$2.101 billion. In such a rich country with a low unemployment rate of 26.6%, students took to the street demanding

national government to provide free tertiary education. On the other hand, our country with a high illiteracy rate chose to increase the cost of acquiring higher education while increasing the salaries and benefits of few public servants.

This decision makes patriotic citizens to wonder as to where they expect the students to get funds to finance their cost of acquiring education when their current income that determines their consumption level is inadequate; or not even available at all. Let those who shift the awful learning condition at the University of Liberia on the students understand that we are no longer contented to leave our fate with those politicians and leaders who have comfortably adopted themselves to life under capitalism. As we were, and as we are; we are the most politically vigorous layers in society and will consistently take the road of the class struggle as long the liberated oppressed turn to oppress the oppressed.

At times, it baffles conscious minded students to wonder as to why those who are living in total darkness of the unfolding at the university frivolously blame the students for their continuous advocacy for improvement at the institution. It is inarguably unambiguous that the University of Liberia has produced some of Liberia's best public officials ranging from the presidency to the Legislature, the Judiciary and even the private sector as well.

Today, the University of Liberia alumni highly dominate the national legislatures, a place where major decisions that govern our nation are made. For instance, one sees the presence of university alumni in the nation legislature as a window to honestly advocate for increment in budgetary allotment for improved learning condition at the university, but on the contrary, it is not the case.

These are the same people who fought against the class system during their days at the University of Liberia but have been induced and indoctrinated in capitalistic ideology. Our struggle for improvement at the university reflects the crisis of the capitalist system which cannot offer any way forward for the masses. We will use our intelligentsia as a responsible barometer of consciousness in society and our struggle today is the anticipation of what is to come.

While we regret the action of our national government for failing to fully support the university, we equally indict the administration of the University for failing to administratively manage the university. The UL administration has failed to utilize the government budgetary support to the university. Funds received from private entities and cooperations as well as tuition and registration fees are spent on the welfare of the top administrative officials of UL. For instance, the president of the university, Dr. Ophelia I. Weeks is driving a vehicle worth over US\$50,000 and visits Cameron and the United States almost every Week. The maintenance of this vehicle

and the weekly travel expense of the university president are not from her personal savings but from the account of the university. Today, we the students at the University of Liberia, the children of the oppressed are now the victims of these evil forces – the National government and the UL administration.

But do we deserve this? Let those who blindly side with UL administration and ignorantly blame the students for lack of progress at the university answer this question or follow us as we enlighten their minds and unearth the mass conspiracy being gruesomely pursued by national government and the UL administration against the interest of the students.

The entire world is living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where technological advancement is at its best. Most of the higher learning institutions in the sub-region are gradually improving in technology and modernity. For example, the University of Ghana (Legon), established in 1948, eighty-six (86) years after the University of Liberia has several research centers, well equipped Library, easy transportation service, free Internet connectivity at all campuses, affordable dormitory, modern science laboratories and many other opportunities for students.

But on the contrary, while these universities are getting adapted to conducive learning conditions/environments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the University of Liberia is dreaming to experience reality in 18<sup>th</sup> century even though the entire world now exists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with sincerity and fixed agenda.

There are numerous problems at the University of Liberia ranging from manual registration process to very poor hygiene and sanitation services, lack of modern science laboratories and equipment, lack of internet connectivity for students, unhealthy learning condition of overcrowded classroom, transportation, etc. The administration of the university through its public relations officer and other administrative staffs have continuously deceived the public that the university is making progress when in fact everything at the institution seems to be in ruin.

On many occasions, the public and some media practitioners without an in-depth investigation, squarely shift those problems on the struggling students who are the direct victims of poor administrative practices. The student enrollment at the university stands approximately at **20,000-30,000** with little over **331** academic staffs. This is a clear indication that the University is seriously understaffed academically. With this huge population, students are restricted to deposit their fees only in two banks in a period of three weeks. With this appalling condition, we challenge those who are blaming the students for the lack of academic progress at the University of Liberia to convince us that two banks, not exclusively dedicated to the

university are enough to serve over **15,000-17,000** students in a period of three weeks.

Not only that, we also place them in the seat of true patriot to convince the public that four operational widows of very few corrupt and delinquent staffs are enough to serve the very huge number of students that carry out registration each semester at the university.

Currently at the university, there are instructors who are full time staffs and at the same time fully employed by government and private entities. Some of those instructors due to their busy engagements outside the university only come to class one or two times or will never come during the entire semester. They will entrust their Teacher Assistant (TA) with the course and some of those TAs don't understand the course thereby creating serious problem for the student. Besides that, the University of Liberia is the only university in this modern age that has no research center. We are still learning from out-dated handouts/pamphlets some of which were prepared since 1999. We attend a university that does not have an active website, no internet connectivity but an uncontrollable alcoholic consumption center called **student center**.

The appalling condition of the University of Liberia is not claiming the attention of the national government because their children are either learning at some of the best universities in the country, or Africa, Europe, Americas, etc. It baffles us and makes us to wonder endlessly, as to whether those who brusquely question the action of the students for standing up for their rights ever ask this simplest of questions, "why one hundred-three (103) persons ( **members of the legislature**) have an annual budget of over **40 million** plus, but over thirty thousand ( 30,000) students lack access to computer laboratory, internet connectivity, buses and science laboratory equipment?

Why should someone say students must continuously fight for buses, tote chairs from class to class, building to building, standing in unhealthy and seemingly endless queues just to do registration simply because during their days at the university they went through the same process? This is the weakest analysis ever presented by people who claim to be degree holders or university students. I know they have forgotten that during their days at the university, the population was not the same as compared to ours. They are also telling us that in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, software like Quick Book and AutoCAD are not necessary for Accounting and Engineering students; therefore, the students should not advocate for modern computer labs for all departments

Not only that, we attend a university where students don't have access to internship, student loan, financial aid, but you argue that the SUP-backed ULSU financial aid

program is not necessary, when in fact, majority of the students can't even afford to get a meal on campus due to the poor economic condition that has been created by national government. In life, progress on the social ladder is not measured by living in the past continuously but moving from history to an improved lives of science and technology, modernization, liberty, democracy, longevity, quality of life and freedom. Our government officials are becoming millionaires while students learn in total academic hell. It is very disappointing for us to live in a country of equal citizenship but unequal opportunities for all citizens; that alone is tantamount to evil.

We will say it in a resounding tone that as long those who were once oppressed tend to oppress the people, as long there still exists a class struggle, and as long as our leaders refuse to improve learning condition at the University of Liberia, the struggle will never END.

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