

**Report from the International Conference on Dual Citizenship in
Staten Island, NY on January 30, 2016**

Three of the six panelists presented at the Conference. The Conference panelist were Mr. Wilmot W. Kunney, representing the All Liberian Conference on Dual Citizenship and ULAA National President. His main focus was the labor and work that had been dedicated by Mr. Emmanuel Wettee, the deliberator and initiator of the Dual Citizenship push in the Americas. He encouraged the conference attendance and those advocating for Dual Citizenship for Liberians to bear in mind that there are code in the language we speak. He said we should be careful about the words we use. He shared with the conference that he and Mr. Wettee had just attended a Diaspora Home Coming in Liberia where the topic of Dual Citizenship was on the fore front of the political debates and conversations in Liberia. He mentioned the Hugh remittance to Liberia from Liberians in the Diaspora in billions of dollars.

The second panelist, Dr. Robtel Naijai Pailey talked about the reservations and limitation on Dual Citizenship and the reasons for the non-passage of the last bill on the matter. She talked about her dissertation and the research she conducted and the data she obtained based on this research. She is convinced that Dual Citizenship will be enacted by the Liberian Legislature but just not right now. She said there are several reasons why such Legislation will not pass right now such as:

The possibility that the passage of such Legislation will lead to a subclass of Liberian citizens by virtue of the fact that they only have one citizenship and therefore granting Dual Citizenship to those who were able to leave during the war might be perceived as an advantage to them and a disadvantage to those who stayed. She also pointed out that there were more pressing matters for the government to deal with for the citizens of Liberia who are present in the country as opposed to the matter of Dual Citizenship for those who are abroad. She said majority of the people that she survey were either in favor or dual citizenship or did not know what it entailed. She also mentioned that when she interviewed the Minister of Finance for this research and ask him about the Remittance of Liberians in the Diaspora to Liberia, He responded that if the remittance was of great importance in reliving most Liberians of the economic stress.

The final panelist, Dr. Gump, who is an economist and a public policy analyst, talked about our need to be cautious as to what we are asking for and why. He talked about the Constitution of Liberia being the primary law of the Land and that any statute or law that was inconsistent with the Constitution is declared as null and void. He said the organizations should review the language for dialogue with the politicians in Liberia as he is of the opinion that we should not be asking for what we already have or are entitled to by law.

There was a heated and lengthy discussion and debate as to whether or not there was a need to petition the Legislature, file a court action or procure a referendum for protection of our rights to Dual Citizenship. There was discussion as to whether or not the emphasis should be in retention of our citizenship as opposed to petition for Dual Citizenship. Some people even questioned the need to move forward with this Advocacy goal.

There were similar points being raised by all three panelists about

- Remittance to Liberia and the need for us to articulate better how it benefits not just our relatives but the Country as a whole.
- The need to watch the language we use so as not to portray that we are begging for what we already have as provided by our Constitution.
- The need to revisit the word “Dual Citizenship” as it could create an impression of privilege to us and a disadvantage to those who do not have or can’t obtain the same.
- The need to obtain and use quantitative and qualitative data when presenting our position on the matter of retention of our citizenship.
- The need to remember that there is a difference between our Constitutional Rights and the political posturing by Law Makers and others in Liberia.
- The need to move the message to other counties beside Montserrado County.