

20 Rounds, 1 Hero: Bassa Schoolkid Clinches Liberia's 2010 Spelling Bee: 04/24/2010 - Samwar S. Fallah, sfallah@FrontPageAfrica.com(231-077-920-058)



2010 SPELLING BEE CHAMP: U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas Greenfield presents trophy to newly crowned national Spelling Bee Champion Morris Jallah of the Bassa Demonstration School Saturday. All 45 contestants performed incredibly but after 20 closely contested rounds, Jallah emerged the winner. Monrovia –

Tears of joy and excitement overwhelmed the Public Affairs Section of the United States Embassy in Monrovia Saturday where several gathered to witness the 2010 By 11:00 AM parents, relatives or supporters of 45 kids representing the 15 counties of Liberia and dignitaries-senators, members of the House of Representatives and officials of government all sat attentively as they were entertained by brilliant Liberians children showcasing their academic talents.

Some of the dignitaries admitted that the kids spelled words that they could not have spelled if they were asked to do so, as United States Ambassador Linda Thomas Greenfield puts it, "I cannot even spell some of the words the kids spelled here today".

Last year it was Grand Gedeh County Sandra Tamba, 11 of the R.B. Richardson High School who out-spelled sixty-five finalists to win the coveted crown becoming victorious with winning word S.A.T.E.L.L.I.T.E. but this term victory was not easy to achieve.

All 45 contestants performed incredibly but after 20 closely contested rounds, one became the hero and it was Morris Jallah, 16, of the Bassa Demonstration School who smiled at last after spelling P.A.T.R.I.C.I.A.N.

The final contest started to a slow pace with six dropping out in the first round, seven in the second, four in the third; six in the fourth and eight in the fifth round.

As the contest progresses, the contestants gained confidence and in the six round only person slipped. Round seven saw five dropping with just two going home in round eight. Round nine produced no victim and round ten produced one by round 11 all stayed in the race.

The contest grew tougher and in round 12, all spellers stayed in the race but in round 13, one dropout after falling prey to the word H.A.B.I.T.U.A.T.E.D.

At the start of round 14, the competition was left with the four best spellers and one fell out with the remaining three prize winners going neck to neck for the prestigious crown.

Lawrence Bulee, 14 from the same school as the 2009 winner Tamba, the Richardson Baptist School could not withstand the heat of the tough closing stages and succumbed to the word S.O.L.V.E.N.C.Y.



Indeed, the die was cast and the remaining two were unarguably the best spellers for 2010 Jallah and Galakpai Konie, 13 of the Guzeh Public School entertained the audience going three straight rounds without a misspelled word.

Unforgettable C.O.U.N.S.E.L.O.R. and P.A.T.R.I.C.I.A.N.

In the closing moments of the contest, two words will live on with the remaining two contestants' one a sour memory and the other a joy forever. In the 19th round, Konie could not hold his emotion to become winner and narrowly slipped after zealously misspelling the word C.O.U.N.S.E.L.O.R. which he misspelled C.O.U.C.E.L.O.R., creating the chance for his close opponent Konie to become the hero of 2010.

Konie brilliantly and correctly spelled the misspelled word C.O.U.N.S.E.L.O.R., before going to win which will lend make him enjoy a trip to Washington D.C. to compete in the Scripps Spelling Bee Project and a cash prize of US\$1,500 plus scholarship.

"My correct spelling is P.A.T.R.I.C.I.A.N." Konie ended the long contest with what could perhaps be described as one of the easiest words of the competition but yet still the greatest for Konie.

Hero: STUDY-Secret of Success

"I feel very good because I was expecting for God to do this for me and again I feel good because people always say things against my school Demonstration that it is a Government school and cannot teach", the 2010 winner expressed.

Jallah who said he wants to be a pastor when he grows up said he was confidence because he believes somebody was standing by his side. Bible and English are his



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best two subjects and he thinks his success came through hard work and long hours of study.

"The secret of my success is just study and I am going to tell my friends to be serious, it is not medicine but hard study", the 2010 National Spelling Bee winner declared.

Liberia Needs Yes I Can Attitude-US Envoy

Ambassador Greenfield described the attitude and posture of the 45 contestants as amazing, indicating that it is such attitude that Liberia needs at the moment.

"Watching these 45 children representing the length and breadth of this country is amazing and what I observed is confidence, hope and the Yes I can attitude which is just what Liberia needs and deserves today" Ambassador Greenfield applauded the contestants.



The spelling Bee, the Ambassador Greenfield said is a family ritual in the United States of America where families sit around dining tables and help their children to become winner, calling on Liberians parents to emulate such example.

She described Spelling Bee as a very valuable educational project that encourages children to study hard.

The US Ambassador expressed delight that all the 15 counties of Liberia were represented at this year's National Spelling Bee Competition to be followed by the participation of two Liberians in international Spelling Bee competition that will take place in Washington D.C.

Ambassador Greenfield disclosed that last year's winner Tamba and another student from Ghana will be the only two African students that will take part in the Washington Spelling Bee contest this May.

The competition, she disclosed has received positive response from all over Liberia and is helping the children who are the future leaders of Liberia. She assured that the United States is working hard to ensure the quality of education in Liberia.

"Here at the US Embassy, we are working hard to improve the quality of education here in Liberia, last year we gave US\$22.5 million", Ambassador Greenfield indicated.

Amongst the major programs, she named the assistance to the Teachers Training Institutes in kakata and Zorzor, the two institutions that will help to improve the quality of teachers.

Ambassador Greenfield lamented the high number of girls that drop out from school and called on parents and teachers to encourage their children to go to school and remain in school.

She commended all the institutions that provided support to the National Spelling Bee competition and told all the contestants that they are all winners. Ambassador Greenfield challenged senators and other lawmakers to provide scholarship for all the contestants from their respective counties.

The sponsors of the 2010 edition of the National Spelling Bee include: Ministry of Education, Central Bank of Liberia, Liberian bank for Development and Investment (LBDI), Consolidated Group, Star

Radio, FrontPageAfrica, Power TV, Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS), U.S. Agency for International Development, National Elections Commission (NEC) International bank Liberia Ltd, Eco bank Liberia Ltd., Firestone Liberia Ltd., Sky FM, The News Newspaper, Ricks Institute, J.J. Roberts United Methodist School and Peace Corps Liberia.

At the end of the ceremony, Tamba and Jallah were awarded and recognized for their outstanding performances and placed into the National Spelling Bee Hall of Fame.

The American Library partnered with regional libraries, county education officers, superintendents, principals and teachers to conduct preliminary spelling competitions. Schools in all 15 counties of Liberia were encouraged to participate and hundreds of students in grades 5 and 6 took part in the competition. Forty-five students from across Liberia have qualified to come to Monrovia to participate in the National Spelling Bee competition.

The top three winners will receive scholarships through a trust fund with Ecobank Monrovia, to cover the cost of the students' high school education. The first prize winner will receive \$1,500 and also get travel to Washington, D.C. together with the Ghanaian winner to participate in the Scripps Howard Spelling Bee Program. Ghana and Liberia are the only two countries in the continent that are currently participating in the international competition. The cost of the project is about \$15,000 and several private and public organizations have made contributions.