

Maryland professor manages Liberian victory

*By Zenitha Prince
Special to Sentinel-Voice*
BALTIMORE (NNPA) - University of Maryland law professor Larry S. Gibson has directed many political campaigns but none more important than the successful campaign of Liberia's first female president-to-be, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

"After more than 35 years of doing political campaigns, this is the most important because this was literally a matter of life or death of a nation," Gibson said.

This was the African nation's first election after 14 years of fighting and a 25-

year cycle of violence that left the country divided and the people in a state of abject poverty.

Not only have Liberia's 3 million citizens suffered the deaths of about 200,000 loved ones and the displacement of about half a million more, they suffer from a lack of running water and electricity; damaged schools, roads and hospitals; and an overall compromised infrastructure. The needs were so apparent, Gibson said, that there was never any question about the candidates' platforms.

"Everyone's platform was the same, but the issue was

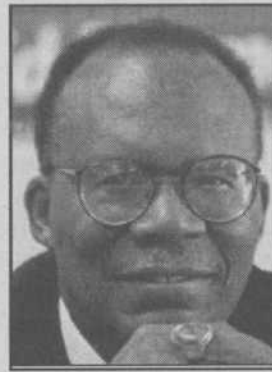
which person would have the experience and competence to deliver," he said.

After meeting Sirleaf in Baltimore in April, at the suggestion of a mutual friend, Gibson decided that Sirleaf was the candidate who could do the job.

"It was clear that if she didn't win, it would not be good for Liberia," he said.

Not everyone felt the same, however. Liberia is still a very patriarchal society, and many of the young and older men said they would not be ruled by a woman.

For them, the macho pic-



"It was clear that no candidate was going to win in the first round, so she (Sirleaf) should have a game plan that covered more than one round."

— Larry Gibson

ture presented by presidential candidate George Weah, 39, a soccer star that rose out of the Monrovia slums to international acclaim, was a better portent for the future of

the war-torn country.

In fact, most of the 100,000 ex-combatants backed him.

"Weah had a solid core of young men and their friends

who were going to vote for him," Gibson said.

But Sirleaf came with a more impressive educational background, a point emphasized during the campaign. Educated at Harvard University, Sirleaf served as minister of finance of Liberia, president of the Liberia Bank for Development and Investment, board member of the International Monetary Fund and senior loan officer at the World Bank.

After escaping an assassination attempt during the 1980 coup, Sirleaf was imprisoned on several occasions because of her politics. And in the 1997 presidential elections, she placed second in a field of 13 candidates.

This time, she came in first.

"I think that, ultimately, the people were sensible," Gibson said. "She obviously had the superior credentials, education and was a woman of integrity."

And still others said that "Mama Ellen" could provide the female touch that the country needed.

"A lot of women said, 'Men are too violent.' I heard (See Professor, Page 12)

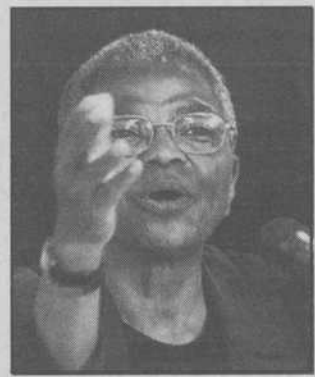
Ruling in Maryland could undermine HBCUs

*By Zenitha Prince
Special to Sentinel-Voice*
BALTIMORE (NNPA) - Maryland's Nov. 9 approval of a University of Baltimore-Towson State University joint master's of business program is indicative of a trend that undermines states' desegregation of higher education efforts and threatens the survival of Historic Black Colleges and Universities, legal and educational experts say.

Schools have reported cases of program duplication, restrictive mission statements and collaborations with majority institutions in which the Black school's role has been lost.

"I see a pattern because I see some programs are already drying up," said Shirley Hauzer, vice president of academic affairs at Alabama A&M University.

The HBCU was part of a state-wide desegregation plan.



"If this is allowed to continue, it will keep the predominantly Black schools (HBCUs) in a state of not being able to expand their missions and build their programs to ensure their future."

— Mary Frances Berry

It was such a fear that drove Morgan State University to object to Maryland Secretary of Higher Education Calvin Burnett's March 15 decision to grant the joint MBA program.

Morgan argued that over the years, increasing numbers of MBA programs in the area bled students from its program. It also argued that the joint program was an unnecessary duplication and as such, went against the mandates of United States v. Fordice (the landmark Mis-

issippi higher education equivalent to Brown v. Board of Education) and against Maryland's agreement with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights to remove all vestiges of a former de jure system of segregation in higher education.

The state argued the duplication was educationally sound since it would help Towson attract and retain faculty, was needed to accommodate a growing demand for MBA degrees and was in

line with the state's aim to increase collaboration among institutions in the university system.

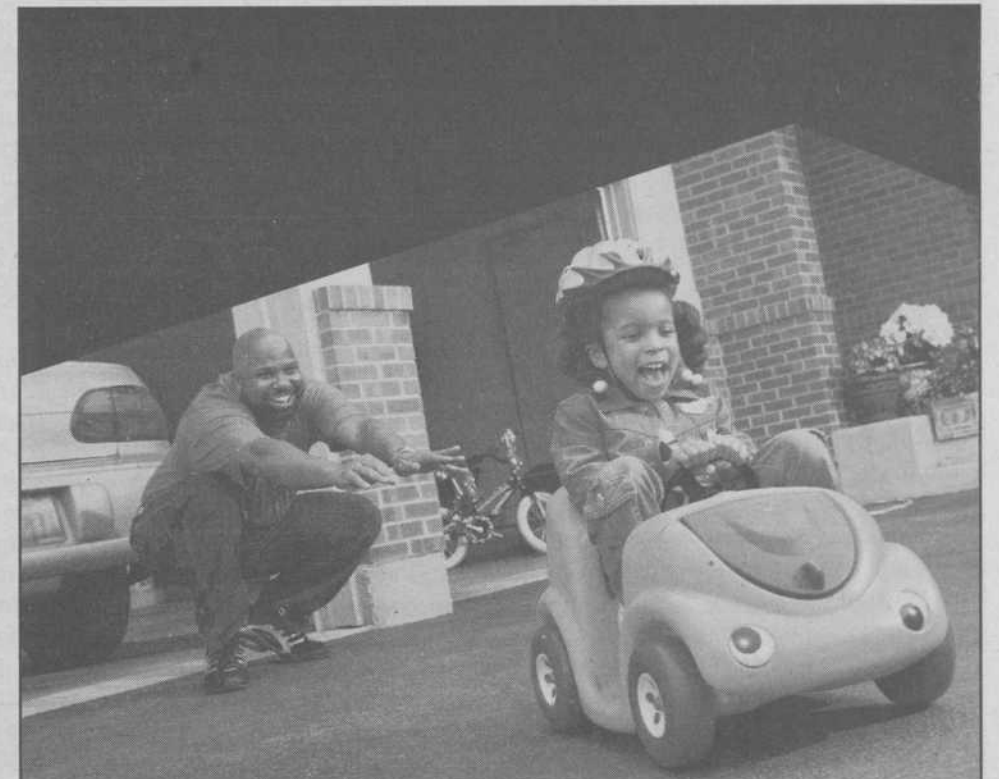
But the decision was faulty and not in line with Maryland's stated intent to desegregate public colleges and universities, said Mary Frances Berry, former chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and former assistant secretary of education under the Jimmy Carter administration.

"This is a clear case of an undermining of desegregation efforts because Morgan State University could clearly take on more students. And if it's a matter of resources, then the state should allocate those resources," Berry said. "Quite clearly, if there is a need for a new program, based on the figures that were presented, there would be enough space in the programs that existed (See Segregation, Page 12)



GODLY GROWTH

Pastors Simmie and Bessie Richard rejoice after turning over the dirt to the expansion of the Bread of Life Ministries of His Glory ground breaking ceremony on Saturday. The new facility will increase the church from 2,714 square feet to 9,787 square feet.



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