

EDANA

**Places of Tourist
Attraction in Liberia**

**Sharing our
Liberian Smiles**

**EMERGING
MODELS :**

**Liberia's
Rich Cultural**

**Lappa Lover
Journey of Discovery
and Identity**

The Beauty of Mama Liberia



Edana
Photography



The Beauty of Mama Liberia

The culture of Liberia begins with a group of youngsters playing soccer and yelling in local English,

Come to Liberia!

The culture of Liberia begins with a group of youngsters playing soccer and yelling in local English, 'Da penalty!' or a group of young girls playing a leg sport dubbed 'Na foot' yelling almost simultaneously, 'Da my time to play!' It stretches to a child holding a pot of water on his head walking from the creek and looking aimlessly at the stretch of shrubs along his path. You take a walk in the neighborhood and the air is choked with aroma of hot palm butter hovering over the town and young baby mothers nursing their defiant babies, adding their crying voices to the chorus of market women yelling, selling, cooking and babysitting, all at once, on the shores of the wall street of Africa-

the marketplace. Liberian culture is almost completely unique- no brand of Africans on the continent speaks with such distinctive pidgin like Liberians. The tiny West African nation is a mixture of 16 local tribes that settled from across the corners of the continent along with repatriated freed American slaves that settled in the 1800s. This is the melting pot of civilization, western life, Afro American culture, Afro Caribbean lifestyle and was once a home for almost every man of color. Liberia, meaning 'land of the free', is the place to go for every man wanting total freedom, from the scars of racism to the bondage of cultural cage, Liberia with its liberal tendencies accommodates every culture from every planet. With a small population of less than 5



million, it's a home to mangrove swamps, beautiful beaches, exotic landscapes and a very hospitable people. Its second largest city, Buchanan, named after former US President Thomas Buchanan is locally referred to as the 'home of the nation's hospitality' Liberia has been a home for everyone from every corner of Africa, the Caribbean, America and Europe.

Liberian cuisine is one of the most exotic dishes across the continent, from her dense Torborgee from northern Lofa County, to pounded cassava known as Gehba (GB) from Nimba Country or pounded softer cassava known as dumboy from Grand Bassa and Rivecess Counties or red palm oil soup with rice and okra known as Kpelleh soup from Bong County.

Jollofrice is a Monrovia based dish that has sustained an intense rivalry between Nigerians and Ghanaians. But, a festival with Liberian Jollofrice would put the rivalry to bed. The Liberian jollofrice is mixed with just everything from the market, pigfeet, chicken, spareribs, meat, mixed vegetables, and an aroma that seals the deal. Liberia is a mixture of Cosmopolitan and Provisional lifestyles with lappaying women with babies on their backs walking to a local market or to attend to farming chores or a woman dressed in a Gucci jeans and blazer, sun glasses, top hats hopping from an elevator. Next time you're lost on the continent and need a place to keep your sanity in check, drop in the bosom of the land of the free. Enjoy your stay and thank me later!



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Liberia's Rich cultural Heritage

The culture of Liberia begins with a group of youngsters playing soccer and yelling in local English,

Liberia, Africa's oldest republic is situated in West Africa bordering guinea in the north, Sierra Leone in the west, Ivory Coast in the east and south by the Atlantic Ocean. About half of the country is covered by tropical rain forest which boasts one of the most valuable hardwoods in Africa.

Liberia is endowed by vast natural resources, the plateaus and mountain ranges in the north of Liberia is rich with iron ore, gold and diamond putting the country on the pedestal of future growth and successes.

The culture of Liberia has two distinct roots namely:

- a. The freed Americo-Liberians – came with the embroidery (needlecraft) skill that is firmly embedded in the national culture of Liberia.
- b. The ancient Africa descendants of the indigenous people

The diversity of tribal ethnicity that makes up the Liberian population has embellished and added value to the culture and the cultural life of the country. There are 16 tribes in Liberia each representing a unique set of custom and tradition, the congruent blending of different tribes as well as religion and culture is fetchingly interwoven in the framework and fabric of the way of life in Liberia. Whilst many young Liberians today are not deeply rooted in their culture and tradition that represent their various tribes, yet, the country has a rich cultural tradition that has been uphold for generation. Today our culture has been characterized by the syllogism which injected influx of external influences that affected our cultural tradition yet the continuity and vitality of our culture must be imperative because a country with



no cultural heritage is like a book without pages.

Liberia is beatified with a distinct culture and has enjoyed a wide range cultural heritage including marriage, dance and cuisine.

1. Traditional marriage or customary marriage- a marriage custom which include a dowry payment to the family of the bride in the form of money or breaking of kola nut, this form of marriage is common in Liberia and allows the husband under traditional right marry more than women.
2. Dance- every tribe in Liberia has a unique style of cultural dance, some of the most popular dances are the Vai dance, Kpelle dance and Bassa dance. Each dance has a symbolic meaning that is

a perfect representation of each tribe cultural heritage and tells a story of an event and the cause for celebration, some of these dances includes:

3. • The moonlight dance is performed to signal the idea that every Liberian has something in common and thus should be treated with respect and love for each other, this dance is also performed during the celebration of a great and successful harvest.
 - The harvest dance is performed at different farming site when there is clearing of trees, burning of bushes and planting of crops, this is a method of motivation for the farm workers.

- Leopard dance signifies a greedy and brutal chief or a bad leader who do not listen to the plight of the people.

4. Cuisine- rice has always been the staple food in Liberia, every tribe has different dishes that they prefer but rice is general and staple to Liberians. Dishes most often in Liberia adumbrate the tribe for instance: cassava leaf (vai) Palm butter (Kru and Grebo) Groundnut soup (Mandingo) GB (Gio and Mano) Torborgee (Lorma) ETC.

Written: Abdul R. Kiawu



Lappa Lover Journey of Discovery and Identity



Growing up, it was always exciting to play dress up in my mother's clothing or make new outfits for my dolls. Fashion is a lot of things to me, an expression of temperament, mood, a statement, and part of my identity. Fashion is more than clothes, shoes and accessories. It is a literal diary of personal growth and exploration of identities. A rebranded "Lallapolian" or as we say, a proud "Ankara" Lover. This is part of my identity and often expressed in clothing or with head ties (head wraps). As a Liberian, African lappa or its

western coined name "Ankara" has always been in my life. From the early years when you tagged along to Waterside market for ready to wear skirt suits, tie dyes pant suits, Leather bags and dyed leather sandals. I can still recall the bells, the hawking of walking clothing racks and pushing and shoving as we made our way to the stalls. Christmas was the most crowded - bells, radio blasting from wheelbarrows, always seem like each year you could figure out if the Christmas was going to be "dry" (meaning hard economic times) or not by number of people in waterside. Bigger crowd meant Christmas was good for all. However, by Teenage years, my first wave of rebellion against the lappa ensued. Watching music videos and TV series promoted the cool American look. From Tupac and bandanas, Aaliyah and sagging pants, to TLC and big shirts. I abandoned African prints for the cool look of jeans, jumpsuits, Timberlands, and hot pants to the horror of my father, and plaid shirts all in a desperate attempt to imitate Aaliyah and TLC. I'd follow my friends and we'd rummage through their older sisters' closets, pull out their jeans and shirts and head out to high school events confident that we would not run into them. After High school, textiles stores in waterside were our favorites - cotton prints, linen and polyester as we desperately tried to get our tailors to make copies of styles, we saw in western fashion magazines. I moved to the US in 2002. I found my first few months strange. I'd get comments randomly about how "American" I dressed or how come I knew the latest Khia song. Don't judge me on Khia. I had thought I was hip and all caught to American pop culture yet it seems that folks still saw the arrival of Africans should have meant coming with spears and cheetah skin. Now for my mother, America was just a post mail away. So, every few months she'd make a couple of African suits and send along with spoons, beaded jewelry, and even toothpaste. So, I would wear them in my dorm room and take pictures and send them back to her. I also started wearing them to international student activities or at school occasions and get complimented on my "costumes". Felt a bit theatric and overdressed. However, I

was a broke college student so I started wearing them at weddings outside of school events. Wearing my lappa suits at Liberian weddings felt comforting. I was home away from home. As the years went by, the style changed... instead of traditional lappa suits, my mother was now sending me dresses, hip and modern. A style evolution was taking place in Liberia as the tailors attempted modern versions of lappa styles. The resurgence of African prints continued in the diaspora - weddings, street styles and catwalks. By 2010, I had made my first trip back home and came back with a suitcase full of new African clothing. By the time I had Moved back home in 2013, I was wearing lappa styles consistently. I then made a conscious decision to wear more African Clothing. Wearing lappa has become a creative outlet. For me, this entails finding new ways to show off lappa in a modern style and or mixing prints with other Liberian materials such as country cloth and tie dyes; matching prints or mixing them. I try to justify the cost aspects of this "creativity" by focusing on how it supports small business. Leave it to me to find a way to make it rights. Yet, it makes sense. Since the interest in Lappa and wearing African styles increased, the local market has grown. Rom made to order to ready to wear, Monrovia streets are line up with new shops selling readymade clothing and or lappa prints. So, the way, I see it, I'm supporting the local economy. However, Lappa or "Ankara" has become not just a fixture in my closet but an expression of my identity. In 2017, at feminist convening, women activists and leaders recounted being discriminated against when they attended meetings. The "Lappalolians" they laughed when recalling some of the experiences of being treated as illiterate or a low-level staff of the organization they either managed or was representing simply because they were in lappa suits. So, they deliberately and consciously chose and continued to wear their lappa suits to events (national and international) as a challenge to the stereotypes and discrimination. So, it gave a whole new symbolic meaning to lappa suits. Hence, as a measure of resistance and reaffirmation of identity as Liberian, I've come full circle.



Sharing our Liberian smiles

"Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing." Mother Teresa.

"People seldom notice old clothes if you wear a big smile." Lee Mildon

"Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy." Thich Nhat Hanh

"You have not lost your smile at making poorer those who give it. It all, it's right under your nose. You just forgot it was there."

"A smile costs nothing but gives much. It enriches those who receive without making poorer those who give. It takes but a moment, but the memory of it sometimes lasts forever." Ndtv

Next time don't forget to wear a big smile. You might not know how it will change someone's life.

