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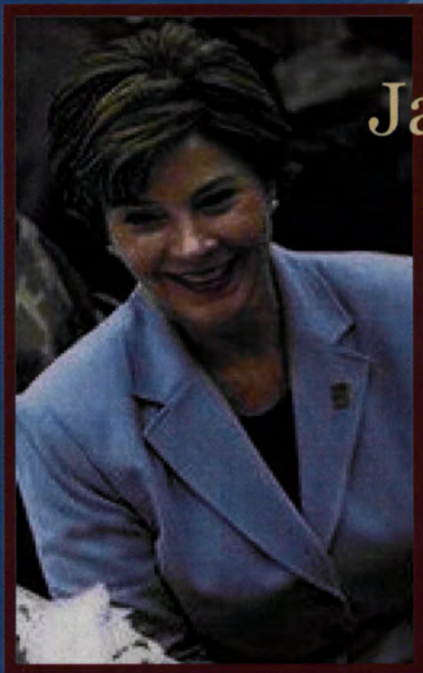
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The Trip of the First Lady to Monrovia, Liberia Accra, Ghana Abuja, and Nigeria, 01/14/2006 - 01/18/2006

The Trip of the First Lady to:

Monrovia, Liberia
Accra, Ghana
Abuja, Nigeria

January 14-18



Press Clips
Mrs. Bush

The New York Times

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HEADLINE: The Case For Contamination

BYLINE: By Kwame Anthony Appiah.

Kwame Anthony Appiah, a philosopher, teaches at Princeton University. This essay is adapted from "Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers," to be published later this month by W.W. Norton.

BODY:

1. I'm seated, with my mother, on a palace veranda, cooled by a breeze from the royal garden. Before us, on a dais, is an empty throne, its arms and legs embossed with polished brass, the back and seat covered in black-and-gold silk. In front of the steps to the dais, there are two columns of people, mostly men, facing one another, seated on carved wooden stools, the cloths they wear wrapped around their chests, leaving their shoulders bare. There is a quiet buzz of conversation. Outside in the garden, peacocks screech. At last, the blowing of a ram's horn announces the arrival of the king of Asante, its tones sounding his honorific, kotokohene, "porcupine chief." (Each quill of the porcupine, according to custom, signifies a warrior ready to kill and to die for the kingdom.) Everyone stands until the king has settled on the throne. Then, when we sit, a chorus sings songs in praise of him, which are interspersed with the playing of a flute. It is a Wednesday festival day in Kumasi, the town in Ghana where I grew up.

Unless you're one of a few million Ghanaians, this will probably seem a relatively unfamiliar world, perhaps even an exotic one. You might suppose that this Wednesday festival belongs quaintly to an African past. But before the king arrived, people were taking calls on cellphones, and among those passing the time in quiet conversation were a dozen men in suits, representatives of an insurance company. And the meetings in the office next to the veranda are about contemporary issues: H.I.V./AIDS, the educational needs of 21st-century children, the teaching of science and technology at the local university. When my turn comes to be formally presented, the king asks me about Princeton, where I teach. I ask him when he'll next be in the States. In a few weeks, he says cheerfully. He's got a meeting with the head of the World Bank.

Anywhere you travel in the world -- today as always -- you can find ceremonies like these, many of them rooted in centuries-old traditions. But you will also find everywhere -- and this is something new -- many intimate connections with places far away: Washington, Moscow, Mexico City, Beijing. Across the street from us, when we were growing up, there was a large house occupied by a number of families, among them a vast family of boys; one, about my age, was a good friend. He lives in London. His brother lives in Japan, where his wife is from. They have another brother who has been in Spain for a while and a couple more brothers who, last I heard, were in the United States. Some of them still live in Kumasi, one or two in Accra, Ghana's capital. Eddie, who lives in Japan, speaks his wife's language now. He has to. But he was never very comfortable in English, the language of our government and our

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schools. When he phones me from time to time, he prefers to speak Asante-Twi.

Over the years, the royal palace buildings in Kumasi have expanded. When I was a child, we used to visit the previous king, my great-uncle by marriage, in a small building that the British had allowed his predecessor to build when he returned from exile in the Seychelles to a restored but diminished Asante kingship. That building is now a museum, dwarfed by the enormous house next door -- built by his successor, my uncle by marriage -- where the current king lives. Next to it is the suite of offices abutting the veranda where we were sitting, recently finished by the present king, my uncle's successor. The British, my mother's people, conquered Asante at the turn of the 20th century; now, at the turn of the 21st, the palace feels as it must have felt in the 19th century: a center of power. The president of Ghana comes from this world, too. He was born across the street from the palace to a member of the royal Oyoko clan. But he belongs to other worlds as well: he went to Oxford University; he's a member of one of the Inns of Court in London; he's a Catholic, with a picture of himself greeting the pope in his sitting room.

What are we to make of this? On Kumasi's Wednesday festival day, I've seen visitors from England and the United States wince at what they regard as the intrusion of modernity on timeless, traditional rituals -- more evidence, they think, of a pressure in the modern world toward uniformity. They react like the assistant on the film set who's supposed to check that the extras in a sword-and-sandals movie aren't wearing wristwatches. And such purists are not alone. In the past couple of years, Unesco's members have spent a great deal of time trying to hammer out a convention on the "protection and promotion" of cultural diversity. (It was finally approved at the Unesco General Conference in October 2005.) The drafters worried that "the processes of globalization... represent a challenge for cultural diversity, namely in view of risks of imbalances between rich and poor countries." The fear is that the values and images of Western mass culture, like some invasive weed, are threatening to choke out the world's native flora.

The contradictions in this argument aren't hard to find. This same Unesco document is careful to affirm the importance of the free flow of ideas, the freedom of thought and expression and human rights -- values that, we know, will become universal only if we make them so. What's really important, then, cultures or people? In a world where Kumasi and New York -- and Cairo and Leeds and Istanbul -- are being drawn ever closer together, an ethics of globalization has proved elusive.

The right approach, I think, starts by taking individuals -- not nations, tribes or "peoples" -- as the proper object of moral concern. It doesn't much matter what we call such a creed, but in homage to Diogenes, the fourth-century Greek Cynic and the first philosopher to call himself a "citizen of the world," we could call it cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitans take cultural difference seriously, because they take the choices individual people make seriously. But because cultural difference is not the only thing that concerns them, they suspect that many of globalization's cultural critics are aiming at the wrong targets.

Yes, globalization can produce homogeneity. But globalization is also a threat to homogeneity. You can see this as clearly in Kumasi as anywhere. One thing Kumasi isn't -- simply because it's a city -- is homogeneous. English, German, Chinese, Syrian, Lebanese, Burkinabe, Ivorian,

Nigerian, Indian: I can find you families of each description. I can find you Asante people, whose ancestors have lived in this town for centuries, but also Hausa households that have been around for centuries, too. There are people there from every region of the country as well, speaking scores of languages. But if you travel just a little way outside Kumasi -- 20 miles, say, in the right direction -- and if you drive off the main road down one of the many potholed side roads of red laterite, you won't have difficulty finding villages that are fairly monocultural. The people have mostly been to Kumasi and seen the big, polyglot, diverse world of the city. Where they live, though, there is one everyday language

(aside from the English in the government schools) and an agrarian way of life based on some old crops, like yams, and some newer ones, like cocoa, which arrived in the late 19th century as a product for export. They may or may not have electricity. (This close to Kumasi, they probably do.) When people talk of the homogeneity produced by globalization, what they are talking about is this: Even here, the villagers will have radios (though the language will be local); you will be able to get a discussion going about Ronaldo, Mike Tyson or Tupac; and you will probably be able to find a bottle of Guinness or Coca-Cola (as well as of Star or Club, Ghana's own fine lagers). But has access to these things made the place more homogeneous or less? And what can you tell about people's souls from the fact that they drink Coca-Cola?

It's true that the enclaves of homogeneity you find these days -- in Asante as in Pennsylvania -- are less distinctive than they were a century ago, but mostly in good ways. More of them have access to effective medicines. More of them have access to clean drinking water, and more of them have schools. Where, as is still too common, they don't have these things, it's something not to celebrate but to deplore. And whatever loss of difference there has been, they are constantly inventing new forms of difference: new hairstyles, new slang, even, from time to time, new religions. No one could say that the world's villages are becoming anything like the same.

So why do people in these places sometimes feel that their identities are threatened? Because the world, their world, is changing, and some of them don't like it. The pull of the global economy -- witness those cocoa trees, whose chocolate is eaten all around the world -- created some of the life they now live. If chocolate prices were to collapse again, as they did in the early 1990's, Asante farmers might have to find new crops or new forms of livelihood. That prospect is unsettling for some people (just as it is exciting for others). Missionaries came awhile ago, so many of these villagers will be Christian, even if they have also kept some of the rites from earlier days. But new Pentecostal messengers are challenging the churches they know and condemning the old rites as idolatrous. Again, some like it; some don't.

Above all, relationships are changing. When my father was young, a man in a village would farm some land that a chief had granted him, and his maternal clan (including his younger brothers) would work it with him. When a new house needed building, he would organize it. He would also make sure his dependents were fed and clothed, the children educated, marriages and funerals arranged and paid for. He could expect to pass the farm and the responsibilities along to the next generation.

Nowadays, everything is different. Cocoa prices have not kept pace with the cost of living. Gas prices have made the transportation of the crop more expensive. And there are new possibilities for the young in the towns, in other parts of the country and in other parts of the world. Once, perhaps, you could have commanded the young ones to stay. Now they have the right to leave -- perhaps to seek work at one of the new data-processing centers down south in the nation's capital -- and, anyway, you may not make enough to feed and clothe and educate them all. So the time of the successful farming family is passing, and those who were settled in that way of life are as sad to see it go as American family farmers are whose lands are accumulated by giant agribusinesses. We can sympathize with them. But we cannot force their children to stay in the name of protecting their authentic culture, and we cannot afford to subsidize indefinitely thousands of distinct islands of homogeneity that no longer make economic sense.

Nor should we want to. Human variety matters, cosmopolitans think, because people are entitled to options. What John Stuart Mill said more than a century ago in "On Liberty" about diversity within a society serves just as well as an argument for variety across the globe: "If it were only that people have diversities of taste, that is reason enough for not attempting to shape them all after one model. But different persons also require different conditions for their spiritual development; and can no more exist healthily in the same moral, than all the variety of plants can exist in the same physical, atmosphere and climate. The same things which are helps to one person towards the cultivation of his higher nature, are

hindrances to another... Unless there is a corresponding diversity in their modes of life, they neither obtain their fair share of happiness, nor grow up to the mental, moral, and aesthetic stature of which their nature is capable." If we want to preserve a wide range of human conditions because it allows free people the best chance to make their own lives, we can't enforce diversity by trapping people within differences they long to escape.

2. Even if you grant that people shouldn't be compelled to sustain the older cultural practices, you might suppose that cosmopolitans should side with those who are busy around the world "preserving culture" and resisting "cultural imperialism." Yet behind these slogans you often find some curious assumptions. Take "preserving culture." It's one thing to help people sustain arts they want to sustain. I am all for festivals of Welsh bards in Llandudno financed by the Welsh arts council. Long live the Ghana National Cultural Center in Kumasi, where you can go and learn traditional Akan dancing and drumming, especially since its classes are spirited and overflowing. Restore the deteriorating film stock of early Hollywood movies; continue the preservation of Old Norse and early Chinese and Ethiopian manuscripts; record, transcribe and analyze the oral narratives of Malay and Masai and Maori. All these are undeniably valuable.

But preserving culture -- in the sense of such cultural artifacts -- is different from preserving cultures. And the cultural preservationists often pursue the latter, trying to ensure that the Huli of Papua New Guinea (or even Sikhs in Toronto) maintain their "authentic" ways. What makes a cultural expression authentic, though? Are we to stop the importation of baseball caps into Vietnam so that the Zao will continue to wear their colorful red headdresses? Why not ask the Zao? Shouldn't the choice be theirs?

"They have no real choice," the cultural preservationists say. "We've dumped cheap Western clothes into their markets, and they can no longer afford the silk they used to wear. If they had what they really wanted, they'd still be dressed traditionally." But this is no longer an argument about authenticity. The claim is that they can't afford to do something that they'd really like to do, something that is expressive of an identity they care about and want to sustain. This is a genuine problem, one that afflicts people in many communities: they're too poor to live the life they want to lead. But if they do get richer, and they still run around in T-shirts, that's their choice. Talk of authenticity now just amounts to telling other people what they ought to value in their own traditions.

Not that this is likely to be a problem in the real world. People who can afford it mostly like to put on traditional garb -- at least from time to time. I was best man once at a Scottish wedding at which the bridegroom wore a kilt and I wore kente cloth. Andrew Oransay, the islander who piped us up the aisle, whispered in my ear at one point, "Here we all are then, in our tribal gear." In Kumasi, people who can afford them love to put on their kente cloths, especially the most "traditional" ones, woven in colorful silk strips in the town of Bonwire, as they have been for a couple of centuries. (The prices are high in part because demand outside Asante has risen. A fine kente for a man now costs more than the average Ghanaian earns in a year. Is that bad? Not for the people of Bonwire.)

Besides, trying to find some primordially authentic culture can be like peeling an onion. The textiles most people think of as traditional West African cloths are known as Java prints; they arrived in the 19th century with the Javanese batiks sold, and often milled, by the Dutch. The traditional garb of Herero women in Namibia derives from the attire of 19th-century German missionaries, though it is still unmistakably Herero, not least because the fabrics used have a distinctly un-Lutheran range of colors. And so with our kente cloth: the silk was always imported, traded by Europeans, produced in Asia. This tradition was once an innovation. Should we reject it for that reason as untraditional? How far back must one go? Should we condemn the young men and women of the University of Science and Technology, a few miles outside Kumasi, who wear European-style gowns for graduation, lined with kente strips (as they do now at Howard and Morehouse, too)? Cultures are made of continuities and changes, and the

identity of a society can survive through these changes. Societies without change aren't authentic; they're just dead.

3. The preservationists often make their case by invoking the evil of "cultural imperialism." Their underlying picture, in broad strokes, is this: There is a world system of capitalism. It has a center and a periphery. At the center -- in Europe and the United States -- is a set of multinational corporations. Some of these are in the media business. The products they sell around the world promote the creation of desires that can be fulfilled only by the purchase and use of their products. They do this explicitly through advertising, but more insidiously, they also do so through the messages implicit in movies and in television drama. Herbert Schiller, a leading critic of "media-cultural imperialism," claimed that "it is the imagery and cultural perspectives of the ruling sector in the center that shape and structure consciousness throughout the system at large."

That's the theory, anyway. But the evidence doesn't bear it out. Researchers have actually gone out into the world and explored the responses to the hit television series "Dallas" in Holland and among Israeli Arabs, Moroccan Jewish immigrants, kibbutzniks and new Russian immigrants to Israel. They have examined the actual content of the television media -- whose penetration of everyday life far exceeds that of film -- in Australia, Brazil, Canada, India and Mexico. They have looked at how American popular culture was taken up by the artists of Sophiatown, in South Africa. They have discussed "Days of Our Lives" and "The Bold and the Beautiful" with Zulu college students from traditional backgrounds.

And one thing they've found is that how people respond to these cultural imports depends on their existing cultural context. When the media scholar Larry Strelitz spoke to students from KwaZulu-Natal, he found that they were anything but passive vessels. One of them, Sipho -- a self-described "very, very strong Zulu man" -- reported that he had drawn lessons from watching the American soap opera "Days of Our Lives," "especially relationship-wise." It fortified his view that "if a guy can tell a woman that he loves her, she should be able to do the same." What's more, after watching the show, Sipho "realized that I should be allowed to speak to my father. He should be my friend rather than just my father." It seems doubtful that that was the intended message of multinational capitalism's ruling sector.

But Sipho's response also confirmed that cultural consumers are not dupes. They can adapt products to suit their own needs, and they can decide for themselves what they do and do not approve of. Here's Sipho again:

"In terms of our culture, a girl is expected to enter into relationships when she is about 20. In the Western culture, a girl can be exposed to a relationship as early as 15 or 16. That one we shouldn't adopt in our culture. Another thing we shouldn't adopt from the Western culture has to do with the way they treat elderly people. I wouldn't like my family to be sent into an old-age home."

It wouldn't matter whether the "old-age homes" in American soap operas were safe places, full of kindly people. That wouldn't sell the idea to Sipho. Dutch viewers of "Dallas" saw not the pleasures of conspicuous consumption among the superrich -- the message that theorists of "cultural imperialism" find in every episode -- but a reminder that money and power don't protect you from tragedy. Israeli Arabs saw a program that confirmed that women abused by their husbands should return to their fathers. Mexican telenovelas remind Ghanaian women that, where sex is at issue, men are not to be trusted. If the telenovelas tried to tell them otherwise, they wouldn't believe it.

Talk of cultural imperialism "structuring the consciousnesses" of those in the periphery treats people like Sipho as blank slates on which global capitalism's moving finger writes its message, leaving behind another cultural automaton as it moves on. It is deeply condescending. And it isn't true.

In fact, one way that people sometimes respond to the onslaught of ideas from the West is to turn them against their originators. It's no accident that the West's fiercest adversaries among other societies tend to come from among the most Westernized of the group. Who in Ghana excoriated the British colonizers and built the movement for independence? Not the farmers and the peasants. Not the chiefs. It was the Western-educated bourgeoisie. And when Kwame Nkrumah -- who went to college in Pennsylvania and lived in London -- created a nationalist mass movement, at its core were soldiers who had returned from fighting a war in the British Army, urban market women who traded Dutch prints, unionists who worked in industries created by colonialism and the so-called veranda boys, who had been to colonial schools, learned English and studied history and geography in textbooks written in England. Who led the resistance to the British Raj? An Indian-born South African lawyer, trained in the British courts, whose name was Gandhi; an Indian named Nehru, who wore Savile Row suits and sent his daughter to an English boarding school; and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, who joined Lincoln's Inn in London and became a barrister at the age of 19. The independence movements of the postwar world that led to the end of Europe's African and Asian empires were driven by the rhetoric that had guided the Allies' own struggle against Germany and Japan: democracy, freedom, equality. This wasn't a conflict between values. It was a conflict of interests couched in terms of the same values.

4. Sometimes, though, people react to the incursions of the modern world not by appropriating the values espoused by the liberal democracies but by inverting them. One recent result has been a new worldwide fraternity that presents cosmopolitanism with something of a sinister mirror image. Indeed, you could think of its members as counter-cosmopolitans. They believe in human dignity across the nations, and they live their creed. They share these ideals with people in many countries, speaking many languages. As thoroughgoing globalists, they make full use of the World Wide Web. They resist the crass consumerism of modern Western society and deplore its influence in the rest of the world. But they also resist the temptations of the narrow nationalisms of the countries where they were born, along with the humble allegiances of kith and kin. They resist such humdrum loyalties because they get in the way of the one thing that matters: building a community of enlightened men and women across the world. That is one reason they reject traditional religious authorities (though they disapprove, too, of their obscurantism and temporizing). Sometimes they agonize in their discussions about whether they can reverse the world's evils or whether their struggle is hopeless. But mostly they soldier on in their efforts to make the world a better place.

These are not the heirs of Diogenes the Cynic. The community these comrades are building is not a polis; it's what they call the ummah, the global community of Muslims, and it is open to all who share their faith. They are young, global Muslim fundamentalists. The ummah's new globalists consider that they have returned to the fundamentals of Islam; much of what passes for Islam in the world, much of what has passed as Islam for centuries, they think a sham. As the French scholar Olivier Roy has observed, these religionists -- his term for them is "neofundamentalists" -- wish to cleanse Islam's pristine and universal message from the contingencies of mere history, of local cultures. For them, Roy notes, "globalization is a good opportunity to dissociate Islam from any given culture and to provide a model that could work beyond any culture." They have taken a set of doctrines that once came with a form of life, in other words, and thrown away that form of life.

Now, the vast majority of these fundamentalists are not going to blow anybody up. So they should not be confused with those other Muslims -- the "radical neo-fundamentalists," Roy calls them -- who want to turn jihad, interpreted as literal warfare against the West, into the sixth pillar of Islam. Whether to endorse the use of violence is a political decision, even if it is to be justified in religious terms. Nonetheless, the neo-fundamentalists present a classic challenge to cosmopolitanism, because they, too, offer a moral and, in its way, inclusive universalism.

Unlike cosmopolitanism, of course, it is universalist without being tolerant, and such intolerant universalism has often led to murder. It underlay the French Wars of Religion that bloodied the four decades before the Edict of Nantes of 1598, in which Henri IV of France finally granted to the Protestants in his realm the right to practice their faith. In the Thirty Years' War, which ravaged central Europe until 1648 and the Peace of Westphalia, Protestant and Catholic princes from Austria to Sweden struggled with one another, and hundreds of thousands of Germans died in battle. Millions starved or died of disease as roaming armies pillaged the countryside. The period of religious conflict in the British Isles, from the first Bishops' War of 1639 to the end of the English Civil War in 1651, which pitted Protestant armies against the forces of a Catholic king, resulted in the deaths of perhaps 10 percent of the population. All these conflicts involved issues beyond sectarian doctrine, of course. Still, many Enlightenment liberals drew the conclusion that enforcing one vision of universal truth could only lead the world back to the blood baths.

Yet tolerance by itself is not what distinguishes the cosmopolitan from the neofundamentalist. There are plenty of things that the heroes of radical Islam are happy to tolerate. They don't care if you eat kebabs or meatballs or kung pao chicken, as long as the meat is halal; your hijab can be silk or linen or viscose. At the same time, there are plenty of things that cosmopolitans will not tolerate. We will sometimes want to intervene in other places because what is going on there violates our principles so deeply. We, too, can see moral error. And when it is serious enough -- genocide is the least-controversial case -- we will not stop with conversation. Toleration has its limits.

Nor can you tell us apart by saying that the neofundamentalists believe in universal truth. Cosmopolitans believe in universal truth, too, though we are less certain that we already have all of it. It is not skepticism about the very idea of truth that guides us; it is realism about how hard the truth is to find. One tenet we hold to, however, is that every human being has obligations to every other. Everybody matters: that is our central idea. And again, it sharply limits the scope of our tolerance.

To say what, in principle, distinguishes the cosmopolitan from competing universalisms, we plainly need to go beyond talk of truth and tolerance. One distinctively cosmopolitan commitment is to pluralism. Cosmopolitans think that there are many values worth living by and that you cannot live by all of them. So we hope and expect that different people and different societies will embody different values. Another aspect of cosmopolitanism is what philosophers call fallibilism -- the sense that our knowledge is imperfect, provisional, subject to revision in the face of new evidence.

The neofundamentalist conception of a global ummah, by contrast, admits of local variations -- but only in matters that don't matter. These counter-cosmopolitans, like many Christian fundamentalists, do think that there is one right way for all human beings to live; that all the differences must be in the details. If what concerns you is global homogeneity, then this utopia, not the world that capitalism is producing, is the one you should worry about. Still, the universalisms in the name of religion are hardly the only ones that invert the cosmopolitan creed. In the name of universal humanity, you can be the kind of Marxist, like Mao or Pol Pot, who wants to eradicate all religion, just as easily as you can be the Grand Inquisitor supervising an auto-da-fé. All of these men want everyone on their side, so we can share with them the vision in their mirror. "Indeed, I'm a trustworthy adviser to you," Osama bin Laden said in a 2002 "message to the American people." "I invite you to the happiness of this world and the hereafter and to escape your dry, miserable, materialistic life that is without soul. I invite you to Islam, that calls to follow of the path of Allah alone Who has no partners, the path which calls for justice and forbids oppression and crimes." Join us, the counter-cosmopolitans say, and we will all be sisters and brothers. But each of them plans to trample on our differences -- to trample us to death, if necessary -- if we will not join them. Their motto might as well be the sardonic German saying *Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein, So schlag' ich Dir den Schadel ein.* (If you don't want to be my brother, then I'll smash your skull in.)

That liberal pluralists are hostile to certain authoritarian ways of life -- that they're intolerant of radical intolerance -- is sometimes seen as kind of self-refutation. That's a mistake: you can care about individual freedom and still understand that the contours of that freedom will vary considerably from place to place. But we might as well admit that a concern for individual freedom isn't something that will appeal to every individual. In politics, including cultural politics, there are winners and losers -- which is worth remembering when we think about international human rights treaties. When we seek to embody our concern for strangers in human rights law, and when we urge our government to enforce it, we are seeking to change the world of law in every nation on the planet. We have declared slavery a violation of international law. And, in so doing, we have committed ourselves, at a minimum, to the desirability of its eradication everywhere. This is no longer controversial in the capitals of the world. No one defends enslavement. But international treaties define slavery in ways that arguably include debt bondage, and debt bondage is a significant economic institution in parts of South Asia. I hold no brief for debt bondage. Still, we shouldn't be surprised if people whose incomes and style of life depend upon it are angry.

It's the same with the international movements to promote women's equality. We know that many Islamists are deeply disturbed by the way Western men and women behave. We permit women to swim almost naked with strange men, which is our business, but it is hard to keep the news of these acts of immodesty from Muslim women and children or to protect Muslim men from the temptations they inevitably create. As the Internet extends its reach, it will get even harder, and their children, especially their girls, will be tempted to ask for these freedoms, too. Worse, they say, we are now trying to force our conception of how women and men should behave upon them. We speak of women's rights. We make treaties enshrining these rights. And then we want their governments to enforce them.

Like many people in every nation, I support those treaties; I believe that women, like men, should have the vote, should be entitled to work outside their homes, should be protected from the physical abuse of men, including their fathers, brothers and husbands. But I also know that the changes these freedoms would bring will change the balance of power between men and women in everyday life. How do I know this? Because I have lived most of my adult life in the West as it has gone through just such a transition, and I know that the process is not yet complete.

So liberty and diversity may well be at odds, and the tensions between them aren't always easily resolved. But the rhetoric of cultural preservation isn't any help. Again, the contradictions are near at hand. Take another look at that Unesco Convention. It affirms the "principle of equal dignity of and respect for all cultures." (What, all cultures -- including those of the K.K.K. and the Taliban?) It also affirms "the importance of culture for social cohesion in general, and in particular its potential for the enhancement of the status and role of women in society." (But doesn't "cohesion" argue for uniformity? And wouldn't enhancing the status and role of women involve changing, rather than preserving, cultures?) In Saudi Arabia, people can watch "Will and Grace" on satellite TV -- officially proscribed, but available all the same -- knowing that, under Saudi law, Will could be beheaded in a public square. In northern Nigeria, mullahs inveigh against polio vaccination while sentencing adulteresses to death by stoning. In India, thousands of wives are burned to death each year for failing to make their dowry payments. Vive la difference? Please.

5. Living cultures do not, in any case, evolve from purity into contamination; change is more a gradual transformation from one mixture to a new mixture, a process that usually takes place at some distance from rules and rulers, in the conversations that occur across cultural boundaries. Such conversations are not so much about arguments and values as about the exchange of perspectives. I don't say that we can't change minds, but the reasons we offer in our conversation will seldom do much to persuade others who do not share our fundamental evaluative judgments already. When we make judgments, after all, it's

rarely because we have applied well-thought-out principles to a set of facts and deduced an answer. Our efforts to justify what we have done -- or what we plan to do -- are typically made up after the event, rationalizations of what we have decided intuitively to do. And a good deal of what we intuitively take to be right, we take to be right just because it is what we are used to. That does not mean, however, that we cannot become accustomed to doing things differently.

Consider the practice of foot-binding in China, which persisted for a thousand years -- and was largely eradicated within a generation. The anti-foot-binding campaign, in the 1910's and 1920's, did circulate facts about the disadvantages of bound feet, but those couldn't have come as news to most people. Perhaps more effective was the campaign's emphasis that no other country went in for the practice; in the world at large, then, China was "losing face" because of it. (To China's cultural preservationists, of course, the fact that the practice was peculiar to the region was entirely a mark in its favor.) Natural-foot societies were formed, with members forswearing the practice and further pledging that their sons would not marry women with bound feet. As the movement took hold, scorn was heaped on older women with bound feet, and they were forced to endure the agonies of unbinding. What had been beautiful became ugly; ornamentation became disfigurement. The appeal to reason can explain neither the custom nor its abolition.

So, too, with other social trends. Just a couple of generations ago, most people in most of the industrialized world thought that middle-class women would ideally be housewives and mothers. If they had time on their hands, they could engage in charitable work or entertain one another; a few of them might engage in the arts, writing novels, painting, performing in music, theater and dance. But there was little place for them in the "learned professions" -- as lawyers or doctors, priests or rabbis; and if they were to be academics, they would teach young women and probably remain unmarried. They were not likely to make their way in politics, except perhaps at the local level. And they were not made welcome in science.

How much of the shift away from these assumptions is a result of arguments? Isn't a significant part of it just the consequence of our getting used to new ways of doing things? The arguments that kept the old pattern in place were not -- to put it mildly -- terribly good. If the reasons for the old sexist way of doing things had been the problem, the women's movement could have been done in a couple of weeks.

Consider another example: In much of Europe and North America, in places where a generation ago homosexuals were social outcasts and homosexual acts were illegal, lesbian and gay couples are increasingly being recognized by their families, by society and by the law. This is true despite the continued opposition of major religious groups and a significant and persisting undercurrent of social disapproval. Both sides make arguments, some good, most bad. But if you ask the social scientists what has produced this change, they will rightly not start with a story about reasons. They will give you a historical account that concludes with a sort of perspectival shift. The increasing presence of "openly gay" people in social life and in the media has changed our habits. And over the last 30 years or so, instead of thinking about the private activity of gay sex, many Americans and Europeans started thinking about the public category of gay people.

One of the great savants of the postwar era, John von Neumann, liked to say, mischievously, that "in mathematics you don't understand things, you just get used to them." As in mathematical arguments, so in moral ones. Now, I don't deny that all the time, at every stage, people were talking, giving one another reasons to do things: accept their children, stop treating homosexuality as a medical disorder, disagree with their churches, come out. Still, the short version of the story is basically this: People got used to lesbians and gay men. I am urging that we should learn about people in other places, take an interest in their civilizations, their arguments, their errors, their achievements, not because that will bring us to agreement but because it will help us get used to one another -- something we have a powerful

need to do in this globalized era. If that is the aim, then the fact that we have all these opportunities for disagreement about values need not put us off. Understanding one another may be hard; it can certainly be interesting. But it doesn't require that we come to agreement.

6. The ideals of purity and preservation have licensed a great deal of mischief in the past century, but they have never had much to do with lived culture. Ours may be an era of mass migration, but the global spread and hybridization of culture -- through travel, trade or conquest -- is hardly a recent development. Alexander's empire molded both the states and the sculpture of Egypt and North India; the Mongols and then the Mughals shaped great swaths of Asia; the Bantu migrations populated half the African continent. Islamic states stretch from Morocco to Indonesia; Christianity reached **Africa**, Europe and Asia within a few centuries of the death of Jesus of Nazareth; Buddhism long ago migrated from India into much of East and Southeast Asia. Jews and people whose ancestors came from many parts of China have long lived in vast diasporas. The traders of the Silk Road changed the style of elite dress in Italy; someone buried Chinese pottery in 15th-century Swahili graves. I have heard it said that the bagpipes started out in Egypt and came to Scotland with the Roman infantry. None of this is modern.

Our guide to what is going on here might as well be a former African slave named Publius Terentius Afer, whom we know as Terence. Terence, born in Carthage, was taken to Rome in the early second century B.C., and his plays -- witty, elegant works that are, with Plautus's earlier, less-cultivated works, essentially all we have of Roman comedy -- were widely admired among the city's literary elite. Terence's own mode of writing -- which involved freely incorporating any number of earlier Greek plays into a single Latin one -- was known to Roman litterateurs as "contamination."

It's an evocative term. When people speak for an ideal of cultural purity, sustaining the authentic culture of the Asante or the American family farm, I find myself drawn to contamination as the name for a counterideal. Terence had a notably firm grasp on the range of human variety: "So many men, so many opinions" was a line of his. And it's in his comedy "The Self-Tormentor" that you'll find what may be the golden rule of cosmopolitanism -- Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto; "I am human: nothing human is alien to me." The context is illuminating. A busybody farmer named Chremes is told by his neighbor to mind his own affairs; the homo sum credo is Chremes's breezy rejoinder. It isn't meant to be an ordinance from on high; it's just the case for gossip. Then again, gossip -- the fascination people have for the small doings of other people -- has been a powerful force for conversation among cultures.

The ideal of contamination has few exponents more eloquent than Salman Rushdie, who has insisted that the novel that occasioned his fatwa "celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelisation and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Melange, hotch-potch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world." No doubt there can be an easy and spurious utopianism of "mixture," as there is of "purity" or "authenticity." And yet the larger human truth is on the side of contamination -- that endless process of imitation and revision.

A tenable global ethics has to temper a respect for difference with a respect for the freedom of actual human beings to make their own choices. That's why cosmopolitans don't insist that everyone become cosmopolitan. They know they don't have all the answers. They're humble enough to think that they might learn from strangers; not too humble to think that strangers can't learn from them. Few remember what Chremes says after his "I am human" line, but it is equally suggestive: "If you're right, I'll do what you do. If you're wrong, I'll set you straight."

URL: <http://www.nytimes.com>

CORRECTION-DATE: January 15, 2006

CORRECTION:

An essay on Jan. 1 about the advantages of cosmopolitanism over enforced homogeneity in world cultures throughout history misstated the religion of a 17th-century English king. Charles I was a member of the Church of England, not a Catholic.

GRAPHIC: Photos: Connected In the Ghanaian cities of Accra, Cape Coast and Kumasi, cellphones are part of the culture. (Photographs by Lyle Ashton Harris for The New York Times)

LOAD-DATE: January 1, 2006

The NEWS (Monrovia)

January 12, 2006

HEADLINE: Six Presidents for Inauguration --NTGL Releases Calendar of Events

BYLINE: T. Michael Johnny

At least six African Presidents have confirmed their respective presence in Monrovia for the historic inauguration of Liberia and Africa's first female elected President, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, slated for January 16, 2006 at the Capitol Building, Information Minister, C. William Allen has disclosed.

Briefing Executive Mansion reporters following an-hour long Cabinet Meeting Wednesday, Minister Allen named Nigeria's President and Chairman of the African Union (AU), Olusegun Obasanjo, South African President, Tambo Mbeki, and Ghanaian President John Kuffor. Others include Sierra Leonean President, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, and Ivorian President, Laurent Gbagbo, all of whom have communicated to the Foreign Ministry confirming their participation in the inauguration of Liberia's 23rd President- elect.

Reports also have it that the Burkina Fasso President, Blaise Campore will also attend. Also included in the list of dignitaries expected to grace the inauguration are Guinea's Prime Minister Saydou Diallo, and several other proxied from heads of States and governments in Africa and elsewhere.

From across the Atlantic Ocean, **Mrs. Laura Bush**, wife of United States President George Bush, United States Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice, the Chinese Foreign Minister, and the Development Minister of France are all expected in Monrovia, Minister Allen told the Press. "Although the list of expected guests are still confirming their presence with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the names given are those that have formally confirmed their willingness to attend the inauguration," the Information Minister said Wednesday.

"I think the presence of powerful African and influential leaders and business executives from developed countries is a sign of relief that at long last, Liberia will become stable, embrace development and be on par with other emerging democracies in Africa and the world at large," an incoming lawmaker asserted.

In a related development, the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) has released the calendar of events leading to the inauguration of the President- elect. In its protocol, the NTGL said the inauguration ceremonies start on Saturday, January 14, 2006 with a cultural and musical extravaganza at the Antoinette Tubman Stadium, (ATS) which will be opened to the public at 7:00 p.m.

On Sunday, January 15, 2006 at 11 o'clock a.m., an Intercessory and Thanksgiving Service will be held at the First United Methodist Church on Ashmun Street by invitation only, while at 2 o'clock p.m., an honoring program organized by Women's Organization will be held at the ATS, which will be opened to the public.

Seemingly, the NTGL said on Monday, January 16, 2006 at 11 a.m., inauguration ceremony will take place on the grounds of the Capitol Building, which is strictly by invitation, while reception will follow at the Executive Mansion and simultaneously in communities throughout the country. Finally on Tuesday, January 17, 2006 at 9:30 a.m., the President will receive the ad hoc Missions accredited to the inauguration in the parlous of the Executive Mansion. At 10:30 a.m., the President will receive the delegations from the 15 counties including traditional leaders at the same venue, while at 2 p.m., national children's party will also be held at the Executive Mansion.

AND NETWORK

January 12, 2006

HEADLINE: US first lady, **Laura Bush**'s visit a show of support for Ellen

BYLINE: Zimbeat Zimbeat

The expected attendance of Ellen Johnson's inauguration by US first lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of state, Condoleeza Rice is a show of support for the first woman head of state in Africa.

According to US assistant secretary of state for Africa, Jendayi Frazer the visit is also a sign of support for the girl child network in a country where females are largely marginalized. Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf will officially be inaugurated as Liberian president on 16 January.

"This symbolizes the importance that we feel in this outcome (of the Liberian presidential election)," said Jendayi Frazer.

"Liberia is of strategic importance to us because instability across the region is not all that good. It is extremely important to stabilize this region. We have a strong relationship with Liberia because it was formed by former slaves coming from America," added Frazer when quizzed on why she thought Liberia was important in the US policy.

After 14 years of civil war with the US watching from the sidelines, the visit by the Secretary of state and the first lady is seen as a sign that is playing its part. Already it has committed and spent US\$840m to make the democratization of Liberia a success.

The Washington Post

January 14, 2006 Saturday

HEADLINE: NAMES & FACES

First lady **Laura Bush** did the sisterhood-is-powerful thing again yesterday. In an interview with CNN International, she said she would "love to see" Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice run for president.

Bush, who is traveling to Liberia with daughter Barbara to attend the inauguration of Liberia's first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, speculated that America will "probably" have a female president within the next few terms. When prodded for whom she has in mind for the job, Bush responded, "Well, of course, a Republican woman. Like maybe Dr. Rice." Although Rice routinely demurs and deflects when asked about the Oval Office, Bush gave her vote: "She's terrific." The president's wife had urged him to appoint a woman to replace retiring Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, but, well, that didn't work out.

Laura Bush also said she provided a little sisterly support via a phone call to Samuel Alito's wife, Martha-Ann, after she cried during her husband's Supreme Court confirmation hearings a few days ago. Bush pointed out that she, too, feels like doing that "every once in a while."

Is Laura gunning for a stint as a daytime talk-show host or what?

That Karl Rove, so hot.

President Bush's senior adviser was roasted at the Headliners Club of Austin on Thursday and bore the brunt of jokes from attendees such as political strategist Mary Matalin, former University of Texas regent Lowell Lebermann and the president himself.

Jabs included Bush's videotaped suggestion that Rove finish reading the Cliff Notes of the Constitution in the next three years and Lebermann's observation that the Bush and Clinton administrations shared a common weakness: "Two pudgy people in the White House who couldn't keep their mouths shut."

Matalin, the only non-Texan speaker, recalled yesterday that she was a better storyteller than jokester, but she did repeat the president's off-color nickname for Karl, then offered, "Us girls renamed him 'Stud Muffin.' "

A spokesman for the event said Rove was in good spirits and even took notes during the evening. Took notes or names?

It's official: Gwyneth Paltrow is pregnant with her second fruitlet -- err -- baby.

After months of media speculation, the 33-year-old actress confirmed the big news during an interview after Thursday night's screening of her movie "Proof" in Los Angeles.

According to the entertainment show "The Insider," moderator Lou Diamond Phillips introduced Paltrow as a pregnant woman and asked, "How far along are you?" She answered noncommittally, "Far enough along to feel cumbersome." Paltrow has a 20-month-old daughter, Apple, with rocker hubby Chris Martin.

Future editions of James Frey's disputed memoir, "A Million Little Pieces," will contain an author's note about the book's contents, his publisher announced.

The bestseller has come under fire since Sunday, when the Smoking Gun Web site posted a story alleging that Frey embellished his criminal record as well as several parts of his story.

A Doubleday spokeswoman would not disclose further details or the motive behind the new addition.

* Former "Baywatch" hunk David Hasselhoff filed for divorce Thursday from Pamela Bach, his wife of 16 years. "The couple have agreed to an amicable settlement," Hasselhoff's publicist told the Associated Press yesterday. The couple wed in 1989 and have two teenage daughters.

-- Korin Miller

Daily News (New York)

January 14, 2006 Saturday

HEADLINE: RUN FOR IT, CONDI! Laura would luv Prez Rice

BYLINE: BY KENNETH R. BAZINET DAILY NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON - First Lady **Laura Bush** predicted yesterday the U.S. will soon have a female President and held out hope Secretary of State Rice will change her mind and run for the White House.

Asked about other potential female candidates in a CNN interview, Bush pointedly ignored the question in an apparent snub of Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), who is salivating at the chance to return to the White House - this time in the lead role.

On the eve of her trip to the inauguration of Liberia's first female President, Bush said the time is right for a female commander in chief here in the U.S. - as long as she's a Republican.

"I think it will happen for sure. I think it will happen probably in the next few terms of the presidency in the United States," she said.

"Of course, a Republican woman, like maybe Dr. Rice," she added with a giggle and a smile.

It's not the first time Bush has stumped for Rice, considered the brainy rock star of the Bush administration who is liked even by many Democrats, polls have shown.

But so far Rice plans to return to her ivory tower sanctuary at Stanford University and has dreams about someday becoming commissioner of the National Football League.

Rice's top State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack, indicated she still has no desire to run for President. "The secretary has spoken to this issue many times before," McCormack said.

Bush is well aware that Rice doesn't want to run at this point, but apparently she hasn't written off the possibility Rice will change her mind. "She says she definitely is not running," Bush said. "I'd love to see her run. She's terrific."

Rice will join Bush in the official delegation for President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's inauguration Monday.

Clinton's camp was mum about Bush's comments or the potential of the senator facing Rice. "No comment," said spokeswoman Ann Lewis. "Thanks for asking."

In nearly every recent 2008 presidential poll, Clinton tops Rice but loses to Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) or ex-Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

Indo-Asian News Service

January 14, 2006 Saturday 2:41 PM EST

HEADLINE: First woman US president likely soon: **Laura Bush**

BYLINE: Indo-Asian News Service

Washington, Jan 14 -- US first lady **Laura Bush** believes the country's first woman president is just a few elections away.

"I think it will happen probably in the next few terms of the presidency in the United States," President George W. Bush's wife said in an interview with CNN.

Bush said she would like to see US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice run for president, although she acknowledged that Rice "says she definitely is not running"

Her remarks Friday came the same day that Angela Merkel, Germany's first female chancellor, met President Bush for talks at the White House.

On Monday, Rice and the first lady are due to attend the inauguration of Africa's first woman president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, in Liberia. **Mrs. Bush** called Johnson-Sirleaf's election "really thrilling".

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Associated Press Worldstream

January 14, 2006 Saturday 12:14 AM GMT

HEADLINE: No water, power, no jobs: Liberia's first elected woman president faces daunting task

BYLINE: By HANS NICHOLS, Associated Press Writer

Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf takes office as Africa's first elected female president on Monday, and takes up the challenge of rebuilding a war-scarred nation where a stunning 80 percent of the working population is jobless will be no easy task.

On-and-off civil wars from 1989 to 2003 left 200,000 people dead and displaced more than half of the tiny nation's 3 million people. Now in a devastated country with no electricity and no running water, not even the toilets are working in the Executive Mansion, where water is carried in buckets.

"We have so many problems. Too many to count," said 33-year-old mother of three, Serena Marley, who ekes out a living as a market seller.

To rebuild Liberia and secure a desperately needed influx of foreign aid, Sirleaf must win over international donors by proving the country is in good hands well-governed, free of corruption and violence.

Doug Coffman, a U.N. spokesman in Liberia, said the country needs substantial and continued aid. Rebuilding and retraining the army and police force alone will take tens of millions of dollars (euros), he said.

With 15,000 peacekeepers and a solid two years of peace under Liberia's belt, the threat of renewed war is considered remote, for now.

Sirleaf says she will reach out to former rebel leaders and personally invite them to find ways to contribute to Liberia's growth. Most faction leaders supported Sirleaf's political rival, soccer star George Weah, who lost a heated November presidential runoff.

Her House and Senate modeled after their counterparts in the United States, with whom Liberia has a long a close history include former warlords as legislators.

Sirleaf must ensure the integration of 100,000 ex-combatants. That means keeping money flowing to U.N.-backed reintegration programs that have put them in school and given them job training.

Many ex-combatants are convinced Sirleaf stole the election from Weah, though international observers declared the vote free and fair.

Sirleaf, a 67-year-old Harvard-educated former finance minister, has promised to electrify the city within six months with private investment she claims to have already lined up.

"She's promised to bring safe drinking water and electricity and she has the international contacts to make that happen," 41-year-old former fighter James Cooper said.

Liberia, founded by freed American slaves in 1847, has been wracked by coups and war since 1980. Two of the last four heads of state have been executed, a third fled to Nigeria, and the fourth could face criminal charges for corruption.

Liberia's economy is minuscule. The national budget is just US\$80 million, with donors injecting about US\$300 million annually, mostly through aid projects.

The tumbledown capital is in bad shape, slipping into darkness nightly because the city has no mains power. Severed power lines dangle to the road, meeting open sewers that often spill onto the sidewalk. Buildings are bullet-splattered and blackened by fire and mold.

The situation is so bad that toilets in the Executive Mansion don't function because of shortages of water, most of which is carried in by buckets, said Edith Bawn of Living Water International, an aid group in charge of a US\$150,000 USAID grant to clean up government grounds.

Sirleaf's officials said they didn't know whether she'll move into the mansion Monday, though she will start using it as an office.

In an attempt prepare the city for inauguration guests prominent among them U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and U.S. First Lady **Laura Bush** the government has dispatched bands of youth to collect rubble and rubbish from potholed streets, hauling away rusted taxis, sweeping curbs and laying on fresh coats of paint.

Around the legislature, several hundred ex-combatants are clearing trees and erecting inaugural stands beneath an unforgiving sun all for two dollars (euros) a day and a free lunch.

For most, it was the first paid job in months.

Xinhua General News Service

January 14, 2006 Saturday 2:00 PM EST

HEADLINE: **Laura Bush** to attend Liberian presidential inauguration, visit Ghana

Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States, is to visit Ghana Sunday, and is to attend the Monday inauguration of Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf the first woman to be elected president in Africa, according to Ghana News Agency on Saturday.

Bush would be accompanied by six university presidents from the United States to Ghana to unveil the "Textbooks and Learning Materials Program" aimed to support African tertiary education with the required logistics.

Ghana was chosen for the launch of **Laura Bush's** program for Africa, which aims to link minority serving colleges in the United States with institutions in Africa to provide textbooks and school supplies for African students.

The program would be launched at the Accra Teacher Training College.

As part of her visit to Africa, **Mrs. Bush** would also travel to Liberia with the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to attend the inauguration of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf president-elect of Liberia and the first woman to be elected president on the African continent.

Reuters

January 15, 2006

HEADLINE: US first lady irked by criticism of Bush AIDS plan

BYLINE: Patricia Wilson

U.S. first lady **Laura Bush** opened a four-day trip to West Africa on Sunday full of praise for the continent's first elected woman president but irritated by criticism of promoting abstinence to help combat AIDS.

"She serves as a very important role model for little girls on the continent as well around the world," Bush said of Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, whose inauguration she will attend on Monday. "A shining example for all of us."

Johnson-Sirleaf defeated soccer millionaire George Weah in a November 8 presidential runoff and has pledged to heal the wounds of a bloody 14-year civil war that ended in 2003 but left Liberia in ruins and killed 250,000 people.

Bush urged Liberia's president-elect to reach out to young people who did not support her.

"One problem in Liberia is there's so many unemployed young people and the young people were overwhelmingly for George Weah, the soccer player ... even though Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf won by 59 percent of the vote," she told reporters en route to Accra.

Bush said she brought "the commitment of the United States government to stand with Liberia and the people of Liberia as they rebuild their country."

A senior U.S. official said Washington had committed \$1 billion to Monrovia between 2004 and 2006, most of it for peacekeeping.

The rest of Bush's trip, to Ghana and Nigeria, will focus on education and the HIV/AIDS pandemic which the United Nations estimates infects more than 30 million people in Africa. The disease has killed at least 20 million worldwide.

President George W. Bush has proposed a \$15 billion emergency plan to help stem its spread in Africa and the Caribbean, but critics have complained the program leans too heavily on the promotion of abstinence and fails to place enough emphasis on condoms.

"I think it's a very fair divide," **Laura Bush** said. "The whole plan all along has been Uganda's plan which is the ABC -- abstinence, be faithful and the correct and consistent use of condoms."

Uganda has brought its AIDS infection rate down from 30 percent in the 1990s to about 6 percent now.

In a part of the world where one in three people had a sexually transmitted deadly disease and in countries "where girls feel obligated to comply with the wishes of men," women needed to know that abstinence was a choice, Bush said.

"But when girls are not empowered, when girls are vulnerable, their chances of being able to negotiate their sexual life with their partners and to encourage or make their partners use a condom are very low."

Opponents contend that money under the Bush program is often siphoned off to faith-based groups that preach abstinence, but supporters say in Africa promoting the use of condoms has failed to halt the disease.

"I'm always a little bit irritated when I hear the criticism of abstinence, because abstinence is absolutely 100 percent effective in eradicating a sexually transmitted disease," Bush said.

The Associated Press

January 15, 2006 Sunday 7:24 PM GMT

HEADLINE: **Laura Bush** backs domestic spying program as criticism continues on Capitol Hill

BYLINE: By DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press Writer

First lady **Laura Bush** said Sunday that the U.S. government is right to eavesdrop on Americans with suspected ties to terrorists, but a top Senate Republican joined a chorus of lawmakers who think domestic spying is on shaky legal ground.

"I think the American people expect the United States government and the president to do what they can to make sure there's not an attack by foreign terrorists," **Mrs. Bush** said just before landing here to begin a four-day stay in West Africa.

President Bush is concerned that media disclosure of the program will cripple work to foil terrorists, she said. "I think he was worried that it would undermine our efforts by alerting terrorists to what our efforts are," **Mrs. Bush** said.

Bush's secret order gave the National Security Agency permission to listen in on international phone calls and peek at e-mails between Americans and suspected terrorists.

Administration officials claim a congressional resolution passed after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 a resolution that authorized him to use force in the fight against terrorism gave the president the authority to order the program.

"I thought they were wrong," Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., said on ABC's "This Week."

Specter is one of several Republicans and Democrats who are questioning the administration's authority to engage in domestic spying without court warrants. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales has agreed to testify at hearings next month before the Judiciary Committee, which Specter chairs.

Committee members, including GOP Sen. Sam Brownback of Kansas, have expressed doubt about Bush's legal argument for the program.

"We're not going to give him a blank check, and just because we're of the same party doesn't mean we're not going to look at this very closely," Specter said. "And I moved immediately when the matter was disclosed to say that I would use my authority as chairman of the Judiciary Committee to have hearings, and we're going to pursue it."

Speaking on CBS' "Face the Nation," Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said she too does not think Bush had the legal authority to order the program. She lamented the administration's decision to bypass checks and balances provided by the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

Under the act, the attorney general can authorize a warrantless wiretap for up to 72 hours. But he must give the presiding judge of an 11-member FISA court a head's up and justify the

surveillance later. If the attorney general fails to do so, the court has discretion to notify the target of the surveillance.

"If you're going to wiretap Americans, if you may wiretap whomever an American might call, if you're going to put that information in a database and I said if, because we don't exactly know what happened follow the law, and do it legally," Feinstein said.

On her second trip to Africa, **Mrs. Bush** plans to join Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Monrovia, Liberia, on Monday to attend the inauguration of President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first woman president on the continent.

"The centerpiece of this trip is women's empowerment, with Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as an example, a shining example for all of us, for women around the world," she said.

Mrs. Bush also is highlighting U.S.-backed education and HIV-AIDS programs in Ghana and Nigeria.

In a 12-minute exchange with reporters on the plane, **Mrs. Bush** rebuffed criticism that too much of U.S. assistance for battling AIDS in Africa is focused on abstinence programs. She said abstinence, the use of condoms and being faithful to one's sexual partner are all important in curbing the spread of disease.

"I'm always a little bit irritated when I hear the criticism of abstinence, because abstinence is absolutely 100 percent effective in eradicating a sexually transmitted disease," she said.

In countries where girls feel obligated to comply with the wishes of men, girls need to know that abstinence is a choice.

"When girls are not empowered, when girls are vulnerable ... their chances of being able to negotiate their sexual life with their partners and to encourage or make their partners use a condom are very low," she said. "So it's really important for all three to be part of a successful eradication of AIDS, and that is ... abstinence, be faithful to your partner, and then use condoms, correctly and consistently."

The Associated Press

January 15, 2006 Sunday 5:03 PM GMT

HEADLINE: **Laura Bush** begins four-day swing through West Africa

BYLINE: By DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press Writer

First lady **Laura Bush** said Sunday that the U.S. government is right to eavesdrop on Americans with suspected ties to terrorists, and that President Bush worries that revelations about the domestic spying program will cripple efforts to foil terrorists.

"I think the American people expect the United States government and the president to do what they can to make sure there's not an attack by foreign terrorists," **Mrs. Bush** said just before landing here to begin a four-day stay in West Africa.

"I think he was worried that it would undermine our efforts by alerting terrorists to what our efforts are," she said.

Mrs. Bush planned to travel on Monday to Liberia to attend the inauguration of President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first woman president on the continent. She also is highlighting U.S.-backed education and HIV-AIDS programs in Ghana and Nigeria.

In a 12-minute exchange with reporters on the plane, **Mrs. Bush** rebuffed criticism that too much of U.S. assistance for battling AIDS in Africa is focused on abstinence programs. She said abstinence, the use of condoms and being faithful to one's sexual partner are all important in curbing the spread of disease.

"I really have always been a little bit irritated by criticism of abstinence because abstinence is absolutely, 100 percent effective in fighting a sexually transmittable disease," she said. "When girls are not empowered, girls are vulnerable, and their chances of being able to negotiate their sexual life with their partners and to make their partner chose a condom are very low."

She said that in Africa, where one in three people have AIDS, a sexually transmitted disease, it's important to talk about abstinence.

"In many countries where girls feel obligated to comply with the wishes of men, girls need to know that abstinence is a choice. It's really very, very important to have all three," she said.

Mrs. Bush also quelled speculation that Vice President Dick Cheney, who has suffered heart attacks in the past but not as vice president, would step down before the end of Bush's term. Cheney recently used a cane because of a foot ailment.

"I think Vice President Cheney's in great health and he's doing great," **Mrs. Bush** said. "Yes, I'm sure the president would not like for him to step down, obviously. The vice president has been an excellent vice president. He's solid as a rock."

LOAD-DATE: January 16, 2006

BBC Monitoring International Reports

January 15, 2006 Sunday

HEADLINE: GHANA US FIRST LADY ARRIVES IN ACCRA EN ROUTE TO LIBERIA

Excerpt from report by Ghanaian GBC radio on 15 January

The US first lady, **Laura Bush**, has arrived in Ghana en route to Liberia for the inauguration of President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

As part of her African trip, she will also visit Nigeria. She is accompanied by one of her twin daughters, Barbara, who has an interest in the care of people living with HIV/AIDS. Also on her entourage are the US under-secretary of state for African affairs, Ambassador Jendayi Frazer, and 13 senior officials. [Passage omitted].

Source: Radio Ghana, Accra, in English 1800 gmt 15 Jan 06

BBC Monitoring

Pensacola News Journal (Florida)

January 15, 2006 Sunday

HEADLINE: Peace replaces strife in nation of Liberia

BYLINE: Kate Peabody

Kate Peabody is the health reporter for the News Journal. She is a native of Liberia.

Liberians in Pensacola and across the United States will have lots to celebrate on Monday. After nearly two decades of civil strife, it seems Liberia, my homeland, once fraught with unending problems, is on the verge of attaining lasting peace.

It will also mark a day of historic proportions when Africa's oldest republic, founded by freed American slaves in the 1800s, will inaugurate its first woman president -- the first ever on the continent.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and first lady **Laura Bush** are among the foreign dignitaries who will attend the ceremonies for president-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Monrovia, the capital.

Much to be grateful for

On Nov. 23, the Harvard-educated Johnson-Sirleaf and her Unity Party won nearly 60 percent of the vote in a runoff election against millionaire soccer player George Weah's 40 percent.

As our embattled nation struggles to gain its footing, we have lots to be grateful for, given our horrific past, which began with the violent military overthrow of President William R. Tolbert in 1980, and later spiraled into 14 years of a senseless civil war.

In one fell swoop, a violent coup had shattered our lives and changed Liberia forever.

For me, it began on that dreadful morning of April 12, 1980, when I was awoken to pandemonium in the hallways of my college dorm at Cuttington University, nearly 120 miles away from Monrovia. It was evident from the rape of a female student the night before that gun-toting soldiers swarming our campus had not come to protect us.

Suddenly, my serene and tranquil world seemed light years away.

Clearly, the sobering news of the coup, led by 28-year-old Master Sgt. Samuel K. Doe, was a rude awakening for many Liberians. We never imagined such violence was ever possible on our shores. But little did we know that this, too, would be the emergence of a long and horrific nightmare.

Our worst fears were yet to come. Doe wasted little time executing former government officials. And anyone who dared oppose him, thereafter, felt his wrath. He ruled with impunity.

Leaving Liberia

Just one month after the upheaval, in May 1980, at 21, with mixed emotions, I left Liberia to attend college at Southern University in Baton Rouge, La.

I felt guilty leaving my family to face an uncertain future -- worried particularly about my father's fate. My father, Alfred Kollie, a deputy minister for the Ministry of Local Government, was among the few officials from the Tolbert government to reluctantly retain his post. But we breathed a sigh of relief when he deftly planned his resignation and did so two years later.

Doe's ruthlessness was no match for his opposition or anyone who crossed him. And so after nine years of his brutal rule, when rumor spread that Charles Taylor, a former official in his government, was returning home to redeem the country from its misery, many Liberians rejoiced. Taylor had left the country some years earlier, after falling out of grace with Doe and moving to the United States.

But their joy was short-lived.

On Christmas Eve in 1989, while visiting my parents for the first time in years, we learned that Taylor and a group of men had clandestinely entered the country. Sensing trouble, my father urgently pressed me to return to America. It would be another six months before I would again communicate with my family. Indeed, Taylor's arrival had set in motion not only the subsequent assassination of Doe, but also the violent and senseless 14-year war.

Even Doe's death in September 1990 did nothing to stem the violence. Taylor continued to battle soldiers loyal to Doe and other rebel groups as well, before he finally emerged on top, winning a lopsided election in 1997.

Prospect for change

The United Nations estimates that close to 250,000 Liberians were killed in the war and countless others displaced, some living as refugees in neighboring countries -- my father included.

In 2003, after bending to pressures from President George W. Bush and other African leaders, Taylor was forced to leave Liberia and now lives in exile in Nigeria.

Despite our violent past and a long road to recovery, I continue to be a hopeless optimist.

Not only am I overjoyed at the prospects of change for the better in the country, I am especially proud of my 73-year-old dad, who together with a couple of his friends had sown the seeds of the Unity Party, now headed by Johnson-Sirleaf.

Back in August 1984 when the party founder, the late Edward Kessely, and a group of men with similar ideas gathered for the first of several meetings in my dad's living room, little did they know that they too would be a tiny part of the momentous events set to take place Monday.

My dad also served as the first chairman of the party. And as he prepares to return home after nearly a decade as a refugee in Ghana, I'm encouraged that aside from the tremendous loss of lives, one of the greatest tragedies of the war is coming to an end. Countless families like ours, separated by this conflict, can now look forward to some long overdue reunions at home.

It's a day that I anxiously await.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the First Lady

For

Immediate Release

January 15, 2006

PRESS BRIEFING BY THE FIRST LADY
EN ROUTE ACCRA, GHANA

Aboard Plane

2:35 P.M. (Local)

MRS. BUSH: Well, first, of course, we're going for the inauguration of the first woman president on the African continent. Dr. Rice will be joining us. We're really, really excited to be at such a historic inauguration. Her election followed a very competitive, but from all international observers, said free and transparent election, which was really great, especially under the circumstances of the recent history of Liberia. She ran on a platform of reconciliation and reconstruction, and it's going to take the help of a lot of countries, including the United States, which has a special relationship with Liberia, for her and the people of Liberia to be able to do the reconstruction they need.

And so I'm really thrilled to be able to bring the best wishes of the American people to her as she's sworn in as their President, and also to bring her the commitment from the United States government to stand with her, to stand with the people of Liberia as they rebuild their country.

So the centerpiece, really, of this trip is women's empowerment, with Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as an example, a shining example for all of us, for women around the world, not just women on her continent, but for women everywhere. And we will continue, when we go to Ghana and then Nigeria, to talk about education, to talk about the treatment of HIV/AIDS, all the ways that boys and girls can be educated so that they can protect themselves from deadly diseases, so they can make an economic impact in their countries, and so that they'll be able to live successful lives.

The problems that we'll see in each of these countries are problems that we also have. One problem in Liberia is there's so many unemployed young people, and the young people were

overwhelmingly for George Weah, the soccer player, the American soccer player, even though Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf won by 59 percent of the vote. So she, in her country, and her colleagues will have to do what all of us are doing in countries around the world, where we're reaching out to young people, especially boys, to help them find employment, help them find a successful way to live, and then, on the continent of Africa and around the world, reaching out to girls to make sure girls are educated and that girls get basic rights.

Liberia recently passed rape legislation, anti-rape legislation. It was the first time they'd had legislation like that. And violence against women is a problem across the continent, just like it is around the world. But it's a problem that they're starting to address. And we all know that if girls are educated and empowered, they also are able to avoid violent situations easier than if they're not educated and vulnerable.

Then we'll go on to Ghana, and in Ghana, we'll be doing an event with six university presidents from the United States. They're minority-serving universities, and they will each adopt a specific country -- and in the speech, when I give it day after tomorrow, I'll introduce those presidents and talk about the countries they're going to work with. They are getting funds from USAID, the American universities are, to work with African countries so they can write and develop their own curriculum and their own textbooks for K-8. It's a way for countries to develop curriculum that's traditional, that's insidic to their own traditions, and that meets the needs the needs of their own children.

So I think it's a very, very exciting project, and I know the American university presidents that are involved are really excited about it, as well. So we'll hear more about that when we get to Ghana.

Then in Nigeria, we're going to visit a hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, that was one of the first hospitals that PEPFAR had a strong association with, and we'll deliver, actually deliver antiretroviral drugs as part of the PEPFAR program that they -- drugs they've already been receiving, as well, for their patients.

But overall, our themes are women's empowerment, girls' education, as a way to treat HIV/AIDS, as well as to let boys and girls develop into successful adults.

So now I'll take your questions.

Q I was wondering if I could ask you about Liberia. You mentioned the U.S. -- bringing the commitment of the United States to stand with Liberia. Are you bringing any specifics with you? You talked about the unemployment problem and the incredible reconstruction that has to happen. What can the U.S. do to help?

MRS. BUSH: Well, the United States has already invested a lot of money -- Jendayi can probably tell you exactly how much -- over the last two years through the election period -- actually over many years, but specifically through the election period as they establish free elections in a democracy. And then we have a commitment for the year 2006, as well, to help them in their reconstruction as they start to try to have electricity again and potable water and all the things that are so crucial for basic survival in Liberia.

MS. FRAZER: It's \$1 billion from 2004 to 2006, and \$840 million last year.

Q Mrs. Bush, I'd like to get you on another subject, the NSA program, the National Security Agency eavesdropping program. Your husband seemed upset when that was disclosed. And I was just wondering if you could tell us what his initial reaction was to that disclosure, and whether you think that disclosure is undermining or will undermine the effectiveness of that program.

MRS. BUSH: Well, of course, that was his initial reaction, and that was -- of course, the problems that might come when you're in the situation that we're in, where we're constantly on the alert for an attack like what happened on September 11th. And I think the American people expect the United States government and the President to do what they can to make sure there's not an attack by foreign terrorists.

Q Was he initially worried that it would have to be eliminated -- stopped, because --

MRS. BUSH: I think he was worried that it would undermine our efforts by alerting terrorists to what our efforts are.

Q Can I ask you another unrelated question? I wanted to ask you about Vice President Cheney. Do you think that he's

going to be here until the end of the administration? And do you think that --

MRS. BUSH: Absolutely. I think Vice President Cheney's in great health and he's doing great.

Q You don't think that he -- the President would be upset if he decided to step down at this point?

MRS. BUSH: Yes, I'm sure the President would not like for him to step down, obviously. The Vice President has been an excellent Vice President, he's solid as a rock.

Q So you think he'll stay.

MRS. BUSH: Yes.

Q Mrs. Bush, I'd like to ask you about the President's global AIDS initiative. There's been some criticism that it focuses too heavily on abstinence rather than condom use, and some people have equated this with Christian moralism. Do you think there's a fair divide, unequal? Do you think there should be more emphasis on condoms?

MRS. BUSH: I think it's a very fair divide. The whole plan all along has been Uganda's plan, which is the ABC -- abstinence, be faithful, and correct and consistent use of condoms. In a country or a part of the world where one in three people have a sexually transmitted deadly disease, you have to talk about abstinence, you really have to. And in continents, on a continent, and in many countries where girls feel obligated to comply with the wishes of men, girls need to know that abstinence is a choice. It's really very, very important to have all three -- abstinence, be faithful, and the consistent use of condoms.

But when girls are not empowered, when girls are vulnerable, they have very -- their chances of being able to negotiate their sexual life with their partners and to encourage or make their partners use a condom are very low. So it's really important for all three to be part of a successful eradication of AIDS, and that is to be faithful -- abstinence, be faithful to your partner, and then use condoms, correctly and consistently.

So I really -- I'm always a little bit irritated when I hear the criticism of abstinence, because abstinence is

absolutely 100 percent effective in eradicating a sexually transmitted disease.

Q How do you think the American women view this Liberian inauguration? Do you think that they're --

MRS. BUSH: Even know?

Q Yes.

MRS. BUSH: I do think so, I hope so. I hope you all will spread the word in your papers.

Q Why should they feel it's important?

MRS. BUSH: I think it's really important worldwide. I think it's particularly important on the continent of Africa, because traditionally women have been excluded in many African cultures -- not all of them, but in many. And I think it's important to -- that she serves as a very important role model for little girls on the continent, as well as around the world. And I'm really, really thrilled to have the opportunity to be the one that gets to represent the United States, along with Dr. Rice, at her inauguration.

Q Did you ask to go?

MRS. BUSH: I asked to go. No, I asked to go.

Q Quick follow on Liberia. What, if anything, does it tell us, that this country that was founded by freed American slaves is now electing its first woman president, and in our country we haven't gotten to that point yet? Is there anything that could be drawn from that?

MRS. BUSH: I don't know that there is. I mean, I can't -- I don't think you can extrapolate something from one to the other. But we'll have one sometime.

Q Did you hear from Dr. Rice about your comment?

MRS. BUSH: I'm probably going to have to take over her correspondence department, when she gets all the letters -- (laughter.)

END

2:47 P.M. (Local)

The Bradenton Herald (Florida)/Associated Press/Miami Herald

January 15, 2006 Sunday

HEADLINE: Florida kids on the way to Liberia

BYLINE: ASSOCIATED PRESS

(AP) -- Liberian president-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has been called the "Iron Lady," someone who fearlessly challenged the most powerful Liberian warlord.

Two Florida children have another name for her: Grandma.

Jamell Sirleaf, 9, and Amina Sirleaf, 7, will be part of a group of dignitaries in Liberia on Monday for the swearing-in of their grandmother, Africa's first female head of government.

The two will be at the ceremony in Monrovia, Liberia's capital, joining dignitaries such as first lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

The children will be accompanied by their mother, Helen Joseph, who fled from Liberia at the age of about 13. The children's father is James Sirleaf, Johnson-Sirleaf's son. Joseph and Sirleaf are divorced, but their grandmother remains close.

And grandma, well, she wanted Jamell and Amina at the historic event.

"Ellen called me and insisted that I take the children," Helen Joseph told the Orlando Sentinel.

Despite her memories of war-torn Liberia, a country of curfews and shootings, Joseph agreed. She said until now she has been afraid to take the children to visit the country where she was born.

Liberia was founded by freed American slaves in 1847. The country has been torn by bloody coups and war since 1980. Around 200,000 people have died in the fighting, and millions have been displaced.

The president-elect will take over a war-scarred nation where a stunning 80 percent of the working-age population is jobless.

The Harvard-educated economist is a former Liberian finance minister. She has also served with the World Bank and the United Nations. She won the presidency in a November runoff election.

SUNDAY TASMANIAN

January 15, 2006 Sunday

HEADLINE: Boss's wife backs Condi bid

AMERICA will soon have a woman president, First Lady **Laura Bush** said yesterday, and she hopes it will be Condoleezza Rice (and presumably not Hillary Clinton).

"I think it will happen probably in the next few terms of the presidency in the United States," said Mrs Bush. Rice has already said she doesn't want to replace President Bush in the Oval Office, but Mrs Bush said: "I'd love to see her run. She's terrific."

In a rare interview, Mrs Bush talked about her upcoming trip to Africa with daughter Barbara Bush and Rice. The women are attending the inauguration of Liberian President Ellen Johnson, the first woman head of state in Africa.

Africast WEST REGION NEWS

January 16, 2006

HEADLINE: **Laura Bush** on Ghanaian soil

ACCRA, January 16 -- The first lady of the United States of America, Mrs. **Laura Bush** yesterday arrived in the country.

On arrival at the Kotoka International Airport, the U.S first lady who was accompanied by U.S Secretary of State, Condolea Rice, six university presidents from the United States, U.S Security and intelligent officers and thirty journalists were met by the usual Ghanaian cultural hospitality with traditional dance and song. The First lady and her entourage were obviously thrilled by the little they saw of Ghana's rich culture.

The Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy in Accra last week disclosed to the press that the first lady is in the country to formally launch the Africa education initiative.

This initiative said the Public Affairs Section is to allow students from Africa to study in the United States and also learn about the life style of their US counterparts.

The three day visit will see **Mrs. Bush** travel to Liberia to witness the inaugural ceremony of Miss Ellen Sir-Leaf Johnson, the President-elect of Liberia today in Monrovia.

The United States strongly supported the recent democratic elections in Liberia and Mrs Bush's presence there reflects her husband's continued commitment to democracy and support for countries making the difficult transition from war to peace and from tyranny to liberty.

The Public Affairs media briefing disclosed that, "The United States looks forward to working with the new President and the people of Liberia to rebuild their institutions, establish stability and prosperity, and create an environment for reconciliation".

Mrs Bush is expected to meet President J.A Kufuor tomorrow for a formal welcome. During the meeting, the delegates will unveil Textbooks and Learning Materials Program. This program links minority-serving colleges in the U.S. with institutions in Africa to provide textbooks and school supplies for African students. By working together, the U.S. government and institutions of higher education can introduce people around the world to the US.

From the Osu Castle the US first lady would move to the University of Ghana, Legon, where she will address the Accra Teacher Training College. From the University, **Mrs. Bush** will tour the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital, where she will talk to people living with HIV/AIDS.

The U.S.A's first lady and her delegates will then depart to Nigeria after the Kole-Bu tour to end their three-day visit to the Country.

Laura Bush is actively involved in issues of national and global concern, with a particular emphasis on education, health care, and human rights. In March 2005, **Mrs. Bush** made an historic trip to Afghanistan, witnessing firsthand the progress achieved by the Afghan people after the fall of the Taliban regime.

She visited the Women's Teacher Training Institute in Kabul, which is training women to lead classrooms that girls were once forbidden to enter.

She also met with President Hamid Karzai and expressed America's continued support for Afghanistan's new democracy, which ensures equal rights for women and men.

Mrs. Bush also speaks on behalf of public/private partnerships between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Project Hope, and other private health care organizations that are equipping and training pediatric health care professionals worldwide.

She strongly supports the initiative to build a National Children's Hospital in Iraq. **Laura Bush** is Honorary Ambassador for the Decade of Literacy of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), serving as an international spokesperson for efforts to educate people throughout the world, especially women and girls.

As the leader of President Bush's Helping America's Youth initiative, **Mrs. Bush** is listening to the concerns of young people, parents, and community leaders throughout the country and drawing attention to programs that help children avoid risky behaviors like drug and alcohol use, early sexual activity, and violence.

She's highlighting the need of every child to have a caring adult role model in his or her life - whether that adult is a parent, grandparent, teacher, coach, or mentor.

A hiking and camping enthusiast, **Mrs. Bush** helped to start Preserve America, a national initiative to protect cultural and natural heritage.

She highlights preservation efforts across the US and encourages Americans to get involved in preserving main streets, parks, and community heritage treasures.

Laura Bush was born on November 4, 1946, in Midland, Texas, to Harold and Jenna Welch. Inspired by her second grade teacher, she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in education from Southern Methodist University in 1968. She taught in public schools in Dallas and Houston. In 1973, she earned a master of library science degree from the University of Texas and worked as a public school librarian. In 1977, she met and married George Walker Bush. They are the parents of twin daughters, Barbara and Jenna, who are named for their grandmothers.

Voice of America

January 16, 2006

HEADLINE: **Laura Bush** Arrives in Africa

BYLINE: Scott Stearns

U.S. first lady **Laura Bush** is in Africa at the start of a four day tour that includes the inauguration of the continent's first female head of state, Liberian President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

Traditional Ghanaian drummers welcomed **Mrs. Bush** to Accra. She will meet with Ghanaian President John Kufour during this visit, and announce a partnership between six American universities and six African nations to develop individual kindergarten-through-eighth-grade curriculums.

She will also visit Nigeria to meet with President Olusegun Obasanjo, and speak about HIV/AIDS prevention at a hospital in the capital, Abuja. But the centerpiece of this trip is Monday's inauguration of Liberian Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as Africa's first female head of state. Speaking to reporters en route to Africa, **Mrs. Bush** said the Liberian president-elect is a shining example of women's empowerment.

The first lady is leading a delegation that includes her daughter, Barbara, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer says the strength of the delegation shows President Bush's commitment to Liberia and women's rights.

"President Bush is sending this high-level delegation to underscore the importance of Liberia's transition from war to peace, and towards a democratic consolidation for the Liberian people, the continent of Africa and the world at large," said Frazer. "The election of Africa's first female president is an inspiration for young girls and women across the continent."

The Bush administration last year contributed more than \$840 million to Liberia, the bulk of which went to pay for United Nations peacekeepers. It also included \$60 million to train Liberian police and \$90 million to help returning refugees.

Mrs. Bush said one of the biggest problems facing Liberia is massive unemployment. There is also the question of former rebel leader and head-of-state Charles Taylor, who is currently living in exile in Nigeria. Taylor started the war that ultimately toppled former military ruler Samuel Doe. Taylor is now wanted by a war crimes tribunal for his alleged support for human rights abuses in the civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone.

Assistant Secretary of State Frazer says the Bush administration still wants Taylor held accountable for his actions.

"Clearly, the United States continues to seek Charles Taylor having to answer, to be accountable for the atrocities he carried out in Sierra Leone, where he is indicted by the Sierra Leone special court, and throughout the Mano River states," said Frazer. "He was one of the major sources of instability in the region."

During a visit to Washington after her election, Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf asked Secretary of State Rice about Taylor. Frazer says the secretary told the president-elect that Washington will continue to pursue the matter, and was encouraged by Nigerian President Obasanjo's statement to the U.N. General Assembly that the former Liberian leader should be turned over to the special court.

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

HEADLINE: **Laura Bush** declares Rice for U.S. president: 'She's terrific': Secretary of State could face Clinton in 2008 race

BYLINE: Philip Sherwell, The Sunday Telegraph

WASHINGTON - **Laura Bush** has revealed for the first time whom she would like to see replacing her husband in the White House: Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State.

"I'd love to see her run. She's terrific," **Mrs. Bush** said during an interview in which she predicted that for the first time a woman would soon be elected president of the United States.

The first lady, a powerful behind-the-scenes figure in U.S. politics, is the most influential voice to speak in favour of a presidential bid in 2008 by Ms. Rice. Her comments indicate that the Secretary of State would have backing at the highest level if she were persuaded to change her mind and run on the Republican ticket.

Asked about the prospects of a female president, **Mrs. Bush** told CNN: "I think it will happen, for sure. I think it will happen probably in the next few terms of the presidency in the United States."

She said her choice for that ground-breaking role would be "of course, a Republican woman" and then gave her endorsement to Ms. Rice.

Mrs. Bush is normally extremely guarded in her pronouncements, so her expression of support carries added weight. It is unlikely that she would have adopted such an overt position if her husband were opposed.

The unmarried Ms. Rice is a close confidante and long-standing friend of the Bush family, having previously advised George Bush Snr. on foreign policy when he was president. She played a key role in preparing the current President Bush for his first White House campaign and has worked closely with him ever since.

Since the President's brother Jeb, the Florida Governor, has ruled himself out of the 2008 race, she could emerge as the de facto "legacy candidate" for the powerful Bush political dynasty.

With Hillary Clinton, the former first lady and the frontrunner for the Democrat nomination, the United States could witness a showdown between two women for the nation's highest office in 2008.

Mrs. Bush was speaking on the eve of a trip to Liberia with Ms. Rice for the inauguration of the first female leader in Africa, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

There is a renewed buzz in Washington that the Secretary of State might be named as vice-president if the incumbent, Dick Cheney, were forced by his health to stand down. Mr. Cheney, who has a history of heart problems, was briefly admitted to hospital last weekend after

breathing problems but later said he was fine.

The recommendation of **Mrs. Bush** has delighted the self-styled Condistas of the Americans For Rice grouping.

The movement of grassroots Republicans has been running a campaign building support for a possible Rice presidential run at conservative gatherings across the United States.

"We're delighted by **Mrs. Bush's** comments," Jessie Jane Duff, the group's national chairman, told The Sunday Telegraph. "You don't get much closer to the President and we think her opinion carries enormous credibility."

The Condistas are running a "draft campaign" to persuade their heroine to run by demonstrating a ground swell of public support for her candidacy.

Despite her closeness to Mr. Bush, Ms. Rice would not be universally acclaimed as a candidate within Republican ranks. A former foreign affairs academic and expert on Russia, she has no record on domestic issues. Most notably, the neo-conservatives who in effect ran foreign policy during Mr. Bush's first term are dismayed by her more conciliatory approach and would campaign to prevent her winning the nomination.

For her part, Ms. Rice has insisted she has no plans to run for office. Indeed, the sports fan has often said her ideal job after stepping down would be to head the National Football League.

GRAPHIC: Black & White

Photo: Sean Gallup, Getty Images; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice may emerge as the "legacy candidate" of the Bush political era.

Deutsche Presse-Agentur

January 16, 2006, Monday

HEADLINE: 1ST LEAD: Africa's first female leader sworn in amid tight security

The 67-year-old Harvard-trained economist and grandmother Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was sworn in as Liberia's 23rd president in the capital Monrovia amid tight security Monday.

At least five African presidents and U.S. First Lady **Laura Bush**, as well as U.N. Deputy Secretary General Louise Frechette and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were among the high-level guests attending the ceremony.

Africa's first ever female president is being guarded and transported by U.S. marines in the war-battered nation that is only now emerging from some 15 years of brutal civil war.

It was not immediately clear how long the U.S. troops would stay in the West African country to ensure the new president's personal safety.

Liberia's main airport was closed for commercial aircraft and was being guarded by U.N. troops.

The new president faces an immense task of rebuilding a collapsed economy, reconciling former warring parties and reintegrating into society thousands of former combatants who are skilled in warfare but have never known how to read or write. dpa ebk wjh

Deutsche Presse-Agentur

January 16, 2006, Monday

HEADLINE: NEWS FEATURE: Swearing in begins tough job for new Liberian leader

Thousands of women from all over the continent travelled to celebrate the inauguration Monday of Liberia's 23rd president, but more importantly, to witness the installation of Africa's first ever elected female president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

Sirleaf's inauguration ends a two year transitional period which saw an interim government led by Gyude Bryant take over in October 2003 after former president Charles Taylor was forced into exile in neighbouring Nigeria in August of the same year.

The 67-year-old economist and former top U.N. official defeated former football star George Weah in a surprisingly orderly and peaceful election campaign last November to win the presidency in a country that is only starting to emerge from 15 years of a brutal civil war which left the mineral-rich nation's economy in tatters.

But the ranks of the more than 85 per cent of Liberians who are unemployed have now also been swollen by thousands of former combatants, many of them illiterate children who have committed atrocities against their own villagers.

While Liberians are impatient for quick and visible changes to their daily lives, reintegrating the indisciplined former fighters back into their traumatised society remains a hard but necessary task for the new government.

Expected to announce her cabinet later this week, President Johnson-Sirleaf is almost certain to include former warlords to help her negotiate the dismantling of the remaining militias. It will take all her formidable political experience to stop the plunder of the country's mineral resources, a process which is believed to be led by former rebels turned politicians.

Donors will also want assurance that the new president will curb rampant government corruption in order to disburse crucial aid to help Liberia rebuild basic services where electricity, running water and hospitals remain a luxury.

Yet despite the immense task ahead, the atmosphere in Monrovia Monday was festive and the main street newly spruced up by former combatants paid ten U.S. dollars a day for their efforts to welcome a host of international dignitaries.

No less than five African presidents and United Nations Deputy Secretary General Louise Frechette were present at the inauguration ceremony. American First Lady **Laura Bush** and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were also among the many high-level visitors in Monrovia.

Security was tight with United States Secret Servicemen protecting the U.S. delegation and President Johnson-Sirleaf being driven around and guarded by U.S. Marines.

Two American warships were deployed off the Liberian coast in an impressive show of strength by the historical ally of Africa's first independent nation.

Analysts say apart from the many expectations of President Johnson-Sirleaf's new and as yet untested government, Liberians also expect concrete and enduring assistance from the United States to keep the fragile peace in Liberia on which many states in the West African sub-region rely for their own stability.

A clear change of guard was underway Monday as the pounding of drums replaced the traditional 21-gun salute during the open-air inauguration ceremony. Liberians dearly hope they never have to hear the sounds of gunfire in their country again. dpa ebk pmc

CNN

SHOW: AMERICAN MORNING 7:00 AM EST

January 16, 2006 Monday

HEADLINE: Inauguration Under Way for Liberia's New President; Pakistan Protests Airstrike That Killed 18 Civilians

HIGHLIGHT: Liberia's newly-elected president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, is the first woman to lead an African nation, and the hope is she will help the country forget the violence of the past.

MILES O'BRIEN, CNN ANCHOR: Well, let's talk about the protesters. Protesters voicing their anger over an American incursion in Pakistan. We'll have a closer look at the frontlines of the war on terror for you.

The first ladies of the U.S. government are in Africa to see another first, the first woman elected to lead an African nation. We're live from Liberia.

And a community comes out to remember their own. We have details of the Sago Mine memorial, an emotional time there in coal mining country. It's been a couple of weeks since those miners were lost.

CAROL COSTELLO, CNN ANCHOR: Yes. No closer to an answer either. Good morning to you. I'm Carol Costello in for Soledad this. And hopefully it is warmer where you are than it is here.

M. O'BRIEN: Odds are it is.

Big news coming out of Africa this morning, a landmark inauguration going on right now. Just moments ago, Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf arrived for the ceremony. She is the first woman ever expected to lead an African nation. And the hope is she'll help the country forget the violence of the past.

Liberia sits on the western coast of Africa, right next to Sierra Leone.

CNN's Jeff Koinange is joining us by videophone from Liberia's capital of Monrovia.

Jeff, hello to you. This is a pivotal moment for Africa, isn't it?

JEFF KOINANGE, CNN LAGOS BUREAU CHIEF: No doubt about it, Miles. And I'll tell you why it's so pivotal. Two years ago at this time, we wouldn't be standing where we are right now, because this country was at war back then.

This is an historic day, not just for the fact that Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is the first Liberian woman elected president, or Africa for that matter. The fact that this country is at peace after all they've gone through is extraordinary. People here are excited.

A short while ago, U.S. First Lady **Laura Bush** arrived, accompanied by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. That there shows an endorsement, support, from the most powerful nation on earth, the fact that they came to support one of their own, hoping that this will be a turning point in this country's often turbulent history.

M. O'BRIEN: Jeff, tell us, if you can give us a sense -- as we look at the ceremony and pomp that's under way right now, give us a sense of the real work that lies ahead, the challenges that face her.

KOINANGE: No doubt about it, Miles. There are huge challenges ahead.

First of all, the economy is in shambles. That's going to have to be taken care of immediately. Also basic social services on the ground, everything from water to electricity, that is nonexistent here in the capital of Monrovia.

President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, soon to be President Johnson-Sirleaf, will have her work cut out for her. And she's going to need her very commendable credentials, impressive credentials, having worked at the World Bank, City Bank and the United Nations Development Program. She's going to need all of that and more help to get this country back on its feet after so many years of civil war that killed up to more than 200,000 people -- Miles.

M. O'BRIEN: Jeff Koinange from Monrovia, Liberia. Thank you very much. That's a story you'll only see here on CNN.

And speaking of women elected to lead countries, let's go to another continent and another woman who is now in charge.

Kelly, good morning.

KELLY WALLACE, CNN ANCHOR: Good morning, Miles.

You're exactly right, the people of Chile electing their first female president. Socialist candidate Michelle Bachelet edged out conservative Sebastian Pinera by 7 percent of the vote in a runoff race. Bachelet is a one-time political prisoner who currently serves as defense minister for outgoing President Ricardo Lagos. Bachelet takes office March 11.

Associated Press Worldstream

January 16, 2006 Monday 2:22 PM GMT

HEADLINE: First lady travels to Africa, attends historic inauguration

BYLINE: By DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press Writer

First lady **Laura Bush** smiled broadly and applauded the historic swearing in on Monday of Liberia's new leader, the first woman ever elected president in Africa, who exclaimed that the future belongs to women "because we have taken charge of it."

On her second trip to Africa, **Mrs. Bush** joined U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Liberia's capital at the inauguration of new President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a Harvard-educated economist who pledged to restore peace after a 14-year civil war in this nation founded by freed American slaves.

"I think it's really important worldwide," **Mrs. Bush** said about Sirleaf's inauguration. "I think it's particularly important on the continent of Africa, because traditionally women have been excluded in many African cultures not all of them, but in many."

Mrs. Bush was the formal head of the U.S. delegation, but it was Rice who was greeted with hoots of approval by the crowd during introductions.

Sirleaf's victory in a run-off election in November raised hope that Liberia would move past a war that devastated the West African country. The 67-year-old grandmother has vowed to end the period of corrupt-male-dominated rule in Liberia, still reeling from a brutal 1989 to 2003 civil war that left some 200,000 dead.

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor was indicted by the U.S. for war crimes and forced from power in 2003 during rebel war, paving the way for U.N. peacekeeper to help restore order.

"Charles Taylor is out of Liberia," Rice told reporters on a flight to Monrovia. "He is through raping and pillaging this country, and the Liberian people are trying to look forward."

Mrs. Bush and her 24-year-old daughter, Barbara, who recently worked on AIDS in a pediatric hospital in South Africa, spent Sunday night in Accra, Ghana, at the home of the U.S. ambassador.

Associated Press Online

January 16, 2006

HEADLINE: Rice Again Rules Out 2008 White House Run

Not even a vote of confidence from **Laura Bush** can change Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's mind about running for president in 2008.

Before leaving for Africa, the first lady predicted the United States soon would have a female president a Republican, and maybe even Rice.

"I think it will happen for sure," **Mrs. Bush** said Friday about a woman in the Oval Office.

In the year since becoming secretary of state, Rice has repeatedly dismissed the notion of running for the Republican nomination to succeed her current boss, President Bush.

Asked about the first lady's comments Sunday, Rice laughed and good naturedly answered the recurring question about her prospects for president in 2008. No dice, she said for the umpteenth time.

"Obviously, it's flattering when people say things like that. The first lady is not only a terrific person, she's my friend. And I was honored that she said that, of course. She's a wonderful person," Rice said.

"But I've spoken to this. I know what I'm good at, I know what I want to do and that's not it."

How about vice president?

"The two are the same," she said with a grin and a shake of her head.

During her flight Sunday, **Mrs. Bush** was asked whether she'd heard from Rice after her remark.

"I'm probably going to have to take over her correspondence department, when she gets all the letters," **Mrs. Bush** joked.

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Associated Press Worldstream

January 16, 2006

HEADLINE: Liberia's Sirleaf sworn in as first elected female president in Africa

BYLINE: By HANS NICHOLS, Associated Press Writer

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was sworn in Monday as war-battered Liberia's new president, making history as Africa's first elected female head of state and pledging a "fundamental break" with the West African nation's violent past.

"We know that your vote was a vote for change, a vote for peace, security ... and we have heard you loudly," Sirleaf told Liberians in an inaugural speech.

"We recognize this change is not a change for change's sake, but a fundamental break with the past, therefore requiring that we take bold and decisive steps to address the problems that have for decades stunted our progress," she said.

Sirleaf takes charge of a ruined nation struggling for peace after a quarter-century of coups and war. Speaking for the first time as president, she also promised to stamp out corruption to secure the trust of skeptical foreign donors whose aid is desperately needed to rebuild.

In a statement, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan congratulated Sirleaf, saying she had a "historic mandate to lead the nation toward a future of lasting peace and stability."

Standing in front of a Liberian flag with her left hand on a Bible, Sirleaf pledged to "faithfully, conscientiously and impartially discharge the duties and functions of the office of president of the Republic of Liberia to the best of my abilities, so help me God."

The ceremony was attended by thousands of Liberians and scores of foreign dignitaries, including Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and South Africa's Thabo Mbeki.

Two U.S. Navy warships were visible offshore for the first time since the war ended in 2003, a rare show of support also meant to protect two high-profile American guests, first lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Security was tight, with armed U.N. peacekeepers surveying the scene with binoculars from atop surrounding buildings. The U.N. redeployed 500 peacekeepers previously stationed outside the capital to strategic points in Monrovia and the international airport.

Sirleaf will serve a six-year term as head of Africa's oldest republic, founded by freed American slaves in 1847. The country has known little but war, however, since a rebel group led by Charles Taylor plunged the country into chaos, invading from neighboring Ivory Coast in 1989.

Taylor became president in 1997 but stepped down and was exiled to Nigeria as part of the 2003 peace deal brokered as rebels pressed on the capital. He is now wanted on war crimes charges by a U.N.-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone for his role in backing a brutal rebel group

during that country's 1991-2002 civil war.

On a flight to Monrovia early Monday, Rice told reporters Taylor "is through raping and pillaging this country, and the Liberian people are trying to look forward."

Nigeria has refused to hand Taylor over to the court and Sirleaf has said only that she would consult with regional leaders regarding Taylor's future. Rice said she's confident Sirleaf will work to hand Taylor over to the Sierra Leone court.

Rich in diamonds, iron ore and timber, Liberia was relatively prosperous and peaceful until a 1980 coup saw illiterate Master Sgt. Samuel Doe seize power and order Cabinet ministers tied to poles in their underwear and executed.

Harvard-educated Sirleaf was finance minister at the time, but was spared, she told The Associated Press in a recent interview, "by the grace of God."

Twice imprisoned in the 1980s by Doe's junta, Sirleaf fled into exile.

When Taylor launched a rebel invasion in 1989, Sirleaf briefly supported him a move that still draws criticism today. The war saw children as young as 10 take up arms. Fighting uprooted half the country's 3 million people and killed 200,000.

A truce paved the way for presidential elections in 1997 that Sirleaf lost to Taylor. The brazen bid earned her the nickname "Iron Lady."

After another rebel war forced Taylor from power in 2003, Sirleaf ran for president again, this time winning a heated November run-off buoyed by a resume that included senior jobs at Citibank, the U.N. and the World Bank. Her soccer star rival, George Weah, was backed by ex-rebel leaders and many ex-combatants.

Sirleaf inherits a nation in tatters. The capital has no running water or electricity, and unemployment is an astounding 80 percent.

Reflecting how slowly economic wheels are turning, the annual budget is a mere US\$80 million. Annual donor aid is three-and-a-half times that.

Sirleaf says her top priorities include stamping out corruption, getting electricity in the capital and assuring a future for 100,000 ex-combatants who laid down arms last year, many of whom are prowling the streets, unemployed.

Agence France Presse -- English

January 16, 2006 Monday 10:26 AM GMT

HEADLINE: Thousands attend inauguration of new Liberian president

Thousands of people began filing into the grounds of Liberia's parliament building Monday for the inauguration of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as Africa's first female elected head of state, hopeful of a new era of peace and democracy after years of war and tyranny.

Among the first, hours before the ceremony, were a group of African traditional dancers grounds blowing horns and beating drums in line with local tradition of alerting the population of a pending great event.

Makeshift marquees made from bamboo sticks were festooned with balloons and ribbons in the national colours of blue, red and white, while the trunks of mango and avocado trees in the grounds were painted white.

Senior figures from across Africa and further afield were also due to attend the inauguration, among them United States First Lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, John Kufuor of Ghana, Laurent Gbagbo of Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone's Ahmad Tejan Kabbah were also expected, as was Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, who is on a tour of west Africa.

Johnson Sirleaf, 67, a veteran politician and international civil servant, won a second round runoff election against football hero George Weah on November 8. Her swearing-in ceremony is scheduled for 1100 GMT.

She faces the mammoth task of rebuilding one of the world's most failed states, one ruined by civil wars that raged from the 1989 rebellion launched by Charles Taylor until 2003, when Taylor, by then the elected president, stepped down and went into exile as part of a UN-brokered peace process.

A quarter of a million people were killed in the conflicts.

On the eve of her inauguration, Sirleaf vowed to restore hope to her country's people, half of whom have known nothing but war.

"We will make our children smile again, we will give them back their youth and their future. We will make, like, and be proud of Liberia," she said.

There are more than 15,000 United Nations peacekeeping troops stationed in the country and the UN mission stepped up security along main roads and at the airport serving Monrovia ahead of Monday's ceremony.

A US warship has been stationed off the west African country's coast and key roads in the capital

were closed to public vehicles.

"We're really, really excited to be at such a historic inauguration," **Laura Bush** told reporters Sunday while travelling to Monrovia.

Sirleaf "ran on a platform of reconciliation and reconstruction and it's going to take the help of a lot of countries, including the United States, which has a special relationship with Liberia, for her and the people of Liberia to be able to do the reconstruction they need," she said.

Bush said she was bringing "the commitment from the United States government to stand with her, to stand with the people of Liberia as they rebuild their country."

"The centerpiece, really, of this trip is women's empowerment, with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as a shining example for all of us, for women around the world, not just women on her continent," she added.

Rice told reporters the inauguration was "exciting for the continent" and a sign of the progress Liberia has made since the lawless days of Charles Taylor.

"I think it would have been hard to imagine that we would have had free and fair elections this fall and now be inaugurating this woman as president," Rice said.

"It's going to be a hopeful day. ... The Liberian people certainly deserve a hopeful day," she said. "The Liberian people are trying to look forward and I think we owe it to them to look forward and not backward."

Agence France Presse -- English

January 16, 2006

HEADLINE: Sirleaf becomes Liberia's sworn-in president

Liberia's new President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf took the oath of office Monday, becoming Africa's first elected woman head of state.

"I, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, do solemnly swear to protect, defend and uphold the constitution of the Republic of Liberia and will conscientiously, faithfully and impartially discharge my duties to the best of my ability, so help me God," she said, her hand on the Bible.

She was sworn in by the country's supreme court chief justice Henry Reed Cooper at a Monrovia ceremony attended by thousands of people from around the west African country devastated by 14 years of successive civil wars.

Before Sirleaf took the oath in the grounds of the parliament building, the 64 members of parliament elected last October were sworn in with the 30 senators in the upper house.

Senior figures from across Africa and further afield attended the inauguration, among them United States First Lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: Laura defends the GOP

BYLINE: Bill Sammon,

MONROVIA, Liberia -- First lady **Laura Bush** yesterday rejected Democratic claims that Republicans are mired in a "culture of corruption" and said she'd be "glad" to campaign for Republican candidates in the fall.

"It isn't true," **Mrs. Bush** said of the "culture of corruption" charges in an exclusive interview with The Washington Times while here for the inauguration of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as president of Liberia.

Mrs. Bush offered her star power to Republican candidates after saying she did not know how the Democrats' accusations will affect the congressional elections in November.

"I'll be glad to campaign for Republicans who ask me to campaign for them or do fundraisers for them," the first lady said at the U.S. ambassador's residence here.

Mrs. Bush made clear that "there's certainly not a role for any sort of bribery or anything that would be considered corrupt," but said many lobbyists play vital roles in public policy.

"The whole lobbying aspect of politics is very interesting in the United States," **Mrs. Bush** said. "There's an important aspect to lobbying, as well.

"I mean, what people don't think of is the American Heart Association or breast cancer research - each of those groups lobby for federal funds, for very, very important and worthwhile causes in our country," she added. "And so I hope that people realize that there is a role for advocates for different issues."

Rep. Bob Ney, Ohio Republican, temporarily stepped down Sunday as chairman of the House Administration Committee because of his association with disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff. Democrats are expected to make corruption charges a central theme in their attempt to win congressional seats in the midterm elections.

Mrs. Bush also said she was "disappointed" in Democrats for trying to delay a vote on President Bush's nomination of Judge Samuel A. Alito Jr. for the Supreme Court because it would further postpone retirement for Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

"I'm disappointed about that," **Mrs. Bush** said. "I know Sandra Day O'Connor would like to retire.

"She stayed longer because the president asked her to when he nominated John Roberts for chief justice," the first lady added. "And I think it just would serve the country better if [Judge Alito] can go ahead and be voted on, up and down, and then assume the job."

Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee have delayed a vote on Judge Alito until next week while liberal interest groups work to erode public support for the nominee. Republicans called for a panel vote this week.

Democrats questioned Judge Alito so aggressively last week that his wife, Martha, broke into tears and left the committee room Wednesday for more than an hour. **Mrs. Bush**, who called Mrs. Alito and urged her to "hang in there," made it clear yesterday that she disapproved of the rough hearings.

"They're difficult for family members when they see the people they love attacked," she said. "I really think when anyone is up for confirmation, whether it's for justice of the Supreme Court or any other job that requires Senate confirmation, that it's incumbent upon senators to be respectful."

The first lady is traveling in Africa with her daughter Barbara, who has a keen interest in the troubled continent. **Mrs. Bush** pointed out that last year, Barbara "went to South Africa, where she worked at a pediatric hospital, and then she did UNICEF work in Botswana.

"She's very interested in Africa and she loves it, and really her interest has stimulated mine," the first lady added. "Barbara has been a big influence on me, influenced my interest in Africa."

Barbara's twin sister, Jenna, is not accompanying her mother on this trip.

"Jenna's teaching school in a charter school, and she loves education," said **Mrs. Bush**, a former teacher. "She's having a great time. She's interested particularly in the charter school movement and really wanted to work in a charter school."

The first lady also backed the president's decision in November to make a more aggressive defense of his Iraq policy. She lauded Iraqis for electing a permanent government last month.

"It's really important for him to talk to the American people about the war in Iraq and about what the United States' goals are," she said, "because I'm not so sure that the press does get the word out on how important the vote was there."

Since rejoining the Iraq debate in earnest, the president has seen his job approval ratings climb, although he and his wife often say they are unaffected by polls.

"I only really pay attention when they're really good," **Mrs. Bush** joked.

Mrs. Bush also revealed that her iPod listening includes songs by Tina Turner and Dolly Parton. She said her musical tastes are somewhat different from those of her husband.

"He likes country music a little bit more than I do, although I actually really am very fond of country music, as well," she said. "One of the songs on my iPod that I love is Dolly Parton singing 'Stairway to Heaven.' So that's sort of a combination, country and pop."

BBC Monitoring Africa - Political

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: Kenyan paper urges "amicable formula" over ex-Liberian leader Taylor

Text of editorial entitled "Punish Taylor, but don't imperil gains" published by Kenyan newspaper The People on 17 January

Yesterday's swearing in of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as war-battered Liberia new president no doubt carved her name into history as Africa's first elected female head of state. Even more, she emerged as the western Africa nation's possible redeemer after years of strife during which millions were either killed or displaced.

While the process leading up to last year's polls was bound to be contentious, it was always one that was, by all means, supposed to provide mandate for a leader who would lead Liberia towards a future of lasting peace and stability. It is also gratifying that foreign powers, from the United States to Kenya, have ever sought to provide logistic and moral support to such a process.

Indeed, the role that peacekeeping forces from Kenya have played both in Sierra Leone and Liberia cannot be gainsaid. The presence in yesterday's ceremony of US First Lady **Laura Bush**, Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and South African counterpart Thabo Mbeki is testimony to this.

However, it would be fundamental that any efforts aimed at cementing the new chapter in Liberia involve greater participation from African leaders, as only then will Liberia's interests be fully taken into account. For instance, it is the wish of every African that the thorny issue of bringing former Liberian leader Charles Taylor to justice be implemented as soon as applicable.

Taylor became president in 1997 but stepped down and was exiled to Nigeria as part of 2003 peace deal brokered as rebels pressed on the capital. He is now wanted on war crime charges by a UN-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone for his role in backing a brutal rebel group during that country's 1991-2002 civil war. But Nigeria has refused to hand him over to the court and Sirleaf has said she would consult with regional leaders regarding Taylor's future.

On the other hand, Rice has said she is confident Sirleaf will work to hand Taylor over to the Sierra Leone court and that she was expected to push for the case while in Monrovia yesterday. Given these intricacies, it would be necessary that while the Liberian past deeds should be conclusively tackled, it should never provide an opportunity to compromise the gains so far made in the peace process.

Instead, an amicable formula need to be established - one that can guarantee that justice is found for the victims of Taylor's tyranny as well as ensuring that Liberia's posterity is not held by its past.

Source: The People, Nairobi, in English 17 Jan 06

BBC Monitoring Africa - Political

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: Ghana: **Laura Bush** to launch education program in Accra 17 January

Excerpt from report by Ghanaian GBC radio on 17 January

The US First Lady, **Laura Bush**, will today launch the Textbook and Learning Materials Program under the African Education Initiative at the Accra Training College.

President George Bush originally pledged 200m dollars over five years but this has been increased to 600m dollars over an eight years period.

The current focus is on six Sub-Saharan nations, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia until 2008. Already more than two million text books have been provided under this initiative. [Passage omitted]

Source: Radio Ghana, Accra, in English 0600 gmt 17 Jan 06

THE AUSTRALIAN

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: Historic day as woman takes charge in Liberia

BYLINE: Fiona Connolly and Sarah Grant

MONROVIA: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was due to be sworn in last night as Liberia's new head of state, carving her name into history as the first elected female president of an African country.

Senior figures from across Africa and further afield were to attend the inauguration, among them US first lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

"We're really, really excited to be at such a historic inauguration," Mrs Bush told reporters while travelling to the Liberian capital, Monrovia.

Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf "ran on a platform of reconciliation and reconstruction and it's going to take the help of a lot of countries, including the US, which has a special relationship with Liberia, for her and the people of Liberia to be able to do the reconstruction they need", Mrs Bush said.

She went on to describe the president-elect as a "shining example for all of us, for women around the world, not just for women on her continent, but women everywhere".

Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf pledged to unite her country and secure the trust of sceptical foreign donors whose aid is desperately needed to rebuild her ruined nation, which is struggling for peace after a quarter of a century of coups and war. She also hoped her ascension would be an inspiration to women worldwide.

"I am excited by the potential of what I represent -- the aspirations and expectations of women in Liberia, African women and women all over the world," the 67-year-old grandmother said. "I am also humbled -- humbled by the enormity of the challenge we face."

The UN, which has more than 15,000 peacekeeping troops in Liberia, stepped up security before the inauguration, redeploying about 500 peacekeepers previously stationed outside the capital to strategic points in Monrovia and the international airport.

Liberian police, though unarmed, also increased their presence on the streets.

Two US navy warships appeared offshore for the first time since the war ended in 2003, a rare show of support also meant to protect Mrs Bush and Dr Rice.

Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf will be sworn in for a six-year term, taking charge of Africa's oldest republic, which was founded by freed American slaves in 1847.

Rich in diamonds, iron ore and timber, Liberia was relatively prosperous and peaceful until a 1980 coup had illiterate Samuel Doe seize power and order cabinet ministers tied to poles in their underwear and executed.

Harvard-educated Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf was finance minister at the time, but was spared, she claims, "by the grace of God".

Twice imprisoned in the 1980s by Doe's junta, Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf fled into exile.

When Charles Taylor launched a rebel invasion from neighbouring Ivory Coast in 1989, Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf briefly supported him -- a move that still draws criticism today.

The war had children as young as 10 take up arms. Fighting uprooted half the country's three million people and killed 200,000.

A truce paved the way for presidential elections in 1997 that Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf lost to Mr Taylor. The brazen bid earned her the nickname "Iron Lady".

After another rebel war forced Mr Taylor from power in 2003, Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf ran for president again, this time winning a heated November runoff buoyed by a resume that included senior jobs at Citibank, the UN and the World Bank.

Her soccer star rival, George Weah, was backed by ex-rebel leaders and many ex-combatants.

She inherits a nation in tatters. The capital has no running water or electricity, and unemployment is 80 per cent.

BLOODY HISTORY OF WARS AND COUPS

- * 1847: Liberia founded by freed slaves from the US and Caribbean
- * 1980: Years of relative stability end with a military coup led by Samuel Doe. Former president William R. Tolbert Jr publicly executed
- * 1985: Doe wins presidential election
- * 1989: First civil war begins as Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia begins an uprising
- * 1990: Doe executed by NPFL
- * 1995: Peace agreement signed
- * 1997: Taylor wins presidential elections by a landslide as the NPFL wins a majority in the legislative assembly
- * April 1999: A new rebel group, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, begins attacks in the north, starting a second civil war
- * August 2003: Taylor steps down, exiling himself to Nigeria. International peacekeepers arrive
- * November 2005: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf wins presidential election, defeating soccer star George Weah
- * January 16, 2006: Johnson-Sirleaf's inauguration in the capital, Monrovia

Associated Press

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: **Laura Bush** Attends Liberian Inauguration

BYLINE: Deb Riechmann

First lady **Laura Bush** smiled broadly and applauded the historic swearing in on Monday of Liberia's new leader, the first woman ever elected president in Africa, who exclaimed that the future belongs to women "because we have taken charge of it."

On her second trip to Africa, **Mrs. Bush** joined Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Liberia's capital at the inauguration of President-elect Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a Harvard-educated economist who pledged to restore peace after a 14-year civil war in this nation founded by freed American slaves.

"I think it's really important worldwide," **Mrs. Bush** said about Sirleaf's inauguration, which falls on the day Americans honor civil rights icon, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "I think it's particularly important on the continent of Africa, because traditionally women have been excluded in many African cultures — not all of them, but in many."

Mrs. Bush was the formal head of the U.S. delegation, but it was Rice who was greeted with hoots of approval by the crowd during introductions.

The outdoor ceremony, held on a muggy overcast day, was informal by U.S. standards. The platform was simply decorated with red, white and blue bunting and balloons. Members of the local media shouted at diplomats on stage to move out their camera shots.

The new president said Liberians who voted for her were casting a ballot for national healing, leadership and freedom.

"We know that your vote was a vote of change, a vote of peace, security and stability. We have heard you loudly," Sirleaf said in her speech, which both **Mrs. Bush** and Rice attended.

Sirleaf's victory in a run-off election in November raised hope that Liberia would move past a war that devastated the West African country. The 67-year-old grandmother has vowed to end the period of corrupt-male-dominated rule in Liberia, still reeling from a brutal 1989 to 2003 civil war that left some 200,000 dead.

"The United States has already invested a lot of money over the last two years through the election period," **Mrs. Bush** said Sunday just before landing in Ghana. "We have a commitment for the year 2006, as well, to help them in their reconstruction as they start to try to have electricity again and potable water and all the things that are so crucial for basic survival in Liberia."

Mrs. Bush and her 24-year-old daughter, Barbara, who recently worked on AIDS in a pediatric hospital in South Africa, spent Sunday night in Accra, Ghana, at the home of the U.S. ambassador. They were up before dawn Monday to fly to Monrovia, named after President Monroe.

On her more than hour-long drive to the capital, **Mrs. Bush's** motorcade passed checkpoints manned by U.N. peacekeeping soldiers and she got a close-up look at the pervasive poverty in

Liberia. A few residents waved, but most looked on curiously at the motorcade from thatched huts, some with roofs covered with plastic held down by rocks.

Mrs. Bush landed at Roberts International Airport which U.S. Marines controlled in August 2003 to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid into the country and stop the flow of arms to former Liberia President Charles Taylor. Taylor fled into exile that month, paving the way for a transitional government that is handing over power to Sirleaf.

"Charles Taylor is out of Liberia," Rice told reporters on a flight to Monrovia. "He is through raping and pillaging this country, and the Liberian people are trying to look forward."

Taylor is in exile in Nigeria but is wanted on war-crimes charges in Sierra Leone, where he supported a brutal rebel group during that country's 1991-2002 civil war. Nigeria says it won't hand Taylor over to a U.N.-backed tribunal unless a democratically elected Liberian leader makes such a request. Rice said she's confident that Sirleaf will work to bring Taylor to justice, and that he ultimately will end up before the special court in Sierra Leone.

"This will happen," Rice said. "It's what the international community wants. The international community wants justice. I think the Liberian leadership wants justice."

Sirleaf defeated George Weah, a soccer star who first claimed that the election was fraudulent, but then conceded defeat after international election observers deemed the presidential elections largely clean.

Mrs. Bush's motorcade passed lingering reminders of the election — a billboard that said "Vote George Weah," faded blue campaign posters for Sirleaf and a banner hung over a street that said "Let's join hands in development. No more guns. No more violence."

Liberia faces great challenges: poverty at 85 percent and illiteracy at 80 percent, as well as high unemployment, serious health problems, poor public services and weak public institutions.

"She ran on a platform of reconciliation and reconstruction, and it's going to take the help of a lot of countries, including the United States, which has a special relationship with Liberia, for her and the people of Liberia to be able to do the reconstruction they need," **Mrs. Bush** said.

Congress appropriated more than \$840 million last year to help reconstruct Liberia. Of that, more than \$520 million has gone to support a U.N. peacekeeping mission.

The United States currently is working on quick-impact programs to help rebuild courthouses, high schools and hospitals and provide skills training to youth and ex-combatants. The U.S. government also is helping finance efforts to rebuild Liberia's army.

The Independent (London)

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: Liberia's 'iron lady' pledges reform

BYLINE: By Rob Crilly in Monrovia

Africa's first elected female head of state has promised a rapid peace dividend to the war-weary people of Liberia in an inauguration ceremony marked by a display of backing from Washington.

Cheering Liberians danced through the streets to the beats of traditional drumming as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a 67-year-old grandmother, promised to restore electricity to the capital, Monrovia, and tackle the high unemployment rate in an attempt to unite the country behind her.

She won a presidential run-off against George Weah, the former international footballer, in November. Now the former World Bank economist faces the challenge of unifying a country shattered by 14 years of civil war.

Laura Bush, the American first lady, and Con-doleezza Rice, the Secretary of State, were in the audience at the inauguration.

Ms Johnson Sirleaf said maintaining peace, law and order would be the priorities for her presidency as the country drew a line under its bloody history. "This is not change for change's sake but a fundamental break from the past," she said.

Lighting up the capital and putting Liberians back to work, she continued, would be her priorities. "Our strategy is to achieve quick and visible progress that reaches significant numbers of people to gain momentum, consolidate support and establish a foundation for sound economic development," said the woman who has become known as Africa's iron lady.

Yesterday's jubilant atmosphere was a reminder of how far the country has come in the past two years, when gun battles raged between rival militias vying for control of the capital.

Mrs Bush said on board her US Air Force flight that the new president faced a huge task. "She ran on a platform of reconciliation and reconstruction and it's going to take the help of a lot of countries, including the United States - which has a special relationship with Liberia - for her and her people to be able to do the reconstruction they need."

GRAPHIC: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is presented with the national insignia in Monrovia, Liberia JEROME DELAY/AP

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: First elected female president in Africa talks of a new course

BYLINE: The Associated Press

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and first lady **Laura Bush** attend the ceremony. "I think women around the world are watching, and they're proud of her," Bush told reporters after the inauguration.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is sworn in as president Monday in Monrovia, Liberia. "We know that your vote was a vote for change, a vote for peace, security ... and we have heard you loudly," Johnson-Sirleaf said.

MONROVIA, Liberia -- Africa's first elected female head of state, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, was sworn in Monday as war-battered Liberia's new president. She promised a "fundamental break" with her country's violent past and pledged to rebuild.

With U.S. Navy warships offshore for the first time since the civil war ended two years ago, and first lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on hand in a show of support, the moment was met with thunderous applause from thousands of guests.

"We know that your vote was a vote for change, a vote for peace, security ... and we have heard you loudly," Johnson-Sirleaf, 76, said in her inaugural speech. "We recognize this change is not a change for change's sake, but a fundamental break with the past."

Founded by freed American slaves in 1847, Liberia was prosperous and peaceful for more than a century, bolstered by abundant timber and diamond wealth.

But back-to-back civil wars from 1989 to 2003 killed 200,000 people and displaced half the nation's population of 3 million.

It is now one of the world's poorest countries. Not even the capital has running water or electricity; the rich rely on generators, the poor on candles. Unemployment is 80 percent. "We have all suffered. The individual sense of deprivation is immense," Johnson-Sirleaf said.

"The task of reconstructing our devastating economy is awesome," she said. "There will be no quick fix, yet we have the potential to promote a healthy economy in which Liberians and international investors can prosper."

Bush, making her second trip to Africa, said that the swearing-in symbolizes a push to empower women worldwide and marks a new dawn for Liberia.

"I think women around the world are watching, and they're proud of her," Bush told reporters after the inauguration ceremony as she flew to Ghana to continue her four-day stay on the continent.

"Women's empowerment, girls' education is the centerpiece of this trip, because all of us know that educated girls lead much more successful lives," said Bush, who made the trip with her daughter Barbara, 24, who recently worked in a pediatric hospital in South Africa.

Bush was the formal head of the U.S. delegation, but it was Rice who was greeted with loud hoots of approval by the crowd during introductions.

The outdoor ceremony, held on a muggy, overcast day, was informal by U.S. standards. The platform was decorated simply with red-white-and-blue bunting and balloons. The program started late. Heads of state arrived mid-ceremony. Members of the local media shouted at officials on stage to move out of their camera shots.

Ensuring that Liberia remains peaceful will be Johnson-Sirleaf's most pressing -- and perhaps most difficult -- task.

George Weah, the soccer star who lost the November runoff, was backed by most of the country's top warlords and faction leaders.

He grudgingly accepted defeat and attended the inauguration.

The Kansas City Star

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: More women emerge to lead their nations

During her inauguration Monday in Monrovia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the new leader of Liberia, was helped with a sash by Liberian Senior Ambassador-at-large George W. Wallace Jr. Among those at the swearing in was U.S. first lady **Laura Bush**.

Around the globe, more women are stepping up to lead their countries. On Monday, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf took the oath as Liberia's president - the first elected woman to be a head of state in Africa.

In Chile, pediatrician Michelle Bachelet awaits a March inauguration after voters picked her Sunday to be their first female president. And Finnish President Tarja Halonen, the first woman to hold that office, is closer to another term after winning the first round of presidential elections over the weekend. Story on A-6

Other countries where women lead:

Bangladesh: Prime Minister Khaleda Zia

Germany: Chancellor Angela Merkel

Ireland: President Mary McAleese

Latvia: President Vaira Vike-Freiberga

New Zealand: Prime Minister Helen Clark

Philippines: President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

Number of female heads of state elected or appointed since 2000: **12**

Approximate number of women presidents or prime ministers serving in the 50 years prior to 2000: **45**

Total years Indira Gandhi served as prime minister of India before her 1984 assassination : **15**

The last year Ireland had a male president: **1990**

Number of women ever to be U.S. head of state: **0**

Irish Times

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: Economist sworn in as Liberian president

BYLINE: Rob Crilly in Monrovia

LIBERIA: A 67-year-old grandmother has been sworn in as president of Liberia, making her Africa's first elected woman head of state.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf promised her war-weary people that she would draw a line under 14 years of coups and conflict to begin rebuilding a country proudly known as Africa's oldest republic.

The former World Bank economist said maintaining peace, law and order would be her priorities.

US first lady **Laura Bush** and secretary of state Condoleezza Rice were among the guests who gathered in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, yesterday in a show of Washington's support for the incoming president.

Waves of cheers and ululations greeted the swearing in of Mrs Johnson Sirleaf during a ceremony that mixed traditional drumming with Western-style political procedure.

In her inaugural address, she said: "We know that your vote was a vote for change, a vote for peace, a vote for security . . . and we have heard you."

Restoring electricity to the battle-scarred capital and putting Liberians back to work, she continued, would be the priorities for her first 150 days.

Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria were among the African heads of state who sat on white plastic garden furniture arranged outside Monrovia's capitol building.

The seat of government is a reflection of Liberia's origins as a colony for freed American slaves.

Thousands of Liberians packed into the grounds, which were decked out with red, white and blue bunting for the occasion. The garden party atmosphere and the ceremony's location are a fitting reminder of how far the country has already come.

Little more than two years ago the cherry trees and neat lawns were the scene of fierce gun battles as rival militias vied for control of the capital. More than 200,000 people were killed in a series of civil wars between 1989 and 2003. Almost half the population of three million people were forced to flee their homes.

The cycle of violence was finally broken in 2003 when president Charles Taylor - who came to power at the head of a brutal rebel army - accepted refuge in Nigeria as another wave of insurgents pressed in on the capital.

Mrs Johnson Sirleaf beat George Weah, the former international footballer, in a presidential run-

off last November to take power in a continent traditionally dominated by male politicians.

Today Liberia is at peace, thanks in part to 15,000 United Nations troops - including a rapid reaction force of about 430 Irish soldiers.

Now the challenge for Mrs Johnson Sirleaf is to maintain that peace. To do that she must contend with senators who include reminders of the country's bloody past. Among them is Prince Johnson, a former rebel commander turned born-again preacher, who oversaw the execution of the 20th president, Samuel Doe, in 1990.

The stakes could not be higher.

In a report published to coincide with yesterday's inauguration, the International Crisis Group, a pressure group working to avoid conflict, said the success of Liberia's transition to democracy was crucial to the region as a whole.

"If Liberia slides back towards instability, it will again threaten its neighbours," it concluded. "Everything is aligned for potential success but the situation, as shown by the post-election riots, remains fragile."

One of Mrs Johnson Sirleaf's first tasks will be to find work for the country's 100,000 former fighters who have laid down their arms. That will mean putting up the funding for education programmes or to pay for public works.

"This is the sector that has to be a priority," said one analyst. "These are the people who have rioted in the past and who, if they don't see fast enough progress, could give up on the whole process and take up arms again."

It will be a struggle for the country's tiny economy, where only one person in five is employed.

There is plenty of work to be done. The years of civil war have left Monrovia with an air of decay. The city has no running water or electricity.

Average life expectancy is 47 and 80 per cent of the population is unemployed.

Toga Nimely, a civil servant who attended the inauguration, summed up the feelings of many when he said he was optimistic after hearing Mrs Johnson Sirleaf's speech.

"We have been through such a long, dark period that we are all ready for change," he said. "She is the right person to do that for us."

Ottawa Citizen

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: Liberian president vows to rebuild: Will take 'decisive' steps to move on from war

BYLINE: The Daily Telegraph

MONROVIA, Liberia - The first woman to win a presidential election in Africa took power in Liberia yesterday, pledging to rebuild her war-shattered country.

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was inaugurated in Monrovia. None of the city's bullet-scarred buildings were fit to hold the ceremony, so dignitaries gathered in the open air.

Among those mingling beside the battered legislative building were South African President Thabo Mbeki, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and U.S. President George W. Bush's wife, **Laura Bush**.

Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf, who defeated George Weah, the former soccer player, in last year's election, said her government would "take decisive steps to address the problems that have, for decades, stunted our progress."

Fourteen years of civil war in Liberia claimed perhaps 250,000 lives, eight per cent of the population. The killing ended in 2003 and 15,000 United Nations peacekeepers now enforce an uneasy calm.

Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf, 67, is the first president in Liberia's recent history to have clear international support.

The Times (London)

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: First lady of Africa is sworn in

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was sworn in as Africa's first female president yesterday, pledging to heal the wounds from 14 years of brutal civil war in Liberia.

The Harvard-educated economist, left, herself jailed for protesting against excessive government spending, touched on her own experience of the violence in her inaugural speech.

"I recall the inhumanity of confinement, the terror of attempted rape and the ostracism of exile," she told a crowd of several thousand. Scores of international dignitaries also attended the event, among them the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, and the First Lady, **Laura Bush**.

"It is time to come together to heal and rebuild our nation.

"We will make the children smile again...we cannot, we will not, we must not fail."

The Philadelphia Inquirer

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: Liberia's new president promises 'fundamental break' with the past

BYLINE: Hans Nichols, Associated Press

Africa's first elected female head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, was sworn in yesterday as war-battered Liberia's president, promising a "fundamental break" with the West African nation's violent past and pledging to rebuild.

With U.S. Navy warships offshore for the first time since the civil war's end two years ago and **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on hand, the moment drew thunderous applause from thousands of guests.

"We know that your vote was a vote for change, a vote for peace, security... and we have heard you loudly," Sirleaf, 67, said in her inaugural speech. "We recognize this change is not a change for change's sake but a fundamental break with the past."

Founded by freed American slaves in 1847, Liberia was prosperous and peaceful for more than a century. But back-to-back civil wars from 1989 to 2003 brought the country to its knees, killing 200,000 and displacing half the population of three million.

Liberia is now one of the world's poorest countries, 206th in per-capita income of 208 countries on the 2004 World Bank list. Unemployment is 80 percent.

Sirleaf said rebuilding would be coupled with high expectations, but she called for patience.

"There will be no quick fix," she said, "yet we have the potential to promote a healthy economy in which Liberians and international investors can prosper."

Ensuring that Liberia remains peaceful, though, will be Sirleaf's most pressing - and perhaps most difficult - task.

George Weah, the soccer star who lost the November runoff, was backed by most of the country's top warlords. He grudgingly accepted defeat and attended the inauguration.

Several lawmakers in the new legislature are under a U.N. travel ban for constituting "a threat to peace." Others are allies of Charles Taylor, the onetime warlord who was forced from the presidency in 2003.

For now, Sirleaf's government is backed by 15,000 U.N. troops.

Sirleaf was born in Liberia in 1938, and she worked her way through college in the United States. She earned a master's degree from Harvard University in 1971 and took top jobs in Liberia, including finance minister, and at Citibank, the World Bank, and the United Nations.

Twice imprisoned in Liberia in the 1980s for political reasons, she returned during a break in fighting in 1997 to run for president. She lost to Taylor but tried again last fall, emerging victorious.

The New York Times

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: Liberia's Harvard-Trained 'Queen' Is Sworn In as Leader

BYLINE: Lydia Polgree

Greeted by shouts of "Queen of Africa!" and standing before the bullet-scarred capitol of this war-torn nation, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a Harvard-trained banker and stalwart survivor of Liberia's brutal politics, took the presidential oath of office on Monday, becoming Africa's first woman to be elected a head of state.

As her words were interrupted again and again with joyful shouts of "Yes!" and "Amen!" Ms. Johnson Sirleaf, 67, told the crowd that she would bring "a fundamental break with the past, thereby requiring we take bold and decisive steps to address the problems that for decades have stunted our progress, undermined national unity and kept old and new cleavages in ferment."

It was a jubilant moment suffused with history, observed with smiles by members of the old boy's club Ms. Johnson Sirleaf now joins, the formerly all-male fraternity of African leaders. Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria's president and chairman of the African Union, looked on beaming as Ms. Johnson Sirleaf was sworn in.

A United States delegation led by **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice sat beneath simple woven canopies. Their presence was an indication of the long and often troubled relationship between the United States and Liberia, which was founded by freed slaves from the United States in 1847.

In the front row sat George Weah, the soccer star who lost to Ms. Johnson Sirleaf and initially refused to concede the election, raising the grim possibility that long-suffering Liberia's opportunity for lasting peace might slip away. But Mr. Weah conceded last month, paving the way for the historic ceremony.

Despite the euphoria, Ms. Johnson Sirleaf faces a mountain of troubles in a nation afflicted by civil war for 14 years. Liberia's public works are in shambles; there is no piped water, no electricity grid. Its roads, schools and health centers, where they still exist, barely function.

An interim government that has ruled since Charles Taylor fled in 2003 was supposed to kick-start development, but corruption forced many donors to halt their programs.

The European Union had been supporting an effort to bring electricity to all of the capital, but withdrew because of corruption concerns. With the new president taking office, the Europeans will begin the program again, committing \$70 million. The United States is committed to rebuilding the armed forces. The United Nations mission in Liberia, which includes 15,000 peacekeepers, costs about \$700 million a year.

There also remains the difficult question of what to do about Mr. Taylor, the warlord-turned-president who, with the backing of Libya and other regional powers, rampaged through his own

country and much of West Africa, unleashing a cycle of war that still reverberates today. He fled to exile in Nigeria in 2003 as a condition of ending the war, but is under indictment by a court for war crimes in Sierra Leone. Nigeria has said it will hand him over only if Liberia asks.

Ms. Johnson Sirleaf said Liberia was bound by the United Nations resolution calling for Mr. Taylor to appear in Sierra Leone, and must weigh calls for justice against the need for peace. "Our peace is fragile; we still have lots of Taylor operatives in the country," she said in an interview. "We don't want to see us return to a state of war."

Liberians, even Mr. Weah's partisans, who had taken to the streets to protest what they said was a rigged election, exulted in the moment, relieved that war seemed to have ceased and proud that their nation had produced the continent's first woman to be elected head of state.

"I voted for George Weah, but I accept Ellen because she is our Ma and is going take care of us," said Benedict Newon, 19, a former child soldier. He first hoisted a weapon for the warlord Charles Taylor when he was 10, though he later switched allegiance to another rebel group.

"I never carry gun again," Mr. Newon said, gesturing at his 8-month-old son and his pregnant wife, Fatou. "I have a future now. I got to protect it. I got to be patient with Ma Ellen."

That notion of president as mater familias may seem new, but in Liberia politics has always been paternalistic -- fighters for Mr. Taylor called him their "Papay."

In an interview before the inauguration, Ms. Johnson Sirleaf said that unlike some Western women in politics, she embraced the stereotypical feminine roles as part of her appeal, though she is also known as Liberia's iron lady from her years in opposition politics, which included two stints in prison.

"The iron lady, of course that comes from the toughness of many years of being a professional in a male-dominated world," she said. "But also the many young people we have here, and the suffering I have seen, and the despair and lack of hope, brought out the motherliness in me, and that is where the Ma Ellen comes from."

It is a combination -- tough and tender -- that has won women new respect in the increasingly democratic political scene in Africa. Once dominated by male autocrats, many African countries now have women in high positions, and a handful are poised to join Ms. Johnson Sirleaf at the pinnacle of power.

Women from across the continent flocked to Monrovia to celebrate her victory. Abena P. A. Busia, an English professor from Ghana, said she would have swum to the inauguration.

Euphoria was palpable in the streets, where squads of workers frantically readied this battered city for its long-awaited close-up. Lacking heavy equipment, crews painted lines in the roads using huge stencils and hand brushes.

Pandora Matati, 20, a former fighter, was among the crews who worked furiously to prepare for

the big event.

"I love Ellen because she is going to do so much for us," she said as she took a brief break from her job laying concrete at the capitol. "With Ellen, anything is possible."

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: President's first task is to rebuild Liberia

BYLINE: Alphonso Toweh and Katharine Houreld, Reuters

MONROVIA, Liberia - Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took office as Africa's first elected woman president yesterday, backed by a strong show of U.S. support and vowing to fight graft and rebuild her country after years of war.

As well as several fellow African leaders, U.S. first lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice attended the inauguration in a sign of Washington's backing for Africa's oldest republic, founded in 1847 by freed slaves from the United States.

Wearing a cream and gold dress, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf, 67, was sworn in at a colourful open-air ceremony to loud cheers from hundreds of foreign dignitaries and Liberians, including women showing off dresses emblazoned with their new president's portrait.

"Let us begin anew, moving forward into a future that is filled with hope and promise," Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf said in her first address as leader of a nation that lacks basic services like water and electricity after a devastating 14-year civil war.

"Oh yes, God has answered our prayer," said Teresa Smith, a businesswoman attending the ceremony with her six children.

The new Liberian President vowed to fight rampant corruption, which experts say has fuelled decades of instability, and to uphold a foreign donor-backed Governance and Economic Management Program (GEMAP) that will oversee state spending.

"We will accept and enforce the terms of GEMAP. We will ensure competence and integrity in the management of our resources," said the Harvard-trained economist. She pledged to "wage war against corruption regardless of where it exists or by whom it is practised."

A U.S. official travelling with **Mrs. Bush** said Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf's inauguration, on the day Americans remember slain civil rights campaigner Martin Luther King, was "an example of women's empowerment across Africa."

But the official acknowledged she "will have to show results rather quickly."

Weary of their country's recent history of conflict, chaos and destruction, Liberians have high expectations both for the new president they call "Mama Ellen" and for the superpower across the Atlantic they look upon as a kind of Godfather.

"The United States has a long and special relationship with Liberia which we will continue," added the U.S. official.

Washington spent more than US\$840-million last year on Liberia as it emerged from a brutal civil war, which ended in 2003 after killing 250,000 people and leaving the country's infrastructure in ruins. U.S. officials say helping the country is a priority of the Bush administration.

U.S. secret service agents mingled with UN peacekeepers in the ramshackle capital and two U.S. warships, USS Mount Whitney and USS Carr, were in position offshore.

Across the city, rubbish had been cleared, bullet-scarred walls painted over and trees planted in a face-lift operation.

Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf beat soccer millionaire George Weah in last year's presidential election with a promise to beat graft and build a better future, but analysts say her vows may founder unless donors make good on pledges of aid.

The Myrtle Beach Sun-News
January 17, 2006
HEADLINE: Tuesday Globe

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

CALIFORNIA

President Ford in hospital with pneumonia

Rancho Mirage | Former President Ford was undergoing treatment for pneumonia Monday at the same facility where he was briefly hospitalized a month ago, his chief of staff said. He was said to be doing well.

Ford, 92, was admitted Saturday to Eisenhower Medical Center near his home in Rancho Mirage in Southern California, Penny Circle said.

"Based on his age it is prudent for his initial course of treatment - IV antibiotics - to be done at the hospital," Circle told The Associated Press.

Ford was expected to be released from the hospital Wednesday or Thursday, she said.

NEW YORK

Gas tanker flips, catches fire in city

New York | A tanker truck carrying thousands of gallons of gasoline overturned and caught fire on a major city highway Monday, blocking traffic and interrupting service on a subway line. A tower of dense smoke could be seen for miles.

The driver was able to escape, and no one else was hurt when the Mobil truck overturned around midday on the six-lane Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, said Jim Tuller, a police chief for the borough of Queens.

"The driver appeared to lose control and the truck flipped over," he said. No other vehicle was involved, and the accident's cause was not immediately known, Tuller said.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Gore denounces White House wiretapping

Washington | Former Vice President Al Gore used the Martin Luther King Jr. national holiday Monday to rebuke President Bush for authorizing warrantless eavesdropping within the U.S., charging the president with "breaking the law repeatedly and insistently."

Gore said numerous actions by Bush amounted to a presidential power grab, and in concert with

a go-along Republican-controlled Congress, had led the nation to a dangerous point.

"A president who breaks the law is a threat to the very structure of our government," Gore said.

FLORIDA

Judge orders mental exam for teen suspect

Fort Lauderdale | A judge Monday ordered a psychological examination for one of two teens arrested in the fatal beating of a homeless man and a second beating that was videotaped by a surveillance camera.

Family members and their attorneys negotiated the Sunday surrender of Brian Hooks, 18, and Thomas S. Daugherty, 17, who had fled the state. They face murder charges in the death of Norris Gaynor, 45, and aggravated battery charges in the videotaped beating of Jacques Pierre, 58, police Capt. Michael Gregory said Sunday.

AROUND THE WORLD

PAKISTAN

Leaders demand apology for deadly airstrike

Peshawar | Pakistan's ruling party on Monday demanded an apology for an alleged CIA airstrike that killed at least 17 people, but the country's prime minister said his trip to the U.S. this week would go ahead as planned.

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and his ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Q on Monday condemned the alleged U.S. airstrike on a village near the Afghan border, which intelligence officials have said targeted al-Qaida's No. 2 leader, Ayman al-Zawahri.

Aziz said he was still scheduled to leave Tuesday for the United States, where he said he would talk about security issues but also meet business leaders to encourage foreign investment.

VATICAN CITY

Pope mourns rise in anti-semitism

Pope Benedict XVI, meeting with Rome's chief rabbi Monday, expressed pain and worry over outbreaks of anti-Semitism in the world and called on Jews and Christians to wage a united battle against hate.

Waves of violence and vandalism targeting Jews have hit Europe in the past few years. Last week, worshippers in a Moscow synagogue were attacked by a man with a knife.

Benedict did not mention specific occurrences of anti-Semitism in his speech to greet Rabbi

Riccardo Di Segni in an audience at the Vatican.

The rabbi led a delegation from Rome's Jewish community, one of the oldest in the world.

JAPAN

American plane crashes into sea, pilot ejects

Tokyo | An American F-15 "Eagle" fighter jet crashed into the sea near Okinawa Island early this morning. The pilot ejected and was rescued with only minor injuries, American military officials said.

The plane went down around off the coast of Ikeijima, part of the Okinawa island chain, during a routine training mission, according to a statement issued by U.S. Air Force officials on Kadena Air Base. The crash occurred about 55 miles northeast of the base.

The statement said the cause of the crash was under investigation. The pilot's name was not released.

LIBERIA

Sirleaf sworn in as first African female leader

Monrovia | Africa's first elected female head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, was sworn in Monday as Liberia's president, promising a "fundamental break" with the West African nation's violent past and pledging to rebuild.

With U.S. Navy warships offshore for the first time since the civil war's end two years ago, and first lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on hand in a show of support, the moment was met with thunderous applause from thousands of guests.

From wire reports

The Mirror

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: ELLEN'S THE FIRST LADY

BYLINE: Allison Martin

LIBERIAN president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf looks solemn as she inspects lines of police after being sworn in yesterday as Africa's first elected female head of state.

Johnson Sirleaf, 67, vowed a "fundamental break" with the African nation's war-torn past in her inaugural speech.

American's First Lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were among guests at the ceremony in Monrovia.

The Miami Herald

January 17, 2006

HEADLINE: President vows to rebuild;

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became Africa's first elected female head of state after being sworn in as president of Liberia.

BYLINE: Hans Nichols, Associated Press

Africa's first elected female head of state Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was sworn in Monday as war-battered Liberia's new president, promising a "fundamental break" with the West African nation's violent past and pledging to rebuild.

With U.S. Navy warships offshore for the first time since the civil war's end two years ago, and first lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on hand in a show of support, the moment was met with thunderous applause from thousands of guests.

"We know that your vote was a vote for change, a vote for peace, security . . . and we have heard you loudly," the 67-year-old Sirleaf said in her inaugural speech. "We recognize this change is not a change for change's sake, but a fundamental break with the past."

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan sent congratulations, saying Sirleaf had a "historic mandate to lead the nation toward a future of lasting peace and stability."

Founded by freed American slaves in 1847, Liberia was prosperous and peaceful for more than a century, bolstered by abundant timber and diamond wealth. But back-to-back civil wars from 1989 to 2003 brought the country to its knees, killing 200,000 people and displacing half the nation's population of 3 million.

It is now one of the world's poorest countries, ranked 206th in terms of per capita income out of 208 countries on the 2004 World Bank list.

Today, not even the capital has running water or electricity: The rich rely on generators; the poor, on candles. Unemployment is 80 percent. "We have all suffered. The individual sense of deprivation is immense," Sirleaf said.

She acknowledged the task of rebuilding would be coupled with high expectations, but called for patience.

"The task of reconstructing our devastating economy is awesome," she said. "There will be no quick fix, yet we have the potential to promote a healthy economy in which Liberians and international investors can prosper."

Ensuring Liberia remains peaceful, though, will be Sirleaf's most pressing -- and perhaps most difficult -- task.

George Weah, the soccer star who lost the November runoff, was backed by most of the

country's top warlords and faction leaders. He grudgingly accepted defeat and attended the inauguration.

Several lawmakers in the new legislature, including the House speaker, are under a U.N. travel ban and assets freeze for constituting "a threat to peace." One newly appointed senator ordered his troops to hack off the ears of a captured president in 1990. Others are allies of one-time warlord and president Charles Taylor, who was forced from power in 2003 as rebels shelled the capital.

Another crucial task: assuring the future of 100,000 ex-combatants who laid down arms last year. Many of them are unemployed.

For now, Sirleaf's government is backed by 15,000 U.N. troops. A similar U.N. force pulled out of neighboring Sierra Leone in the final days of 2005, completing a successful five-year mission that restored the peace.

Taylor is wanted by a U.N.-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone for his role in fueling that country's civil war, but Nigeria has refused to hand him over.

In an interview with NBC's *Today* show broadcast Monday, Sirleaf suggested she would like to see Taylor put on trial.

"Mr. Taylor has always said he wanted his day in court to defend himself. We should grant him that privilege," she said.

Rice said she was confident Taylor would be handed over to the Sierra Leone court eventually. He "is through raping and pillaging this country, and the Liberian people are trying to look forward," Rice told reporters.

In her address, Sirleaf promised to stamp out corruption -- a key step to win over skeptical foreign donors.

She also called on Liberians abroad and refugees in West Africa to return and rebuild. The United Nations says nearly 400,000 Liberians are displaced, both inside the country and the region.

Born in Liberia in 1938, Sirleaf worked her way through college in the United States by mopping floors and waiting tables. She graduated with a master's degree in public administration from Harvard in 1971 and took top jobs in Liberia, including finance minister, and senior positions at Citibank, the World Bank and the United Nations.

Twice imprisoned in Liberia in the 1980s for political reasons, she returned during a break in fighting in 1997 to run for president. She lost to Taylor, but tried again last fall, emerging victorious.

THE AUSTRALIAN

January 18, 2006

HEADLINE: Thanks, Laura, but no thanks

MONROVIA: Not even a vote of confidence from **Laura Bush** can change US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's mind about running for president in 2008.

Before leaving for an African trip with Dr Rice, the First Lady predicted the US soon would have a female president -- a Republican, and maybe even Dr Rice.

"I think it will happen for sure," she said about a woman in the Oval Office.

In the year since becoming Secretary of State, Dr Rice has repeatedly dismissed the notion of running for the Republican nomination to succeed her current boss, President George W. Bush.

Asked about the First Lady's comments ahead of their attendance at the inauguration of Liberia's President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Dr Rice laughed and good naturedly answered the recurring question about her prospects for president in 2008. No, she said, for the umpteenth time.

"Obviously it's flattering when people say things like that. The First Lady is not only a terrific person, she's my friend. And I was honoured that she said that, of course. She's a wonderful person," Dr Rice said. "But I've spoken to this. I know what I'm good at, I know what I want to do and that's not it."

How about vice-president?

"The two are the same," she said with a grin and a shake of her head.

Although political pundits have been licking their chops at a possible match-up of her and Democratic senator Hillary Clinton in the 2008 presidential election, Dr Rice has said she has other vocations in mind.

The former provost of Stanford University has said she would like to return to academia or, as an ardent American football fan, possibly become commissioner of the National Football League.

For her part, **Mrs Bush** was left wondering whether she had triggered a political stampede for Dr Rice by her comments.

"I'm probably going to have to take over her correspondence department when she gets all the letters," **Mrs Bush** said.

WSJ

January 18, 2006

HEADLINE: Redemption Song

First Lady Laura Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were in Monrovia on Monday to see Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf sworn in as Liberia's freely elected president and Africa's first female head of state. Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf, 67, a Harvard graduate and onetime Citibank official who spent much of her life in the U.S., promises Liberians "a fundamental break with the past." After a quarter-century of coups, dictatorships and civil war, they certainly deserve it.

Not that such promises haven't been made before. When the notoriously brutal warlord Charles Taylor blackmailed his way to the presidency in 1997, he actually admitted his role in destroying the country but insisted, "I need to be given the chance to fix it."

The Clinton Administration agreed. "You know, redemption is an important element in diplomacy, an important theological element in diplomacy," said then State Department spokesman (and now Undersecretary of State) Nicholas Burns in response to a question about Mr. Taylor's "somewhat checkered past."

We have our doubts about Mr. Burns's theology. But his views certainly typified an Administration that also bestowed "redemption" on the likes of Yasser Arafat and IRA front-man Gerry Adams. In his six years in power in Liberia, Mr. Taylor reportedly embezzled \$100 million, gave sanctuary to members of al Qaeda and backed Foday Sankoh's limb-chopping guerrilla movement in neighboring Sierra Leone. Only after two rebel armies laid siege to Monrovia in 2003 was Mr. Taylor finally dislodged from power.

The Bush Administration has since pumped some \$750 million into Liberia. Whether such a sum will bring the broken country to its feet remains to be seen, and much will depend on the probity and prudence of the new president. As with so many other African leaders, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf has come to power singing the redemption song. We hope she understands it's a song of freedom.

The Washington Post

January 18, 2006

HEADLINE: Germany's Merkel Wins Over a High-Powered Crowd

BYLINE: Nora Boustany

For her Washington debut as German chancellor, Angela Merkel was dazzling last week. Dressed in comfortable black pants and a crimson velvet evening jacket and necklace, she exuded energy, self-confidence and the authority of a stateswoman.

At a dinner in her honor at the residence of German Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger on Foxhall Road on Thursday evening, the former physicist from East Germany attracted quite a crowd.

Alan Greenspan, head of the Federal Reserve, sat to Merkel's right at dinner, and former secretary of state Colin L. Powell sat to her left. A legion of current and former officials chatted with her during the evening, including Powell's predecessor, Madeleine K. Albright; former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski; R. Nicholas Burns, the undersecretary of state for political affairs; Judith Ansley, the National Security Council's senior director of European affairs; and Robert Kimmitt, deputy secretary of the Treasury.

Among those greeting Merkel were J.D. Crouch, deputy national security adviser, and former defense secretary William S. Cohen.

Early in the evening, Ischinger introduced Merkel by quoting from a speech she gave in Berlin last November. "The greatest surprise of my life is freedom," he quoted her as saying. "When you have experienced one such pleasant surprise, you believe many things are possible. I intend to remain firm in that. Let us dare more freedom."

Later, Merkel addressed the 190 guests in German, speaking through an interpreter, and fielded questions from the high-powered crowd about Russia, Iran, the Balkans, contentious matters of trade, and the touchy issue of how open societies can preserve domestic freedoms while confronting terrorism.

"Criticism is not complete rejection," she said of European disapproval of certain U.S. anti-terrorism practices. "It is a learning process, and we have to be open," she said, urging all allies across the Atlantic to frankly discuss the best ways to fight terrorism and to adopt certain common standards in that struggle.

Merkel came alive with warm applause from the packed room. Many audience members, who had followed U.S.-German relations with angst over the past two years, emerged beaming.

The next day, she held talks at the White House for three hours, first meeting alone with President Bush, then lunching with him and first lady **Laura Bush** and several senior aides, and later holding broader talks with the entire German and American delegations. Merkel spoke in English, departing from earlier arrangements to speak through an interpreter, once the initial one-on-one meeting with the president was over.

According to Ischinger, who attended the Friday lunch, the conversation between Merkel and Bush focused on Iran, the outlook for Israel following the stroke of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Palestinian elections, Eastern Europe and Russia. But the ambassador said the two leaders touched on a range of other issues, such as the central role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the need to keep up pressure on Syria, and even Liberia.

Merkel invited Bush to come visit her in the German countryside, far from urban crowds in her home state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, on his way to or from the G-8 summit in St. Petersburg this summer. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, national security adviser Stephen J. Hadley and several members of Merkel's delegation attended the lunch.

The chancellor promised Bush she would call to brief him after meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Monday.

"A pledge to keep one another informed on a personal level was a promising sign," noted Ischinger, who has seen informal communication dry up between Washington and Berlin in recent years. Energy issues, Russia's relationship with Ukraine and Iran, and efforts to draw Moscow closer to the West were all big issues, Ischinger said in an interview Monday.

In Merkel's first encounter with Rice in Berlin in December, they broke the ice by chatting in Russian.

Merkel introduced President Bush to Germany's future ambassador to Washington, Klaus Scharioth, who is now state secretary of the foreign service. The gesture quashed leaks in the German press that Scharioth was too close to former foreign minister Joschka Fischer to get the job. Scharioth, 59, takes over in March from Ischinger, who will become Germany's top diplomat at the Court of St. James in London after nearly five years in Washington.

The Kuwaiti Embassy opened its doors Sunday to Kuwaitis who came to mourn the death of ruler Sheik Jabir Ahmed Sabah. Tearful women paid their respects at the Kuwaiti residence Sunday and Monday, while men converged on the Kuwait Cultural Office on International Drive. Ambassador Salem Sabah left for Kuwait for the official burial, but a book of condolences can be signed at the Tilden Street chancery Wednesday and Thursday.

Agence France Presse -- English

January 18, 2006

HEADLINE: After Liberia and Chile, could US elect a woman president?

Americans are getting used to the idea of being led by a female president, with political observers dreaming of a showdown between Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Senator Hillary Clinton in the 2008 election.

If polls, a television show about a female president and a prediction by First Lady **Laura Bush** are any indication, Americans appear willing to follow Liberia and Chile in electing their first woman president.

Before attending the presidential inauguration of Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first elected female president, **Laura Bush** predicted last week that a woman would lead the United States someday soon.

"I think it will happen for sure," she said, adding that it will occur "probably in the next few terms of the presidency in the United States."

Reality may imitate art in 2008. "Commander in Chief," which stars Geena Davis as the first female president, became a hit television series after appearing last year. Davis won a Golden Globe for her role on Monday.

A recent Gallup poll for USA Today and CNN showed that 70 percent of Americans said they would probably vote for a woman in 2008.

But before Clinton and Rice can battle for the ultimate power seat in the Oval Office, they would have to become the first women to win the nomination of the top two American political parties.

Republicans and Democrats have yet to pick a woman as a White House nominee, although Geraldine Ferraro was the Democratic vice presidential candidate during Walter Mondale's failed presidential bid in 1984. And Elizabeth Dole tried but failed to win the Republican nomination for president in 2000.

Laura Bush has already made her view on the subject known. She told CNN last week that Rice would be a great Republican candidate to succeed her husband, President George W. Bush, who wraps up the first year of his second term on Friday.

"I'd love to see her run. She's terrific," she said of Rice.

Rice, however, has said she does not want to run for president.

Clinton, who has led potential Democratic candidates in opinion polls, has yet to declare her intentions.

Although neither has said she will run for president, political observers are already pining for a battle between the two powerful women.

Dick Morris, a former adviser to Clinton's husband, president Bill Clinton, co-wrote a book titled "Condi vs. Hillary: The Next Great Presidential Race."

The book imagines a political duel between "two highly accomplished women, partisans of opposite parties, media superstars and quintessentially 21st-century female leaders."

To Morris, only Rice has the potential to reach across the political spectrum to stop Clinton from winning the 2008 election.

While Rice's boss saw his popularity rating plunge last year, the chief US diplomat remained a popular government figure.

After Johnson Sirleaf's inauguration and Chilean president-elect Michelle Bachelet's election victory this week, it is becoming easier to imagine the United States being led by a woman, analysts said.

"It's perfectly possible," said Stephen Hess, a George Washington University professor.

"We're talking on a week in which a woman president was inaugurated in Africa and a woman was elected in Latin America, so this is not any longer so unique," Hess said.

"Here, polls show that gender doesn't really make that much difference anymore," he added.

Women have made gains in the US political landscape, although the United States remains in the 63rd spot worldwide in terms of female legislative representation.

There are 69 women in the 435-member US House of Representatives and 14 female senators in the 100-member Senate.

Clinton has an edge over Rice because she has won an election, while the secretary of state has never run for office, Hess said.

"The odds are greater that it would be Hillary rather than Condi," he said. "You would have to go very far to find a president of the United States who hadn't been elected to some previous office."

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

January 18, 2006 Wednesday

HEADLINE: CHIEFS WHO HAPPEN TO BE WOMEN LIBERIA, CHILE, GERMANY, FINLAND -- ARE FEMALE LEADERS A GLOBAL TREND?

Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was inaugurated in Monrovia on Monday as Africa's first elected woman president. First lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were there representing the United States. The Liberian crowds sang, "This is our time, oh, mama, this is our time."

On Sunday Michelle Bachelet, an agnostic, a former pediatrician and a single mother, was elected the first female president of Chile with 53.5 percent of the votes. She has pledged to fill half her Cabinet with women ministers.

Last week, Angela Merkel, Germany's first woman chancellor, was in Washington exchanging differing views with President Bush on torture at Guantanamo and the Iraq war. This week Ms. Merkel goes to Moscow to meet with Russia's iron-fist-in-velvet-glove president Vladimir V. Putin. She will undoubtedly tell Mr. Putin just exactly what she and the Germans think about his fiddling around with Western Europe's natural gas supply to squeeze the Ukrainians.

What does all this mean? Is there a common thread? Were the recent developments in Liberia and Chile part of some rite-of-spring chick-fest? Or are they a normal result of the increasing participation of women in the political process across the world? We note once again the calm voice of Palestine parliamentary candidate Hanan Ashrawi as elections approach there. Or is it simply a function of the unique evolution of politics in each of these separate constituencies?

To the degree that one believes that people vote on the basis of gender, a woman candidate has the possibility of gaining the votes of slightly more than half the population on that basis. On the other hand, it is also possible that a woman candidate might not get the votes of half the population on the basis of her gender.

Into the pot must go also the recent presidential election in Finland. There, the incumbent candidate, Finland's first woman president, Tarja Halonen, 62, did not sweep the 50 percent-plus of the votes to win victory and a second term in the first round of voting Sunday. But she did finish first among the candidates, and some voters gave as a reason for voting for her Ms. Halonen's maternal image.

Looking further at the Finland situation, the president's critics say she is sometimes stubborn and quick to anger. Men aren't, right?

The other classic comment on women, sometimes put forward in the United States as a reason not to put a female pinkie on the nuclear trigger, is that they are unpredictable. How is a woman more unpredictable than a man in his mid-60s who leaves his wife of 40 years because he has just discovered that they are incompatible?

In looking at this subject in the current context, each country's circumstances are different.

Liberia had had almost non-stop war since Master Sgt. Samuel K. Doe overthrew President William R. Tolbert Jr. in a coup in 1980. Liberia is even now plagued by young men with guns. In the legislative contests that accompanied the first round of Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf's victory late last year, such gems from the past as warlord Prince Johnson -- who tortured then President Doe to death in 1990 starting by cutting off his ears with a video camera running -- won a seat in the parliament.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's principal opponent was soccer star George Weah, 39. It is easy to see how Liberian voters might choose Ms. Johnson, 67, a former World Bank economics expert, over another young man with few if any qualifications for the presidency, for her maturity and maternal image, to start with.

Michelle Bachelet in Chile was elected, in part, as the candidate of the center-left coalition parties who have governed the country since it voted out the government of Gen. Augusto Pinochet in 1990. On the other hand, she stands for quite a lot on her own bat and is really quite special. She is an agnostic in a country that is 89 percent Catholic. She is single, with one daughter born out of wedlock. She was tortured and exiled by the Pinochet government. Her father died in prison at their hands. She served as minister of health and minister of defense in preceding governments. She studied medicine in East Germany and had lived in the United States as a child. She is scheduled to be inaugurated as president of Chile on March 11.

So is there any message in the Liberian and Chilean experiences for Americans moving up on presidential elections in 2008, with the two principal parties' candidate-selection campaigns beginning to loom up this year? The obvious name that leaps to mind is that of Sen. Hillary Clinton. Her husband, former President Bill Clinton, bats down speculation that he might be a candidate to succeed Kofi Annan as secretary-general of the United Nations, pointing out that the post has traditionally not been occupied by a citizen of a country that is a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. The second obvious point, raised by discussion of the first, is his wife's political situation.

It is certainly no secret that Sen. Clinton wants to run for president on the Democratic ticket. The fact that she, like Liberia's President Johnson-Sirleaf and Chile's president-elect Bachelet is a woman will be one element in her prospects for the Democratic nomination, and, if acquired, prospects to be elected president. Her success in that regard will be something altogether different and will be based on the American people's assessment of her qualifications to govern the country, not unlike Liberia's and Chile's judgments of Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf and Ms. Bachelet.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf offers every possibility of being just what Liberia needs at this point in its difficult recent history. Michelle Bachelet looks just right for Chile at this point in time, a modern person as president of a modern country. Both are unique products of their countries' recent experience. That they are women may help, but is not much more than that, in my view.

Associated Press

January 18, 2006

HEADLINE: Africa's first woman leader vows change

BYLINE: Hans Nichols, MONROVIA

ELLEN Johnson Sirleaf was sworn in yesterday as war-battered Liberia's new president.

She carved her name into history as Africa's first elected female head of state.

Ms Sirleaf repeated the oath of office read to her by Liberian Supreme Court Chief Justice Henry Reed Cooper in an inauguration ceremony attended by thousands of civilians and scores of diplomats, dignitaries and other African leaders.

She promised a "fundamental break" with the west African nation's violent past and pledged to rebuild.

With U.S. Navy warships offshore for the first time since the civil war's end two years ago, and U.S. First Lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on hand in a rare show of support, the moment was met with thunderous applause.

"It is time for us, regardless of our political affiliations or persuasions, to come together to heal and rebuild our nation," Ms Sirleaf, 67, said.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan offered congratulations, saying Ms Sirleaf had a "historic mandate to lead the nation toward a future of lasting peace and stability."

Founded by freed American slaves in 1847, Liberia was prosperous and peaceful for more than a century, bolstered by abundant timber and diamond wealth.

Back-to-back civil wars from 1989 to 2003 brought the country to its knees, killing 200,000 people and displacing half the tiny nation's population of 3 million.

Today, not even the capital has running water or electricity. The rich rely on generators, the poor on candles. Unemployment is at 80 per cent. "We have all suffered. The individual sense of deprivation is immense," Ms Sirleaf said. She called for patience.

"The task of reconstructing our devastated economy is awesome, for which there will be no quick fix, yet we have the potential to promote a healthy economy in which Liberians and international investors can prosper," she said.

Soccer star George Weah, who lost the November run-off, was backed by most of the country's top warlords and faction leaders. He grudgingly accepted defeat and attended the inauguration.

HERALD SUN

January 18, 2006

HEADLINE: Women rule, no feminists

BYLINE: Babette Francis

THE election of women as leaders in Chile, Liberia and Germany may cause feminists to imagine an era where they will be standing toe to toe with their male enemies on the world stage.

The fantasy has even been fuelled by the promotion of Geena Davis to US President in the television series Commander in Chief.

Davis is seen as a Hollywood prelude to Hillary Clinton's run for the White House.

But the feminist euphoria in thinking women can solve all the world's problems could be shortlived. We have had many female prime ministers and presidents in the past.

There was Britain's "Iron Lady" Margaret Thatcher, Israel's Golda Meir, India's Indira Gandhi, Sri Lanka's Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan.

None was noted for advancing the feminist cause.

Indeed, Thatcher was loathed by the sisterhood, most of whom could barely acknowledge she was female.

"Grocer's daughter" was the epithet hurled at her, with the emphasis on grocer.

Why are feminists such professional snobs?

One Nation's Pauline Hanson was repeatedly described as running a fish-and-chip shop as if that was her main credential.

Of the new titleholders, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany is conservative and intent on repairing Germany's relationship with that bete noir of feminists, President George W. Bush.

She worked at one time as a barmaid in the former East Germany to put herself through university, rejecting both communism and feminism as dogma.

Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf aims to eliminate the corruption plaguing her poverty-stricken country.

Her inauguration was attended by US First Lady **Laura Bush** and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

This is not exactly a feminist scenario.

The only president who fits the feminist mould appears to be Michelle Bachelet of Chile.

Single mum, socialist-marxist, and former political prisoner during the Pinochet regime, she may indeed advance the feminist cause.

But will that make the women of Chile any happier? Are women anywhere in the world happier because of feminism?

Kate O'Beirne, a US National Review columnist, has a new book, *Women Who Make the World Worse*. This is a serious examination of 30-plus years of feminist policies.

O'Beirne recounts the hypocrisy of powerful feminist leaders during the Clinton years -- Bill, that is.

She compared them to battered spouses willing to endure any humiliation so long as they didn't lose their man.

"As long as Bill Clinton supported abortion rights, affirmative action, and federal child care, it didn't matter that he was a sexual predator," she writes.

Feminism, far from promoting the happiness and well-being of women and society, has instead left great swathes of melancholy in its wake.

O'Beirne mentions one large study of well-being data on 100,000 Americans and Britons from the early 1970s to the late 1990s.

It found that while US men had grown happier, women were 20 per cent less happy.

The so-called "women's movement" was and is a misnomer. Feminists honestly believe they speak for all women: "I think this way, I am a woman, I represent all women."

This is nonsense.

In 1984, feminist Bella Abzug confidently predicted the victory of the Walter Mondale-Geraldine Ferraro ticket as "women . . . join across all racial, social, and regional lines in stark opposition to President Reagan and his policies."

Women voted for the Ronald Reagan ticket over Mondale-Ferraro by 56 per cent per cent to 44 per cent.

Feminists now claim that they were never against marriage and family. Currently they are all for same-sex marriage and lesbian families.

BUT in 1971, Ms magazine founder Robin Morgan called marriage "a slavery-like practice -- we cannot destroy inequities between men and women until we destroy marriage".

Germaine Greer recommended all women leave their husbands in search of more satisfying

"rambling organic structures". Seaweed perhaps?

Logic is not a feminist strong point and Kate O'Beirne's book is a useful reality check for those anticipating a feminist commander in chief.

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

January 18, 2006

HEADLINE: A milestone in Liberia

BYLINE: Deseret Morning News editorial

Liberia always has had a special relationship with the United States. Settled by former U.S. slaves in the 19th century and established under a constitution similar to the one in this country, it was a peaceful haven in Western Africa until only a few decades ago.

Now it is struggling to overcome years of civil strife that has left it devastated and impoverished. And it has elected Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as president. She is the first female head of state ever on the African continent, and she represents the best chance for peace in Liberia and the region in many years.

It was encouraging to see both Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and first lady **Laura Bush** attend Sirleaf's inauguration this week. But that shouldn't be the end of U.S. involvement in Liberia. The successful rejuvenation of Liberian democracy is important to the region, and Sirleaf faces many challenges.

After 14 years of civil war, Liberia is so impoverished that even the nation's capital city, Monrovia, does not have electricity. The nation's unemployment rate, according to the Associated Press, is 80 percent. Meanwhile, people loyal to the former dictator, Charles Taylor, still are around. Some of them serve in the nation's legislature.

Sirleaf's election opponent was a former soccer star who was backed by warlords and other strong-men who prefer the violent methods that have terrorized the nation for years.

Fortunately, she won the election by a landslide. But the 100,000 or so former soldiers who agreed last year to lay down arms may not be content to wander the streets jobless for long.

For now, 15,000 U.N. soldiers remain in Liberia to keep the peace. No one can be sure what would happen to the nation if those troops left, but it ought to be clear that only through peace and the rule of law can the nation regain its footing and begin to prosper once again. The United States should do all it can to facilitate that prosperity, including forgiving loans granted, and subsequently misspent, under previous regimes.

Liberia's unique relationship with the United States is underscored by Sirleaf's own past. She was educated at Harvard, where she earned a master's degree in public administration in 1971. But to do so, she had to take odd jobs performing janitorial duties and waiting tables -- work that placed her on a par with many impoverished black women both in 1971 and today.

Her rise to power through an election is a huge step forward for Africa as a whole. If she succeeds in pulling Liberia out of its darkest years, she could spread a welcome age of peace and prosperity to other nations, as well.

TOWNSVILLE BULLETIN

January 18, 2006

HEADLINE: Op-ed - (Real) girl power Women leaders take big slice of control

IT'S a touch too flippant to describe it as the dawning of a new era of girl power -- but that's exactly what it is.

With the swearing-in of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as Liberian president and the weekend victory of Michelle Bachelet in Chile, a new generation of women are claiming a hold on power as world leaders.

Elected women have played important roles on the world stage for more than a quarter-century -- including such iron-fisted figures as Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi and Britain's formidable Margaret Thatcher.

In Europe and Asia, the Americas and New Zealand, women of the left and right have held office at the head of states and governments -- but many cut lone figures on a political scene overwhelmingly dominated by men.

The simultaneous arrival of Bachelet, 54, as Chile's first woman leader and Sirleaf, 67, as Africa's first elected woman head of state, suggests that a new trend may be at work.

In Europe, the last few months saw Angela Merkel emerge as Germany's first woman chancellor, while Finland's Tarja Halonen looked set for re-election as president following a strong first-round performance at the weekend.

Women presidents already hold office in Ireland and Latvia, while a woman, Segolene Royal, has emerged as the clear frontrunner to be the opposition Socialist Party's candidate in France's 2007 presidential elections.

In Asia, several strong women leaders have emerged in the past five years -- President Gloria Arroyo of the Philippines, Begum Khaleda Zia, elected prime minister of Muslim-majority Bangladesh for a second time in 2001, and Prime Minister Helen Clark, who has governed New Zealand since 1999.

Megawati Sukarnoputri was president of Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation, from 2001 to 2004, decades after her father Sukarno founded the republic.

Even Africa, where women were long excluded from political life, currently has two female prime ministers: Maria do Carmo Silveira of Sao Tome et Principe and Luisa Diogo of Mozambique.

In the United States, the prospect of a woman succeeding US President George W Bush is no longer taboo, with both the Democrat Hillary Clinton and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice seen as strong possible contenders.

First Lady **Laura Bush** -- who led a high-level delegation to Liberia for Sirleaf's inauguration on Monday -- has said that she expects to see a woman president of the United States within the next decade.

"I think it will happen for sure," **Laura Bush** told CNN television, immediately mentioning Rice when asked to suggest names.

Rice -- whose election as a black woman would be a double first for the country -- has been repeatedly named in Republican circles as a possible candidate, although she insists she has no White House ambitions.

Laura Bush, who was to continue to Ghana and Nigeria on a tour focused on the work of African women, hailed Sirleaf, a Harvard-educated former World Bank official, as a beacon of hope for her sex.

"The centrepiece, really, of this trip is women's empowerment, with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as a shining example for all of us, for women around the world, not just women on her continent," Bush told reporters on her way to Liberia.

Worldwide, the number of women in politics is steadily rising, although they remain severely underrepresented, according to Karine Jabre, a Swiss researcher who has studied the place of women in parliaments since 1945.

"In 1995, women made up 11.8 per cent of all lower houses of parliament, rising to 13.4 per cent in 2000 and 16.2 per cent in 2005," she said.

Despite notable exceptions, such as the tough-minded Thatcher, Jabre's study also suggested that women in positions of power tended to put a greater priority on social issues than their male counterparts.

Sirleaf has argued that women have a central role to play in restoring hope to one of the world's most failed states, ruined by 14 years of civil war. "The women of Liberia and the women of Africa, we must succeed and we will," she told the women who came to her inauguration.

Winston-Salem Journal (Winston Salem, NC)

January 18, 2006

HEADLINE: WELL WORTH THE TRIP

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and **Laura Bush**, the first lady, sent a strong and needed message of U.S. support for Liberia as they attended the inauguration of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the Liberian president Monday.

After all, the country was founded by freed slaves from America, and many Liberians who fled its bloodshed of recent years now live in the Triad and elsewhere in this country.

Liberians, and their supporters worldwide, are hoping that Sirleaf's leadership will bring lasting peace. And Rice and Bush, like other women the world over, must have felt a bit of well-justified pride in the fact that Sirleaf is the first elected female head of state in Africa.

GRAPHIC: AP PHOTO
(Rice and **Laura Bush**)