



# Liberian communities in the US battle Ebola on both sides of the Atlantic

By Ralph H. & Elizabeth Tubman - Zoebush Reporters

In the wake of the first Ebola case reported in Dallas Texas, United States, Liberians in the DFW Metroplex woke up Tuesday morning now forced to deal with the Ebola virus on two fronts. Since early May of 2014, the focus and concerns of all Liberians living in the states have been on how to help their families, fellow Liberians and their country fight the Ebola virus which has killed more than 3,000 people in west Africa with the most hit country being Liberia where over half of the deaths have occurred.

Liberians across the United States and the world have been focusing on one thing and one thing only, how to help their people and families. Every day, since the outbreak, Liberians have been getting news about the death of their fellow citizens, friends, families and loves ones. There has been a kind of silent panic within every family because no one knows when the next call was going to come, telling them that their love one is seriously sick with no medical help available or the sad news of death. Liberians in the diaspora has been dealing with this situation and at the same time have been following development in the country as it plays out on the media about the virus. Liberians have followed the news every day with the hope and expectation that the virus would be contained. It was very encouraging to see the international community with the United States taking the lead come in to help the people of Liberia and the other West African countries that are also experiencing the Ebola outbreak.

In July 2014, the Ebola made local and international/world news and Liberia was placed on the map as the epic center of the Ebola outbreak when Dr. Brantly and Mrs. Writebol both U. S. citizens got infected with the Ebola virus. Thanks to the mobilization of the United States and NGOs working in Liberia, both Dr. Brantly and Mrs. Writebol were flown to the States for medical treatment. Fortunately, both were healed from the virus and more attention was placed on doing everything to stop the spread of the virus in West Africa.

The Liberian community Association of DFW Metroplex has been actively engaged in finding support and help for the people of Liberia. While many Liberians in the DFW area are personally sending money and items home to help family members, they are also working collectively as a community to help stop the virus. The community held fundraiser, have collected PPEs and other medical supplies and equipment at the same time praying and fasting for God's intervention. Prayers services were held both in August and September in the Liberian churches. The community has been on the phone calling family members advising them to follow the CDC guidelines on how to stop the spread of the virus.

So with the Tuesday morning news that a Liberian has been hospitalized in Dallas with the first case of Ebola in the United States, the first reaction from many of the community members was one of shock. The leadership team of Mr. Stanley Gaye, President of the Liberian community Association of DFW held an emergency meeting to address the situation and provide information to the community. A press release was put out immediately, to calm everyone and meet the crisis head on.

Mr. Gaye asked every Liberian in the community to pray for the patient and his family, the healthcare providers and doctors that were treating him. Secondly, he asked everyone that have come in contact with

the patient to immediately come forward and make themselves available for testing and to cooperate with the authorities in containing the spread of the virus. He asked all Liberians to follow the CDC guidelines to help contain and stop the spread of the virus. He advised all Liberians in the area that show signs of fever or any symptom of the virus to immediately go to the nearest hospital or call the authority for help. Finally, he cautioned the community not to be afraid but to come together and help in stopping Ebola.

On Wednesday, another meeting was called by the Liberia Community Association at which time the Press was invited. **Zoebush reporter Elizabeth Tubman** was present at the meeting. Below is her report of the meeting.

The Press Conference called by the Liberian Community President commenced with remarks from Bishop Nathan Kortu. He welcomed the Press Corp and thanked them for all they are doing to keep the public informed about Ebola. "We are under high emotional breakdown and we are opened to counseling all who have lost family members in Liberia. The churches and the Community are working together." He called on everyone to assist in curbing this virus. In conclusion, he introduced the President, Mr. Stanley Gaye.

Mr. Gaye reiterated the sentiment expressed to the Press and thanked everyone present. He presented his staff and clergies present. He stated that Liberians in North Texas have faced devastating news of relatives' demise at home from the virus and now, in our immediate community. Liberian Immigrants in the area have lost brothers, sisters, other relatives and friends from Ebola. On September 30th the horror took another turn when the CDC revealed a Liberian at Presbyterian Dallas had tested positive for the Ebola virus. He pleaded with all that had come in contact with the patient to GET TESTED! Anyone TRAVELLING FROM LIBERIA SHOULD DESIST FROM DIRECT CONTACT with others or at least 21 days (the incubation time for the virus to spread). WE DO NOT WANT TO PANIC, BUT WE HAVE TO PRACTICE ALL PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES RECOMMENDED BY CDC.

Q&A Session:

Reporter: Has anyone from the CDC contacted the Liberian Community?

Mr. Gaye: "We had a conference call with a representative from CDC when news of the outbreak was first reported in July. He gave details information on preventive measures that we should convey to relatives in Liberia that will help to contain the spread of the disease. News of a patient here in Dallas has been so overwhelming in the last two days, we have not contacted the CDC, BUT WILL DO SO SOON."

Reporter: Has anyone spoken to family members of the patient?

Mr. Gaye: Yes, I spoke to a member of Mr. Duncan's family and she is in good spirits and asked the community to keep the patient and family.

Reporter: Are family members associates of the Liberian Community?

Mr. Gaye: The family member I spoke with is involved with the Dallas Liberian Community.

Reporter: With this revelation of Ebola coming to Dallas, do you think there should be a ban on travels from the infected areas in Africa?

Mr. Gaye said he is not an expert on the subject and would like that question directed to the government.

Pastor Emmanuel Botchway asked to share his view on the matter. He said he does not feel that will be a good idea because of various reasons. i.e.: Americans in Liberia desiring to return home & for economics. He suggested that detail education and better screenings should be implemented.

Reported: What are we doing about our children that may be confronted at schools about the subject matter, especially since we know several children have had contact with the patient?

Caroline Woahloe addressed this by saying we should explain to our children that Ebola is a disease and even though parents are immigrants from Liberia, we do not have Ebola. She added that even Healthcare workers needed to get more education on the virus to be in better positions to address it.

Reporter: HOW ARE YOU ALL COPING?

WOAHLOE: PRAYERS AND EDUCATION.

Reporter: Do you think this incident will lead to discrimination against US bound Liberians and those that are resident?

Mr. Gaye: I hope not. Americans did not stop mingling with Liberians when Dr. Brantly and Mrs. Writebol were diagnosed with the virus and brought here. Fear brings about profiling. An informed community will not stigmatize an entire community for a disease. We have to get informed about the disease and help to educated others.

Reporter: With Ebola now in the US, should the government support to help contain the virus be increased?

Mr. Gaye: Yes.

Ms. Tubman added, "This is a Global Crisis, it is not just a Liberian problem and urged all governments to aid in aggressively combating this virus." She continued by thanking the media for covering the crisis and keeping the public informed. She added special thanks to the United States government the International Community and other agencies for all they have done and urge them to continue doing. "Together, with God's help, we can contain this bacteria. Thanks to the staff at Presbyterian Hospital that are taking care of the Patient. We pray God protects them."

Reporter: Where and when will the Prayer vigil be held?

Mr. Gaye: We have not decided on the place and time, but will let the media know as soon as plans have been finalized. We have had several prayer services, vigils since August for the Ebola. This will be the first one for Ebola in America. We have been praying for our country, now it is our community in the United States.

Reporter: What is in the container parked in parking lot and what is the destination?

Mr. Gaye: We have been getting donations from individuals, churches, organization and businesses: PPEs and other infection control items. The container will be leaving on Friday, October 3, for Liberia to be distributed by ELWA and Redemption hospitals. The fundraising efforts by the community is ongoing, because the needs are increasing. We are planning an Ebola fundraiser Dinner and a Walk. Dates and times will be provided in the very near future.

Mr. Gaye: I like to thank the Communications department for getting to the media to cover the Press conference. I hope we are all on the same page, we need to focus on the contents of the Press release to be in one accord. Secondhand comments/information should be discouraged within the community. Ebola is real, it is not about us! It's about getting it under control. It is a disease and it can affect anyone. Equip yourself with information on the disease, to be able to share with others.

**PRESS PRESENT:**

**NEW YORK TIMES**

**CHANNEL 8, 5, 11, AND 4**

**Wall Street Journal**

**Tele undu -Channel 39**

**Aljazeera News**

**ASSOCIATED PRESS.**

**Keep Pressing On!**

**Elizabeth R Tubman**