

“Audit Saga Exposes ‘Incompetence’ of EJS Presidency”

A Rejoinder to FPA Editorial Political Madness!

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The attention of the Public Affairs Department of the Executive Mansion has been drawn to FrontPage Africa Editorial of Thursday, May 21, 2015 pursuant to the caption above vis-a-viz a litany of mismatched analogies coupled with labelling the Liberian President as incompetent. Absolutely ludicrous! What was the intent of the diatribe and in whose interest is such vitriolic propaganda tilted?

What FPA readers should appreciate is this specific “Editorial” is precisely a guest contribution as the “verbiage, language, structure, context and style” contradict the trend of FPA-groomed editorial. The essence of trend analysis in journalistic practice is critical to research that must inform the work of journalists. In reality, FPA management opted to provide the platform motivated by political trappings or possible inducements to provide space for an assault on government.

Having scientifically laid the object of such editorial and what it seeks to achieve at the expense of distraction, we will begin to succinctly examine the arguments, divorce ourselves from pettiness and deal with the substance of the issues decisively as they so deserve. It is the style of one man who branded everyone in Liberia as corrupt while he wore sinless garments.

Regrettably, in view of the baptism of responsible journalism, why would an exchange of ‘war-of-words’ become the basis for the practice of a civilized trade? Journalism has a duty to educate and inform; influence societal change, build and connect traditions, cultures, reunite societies and transform lives.

But when journalism out of the ego and self-styled tendencies of journalists, become the means to selfish aim – then our society is bound for failure. This is the crux of FPA’s propaganda interest. The editorial bears the traits of political infidels who once had an

opportunity in government and squandered it. Yes, journalism is about critically informing the population about government and society but facts, figures, precision and correct spellings are the fulcrum of responsible journalism.

Here we go again! This nation celebrates – the world joins our country to celebrate but FPA, that claims journalism is divorced of nationalism intriguingly seems not to be interested in the greater good but the naiveté and trivialities of “you say and I say” kind of cheapness when the real issues that will adequately bring benefits to our country are being ignored.

When we present information to the public without stating the facts, a newspaper makes itself wanting. In this part of the world – whenever evidence is demanded or requested of the accusers, it becomes a crime.

If the culture of professional journalism should thrive on the legacy of “*DIRTY LAUNDRIES - being aired in the public domain, secret conversations between so-called ‘friends’, all appointees of a sitting president have found its way into a 38-page scolding indictment of the supreme auditing institution in post-war Liberia, the General Auditing Commission*” – the face of good journalism, public trust, and social responsibility obviously will be the borrowed niceties FPA is supposedly adopting.

For some strangely propagandistic justification - FPA has allowed itself to welcome a guest-driven editorial with such bombastic verbiage: “THE JURY IS STILL out on the believability factor since the GAC’s release of an audit of the National Ebola Trust Fund for the Period August 1 to October 31, 2014 which unearthed that the Incident Management Team on Ebola headed by Assistant Health Minister for Preventive Services Mr. Tolbert Nyenswah, Mr. James Dorbor Jallah and Dr. Wede Elliott should be held liable for violating Section 66 (4) of the Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC) Act, which regulates protocols for government procurement, contract and others” – with the sole aim of demonizing patriotic Liberians who risked their lives to save their compatriots in the name of a so-called “politically motivated audit” as though these people would be seeking public office – is treacherous and inhumane.

FPA should brace itself for a dozen counter journalistic schooling extravaganzas for subjecting the newspaper to the most irresponsible form of journalism that allows ‘politicians to become its paymaster instead of building a culture of arguably searching for the truth.

An editorial that thrives on a stupor such as “IN THE COURT of public opinion” – when journalism as a scientific practice that borders on research and scholarly work cannot be anchored on disjointed debates consumed in the marketplace.

If journalism is about talent and ambition, we have a responsibility to appreciate that a candid disposition by Her Excellency to intellectualize the fearlessness, patriotism, gallantry and determination of the Ebola team when even the very FPA was calling for Trusteeship and outsourcing the fight against Ebola because of the vulnerability of our health care system; the blame game about the government’s inability to manage a volatile situation and grotesquely a call for regime change then who is goosing the gander after the battle has been won with GAC’s gospel according to “Puritanical doctrine”. How could we have achieved the call for outsourcing Ebola fight in the view of FPA’s political actors?

Let’s for argument sake place the cards on the table in this equation of some obscurely cum poorly analysed statement made by the President when she met journalists in the C. Cecil Dennis Auditorium? President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf did not address a foreign audience let alone foreign journalists. She spoke succinctly but passionately. The President at no time justified anything next to wrongdoing! All she did was to give a human face to the heroic zealotry, courage and aggressive commitment to fight the deadly Ebola virus. We were dogged by an overwhelming emergency situation at the time. Are we having reasons to believe that FPA and its political allies were the only strangers in Jerusalem? How could they have done it different?

Sheepishly, FPA “political editorialist” selects to ignorantly refer to the “rigorous PPCC and other processes” at least when there was so much mass confusion and the painstaking moment for strict adherence would have seen more deaths than we could swallow but

notwithstanding brings Sierra Leone into a baseless analogy without supporting research arguments. All Liberians might read the nasty and often vague politics from time to time but they have scruples. FPA values established norms but when the Liberian Revenue Authority (LRA) requests strict compliance – they cry wolf. They shouldn't, since the laws are on the books and should be implemented to the letter.

It is important Liberians understand our situation in a crystal and clear manner. The challenge imposed on us was not a result of Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Our nation was under attack by an unknown enemy and we could not sit supinely. The President was appealing during the press conference and not defending. What happened then? FPA in its usual subjective and neo-journalistic style carried a banner headline, which portrayed that the President was “Shielding Corruption”. Granted we had a situation of FPA offices set ablaze; would FPA as directed by its Board (if one exists) sanctioned regulations wait for board's approval to invite the Fire Service? We often talk about common-sense but it is not common at all.

Technically, an editorial presents a media institution's official position on prevailing topical issue. It is not a political bone-picking column in any respect. Conversely, to assume that AG Gaye allowed and encouraged members of the Ebola Task Force to scold and query her about a report by the GAC bearing her signature – underscores a motive.

What is unkempt about the arguments presented by EBOLA Task Force elements whom FPA is suggesting continue to herald “the refrain that the emergency situation”? Is FPA or its political backers implying that we did not have an emergency situation on our hands? Surely, that was the case. Laws exist but there are rare, emergency and ad-hoc situations. Agree, Dorbor Jallah heads PPCC and so what prevents him from being called upon in a national emergency crisis to save lives? The duality of his role to fight and combat Ebola is narrowly being construed from the lens of political pettiness rather than the supreme national sacrifice that culminated into tangible results.

It is important for avid readers to reckon there was a common feature in the diction of the previous AG – most often than, he was intrigued by the use of regulatory quotes of all sort to express sometimes simple issues. Calling for schooling in various Financial or Statutory Laws

remain a non-issue. The public, that FPA and its collaborators are trying to impress ultimately care less about defining the TOR of a sitting AG. It is just pointless!

FPA is implying that its “PRIMARY cause for concern regarding the issue of incompetence” correlates with the “poor choice of words and the condescending tone” members of the Ebola Task Force chose to belittle President Sirleaf’s handpicked Auditor General, Yusudu Gaye. In its Editorial of May 20, 2015, FPA termed the AG a CPA, which respectfully is not denigrating if you may. But to suggest that she was handpicked is not just nit-witty but is indicative of a ploy. Using FPA’s puzzle-solving methodology; the only qualified Liberian to have ever shown up at the GAC was John Morlu. No wonder why he has become the newfound Liberia’s so-called John the Baptist.

Contrarily, in the incongruence of this editorial, it leaves so much to be desired. The previously advanced argument in FPA editorial referred to the AG as handpicked but at the same time is coming to the defence of the same person allegedly described as “incompetent amid threats of court action” by Ebola lieutenants.

When the President appointed John Morlu, did she have the slightest iota of assumption that with less than three weeks on the job he would have preposterously and unprofessionally announced: “That the government was two times corrupt as its successor”? If we were to use FPA’s allegory; “THE TASK FORCE’s label of the GAC’s boss as incompetent is a reflection of the President who appointed her to the position”. Therefore John Morlu did not just become an embarrassment to the President but an unprofessional bigot ‘airing unscientific permutations’. He stayed on and concluded his tenure. How can Morlu claim professionalism as FPA editorialist when he repeatedly compromised professional standards by leaking unadulterated draft audit reports to the media?

How then has the same acclaimed AG Gaye who is a CPA earlier referred to, appears now in FPA’s summersault to lack the requisite qualification to head the GAC? Something is gone amiss! It is now obvious that “Deputy AG Nanka who produced the Ebola Fund Audit report”, in this latest construct is the architect behind this obtaining gimmick – as FPA’s

Editorial is claiming: “it means Nanka is more qualified than the AG”. Propaganda is a tool but putting a spin on what is self-evident will not simply escape all minds.

Here we go, as the editorial is suggesting that: “the President and the legislature have sufficient reason to have this incompetent Auditor General removed to protect the professional image of the GAC and to avoid a disgrace like her predecessor Robert Kilby”. How did poor Kilby come into the picture after he’s been long gone?

While we democratically welcome all those including the FPA who would responsibly keep the President’s feet to the fire on critical national issues – the culture of decorum and a deep sense of respect for our leaders should not elude our sensibilities. FPA should not turn a blind eye to reality. The likes of Citi Bank, UNDP, IMF, World Bank would not employ a professional that is “incompetent”. Someone selected along with other Eminent persons from around the world to investigate the genocide in Rwanda cannot be called incompetent. The irresponsible politics of the day in this country should not at any point erode our common-sense. Allowing people with political motives to increase distrust in the type of work you should do is a mindless preoccupation.

Instructively, the business of governance and its operationalization are not run through newspaper pages especially when there is a complete lack of ethical, moral, professional and patriotic sense of duty whatever.