

This, Too, is Liberia

Selected writings of the renowned

Liberian journalist

Tom Kamara



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About the Tom Kamara Foundation

The Tom Kamara Foundation was established in June 2013 in memory of Tom Kamara, who was the publisher of the Liberian newspaper the *New Democrat* until his death in 2012.

The Mission of the Tom Kamara Foundation is:

- To foster, promote, sustain, and improve professional journalism in Liberia and Africa.
- To provide support for journalists engaged in rigorous, probing, spirited, independent and critical work that will benefit the public.
- To support journalism and foster a community of journalists engaged in truthfully informing the public.
- To promote professional journalism, primarily in areas of investigative reporting, youth education, professional development, and special opportunities.

Acknowledgements

This book includes a selection of 53 articles, written by the late Liberian journalist Tom Kamara. He wrote these articles between 1997 and 2012. The articles were published in *The Perspective*¹, an online newsmagazine published by the Liberian diaspora in the USA, and the *New Democrat*, the Liberian newspaper Tom Kamara founded.

The idea to publish this book came up after the launch of the Tom Kamara Foundation in 2013. The widow of Tom, Rachael Kamara, Jimmy S. Shilue and Leo Platvoet committed themselves to this task, but lack of time and funding took some time before this idea became reality.

The main reason for the publication of this book is that there are hardly available accounts (firsthand or eyewitness) of recent history of Liberia, written by Liberian authors. We hope that this book will be read by students, scholars, teachers, politicians, journalists etc., so knowledge and understanding of the recent history of Liberia will be the guide to a better Liberia.

We had to choose out of 138 articles that were available to us. Undoubtedly, Kamara has written far more articles in the 40 years he used his sharp pen as a weapon for justice and democracy, but archives of newspapers he worked for in the 1980s like *The Liberian Star* and *The New Liberian* are not existing. The archive of the *New Democrat* is, due to several actions of Charles Taylor fighters in 1996 and 2000, also very incomplete (see Section F - D). This is why *The Perspective* is a valuable source for this project, although many of these articles have also been published in the (digital) version of the *New Democrat*.²

¹ In 1996, *The Perspective* online newsmagazine was created by George H. Nubo, Siahyonkron Nyanseor and Abraham M. Williams. As soon as Tom heard about it, he joined them, contributing many articles. For a partial list of his articles on ThePerspective.org website, see at the bottom of *A Tribute to Thomas "Tom" Saah Kamara: My Comrade in the Liberian People's Struggle for Rice & Rights* by Siahyonkron Nyanseor, in: *The Perspective*, Atlanta, Georgia, June 22, 2012, <https://www.theperspective.org/2012/0622201201.html>. For the Tribute itself: see Section F - C.

² The digital version of the *New Democrat* is no longer online. However, you can view on the internet archive *WayBack Machine* a number of digital *New Democrat* issues, published between 2005 and 2020, see: https://web.archive.org/web/*/http://newdemocratnews.com/

With the selection of the articles, we show the broader scope of Tom's writings: not only about the Liberian Civil War, but also about other topics. The book starts with an introduction to the life and work of Tom Kamara. The selected articles are divided in five sections:

- A. The Doe Era (1980-1990);
- B. The Taylor Era (1990-2003);
- C. The Johnson Sirleaf Era (2006-2012);
- D. Liberia and the USA;
- E. Miscellaneous Items.

Section F includes reflections on the life and work of Tom Kamara.

The detailed index makes it easy to search for names, events, and places.

The copyrights of the selected articles are in the hands of Rachael Kamara. The copyrights of the other articles (Introduction and Section F, B and C) belong to the authors of these articles.

The introduction (in italics) of each of the 53 selected articles, as well as the notes included in these articles have been written by Leo Platvoet.

The notes aim to give more information and historical context about persons and events. The books that were used as a source for this are listed in the Sources chapter.

In a boxed text on page 145 you will find information about the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In a number of articles one or more paragraph(s) of the original text is / are not included in the text of this book. The only reasons for this are the following two.

1. It is a repetition of something that is mentioned earlier in an article in this book. Tom Kamara knew of course that repetition is an important way to make his cause, especially when there is a time gap between the publication of two articles about the same subject. But in a book, this is less expedient.
2. The topic Tom addressed is too far away from the original scope of the article – that could distract the reader's interest to read on. The place where a paragraph is deleted, is marked with (...).

Tom Kamara was critical because he loved Liberia. He wrote about the many sides of the first African republic, often saying loud 'This, Too, is Liberia'.

Rachael Kamara
Leo Platvoet
Jimmy S. Shilue

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Maps

1: Liberia, West Africa, Africa



2: National capital Monrovia, the 15 counties of Liberia and their capitals



3: Language and ethnic groups

