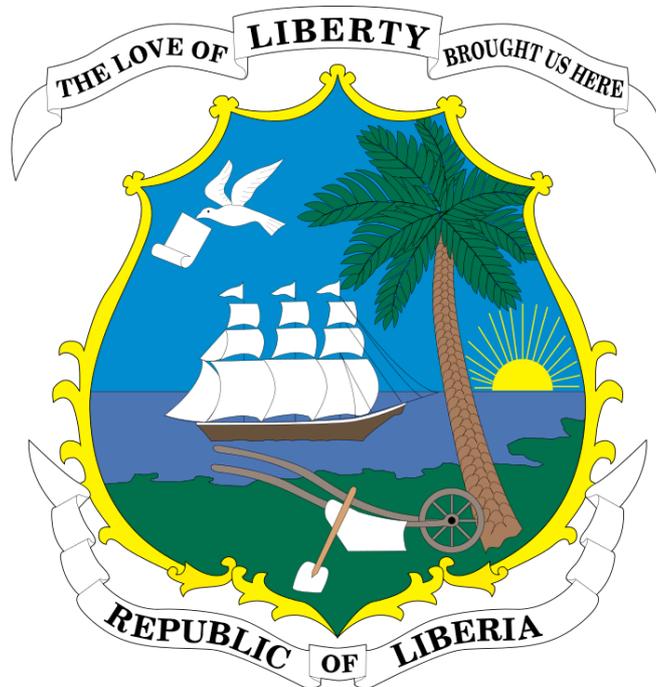

A Celebration of a Life



In Memory of Honorable Cyril A. Allen, II

Special Tribute

Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Republic of Liberia

by
H.E Axel M. Addy
Minister

Bella Casa Hotel, 4:00PM

Thursday, March 24, 2016
Monrovia, Liberia



Madam President,
Mr. Vice President,
Colleagues,
Members of the Allen Family,
Friends,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good Afternoon.

Introduction

1. To quote the famous Greek philosopher, Marcus Tullius Cicero, “The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.”
2. Today we are gathered here to celebrate a life of many memories, the Honorable Cyril Afam, Allen, II, Deputy Minister for Trade Services, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Republic of Liberia; a son, a husband, a father, a brother, a good good friend to so many, a colleague, a compatriot, a son of the soil.
3. It is very very very hard to fathom that he is not here with us and the pain lingers on as a reminder of the person he is. A young vibrant life snatched from us just too soon.
4. There is a certain sense invincibility that comes youth that ignores the reality of death because we have our lives so way ahead of us and so this hurts when youth is interrupted – there is no cure for such pains of such an interruption.

The General

5. Today I am tasked with giving the tribute on behalf of the Ministry of Commerce in celebration of the Life of Cyril and the many contributions he made as Deputy Minister for Administration and then Deputy Minister of Trade Services as my Principal Deputy.
6. He joined the Commerce and Industry family in 2013, and like me, took on the position of Deputy Minister for Administration where he served until 2014 when he was promoted to Deputy Minister for Trade Services as my Principal Deputy.
7. During his tenure he became lovingly known as the General because of his directness and his ability to ruffle feathers that just simply got the job done. So many many of us in Commerce fondly feel his presence in so many ways in the building. He was also a minister of the people, a down to earth guy that did not let the title be a stage to perform on when there is an audience but a stage where the performance led to tangible results whether the audience liked it or not.
8. And so I have many memories of the energetic minister, our General. We formed a unique bond in executing our rebranding Commerce strategic plan agenda. He was the bad cop, I was the good cop and we often said the train for transforming Commerce has



left the station, you are either on it or off it, but its not slowing down, its not waiting for you. And among many of the stories is one I fondly remember of the General in Action.

9. When has was DMA, the senior management team of the Ministry made a decision that all Deputy Ministers will move from the top floor to their respective departments floor to be close to the people they supervised. Many seem to drag their feet when it came to implementation and so I called Cyril and told him Mr. DMA, why has the team not moved to their floors-and he went on to explain, and I said to him, well, I want them on their floor before I get back. Well Cyril, put on his General hat, mobilized all the many power and implemented move or be moved and I return to some unhappy Deputies, but guest what, they were on their floors.
10. Today much of what we have achieved in implementing our five years strategy bears his footprint. From the rebranding of the Ministry of Commerce building to Green and White, to the establishment of the Customer Service Center, to elimination of ghost names on our payroll, to increasing the minimum salary of our lowest ranking employees to leading the domestic response on the WTO accession process during tough negotiations. He held the fort as a reliable, confident lieutenant, never undermining or disrespecting anyone and a reflection of his upbringing, despite his title never referred to any of our elders, junior or senior staff by their first name. He left an impression on international guest and our partners.
11. He was the guy that held the conversation about football with the security, the guy who will dig in his pocket and help a staff in need of assistance, he would pick up the paper on the floor if he saw it, he would be just as comfortable playing football with the staff and talking all the rude colloqua Liberian jokes, as he would be wowing our international and local guests, friends and partners, with his command of multiple languages and accents and a wealth of history. During every single SME conference, I could always count on him being by my side the day before the conference screaming at folks, lifting equipment and furniture, building the stage, rallying the staff to lend a hand and work together most times until midnight to make sure Commerce the brand was adequately presented. And in most cases with jokes and smiles all the way.
12. Lately he was passionately working with the various Agriculture and Manufacturing Taskforce to get deliverables done. He was what I called an owner of the institution with vested interest in protecting it and so it was no surprise to get his strong reaction no matter who, no matter where, when he felt the institution policies or decisions were under attack. He enjoyed his work and epitomized what I believe an essential quality of a minister. He was never hung on the title, he was hung on life, and building relationships with people to get results.
13. He was not only my colleague; he was my friend and brother.



Gone too soon

14. These last couple of weeks have been a painful and difficult one for me because I keep hearing that voice that said to me, deliverables or no deliverables, you are not well, get out of here, because I would not know what to say to Fatu, to only arrive in the US, get on heavy meds to only get a call from my wife at 2AM on a Saturday morning, to tell me this story. It hurt, it hurt, it hurt. It left me completely incapacitated. This is not how the story was to end.
15. Many of our friends who know us know us as the scary man and the bold man. He was bold. I first encounter that boldness when he began to pursue my friend Jess several years ago and you know the rest of the story. The weekend before my departure, we had gone to Robertsports, Grand Cape Mount County to see the Ministry of Agriculture World Bank funded fishing project, to meet with the business community in Robertsports and to visit a young Liberian doing a fishing business there. There he promised that we would launch mobile registration on March 15th, and I whisper to him and showed him my phone where I had put that deadline on my calendar, and we laughed.
16. We decided to stay on to go and visit the famous Japanese funded Bridge projects and so we stayed at Nana Lodge. What was interesting was that it was the first time we had hung out in a long time, as we usually would do New Year eve together every year with our wives, our own little tradition. But he and I sat on that beach in Robertsports talking for hours about the life we have been fortunate to live with age on our side, and the years we look forward to one day becoming embarrassments to our daughters. But we said if we were called today, we would have no regrets because we lived a fortunate life of so many fond memories with friends and family.
17. Today I stand here before you and I feel deprived of a friend and brother whom our families share three generations of many memories. Today, just about every week, our daughters have their play dates and on so many weekends we are on the beach with them. Cyril is gone too soon; I find it hard to go to Commerce because we had our routine morning chats, our lecture our funny gees. I find it hard to hold a meeting because the seat to my right is empty; the guy that cracks the joke to break the seriousness is not there. I miss the big smile, the larger than life personality, the obnoxious interjections to get people riled up, the countless jokes in several languages and accents, the dance offs, sing offs, many travels, dinners, parties, everyweekend.com old-timers football games with the young 20s, just plain old good times. He is gone too soon. But he is never forgotten.
18. So Jess, I say to you, my so young nieces Nyssa and Lyla, I am sorry for our loss, and cannot begin to imagine the pain it has caused, but I want you to always remember, I have



his back and so I am here for you for as long God grants me each tomorrow. To the rest of the Allen family, take courage. Chief, Ma Zee, take courage, for Honorable Cyril Afam Allen, II, the Cyril we all know, is resting in a better place and wowing his new audience.

19. Rest my dear friend. Till we meet again.