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CHARGE DELIVERED FOR THE OPENING OF THE JUNE TERM OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, CIVIL LAW COURT A.D. 2026, BY CLLR. J. KENNEDY PEABODY

His Honor Yamie Quiqui Gbeisay Sr., Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia, Justices of the Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia present, His Honor Judge Nelson B. Chineh, other Judges present, the President and members of the Trial Judges Association, the President and members of the Liberia National Bar Association, the president and members of the Montserrado County Bar, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Liberia and all prosecutors of the Ministry of Justice, the Coordinator of the Public Defense and all Defense Counsels present, my esteemed Colleague Magistrates, the Clergy, the Fourth Estate, Clerical Staff and Ministerial Officers, Party Litigants, distinguish ladies and gentlemen.

Before I proceed further with this Opening Charge for the June Term A.D. 2026 of the Sixth Judicial Circuit, Civil Law Court, Montserrado County, I consider it appropriate and necessary to first return all honor, glory, and thanksgiving to the Almighty God, whose grace and mercy have sustained us all. In a world filled with uncertainties, challenges, sicknesses, dangers, and even death, God has once again preserved our lives and granted us the uncommon privilege to witness the opening of another term of court. For this blessing alone, we owe Him sincere gratitude and humble reverence.

For me personally, this moment is profoundly emotional and deeply meaningful. Having been away from the Judiciary for approximately sixteen months, or one year and four months, I stand before this Court today with a heart filled with gratitude to God for His amazing kindness, protection, and faithfulness throughout that period. There were moments of uncertainty and reflection, yet through it all, God remained steadfast and merciful. He not only preserved my life but also strengthened my spirit, renewed my hope, and surrounded me with goodwill, encouragement, and genuine friendship from many remarkable people whose support I will forever appreciate.

Today, I return with renewed purpose, humility, and determination. I am genuinely happy and honored to be back within the Judiciary and to resume the solemn responsibilities entrusted to me under the law and Constitution of the Republic of Liberia. I return ready to work diligently, impartially, and faithfully in the service of justice and the Liberian people. It is my prayer that the Almighty God will continue to guide this Court, bless every officer of the Court, protect our nation, and grant us wisdom as we discharge our respective duties during this June Term and beyond.

As we gather at the opening of this Term of Court, it is necessary that we reflect not only upon the administration of justice, but also upon the moral and constitutional responsibilities entrusted to us as custodians of the law and guardians of democratic order.

History teaches painful lessons to nations that ignore justice, suppress truth, and abuse power. In Liberia, the events of April 12, 1980, and the tragic fourteen years of civil conflict did not emerge in a vacuum. Those dark chapters of our history were fueled by accumulated grievances, inequality, abuse of office, suppression of dissent, tribal exclusion, and the persistent denial of fairness and dignity to fellow citizens. Therefore, I have decided to discuss the Topic: **"THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF HATRED AND ITS THREAT TO DEMOCRACY, RECONCILIATION, AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT."**

When people are denied justice, unlawfully suppressed, humiliated, or punished through fabricated accusations and misuse of authority, they do not easily forget. Wounds unattended become bitterness; bitterness becomes hatred; hatred becomes division; and division ultimately destroys peace, reconciliation, and national development. This is why the vicious cycle of hatred continues.

Today, I speak not to encourage impunity, lawlessness, or disorder. Rather, I speak in defense of lawful conduct, constitutional democracy, accountability, and respect for the rule of law. Public authority must never be used as a weapon for personal revenge, vendetta, intimidation, or the settling of private disputes. Officials who occupy positions of trust must

remember that power is temporary, but the consequences of injustice are lasting.

Mr. Chief Justice, Madam President, my fellow colleagues of the Bar, ladies and gentlemen, the law must always stand above personal interest. No official should use his or her office to tarnish the reputation of another person without substantial evidence. No authority should manipulate processes, manufacture falsehoods, distort facts, or weaponized institutions against subordinates merely because of personal disagreements or grievances. Such conduct undermines confidence in public institutions and weakens the moral foundation of democratic governance.

A constitutional democracy survives because it can withstand scrutiny, criticism, truth, and accountability. But when authority begins to circumvent the law, abuse due process, intimidate subordinates, and suppress dissent through fear and misinformation, democracy itself is placed in danger. When the rule of law and human rights are threatened, our democracy is threatened as well. And this sets a dangerous precedent.

Mr. Chief Justice, Madam President, my esteemed colleagues of the Bar, it is safe to say that the greatest threat to any society is the normalization of abuse of office. History has repeatedly shown that when institutions become instruments of personal retaliation rather than justice, social cohesion collapses. Trust between citizens, institutions, and their employees erodes. Reconciliation becomes difficult. Development suffers. Relationships are broken. Fear replaces cooperation, and hatred quietly grows beneath the surface.

We must ask ourselves these difficult questions: When public officials favor only their kinsmen, tribesmen, friends, or loyal associates above more competent citizens or employees, is that not nepotism and corruption?

When employees are used as spies to eavesdrop on fellow employees, is that leadership or intimidation?

When lies are manufactured against innocent persons in order to justify punishment, can such actions truly command loyalty, respect, or legitimacy?

Can subordinates genuinely submit to authority when authority itself abandons fairness and truth?

In my view, these are clearly substantial issues and are not merely administrative failures; they are moral failures that poison institutions and divide society. And while some may believe that power protects them from accountability, history proves otherwise.

No one is above reproach. No office is permanent.

No authority is eternal. Therefore, Public institutions, especially the Judiciary, must be seen as a place of hope and justice.

This country will never move forward if leaders dislike someone only because he or she is not their choice. Unity and love build a nation, but hate is a curse to a people and a nation. These are the causes of institutional breakdown.

The Holy Scriptures remind us in the Book of Galatians 6:7: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Likewise, Numbers 32:23 declares: "Be sure your sin will find you out."

Truth buried under intimidation does not disappear.

The grievances of victims hidden under the rug of power do not vanish before God or before history.

Reality cannot forever be suppressed by influence, threats, or manipulation. The Scriptures further remind us in Proverbs 21:15: "When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers." And Ecclesiastes 3:16 warns us: "In the place of judgment, wickedness was there, and in the place of justice, iniquity was there." These verses are solemn reminders that justice is not merely a legal obligation; it is a divine and moral duty.

Public officials must therefore exercise restraint, humility, fairness, and integrity in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Leadership must never become bullying.

Authority must never become oppression.

Governance must never become personal warfare against perceived enemies.

Those who misuse their offices against innocent persons often believe intimidation will permanently silence their victims. But intimidation does not erase truth. It only postpones accountability and deepens resentment.

It is not enough to be concerned with the process of administering justice; those administering justice should be equally concerned with the perception of the citizens, their subordinate employees, and residents of the way and manner they apply justice. We should be seeing justice being done. In so doing, this very arm of government should be the shining example among the institutions of government. We therefore condemn institutional oppression and suppression.

And herein lies the danger.

When people are repeatedly humiliated, falsely accused, marginalized, or denied fairness, society plants the seeds for future conflict. Victims may remain silent today, but future generations inherit those grievances. Children grow up remembering how their parents were mistreated. Communities remember who abused power. The hatred quietly survives and reproduces itself from one generation to another.

Then, whenever an opportunity for retaliation emerges, the cycle begins again. This endless cycle of hatred undermines reconciliation, weakens democracy, discourages investment, destroys relationships, and obstructs national development. A divided society cannot prosper. A fearful workplace cannot inspire productivity. Institutions built on favoritism and intimidation cannot command lasting respect.

That is why we must choose a different path. We must commit ourselves to democratic principles rooted in fairness, truth, due process, equality,

and respect for human dignity. We must build institutions where the law governs all persons equally, regardless of status, tribe, influence, or political affiliation.

The rule of law must prevail over the rule of personalities. As officers of justice, we bear a sacred responsibility to ensure that our courts remain places where truth prevails over manipulation, evidence prevails over fabrication, and justice prevails over personal vendetta.

We must remember that one day every public official will leave office. And when that day comes, those whom we mistreated, suppressed, falsely accused, or humiliated will remain members of the same society in which our children, relatives, and friends must continue to live.

For this reason, wisdom demands restraint. The future of Liberia and the Judiciary cannot be built upon hatred, tribalism, intimidation, falsehood, abuse of office, and institutional injustice. Our future must instead be built upon fairness, dignity, reconciliation, mutual respect, and accountability. Let us therefore seize this moment to strengthen our institutions, restore confidence in justice, and reject every form of abuse that threatens our democracy.

Let us reject the misuse of authority for personal scores.

Let us reject manufactured lies and unlawful punishment.

Let us reject favoritism, intimidation, and suppression.

And let us remember that peace is sustained not merely by silence, but by justice.

In closing, permit me to remind us all of the words of Micah 6:8: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

May we, as a nation, as an institution, and as servants of the law, choose justice over hatred, truth over falsehood, reconciliation over division, and humility over abuse of power. To stop the abuse of office, suppression, fabricated allegations, abuse of authority, social division, and creating stumbling blocks to reconciliation, and the moral responsibility of public

officials. We need to stop all the illegal acts to avoid **"The Vicious Cycle of Hatred."**

Finally, with the authority in us vested by virtue of the Mandates of His Honor Yamie Quiqui Gbeisay, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia, to hold and preside over the affairs of the Sixth Judicial Circuit, Civil Law Court and its Annex for the June Term A. D. 2026 of court, we respectively through this charge hereby declare the said Circuit open for the transaction of business. **AND IT IS HEREBY SO ORDERED.**