

## STATEMENT OF HIGH RECOMMENDATION

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**To: All potential business clients and organizational partners**

It is my honor to write this letter of high recommendation for the ***Christian Outreach Justice Mission of Sierra Leone (Comin-SL)*** under the direction of Rev. Peter Alfred based in Freetown, Sierra Leone as it seeks to contract or partner with you ***to manage the logistics of designing and implementing programs*** on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone.

Please permit me to provide a context for this letter of support. I am an African-American born in the United States. It is often the wish of descendants of enslaved people, who have been denied knowledge of their ancestry, to seek such knowledge. In 2005 through DNA testing and matching, I learned that I had ancestry in both my maternal and paternal lineages to the two major tribes in Sierra Leone: the Mende and Temne. My first desire was to go to Sierra Leone to meet my ancestral people from whom my family had been separated for over 250 years as a result of the Atlantic Slave Trade.

On that "ancestral journey" over a decade ago I met Rev. Peter Alfred and his dedicated staff. I visited Freetown and went into the more rural villages of "Mendeland" which is in the south eastern part of Sierra Leone. I was struck by several things: the damage to the infrastructure created by the 10 year civil war, the depth of poverty and the overwhelming number and complexity of ***basic needs*** of people, the lack of resources, and the logistical challenges of getting around. But what overwhelmed me the most was the tenacious spirit and generosity of the people of Sierra Leone in the face of such adversity. I swelled with pride to be descended from them!

When I returned to the US, I created a small non-profit which was funded only from my personal funds and those of my extended family and extended circle of friends. We were able to repair one village school and create and staff a small primary health care clinic which operated for a few years. We also paid for clothing and school fees for promising students whose families were too poor to pay school fees and some of the children we assisted had been orphaned during the civil war.

We needed trusted partners on the ground to handle the funds we sent to purchase supplies and equipment, select and feed local villagers who supplied the labor, and generally oversee the execution of repairs to physical structures, staff selection for provision of services, and the overall quality of the work. That is when I was introduced to Rev. Peter Alfred and Comin-SL staff through my colleague, Mr. Edward Benya, who at that time was working for USAID. His endorsement of this organization was sufficient for me and it remained so for over a decade and to the present.

As I moved into semi-retirement with the caretaking responsibility for two aging and frail parents and as my son devoted more time to building his career and forming a family, our financial resources to sustain my little organization were insufficient and we closed it. However, we did accomplish a great deal and that was largely due to our "boots on the ground" partners in Comin-SL and their dedicated assistance in our efforts. I can speak to their efficiency, transparency and reliability. I received routine reports on the progress of the work and detailed fiscal accounting of all funds sent including the provision of receipts. It is an organization that functions on honesty, transparency and careful stewardship of funds provided to them for the execution of agreed upon tasks and contract deliverables.

I recommend them highly and without reservation.

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