

**INVITATION TO VISIT UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES FOR THE DEAF IN USA –
SEPT. 15 TO NOV. 10, 2012
KOFI ODUM, FOUNDER / PRESIDENT – FRIENDS OF THE HANDICAPPED INT. (FHI)**

Following the historic visit of a team of 9 missionaries led by the Pastor, Van Sliger and Dr. William Les Moss from God's Storehouse of Blessings Church (GSBC) in Tennessee, USA to Ghana on 11-22 October 2010, whose mission was initially for adoption and after they had been touched with a need to donate to equip the Carpentry Department of Cape Coast School for the Deaf Vocational Complex, the Church further developed love for FHI's development activities and programs.

The Church was impressed by one of the long term objectives of FHI which stated categorically in their website, on the last paragraph of the link <http://www.fhi-ghana.com/whatdoes.html> that "FHI intends to establish among others, a Sign Language Centre, Polytechnic and/or a University for the Deaf to put in place the non existence of any tertiary institution for the Deaf in West Africa. So, barely two years later, God's Storehouse of Blessings Church started communicating with FHI on how best they could help realize this high calling of establishing such a wonderful institution to serve the Deaf community in Ghana and other West African countries.

God's Storehouse of Blessings searched through the net in order to contact the Colleges and Universities in the United States of America who are facilitating the education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. They found National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), in Rochester, NY, Gallaudet University in Washington DC, Tennessee School for the Deaf at Knoxville, TN, and Tennessee School for the Blind at Nashville, TN. The Church therefore recommended the founder and President of Friends of the Handicapped International, Kofi Odum to the Universities and the Colleges to invite him into their institutions for Classrooms observations, interactions, discussions and to meet with their top blasts on the development of deaf educational issues.

THE INVITATIONS

When the Lord put such a high calling on my heart to establish such an institution for the deaf, little did I believe that such a reality will soon happen after a decade of making it known to the world via our website, <http://www.fhi-ghana.com> I was therefore surprised when I started receiving invitations from these Universities and Colleges to visit them in order to share ideas, observe their classrooms lecturing, tour their campuses and meet with their top hierarchies on how FHI could possibly be helped or partner with them to carry on our programs and activities of establishing a higher institution like theirs.

THE VISITS/FUNDING OF THE TRIP

After the invitations had been received from the Universities and the Colleges, there came another big challenge of funding the two months trip to the 3 states of USA – Tennessee, New York and Washington DC, where the Universities and the Colleges are located. This is an official business trip which FHI must bear the full expenses including the round Air fair, hotel accommodation, feeding, transportation within the 3 states, insurance coverage while in the USA and other incidental expenses. It was a big challenge because there was virtually nothing in the coffers of FHI for the trip. I communicated the financial position to GSBC. Again, the Lord touched the hearts of the Church and the leaders accepted my humble plea of fully sponsoring the trip. I received a letter from the GSBC promising me that based on receiving a USA visa, the Church was going to send me a round trip Air fair ticket, free accommodation,

feeding, transportation while in the USA on FHI travels to the colleges, insurance coverage, and other benefits. True to the faithfulness of our God whom we serve, He caused to approve everything concerning the trip to USA from September 15 to November 10, 2012.

THE TENNESSEE HOST FAMILY

On the 15th of September 2012 at about 9.05pm I departed from Accra Airport with Lufthansa Airlines on Flight 567 on board with Boeing 737 Aircraft to Frankfurt. I continued the journey on the 16th Sept. from Frankfurt Airport at 12.20pm with the United Airlines on Boeing 777 Jet Aircraft to arrive at Washington Dulles Airport on 9 hours flight. I joined another flight from Washington Dulles Airport to arrive Knoxville, TN Airport at about 10.45pm. I was met at the Knoxville Arrival Hall by over 10 members of GSBC, led by the Pastor, Van Sliger and Dr. William Les Moss to take me to the home of Dr. W Les Moss at 401 County Road 709 Riceville, TN 37370. I stayed with the Les Moss Riceville home for 1 week and continued to the Universities and Colleges.

VISIT TO THE RIT/NTID CAMPUSES

I left the Les Moss residence at Riceville to start the actual visits to the Universities and Colleges on the 23rd September, 2012. And at about 4.45pm, I arrived at the "Greyhound" Bus Station in Athens, TN to board their bus enroute from Athens TN, Cleveland OH, Buffalo NY and finally arrived at Rochester NY Greyhound Bus Station on the following day, 24th Sept. at about 3.30pm. The journey was about 900 miles from Athens TN to Rochester NY. I was so fortunate that, Dr. Karen Christie, Associate Professor, NTID's Dept. of Cultural and Creative Studies met me at the arrival hall of the Greyhound Bus Terminals at Rochester, took my baggage into her car and drove me to the Campus of NTID. She led me to my booked guest house at the NTID Campus and handed an electronic Card to me in order to have access to the main entrance of the Guest House block. She took me to an African Shop where she bought some food items for me to enjoy my own African diet. On the following day, she gave me a duty schedule for my visit there.

Meeting with the President of NTID & others

Even though, the President of NTID and also the Vice President & Dean of RIT, Dr. Gerard J. Buckley, at about 10.00am on the 25th Sept., I learnt, was on his way for a very important meeting outside USA, had time for me to listen to the mission of my visit to his highly esteemed university. He welcomed and commended me for having good thoughts for the development of Deaf education in my country. He referred me to his colleagues to take care of my requests to see how best we can work together in the near future.

With Bill at CAT & PEN-International Offices

From the President's office, Dr. Karen Christie led me to Dr. E. William Clymer, an Associate Professor at NTID/RIT who is also Associate Director of Center on Access Technology (CAT) at NTID and also served as the Associate Director of Postsecondary Education Network (PEN) International at NTID. Clymer, who is fondly called Bill, readily welcomed me and organized a meeting at his office with me to listen to the mission of my visit to NTID. I informed him of FHI's missionary statement, <http://www.fhi-ghana.com/whatis.html> our involvement and passion for the development of deaf education and our quest to put in place, the non existence of any tertiary institution like a Polytechnic or University for the Deaf in Ghana to serve other West African Deaf communities. I enquired from Bill, if FHI could partner with NTID for Exchange Programs, whereby FHI could send Deaf students and/or Educators for short courses at NTID and NTID Educators might also be posted to Ghana on Deaf educational issues. Bill said it could be possible but the question of funding such programs was raised. He said, the mighty infrastructures and heavily equipments and educational facilities I see at the NTID are all from the

American Federal Government's funding. Bill continued that they cannot send anything worth even a dollar from the University to help develop any needy institution outside NTID. However there are other organizations and individual philanthropists who have the interest to help fund deaf and hard of hearing educational programs, who could be contacted for a possible funding if our proposals fall within their requirements, Bill concluded. From Bill's office, I was taken to a Restaurant for a business lunch from where I continued the day for Classroom Observations.

Class Observations

I was privileged to sit with students in the lecture rooms to observe the following professors imparting their rich knowledge to their students with an amazing passion. From what I saw, I wished some of the teachers or staff from the Ghana Education Service and other parents of the deaf accompanied me to observe how teaching and learning was going on there. It would have helped to change our attitude towards the way we regard our children with disabilities' education better and encourage higher learning for them. The professors with their classes were:

Dr. Mindy Hopper	English
Dr. Susan Lane-Outlaw	English Language Development
Dr. Todd Pagano	Introduction to Laboratory Science & Technology (LST)
Mitchell Bacot	Elements of Trigonometry
Thomastine Sarchet	Assessment
Michael Skyer	Intensive English
Dr. Christopher Kurz	Foundations of Educational Research

I was led by a staff from the NTID Admissions to tour the campuses. I was astonished to see magnificent buildings at the NTID Quarter-Mile Village. I was told, all the students and the alumni with their parents and friends were levied at least a Quarter-Dollar to raise enough funds for that Project.

NTID/FHI REPS MEETING

On the last day of my 1 week visit to NTID, 3 official members from NTID – Bill Clymer, Erin Mathiz and Karen Christie met with me at Bill's office to finally decide how best NTID and FHI could team together to help establish the University for the Deaf in Ghana. Dr. Karen Christie was appointed as a Coordinator to champion the cause of FHI's interest to monitor and help speed up matters with regard to FHI projects. The meeting also agreed to direct how FHI should write its proposals and channel it through them to some interested donors.

Good Bye from RIT/NTID

I checked off from the Visitors Block at NTID on the Sunday Sept.30 at about 6.00pm. As usual, Dr. Karen Christie helped packed my luggage into her vehicle, took me to a restaurant for a dinner and later drove me to Greyhound Bus Terminal at Rochester NY at about 7.00pm.

Journey Towards Gallaudet University

The Greyhound Bus departed from Rochester NY by 10.00pm and journeyed through Syracuse NY, to New York City NY and finally arrived at Washington DC on Monday, October 1 about 9.15am. The journey was about 615 miles. By 9.30 am, the Lord had safely brought me to the Campus of Gallaudet University.

Meeting with Larry Musa, Global Education Specialist

By 10.00am, Monday Oct.1, I was directed to the office of the Center for International Programs and Services (OIPS) to meet with Mr. Larry Musa, the Global Education Specialist. He welcomed me and

listened to the mission of my visit to Gallaudet University. He directed me to the Guest House and as usual, I was given an access electronic card to the block and a room for my stay.

Oct.2-5, 2012

Class Observations

A similar Itinerary from what I had at RIT/NTIM was also given to me at the Gallaudet University. And at the Gallaudet, I was privileged to meet the following officers at their offices and classrooms:

Ms Roberta Gage, Event Planner/Visitors & Alumni Relations at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD)

Ms Amy Malone English

Mr. Mark Tao Physical Science Class

Ms Mindi Failing Meeting with the Principal, MSSD

Again met with Ms Gage, front lobby of Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES)

Met with Ms Susan Schatz, Transitional Leadership Team Leader of KDES

Observed Ms Anna Rice's 7th grade Math Class

Observed Ms Francisca Rangel's American Sign Language (ASL) class.

Meeting with Dr. Asiah Maison, Office of the President

I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Asiah Maison, Manager of International Relations at the office of the President on the fourth day of my visit to Gallaudet University. Dr. Maison was very pleased with me when she listened with interest to my mission at their University. She also told me a similar story I was told at NTID that it is the American government who is funding every project at the campus, therefore they as workers cannot do anything to help fund FHI projects. She however said that, there could be funding possibilities from other individual foundations and organizations who, when contacted might open their doors to us. She concluded that FHI should follow up for more discussions to see how best they could work together to help implement FHI intended projects.

End of my Trip at Gallaudet University

According to the schedule of my invitation to the Gallaudet, I brought the end of my visit to Gallaudet University on Friday, October 5, 2012 at 2.00 pm and checked off from the Visitors Guest House.

Journey Back to Riceville, TN

At about 4.00pm on Friday, October 5, I found my way to Greyhound Bus Terminals in Washington DC to join their bus back to Dr. Moss residence at 401 County 709 Road, Riceville, Tennessee. The bus took us from Washington DC through Charlottesville, VA, Knoxville TN and finally arrived on the following day, Oct. 6, in Athens TN at 6.40 on a journey of about 600 miles. Unfortunately, the bus delayed us when the original schedule was changed, so instead of arriving in Athens, it was arrived in Knoxville at about 8.00am. Dr. Les Moss took all the pain and drove from Athens at about 6.30am to pick me at the Greyhound Bus Station in Knoxville at about 8.30am when I communicated the change in the arrival schedule to him.

Visits to Tennessee School for the Deaf & Blind

The last two of my visits to the Colleges were Tennessee School for the Deaf at Knoxville and the Tennessee School for the Blind at Nashville on the 9th of October and 1st of November 2012 respectively. All these two visits were accompanied by Dr. William Les Moss and his daughter, Elizabeth who works with the Special Education Office in Athens TN as a Coordinating Officer. Elizabeth was glad to have accompanied us to the Colleges since the visits relate to her field monitoring work.

At Tennessee School for the Deaf, we were received by the Director of Instruction, Madam Elaine Alexander, who took us to her office and listened to the mission of my visit. She then coordinated our visits, took us round to the classrooms to observe how the teachers were imparting their knowledge to the pupils and the students. She also led us to tour the campus. Comparing their infrastructure – school departmental buildings, the heavily equipments and materials with the modern electronic devices for teaching and learning, the gap between them and that of Ghana schools for the deaf or blind is so wide that, I can't imagine the years that will take us to reach them. After the campus tour, we were led to the Dinning Hall for a lunch. Madam Alexander then finally took us to a last meeting with the Superintendent, Alan J. Mealka, who also listened attentively to the mission of my visit, which is FHI seeking partnership and/or collaboration from all these institutions to enable us establish either Polytechnic or University for the Deaf in Ghana. We also met the following officers for usual interactions:

Mark Battle, High School General Principal	Kaye West, Vocational Technical Principal
Lynn Andrick, Elementary School Principal	Steve Farmer, Director of Student Living
Bev Gibson, Director of Social Services	

Other Places of Interest & Privileges

As a free lance Evangelist of the Word of God, I was privileged to mount the Pulpits of the following Churches to share the Word of God and also to inform the congregation the purpose of my visit to USA:

1. Sunday Oct.21, Preached at the Mount Harmony Baptist Church, Athens TN
2. Sun. Oct 28, Mounted the Pulpit of Woodland Acres Baptist Church at Calhoun, TN
3. Sun. Nov.4, Led the Bible Class of God's Storehouse of Blessings Church, Riceville, TN

On October 12, Pastor Van Sliger of GSBC and I visited Rev. Richard S. Brown, Jr., the Pastor of Payne Avenue Baptist Church at Knoxville TN 37914 on a friendly invitation.

CONCLUSION

This project of establishing a University for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Ghana is a noble project and high calling for you to be involved. FHI believes that the purpose of this visit is God's sent, therefore, all glory, honor and thanks belong to our Heavenly Father who causes to do marvelous things in anywhere on this earth just as He has done for RIT/NTID, Gallaudet University, and other Colleges for the Deaf and Blind in USA, is able to do likewise for the Deaf and Blind communities in Ghana and other African countries, therefore, let us all with on heart and mind humbly say, GOD our Father, use even us to cause this project to happen in Ghana for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to your GLORY, AMEN!!

GRATITUDE & APPRECIATION

As FHI gives glory, honor and thanks to God our Heavenly Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, we also wish to give our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the following children of God from God's Storehouse of Blessings Church (GSBC) in Riceville, Tennessee who allowed God to use them to become sponsors of this trip:

To the Pastor, Van Sliger, and Dr. William Les Moss, who engineered the whole trip, Brothers Jacky Cook, Philip Cook, Roy Randolph Fling, Donald Maloney and the entire congregation, we say, AYEKOO and God's richest blessings be on you!

We also recognize the role played by RIT/NTID staff and thank them for their positive promises and assurances to collaborate with all our efforts to make our dreams happen. We therefore salute the following: Dr. Gerard J. Buckley, Dr. Karen Christie, Bill Clymer, Erin Mathiz just to mention a few.

At Gallaudet University, Tennessee School for the Deaf and Blind, you were exceptional with your special reception given to us, we really appreciated it.

PRAYER REQUEST

Even though our thanks to God indicate that we believe that He has already started implementing this project, yet since it has not been manifested, let us like Isaiah said in (Isaiah 62:6) "Take no rest, all you who pray. Give the LORD no rest until he makes (FHI) Jerusalem the object of praise throughout the earth, so please join us in your daily prayers and humbly remind our God to cause to manifest the constructing of the University for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Ghana.

Please while praying, start action by sending in your church's or organization's or individual building materials like cement, iron rods, roofing sheets, nails or money worth of such materials to our sponsors

at God's Storehouse of Blessings Church in Tennessee, attention of Dr. William Les Moss, 401 County 709 Road, Riceville TN 37370 or call +1423 507 7875 or "William" mossycove@comcast.net

info@fhi-ghana.com or fhikodum@yahoo.com or kofiodum9@gmail.com or to P O BOX GP 20275, ACCRA, GHANA.

We are thankful to all of you and hope that you will all really play your role and allow God to use us to make this noble project happen soonest to the glory and honor of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your Humble Servant in Christ,

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