

Carl Gershman Democracy Lecture Forum

DEMOCRACY INSIGHT

Equipping the next generation
of activists



One of the best achievements of the 20th century was the spread of democracy and economic development on a global scale. Democracy has proven time and time again to be the best form of governance. It delivers economic and social gains as well as peace and stability. It enables voices to be heard, encourages participation, and allows for conflicts in society to be solved through peaceful means. Democratic societies stand stronger in an ever-changing world. Yet, democracy requires continuous attention and engagement.



It is from this backdrop that Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, headed by Eddie D. Jarwolo, an alumnus of the prestigious Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Program established the Democracy Lecture Forum in Liberia in 2019. After running this program successfully for two years, he rebranded it in honor of Carl Gershman in 2021 for his numerous contributions towards democracy. Carl Gershman has done tremendously well to fight for the promotion of democracy across the globe. For nearly 4 decades, the National Endowment for Democracy has been supportive to thousands of grassroots efforts around the world for the advancement of democracy. This was made possible through the sacrifice and commitment of Carl Gershman. He was the founding president of the National Endowment for Democracy and presided over the Endowment's grants program in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the former Soviet Union. He also supervised the creation of the quarterly Journal of Democracy, the International Forum for Democratic Studies, the Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Program, and the Center for International Media Assistance. In 1999, he led the launching of the World Movement for Democracy in New Delhi, India.

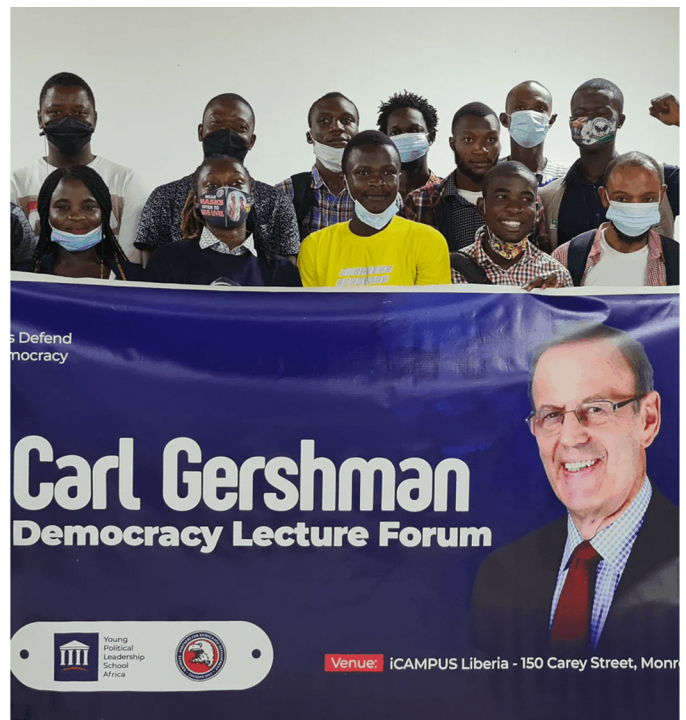
It is no secret that Gershman has fought hard to ensure that democracy thrives to the farthest corners of the earth even in the face of challenging environment of authoritarian resurgence.



Since its establishment, the Carl Gershman Democracy Lecture Forum has organized 12 democracy lecture series that brought together 900 young leaders and social activists from different political parties, civil society organizations, media institutions, religious organizations, etc. Speakers at these forums included ambassadors and several high-profile individuals. These lecture series have been pivotal in inspiring several young leaders to be committed to the principles of democracy with enough emphasis being placed on Political tolerance, citizen participation, political accountability, transparency amongst others.

This program has changed the perspectives of young people from seeing politics as an actual warfare which has to do with brutality, to seeing it as an exchange of ideas.

The success of the Democracy Lecture Forum has enthused the establishment of two other pro-democracy activities – High School Democracy Club and Democracy by Radio. The High School Democracy Club which is currently taking place in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Nigeria, and the Gambia is designed to help high school students understand democratic principles and deepen their understanding on how to influence democratic decision making. A total of 30 high schools across the five targeted countries are expected to benefit from the program. In an effort to extend the message of democracy to a much larger audience, Naymote is currently running Democracy by Radio, a radio program aired every Friday on one of Liberia's largest radio platforms with plans to relay on other community radio stations. Democracy by Radio usual hosts young leaders, specifically graduates of the Young Political Leadership School Africa, to better discuss the 13 fundamental principles of democracy.



The goal of democracy by Radio is to educate young people about their roles in a democratic society, help them grow and adhere to democratic values, norms, and ideas for the common good of Liberia when they excel in leadership positions. The show is also carried live on social media to allow other young people from outside of Liberia to hear the good news of democracy and sometimes share the status of democracy in their various homelands.



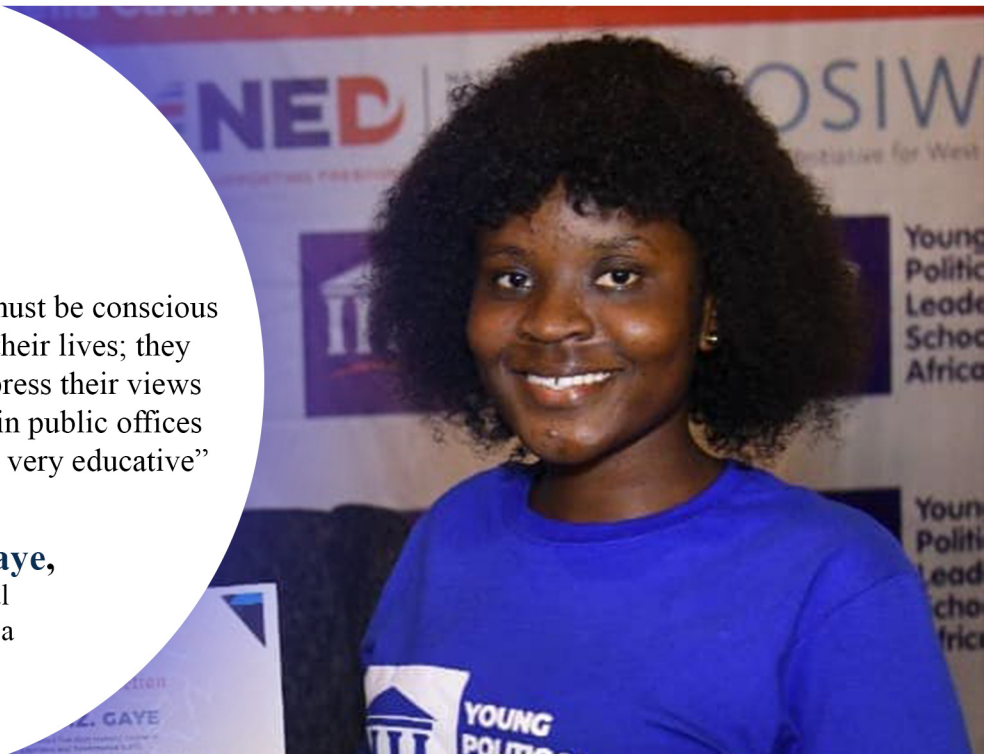
Currently, there is work in progress to converge 75 young leaders from the Mano River region – Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone in Freetown at a summit under the theme: “Electoral Integrity; an Ingredient for Political Accountability and Leadership”. This program is scheduled for the end of March this year and is aimed at increasing collaboration and networking amongst young political and socially active leaders within the MRU, provide opportunity for dialogues on mitigating electoral violence, fostering electoral integrity, political accountability, etc.

All of these initiatives and several other undertakings that support grassroots activities for the strengthening of social and political accountability and increase citizens participation in local decision-making are being inspired by the decades of service to democracy made by Carl Gershman.

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“For Democracy to deliver, citizens must be conscious enough of issues that can improve their lives; they must feel free to join together to express their views and preferences, thus holding those in public offices accountable. Democracy by Radio is very educative”

Wilnet Sara Zola Graye,
Alumna, Young Political
Leadership School Africa



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“The Carl Gershman Democracy Forum is actually changing the way young people interact politically. It has been very much enlightening and I want to appreciate Naymote for engaging with young people through this laudable initiative”

Alex Kayee, Alumnus,
Young Political Leadership School Africa

