



**PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA TO SPEAK  
AT FURMAN UNIVERSITY APRIL 13**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GREENVILLE, S.C.—Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, known as Africa’s “Iron Lady,” will visit Furman University Monday, April 13.

Her talk, a conversation with Furman president David E. Shi, will begin at 4 p.m. in McAlister Auditorium. Her visit is sponsored by Furman’s Riley Institute, and the speech is free and open to the public.

Johnson Sirleaf is the first woman elected to lead an African nation. A graduate of Harvard University and a former World Bank economist, she won the presidency in 2005 with almost 60 percent of the vote. The race initially included 22 men and pitted her against a popular former soccer player in Europe, George Weah, in a run-off.

Head of a country of some 3.5 million people on the west coast of Africa, Johnson Sirleaf has been recognized for her courage and commitment to expanding freedom and improving the lives of the people of war-torn Liberia and others across the African continent.

In 2007, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States’ highest civilian award. Her first book, *This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa’s First Woman President*, will be published in April by Harper Collins Publishers.

Johnson Sirleaf was born in Monrovia, the capital of the nation founded by former slaves. Her father served in the national legislature of Liberia, and her mother was born in Greenville, Liberia.

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The mother of four and grandmother of nine, Johnson Sirleaf has survived house arrest, prison, death threats and exile. She earned a master's degree in public administration from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and she has received honorary doctorates from Brown, Indiana and Marquette universities.

She had a wide-ranging career in economics and politics. She was the first woman to serve as Liberia's finance minister, held vice presidencies with Citibank and HSBC Equator Bank and was senior loan officer of the World Bank.

She was director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Program and made her first run for the Liberian presidency in 1997, finishing second. She chaired the Governance Reform Commission of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, but resigned in 2004 to become standard bearer of Liberia's Unity Party. She made her successful run for the presidency the following year.

In 2006, Forbes magazine named her the 51<sup>st</sup> most powerful woman in the world.

Sirleaf has served on international panels investigating issues from genocide in Rwanda to the role that women can play as peacemakers. She is the founder of Measuagoon, a nonprofit organization in Liberia involved in community development and the education of girls.

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