

## PROGRAM

### WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

David E. Shi  
*President, Furman University*

### REMARKS

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf  
*President, Republic of Liberia*

### CONVERSATION

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and David E. Shi

### PRESENTATION OF HONORARY DEGREE

David E. Shi  
and  
Richard W. Riley  
*former U.S. Secretary of Education  
and former Governor of South Carolina*

## THE RILEY INSTITUTE AT FURMAN

The Riley Institute at Furman is a non-partisan organization affiliated with the Department of Political Science at Furman University. Named for former Governor of South Carolina and United States Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, the institute engages students and citizens across South Carolina in the arenas of politics, public policy and leadership.

Since its inauguration in 1999, the Riley Institute has developed a broad array of community leadership programs, symposia and conferences designed to promote discussion and analysis of public policy issues. The institute also conducts research on education and other areas of public policy in South Carolina and nationally.

Through its promotion of engaged learning for students, leadership development, policy research, and conferences featuring internationally recognized speakers, the Riley Institute has established itself as an innovator in policy and public leadership education.

Visit the Riley Institute website at <[www.rileyinstitute.org](http://www.rileyinstitute.org)> for more information on future events and programs.

 President of the  
Republic of Liberia,  
*Her Excellency*  
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf  
in a conversation  
with Furman President  
David Shi

*Presented by*  
The Riley Institute® at Furman

April 13, 2009 at 4 p.m.  
*McAlister Auditorium, Furman University*



## CITATION

A leading promoter of peace, justice and democratic processes, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has worked tirelessly to bring about progressive changes in her native country of Liberia.

Her courageous efforts over many years have at times led tyrants to charge her with treason, imprison her for more than a year, and threaten her with execution. However, the risks did not deter her from continuing to work to free her country and remain a true champion of the rule of law.

Internationally, she is known as Africa's Iron Lady. Her relentless efforts have helped Liberia transition from a long period of abusive, chaotic and horrific dictatorships to a stable democratic government working to improve the lives of all its citizens.

In 2005 she was elected President of Liberia, becoming the first woman to lead an African nation. Her distinguished career includes a diploma from Harvard University and high ranking positions at the World Bank, Citicorp and HSB Equator. She also directed the United Nations Development Project for Africa. She has received numerous awards honoring her for her unselfish and significant contributions to the betterment of humankind.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, your personal courage and unwavering commitment to the pursuit of justice and peace are an inspiration to people around the world. By the authority vested in me by the charter and the trustees of Furman University, I hereby confer upon you the degree of DOCTOR OF HUMANITIES, with all its privileges and responsibilities.

David E. Shi,  
*President, Furman University*

## THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

Liberia stands alone in the modern history of Africa for its close relationship to the United States. Whereas the rest of African nations have historic ties to Europe, the origins of the modern Republic of Liberia are located on the other side of the Atlantic.

Starting in the early 19th century, the area on the west coast of Africa now known as Liberia was targeted by the American Colonization Society as a "repatriation" location for freed slaves. By the mid 1840s, a few thousand people had settled on the coast of what is today Liberia. In 1847 these "Americo-Liberians," as they came to be called, declared the formation of the Republic of Liberia. They named their capital Monrovia after U.S. President James Monroe, and modeled many of their other symbols and structures on the United States.

But the lands upon which the Americo-Liberians settled were hardly empty of people. In fact, the west coast of Africa was densely populated by peoples living in complex societies with distinct histories. The arrival of the black immigrants from North America added a volatile new group to the already complex mix.

For the most part, the Americo-Liberians saw themselves as enlightened settlers coming into contact with primitive peoples. By settling on the coast, they controlled access to the outside world and viewed the interior lands and its peoples as sources of raw materials and labor. They established a closed political system in which the interior peoples were mostly denied representation.

The Americo-Liberian dominance ended in 1980 when President William Tolbert was ousted in a coup led by Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe. As President, Doe governed in a highly authoritarian way and did little to develop Liberia. Civil war erupted in 1989 and 2003, with Americo-Liberian Charles Taylor playing a continual role as either liberating hero or warlord. It is estimated that more than 250,000 people died before Taylor went into exile in 2003.

Under UN guidance, elections were held in 2005 and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a Harvard-trained economist from a non Americo-Liberian family, emerged victorious. President Johnson Sirleaf is the first woman elected as President of an African country. Since taking office she has focused on reconciliation, education, and economic development and has brought significant stability to the country. Still, President Johnson Sirleaf faces the challenge of rebuilding a state and society devastated by years of conflict and abuse.

Today Liberia is home to more than 3.4 million people, 95% of whom are indigenous, or non Americo-Liberians. The economy is heavily dependent on exports of raw commodities, including diamonds and timber.

## FURMAN UNIVERSITY

From its position as a top-ranked independent, coeducational liberal arts college of 2,600 students, Furman University takes great pride in its impressive 750-acre campus, its gifted student body, its distinguished and active faculty, and in the many notable accomplishments of its alumni. The university's graduates include Nobel Prize winner Charles H. Townes, former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, Boston Pops conductor Keith Lockhart, former NFL coach Sam Wyche and LPGA Hall of Fame members Betsy King and Beth Daniel.

Furman emphasizes engaged learning, a hands-on, problem-solving and collaborative educational philosophy that encourages students to put into practice the theories and methods learned from texts and lectures. Committed to sustainability, diversity and the education of the whole person, the university provides a distinctive undergraduate education encompassing the humanities, fine arts, social sciences, mathematics and the natural sciences, and selected professional disciplines.

## DAVID E. SHI

David E. Shi has been president of Furman since 1994. Before that, he spent one year as Furman's vice president for academic affairs and dean and another 17 years teaching history at Davidson College. He is the author of *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* and co-author of the popular textbook *America: A Narrative History*. His columns and essays have been published in newspapers across the country and are heard regularly on South Carolina Educational Radio. He is a member of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*/*New York Times* Higher Education Cabinet, a group of presidents and chancellors charged with identifying the key issues and trends in higher education. A 1973 graduate of Furman, he holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in history from the University of Virginia.