

# Charlotte fund raiser helps Liberia education

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Sirleaf, the first woman elected president of an African nation, was keynote speaker at the N.C. Conference for Women at the Convention Center. Also appearing at the conference were Bennett College President Johnetta Cole and U.S. Sen. Elizabeth

Dole.

During her Charlotte visit, Johnson-Sirleaf toured the Afro-American Cultural Center and the Performance Learning Center, a non-traditional high school where students are encouraged to learn at their own pace using a computer-based curriculum.

Johnson-Sirleaf's U.S. tour went beyond education and women's empowerment. She spent a week negotiating

with Treasury Secretary John Snow and International Monetary Fund Managing Director Rodrigo deRato for

debt relief for Liberia, which owes \$3.7 billion to creditors. The country owes \$104 billion to the IMF. Johnson-

Sirleaf told *The Analyst* the process of debt reduction is slow, but hopes an agreement can be worked out next year.

## Obama considers presidential run

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First, he was asked about bipartisan attempts by former Indiana Congressman Lee Hamilton and former Secretary of State James



Obama

Baker to bring more international partners into the effort to rebuild Iraq. Obama called for "a renewed realism around our foreign policy

and a recognition that building alliances doesn't reflect weakness, it reflects our strength. We can defeat any nation on Earth but rebuilding democracies and creating order involves everybody."

Two predictable questions, posed in different ways, were directed to Obama about his thoughts on running for president in 2008. Although he didn't rule out the possibility, Obama said such questions are premature and his focus is on this year's election.

"I have actually focused on trying to get more Democrats in the House and Senate so I can get a bill passed," he joked. "As a member of the Illinois Legislature and as a U.S. senator, I've been in both the minority and the majority, and being in the majority is more fun."

On a serious note, he added that efforts to address issues like providing health care for children, controlling energy costs and finding a pragmatic way to "bring the troops home" can't be accomplished until there's "some balance" in Washington.

"People are responding to the fact that we have an ideologically driven group that has consolidated power and has lost touch with what ordinary people want," he stated.

Obama, who was born in 1961, was asked about his party's commitment to educating people about new laws passed by some states (including Indiana) that require voters to show a form of photo ID at the polls. He said minorities, low-income persons and seniors who are less likely to have a birth certificate or driver's license are all burdened by it.

"It's constitutionally problematic and I suspect that it will be challenged," Obama said. "I am confident the Democrats will ensure that we've got lawyers and others onsite in all polling places to make sure that the right to vote is protected. However, another concern is people who have the ID to vote and just aren't doing it because they feel too cynical about the political process."

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