



Title: Redemption Road: The Quest for Peace and Justice in Liberia (A Novel)

Author: Elma Shaw

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Synopsis:

Set in Monrovia during the administration of Liberia's former president, Charles Taylor, this riveting debut is a story of recovery, atonement, and the continuing quest for peace and justice in a nation plagued by conflict and inequalities since its founding by free blacks and former American slaves. Life in post-war Liberia is not easy, and it is especially challenging for Bendu Lewis, a young woman who counsels traumatized survivors of Liberia's civil war while struggling with memories of her own war-time experiences. When the warlord who once held her in captivity suddenly shows up in town, she decides that for her own healing, and for the voiceless victims of the war, she must bring him to justice for his past atrocities. In her pursuit of Commander Cobra, Bendu finds much more than she bargained for, including the courage to finally confront and make amends for her own painful war-time secret.

Reviews:

"The choices that Bendu makes teach lessons in much the way that Chinua Achebe aims at educating his African readers. Shaw has taken an enormously difficult theme and treated it convincingly after laying the horrific groundwork of what happens during time of awful warfare —especially to women. Atonement and renewal as Shaw develops them are believable and inspiring and exactly what so many potential readers in Africa need during these troubled times. I see *Redemption Road* finding many enthusiastic readers not only in Liberia, but also in Sierra Leone, South Africa, Rwanda, Congo—a list that sadly can be expanded too far."

— **Charles R. Larson**

Department of Literature, American University
and editor of *Under African Skies*

"Redemption Road is one of Liberia's first post-conflict novels. It contributes to a growing body of literature produced by African writers examining the impact of war. This novel is recommended for high school, college, and university general collections."

—**The African Book Publishing Record**

"Great work on Liberia and its quest for redemption."

— **Jerome Verdier**

Chairman, Liberia's National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

"Shaw crafts a classic convergence among the characters, causing them to vehemently confront one another only to find out that they really needed to confront themselves... [*Redemption Road*] is a story that deserves a telling because it offers a way forward amidst all the ideological divisions about what peace in Liberia should look, sound, smell and feel like."

—**Bai Best**

Daily Observer

"Redemption Road is a bold first step on the path to creating a new oeuvre for West Africa's post-conflict states."

—**The Africa Report**

"Elma Shaw swims through the murky depths of Liberia's recent past without holding her breath. She breathes and allows us to breathe through the pain. Her *Redemption Road* is a story that needs to be told and Shaw handles the emotions, the tragedy, the wounds, and the burden, with delicacy and power."

— **Stephanie Horton**

Sea Breeze Journal of Contemporary Liberian Writings

"Although it is a work of fiction, *Redemption Road* provides valuable insight into the long-simmering causes of the Liberian civil war and offers a prescription for preventing future conflict."

—**Awo Sarpong Ansu**

Jamati Online

“Elma Shaw’s novel is a journey back to the ruins of our homeland, where the beauty of culture clashes with the ugliness of war. It is a story filled with both life and death, but throughout *Redemption Road*, I feel the power of hope in both the storyteller and the novel’s heroine.”

— **Patricia Jabbeh Wesley**
author of *Becoming Ebony* and *The River is Rising*

“Liberia could very well enter the canon of post-conflict literature with Elma Shaw’s *Redemption Road*. Peppered with flashbacks, chock full of suspense, and sprinkled with a smidgen of romance, *Redemption Road* contextualizes the Liberian Civil War with gut-wrenching appeal...It brings to bear Liberia’s tortured history, and civil conflict no doubt, but it also transcends the country’s context to ask universal questions about truth, reconciliation, forgiveness, and the power of unconditional love.”

— **Robtel Neajai Pailey**
LIBERIA Travel & Life Magazine

“A brilliant novel...a promising and incisive voice. Elma Shaw knows how to tell a story. Reading *Redemption Road* was a most refreshing and enlightening experience, and the best Liberian novel I have ever read.”

— **Wilton Sankawulo**
Professor of English and Literature, University of Liberia
and author of *Sundown at Dawn*

“Spellbinding...*Redemption Road* holds your attention without end. If you survived a war or lost loved ones in a war, you will relate to this tear-jerking story of fear, survival, life, power and love. I highly recommend this page-turner.”

— **Angela M. Peabody**
author of *Exiled*

“In the tradition of Liberian literary greats Bai T. Moore and Wilton Sankawulo, Elma Shaw carves out a period in Liberia’s history and transplants it onto paper for the world to swallow and digest without judgment...The tragedy of war reveals the potential for humans to behave with ruthless disregard for life, but it also allows people to reconnect with their own humanity. The Liberian Civil War was tragic, yes, but there are countless examples of families taking in orphans, combatants shielding potential victims, strangers embracing strangers. This attests to the Liberian spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation, of communalism and commonality. *Redemption Road* fictionalizes a historical moment, and it also puts a face to the war’s wrath. It reminds us that ultimately, Liberians must take ownership of the past, reconcile with the present, and plan for a better future.”

— from the Foreword by **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**
President, Republic of Liberia