

# Top 5 Highlights of 2023

WWLLC

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2023 has been epic, filled with highs and lows, and opportunities to expand our thinking about what it really means to invest in the enterprise of youth and simultaneously shift to seeing things through the eyes of community. As we ring in 2024, I would like to thank our fiscal sponsor Access Philanthropy, our strategic partners, donors, volunteers, family and friends for helping make 2023 an unforgettable year for WWLLC. Below please find the top 5 highlights of 2023.

## **Highlight # 5** High Yield Youth Investment

In 2023, the WWLLC unleashed a new vision of ways to accelerate DEI practices, empower youth, and advance real community vision. We prioritized clarifying our mission and goals, building the organizational infrastructure, fundraising, selecting the right partners, and contracting with an amazing intergenerational team. Together we coined HYYI to invite fresh, intentional thinking about ways global youth champions could work collaboratively to achieve deeper impact. At its' core, HYYI is about connecting with kindred spirits, disrupting systems that don't work for everyone, strategy execution and growing an investment portfolio designed to transform systems, change lives, and supersize the hope and dreams of BIPOC/low income youth.



## Highlight # 4 Namoa Koni: Honoring the Ties that Bind: Rock of My Ancestors

In 1865, my great, great grandfather led a mission of 346 travelers from Barbados to Liberia on a ship called the Brig Cora. I stand on the shoulders of the men and women who made the dangerous voyage by sea. My great grandfather's son, Arthur Barclay, was 12 years old when the Brig Cora arrived on Providence Island, Liberia. Arthur later became the 15<sup>th</sup> President of Liberia. A definite highlight for me in 2023 was reconnecting with those ancestral roots, brought to life by a rare book gifted to me by my father Charles B Roberts Sr. When I close my eyes tightly, I feel the sweet, inviting ocean breeze of Barbados, calling me home. Fast forward to present day, the Prime Minister of Barbados is offering dual citizenship to the descendants of the passengers of the Brig Cora. For my family, which includes Swedish, Greek, American, Mexican and Puerto Rican roots, diversity is a strength which holds us together.

[Barbados Liberia: Exploring Oral History Documentary \(ourhistorytv.com\)](https://ourhistorytv.com)

Link to Book : [Rock of the Ancestors: namoa koni | William C. Siegmann, Cynthia E. Schmidt \(mullenbooks.com\)](https://mullenbooks.com)



### Highlight # 3 Taste of Liberia/Taste of Africa

2023 brought new opportunities to lift up seldomly heard positive stories about war-torn Liberia. In late October and early November, the WWLLC partnered with Access Philanthropy and Sojourner Truth House to highlight ways to tackle issues impacting Liberia and developing a plan of action for long term sustainability. Three main themes emerged, ending illiteracy, developing an action plan to stop domestic violence, and providing educational scholarships and housing stabilization support to the children of Liberia. The Back to Back events found me entering the uncharted world of grassroots fundraising, pivoting, and thinking deeply about innovative ways to leverage media, change mindsets, and co-create a new vision of a justice filled world where everyone thrives. The “Tastes” had a profound impact on me personally, galvanizing new dreams and inspiring new hopes.



### Highlight # 2 Launching the Reciprocal Learning Partnership Program

2023 saw this novel program kick off when Dave Wanpue travelled to Liberia from North Minneapolis to complete an internship with the Liberian based We-Care Foundation. Next year, Turvon Weah will travel to Minnesota to intern with V3, a Minnesota-based Foundation ([V3 Sports | Elevating Our Community Through Wellness, Fitness & Education](#)). This is also a story about a native son returning home, two techies working together, and the value added to an exchange that enhances the understanding of those completing the internship program that they have something to learn and something to give. In 2024, the WWLLC will work with the We-Care Foundation, Liberia and its strategic partners to place interns in schools, libraries, and universities. We-Care promotes a love of reading through the development of culturally relevant, field tested reading materials and travels throughout the African diaspora to scale their



philosophical approach while encouraging participants in workshops to adopt it to their own country context. We-Care also operates a reading library equipped with computers, books, and magazines and travels throughout the country to promote a love of reading.



## Highlight # 1 Grammy Time

In April of 2023 I welcomed my 13th grandchild, Cataleya Mai into the family. Spending time with my grandchildren, six live in Atlanta, 1 in Mississippi, 1 in California, 1 in Michigan and 4 in Minnesota is a source of great joy. Carving time to spend with them is my most urgent priority. I also have three grand cats, and two great grand cats.



As I lean into 2024, I am extremely optimistic about what the future holds for the WWLLC and its strategic partners. Stay tuned for my article highlighting the promise and potential of the true meaning of Bold and Audaciously Grounded Leadership. We will continue to leverage social media, explore deeper partnerships, and disrupt with intention and purpose. In late April/early May we are partnering with a Minneapolis-based Art Gallery to feature photos by Nete, an up and coming Liberian photographer and member of the WWLLC Executive Leadership Team. Shortly thereafter I will be rediscovering my ancestral roots with a much anticipated trip to Barbados. Thanks again to all of our partners who, as we say in Liberia, "held up hand". You played a big role in rekindling our passions, hopes, and dreams!