

“Celebrating Our Community As A Strong Foundation For Accelerated Development”

Inspiring Hope for the People of our Country

Your Excellency, Madam President;

Your Excellency, Mr. Vice President & Mrs. Boakai;

Mr. Speaker & Members of the House of Representatives,

Mr. President Pro-Tempore & Members of the Liberian Senate,

Mr. Chief Justice & Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, Judges & other Members of the Judiciary,

Your Excellency, the Dean & Members of the Cabinet,

Your Excellency the Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

The Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations & Other Heads of International Organizations;

Members of the Consulate Corps;

The Commanding General of the Armed Forces of Liberia & our Men & Women in Uniform;

The Executive Governor of the Central Bank & Members of the Banking Community,

The President & Members of the Liberian Council of Churches,

The Head & Members of the National Muslim Council;

Leaders of Other Faith Traditions;

Chief Zanzan Karwor & the Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders;

Former Officials of Government & Leaders of Opposition Parties;

Superintendents & Officials of Grand Kru and Sinoe Counties;

Heads of Civil Society Organizations, Industries and Business Houses,

The Press, Trade Unions, Students & Youth Organizations,

Market Women, Health Workers, Street Vendors and Transport &

Motorcycle Riders, Farmers and the Thousands who are in pursuit of

Jobs, Special Guests, and Ladies & Gentlemen:

Permit me to first give THANKS and GRATITUDE to Almighty God for this high honor He has inspired our President to bestow upon me and then to thank you, Madam President, for the confidence and trust to request that I speak on this auspicious occasion to bring WORDS OF HOPE to the People of our beloved Republic of Liberia on this the 168th Anniversary of the Declaration of our Independence and statehood. Thank you, Madam President.

It is indeed a pleasure to be back home in Sinoe. Let me ask your kind indulgence as I quickly greet the people of Grand Kru and Sinoe in Krou:

“Bartee – O, Bartee!

“Mothers and Fathers, Girls and Boys and all our People of Sinoe and Grand Kru Counties:

“A very happy Good Morning to all.

“I am indeed pleased to be here with you as we celebrate our National Independence. Greetings and facilitation and a very Happy “26” to all..

“My name is Charles Minor, born here in Sinoe to the Rev. & Mrs. Berkine Minor. My father, popularly known as Boakai Manneh, was a senior citizen of Sinoe and for many years he served as Sinoe County’s Representative in the National Legislature.

“As a son of the soil, I grew up right in this town. I played football and volleyball in various yards and on the street and played blay on the beach. We were under strict control, not allowed to swim in the sea or river and we dared to stay out of the home after 6:00 pm.

My primary education began in a school at the home of Professor S.J.C. Davies and under Principal James T. Tweh, a protégé of Teacher Davies.

“We are grateful to Almighty God for the opportunity given me to be with you and to address you on this our Independence Anniversary.

“I also wish to thank our Head of State and President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for her choice of me to speak on this important day. Our President’s grandmother, Juah Sirwee, was a matron of Sinoe and because of that, we can claim the granddaughter, our President, to be a Daughter of our County. We are delighted that she is here with us

today.

“We welcome all our citizens and friends from all over our Country and from foreign lands who are here to celebrate this important day with us here in Sinoe and Grand Kru.

“We congratulate each and every Liberian as we celebrate our Independence Anniversary today and say HAPPY BIRTHDAY LIBERIA!

“May I now ask that you kindly excuse me and allow me to speak in Kwee (English) to all our people, present here as well as those listening to us by radio, television and through the internet.”

Thank you. Thank you.

I now wish to address all my fellow Liberians; spanning the breadth of this Glorious Land of Liberty, from the Piso Lake in Grand Cape Mount to the Shephard Lake in Maryland; from Mount Nimba to Cape Montserrado; from Makona River banks in Solomba, Lofa County, to the mouth of the Cestos River. I am addressing our people in communities in and around Vahun on the border of neighboring Sierra Leone as well as those in Karnplay, Nimba County. I am calling on those of us listening on radios in Kawakan in River Gee, as well as those in District No. 4 in Grand Bassa. I am greeting those in Grand Cess, in Picknet Cess as well as those in Sasstown; in Sanqunie and in Baffu Bay. I am also sincerely and respectfully greeting my fellow Liberians in their numbers out in the Diaspora. I am here humbly saluting all my Fellow Citizens, young and old, women and men of all ethnic and religious backgrounds and of all standards of living. To all of you, fellow Liberians, I extend sincere greetings and felicitation on this our NATIONAL DAY. A Very HAPPY 26 TO ALL.

My Greetings to you on this “26” come from backgrounds not as glorious as I would wish. The backdrop from which I speak is punctuated by the perceptions and realities of what is affecting Liberians everywhere. My challenge is to elevate us all from that plane, however bleak that may be to a higher level where we can all attempt to view a future for all of us that is brighter and better. Yes, as I speak

to you, many Liberians are wondering – indeed is our nation really 168 years old? “What can we show for those 168 years?” Many Liberians see nothing to be proud about. Perhaps nothing to celebrate. Yes, they are calling into question precisely what the late Rev. Canon Burgess Carr referred to, when he delivered the Inaugural Sermon of President William Richard Tolbert in Bensonville as the “Years the locusts have eaten!” Even since that Inauguration, Liberia and Liberians have had some very difficult years – in which we experienced violent overthrow of Government; years of war and civil strife; years when we experienced two Governments in one country; years of deprivation and starvation; years when Liberians were dislocated from their homes and had to flee their homeland and whatever possessions they had. Although some 40 to 60% of Liberians may not have personally experienced many of those years; it does appear that the young and old alike in our Country have been psychologically, economically and socially influenced by those years.

As we celebrate “26”, many Liberians are still surviving at the margins of society. There is still hunger; We are experiencing young women opting to become commercial sex workers both at home and abroad as a means of earning their living; unemployment is high; the cost of living is rising and families are finding it difficult to meet their basic needs . Health care and good education remain major challenges. Healthy accommodation, electric power and potable water are still in deficit and the deadly EBOLA has further exacerbated and exposed the level of poverty, ignorance and disease and the inadequacies of the basic needs of many of our people and of our infrastructure.

Too many Liberians seem to be stuck below the economic glass ceiling while foreign business men and women are excelling. In real estate, for example, Liberians who have exclusivity to own land, appear to be relinquishing the ownership rights through long term lease and “fronting” arrangements to non-Liberians who are becoming the landlords of the most valuable properties. Growth in agriculture, especially food production has lagged considerably below the demand

for food. As a result, most of what we eat is imported if not from neighboring countries than from faraway Asia. “Dogafila” is strangulating our tailors and seamstresses while street vendors market their pre-used and cheaper clothing, shoes and everything else, all over the country. Selling imported goods have become the predominant form of economic activity for a large number of our people; and while merchandising on the streets provides opportunities to make a living, it dissipates our productive capacities and adversely affects our balance of trade and constantly drains our foreign exchange earnings. All of the above are all components of the Community we celebrate today.

But just as we have weaknesses and challenges, just as we can numerate our shortcomings and inadequacies, so we also have strengths and opportunities. The score card is incomplete when we accentuate only the negatives and the minuses. We need to also check out the positives, the plus side of the score card.

On the plus side, we must thank Almighty God who has been gracious unto us. He has sustained us as a Nation for 168 years, when several attempts were made to remove the name Liberia from the world map. Even through the Ebola Virus Disease, we have survived. For over 10 long years, PEACE has prevailed in Liberia, although justice has not always been swift for all. An impressive level of National COHESION has been attained in our land, notwithstanding, we continue to witness a lot of bickering over lands and the rights to their use. The economic foundation began to strengthen for a number of years between 2006 and the advent of Ebola as our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth exceeded population growth; and LIBERIA again began to obtain a higher level of respect in the comity of Nations. The level of international assistance provided us in our fight against EVD, which enabled us to achieve early success in the defeat of the deadly enemy, demonstrates a good level of support we, as a country, have earned. Early this month, the Dutch Foreign Trade and Development Minister,

Lilianne Ploumen, who led a delegation to the three Ecowas Countries affected by the deadly Ebola Virus Disease, aptly suggested that our Friends and Partners, including the Netherlands, are willing to help Liberia restore “the impressive economic growth” which was halted by the deadly EVD.

As we take stock of ourselves and our society on this our Independence Day, we must also admit and recognize that too many of us Liberians have allowed the candle of vibrancy and vitality, the hope for a better future that enthusiastically glowed in early 2006, as we ushered in the new

Administration, appear to be glowing dim. Around our towns and around the Country, Liberians are becoming pessimistic, critical of each other, not trusting each other, and especially vocally expressing lack of trust in our elected and appointed officials. It is fast becoming in vogue now, a popular thing to be not just critical of each other but even sarcastic, to the point of even expressing caustic remarks against our leaders in Government, in civil society and in the private sector. The perception is that no one can be trusted. No official is honest, and the P H D meaning “pull him down” mentality continues.

Last year in her Independence Day Oration, Dr. Elizabeth Davis-Russell spoke of the freedom of expression (and of the Media) Liberians today enjoy and warned that as we enjoy such freedom, we need to also demonstrate a sense of responsibility and not engage in malicious rumor that bring injury to individuals, families and institutions. She added, and I quote: “The promulgation of half-truths, misinformation and disinformation that cast aspersion on people and divides our community does not demonstrate personal or social responsibility.”

Admittedly, some criticisms are justified. We must also admit that Criticisms are important in our growing democracy. Criticism can sometimes warn us of worst things to come. Even when we consider some criticisms to be negative, unproductive and divisive, they ensure that those who govern, those who are given responsibilities to lead and manage people and resources do so with care, diligence, accountability

and trust. Accepting criticisms goes with the responsibility of leadership. Criticism reminds us of our fiduciary responsibility to be accountable.

Having said that, let me make an important corollary to that assertion. In my adult life, I have known Liberians to criticize and oppose every government since the time of President Tubman. And when given the opportunity to lead and govern, those who were most vocal in their criticism and opposition, demonstrated no better skills, no greater attitudes or any higher level of honesty than those they criticized. Another negative attitude amongst many of us is that characterized by "I win and you lose". In the job market, for example, one finds this syndrome well played out. Many individuals desperately search for jobs, but their intention is not to carry out the functions of the job. They mainly seek means to obtain money. As soon as they can, they begin to make profits on the job. Profit is another definition of what is illegally or fraudulently taken from their employers or the entities. They say to themselves, "What is mine is mine and what is yours, I should take away from you, even from our national coffers, and make it exclusively mine!" And that goes across our society, in the upper, middle, and lower classes. In some circles, that is referred to as "chopping", a term used both as subject and predicate. Such "chopping" more often than not, is obtained fraudulently. This attitude of extra "chopping," is becoming a measure of how good a job is. Paymasters must "chop" something from the employees they pay. Service providers expect fat extra tips that exceed their daily wages or even their salaries. Employees are found to be leaving their jobs if those jobs provide no opportunity for "chopping!" Civil servants expect lunch money to enable them to render the service they are engaged to render. Even some agencies of Government are now making provision for "facilitation" fees in their budget and expenditure accounting to ensure they can payoff whoever needs to be paid off for the entities to accomplish their mission. Those attitudes and practices cannot be parts of the foundation blocks for accelerated development in our society.

Why have such grafts become so rampant? Who do we blame? The natural tendency is to pass the blame; to accuse others of being responsible. Too often we hear that it is the Government to blame. It is the Government that is responsible, it is the Government that has failed us. Some contend that our forefathers and mothers have passed on to us such legacies. Some have even blamed our Partners, especially Western countries and now also China and their nationals who have and continue to exploit us.

My fellow Liberians and friends, it is very simple and extremely easy to pass the blame; to point the finger. And now, in our new dispensation of extremely free press and particularly with the increasing number of instantaneous Radio Talk Shows with growing callers' participation; there is no shortage of criticisms and accusations by people who themselves participate in this unwholesome pre-occupation.

Today, on this our Independence Anniversary, as we "Celebrate our Community ... "all that we are; even the years the locusts have eaten, let us profit from the errors of the past to build a better foundation for a more positive tomorrow. A tomorrow when we will have substantially reduced poverty, when we can eat tomatoes, cabbages, peppers and other vegetables grown in our back yards and in nearby gardens; a tomorrow when we will import only the raw cotton gin, and perhaps cotton from nearby suppliers to produce yarn to weave, knit and stitch textile materials for the domestic and export markets; a tomorrow when many in the public sector will realize that it is not in that sector where wealth is created so that those genuinely interested in creating wealth can give up their white collar jobs and return to the land to produce our staple rice and other food crops to reduce our dependence on imports, ensure a greater level of food self-sufficiency and earn a higher standard of living for their labor. In the tomorrow we are today laying the foundation, and a tomorrow when Liberians will work together more effectively and compete seriously with foreign contractors to build our own roads, even to the extent of making them toll roads, thereby reducing the continuous increasing burdens on

Government, which we all know will never be in the position to meet all the expectations of all our people.

Honorable Elected and High Officials in Government: You have been the target of criticism and you have also been pointing the fingers to others, perceived to be corrupt. I wish to call attention to the fact that you have chosen to pursue and have accepted positions of leadership in our nation. By accepting to lead, you accept the responsibility of STEWARDSHIP of our people. The principle of stewardship is the principle of focusing on responsibilities, assignments and duties given to you with the goal of magnifying and enhancing the quality of life for our people. Stewardship is not defined as aggrandizement, as self-centeredness and self-interest-serving, neither is it defined as acquiring absolute power. History will judge you not on the basis of your influence, your popularity, your wealth or your possession; but to the extent of your intervention, your passion and your labor to improve the situation affecting Liberians everywhere.

Let me also indicate what experts advise: "To improve any situation, you must improve yourself." To even change your spouse, you must first change yourself. To change the attitude of your co-workers, your constituencies, your own attitude must change." Change requires taking responsibility and being responsible. Change requires exercising discipline. As a steward, may I suggest that whether you are levying taxes, making budgetary decisions, passing laws or implementing policies, you should not think about yourself; how do I benefit from this? Or how can I win this one and people out there lose. Instead you must think "win-win" and focus on "inclusion." Such thinking broadens our vision and gives us a better prospect for abundance and prosperity for all and not scarcity and deprivation. The paradigm then becomes one of sharing, be it of your privileges or your prestige, your reward or your compensation; your decision making and your support should be for those you lead.

Let me also add that our Branches of Government should never be perceived to be in competition. What is needed far more than

competition is the opening of possibilities for determining alternatives and for creativity in all spheres of our endeavors?

To you our students who desire more classrooms, more textbooks, better trained instructors, laboratories and libraries; let me urge you to think about what your education, at every step of the education ladder should do for you! Please note that counseling is crucial and it can aid you to become more productive when you leave the classroom. To our Carpenters and wood workers, who although inadequately trained, are unable to use whatever acquired skills you have to produce products because of a low effective demand for them on account of their apparent sub-standard; continue your efforts to establish the wood village, it could certainly provide supportive services to enable you to become world class wood products producers. To you, our farmers, who are yet to earn above the poverty threshold because of your small land holdings, limited technical know-how, irregular and limited extension services, insufficient high yielding planting materials and marketing advice, you will find it fruitful working together for that is how greater assistance can be obtained. And to you, strong young men and women, who are walking up and down the streets of our main cities and towns selling chewing gum because you have yet to cultivate the skills to attract a remunerative wage paying jobs, offer to become an apprentice and accept a minimum wage today so that tomorrow, you will have acquired some skills to improve your capacity to obtain a decent job. Take a look at our growing building industry, for example, and see that the increasing demand for skilled craftsmen and women is being met by skilled contractors, masons, carpenters, electricians and plumbers from neighboring countries. I also wish to speak to you young women, still in school and colleges, who feel that agreeing to overtures of your teachers and lecturers are greater guarantee for obtaining passing grades than earning them the old fashion hard way of burning the midnight oil over your books. The temptations of the “Profs” should be resisted. It makes no contribution to our accelerated development.

To you young men on Broad and Randall Streets in Monrovia and elsewhere, running after passengers and vehicles, loading cars; to all of you, and others like you, who may consider yourself poor and defeated; who feel oppressed, mistreated, used, abused and taken advantage of and all others at the margins of our society, I say to you, life on planet earth can sometime fail to satisfy our hopes and aspirations. Yes, life can be disappointing in no small measure. And that is how many listening to me this Independence Day may feel.

But I also say to you, life can also be wonderfully fruitful and rewarding. Poverty need not be in your future. As human beings, we are endowed by our maker with great gifts of self-awareness, conscience, independent will and creative imagination. And our imagination is extremely powerful. It transforms lives, it has sent man to the Moon and today man is planning to vacation in outer space. Our endowments also provide us boundless energy and enthusiasm. These God given endowments are for you as they are for me. They enable us not to be constrained by circumstances. Do not retain the attitude of hopelessness. Knock it off. Remember what Bishop Bennie D. Warner told the nation when he was inaugurated Vice President: "That what is wrong with us is US!"

We can work within our circle of influence and, with a sense of personal worth and self-assurance, our inner drive and our creative imagination can catapult us from being street vendors to becoming merchants of Greenville and Barclayville, with our own stores and inventories; from being market women selling tomatoes grown in Cote d'Ivoire to becoming vegetables and fruits producing farmers. Right in our cities and towns, our local authorities, with some imagination, can make even private vacant lands available for periods of two to four years for locals, with the determination and creative imagination to do gardening for income generation and employment.

With imagination those who now sell "dogafra" could begin to look beyond where they are to become small manufacturers of uniforms for schools, security firms, banks and other institutions. Our students,

police and employees of business houses should be encouraged to take pride in dressing up in locally made outfits. These concepts are doable and can become good projects and viable business propositions for financing even by Rural Village Banks now being established around the country. They are part of the foundation, already laid that we celebrate today. Take advantage of them, especially if you are prepared to utilize our creative imagination. Such projects may require some protection and concessions but that is what may be necessary to elevate our people from where they are to where they should be. I vision car loaders with imagination and vision one day becoming owners of taxi cabs. Achieving those lofty goals, however, depends upon ourselves, not on our Government; achieving such goals depends on our own self-image; our creative imagination, our ability to be transparent and accountable, our willingness to re-pay our loans; and our taking advantage of pivotal opportunities in our lives.

It is those “pivotal opportunities”, Madam President, that your Government and future Governments, even local governments should seek to provide. Our people should choose to pursue them, to require their representatives and other leaders to aid them in pursuit of such opportunities. Let me give an example of opportunities in business that could become “pivotal” and available to young Liberians leaving junior colleges and universities:

- We have been witnessing a surge in the building industries, although the Real Estate Market appears to be plummeting to some extent.
- Building materials shops are opening everywhere. But who own and operate them? Hardly any Liberians!
- The main building material shops employ Liberians all right, but they are primarily, material handlers, while the upper classes of store attendants: the Clerks, Warehouse Keepers, Book Keepers are non-Liberians of hardly any technical or educational back-ground greater than Liberians leaving junior colleges and universities. These young, mainly unskilled foreign workers with only the ability to use the

calculators and write in English, are given work and resident permits while our graduates remain un-employed.

Here is what I believe is possible:

- Resident and Work Permits for foreigners who are not investing in our economy and who do not possess critical skills in demand, should be gradually but significantly curtailed.
- Expand the scholarship programs and budgets (which now appear to be on-going amongst many Legislators and Executives) to cover, in addition to academic fees and books, monitoring of scholarship students' character, ethical conduct, deportment, commitment to work and work attitude amongst other traits for about two years prior to graduation; Let the programs and budget also cover reasonable monies for bonds and sureties for students with good prospects for work in business;
- At the completion of their studies, scholarship students should attend job fairs to prepare them for the job market.
- Business houses that complain that some Liberians cannot be trusted or lack work attitude, would then have no excuse employing recent graduates who come in with good character reference and bonds, just in case!
- The Graduates should be encouraged to start at the bottom of the ladder to learn every possible trick of the trade so that, in three to four years, just as foreign workers who come here do, they too can start their own businesses.
- With the track record from the last two years at school, good work experience having been employed in the business and with good knowledge of the particular business, financial institutions would have little problems investing in such young people. This would indeed offer pivotal opportunities and our young people deserve to have them. Pursuing economic rights for all our people is a compelling urgency and the capacity to be able to take advantage of the opportunities when they come must be given priority. To do so we must step up our

capacity building endeavors, not just by the Government but private businesses must be given the incentives to also join efforts in this regard. Large and medium size businesses should be provided the incentives to train Liberian workers not just for their own needs but for the job market.

Fellow Liberians:

Many of us over the age of 40 years will recall that during the President W.R. Tolbert's administration, a Cabinet meeting was called to which members of the Diplomatic Corps and the Press were invited. At that meeting, the President declared "war against Poverty, Ignorance and Disease." Some, hearing of that "declaration of war" felt that something must have been wrong in the mind of the President.

Years following his demise, we did go to war, but not with the enemies of poverty, ignorance and disease, he had suggested. We went to war with ourselves and destroyed lives and our infrastructure. We did not consider the real enemies, still at our door steps; and when that deadly disease attacked from across the borders, we were little prepared.

Madam President:

When you successfully completed your first term and began the second, there were many skeptics who wondered about the efficacy of a second term. No one could have imagined that God in His infinite wisdom had ordained that you should be in command just when our Country was attacked by the Deadly Enemy, EVD. Your rallying of the troops, the financial and material support from home as well as from around the world, taking advantage of your broad contacts and wide network of friends, supporters and partners, in the region and in the wider International Community, our country, although hardest hit, has had remarkable successes in the fight against it.

On Friday, July 17, 2015, at the Investiture Ceremonies at the Monrovia City Hall, hearts of Liberians were warmly touched when you, in your capacity as President of the Republic and Grand Master of the Orders of Distinction, for and on behalf of the people of our Country, honored thirty three surviving heroic individuals and institutions, plus some two

hundred others posthumously, for the selfless, sacrificial and risky roles played by them under your command in the courageous and bold fight against the deadly Ebola Virus Disease.

I do speak for my immediate and extended family and many other Liberians, Madam President, when I say THANK YOU for the passion, the energy, the enthusiasm and for everything else you have put in leading our Doctors, Nurses, Administrators and other Health Workers in the heroic fight against Ebola.

Now it is time to strengthen the foundation for a broad base and effective affordable health delivery system in Liberia. We must train more medical practitioners by offering more scholarships, improving incentives for those in the field and encouraging Liberians in health services practicing abroad to return, even for short periods, to help accelerate efforts at developing the sector. I use this opportunity to appeal to the many Liberian doctors, nurses and other medics in the United States and elsewhere to come home, initially to visit, see firsthand where we are and then to come back to stay and get involved. One of my favorite teaching tools in “Strategic Planning” is Joel Arthur Barker’s *The Power of Vision*.” It teaches that:

- Children and students, with a vision of what they want to achieve in their future, what they want to be tomorrow, do very well and excel, leaving behind those without a vision for their future;
- That under the most trying circumstances, when life is seriously threatened, such as in the Nazis Concentration Camp at Auschwitz, those who had a vision of “something significant yet to do in their future” survived; while those who believed they had been brought there to suffer and die, did suffer and died.

I call on all of us to think seriously of our future and have a positive vision of that future, a compelling image of what we want to do or where we want to be as individuals and communities in 2, 5, 10 or 20 years; where our nation should be in 10, 20 or 30 years.

Street vendors Stop thinking that you are at the end of the road. Think where you wish to be in five years. Citizens and Residents of Greenville

and Barclayville, develop your vision of what Greenville and Barclayville should look like in five years and begin today to work towards reaching there.

Permit me to make one historical point of importance for our People in Sinoe.

Historians tell us that around the year 2 B.C. migrants from the Sudan began arriving here in South Eastern Grain Coast, now Liberia. Settling further north-west of here were the Mannees, known today as the Bassa people; then came the Krous who settled all over the coast from Tee Wra Me Tor to Nee Sur Tee (Timbo). They became found of the Sea and of activities along the Atlantic Coast. The Jlokweah or Grebos settled further down in lower South East on both sides of the Cavalla River. As other sea-fearers came to these parts in their boats, they found the local Krous quite knowledgeable about life on the Sea and great helpers to them on their boats, so they began hiring and calling them "Kroos."

In the 19th century, immigrants from Mississippi and other southern states of America began arriving and founded a settlement in Greenville, with sprinkles of immigrants in other settlements. They were followed by free slaves who were discharged from boats coming from the Congo basin and other parts of Eastern and South Western Africa.

Between the 1820s and 1830s five hunters from the Krahn Country in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire were lost on their hunting expedition. With creative imagination, they decided to follow the Sun as it moved across the sky to set in the West. Trailing the Sun and marking trees as they went, they ended up in the middle of the Krou people. These five hunters: Weh, Kaba, Sayoh, Saydee and Putu were well received and welcomed. After their sojourn with the Krous, they returned to their home villages, bearing gifts of salt, clothes and other coastal artifacts. Back at home, they discovered that their wives and properties they left at home had been taken away and distributed amongst other townsmen, assuming they were dead in the forest. Quarrels and

fighting ensued and in the end, the five and those who were willing to join them left the Krahn and return to the coastal areas where they were again welcomed by the Krou and they settled “under the tree” which is today Juarzon and in Butow. Leaving their old Krahn families they declared “Ah Sapo” meaning we are not part of you anymore. And that, we are told is the origin of our Sapo brothers and sisters.

When President Edwin Barclay travelled through the area in 1937, he congratulated the people for the unifying spirit in living together. In 1951 Richard G. Letourneau of the United States obtained a Liberian concession to operate out of Baffu Bay where he began to saw logs into timber to be sold on the domestic market. The Dwehwroh Forest, part of his concession, was referred to as the Bay Forest in the various Letourneau’s documentation. It was later again re-named the Sapo Forest by an act of Legislature introduced by the then Senator James Edward Greene, who, when he was Superintendent had a very close relationship with the Sapo and the area.

Now here is the point: The Krou-Liberians, the Americo-Liberians, the Congo-Liberians and the Sapo-Liberians are all Liberians of Sinoe County or of any other county in the Republic. I pray that as we celebrate this 168th Independence Anniversary, Almighty God will give us hearts of flesh and not of stone and the capacity to bridge the chasm that divide us in this county and that the friendship and peaceful co-existence that existed between the first Sapo generation, their hosts the Krou and other co- settlers will be re-kindled and the people of Sinoe will discover that with a new sense of unity, we are strong, Sinokree strong; Sinoria strong; GeCraw strong, and upon that strong foundation we will consolidate our gains and accelerate efforts to develop and grow our communities, our economy and improve the lives of our people.

My prayer for Sinoe, is also my prayer for Grand Kru and for all the other thirteen counties of Mama Liberia.

“With Heart and Hand,
Our Country’s cause defending

We'll meet the foe
With valour unpretending
Long live Liberia Happy Land
A home of glorious liberty
By God's command"
May God Bless Liberia and Save the State!