

Brumskine: Liberians Should be Allowed to Look to a Better Future

07/28/2010 - 163rd INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE By Charles Walker Brumskine

On behalf of Liberty Party, and Mrs. Brumskine and myself, I wish the people of Liberia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and officials of her Government, the Speaker, President Pro Tempore and Members of the Legislature, the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and Members of the Judiciary, a Happy July 26.

This is that time of the year when all Liberians should come together to celebrate the independence anniversary of our nation. A time when we, the government and opposition political parties, realize that it takes the collective effort of all to build our nation, committing ourselves to never again allow the all-powerful presidency and a one-party state, ensuring that the opposition remains strong, but also faithful to the Constitution of Liberia. There is no better time for all of us to awaken to the fact that we are in this boat together.

With the invaluable assistance of our friends and development partners of the international community, the Sirleaf Government marks the celebration of Liberia's 163rd Independence Anniversary with the dedication of public projects such as buildings on the Fendell Campus of the University of Liberia and Liberia's largest hospital in Tapita, Nimba County, among others. We join the government and people of Liberia in thanking the Chinese Government for their investment in the infrastructure of Liberia.

But as we celebrate our independence, we are continuously reminded that the salient question that Liberia is yet to address is, "Are we making progress toward sustaining the peace?" We have to reconcile our people, reform our institutions and the way we "do business", and recover some of our national values that have been lost over the years. We must grow our economy in a way that empowers the people of Liberia, creating wealth instead of simply striving to reduce poverty.

Liberians should be allowed to look to a better future, where the infrastructure we build and rebuild today would not again be destroyed tomorrow. We must celebrate not only the number of years of our existence, but also our hope of a different and better tomorrow. As sad as our past may have been, especially our recent history, I still believe in Liberia, knowing that together we can do better. I, therefore, ask that all Liberians commit anew to the founding ideals of our country—establishing justice, ensuring domestic peace, and promoting the general welfare of all Liberians.

We can ill-afford to again evolve a society premised upon exclusion, cronyism, and injustice, accentuated by the divide between the haves and haves-not. Liberia cannot continue to celebrate the ills of the past—corruption in high places and indifference to the plight of other Liberians.

For example, while the government is celebrating the anniversary of the birth of our nation, Commissioners of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) must miss out on the celebration because the government has refused to pay their salaries and benefits, which are long overdue. Teachers have been constrained to stage a peaceful demonstration in demand of their salaries, hoping that their families would also be able to join in the celebration. How many more Liberians will not be celebrating this July 26, because the government does not like what they have said, or because, as the teachers, they are not on government's priority list?

It has been said that, "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Those who do not remember their past are condemned to repeat their mistakes."

Certainly, we can build a better nation, as we renew the aspirations of every man and woman, boy and girl. But all we do depends on Liberians being reconciled. And national reconciliation cannot be attained without justice. Reconciliation follows justice, and precedes lasting peace!

We, therefore, celebrate with those Liberians who insist that we begin our 164th year of existence with a resolve to embrace those principles that will ensure justice, reconciliation, national healing, and lasting peace. May God bless the Republic and save the people. I thank you!

Charles W. Brumskine, Esq.