

High has done a remarkable job" Asserts Calvin Johnson

By

Robert Sayon Morris

Editor-In-Chief

Liberian Media & Advertising Services



**Mr. Calvin Roosevelt Johnson, BA, MA, PMP
Class of '75, BHS, delivering the Convention Keynote Address**

Mr. Calvin Roosevelt Johnson says, Bassa High School in Grand Bassa County “has done a remarkable job of producing fine national and international citizens.”

Speaking on the theme: “Building For Tomorrow”, Mr. Johnson said: “As members of BHS USA and friends of BHS, and as fine citizens of the world, if we want to build for tomorrow and succeed by achieving our ultimate goals, we should ponder over the question, ‘What will be my legacy’?” He urged the audience to utilize "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" to ensure that SUCCESS is achieved. The full text of Mr. Johnson's Speech is below:

Before I proceed, permit me to introduce three important guest: The retired US Air Force Captain, currently, a Professor and the Director of Admission of Nyack College, Washington, D.C., also, CEO of Hairston Enterprises Mr. and Mrs. George C. Hairston, a long time American friend. I also like to introduce to you the President and CEO of Liberia Media and Advertising Services, the Hon. Robert Sayon Morris, former Asst. Minister of Information, Republic of Liberia, a long time friend and colleague from the University of Liberia... Let me finally introduce to you the most beautiful lady in the

world in lieu of my worldview, in person of Mrs. Marietta Freeman Johnson, my beloved wife.

Building for Tomorrow

Speech Delivered to Bassa High School Association (BHSA), USA, Fourth Annual Convention Bowie, MD, USA, August 19th.2006, Bowie, MD.

by: Calvin Roosevelt Johnson, PMP, MA, BA

Mr. President, Officers and Members of the Bassa High School Association, USA, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Board of Directors, Distinguished Officials and Former Officials of the Liberian Government Present, Distinguished Officials of the U.S. Government Present, Representatives and Leaders of the Bassa Counties Association and Liberian Community Association present, Representatives and Leaders of the "Friends of Liberia" Association (which comprises former U.S. Diplomats, Peace Corps, and Public Servants, Representatives and Leaders of other Associations and Organizations, Corporate Executives present, Representatives of Academic Institutions, Distinguished Guest, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is with heartfelt gratitude, yet humility, honor, and a sense of commitment, I accepted the invitation to serve as Keynote Speaker for the Bassa High School Association, USA Fourth Annual Convention... While it is true that my selection as Keynote Speaker for this all-important occasion was no accident, it is important to note that there are many other products of BHS who have embraced the challenging road to success; thus, would be just as capable or more capable than I am. Considerably, let me express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the entire Planning Committee, the National Leadership, and all those concerned for inviting my participation.

My friends, it is interesting and no doubt benefiting to note, that the theme of this year's Convention is: "Building for Tomorrow." I do not know if this was a coincident, nor do I know who decided on the Theme for the Convention; however, this year's theme brings about a significant reflection of my past... Yes, the identical theme "Building for tomorrow" was the Motto of my Kindergarten Graduation Class, from the Urias A. Porter Kindergarten School in Edina City, Grand Bassa County, Liberia, in the year 1963. I remember vividly, the current National President of BHSA, the Hon. B. Wilmot Nekpo Howard who also happens to be a former Congressman in Liberia and a former Vice-Principal of the Bassa High School, was a member of that Kindergarten Class. In fact, we were neighbors in Edina; we played together; and in our little great and beautiful city those days, even kindergarten kids were nurtured to become orators.... As such, I delivered the Valedictorian address while Wilmot delivered the solitarian address for our kindergarten class of '63... I remember that it was my dear father, the late William A. Johnson, who dictated both of our speeches and we hand wrote them and memorized, and rehearsed them on our piazza prior to exceptional deliveries during our kindergarten graduation ... Ladies and Gentlemen; these significant activities are all evidences of building for tomorrow... Against this backdrop, I request your kind and undivided attention as I share with you some thoughts on the theme "Building for Tomorrow," Within the context of BHS environs...

BHS

Reflection:

As I strive to walk you through the scope of building for tomorrow based on my personal experiences and the BHS Paradigm, I request each and every one of you to take a retrospective approach to examining your respective lives in relations to SUCCESS as you would define it... To these ends, I request you to think about where you were in relations to where you are to date; how did you get to where you are? And where do we go from here? For those of you who attended or graduated from BHS, I am sure, you will agree that BHS did play a significant role in your respective lives...

As for me, building for tomorrow within the BHS mosaic began in the year 1968 when I was an elementary school student, wearing "short pants/trouser" uniform to school, and I traveled from Edina to Lower Buchanan with my late dear father to attend an annual celebration of the Fraternal Society known as "Odd Fellows..." On a Monday morning we were in a Taxi Cab on Preston Street, in route to Upper Buchanan to travel across the river back to Edina, I looked through the cab window and saw two of Bassa High School students walking to school, dressed up in their BHS long pants uniforms... Later, I will come to know them as Robert Kilby and James Harris. The following year, 1969, I was sponsored on a "boarding school", Julia Slocum Mission in Bong County, Liberia by my oldest brother Robert Johnson. Those days many of my classmates were men and women in their twenties but many of them befriended me to help them with their homework assignments or take a sneak peep at my test papers during test or exam... The work related choices on the mission were difficult for me and I missed being home with my parents dearly... Further, we were only allowed to wear long pants to church on Sundays; hence, I could not wait to complete the 6th. Grade and attend BHS to begin wearing "long pants" to school on a daily basis. To my challenge I was awarded a scholarship for room and board as I topped the 6th. Grade going to 7th. At the end of the school year... The owner of the mission, Mother Julia Slocum notified my mother of the scholarship, and my mother was very happy and impressed... But I began to cry continuously to my mother, begging her not to let me go back on the mission. My father helped me to convince her to let me begin attending Bassa High School instead, which began from 7th. Grade... The bottom line is, I wanted to begin wearing "long pants" to school daily like Robert Kilby and James Harris... In March of 1970, I joined the family of BHS... In the 7th grade class At BHS in 1970, I came to meet a number of rising stars, all kids like myself at the time, which will later become major contributors to society. They included such great personalities as Ausman Jalloh, S. Loyola Fleming Jr., affectingly called S. Lorac, Blyden Bonar, Mary Karnga, and Francis Porter who scored 100% in just about every subject, and will get a rapid promotion to the 8th. Grade immediately following the second marking period. Following our promotion to the 8th. Grade, we were joined by other rising stars such as Joel King, Roy Reeves, Ida Lloyd, among others... We all developed a bond and became members of the class of 1975... Many of us went on to college and as far as I know, succeeded in life. Will members of the Class of '75, BHS PLEASE STAND!

Following our class came members of the great class of 1976. This class had great stars like, Diplomat Nathaniel Brumskine, Hon. Wilmot B.N. Howard, Victor D. King, among others...

Will members of the class of '76 please stand. Will members of the classes of '77, 78, 79 please stand... Will members of the classes of the '80's and 90's that are present please stand...

Now let's look at my seniors, will members of classes from 1970 to 1974 that are present please stand!

Will members of classes of the '60's please stand...

I must note that one of the members of the class of 1969 of BHS not long ago made a well-earned and serious bid for the presidency of the Republic of Liberia. That honorable gentleman is non other than Former Senator, Counselor Charles Walker Brumskine, the Valedictorian of BHS Class of '69...We congratulate him for his all success endeavors...

BHS as a Symbol of Motivation:
When I think of the "Tower of Light," I think of an Institution of motivation... Yes, I remember the essence of Seniority according to grade level... During assembly in the auditorium, members of the senior class were assigned to sit in the "front rows." Next, were the juniors, followed by sophomores, than freshmen or 9th graders, followed by 8th. And 7th. Graders... Such tradition motivated many of us to work hard and become seniors also...

When I think of BHS, I remember the "good old" days where it was mandatory that all students had to join the School Choir, even if you couldn't sing... We had a brilliant music teacher and choir director, known as Nathaniel Hodge, affectionately called Zoe... He was so serious about singing business until he constantly flogged those of us who could not sing well... I am a living witness, Ausman Jalloh can also attest to this...

When I think of BHS, I think of Teacher Estelle Harris calmly teaching us Literature in the 7th. Grade class, I think of the late Dean Dalmeda Jackson introducing us to the works of the great English Writer, William Shakespeare... I think of fine young college graduates at the time, traveling to Liberia as Peace Corp volunteers from the U.S., and making significant contributions through teaching... Ms. Pat Reilly, my 10th. Grade English and Literature teacher, who is with us today is a great example... Others include Mr. William Hares, Ms. Marion, Terrance Johnson, among others...

Yes; BHS is an institution to remember when building for tomorrow... I remember when the school's administration was led by such great Liberians as Philemon E. Harris, affectionately called "Joe Prince," the Rev. Edward Harris, affectionately called "Prof Eddie." Then there was a man called Phillip Vacanderick Saywryane, affectionately known as "P. Vat." . Based on my candid reflection, I have continued to consider "P. Vat" a fine Liberian Philosopher.

BHS as a Symbol of Success:
Friends; BHS has done a remarkable job of producing fine national and international citizens... As I sit to ponder over what makes some of our colleagues successful, my thoughts lead me to

what I describe as one of the most brilliant master-peace of work published during the 20th. Century. It is non other than the book entitled “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,” authored by Steve Covey. The seven habits discussed in his book, is no doubt common to just about all-successful people in the human race. Accordingly, I’ll like to briefly share them with you:

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People:

Habit One: Be Proactive – Take the required initiatives to maximize your achievements. Trust God and act upon the world to make things happen for the betterment of mankind instead of being acted upon. Recent initiatives by this great organization to invest over \$10,000.00 to renovate, paint, and furnish the Bassa High School in Buchanan, is an excellent case in point... Thanks to the leadership and committed members and supporters of this association for a job well done. I salute you and may I request the audience to please join me in applauding all of you...

Habit Two: Begin with the End in Mind – As rational beings with rational faculties, always think about the kind of legacy you want to leave, following your departure from this earthly world...

Habit Three: Put First Thing First – While it is very important to multitask, be sure to take an organized and systematic approach to whatever you do. The name of the game here is to “focus” and take it step-by-step. By practicing this habit, which is in essence “self management”, I guarantee, you will reach your ultimate goals.

Habit Four: Think Win-Win
Friends, the world is in a state of “imbalance”... This state of imbalance comes from the struggle between “good and evil,” The struggle between “selfishness and unselfishness,” between realism and unrealism, between ignorance and intelligence, between healthiness and unhealthiness, between rich and poor, between young and old, and between morality and immorality... YES! The evidences are clear and explicit... They are rampant in our families, academic, religious, corporate, and public institutions. They are rampant in North and South America, in Africa, Europe, and Asia and the Middle East... Considerably, it is about time we come together and practice the philosophy of “win-win” instead of win-lose during our dealings with one another... No doubt the most promising president of the Republic of Liberia, His Excellency William Richard Tolbert was right as he introduced his philosophy of “humanistic capitalism... He made a clarion call for maximizing one’s humanistic and economic potential, and being willing to share with others... By shifting to this “win-win” paradigm, he enabled one like me along with many others, to obtain undergraduate college education for a small fee of only \$37.50 per semester. In fact, his educational policy went beyond expectations, by providing full scholarship of \$550.00 per year for any university student who scored a 3.0 GPA or better... Unfortunately, the “vocal minority” coupled with the “enemies” of Liberia did not rest until they destroyed this “far-sighted” leader... Later, many of those who participated and rejoiced under the “dangerous cloud of blood-shared which hampered the nation, will become victims of their own bad deeds.” This

obviously validates the old wise saying that “he that liveth by the sow shall die by the sow. Considerably, we should learn to build for tomorrow with an attitude of gratitude, the element of unity, patriotism, and share our achievements with our alma mater, BHS.

Habit Five: Seek First to Understand than Seek to be Understood... Too often we treat one another unfairly by not understanding others as they intend to be understood... In fact some of us begin formulating and articulating responses before the other person completes his or her statements... During meetings or very important discussions, we practice this behavior... Friends, if we want to be credible, and generate support from others, we need to listen deeply, understand others from their perspectives... By so doing, we’ll be in the position to respond appropriately, and receive the kind of cooperation we really expect...

Habit Six: Synergize. This habit is the essence of principle-centered leadership and creative cooperation... If we succeed by practicing habits one through five, we will certainly come to grip with a mosaic of achieving our goals... At this point, all we need to do is to keep on employing the strategies that work, to obtain intended results... To this end we can continue to synergize by establishing a mosaic of successful endeavors.

Habit Seven: Sharpen the Saw
It is through habit seven we perform self-evaluation or self-analysis to modify our approaches to our social interaction with others. This is where we realize our mistakes and take corrective measures... This will enable us to be ahead of the “game” and maximize success...

As members of BHS USA and friends of BHS, and as fine citizens of the world, if we want to build for tomorrow and succeed by achieving our ultimate goals, we should ponder over the question, “What will be my legacy?”

Fellow members of BHS USA, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen... Life is too short; both, the young and old are departing these walls for eternity on a daily basis... We cannot wait until tomorrow to contribute; we need to establish our legacy now by making significant contributions.... I recall while planning for the Elijah Johnson Family Reunion about two years ago as I was talking about the Johnson’s legacy, my little then six year old daughter who is now eight, Leyeama Caldella Johnson asked me “Daddy, what do you mean by legacy?” I responded, Legacy is the very good or bad thing one does on earth so that when they die and go to Heaven, people will remember them... She proceeded to ask me what was Grandma legacy? I responded, Grandma legacy was to love and serve God, feed people, and care for her children as well as other people’s children... I then asked her what she would like to be her legacy, she noted, “to sing well and be a good teacher...” I told her that was great, and that she has the choice of becoming the best in whatever she decides to be, and people will remember her for that.

Having briefly discussed the seven habits of highly effective people, one may ask how do we begin? My suggestion is, begin by first drafting your own or personal mission statement and

revisit it daily or weekly. Let it guide you in shifting to a new paradigm of principle-centeredness. As an example, let me share with you my own personal mission statement; it reads thus:

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With this in mind, I can recap the postulates of former U.S. Congressman Gray, during his keynote address as I along with others obtained our Masters Degree from Howard University in May of 1986; he said... "Aim far, run fast, jump higher, and be a success!"
Unquote:

It is against this backdrop, I call upon all of you members of BHSA USA, friends of BHS, let us join hands, be thy brothers and sisters keepers, share telephone numbers, email addresses, talk about the good days, and inspire one another to make a positive contribution to BHS, "Tower of Light," By so doing we can guarantee our respective places in history; by so doing we will leave a good legacy... and when all is said and done, we will have well played our respective parts. And History will attest to the fact that we actually did build for tomorrow.

God Bless Liberia!
God Bless the USA!
God Bless Grand Bassa County!
God Bless Bassa High School (BHS)!

May the Tower of Light continue to shine on all of us!

I thank you!!!