

C a m p a I g n l A u n c h A D D R E S S

Delivered by

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Vice Standard Bearer of the Unity Party & Vice President, Republic of Liberia

On the Occasion of the

Official Launch of the UNITY PARTY NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

at the

Antoinette Tubman Stadium (ATS)

Monrovia, Liberia

Saturday, September 16, 2017

***Vice Standard Bearer Speaker Emmanuel and Mrs. Nuquay;
Mrs. Kartumu Boakai and My Beloved Family Members;
Mr. Chairman and Officials of the Unity Party;
Esteemed Chairman & Members of the National Campaign
Committee;
The Campaign Manager and his Team;
Auxiliary Organizations and Individual Supporters;
Distinguished Leaders & Members of our Collaborating Political
Parties;
Our Chiefs and Elders;
Members of the Fourth Estate;
Ladies and Gentlemen:***

I stand before you today as grateful to God as I am humbled by the privilege to serve as the Standard Bearer of the governing Unity Party.

Yes! The task of governing a war-torn state is an enormous one. Not only challenges related to broken roads, bridges, schools, hydro, and other essential infrastructure, but most importantly the human dimension that left our citizens across shallow lines and our people traumatized. As if we as a people had not gone through enough, Ebola came and caused huge reversals as shown in the worse peacetime deaths we have ever faced.

I thank our Standard Bearer Emeritus, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Chairman Emeritus, and all the officials of government, as well as our civil servants for their individual and collective services to the country. I thank each of you so much for the amazing work that led to bringing together the

largest crowd of supporters our country has experienced for a single campaign rally. To all of you, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am certainly in awe of this occasion because of your overwhelming show of support. My heart is uplifted with pride to see this moment. You have demonstrated that no obstacle is too big for us to overcome together.

These are defining moments in our history. Our country has come a long way from what we inherited. We have had 12 years of uninterrupted peace and uncensored civil liberties, after enduring many decades of tyranny and nearly two decades of war. But today, much of the nation's capital has access to electricity and running water. We have more functioning universities and community colleges than ever before.

Added to the fact that we are experiencing unprecedented grade school enrollment, greater numbers of Liberians are today receiving higher education than ever before. Besides, this Administration has paved 750 kilometers of roads, more kilometers than any of its predecessors. Today, a journey from Monrovia to Buchanan that took more than 5 hours in 2006 can now take you one hour and half.

A journey from Monrovia to Ganta, that took over seven hours, now takes three and half hours. Several streets in Monrovia and its environs are now paved: SKD Boulevard to 72nd, Jallah Town to Bassa Community, and most of Paynesville Duport Road and adjoining communities, including the back road towards Redlight. Salaries are current.

Back in 2006, the national budget was \$86 million USD. Most institutions of governance were non-functional. Quality of Life measurements had no data and so our Human Development Index was sadly nonexistent. Liberia was an outcast facing international sanctions and not even credit worthy.

Here we are today with a different scenario. Liberia is no longer isolated by other nations, but respected and considered as a leader amongst its peers in the Mano River Union and ECOWAS, even in the African Union and United Nations.

After just 12 years, the budget today stands at 563 million USD. Liberia has emerged from the ashes of war and the prospects for increased improvement are high depending on whose hands you put the country to lead--a novice or an experienced manager. Liberia is peaceful because Liberians have said no to war. Liberia is stronger because of your strength. And Liberia will get much better because we are all in this together.

What happened in the civil war has taught us significant lessons, which we just do not need to learn, but must apply to how we govern. We must see ourselves as one people and keep from repeating the hate that fueled the war.

Let me add that when we took over this country, it was not able to receive any credit from other nations or the international lending institutions. Because of the HIPIC Completion, the nation was able to borrow and start many of the big road or infrastructure projects that we are benefitting from today.

Today, the critical foundations of a functioning state have been built. While all have not gone perfectly, these achievements have been nothing less than milestones.

My fellow Liberians, I have never been naïve to believe that in two presidential election cycles we can fix a country that accumulated its problems and wounds for 159 years completely.

But I can say that we are poised for making sustainable change. Elections are not just about the past or present, but largely about the future. And so, I want to spend this time describing to you, the kind of future Honorable Nuquay and I plan to create with your support.

My development agenda is driven by how I got here and the empathy that it gives me. I am an ordinary Liberian. When you elect me as your President, I will be the first janitor and rubber tapper to make it to the highest office in the land.

As a school boy, to pay my school fees, I worked as a janitor at CWA, the school that I attended, and waiter at the Rivoli Cinema Restaurant. Before I attended CWA, I dropped out of school multiple of times because I did not have tuition. But I remained resilient and strong and eventually made it through high school and college.

These life struggles were God's way of teaching me the challenges ordinary people face daily. This will certainly make me quite a different President – the standard bearer for the cook, the taxi driver, the babysitter, the janitor, the motorbike rider, the yana boy, rubber tapper, and the farmer. If I can make it this far, you too and your sons and daughters can make it as well.

As the Vice President, I learned what worked well and what did not work so well; which steps took us forward and which ones kept us from moving forward.

It is clear that I will not have a learning curve about how to govern a failed state. I will have an execution, and implementation curve. I will deliver results. I will actually be walking the talk and not just be talking from textbook or experience that is not rooted in practical Liberian reality.

Now, let me outline my priorities. The infrastructure and agriculture sectors are the most crucial aspects of transforming Liberia. Agriculture will be the primary development goal of our government side-by-side with roads because of their capacity to bring about growth and employment.

If government is going to change the lives of Liberians dramatically, if one thing will move poor people from poverty to the middle class in large numbers, it will be investment in these two sectors. And let me be specific to emphasize ROADS. Roads will create access to health, agriculture, and education. I intend to utilize our God-given natural resources to connect the county capitals to major commercial cities, district capitals to chiefdoms, by paved roads and then to clans and then to villages and farms.

Specifically, the roads that I will prioritize include: Cape Mount to Cape Palmas; Gbarnga to Mendikoma; Ganta to Tappita, and Zwedru to Cape Palmas. The Southeast must be connected to the rest of the country. I promise to commence study for the implementation of these projects immediately after inauguration. Road connectivity is our number one national priority. I see the Southeast as a tourist destination with huge agricultural potential.

Agriculture, on the other hand, will allow us to produce the food we eat. Access to finance for farming and other agricultural activities will be prioritized and scaled up. Agricultural extension services will be improved greatly.

When we feed ourselves, it will allow many Liberians to export the surplus, which will be a source of foreign exchange. You see, people do not grow the economy from top-down, but from bottom-up. I will boost access to finance through a reopening of the Agriculture & Cooperative Development Bank and provide incentives to other commercial banks to make credit possible to all our people. Liberians must own shares in our mineral ventures.

Manufacturing, imbedded with value-addition, will also be a fundamental part of this vision so that it enables our people to benefit from our God-given natural resources: rubber, iron ore, timber, and other products before they are exported from Liberia. This will create more and better paying jobs for our people. Liberians must own shares in our mineral ventures.

I will work to ensure that manufacturing becomes a normal part of our development process supported by investment in solar energy and other sustainable production approaches which will make electrical energy available to our people at the village level. In all of these changes, ordinary Liberians will be the heartbeat of and the main beneficiaries of our economic transformation.

When I think about the future of Liberia, I think about how to make sure that our school-going and those of our children that are not attending school get the best education and technical training. That means, making sure that our teachers are recruited and trained well, particularly in math and science, paid better, and given incentives, housing for those working in the remote and rural areas to keep them invested in their job. Vocational education will also be the cornerstone of that change making opportunity in the education sector.

We will join our international partners in offering adult literacy programs to help our people who did not have the opportunity to complete their education, which would increase parent involvement in their children's learning.

After school and other extra-curricular activities will be developed to enable our children to increase their achievement rates. Libraries and laboratories will be constructed to support instruction and learning and school facilities will be modernized and fit with appropriate technology.

Our Administration will curb drug use, addiction and teen pregnancy, which increase delinquency and crime, using diverse prevention and treatment programs. These will include counseling and rehabilitation centers in each county to take care of those of our people unfortunately caught up in the practice of using drugs. The name "zogos" must disappear from our life.

We cherish all of our people and therefore cannot continue to think that some of us are disposable people called zogos. I consider them as potentially productive citizens who stand in need of our help. That help we will give

them. We will build college preparedness programs in high schools and fit them with trained counselors to help set our children on the appropriate career path. We must do this because our children are too valuable to us and none of them should be left behind in the national development process.

Our nurses, doctors, lab technicians, public health professionals and other healthcare workers will receive similar attention and incentives.

Yes! Our healthcare system took a huge beating from Ebola, but it is on its way up. And to enable the change to become sustainable, we will make sure that our healthcare system works for the benefit of the poor, the middle class and the rich as well in all of our 15 counties.

Community healthcare centers will be built to close the distance people have to travel to seek healthcare. This will increase their desire to go to the hospitals for treatment and prevent treatable illnesses from becoming chronic. All of us will attend the same hospitals, except in cases beyond the capacity of our medical facilities.

We want to make our healthcare facilities more affordable, and better yet, we want to reduce the number of Liberians that travel abroad for healthcare by providing up-to-date medical facilities in the various regions of Liberia. For every five counties there must be a regional hospital comparable to JFK and the Jackson F. Doe hospitals.

Just yesterday, I made remarks at the graduation ceremony of 11 specialized doctors from the Liberia College of Physicians and Surgeons. They will be deployed all around the country in 16 different sub-fields in medicine. This is a great step forward in building a resilient healthcare system in our society.

We want to show our appreciation for all of our faith-based organizations: churches and mosques which in the past laid the foundation for delivery of health and educational services in this country.

Special effort will be made to partner with them again so that they produce more institutions like our first maternity center in Bassa Community by the Baptist Church many years ago, as well as Cuttington College that was built in Maryland County originally by the Episcopal Church. We have no space in the streets for our children, and for this reason we will invite our partners to open boarding schools that can enroll these children.

The economic climate that we are transitioning to will be different from the immediate post war one. We must all prepare for stringent disciplined processes and austerity measures in our financial management. There is no success without sacrifice.

Our integrity institutions will be given teeth to help end the culture of corruption and impunity that are immense constraints on building an enabling investment climate.

Corruption is due to greed and selfishness and it poisons whatever it touches. If you steal government money you will be punished severely and face restitution.

The size of government will be smaller, and governance will become more transparent, accountable, and efficient. The vision is to get rid of programs that do not work or outsource those that the private sector can manage more effectively. Public corporations will be required to publish their annual reports in the media.

Government will enable the private sector to thrive and multiply the numbers of jobs that government can create. To make this possible, we will equip our citizens with the training and skills that the private sector wants and facilitate the best opportunities for their employment including empowering many of our young people to become business owners.

I do not believe that all government programs do produce results. That is why gathering data to measure results, while using lessons learned to improve governance, will be critical to how we govern.

Certainly, we have not run a perfect government, but I can say emphatically that we have changed the course of Liberian history for the better. In the process, we have acquired experiences that are crucial for lifting this country to the next phase of its development.

Let me close by making this important point: I have no loyalty to any other country. I have been tried and tested and I have remained trusted and dependable. I believe in being humble and honest. Our Government will guarantee press freedom but we must respect decency in our public utterances.

It is hard work that got me thus far. My Church and family have always been my anchor. My respect for the law and order means that no one is above the law. We must restore family values if our country is to produce quality citizens.

As a Church going person and a strong believer, my faith compels me to be tolerant of different people and cultures and inclusive in all that I do. I lead by example, and will certainly not give one window of opportunity for a family of mine to get any preferential treatment or exceptions.

My Ordinary Brothers and Sisters, Sons and Daughters!

The future is bright. Thanks to God and our development partners, today, we are out of the danger zone and we are enjoying peace. Great moments like these are defined by greater determination, greater ideas, and the inclusion of all. Great moments like these are defined by love of our neighbors and our country.

The country is on a stronger footing now than it ever was, despite all the challenges and the unfair criticisms by our detractors. We are set to knock down the barriers that have kept our country from making the lives of all its citizens better.

Whatever will stand in our way, we should be able to remove because we **THINK LIBERIA; LOVE Liberia;** and are determined, with valor unpretending to **BUILD** a strong, viable and prosperous Liberia.

Nothing! I say nothing is beyond your wildest dreams that we cannot achieve together for the good of our country. You are the change that this country depends on. My part of the bargain is to make this country free and fair with opportunities for all.

Your presence here today has given me that hope and assurance that on October 10, you will not place the future of this country in the hands of any other people, but Speaker Nuquay and myself. By so doing you will be handing us the mantle to close the division in our society and lead us through the next phase of our democracy on our journey to greater achievement in all areas of national development, including reconciliation, unification of all our people and the prosperity of the our country.

All of what we are talking about will be possible if and only if we **THINK LIBERIA, LOVE LIBERIA**, then we can together **BUILD LIBERIA** for all.

I now declare the Unity Party Campaign for the House of Representatives and the Presidency of the Republic officially launched this historic Saturday, September 16, 2017.

God bless Liberia. And thank you.