

**Statement by H. E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Visitor of the University of Liberia
At the Dedicatory Program
Of the David A. Straz, Jr. - Sinje Technical & Vocational College
Of the University of Liberia
Sinje, Grand Cape Mount County
Monday, July 23, 2012**

We are celebrating the July 26 in Montserrado County. But we felt it only proper to come, since Ambassador [David A.] Straz is with us for this “26” celebration, to make sure that we dedicate this Technical and Vocational College within the context of this year’s celebration. That’s why we’re here.

It was just three years ago that we broke ground for these structures, realizing the importance to have a center of learning to provide technical and vocational skills for our young people – people who we know are thirsty for knowledge. They want an opportunity to participate in the reconstruction of their country, and to do so they need to have skills. We are glad that Dr. [Emmet] Dennis and his team agreed to put this College under the University of Liberia, so he can work with them to give the quality education that is necessary.

Let me thank you, the people of Grand Cape Mount County, for providing the space for these facilities. Grand Cape Mount County has always been known as the “book” county, whether they went to St. John’s or Bethany [the Episcopal High School] and all of those old schools that everybody is known for. But you know, they don’t make farm!

Thank you, Garwula District, for your generous donation. Thanks to all of you who cooperated during the period when these facilities were being constructed, who protected it, safeguarded it, who worked with it.

As many of you know, and has been stated by others, not only is education a priority of this government, but also the decentralization of education. This is why today we have five Community Colleges all over the country that are now operational and

functional. Our aim is to make sure that all the other counties will also have their Community Colleges, where students do not have to leave their hometown if they do not want to – although there is free movement around the country as our Constitution provides – and for those who want to stay home or have equal access to the same kinds of benefits and facilities that they may find in other places. That’s the objective of this government and we call on everybody to support this.

Now, let me put this paper down. Today, we dedicated a clinic behind Ricks Institute – a place [Gbondo] in a remote area where there are no facilities. As we drove through Ricks Institute, the disappointment was there because all you have were the houses with all the bush, and Ricks Institute has to go down to Monrovia [Red Light] to buy food to be able to feed the children – an institution that has been there all this time. How?

Coming here, 1000 acres of land have been given. This institution must feed itself! Our subsidy to boarding institutions will be based upon their ability to become self-sufficient, particularly in food.

As we close, let me invite all these dignitaries here today. Imagine if one Ambassador, say the French, will say, we will build the [François] Hollande mechanical center; or one of our esteemed persons will say, we will furnish one room in the dormitory. We call upon everybody to support this institution.

The good thing about ownership is that you must give to it yourself. The good thing about us talking about taking our destiny into our hands is that we must be prepared to take primary responsibility for our own development. I call upon some of our foreign friends, but they are just secondary; we will have to do it for ourselves.

As we dedicate these facilities, let’s all of us remember that it will be what we make it to be. It will prosper as we are willing to contribute to it and to work for it.

Thank you, Garwula. Thank you, Grand Cape Mount County.