

INDEPENDENCY DAY MESSAGE BY HIS EXCELLENCY JOSEPH NYUMA BOAKAI,
SR., PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA ON THE OCCASION OF LIBERIA'S
179TH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY

BUCHANAN CITY, GRAND BASSA COUNTY

Monday, July 27, 2026

Theme: "Strengthening National Identity Through Liberian-Led Historical Leadership"

Fellow Liberians,

Today, we celebrate one hundred and seventy-nine years of our nation's independence with gratitude to Almighty God and with renewed hope for Liberia's future.

Beyond celebrating our sovereignty, Independence Day is also a moment to reflect on who we are, where we have come from, and the nation we aspire to become.

For nearly two centuries, Liberia has traveled a remarkable path. Ours is a story of courage and sacrifice, of triumphs and setbacks, of unity tested and restored. Through every challenge, our people have demonstrated extraordinary resilience, preserving our sovereignty and keeping alive the promise of Africa's first independent Black Republic.

As we approach two hundred years of nationhood, we must do more than commemorate our past. We must understand it. A nation that understands its history is better prepared to shape its future. It is in that spirit that this year's theme, "Strengthening National Identity Through Liberian-Led Historical Leadership," calls upon us to deepen our understanding of our national story and to ensure that Liberians themselves take the lead in researching, preserving, and interpreting the history that defines our identity.

The story of Liberia is rich, complex, and consequential. But who are we as Liberians?

The answer cannot be found only in the events of recent decades. It must be sought across the full sweep of our national journey, from Liberia's conception in 1819 to independence in 1847, across generations of nationhood.

Our story is preserved in archives and official records, but also in the oral traditions of our communities, our cultural heritage, and the lived experiences of our people. It is shaped by the histories of indigenous civilizations, the return of people of African descent from the Americas and the Caribbean, and our enduring ties with the African Diaspora.

Together, these experiences have produced the Liberian exceptionalism: a nation unlike any other.

Our identity must therefore be rooted in history and shaped by the values and experiences that make us uniquely Liberian and have sustained us through nearly two centuries of statehood: our republican tradition, our love for freedom, our resilience, and our cultural diversity. These values should shape not only how we remember our past but also how we govern our Republic and build our future.

We are a people born in freedom. That legacy remains our greatest inheritance. We are also a nation richly blessed by God.

Our fertile lands, abundant rivers, forests, minerals, and above all, our resilient people, provide every reason for confidence in Liberia's future. These blessings must be managed wisely and equitably so that they improve the lives of every Liberian.

We are proudly African. As Africa's first independent Black Republic, Liberia became a symbol of hope for millions seeking freedom and self-determination.

Our nation's history inspired liberation movements across the continent and strengthened the aspirations of people of African descent around the world. That distinguished legacy continues to place upon Liberia the honor and a special responsibility to promote peace, democracy, and cooperation in Africa and beyond. Our national identity is also enriched by diversity.

Liberia reflects the cultures and traditions of its indigenous communities, the experiences of settlers from the Americas and the Caribbean, and the lasting bonds we share with the wider African Diaspora. These experiences have given us a national character unlike any other in Africa.

Along our coastline also lie reminders of one of humanity's darkest chapters, the transatlantic slave trade. That history connects Liberia not only to the story of return, but also to the painful story of separation and loss.

We therefore support continued efforts to acknowledge the history of the transatlantic slave trade honestly, not to reopen old wounds, but to strengthen justice, reconciliation, and our common humanity.

My Fellow Liberians,

No nation is shaped without adversity, and Liberia is no exception.

Our history has been marked by periods of political uncertainty, economic hardship, social division, and painful conflict. At critical moments, we have faced difficult choices: whether to remain divided or pursue the more demanding path of building a peaceful, inclusive, democratic, and capable nation—state.

Time and again, Liberians have chosen hope over despair, reconciliation over revenge, and democracy over instability.

By emphasizing Liberian-led leadership, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of our past that reinforces our national identity, supports reconciliation, and motivates collective effort. We believe that our future will be shaped not by the weight of history but by our resolve to build a unified and prosperous Liberia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While we have understandably devoted considerable attention to building the institutions of the State, nation-building is key. We must see beyond strong institutions and the power they demonstrate. We must harness the soft, deep power—the culture, values, and common sense of identity and purpose—that is the nation's inner spirit.

The strongest nations are united by shared values, common purpose, mutual respect, and a deep sense of identity.

Nation building is therefore not simply the work of government. It is the responsibility of every citizen.

It is reflected in how we treat one another, how faithfully we uphold the rule of law, how honestly we serve the public, and how proudly we embrace the symbols, history, and values that define us as Liberians.

When citizens share a common identity, political differences become easier to manage, diversity becomes a source of strength, and national progress becomes a collective responsibility.

That is why strengthening our national identity is inseparable from building the nation.

Fellow Liberians,

A nation ignoring its history risks losing its identity. Preserving archives, sites, artifacts, and records is an investment in our future. Liberia's documentary heritage has suffered losses from conflict, poor preservation, and neglect. Much of Liberia's history is also held abroad in various institutions and private collections.

That is why we must work to ensure that Liberia's history is researched, interpreted, and presented with professionalism, integrity, and intellectual independence. Every Liberian has a responsibility to preserve our heritage. But the responsibility for producing our national history belongs primarily to those trained to examine evidence objectively and rigorously.

In an age when misinformation spreads instantly, and opinion is too often mistaken for facts, credible scholarship has never been more important. Our universities, archives, museums, and research institutions must become the guardians of our national memory.

Liberian historians and other scholars should lead this national effort, drawing upon the experiences of communities throughout our country while working in partnership with respected international institutions.

Only then can history reinforce the national identity that binds us together as one people.

Accordingly, I am announcing today the creation of a National Historical Recovery and Repatriation Initiative. Through this initiative, the Government will work with international partners, universities, and cultural institutions to repatriate copies of historical records related to Liberia, enabling our people to once again access the documentary foundations of our national memory.

With this understanding, I also announce the Government's commitment to revitalizing Liberia's principal heritage institutions. For too long, the National Archives and the National Museum have operated under difficult conditions, limiting their ability to fulfill their important responsibilities. These institutions are custodians of our collective memory and repositories.

Accordingly, the Government will modernize and strengthen the National Archives and the National Museum by improving infrastructure, preservation and conservation systems, digitization, and access for researchers, students, and citizens.

We also recognize the significance of the Kendeja Cultural Center, which once stood as a proud symbol of Liberia's cultural heritage and artistic expression.

Accordingly, I am directing the establishment of an intergovernmental technical committee to study the future of the Kendeja Cultural Center and make recommendations for its restoration, modernization, and integration into Liberia's national heritage program.

It is also important to recognize the work of one of Liberia's distinguished scholars in recent years to examine our national symbols and how they might better reflect the rich mosaic of Liberia's diverse peoples, cultures, and history.

That important contribution reminds us that our national symbols should embody the identity, aspirations, and contributions of all Liberians and inspire in every citizen a deeper sense of belonging and national pride.

Finally, my Administration will revive and advance the National History Project, first recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Its purpose is to promote a comprehensive, inclusive documentation through broader research, deeper scholarship, and more inclusive documentation of the experiences of all the communities that have contributed to Liberia's formation and development.

This project must remain independent of partisan influence and insulated from the interests of any particular administration or generation. History should never be written through the lens of political convenience. It must remain an honest, evidence-based account of our national journey.

Accordingly, the National History Project will be led by Liberia's community of professional historians, archivists, archaeologists, anthropologists, linguists, educators, and other scholars, working under appropriate institutional oversight and drawing upon the knowledge and experiences of communities throughout our country.

International scholars and institutions will remain valued partners in this endeavor. But Liberians must remain at the center of researching, interpreting, and presenting Liberia's history to ourselves and to the world.

Only through such an approach can we strengthen national identity, deepen reconciliation, and leave future generations a historical record worthy of their inheritance.

This year also marks one hundred years since two events that profoundly influenced Liberia's national development: the signing of the 1926 Firestone Concession Agreement and the Harvard African Expedition to Liberia.

Each shaped our country's economic development and contributed significantly to the world's understanding of Liberia's people, culture, and natural resources.

As we reflect upon these milestones, let us also commit to ensuring that future scholarship about Liberia increasingly reflects Liberian leadership, Liberian perspectives, and Liberian voices, working in partnership with respected institutions around the world.

My Fellow Citizens,

The greatest gift we can leave future generations is not only infrastructure or stronger institutions. It is a confident nation that understands itself.

A nation whose citizens understand their common history, appreciate their diversity, and embrace a common destiny. That is the Liberia we must come together and, with true intent, work to build!

Fellow Liberians,

As we continue to implement our national development priorities, we must also strengthen the foundations of citizenship, civic responsibility, and national consciousness.

Every Liberian, regardless of county, ethnicity, religion, political persuasion, gender, or social background, must see themselves reflected in our national story and recognize that they have an equal stake in our country's future.

We, the people, should not just be connected by the hope of prosperity, but by the strength of the identity we share and commitment to one another. If we are to leave a stronger Liberia for future generations, we must pass on more than the story of our past; we must pass on the faith, principles, and sense of purpose that have sustained us through every chapter of our journey.

Let us draw strength from the achievements of those who came before us, learn from the challenges they faced, and preserve the legacy they left us.

We also give thanks to Almighty God for His abundant grace upon Liberia, and we pray that He continues to guide us as leaders, strengthen our people, and bless our beloved country for generations to come.

Let me thank the people of Grand Bassa County and Liberians in Liberia and all over the globe for such patriotism as demonstrated in the unprecedented celebration of our beloved nation.

We want to thank our Guest of Honor who had to travel from far to honor our invitation. We also thank our National Orator. I give special thanks to the Superintendent of this County for such a splendid job.

May God bless us all and continue to save the Republic.