

SPECIAL REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY JOSEPH NYUMA BOAKAI, Sr.,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA DELIVERED AT THE 97TH FOUNDER'S
DAY CELEBRATION OF THE BOOKER WASHINGTON INSTITUTE (BWI)

BWI Campus, Kakata, Margibi County

Saturday, June 27, 2026

The Chairman and Members of the Board of Directors; The Administration, Faculty, and Staff of Booker Washington Institute; Esteemed Alumni;

Students; Visiting Guests of Prairie View AM University Development Partners; Members of the Diplomatic Corps; Government Officials;

Honorees; The Two Queens; Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honored to join you today in your celebration of the 97th Founder's Day of Booker Washington Institute, one of Liberia's most distinguished institutions and a pillar of technical and vocational education in our country.

This occasion is especially significant as you gather under the theme, "Honoring Our Founders, Celebrating Their Legacies toward the Centenary." It is a theme that invites us not only to reflect on the remarkable vision and sacrifices of those who established this Institution, but also to recommit ourselves to the noble purpose for which it was founded.

For ninety-seven years, just three strikes away from one hundred, Booker Washington Institute has served as a center of excellence, producing generations of skilled Liberians who have contributed meaningfully to our national development.

The story of Booker Washington Institute is, in many respects, the story of Liberia itself. It is a story of perseverance in the face of adversity. It is a story of hope triumphing over hardship. It is a story of a people who understood that, while buildings may crumble, the human spirit, when nurtured through education, remains unconquerable.

For ninety-seven years, Booker Washington Institute has weathered changing political administrations, economic uncertainty, global financial crises, public health emergencies, and even the painful years of violent civil conflict that tested the very fabric of our nation.

Many institutions struggled to survive. Some disappeared altogether. Yet Booker Washington Institute endured. This Institution endured because it represented something greater than bricks, steel, and mortar. It represented a national ideal. It represented the conviction that Liberia's greatest wealth has never been buried beneath our soil alone.

Our greatest wealth walks our streets, tills our farms, studies in our classrooms, and dreams of a better tomorrow. That wealth is our people.

Throughout the difficult years of our civil conflict, Liberia lost much. We lost lives. We lost opportunities. We lost decades of development. Schools were destroyed. Communities were displaced. Families were separated. The hopes of an entire generation were interrupted.

Yet even in those darkest chapters of our history, the Liberian people never abandoned their faith in education. Parents continued to sacrifice so their children could learn. Teachers continued to serve despite enormous hardship. Students continued to dream even when circumstances suggested otherwise. That resilience became one of the defining characteristics of our national recovery. We cannot but only credit all this to the never daunting spirit, foresight, and conviction of the founding fathers as well as those who followed to carry on with the dream.

It is out of their sweat and toil that institutions such as Booker Washington Institute became indispensable vehicles in the rebuilding of our country. When peace returned, Liberia needed roads to be rebuilt. We especially needed skilled Liberians capable of rebuilding Liberia with Liberian hands. It is to that call that Booker Washington Institute answered.

This is why today we celebrate not merely an educational institution. We celebrate an institution that has quietly, consistently and faithfully participated in the rebuilding our nation. Booker Washington Institute has produced thousands of those nation builders. And Liberia is better because of them.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the greatest strengths of Booker Washington Institute has always been its willingness to embrace and sustain partnership. No institution achieves greatness in isolation. The enduring relationship between Booker Washington Institute and Prairie View A&M University stands as a shining example of what international cooperation in education can accomplish.

For generations, this partnership has strengthened agricultural sciences, engineering education, electronics, industrial arts, teacher preparation and community development. Knowledge has crossed oceans. Faculty members have exchanged ideas with their peers in faraway lands. Students have benefited from expanded opportunities. Research has informed agricultural practices. Innovation has improved technical education.

More recently, this historic partnership has embraced digital learning, climate-smart agriculture, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies that will define the future of work.

The real question now is whether Liberia will prepare its young people to lead in this new world or merely observe it from the sidelines. That future is not beyond our reach.

Under our ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development, we recognize that education must be directly linked to employment, entrepreneurship and economic transformation. Our objective is not merely to educate young people. Our objective is to empower them.

We seek an education system that produces competent hands and minds. These well molded products should come from every county, every district, and every community where young Liberians possess dreams worthy to pursue.

My dear students, allow me to speak directly to you.

Though we serenade our sainted founders, you are the reason we are here today. You are not simply students enrolled in a respected institution. As we journey toward the mid-21st Century, let us resolve that the next century of Booker Washington Institute will be even greater than the first. And that is a dream you will have to play the greater part to ensure actualization.

As Liberia continues on its path toward economic transformation, technical and vocational education continues to occupy a central place in our national development agenda. The Boakai Administration therefore remains committed to strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) across Liberia through the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development.

To the students gathered here today, I encourage you to embrace excellence, integrity, discipline, and hard work. You are the custodians of this Institution's future.

To the administrators, faculty, and staff who will mold you into productive citizens, I extend immense thanks as I urge them to keep on this noble pursuit. Let us all, Think Liberia, Love Liberia, and together Build Liberia.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Liberia, and to the memory of our Founding Fathers, I congratulate the Board, Administration, Faculty, Staff, Student Body, Alumni, and all stakeholders of Booker Washington Institute on this important milestone. I say to you,

Bravo!

May God bless Booker Washington Institute.

May God bless us all.

And may God bless the Republic of Liberia.

I thank you.