DUAL CITIZENSHIP SPEECH

FOR

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Hello everyone and thank you for giving me the honor to speak before all of you today. U.S. astronaut Frank Borman once said, “When you’re finally up on the moon, looking back on earth, all these differences and nationalistic traits are pretty well going to blend and you’re going to get a concept that maybe this **is** really **one world**…” Ladies and gentlemen, our world is changing rapidly. It is shrinking as our personal, professional, and civic responsibilities are growing to include the ever-present necessity to have the ability to function in more than one geographic scenario. Borman made his lunar orbits and observations generations ago and since then, we have experienced war and peace, innovation and destruction, prosperity and despair, and as the world has continued to “shrink,” each one of us has had the privilege and opportunity to experience and exchange pride of homeland, curiosity about new places and weighing choices concerning nationalism.

As the saying goes, “Adapt or die.” That phrase was created by economist Joseph Schumpeter to illustrate the concept of creative destruction. We look to our ecosystem to give us clues as to how we can sustain civilization and ourselves. In much the same way as fire first consumes and then ultimately renews that ecosystem by allowing sun to shine through and nourish and encourage nature’s new growth, so must we be inspired to take a look at old established traditions, laws and rules and find the way to adapt them to better suit their purposes to serve nations and their citizens. I am here today to offer perspective on our world and to urge all of you to consider the viability and benefits in encouraging and accepting dual citizenship in Liberia. Dual citizenship for Liberians is a concept that has arrived. Its time is **NOW**.

The benefits of dual citizenship are many and as each of our lives become more ”global-centric,” the demand becomes more relevant and, dare I say, **necessary** to the growth of a nation and its people. Just as Astronaut Borman gained a new perspective on our planet when he was able to observe it at a new vantage point, we will have the ability and opportunity to see life and progress bloom as we evolve and open our minds to fresh new and affirmative influence. If we take a look at the conditions present today, we can see that contemporary life calls for the positive effects brought on by the integration of citizenship. There are many countries that now support dual citizenship. Let’s learn from them and take a look at what they’ve experienced. Ghana’s Citizenship Act of 2000 took effect in 2002. Since then, the benefits that have been exchanged and enhanced are many, including the support of greater access to financial investment rights, greater opportunity for educational benefits, increased opportunity to foster and support culture and tradition, promotion of free enterprise and democracy and enhanced exposure and participation in the “global conversation” in general.

In this day and age, more than ever, no one can afford to live an insulated life. Think of all of you sitting in this room. Where are you from? How did you get here? Think of your personal and professional journeys and think of how your travels and exposure to other cultures influenced **your** view of life and the world. Now think of how your travels have made you feel about your homeland-the place of your birth. Think about the places you’ve been or where life and circumstance have taken you and think about how some of you may have a new or adopted home. Does it make the pride of nationalism for your birth country any less passionate? Or does having the privilege to be exposed to the entire world and to have the benefits and challenges play off each other, and inform each other, like an intense game of cultural tennis? In the olden days, people stayed put. Time, lack of technology and circumstance forbid our neighbors to experience the richness and diversity offered in every corner of this planet. But there is one thing that progress has taught us, and that is that we are now aware enough and can say, “I don’t know what I don’t know.” 150 years ago, Africa was known as “The Dark Continent.” In the past 150 years, there has been innovation, enlightenment and progress thanks to the people who have chosen to look outside of their singular platforms in life to explore and connect to everyone in the global community. That exploration and socio-cultural exchange does not diminish pride of country-it **MAGNIFIES** it.

Let me give you another perspective. What is the fear of establishing and fostering dual citizenship? Is there really a down side? Or is there really the possibility to work out the complications that arise by pledging allegiance to more than one country? As I said earlier, we all benefit from advanced technology and connectivity all designed to encourage conversation and foster solutions to society’s issues and problems. When questions of military service or taxation are at the core of the discussion, now more than ever, we are equipped to have the dialogue and to commit to equitable resolution. “No” is not an option in this day and age.

The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates once said, “I am a citizen, not of Athens or Greece, but of the world.” United States President Theodore Roosevelt said, “The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his own weight.” The truth of the matter is that if a person has the passion, drive, dedication and interest to explore the option of dual citizenship, he or she should have access to that privilege. Any person who attempts to seek dual nationality should not take the act lightly. The allegiance to be pledged to each country is implicit and unassailable. The act is done as an expression of commitment, dedication and pride. It is not for everyone, but for those who seek to express such extraordinary allegiance, it should be granted.

Liberia is a country with history and culture to share. Acceptance of dual citizenship would have a two-fold benefit. Our customs, culture and way of life would benefit through enhanced exposure throughout the world and the world would also benefit as we share our treasures and traditions. Sometimes people tend to view change of this sort as something that has the potential to chip away at the distinctiveness and pride of our people. I want to invite all of you to think of the positive side to sharing our culture. Liberians need to have government policies that support the people as well as the infrastructure and cultural and economic growth. It is no longer acceptable to settle for policies that do not support a growing and emerging populace. It is time to open the doors and allow the breeze to come in **and** go out, and that breeze will not just be “hot air.”

It is time to take the pieces of our country and rearrange them to support growth, modernity and prosperity in Liberia, and one essential part of the puzzle that is needed is the acceptance of dual citizenship. The time has come to be part of the global community and conversation, to support those who honor Liberian culture along with other cultures and it’s time to support Liberians throughout the world that want to be true to their roots while expanding and fostering bilateral allegiance. I urge all of you to consider the benefits of dual citizenship and I look forward to the day when Liberian dual nationals can travel freely as they make their mark on our country and the world.

Thank you all!