

Greetings Fellow Spartans and Friends of B. W. Harris Episcopal School Alumni Association-USA, Inc. My name is Joanna Hawah Freeman-Richards, National Chair for those who don't know me.,

I am pleased to join the members of the Rhode Island Chapter, my home chapter, in welcoming everyone to the 26th Convention and reunion of our Association. We should all take pride that for 26 years we have gathered each year to support our alma mater. We have and continue to make a difference in the lives of the children who attend our school.

The last Convention, which marked our 25th Silver Jubilee year, was also an election year. One of the things that we should learn and always remember is that in exercising our democracy, we must refrain from saying words and doing deeds that undercut our strengths and cause cracks within our Association. In the interest of the Association and our school, during the 2019 elections, we must not repeat the excesses, particularly in the use of social media, that threatened our Association and has residual effects even now. Let us always be positive ambassadors of this Association.

Where it exists, please let go of the lingering aftertaste of the 2017 elections that has affected the Association, Chapters and Classes. Please let it go for the sake of the children for whom we work. Our 26 years of success can only continue if we remain united and build upon what has been accomplished since 1992 when this Association was founded.

Working hand-in-hand with our donors, both in and out of the Association, and with our Chapters and Classes, we finance a very viable scholarship program that recognizes merit. We continue to invest in our school and have expanded the computer lab, provided projectors for every classroom, commenced refurbishing the front façade of the school, provided supplies and materials for the Kindergarten and clinic programs, and will soon begin construction of new flooring in the school's auditorium.

The Association is fully supportive of the efforts of our Principal, Hilary Collins and his plans to change the education environment of the school including the STEMA (Science, Technology, English Math and Arts program and raising WAEC (West African Examination Council) scores. We will continue to support our school by working closely with the principal. All of this is dependent on contributions and donations and we encourage all members to participate in the Capital Campaign.

Since our last Convention We have expanded accountability and transparency in the Association. Notably, in addition to providing all quarterly financial statements of the income and expenses of the Association, we have also made quarterly bank statements available for review to our members. Our Association must always maintain and grow its principles related to accountability and transparency.

One of our major accomplishments regarding the future of the Association since our last convention has been to fully engage the class of 1999/2000 and other classes and are grateful that they have been responsive. It is imperative for the future of this Association that we embark on a dedicated outreach to graduates at B. W. Harris after the 1980s. It is the only way that this Association will survive our time.

As this begins the last year of this administration, we have been extremely grateful for the honor of serving all our members and our school and look forward to a successful 2018-2019 year. We look forward to meeting at Convention 2019 in Minnesota for our 27th Reunion.

We are Spartan **STRONG!** Let us remain united for our school and the longevity of this Association. Thank you.