

have the chance to build a new Nigeria. We have the chance to build a lasting network of ties between Africa and the United States. I know it will not be easy to walk the road, but you have already endured such stiff challenges. You have beaten such long odds to get this far. And after all, the road of freedom is the only road worth taking.

I hope that, as President, I have helped a little bit to take us a few steps down that road together. I am certain that America will walk with you in the years to come. And I hope you will remember, if nothing else, what I said about our interdependence. Yes, you need us today because at this fleeting moment in history, we are the world's richest country. But over the long run of life and over the long run of a nation's life and over the long run of civilization on this planet, the rich and the poor often change places. What endures is our common humanity.

If you can find it amidst all your differences and we can find it amidst all ours, and then we can reach out across the ocean, across the cultures, across the different histories with a common future for all of our children, freedom's road will prevail.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the House of Representatives Chamber at the National Assembly Building. In his remarks, he referred to Senate President Pius Anyim, Speaker of the House Ghali Na'Abba, Deputy Senate President Ibrahim Mantu, Deputy Speaker of the House Chibudum Nwuche, and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria; novelist Chinua Achebe; musician King Sunny Ade; U.S. Special Envoy to Africa Rev. Jesse Jackson; and former Nigerian military leader Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria in Abuja *August 26, 2000*

President Obasanjo, to the President of Niger, to the distinguished leaders of the legislative and judicial branches of the Nigerian Government, and all our friends from Nigeria who are here, I believe I can speak for the entire American delegation when I say thank you all for an unforgettable day.

And on a very personal basis, I want to thank you for enabling me to say something no previous American President has been able to say: It is good to be back in Africa for the second time.

I will say, Mr. President, I was very moved by your generous remarks, and I was very glad to have a Nigerian name. [*Laughter*] But now, you will have to give me a copy of your remarks so that when we go out tomorrow, I can introduce myself properly to the people of your country. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, it's a great honor for all of us to be here. I wish that my wife could come, and your remarks indicated you understand why she could not. But I am grateful for her interest in Africa as well, and especially in the Vital

Voices program that so many Nigerian women have been a part of.

We meet at a pivotal moment in your history. The long-deferred dreams of your people finally can and must be realized. I spoke about it in detail to the members of the Senate and the House today. I will only repeat that it is a daunting challenge, requiring both rigorous effort and realistic patience.

Nigeria is poised to do great things for its own people and for Africa's democratic destiny. We in the United States have long known Nigeria as an economic partner and an important supplier of energy. But now, more than ever, we and others throughout the world will know and honor Nigeria for its greatest energy resource, the people of this great nation.

We have come to appreciate it in many ways: the musical genius of King Sunny Ade; the brilliant writing of Chinua Achebe; and your Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka. We also think rather highly of the basketball feats of Hakeem Olajuwon. And we're coming more and more to appreciate the football brilliance of the Super