

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009*

**Remarks Prior to Departure from Accra, Ghana**

*July 11, 2009*

Hello, Ghana. Thank you. Thank you. I want to thank the people of Ghana for this extraordinary visit. Michelle and I have been greatly honored to be joined by President Mills and his lovely wife. They have been gracious hosts.

You know, your President and I have a lot in common. We're both lawyers; we're both former law professors; we're both new Presidents. We both like to think of ourselves as athletes. The difference is President Mills played hockey on the national team of Ghana, and I played basketball mostly in my backyard. [*Laughter*] But we both love sports.

We're both proud of serving our countries. And today I want to honor President Mills for his strong and thoughtful leadership, his devotion to democracy, and his commitment for the future of this nation.

Now, I also want to thank the magnificent welcoming committee, including the drummers and the dancers. Michelle and I and our daughters enjoyed it very much.

I want to recognize our Peace Corps volunteers who are here. You know, Ghana was the very first nation to host young people from the Peace Corps. And for decades, our two nations have formed vital partnerships and lasting friendships because of this program. So all of you in the Peace Corps, you are doing an outstanding job, and we're proud of you.

As somebody whose father comes from Africa, obviously, this visit has been particularly meaningful for me. I've had a chance to discuss the future of Ghana but also the future of Africa with President Mills. I've spoken to the Parliament here in Ghana about America's commitment to supporting democracy and development. Michelle and I visited La General Hospital, where we met with beautiful women and their children who are getting the care that they need for a healthy start.

And finally, we toured Cape Coast Castle, a place for centuries where men, women, and children of this nation and surrounding areas were sold into slavery. I'll never forget the image of my two young daughters, the descendants of Africans and African Americans, walking through those doors of no return, but then walking back those doors of return. It was a remarkable reminder that while the future is unknowable, the winds always blow in the direction of human progress.

At each point of our visit here, I was reminded of the enduring bond between our nations. The men and women taken from this nation helped to build my own. And today, many of our leading citizens trace their roots to these shores. Your first President attended a university in the United States, as did your current one. Great civil rights leaders of America, like Dr. Martin Luther King, looked to the independence movement here in Ghana and asked themselves, "If Africans can live freely in Africa, why can't African Americans live freely in America?"

And immigrants from Ghana and from all across Africa have thrived all across America. Today, both our nations are diverse and vibrant democracies. Here in Ghana, many different ethnic groups speak many languages, but have found a way to live and work together in peace. People here can speak freely and worship freely. You have a robust civil society, fair elections,

and a free press, a growing market economy, and a sense of energy and optimism. And every day with its success, Ghana sends a simple message to the world that democracy can thrive in Africa.

So we in America are proud of our partnership with Ghana. Together we've worked to advance education and fight poverty. We've made real and measurable strides in fighting diseases from malaria to tuberculosis to polio and neglected tropical diseases. This is a partnership we intend to continue. It's a partnership based not just on shared interests, but on shared ideals, ideals forged in struggles for independence that have made our countries who they are.

We believe that democracy is not simply a gift from previous generations, but a responsibility for each generation to preserve and to pass on. We believe that no one, whether it's through the influence of politics, the power of money, or the fear of force is above the law. And we believe that we're all equal, all endowed with basic human dignity, all entitled to basic human rights.

It is up to each of us, every one of us, to uphold those ideals. This is true not just in Ghana but for all of Africa. America wants to partner with the people and nations of Africa, but we all know that the future of Africa is in the hands of Africa.

So I especially want to, again, speak to the young people of Africa. In places like Ghana, you make up more than half the population, and here is what you must know, that the world is what you make of it. You have the power to hold your leaders accountable and to build institutions that serve the people. You can serve in communities like these Peace Corps workers and harness your energy and education to renew and build connections between the world. You can conquer disease and end conflict and make change from the bottom up. You can do all that.

And I promise you this: If you seize this opportunity, if you take responsibility for your future, America will be with you every step of the way as a partner and as a friend. Freedom is your inheritance, hard won 52 years ago by men and women determined to cast off the title of subjects for the title of citizens and claim for themselves and their children the liberties that are all of our birthrights.

Dr. King came here to Ghana to witness the culmination of that struggle. He watched as the Union Jack was lowered and the Ghanaian flag was raised at the Parliament. He marveled at the site of the Duchess of Kent dancing with the new Ghanaian President at the state ball. And in a sermon he gave upon returning home to America, he said of this new nation, "There is a great day ahead. The future is on its side." Those words ring just as true today as they did more than half a century ago.

Great days lie ahead for this nation. The future is on Ghana's side. I promise that America will be with you. And together we will create a better world.

Thank you, Ghana. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:24 p.m. at Kotoka International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to President John Evans Atta Mills of Ghana and his wife, Naadu. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Mills.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Ghana :: Departure ceremony in Accra.

*Locations:* Accra, Ghana.

*Names:* Mills, John Evans Atta; Mills, Naadu; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha".

*Subjects:* Africa : Relations with U.S.; Ghana : Cape Coast Castle in Cape Coast; Ghana : Democracy efforts; Ghana : La General Hospital in Accra; Ghana : President; Ghana : President Obama's visit; Ghana : Relations with U.S.; Peace Corps, U.S.; Slavery (historical) in U.S.

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