

NOTE: The interview began at 6:30 p.m. in Roosevelt Room at the White House and was broadcast live. In his remarks, the President referred to Lisa Myers, national correspondent, NBC

News; President Chen Shui-bian of Taiwan; Hong Kong Democratic Party Chair Martin Lee; and Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York City.

Remarks at the State Dinner Honoring President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa May 22, 2000

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the White House. And let me say a special word of welcome to President and Mrs. Mbeki and the South African delegation.

In 1966 Robert Kennedy began a famous speech to the students at Cape Town by describing his deep interest in a land settled by the Dutch in the mid 17th century, then taken over by the British before finally becoming independent, a land with complicated and cruel racial problems dating back centuries, a land of untamed frontiers alongside a proud history of entrepreneurial achievement. He said, "I refer, of course, to the United States of America." [Laughter]

Obviously, in 1966 and in 2000, a great deal unites South Africa and the United States. We share a fundamental sense, dating back to our earliest struggles, continuing through our most recent ones, that nationhood is more than an inheritance; it is a living gift to be protected, defended, and redefined every day.

Few nations have worked harder at nationhood or achieved more impressive results than South Africa. Few leaders have given more of themselves to the struggle than Thabo Mbeki. His mother says that even when he was a small child, he used to get terribly excited whenever news broadcasts came over the radio. If only we could replicate that today. [Laughter]

When his father was in prison, alongside Nelson Mandela, in the early 1960's, Thabo Mbeki carried on the struggle from England. At the tender age of 21, he delivered a powerful appeal for his father's life in which he mentioned, as an aside, the fact that his father's birthday was the Fourth of July, 1910. Even though the United States was not exactly supporting the ANC in 1964, he saw that day, nevertheless, as a symbol of freedom and all the more reason his father should not lose his life for affirming

the simple truth that all people are created equal.

Fortunately, Thabo Mbeki won that campaign, as he has won so many since. And South Africa's resurgence has given the entire world something to feel proud of. Today we talk about how best to deliver on its promise, how to deepen the friendship between our nations. I have already thanked President Mbeki for his strong support for peacekeeping and his ongoing leadership throughout the continent. I pledged to him that we would work harder to hasten the return of peace in troubled parts of Africa and that we would do more to build the prosperity needed to make conflict and disease less likely.

So many people who are here tonight, Mr. President, Mrs. Mbeki, contributed to the landmark legislation I signed last week to expand our trade with Africa and the Caribbean. Now we need to keep the momentum going to support the Africans who are working and fighting for peace, to relieve the debt of the poorest nations so they can devote their resources to basic human needs, to find cures and treatments and preventive strategies for the diseases ravaging the continent.

With echoes of John Donne, President Mbeki once said we have to address the problems of other peoples, because "each one of us is a particle of the complete whole." A South African poet, Mongane Wally Serote, recently wrote a poem entitled "Come hope with me." As you might imagine, I sort of liked it. [Laughter] In the poem, he urges people never to forget, "life is a promise, and that promise is us."

Tonight I ask you to join me in a toast to President and Mrs. Mbeki, to the people of South Africa and the promise of South Africa, the promise that will always join our two peoples.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mbeki's wife, Zanele, and his mother, Epainette; and former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. The

President also referred to Public Law 106-200, the Trade and Development Act of 2000. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Mbeki.

Remarks on the New Markets Legislation Agreement

May 23, 2000

The President. Thank you very much, everybody. And I think it's just "good afternoon." [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, Secretary Summers, Secretary Shalala, Administrator Alvarez, and Mr. Sperling from the White House. And I want to recognize here from the House of Representatives Congressman Rangel, Congressman Talent, Congressman Watts, Representatives Watt, Kanjorski, Jefferson, Velázquez, LoBiondo, Chambliss, Becerra, Bono, Davis, LaFalce, Price, Reyes, Waters, Hinojosa. I think that's everybody. [Laughter]

I'd also like to acknowledge people who aren't here who have supported this effort, to Chairman Archer and Representatives Clyburn, Roybal-Allard, Hayworth, Kildee, and the members of the Congressional Black, Hispanic, and Indian Caucuses. And I want to acknowledge the presence in the audience of Mayor Webb of Denver and Mayor Campbell of Atlanta.

This morning Speaker Hastert and I have the honor of announcing a truly remarkable bipartisan achievement. We have completed an agreement to making historic investments in the untapped markets of America's inner cities, rural areas, and Native American reservations.

Today, our economy is the strongest it has ever been. But there are places that have still not been touched by our prosperity. For over 7 years, our administration has worked hard to change that. Under the Vice President's leadership, we have created and administered empowerment zones and enterprise communities; we have strengthened the Community Reinvestment Act and fostered community development banks and other community financial institutions. These initiatives, I believe, have made a significant difference in many places in America. But we know that we have more to do, and we know we must do more to get private sector

firms to step up to their responsibility to create jobs and opportunity.

That's why I launched this new markets initiative last year. I've been to Appalachia, to the Mississippi Delta, to East Palo Alto, to Newark, to Phoenix, to many other inner cities, and I've been on the reservations of the Lakota Sioux and the Navajo.

Every place I've gone, I've seen talented people eager for opportunity and certainly able to work. They are the untapped markets that are not only crying out for their own opportunity but clearly presenting us an opportunity to keep our economic expansion going without inflation.

Early in this endeavor, I began to talk to the Speaker about this, and he told me he was interested in doing something, that it was something he was genuinely concerned about. Last November, on our second tour, the Speaker and I went together to Englewood, Illinois, along with Congressman Rush and Reverend Jackson. It's on the south side of Chicago. And together, we made a pledge to try to pool all the ideas that both parties had for dealing with this challenge and to try to come up with one unified, bipartisan effort. At the time, I said, and he said, that giving people a chance to make a living or start a business was neither a Republican nor a Democratic issue but an American imperative.

Today we have Members of both parties here in substantial numbers to say that we're honoring the commitment we made at Englewood. We have achieved an agreement that will allow us to give every family in every community a stake in the prosperity Americans have worked so hard to build.

I'd like to give some of the details of this agreement and leave it to the Speaker to outline the rest. And then we'd like to invite four of our Members, two from each caucus who have