

**REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR ON THE OCCASION OF THE BLACK
HISTORY MONTH PROGRAMME ORGANIZED BY THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS
SECTION, UNITED STATES EMBASSY AT CALEB UNIVERSITY, IMOTA, LAGOS
STATE, FEBRUARY 28, 2012**

Management and Staff of Caleb University, Officials of the PAS, US Embassy, dear students,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to welcome the officials of the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the United States Embassy to this Black History Month event, the first of its kind here. Our University is honoured to host this event, our second Embassy-related event this month. On February 13, 2012, we hosted the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Nigeria, His Excellency Ryuichi Shoji, on his first visit to a Nigerian University.

For the record, my personal association with PAS dates back to when it was known as the United States Information Service. Specifically, I was a pioneer member of the American Studies Association of Nigeria (ASAN) established at an inaugural Conference at the University of Lagos in 1989. I participated in ASAN's annual conferences, including the one in Kaduna that the Abacha junta aborted after delegates had lodged at the National Teachers Institute, venue of the event. ASAN survived the travails of the era and I later served as Vice-President of the University of Lagos Chapter. Much later, as a second-term Dean of Arts at the University of Lagos, I established the Centre for American and Atlantic Studies, the office/library of which was commissioned on December 10, 2008 by Mrs Mary Lou Johnson-Pizzaro, head of PAS. Finally, on February 24, 2011, I led a contingent of Caleb University students to a youth empowerment programme at the PAS, where I also made a presentation on "Nigerian Youth as Agents for Change."

The point is that there is a history of a positive partnership between PAS and the Nigerian University system in which this University and myself have been active participants, and that such relationships can be deepened, through programmes and initiatives such as today's. The other point to stress is that history is the driving force behind meaningful national development, as epitomised by the United States and other leading nations of the world. There is much to learn

from the past as we chart a future of progress and greatness for our respective nations and institutions. The theme of today's event underscores the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and association, the right to life, and the need to harness and unleash the latent and actual potential in well-educated and focused men and women. The biographies of leaders teach us that a nation can hardly rise above the character, vision and ability of its leaders. The discussion around President Abraham Lincoln will, hopefully, challenge participants to pay greater attention to self-development and leadership training within and beyond the bounds of the classroom. Here at Caleb University, this is exemplified by our Leadership Academy, which I handle in partnership with experts from the private sector. The Academy strives to combine theoretical and practical approaches to the development of leadership potential in our students.

As we welcome the PAS Team to our young University, it is hoped that this visit, a return match of sorts, will create opportunities for further collaboration and cement a cordial and fruitful partnership between our respective organizations. On behalf of the Management of Caleb University, I gratefully acknowledge the books donated by the PAS delegation towards enriching our library holdings, and thank Tantalizers Nigeria PLC for providing refreshments for this event. I wish everyone happy deliberations and journey mercies at the end of the day.

Thank you for listening. God bless.

Professor Ayodeji OLUKOJU

Fellow, Nigerian Academy of Letters

Vice-Chancellor

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