

NIGERIA TRIP

In November of 2004, the Public Affairs Section of the United State Embassy in Nigeria requested that I serve as the keynote speaker for the Martin Luther King, Jr. observances in Abuja and Lagos. In addition, they also requested that I conduct workshops on leadership and youth empowerment in the country. The objective was "to strengthen democratic practices and institutions...while continuing our emphasis on reaching younger, wider audiences, a key Washington priority." (Atim Geroge, Chief Public Information Officer, United States Embassy, Lagos, Nigeria). I was asked to visit for one week to Lagos and Abuja and possibly to other cities in the north and south/west region of the country.

It took a while for things to come together, but on Saturday afternoon January 22, I boarded a plane at San Francisco International and officially took the Omega Boys Club to the Motherland. Here's how it all unfolded for me. JM

1/22/05

Well, I'm off. Off to the Motherland. Off to West Africa. Off to Nigeria. Now ain't that a trip! I'm on the plane. First stop Amsterdam; a three hour layover, then a six hour flight to Abuja. The flight to Amsterdam is a long one—10 hours. But I've done long ones before. The flight to Israel (in 94) and Japan (in 97) were long too, so I'm prepared. Got all my CD's, got all my cassettes and my old walkman. I've got enough music for three flights.

The State Department hooked me up though. I'm flying business class on KLM. Big seats, plenty of room and FOOD! Dinner, breakfast, snacks, sodas, even champagne. Yeah. I've got my own private tv/movie screen too.

I've been reading a lot about Nigeria. It's a huge country, about the size of Nevada, Arizona and California, and (I didn't know this) the most populous country in *all* of Africa. Like a lot of places on the continent, it has a long history with a lot of ups and downs. I'm not going into it all here, but modern Nigeria traces itself to British influence in the late 1800s and British control in the first half of the 20th century. Independence was granted in the 1960, but it's been a lot of major drama since then to get government stability. Military government, military coups, civilian government, military coups...back and forth, on and on. In 1999 a civilian democracy emerged again and things seem to be getting better, but there's a ways to go.

Nigeria's got oil though and plenty of it and the United States is a big importer. U.S. and Nigerian relations are supposed to be pretty good, although I guess I'll find out more about that when I get there. I've already been shook up reading about all the travel warnings for Americans; don't go out after dark, don't ride in taxis, don't take public

transportation; etc. And there's all those shots I had to take to protect me against possible infection and disease—polio, hepatitis, meningitis, typhoid, and yellow fever. I've got malaria pills that I have to take for a month (yes even after I get back) and plenty of mosquito lotion which is recommended I wear.

OK. It looks like I'm ready. I'm going to miss the football playoff games, but what the hell. I'm going to Africa to speak about Omega and Street Soldiers and Martin Luther King. This is what I always said I wanted to do, so let's do this!

1/23/05—am

3 hour layover in Amsterdam. Long time. Too bad I didn't get to see this place. I heard it's a helluva city. One day, I've got to come and check it out. Long flight, but I've got a lot to read. I just finished James H. Cone's *Martin and Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* in which he give his analysis and comparison of the two. Pretty good book, although I know a lot of the stuff in it. Both of these cats were bad dudes and huge influences on me. King really got out there the last few years of his life; you just don't hear enough about that—his opposition to the war in Vietnam and his criticism of American foreign policy in general. I like what Cone says here about the two of them:

“It is important to emphasize that Martin and Malcolm....were not messiahs. Both were *ordinary* human beings who gave their lives for the freedom of their people. They show us what ordinary people can accomplish through intelligence and sincere commitment to the cause of justice and freedom. There is no need to look for messiahs to save the poor. Human beings can and must do it themselves..... Malcolm and Martin are both necessary ingredients in the African-American struggle for justice in the United States. We should never pit them against each other.”

Time to get on the next plane.

Six hours later

Welcome to Abuja. I'm here. Nigeria. Africa. Damn! Yeah!

If you're a black American, no matter how you try to play it off, coming to Africa means something. You know that somewhere on this huge continent your lineage is there. Your great, great, great, great somebody is right here. The ties may have been broken but still you know it and it shakes you up; can even bring you to your knees. (Alex Haley, I'm feelin' you.) It's dark, it's late and it's warm (even at 10:00 o'clock at night) and I just want to get to the hotel and into bed. Where's my passport?

1/24/05

Up and at 'em. Where's breakfast? That's right—the 7th floor. Orange juice, fresh fruit (pears and grapefruit), decafe, and what's this—beans and some kind of sausage. (I don't want any oatmeal.) Sausage is different, but beans are cool--I guess black people everywhere eat beans—and it's filling. Now to find out what's up today and what I've got to get ready for.

Just met with Bruce Lohof of the American Embassy at the hotel. It seems that I'm speaking tonight at the Embassy's Martin Luther King program at the Yar' Adua Center. Topic is "Fulfilling the Dream." He says the local who's who will be there. He also tells me more about Nigeria in general and Abuja in particular. Abuja is a new city—only 15 years old, and therefore only recently became the capital. It's a planned place, and there's still a lot to be done. He also helps me make contact with the Ashoka rep in Nigeria, Dr. Chi Chi Aniagolu, and I invite her to tonight's event. That Ashoka thing is paying dividends already. Now it's time to go and get together a 15-20 minute speech.

End of Day 1

I almost missed my speech! Can you believe that?!! I almost missed my speech! The gentleman from the Embassy came to pick me up and couldn't find me. They gave him the wrong room number. He called that number and no one answered. He even went to the room (the wrong room of course) and nobody answered, so he left. An hour later, his assistant found me. They finally got the right room, the right man and found Dr.M. Then they whisked me off to the event and rushed me in. When I got there young people were doing spoken word and poetry about King, followed by a song. Then it was time for me. I think I did ok; I guess I did ok. Everybody applauded in the end and folks congratulated and thanked me.

I met with the Ashoka representative afterwards and learned more about Nigeria. We talked about Nigerian youth and the Nigerian people and the Nigerian government, and damn, did I come away depressed. In the end it's all about the rampant corruption at all levels from the top to the bottom--government, police, everybody. It's all about the haves and the have-nots. There's a few haves and a whole bunch of have-nots. She said Nigeria really needs a Martin Luther King, because no one really cares about the people. It seems like they've got some serious Commandments of the Hood here—the main ones being "Thou shalt get thy money on," and "Thou shalt not snitch." And they've got some serious Risk Factors too—the main one being Material Values Over People. (Later I'd learn a Negative View of Women is a major risk factor too.) I asked her were the people scared to speak up fearing reprisal if they did. Not so much fear, she said, but apathy. They're just worn down. She said she dreads the elections in 2007, fearing that the place will go up in smoke. A new president's got to be elected and she's afraid a lot of lives will be lost as folks vie for the top seat. It's too bad, she went on, because Nigeria has so much potential. Damn, I don't like hearing this. I really don't.

Speaking of going up in smoke, when I get in the car to go back to the hotel, my Embassy contact tells me that my Lagos itinerary had been changed. It seems that there had been a riot at the University of Lagos where I was scheduled to speak, and the government shut

it down, so I won't be going there. Wow. You know me though. I'm a Street Soldier. Maybe that's the place I should be.

PROBLEM

Yo! I don't know if I have enough money to pay my hotel bills. I'd heard to pay cash at the hotels, but the Embassy in Washington assured me that I could use my credit card at the Sheraton in Abuja. When I got here, though, everybody I saw said nope, don't do it. Now I've got to see if I brought enough cash. I've got two more nights to go here and three more in Lagos @ \$171 a night. It's gonna be tight. If I make it out of here with 50 bucks, that'll be it. Grandma say a prayer and look out for me.

The Embassy was supposed to put some money into my account to cover all these expenses, but it wasn't there when I left. It better be there when I get home. Oh and everybody back home who's looking for a souvenir, when I get home put your arms around me, cause I'm going to be it.

1/26/05—Day 2

Oh man, what a long, long day. But oh my, today Omega officially hit Nigeria and in a big way. 1st stop KOOL-FM.

KOOL-FM is an independent radio station. I'm told all the young people listen to it so it's a great place to get the message out. Independent radio is new. Until recently, only state controlled programming was allowed. But this thing is run by young folks. It's the KMEL of Abuja. We've got an hour on the air and guess what--the show is a mixture of talk and music; they even take phone calls. Sound familiar? They even play music under the talk. It's a Nigerian Street Soldiers! O.J. and Toyin are the hosts, although today Toyin handles everything—the board and the interview. She's got skills and she looks a whole lot better than Dennis, my board op back home (but don't hate Doc; you know Dennis is your man), and we glide through the interview. It's a great hour. She asks all the right questions and I hope I'm giving all the right answers. However the phones aren't working (that's a frequent problem here—the phones and the electricity), so we can't take any calls. But I've got a best of Street Soldiers CD, so we play a call as an example of callers to Street Soldiers—an old one about a girl who got killed in Richmond some years back. Street Soldiers is on the air in Nigeria! Later on Toyin plays *Dear Mama* by Tupac and we discuss the song, Pac, and the homies. It's over all too soon, but she keeps the CD and says she'll play some more calls later. We exchange cards and it's done. You know what, maybe I can get Dennis to hook up an interview with her and O.J.

Then it's off to NTA Network News (Nigerian Television Association) for a noon appearance on the tube. NTA is the state controlled TV network. It reaches all of Nigeria. The show I'm on is *Panorama*—a news and talk show. My topic is Martin Luther King. We've only got ten minutes, so Lord please don't let me make a fool of

myself in front of all these folks. I'm representing Omega and Black America on this, so please let me say something that makes sense. I think I did. Oh my, what a blast!

That's pretty much it for the formal part of the day, but they drive me around town to see landmarks—the President's headquarters, the Assembly building, the new soccer stadium and the Muslim temple. All along, I'm learning more and more about Abuja and more about Nigeria. There are people out and about doing their thing. Movement everywhere—on foot, in cars, and especially on motor scooters. They must be a million of those scooters. They even have motor scooter taxis. You know what? Can't nobody over here drive. Well, that's not true; it's just that whoever gets there first can have it. There are few traffic lights and you just decide at the moment who gets the right of way. If you ain't payin' attention, you're gone. And you damn sure better know your way around.

Later on they drop me off at the hotel and Chi Chi, the Ashoka rep I met the night before, picks me up and takes me to the Ashoka office. She's great. She gives me more Nigerian insight, hooks me up with some money, and eventually takes me home for an African cooked dinner—potatoes, salad, schwermas, plantains, and goat (yes goat) with a gravy sauce that's kickin'. She and her husband's hospitality is wonderful. We discuss everything. Chi Chi is 37 and her husband is 40. She's a PhD in Sociology and he's an accountant. They recently got married after fifteen years of friendship and proceeded to show me a tape of the wedding—the traditional service in the village. (Actually it was her sister's wedding that I was shown). I learned that in Nigeria you get married as many as three times--the village ceremony, the church service, and the civil ceremony. The village ceremony is something to behold. It's just grand—dancing, drumming, family, ritual--and everybody is laid; I mean dressed and gorgeous looking. Chi Chi and her husband explained every detail (the cup of plum wine—uh, uh, uh). It was really beautiful. Almost made me want to do it again. (Nah!) We said our goodbyes, pledged enduring friendship and Chi Chi took me back to the hotel.

LATER

I awoke this morning at 5:00am and couldn't go back to sleep. I know I've got to get up and get out of here, but not for another three hours. Then I looked at my watch and it hit me. It's 8pm Tuesday night back in the States and that means one thing—it's meeting time at the Omega Boys Club and I'm locked in. Jason and Ms. Estell are wrapping up class now and then Zack and Corey are going to get everybody in for the meeting. Then Jack's gonna blow and do his thing. And it'll be official--**THE LIGHT IS ON FOR ANOTHER TUESDAY NIGHT**. Hey y'all, I'm right here—locked in and Nigeria's locked in with me. There ain't nothing like Omega. Carlos say a big prayer tonight and I know it'll be heard and felt all the way here. Amen!

1/27/05

Fish stew for breakfast this morning. Good stuff. Screamin. Spicy as hell. Now I've got to hurry up and check out of this place and get over to the American Embassy to meet the American ambassador to Nigeria. You know, I've only been here three days, but I'm going to miss this place.

I talk to Ambassador Campbell for a long time, about 20 minutes. Usually these meetings are perfunctory, but we get into a pretty good discussion about Nigeria and violence and Omega. We cut it short because his next appointment arrives. He gave me a suggestion of getting Condoleeza Rice to speak at the National Conference. It seems that she's from Birmingham. Condoleeza Rice??!!

Ok, so now I'm finally getting to do what I've been wanting to do since I got here—talk to some young Nigerian brothers and sisters. There's a program at the U.S. Embassy's Educational Advisory Center that provides Nigerian youth with information about how to attend college in the United States. When I started talking they wanted to know all about Omega and what were my plans to help the people of Nigeria. Just as important I wanted to know about them, what their hopes and aspirations were, and how they felt about conditions in Nigeria. So we finally got a dialogue going. It was great. All these young Nigerians and me. I gave them the Omega Rules for Living. I told them “the more you know, the more you owe.” They wanted to know when I was leaving and when I was coming back. I was feeling them and they were feeling me—just like at the Club. I told them that life was a struggle and they if they wanted things to change, then that change began with them, even if they had to risk. In the end it was much too short. They all applauded and we took pictures and shouted “Nigeria” as the shutter snapped. Oh, one more thing. I told them that I was going to send everybody present (about 50 of them) a copy of *Street Soldier* so that we could stay connected. Corey, they're going to be reading about you in the Motherland. Unbelievable. Praise God and hallelujah. Thanks Lord for letting this happen.

Later that evening

On to Lagos. I say goodbye to everyone, shake hands, hug and get to the airport. Same airport that I can in on, but a different terminal—the Nigerian one. It's a crazy place, totally chaotic, but it's organized chaos. Believe me, it's great to have an Embassy guide there to move things along for you. I finally get inside the terminal and wait for the plane, but it's delayed. So I settle back and wait. It's hot and sticky and uncomfortable and I've still got my suit on. There's a shop selling goods and I make my first purchase—a Nigerian outfit, dashiki and pants. It's white with gold trim, just beautiful and I think it will look good on me. I probably paid too much for it but what the hell. Where else am I going to get this? Anyway the plane's finally here—Bellview Airlines—and we take off two hours late.

One hour later, I'm in a city of 15,000,000, the opposite of where I just came from. It's like going from Sacramento to Los Angeles. From the small capital to the big bustling metropolis. I get to my new lodgings about an hour late (a very nice guesthouse), kick

back and turn on the TV. Lo and behold there's Arnold--the governor right there on the tube and I watch *The Terminator* for the 75th time. After that I take a shower and crash. Tomorrow's another big day.

1/27/05

I'm picked up at 8:30am to go to the Embassy's Public Affairs office. Everybody is warm and friendly and glad to see me. I finally meet Atim Geroje, the one who made this trip happen. She is the Chief Information Officer and the aunt of one of my Omegas, Marquex Boynton. She thanked me and Omega for helping her nephew and told me all about Lagos—a wonderful rich vibrant place full of energy—but of course with all of the problems I'd heard about before. She also told me that 50% of her budget had been cut because of the war effort, and she's having to make due with less. She thanked me for coming 15,000 miles to see the people of Nigeria and to dialogue with the Nigerian youth.

I've got two meetings today. The first is with university scholars and public officials and the press, and the second is with high school students. I'm ready

I'm only going to speak here about my meeting with the kids. There must have been 250 of them packed into that room and they told me all about what's really going on. It ended up being a long list and actually didn't sound a whole lot different from stuff I'd heard back home. Here's some of the things they listed as issues for Nigerian youth:

1. poverty and hopelessness
2. lack of motivation on the part of the youth
3. lack of resources
4. corruption at all levels of government
5. gap between parents and children
6. abuse of children; child labor abuse
7. prostitution and pimping
8. girls being forced to marry older men
9. girls being involved with older men
10. peer pressure
11. lecturers exploiting female students for passing grades
12. lecturers taking money from male students in exchange for passing grades
13. parents splitting up
14. unemployment
15. lack of interaction and communication with adults
16. nothing for us to do
17. nobody listens to us, nobody loves us
18. violence

They kept asking me, "Dr. Marshall, what can you do to help with..? Dr. Marshall, what can you do to help change..? Dr. Marshall what do you think can be done to..? Dr. Marshall...Dr. Marshall." It was just too much for me. All those faces looking at me for an answer. I felt terrible, because I didn't have the answers there were looking for; and I

didn't have the immediate solutions they wanted. So I did the only thing I could. I gave them what I knew, the things that I had seen work, the things that had gotten me in front of them in the first place. I gave them the Omega Boys Club and Street Soldiers. I told them that I wasn't the messiah, but that the messiah was in them. I told them that they should get together next week and do exactly what they did today and listen to each other and support each other; and that the interested and well meaning adults in the room could and should help them. I told them I would try and get them some *Street Soldier* books, and try and get some of them over to the national conference in October; and try and get some Omegas over here to Nigeria. I told them "the more you know, the more you owe." And I told them I'd be back. I told them I'd be back.

1/28/05

It's the second to the last day and today is an early start. I'm speaking at a private college (Babcock University) on the outskirts of town and it's going to take a while to get there. This is the school they had to substitute because of what happened at the University of Lagos. Babcock University is a small liberal arts college with Seventh Day Adventist roots. On the way there we get a flat tire, and the vice president of the school comes and picks us up. Once there, I meet the Vice Chancellor who tells me a little bit about the place. Then it's off to the auditorium and the students. It's packed—about 800 of them. There's a lot of protocol before I begin, introducing everybody on stage. Finally it comes to me, and I go into my thing. 40 minutes later they applaud and it's over. Now it's question and answer time.

At first nobody raises a hand. Then, slowly, one by one, the hands go up. The first one is a professor from the school who basically scolds me for misjudging Nigeria (no comparison to the U.S, he says) and everybody laughs. Then a young man asks about the relationship between poverty and drug addiction. Another asks about Cultism and what can be done about it. (The Cult is a sort of college fraternity gone bad. They are very vicious and often violent, forcing members to join against their will, and commit all sorts of mayhem on campuses and in the community). A young lady asks why are some students so jealous about others who are doing well. A young man queries me on the issue of government corruption and how do you stand up to it, if it might mean death. I answer them all the best I can. Finally a young asks me about the issue of sexual harassment; specifically the harassment by male faculty at the school who basically want sex in exchange for good grades. Bingo! The place falls completely silent. I give her my answer, telling her to keep on complaining and that someone will hear her. I tell her that I had met a lawyer since I had been there, someone that I think might help and that I would be glad to refer the lawyer to her. (There is a very famous case in Nigeria, a case that achieved world wide notoriety, of a woman who was to be stoned for adultery and having a child out of wedlock. I met the woman who defended her and got her off. This is the lawyer to whom I was referring.) I tell her, of course, not to take any of it, and that if I was here I would go with her and confront the faculty member myself. It was a pretty powerful moment. More students' hands go up with more questions, but things are cut short. It's time to go.

One last thing though. In his closing remarks, the Vice President, the one who had picked us up, thanked, even praised me for the things I said, and then told the girls in the audience to please come forward to him personally with any issues around sexual harassment. It would be kept confidential and there would be no reprisals and no recriminations. He gave his word. Wow! Street Soldiers strikes again.

Next it's on to an all girls' Catholic school, a completely different audience. As I walked into the auditorium, a choir was singing me a song welcoming me to Nigeria and to the school. The girls in the auditorium looked like they were a group of 400 Cassies (Cassie is my youngest daughter). So guess what I talked about—my daughter, of course. My daughter and Kemba Smith. I talked about the dangerous animals and how we often can't spot them, because they are disguised so well. I talked about how my daughter had difficulty spotting them and how Kemba had even had more difficulty. I spoke about all the challenges and pitfalls for girls that I knew myself and the ones that I had learned about since I had been in Nigeria. I think it worked. They seemed to hang on every word, and giggled when I talked about 50 Cent (he had just performed there; they all knew the song P.I.M.P.). When it was their turn to talk they told me again about the lack of communication with their parents, about violence, and child labor abuse and child prostitution. In the end I made two wonderful little friends (I took a picture with them), and the principal thanked me and told the two girls to prepare some remarks on my talk for the rest of the student body on Monday. I don't know. In the end I might have liked that group the best of all.

Finally it's on to NTA for another television appearance. It's called *Youth Talk with Emilia* and it's with the kids that I met yesterday. We are glad to see each other and we hug. It's a good show. They open the show comparing me with the spirit of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. That's nice. I tell you, those kids are wonderful. They are the future of Nigeria. In the end if Nigeria is going to get it right, it'll be because of them. I just hope that their spirit doesn't get broken first.

The day is finally over and I'm exhausted. The staff drops me back at the hotel, and I crash feeling good, real good.

Ring!! The phone awakens me. It's Chi Chi, the Ashoka rep, down from Abuja. She had come here to set up a meeting for me with the Ashoka fellows in Lagos, and had been trying to catch me all day, but we just couldn't connect. She says get up. She's coming to pick me up and take me out for some Nigerian nightlife. I say OK. It's my last night, so what the hell. It's 11:30pm when she arrives and we end up at a nightclub on the edge of town.

I'm sure this won't surprise you, but Nigerians dance and dance and dance and dance. There was a band there and they played a lot of Nigerian songs. Everybody seemed to know them. The highlight of the band for me was the drummer. He held a single drum in his hand and played it with some sort of stick. No drum machine, no beats. The real thing. Man that dude was kickin'. Rhythms off the hook. It felt like a big village in

there. And they just went on and on. Did I dance? Come on now. I'm in the Motherland with the authentic stuff. How could I not! What a blast. What a wonderful end to my week. What a fitting way to spend my last night in Nigeria.

I finally got home around 4:00am. Before I walked into my room, I looked up at the Nigerian moon. It was beautiful. I knew I wouldn't see it again for awhile.

NIGERIAN MARKETPLACE

There's a song by pianist Oscar Peterson called *Nigerian Marketplace*. I've heard it done twice, once by Billy Taylor and Ramsey Lewis in a piano duet, and the second time by Oscar himself. It's a beautiful piece full of color and movement, and when you get there (to the marketplace) you can see why. (Actually all of Nigeria is sort of like that song.) The marketplace is like catacombs-- rows and rows of everything and anything; art, wood carvings, jewelry, sculptures, metal figures, and of course, clothing. I've got to buy souvenirs for folks back home--I was told not to come back without them-- and I don't have much money left. So off we go, weaving through city traffic to get there. As soon as we arrive, a group of young boys run up to the car and besiege us. I'm told to pick one to accompany me around and carry my purchases; that's how he makes his money. I pick Stephen.

Anybody who's ever done this knows it's all about haggling and negotiating. It's a good thing I've got folks with me to coach me on price, because I've got to make a little go a long way. I've got to get something for my staff, my kids, my parents. Somebody's not going to make the cut. In the end though, I think I do ok. I hope everybody will like what they got.

The toughest thing is saying goodbye to Stephen. He's 14 years old and could easily be a kid at Omega. We shake hands and I give him a tip and we say goodbye.

It's nine hours later now and I'm at the airport, ready for takeoff. I've already checked out of the hotel and said one last good bye to my Embassy contact Russ Marburg. I've got to make sure I send him a check as soon as I get back, because he went into his own pocket to help me out.

I'm writing these words as we climb into the sky, leaving Nigeria behind. It went by so fast. I was only there a week, but it seemed like a month. I've been searching for a way to sum the whole thing up and I think I've finally got it. There's a Frankie Beverly and Maze song that says it all for me; that sums up the trip and the experience, and Nigeria to a T. Do you remember the song "Joy and Pain, Sunshine and Rain?" That's it. That's the song. That's Nigeria. They've certainly got plenty of both. Lord, if only they could do something about the pain and the rain, and tilt things more to the joy and the sunshine, Nigeria would really be something. That place would really be off the hook. Much, much love and good luck.

I slip the headphones on and turn on the CD player. Time to bounce. Alright, Jill Scott, take me home. "Livin' my life like it's golden, golden. Livin' my life like it's golden. Livin' my life like it's golden, golden. Livin' my life like it's golden."

I'll be back!

EPILOGUE

Since I've been back, my feet have barely touched the ground. I was only in San Francisco for three days before I took off to Birmingham, AL to plan the Street Soldiers National Conference scheduled for October 2005. While there Roderick Stevenson and I spoke a Chalkville, a girls correctional facility on the outskirts of the city. Later that day he and I drove to Atlanta to see Charles Porch, another Consortium member, do the Omega/Street Soldiers violence prevention model with a group of young teens at a treatment facility in Marietta, GA. Wow! From Nigeria to Alabama to Georgia—from Africa to America—all in one week. All Omega, all Street Soldiers.

I'm sure I'll be wearing dashikis for a while, and eating at West African restaurants too. (There's one in the City and one in Berkeley, so expect me.) And of course there's plenty of follow up to do. I've already received an email from somebody I met over there who wants to do Omega in Nigeria and come to the conference in October, so here we go. And there's that email from someone in South Africa I got right before I left that I've got to respond to. It looks like the international thing is in full swing. The More You Know, the More You Owe.

Darn, I've got to fill out these forms for the State Department about the trip. And, oh my God, I just remembered. I'd better hurry up and check. Did they ever put that money into my account? JM

Email received 2/3/05 from Lagos, Nigeria

Hello Dr. Marshal,

We met at the US Consulate during one of your interactive sessions there on Jan 27th.

I am a Program Manager with the Centre for Values in Leadership, a non-profit involved in leadership training for youth aged 18-35. I mentioned that I was very interested in starting something akin to the Omega Boys Club here in Lagos. I am interested in helping young women though and was wondering how we could partner.

I thoroughly enjoyed the session and wish you the very best...keep it up! I would love to attend the Alabama, Birmingham conference you mentioned if I can find a sponsor. I'll look out for more details from your website.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Ier