

Ambassador Michelle D. Gavin

Remarks for Opening Ceremony for Rothschild Library

in Pitshane Molopo

Tuesday, June 21, 2011

As prepared for delivery

Acknowledgements:

- *Kgosi ya motse ono Kgosi Pekenene,*
- Honorable Councilor, Ms Pandor,
- District Officer for Good Hope, Mr. Mlilo
- Robert and Sara Rothschild,
- Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture
- Acting Director of the Department of National Library Service, Gaorere Kgotla
- Members of the press,
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

REMARKS:

- *Dumelang, bomma e borra* (Pause)
- *Le tsogile jang* (Pause)
- *Ke itumelela go iphitlhela ke le gargeng ga lona gompiano go bula sefalana se, sa dibuka mo motseng wa lona.*
- It is a great pleasure and true honor to join you here to celebrate the opening of this new library.
- There are several reasons that I am particularly pleased to be with you today.
- First, you may be aware that I am a new arrival in Botswana. I arrived in the country less than a week ago, and only yesterday presented my credentials to President Khama.
- This event is in fact my very first official activity as United States Ambassador to Botswana.
- And the drive to Pitshane Molopo was my first trip outside of Gaborone.
- I could not be more pleased that I will remember this event as my first official duty in the country, and the very warm greeting that you have given me as my first real introduction to the people of Botswana.
- I feel most welcome, and I thank you for that.
- I also want to tell you how I feel about libraries.

- Some of my earliest memories are of going to my local public library to sit on the floor alongside other children and hear stories read to us by volunteers.
- Later, as a student, the library was the place where I could move beyond the limits of my school's resources, and learn as much as I wanted to, at my own pace.
- Eventually I would access the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. as an undergraduate at university, and the Bodelian library in Oxford while I was pursuing my graduate studies --- and even at these massive institutions, the pleasure of discovery, and the sense of community I felt with my fellow library-goers, was the same feeling I had as a young girl, exploring books at my small local library.
- Now I am a mother, and my daughter, who is just two years old, has come to love libraries just as I do.
- Books allow all of us to travel anywhere in the world --- if only in our imaginations. They even let us travel through time.
- And if knowledge is power --- *kitso ke maatla* --- then libraries are where we go to recharge our batteries.
- Books can inspire us. And they can challenge and enlighten our thinking in ways that not only benefit us individually, but can benefit families, the community, and the entire country.
- Simply put, books can change lives.
- When people have books in their hands, and they can read them, a world of opportunity opens. This was true for me, it is true for my daughter, --- and it is now true for every member of this community.
- We heard from Bob and Sara Rothschild about why they do what they do.
- They are committed not only to building facilities that can put vitally important library resources into hands that did not have them previously, but they have constructed these buildings as centers, where members of the community can participate in a wealth of activities that enhance life throughout the entire community.
- I can only say that, as the United States Ambassador, and as a fellow American, I could not be more proud today to stand beside these two incredibly generous people who not only devote a tremendous amount of their own resources, but of their time and energy, to give to the citizens of Botswana some of the tools with which to build a better future.
- Please join me in offering another round of applause for two very special individuals, Bob and Sara Rothschild.
- Not only is the establishment of this library an important milestone for Pitshane Molopo, but it is more broadly symbolic of the kind of close partnership and mutual interests that the United States and Botswana share.
- This is something that I discussed with President Obama when he asked me to serve as Ambassador to Botswana – it is something I told the United

States Senate when they confirmed my appointment – and it is something I committed myself to when I took the oath of office ...

- This partnership is critically important to both our countries.
- Botswana is the place where the United States should be modeling what a mature partnership with an African democracy looks like.
- This is the relationship that we should be able to point to and say, in other contexts – this is what we're aiming for. This is what real partnership, based on shared interests and mutual respect, looks like.
- Botswana has a friend in the United States.
- And I will often talk of our relationship as friends – but I will more often talk of it as a partnership – a hard-working partnership – to achieve those objectives we both seek.
- I have the greatest respect for the officials present today – for the officials that are part of this ceremony – and for the leaders and community elders that are gracing us with their presence.
- But let me be clear – the future of Botswana is not in your hands or mine – our day will pass. The future of this beautiful land is in the hands of the children of Pitshane Molopo, and of communities across the country.
- It is the next generation of leaders that we work today to ensure that they have the tools, and the knowledge, and the imagination to take Botswana into an even brighter future.
- And when we talk about partnership, this library shows another important aspect of how together we can build a brighter future.
- The Government of Botswana has committed – alongside Bob and Sara Rothschild – to invest in these libraries. Both agree that this is important to the country's development, and both have committed scarce resources to building, staffing, and resourcing these facilities.
- It is this type of public – private partnership that will more and more prove the model for future development assistance.
- Private individuals – like Bob and Sara – and private institutions like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which is contributing the computer resources to these libraries, increasingly recognize the crucial role that the private sector can play, in partnership with government.
- Taking this important notion of public – private partnership even further – I am proud to announce today that the United States Embassy has committed to contribute 13,000 pula worth of health-related books and other resources to each of the libraries that the Bob and Sara Rothschild Foundation build – to all the ones already constructed and to those that will be constructed over the few years.
- We believe – as do Bob and Sara, and the officials at the Botswana National Library Service, and throughout the Government of Botswana –

that putting these types of resources in as many hands as possible across rural Botswana simply is the right thing to do.

- With that, I would like to thank you once again for the incredibly warm welcome you have shown me, and I would like to tell you that I can only hope that my coming years in Botswana can be as rewarding as today.
- *Ke le bogile thata.* Thank you.