

# Thank You

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On the evening of October 18, 2006, I arrived Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja aboard a KLM flight. I had left my base, Lansing, Michigan for Nigeria the previous day. I was looking forward to coming home and finishing some projects I had started some months earlier. These projects are 2 documentary films I had started working on some months earlier and a stage show to celebrate the one year anniversary of Gov. Chibuike Amaechi.

I got to the Immigration counter at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport and handed my passport to the officers there. This is something I had done several times in the past and I had no reason to suspect that this day will be any different. The Immigration officer took a glance at my passport and handed it over to another officer in plain clothes. The officer turned around and beckoned on another man in white caftan. The man, who later introduced himself as the director of the State Security Service (SSS) airport division, told me that he needed to chat with me and would wait until I picked up my luggage.

After picking up my stuff I headed to the Customs unit where they assessed duty and after I paid released my luggage to me. I had asked those who were waiting for me to take my luggage with them while I went to see the SSS officers. The director of SSS insisted that my luggage had to follow me to Yellow House, their headquarters near the Aso Rock Villa. The SSS officers hired a van to convey one of their officers, my luggage and I to their headquarters from the airport. The driver of the van drove like a man who had an appointment to keep in hell. The road to town was not lighted and his headlights barely showed. I celebrated our getting to the offices of the SSS in one piece. We got to the offices of the SSS at about 10:45 PM and that is how my 12 days in lock up began. It was the most harrowing experience of my life. On the 10th day I had access to my lawyers for the first time. This was after I was transferred from the SSS cell, where I was held in solitary confinement for 7 days, to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) cell. My lawyer told me about the outpouring of love and support for me from all over the world. I broke down and cried. I cried because I had been told by the SSS that I was abandoned by my lawyers and family. I knew that to be false. I cried because I did not know that my plight was known to the world. I cried because I was just overwhelmed by the support and wondered if I had earned your love. And I cried for my country&hellip;Words are not enough to tell you how grateful I am to each and every one of you. Many times I had doubted the wisdom of the path I had chosen for myself. Now I know it was the right path for me. I had tried to refocus and reposition my practice as a journalist. This led to my slowing down in reporting. This experience and your response to my plight have shown me that I was wrong. I wish I could find stronger words to tell you how grateful I am. What better words can I come up with to better express my feelings for what you have done for me? Hard as I have searched, I can only come up with these two words: Thank you. There have been stories and speculations as to what led to my arrest by the SSS and later the EFCC. The speculations continue even now that I have been released. There were also speculations as to what happened while I was in lock up. I even heard that I "sang" while in captivity. I have asked what tone I sang, what song I sang. I am writing this note on a borrowed computer as my laptop, flash drives, cell phones, clothes, wallet, green card, credit and bank cards are still in the custody of the SSS. In fact, everything I came with from the States, apart from the clothes on my back are in the custody of the SSS. When my stuff is released and after due consultations with my family and lawyers, I will tell the world what actions or inactions will follow. I have seen a doctor after my release on Wednesday. I am hoping to see my doctors in the United States soon. However, as soon as I get my laptop and get some little rest, I intend to give a full account of what transpired while I was in lock up. This much I can tell you: They tried but did not succeed in breaking my will. If the idea was to cow me, I want you to know that I do not walk on all fours. If the intention was to use me as a scapegoat, please note that I do not bleat and I do not eat grass. If what I went through was to teach me a lesson. This much I have learnt. The servant leader has adorned the robes of a wicked Emperor. Ill-fitting as the clothes may be, he appears comfortable in the role. These words are few and simple and yet mean so much to me: Thank you. Email: jonathan@elendureports.com