

U.S.-China Friendship Envoy Award Ceremony

EVENT TRANSCRIPT

December 6, 2022

Chicago, IL

REMARKS FROM CHINESE AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES QIN GANG

Fifty years ago, a young American at Harvard College started studying Chinese. His parents had immigrated to the United States from Europe and taught him that if the U.S. government and the people had not accepted his family into the United States, he, his sister and brother would not have been born, so they had an obligation to serve the American people. Over these fifty years, he has consistently believed that constructive relations between the United States and China promote world peace and benefit the American and the Chinese people.

This belief has led him to a life of continued advocacy for constructive U.S.-China relations. As a young lawyer at the U.S. State Department, he participated in the establishment of diplomatic relations. Later, he lived in China helping U.S. companies invest because he believed that those investments would not only create profits, they would build people-to-people relations that strengthen the bonds between the American and the Chinese people. Over the last 17 years, he has been president of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and has tirelessly advocated for a relationship that benefits our two peoples.

From reducing tariffs to reopening consulates to avoiding strategic competition, Steve Orlins stands for a better, stronger, and a more constructive relationship. His mother and father would be proud that he has fulfilled his obligation to the American people and during my time as a diplomat, particularly as a Chinese ambassador to the United States, Steve and I had lots of interactions, lots of discussions. We have agreement, we have disagreement sometimes, but we share one wish that is for a better understanding and cooperation between our two countries. I learn a lot more from him, and I see him as a frank candid, and sincere friend, so I'm proud to call him a friend and to present him with the award tonight. Steve, please come on up.

你这500天对中美关系做那么大的贡献。这500多天当大使非常非常好。你的贡献非常非常大。我们都感谢你。

我知道 在座的有一些不会中文,所以我可能今天应该用英文讲,是吗?

I congratulated Ambassador Qin on an incredible five hundred-plus days he's had as an Ambassador and the extraordinary contribution he's made to U.S.-China relations in what is a relatively short period of time. I also said I would speak in English because I think there are a few people in this audience who may not speak Chinese, but it's a great honor to receive this award to follow in the footsteps of Ambassador Branstad who received it previously because of his contribution to U.S.-China relations and of course, it's great to be back in Chicago. Many of you who know me know I'm a New Yorker, I was born in New York. My Midwestern connection? Well, growing up I shared a room in New York with an older brother who took a very different path from me. He joined the American military during the war in Vietnam. He served there then he went to Ohio state law school and lived in Dayton for his whole life. He never went to China, his brother lived in China, and he never never came and visited, but I saw the Midwest through his eyes. I saw Dayton, Ohio through his eyes.

You know there was a company some of you might know National Cash Register, the older people NCR, it closed in Dayton. General Motors used to have auto facilities in Dayton – they closed their suppliers as Niping would know. I watched this great American city, Dayton, Ohio, get hollowed out like many other Midwestern cities and as a result of being hollowed out its tax space deteriorated, and its services deteriorated so things like education from my brother's kids were hard to get in the public schools.

But then six years ago it all changed. Fuyao Glass built the world's largest automotive plate glass company right three miles from my brother's house, and when I spoke that morning at the opening of the facility I still it – it was this gorgeous October morning in Dayton, and I looked at him. The sun was shining in my eyes, but I could see Governor Kasich, I could see Senator Brown, I could see Congressman Turner, I could see the political establishment of America supporting Chinese investment in the United States, and I thought I'm seeing the future, a future where Chinese companies and American companies can invest in each other's country, enriching each other's economy, benefiting workers and their families. A relationship that shows that peaceful cooperation and mutual respect can achieve, and demonstrates that what unites us is greater than what divides us. My life has been devoted to encouraging American companies to invest in China and Chinese companies to invest in the United States, and for a moment in time, I saw a realization of that in Dayton. And though my brother has left this world, I still hear his voice saying. "Younger brother I finally understand what you do...弟弟 我终于理解你的事."

This past year has shown that there are still many obstacles to achieving this future and they are significant: capital controls, investment restrictions, mutual misunderstanding, political moods, and simple fear abound and threaten to derail any cooperation. Critics tell me don't be overly optimistic, I say don't be so short-sighted. I may be early, but I am not wrong, and when I look at this audience, when I look at the many states that are represented in this audience, I know that my vision, one that is shared by many in both countries, will become a reality because working together benefits the people of America and the people of China. But it will only be realized if the companies in the room stay with it – that in these difficult times, don't give up. Let me close by quoting the famous Tang dynasty poet Zhang Jiuling, "相知无远近, 万里尚为邻," which translated means good friends feel close to each other even when they are thousands of miles away. Thank you so much for this award.