

AFRICAN FOCUS: An American's Perspective

While waiting to make a connecting flight in the Johannesburg Airport in July, I darted into a CNA convenience store to buy a passport holder. As I considered my selection, I turned to see the man I revered most, not only in Africa but in the entire world-Nelson Mandela.

Aside from a rudimentary understanding of Mandela gleaned from my studies in school, I did not know a great deal about his life or his struggle. Four years ago, while preparing for my first trip to Africa, I wanted to learn more

Winnie, and saw the bullet holes that remained in the walls from the night the two of them were taken by the police for interrogation and later imprisonment.

The following summer, before beginning an overland tour of Mozambique, I purchased a six-hour audiocassette, the abridged version of Nelson Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom. While driving through a landscape still filled with one million unexploded mines from the civil war and then walking alone along the beaches of the Indian Ocean, I listened to his

A Treasured Memory from a Brief Encounter with Mandela

about the politics of the continent and began by renting a documentary about Mandela. What I found most shocking was that apartheid, not so unlike the practice of slavery that prevailed in our country, had only just ended in 1990.

On my first day in Africa during the summer of 1998, I took a tour of Soweto, the black township northwest of Johannesburg, home still to millions of Africans living in shanties without water or electricity. With the company of a local guide, Opa, I visited the site of the 1976 uprising against the policy of teaching Afrikaans, the "white" language, in the schools. The protest, which resulted in the loss of many children's lives, brought international attention to the cause. Mandela, still imprisoned at the time for his political actions against apartheid, was a beacon of hope for the 10,000 to 20,000 school children that led the riot.

We ended the tour by visiting the house where Mandela lived with his wife,

story and developed a greater understanding of a man destined to become leader of the Xhosa tribe, become President of South Africa, and win the Nobel Peace Prize.

I completed listening to the autobiography as we drove toward the border of Zimbabwe. Mandela's struggle, which lasted from his early years as a lawyer through his twenty-seven year imprisonment, ended in 1980 because of political pressure from abroad. Thinking I was listening to music, the other members of the tour were concerned when they saw me crying. I was overwhelmed with emotion as I heard the account of his release: I imagined the euphoria the world felt as they watched the prison gates swing open as Mandela entered the arms of his friends, family members, and supporters.

On my last day of my third trip to Africa, I visited Robben Island, several miles off the coast of Cape Town, South

Africa where Mandela was imprisoned for eighteen of his twenty-seven year sentence. Standing in front of a small, gray cell, I cringed at the thought of man's inhumanity to man. I imagined Mandela, sleeping on the floor, working at the lime quarry blinded by the sunlight, surviving on a minimal amount of nourishment, and spending almost six years in solitary confinement. What courage it must have taken to withstand such treatment and never lose his pride nor grow to hate his oppressors. Despite his captivity, Mandela was able to inspire not only South Africans, but also millions around the world.

When I was in the airport convenience store and turned, I did not just think it was Nelson Mandela: I knew it was Mandela and was immediately struck by the unlikelihood of such an encounter. I wondered why I was blessed with a chance meeting with one of the great reformers of the twentieth century. One cannot help but feel awe



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Meeting Mandela reminded me that we all have the capacity for greatness. In order to do so, Mandela believes, we must first free ourselves of bitterness and embrace forgiveness. Before we can

when in the presence of a man who possesses such courage and strength of character yet is so warm and humble. I was standing in front of a legend, a hero who was not afraid to stand up for his beliefs and never allowed anyone to break his spirit. Before his bodyguards brushed me away, I was able to blurt out: "Nelson Mandela, you are a great man," and I cried as I shook his hand. With pride, I stated, "I teach you to my students." Because his hearing was bad, I had to repeat the statement, which made him smile.

make a change in society, we must first improve ourselves; we must acquire moral integrity. I know that at the age of eighty-three, Nelson Mandela, an icon of human rights, will not be around long, yet the message he delivered to the world against racial segregation will, and I, as a teacher, will continue to deliver it.

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IIPT Debate at World Travel Market: Building Bridges of Understanding Between Civilizations, Cultures and Religions

LONDON, UK, Nov. 12 - Humanity is currently witnessing - and shaping the most significant paradigm shift in human history - a paradigm shift of major demographic, economic, ecological and geo-political dimensions.

Integral to this paradigm shift are global challenges unprecedented in human history including global warming, depleting resources, an ever-increasing and unsustainable ecological footprint, global poverty, and HIV AIDS.

To meet these challenges will similarly require collaboration on a global scale unprecedented in human history - and to achieve this level of global collaboration - it is essential that we first build the foundations of mutual understanding and respect between civilizations, cultures and religions.

This year's IIPT debate focused on these issues and the key role of Travel and Tourism - the world's largest industry - in building these bridges of understanding as a foundation for global collaboration?

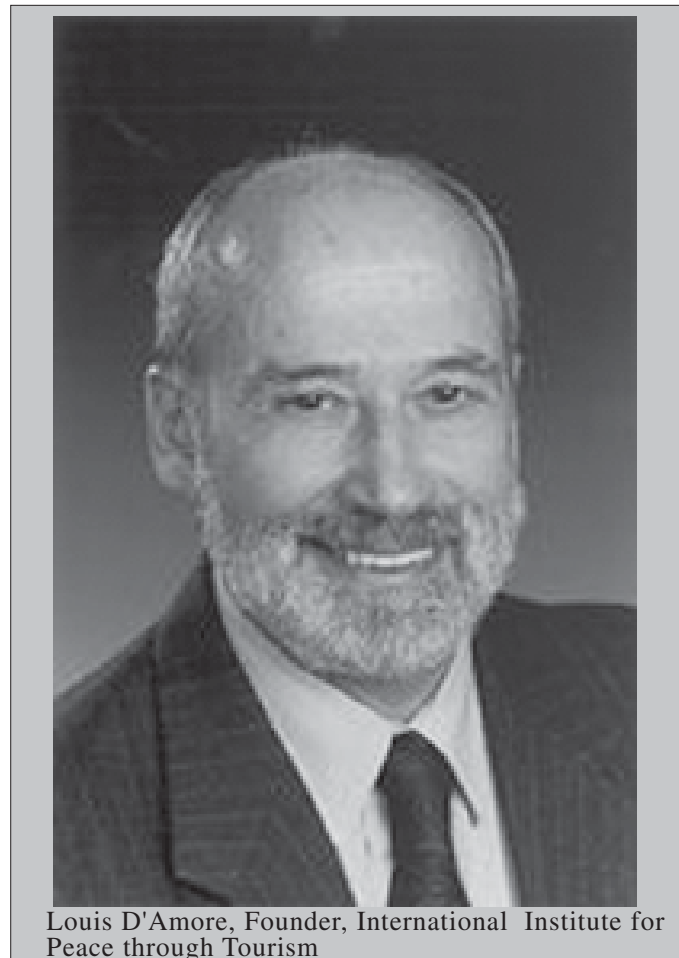
This year's debate featured H.E. Senator Akel Biltaji, Special Advisor to H.M. King Abdullah II, Jordan as Moderator and PATA President and CEO, Mr. Peter de Jong framing the debate.

The three industry leaders taking part in the debate have the breadth of experience and knowledge that provided an over-arching global perspective: Mr. Robert Coggin, Vice Chairman, Travelport; Mr. Elhamy ElZayat, Chairman, Egyptian Tourism Federation and Chairman&CEO,

Emeco Travel; and Mr. Alwin Zecha, Executive Committee PATA, and Executive Chairman, Pacific Leisure

Group.

Louis D'Amore, Founder and President of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism, was proud to again bring the debate to the global forum of World Travel Market. Commenting on the debate, Mr. D'Amore stated, "The total world military budget for 2007 is US\$ 1.2 Trillion. More than the gross national product of every nation except 7 - \$186 for every man, woman and child in the world - a world where 1 of every 6 persons survives on less than \$1 a day, and another 2 of every 6 on less than \$2 a day - 1 in 6 go to bed hungry each evening - and 1 in every 4 persons never has the luxury of a clean glass of water to drink. We must bring an end to the exorbitant and destructive elements of war if we are to collaborate as a global family to meet the real challenges that humanity is facing."



Louis D'Amore, Founder, International Institute for Peace through Tourism