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—Dean Jacobs



Photo by Dean Jacobs

Lessons Learned From World Travel

Common humanity unites people more than the issues that divide

The Stanley Foundation often provides presenters for youth activities. Finding speakers who can share their knowledge and experience with young people in an inspiring way is not an easy exercise. However, there are those who are simply excellent at delivering a powerful message in a passionate, yet accessible, way. Dean Jacobs is a world traveler who has presented at both the Iowa Student Global Leadership Conference (page 6) and International Day (page 7).

On an island in the middle of the Nile River near Khartoum, Sudan, I watched an elderly man dressed in a long white robe and scull cap walk along a dirt road hand in hand with a young girl. Touched by the intimacy expressed between the two, I photographed a moment of love between father and daughter.

Four weeks later on a side street in a village near Amsterdam, Holland, I witnessed a similar scene. A grandfather dressed in a gray jacket and trousers was walking down a cobblestone street hand in hand with his young granddaughter.

These two scenes captured as brief moments of life unfolding reveal how I view humanity. We may have different skin color, eat different food, speak different languages, or worship different Gods, but we are far more alike than we are different.

If you want to find what's wrong in the world, you can find it. All you have to do is turn on the evening news. But if you want to find what's right in the world, you can find that too—you might just have to look a little harder.

It never made a news headline during the many times I was invited into people's homes so they could meet someone from the United States for the very first time. Or all the times someone took me by the hand to make sure I found the right bus or hotel or place to eat.

Because of what we hear and read from our mainstream media, it is easy to forget about the goodness of humanity and the magnificence of the natural beauty of places in the world.

Four years of exploring in over 50 countries has taught me a different lesson. The goodness of humans and the beauty of nature far outweigh the darkness.

I traveled to appreciate the Seven Wonders of the World, and I returned home with important observations about humanity. Kindness, dignity, and respect, for example, are universally practiced everywhere.

As I continue my journeys, I am committed to sharing my experiences so students can be exposed to issues of culture, history, and the natural wonders of the world.

For many reasons, not everyone is capable of world exploration. For me, it is a privilege and presents the opportunity to be of service.

All of my experiences with new and different cultures have been rich with opportunities to grow, learn, and expand my horizons. Each encounter with a father and daughter or a grandfather and granddaughter offers a chance to look into the larger picture of humanity and the world.

My presentations focus on the goodness of humanity and the awe of nature. I offer students the opportunity to see these qualities in others and themselves, leaving them hungry and receptive to learn more.

I present new perspectives of our world. Because of the authenticity of my experiences, students are encouraged to not be reluctant to voice their own dreams to some day travel to different parts of the world.



I hope the knowledge students take away from my presentations leaves them with many choices and decisions on how to make their world a better place to live.

All this gives me hope for a bright and better future.

—Dean Jacobs
www.deanjacobs.org