

**Travel Agent Conference
Montgomery, Alabama
January 28, 2018**

Welcome to the City of Montgomery Alabama, 200 years of triumphs, struggles, revolutions and revelations, heartache and happiness, defeats and victories, raising voices to the sky singing “we shall overcome.” Sitting along the banks of the Alabama River that flows southward to a bay then on out to sea. Shouldering the history of pain and suffering but reminding others that without rivers, there would be no bridges to cross to the other side where liberty and justice resides.

Tonight, we are surrounded by buildings, streets and other places that bear the sorrows of struggle and the

nobility of change. A city built on the soil of shared sorrows, in memory of all those who suffered and died in a Civil War intended to destroy for our American Democracy, for the 435,000 men, women and children who were sold into slavery, for those who were freed following a war, but far from being free as they were denied the rights of the common man, lynchings in the dark of night of night, no justice, no hopes in Mother's eyes.

Montgomery is a city of repose, lying at rest on city streets, but history never sleeps. Look and you will see monuments of stone and steel that remind us of our history, in remembrance of people and places, where

history resides. A complex and still incomplete study of the character mankind.

Truths to see and accept, forgiving others as well as ourselves. Hallowed ground on the other side of sunsets where grief can be laid down. A place to shoulder the burden of moving beyond the indignity of slavery, of coming to terms of the history of horror of lynching men, women and children with no justice, ignoring the principle and the value of “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” And the courage and character of African men women and children who were beaten, belittled, and denied the bounty of hope for better days. Raising their voices in

song, “We shall overcome, Deep in my heart, I do believe that We shall overcome one day.”

The mothers and daughters, fathers and sons of the American civil rights movement never wavered in their belief that justice would come and they prayed for the day when the fair winds of freedom and following seas would carry them to the shores of a life without fear and a heart of purpose. Their courage in the face of danger and their humanity in the face of God gave them the courage to stand up and demand that full bounty of freedom and justice for all.

There is power in all of us to reach out, to support and stand firm in the belief that our lives count for

something. For how can our children stand on mountaintops if we do not teach them how to climb.

For most of my life, I lived in the shadow of history. My life was measured by who I belonged to rather than who I was, always supporting but never leading, always believing in others but never in me, always in the crowd but never breaking away. Believing that my life would be measured by the accomplishments of others, but never by my own.

My parents, George and Lurleen Wallace, were the most powerful, beloved and controversial Governors in Alabama history. From segregation to reconciliation, was my father's journey along his own Road to Jericho.

Breaking away from a painful past is not always easy but it is always right. And for today and all the tomorrows to come, I

hope that each of you, all of us, can find opportunities to inspire others, serve others and build legacies of our own. Believe that our world is at her best when she embraces all of us, protects the least of us and offers her bounty of hope and prosperity to not just some of.

Now is the time to stand shoulder to shoulder for the sake of a better world, rather than looking over our shoulder at the past. LIVING your lives with inspiration, always aspiring to make the choice that leads you to higher ground, that guides you to understanding and purpose of not just who you are, but who you can become.

On August 28, 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King, the former pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church here in Montgomery and recognized throughout the world as the leader of the American Civil Rights Movement stood on the steps of the

Lincoln Memorial in Washington and told American that he had a dream.

“I have a dream” he said, “that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification – one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”

On March 25, 1965, after walking for three days from Selma Alabama to Montgomery, Dr. King led 25,000 thousand people into the city and up Dexter Avenue to the State Capitol to deliver a petition requesting that African American citizens be given the right to vote in the State of Alabama to Governor Wallace, and he refused to meet with them.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March of the Dr. King’s daughter, Bernice, and Governor

Wallace's daughter, Peggy stood on the steps of the Alabama I stood on the steps of the Alabama Capitol and held hands as thousands of people walked up Dexter Avenue toward us.

For that moment in time, Bernice and I became the embodiment of that little black girl and that little white girl holding hands as sisters down in Alabama. Dr. King's dream had come true. Bernice and I served as testaments to the power of reconciliation, of change through understanding and unconditional love.

I sometimes wonder how the course of history might have been different, if back in 1965, Dr. King and Governor Wallace had known that one day, that little black girl and that little white girl, down in Alabama would be their own daughters.

All of us come to this moment, to this place, on the road of our OWN life's experiences. We are diverse, both in our experiences, our aspirations and our dreams. But we are united

in the common belief that a vision for a most Just World is worth the saving.

All of us are unique. All have a history and a story that is worth the telling.

There is power in who we are and where we come from. Every one of us cannot live on a stage for all to see, but all of us have something to share about that makes us unique, the fabric of our lives. We must know where we have come from, before we chart our course for the future.

Now is the time we must hold hands together rather than holding down the inherent rights of others. For no one can ever measure the true worth of a mended heart that beats because someone cared.

Tolerance must be more than what we believe, It must be what we live and leading by example is what we must do.

Tolerance does not always mean agreement, but tolerance always requires understanding and compassion for others.

If each of us lives a life of purpose and hope, we will never have to think about the cost of a lost opportunity to say the right thing or stand up and be counted.

And in the sunrises of our tomorrow's, we must rise up, and again, stand shoulder to shoulder to face the challenges that lay ahead.

There is power in confidence in feeling loved and respected for who you are and what you believe, it is the reaching out and touching a soul that brings out the humanity in others.

An opportunity for each of you, an obligation for all of us, to see others, feel others and celebrate others, respecting their humanity for who they are.

Montgomery Alabama, the place I call home, welcomes you all.

