

God's Hope for America Bus Tour - Discovering the Real Las Vegas

Michael Balcomb

June 25, 2014



Our current God's Hope for America Pilgrimage motel (I won't name the chain, but it rhymes with 'Super Late') in North Las Vegas has seen better days and better years. Maybe.

Not all the rooms are clean or have fresh sheets and towels. Keys lose their magnetic code without a struggle. The small, overworked staff struggle with the concept of almost a hundred guests arriving all at once, though they put on a brave, smiling face. Yes, all in all, this humble facility is about as far as you can get from the five-star casino hotels on the much better known Las Vegas Strip. But, I'm so glad we stayed here and somewhere more upscale, more glitzy, more, you know, Las Vegas-ey.

In my view, this hardscrabble corner of town, right across from the massive Nellis Air Force Base, is the real deal of Las Vegas, much more so than the fantasy world of the big casinos. From about six in the morning, there's a steady stream of cars arriving at the base's main security gate, airmen arriving for work. Nearby, city buses regularly disgorge dozens of blue-collar day-shift civilian workers who have to proceed to the base on foot.

Most wear tired expressions, though the day has just begun. It seems almost futile, even invasive, but I try asking a few of them anyway 'What do you think is God's Hope for America?' It's the same question being read by hundreds of motorists every day, spelled out in foot-high letters across the back of our #godshopeforamerica tour bus.

The answers surprise me, and encourage me. "America needs to be strong," says one middle-aged Hispanic woman, a cleaner "but America needs to be humble." "We don't need to be starting fights," says a young man in his twenties, on his way to the base to look for work, "but we need to be ready to help our friends, and they need to be able to depend on us."

Sixty-four years ago, June 25th, 1950, when the Korean War broke out and communist forces from the North overran Seoul, Unification Movement founder Rev. Moon was imprisoned in a communist prison camp in Hungnam, North Korea. Though most prisoners survived the pitiless conditions for just a few

months before dying from exhaustion and disease, Rev. Moon had endured more than two years. He was in more danger of being executed by the prison guards for critiquing the system than succumbing to any physical weakness.

Millions of Koreans and over 58,000 American military personnel lost their lives in the Korean War, but for Rev. Moon and some others the cloud of war did prove to have a silver lining. When US and UN troops liberated him from the Hungnam death camp in the fall of 1950, he pledged that one day he would travel to America to thank his liberators in person, a pledge fulfilled in 1965.

Yesterday, June 25th, we were welcomed with a very moving commemorative program at the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, a beautiful facility that just happens to be right on top of the original holy ground planted by Rev. Sun Myung Moon in 1965.

Veterans from local American Legion Post 8, and several branches of the armed forces, were honored in a brief ceremony of appreciation and recognition held in the plaza. The event was well covered by the local press, (read an account here.)

The Korean War has long been referred to as the United States' 'forgotten war,' overshadowed by more recent troublesome conflicts like Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. But several in the audience yesterday made it clear that they've not forgotten that service and sacrifice.

Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Continental Chair of the Family Federation in North America, who has been on Holy Ground tour from the beginning, was just an unborn child when his mother made it across the border to freedom and safety in South Korea. "We will never forget the sacrifice of the American people," he said. "Our 50-state Holy Ground tour is a way for me, and all Koreans in the USA to give something back, by sharing Rev. Moon's message of revival and explaining what is God's Hope for America."