

OUT OF AFRICA



Members of the IFEA Boards and the extended Landey Family.

Our IFEA World Board and IFEA Foundation Board members recently made the long journey around the globe to South Africa. During our visit, IFEA Africa President and 2019 IFEA World Board Chair Janet Landey, brought us all together with the children, young future industry leaders and the stakeholders (including IFEA Africa) who have committed so much to the success of the Skills Village 2030 projects and programs that Janet (and her highly supportive family – both personal and professional) has dedicated her life and career to. In South Africa, different from some other of our global regions, the focus is heavily on the use of festivals and events to provide training, valuable skills that can be translated into many sectors, and job opportunities for the youth of a remarkable country, resulting in motivation, inspiration and a vision of what they can accomplish despite countless financial and resource challenges that would stop many before they ever started. What started as a conference opportunity for our Board members, with countless decades of experience between them, to share their knowledge and insights with those attending,

quickly became a common ground of inspiration; a gift that was provided to all of us and that will stay with us for years to come.

Along our South African journey, we met multiple young professionals whose start had come through the Skills Village training and experience opportunity. From the artists and entrepreneurs of Victoria Yards, to the community co-op and program leaders throughout Skills Village, to the interns and volunteers providing high-quality guest experiences in the Nelson Mandela House and Apartheid Museum in Soweto, and the Cradle of Humanity, where all of our stories converge. You could identify them by the gleam in their eyes; the passion as they readily shared their dreams with anyone who would listen; and the sincere appreciation that they showed for the guidance and support that we were all able and very willing to provide. I am confident that we all took away every bit as much as we were able to leave behind.

Through one of these young professionals, as part of our visit to the Cradle of Humanity, we had the unique opportunity to learn about and experience a remarkable exhibit called the 'Long March to Freedom.' It is (currently) 100 sculptures, that will build to 400



when finished, of leaders and individuals from the 1700's through to modern times, who have impacted the road to freedom and democracy for South Africa (including global figures like Martin Luther King, Ghandi, and Fidel Castro). All are remarkable in their detail, calling you in to look closer and learn about each of them and the pathways that they chose to follow. From tribal leaders on horseback, to newspaper writers on their bicycles with typewriter strapped on the back, to Nelson Mandela with fist raised, all are sculpted in a forward moving action pose, giving movement to the entire exhibit. Placed in a procession dating through time, the power of their individual and collective passion and commitment, toward a common goal, can be quite literally felt and the entire procession is both memorable and moving.

It made me think of all the great leaders and professionals and creatives and influentials and volunteers and stakeholders that have touched, supported and influenced our own industry and organization, in so many ways (knowingly and unknowingly), for so many decades. Just as each of our own events and communities and countries has their own ancestry of individuals who have made a difference along the way; Yourselves among them. And I imagined, in the years ahead, that we may see the addition of some of these inspired young men and women from the Skills Village 2030 program leading that procession into the future, with Janet Landey forever by their sides and in their hearts.

And I will be proud to have played even a small role in inspiring them to change our world for the better. Out of Africa, I believe we were all reminded of the spark that started us all down our respective pathways and that continues to fuel our hopes, dreams, events and communities toward a better world.

