

There are 54 nations comprising the continent of Africa. We look at these nations, too often, as all the same – third world striving to enter the second world. South Africa is an exception as it, in total economic terms, is first world. The problem here is that the wealth is greatly weighted to a distinct minority of the population and that is by race, i.e. white. Slums, violence and hopelessness are as prevalent in South Africa as they are in the lowest rung of nations that endure wholesale poverty. Last week, I was in for a revelation. We took a Trade Mission to Botswana and found a modern nation with a solid middle class and beautiful neighborhoods. It is time for the rest of the world to look at Botswana as something special.

How did Botswana get it right? Perhaps the major event is a consistent democracy and good governance. This nation gained its independence in 1966 and has not had one day of political unrest or manipulation. Prior to that it was a “British colony” by choice. Yes, they asked Britain to take it in. Not because they wanted to be colonized but they had a big fear of invasion/annexation by South Africa, Namibia, Angola or Zimbabwe –all of which borders the nation. Being part of the British Empire was insurance for the time being. Early in the 1960’s there was a significant finding under the surface of the land of the nation. Botswana, as it turns out, has been blessed with diamonds. They have diamonds by the billions of annual dollars and for many decades to come. Wisely, and quickly, they set themselves free from the guidance of Britain and became its own “boss”.

Today, the diamond industry accounts for 50% of the national revenue of the nation. Their good governance allows them to invest this revenue into the lives of its people. There is free education through four years of college for everyone. The medical delivery system is offered to all as a right not a privilege. Their infrastructure is more advanced than most nations on the continent. I must admit that their asphalt roads seem superior to ours. The structure of their downtown buildings would rival any U.S. city. The proper management of their natural resources has brought many blessings to the whole nation not just to a few Swiss bank accounts owned by corrupted officials.

We had the opportunity to visit the richest diamond mine in the world, the Jwaneng Diamond Mine. It was absolutely awesome. The biggest highlight was meeting the General Manager of the mine. He was a well educated and articulate brother. That’s right – the world’s richest diamond mine is managed by a child of Africa. The majority of the staff was also indigenous Africans. The nation has a joint-venture with DeBeer’s Diamonds (South African firm). It seems to be working out for both. One of the participants of our Trade Mission was Signet Diamonds (Kay’s Jewelers, Jared, etc.). I believe they were convinced at the end of our trip that they must put a significant office in Botswana and concentrate their new efforts in this fantastic nation. Remember, the majority of all diamonds in the United States come from Botswana and most of

us don't know that.

Another natural resource the nation has is the natural beauty of its women. We heard about this but couldn't imagine until we journeyed. All the men on the mission had sore necks from looking at all the Lena Horne/Halle Berry types walking here and there. My wife and I are now kidding our sons that they must first visit Botswana before they decide on a wife (mother of our grandchildren). In recent years, Botswana has provided two Miss Universe's and many in the final selections.

Most important to us is the fact that Botswana has a great inventory of entrepreneurs. The banks are lending and there is an ample amount of quasi government/private investment and technical assistance resources for the growing businesses. The Bank of Botswana suggested that we establish a Holding Company made up of firms wishing to do business in Botswana and listing the company on the Botswana Stock Exchange. We are making plans for that.

The Chamber of Commerce of Botswana, BOCCIM, opened its arms to us and we are now working on a Memorandum of Understanding. Our entrepreneurs and theirs will have a living process of interaction, joint venturing and doing business in both nations from here on out. Together we will grow from this. Before we left, one of our participants had already established a joint venture with one of BOCCIM's members. Let it be known, that if you want to do international business COME TO BOTSWANA.

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