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When I first became involved with PTPI more than a decade ago, I had little concept of the totality of the organization and the programs it administers. I saw it exclusively as a mechanism for a young kid from the inner city who grew up on welfare in a single-parent home to see the globe, interact with foreign cultures, and come away with a greater understanding of the world. I suspect that many of you came to be involved in a similar fashion for similar purposes. Although I immediately understood and accepted President Eisenhower's vision, wonderfully summed up in the phrase peace through understanding, it was only through greater involvement with PTPI that I came to fully see how that mission is pursued and can be integrated into each of our lives.

PTPI occupies a hard-to-identify niche in the world of non-profits. Our programming is now so diverse – from Operation Iraqi Children to homestays to Peace Camps to conferences to land mine action – that the uninitiated are sometimes confused as to what our purpose is. That's only because they look exclusively at the physical activities undertaken, and not at the spirit that permeates every program. But once you begin to participate, it's impossible not to see connections to the Eisenhower vision in every aspect of life.

At its most basic level, the Eisenhower vision says that we are all in this together, that we all have a role to play, that we are all inter-connected. Long before globalization became the buzzword of the day, Eisenhower realized that the world was drawing closer together and that cooperation would be required. Having seen the horrors of war up close, he understood well that the world could ill afford another such conflict. And having been exposed to people all over the world, he saw that peace is universally desired, but that fear and hatred too often get in the way. Of course, Eisenhower was also motivated by the political realities of his day: he felt sure that the Soviet Union would lose its grip on eastern Europe if people were allowed to interact with one another, free from the limits imposed by government. He was confident in the truth of his position and felt certain that that truth could be most powerfully and lastingly shared with others through casual interaction and friendship, not the formal strictures of summits and diplomatic meetings.

Eisenhower was far ahead of his contemporaries on two vital points, points that we must understand if we are to continue the work of People to People for another fifty years. First, he understood that most human conflict is caused by fear and misunderstanding. Today, the academy is rife with anthropological studies demonstrating our tendency to create "otherness" – that is, to create a mythology where peoples who talk differently, dress differently, and especially look differently than we do are deemed fundamentally separate

and distinct, to the point of inhumanity. The mind is then able to rationalize violence or conflict – if the victim is somehow less human, a normally inexcusable act becomes much more forgivable, even necessary. Eisenhower understood intuitively that if people from different cultures were brought together and given the opportunity to deconstruct that mythology naturally, without prompting, that conflict would be much less likely. It's taken scholars decades to catch up in social science research, some of it veering off into slightly nutty postmodern relativism. Eisenhower, who was president of one of this country's greatest universities before his terms in the Oval Office, already knew that rediscovering our shared humanity was the key to progress and peace.

Second, Mary's grandfather realized that the cause of peace was far too important to be left exclusively to government. As someone who is in government, I can tell you that there are functions that we perform well. There are some functions that we don't perform well. Traditionally, foreign affairs and diplomacy have been left entirely to the federal government. There's some wisdom in that – after all, a national government presumably should have the greatest mandate to speak for its people. But even a cursory look at the history of diplomacy shows that there have been far more failures than successes. Nothing affects a country more than the decision to go to war or live in peace. Shouldn't a nation's people have a role in spreading peace? Frankly, governments sometimes get in the way. The elites may have agendas of their own. Eisenhower famously called out the “military-industrial complex” that maintained an unreasonably firm grip on the levers of mid-twentieth century power. There are some with a vested interest in keeping the flames of hatred alive, no matter how immoral or destructive that may be. The only means we have of containing those agendas is through old-fashioned populism: through having everyday people take an interest and active role in their own futures.

At least where it came to the vision for People to People, Eisenhower was something of an unexpected radical. Because, make no mistake about it, the People to People mission is a radical one. Not in the sense of armed revolution or leftism, but in its emphasis on the agency of ordinary citizens to create a fundamental paradigm shift for peace. Citizen diplomacy is essential to our future, because it is citizens who have to deal with the consequences of government policies and national actions. People to People emphasizes the interconnectedness of all humanity. We all have a role to play in pursuing peace, regardless of position, nationality, creed, or color, because we are all affected by the outcome. For that reason, People to People is non-partisan, non-political, and non-sectarian. No party, person, or faith has a monopoly on peace or its pursuit. Peace does not belong to the Democrats or the Republicans, the Christians or the Muslims. It should belong to all of us – we should all be invested in it.

Most importantly, it is not enough for us only to seek peace and understanding for ourselves. No matter where in the world the conflict or hatred is, it affects all of us. In South Africa, they call this concept *ubuntu*. It means that an injury to one is an injury to all, that we are all inextricably bound up in one another. That I am a person only through my interaction with other people. That it is the way we treat one another and socialize with others that distinguishes us from other species. And that from a moral perspective, the hurt of one

offends the social contract and endangers us just as much as if the entire globe were threatened.

Recently, the mission of People to People has shifted its focus. Under the leadership of our great president and CEO, Mary Eisenhower, we now do a great deal of explicitly humanitarian work. That shift represents a much fuller understanding of the complexities of the contemporary world. The disparity between the rich and poor greatly exacerbates existing prejudices, putting up taller barriers between people, and prolongs conflict. Moreover, we've come to understand that peace is a broader concept than once was thought. Yes, the absence of war is the most dramatic form of peace. But we are also seeking a peace of the soul – that people all over the world should not spend restless nights wondering where the next meal will come from, or living in the agony of a painful and entirely preventable disease, or wondering how different their future might be, if only they had access to decent education. Indeed, achieving this peace of the soul is a far more difficult task. It takes resources, and it takes the absolute commitment of a group of people who are unafraid and unashamed to pressure their friends, family, civil society organizations, and governments to take action.

That is the role that People to People must play for the next fifty years. To be that committed vanguard, promoting peace and cultural understanding. At every turn. Repeating the same talking points to anyone and everyone who will listen.