



Postmarks from a Political Traveler

Phil Karber

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As spring and summer vacations beckon, this book invites and incites a whole new approach to travel. "Postmarks from a Political Traveler" is a series of travel recollections confronting the troubling topics of roots and racism, polar bears and climate change, anti-Americanism, and the war in Afghanistan. The book opens with the story of the author's experience growing up in the Jim Crow South, traveling in apartheid South Africa, and living in the post-apartheid South Africa of 2009 and 2010. It explores the not-so-dissimilar roots and racism of the United States and South Africa, as well as the cross-fertilization of ideas between the two countries. The next installment chronicles two trips to Churchill, Manitoba, where the planet's largest population of polar bears congregate each October. It recounts the dramatic changes that have occurred in both the human and the polar bear communities in just the last decade and shows how the bears have become an Arctic version of the proverbial canary in the coalmine. Then the book shifts to the author's journey back to the United States on a German freighter with a rabidly anti-American captain. Woven into this account of life aboard a long haul ship are threads of the author's travels and anti-American encounters over a decade of living in Africa and Asia. The book concludes with reflections on trips to Afghanistan in 2004 and in 2012, describing the effects of war and conflict zone politics on women, education, refugees, and aid workers. What ties these episodes together is the author's commitment to social justice and to changing the world through travel and writing that is, affirming travel as a political act."

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