



## Travel Journal: China

From May 9 through June 7, 2005, I had the honor of touring The Peoples Republic of China. I was sponsored by China Educational Exchange, which is a US-based organization that enters into cultural exchange with China in the area of higher education

I traveled to eight cities and gave a series of concerts. All of my concerts were on university campuses. My repertoire included American folks songs, show tunes and spirituals. I was also a visiting lecturer and spoke to many classes about American culture. I used music as a way of talking about the American experience and had the students join with me in the singing of many songs.



It proved to be a very good way to connect with the Chinese students. In the concert setting and the lecture hall, the students were engaged, excited and appreciative. One special moment was when we sang a Chinese folk song together—here, I joined them in their world of music. Joining voices through music is a profound metaphor for what we need to do to make peace in the world.

My goal was to connect across race, language and culture to help us focus on our common humanity and to promote peace and goodwill. It was a tour I will never forget.

One student approached me to share that his attitude regarding African-Americans had changed for the better after meeting me. Another student was so touched by the message of the music that he approached me, hugged me and said “love you.”

The overwhelmingly positive response to my music was unforgettable. The Chinese people were gracious, receptive and appreciative. They have taught me a great deal about hospitality and respect.

My tour in China increased my understanding of the Chinese people and I feel a profound solidarity with them. Learning more about their cultural stories only confirmed for me just how much we are alike and just how much we need each other.

