

column

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US AMBASSADOR
TO SOUTH AFRICA



contributors

SEAN O'TOOLE
WRITER

A local artist whose work is seriously underrated at the moment? Igshaan Adams. **A historical figure that you'd have loved to have interviewed?** JH Pierneef, circa 1910, around the time he headed east out of Pretoria to draw the construction of the Union Buildings.

More than 600 US companies are invested in SA

When President Barack Obama asked me to come to SA to represent him as US ambassador it was an opportunity I just couldn't pass up. I still remember the day 25 years ago when Madiba walked triumphantly into freedom. We raced out into the streets to dance and it was one of the few times when my father openly wept in front of me.

Four years later, along with so many Americans, I was inspired by the newly elected President Nelson Mandela's words calling for the country to create a new future that would help all citizens realise their full potential.

I am proud that over the past 20 years, the US government has supported SA's achievements across a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from working together to confront the scourge of HIV and AIDS to supporting social development under our aid and education programmes.

As important as these ties are, the private sector trade and investment links that have developed during the same period positively influence the lives of more South Africans every day.

I am proud that there are more than 600 American companies invested here, contributing an estimated 10% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and employing more than 100 000 South Africans.

In addition, the African Growth and Opportunity Act has had made a

significant impact on trade between the US and Africa and no country has made better use of it to create jobs and support growth than SA. Last year alone, SA exported \$2.3bn (about R27bn) worth of cars to the US, supporting 30 000 workers in Port Elizabeth and Gauteng.

At the US-Africa Leaders Summit during August, President Obama committed the US government to expanding these economic ties because a thriving, growing Africa is good for us too. In addition to the stability they bring, expanded markets are good for US business. As a result, we created a number of programmes to encourage US companies to look to Africa, including Doing Business in Africa, Power Africa and the Africa private capital group initiatives.

SA is well positioned to benefit from these new initiatives and many US companies will visit over the next 12 months to consider new, job-creating investments. We want to seize these opportunities to develop the industries of the future while deepening and strengthening our bilateral trade and investment ties.

SA has grown so much since 1994 that its economy increasingly resembles other advanced Western economies. This means the manufacturing, mining and agricultural sectors are steadily shrinking as a percentage of GDP while

the services sector is growing. I believe this natural economic evolution will have a great impact on our economic relationship. Clear and consistent laws on investment that protect intellectual and real property rights are essential for growing the innovation-based economy of the future in both our countries.

This is why this year we are focused on developing a much broader, stronger economic partnership with SA. We want to move from a predominant focus on tariff levels to discussing how we can help develop a vibrant innovation economy, capturing the tremendous potential of your scientists and companies to help solve some of the planet's toughest medical, environmental and manufacturing challenges while making businesses more productive and helping to create thousands of new jobs.

In President Obama's words, "Just as Africa is changing, we need to change the way we think about the continent, put aside old stereotypes and respond to Africans' desire for a partnership of equals where Africans take the lead in their own development."

This is exactly what we intend to do. Through a new economic partnership, I believe the US can help your country deliver on the future about which all South Africans dream — and that is another opportunity that I won't pass up.

DAVID ROSS
PHOTOGRAPHER

A place that inspires you? Whenever I travel I'm inspired to paint. I have bought oil paint tubes all over the country. They usually get confiscated at airports, because they're flammable. **An artist whose work you admire?** John Murray. I love his use of muted colour and abstract form, and the simplicity of his portrait studies. **An artwork you wish you'd bought?** I was inspired by an Ian Grose portrait exhibition at the Stevenson recently. I was so moved by his oil on paper portraits that I took up oil painting.



CAROLINE OLAVARRIETA
STYLIST

A designer whose work you admire? Yohji Yamamoto. I love his androgynous ethos. Lanvin; need I say more? **A fashion trend emerging?** Fitted double-breasted suits are exciting and playful; big lapels have emerged. Keep an eye on the Jozi stamp on street fashion, infusing traditional ideas in a modern way. Street culture has played a large part in inspiring people to be more daring and individual with their sense of style and even inspired designers. **One item that everyone should have in their wardrobe?** Jackets of all sorts.

