

---

**Ambassador Louise V. Oliver, Permanent Delegate of the United States of America to UNESCO**

**Remarks at the Exclusive Screening of “AMAZING GRACE,” February 6, 2008**

---

Good evening everyone and welcome to Movie Night at UNESCO ... I'd like to join Ambassador Landymore in thanking you for joining us at this showing of Amazing Grace, the French premiere of this widely acclaimed film.

Two hundred years ago, not long after the United Kingdom, the United States, in one of the first and most significant acts of our then new and young country, officially abolished the transatlantic slave trade. An Act of Congress passed on March 2, 1807 stated the following:

“Chap. XXII—An act to prohibit the importation of Slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States, from and after the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eight.

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled,

That from and after the first day of January, one thousand eight hundred and eight, it shall not be lawful to import or bring into the United States or the territories thereof from any foreign kingdom, place, or country, any negro, mulatto, or person of color, with intent to hold, sell, or dispose of such negro, mulatto, or person of color, as a slave, or to be held to service or labour.”

That historic and bold achievement will be commemorated throughout the United States during 2008. Like the UK, however, the Congressional Act was only the beginning of a long and difficult process that lasted almost sixty years, and in our case included a terrible Civil War, before slavery itself was finally declared immoral and unconstitutional in the United States.

Prior to the abolition of the slave trade, millions of African slaves were brought to the Americas to work in the sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantations, as well as other places of servitude. UNESCO's Slave Route Project documents this process, and describes how Africans were taken from ports along the coast of Africa to be sold and then transported to the New World.

Last December, during a visit to Goree Island, a World Heritage Site in Dakar, Senegal, I saw one of the slave houses that still remains in its original condition. In the middle of the side of the house that faces the sea is the “door of no return”—the door through which countless millions of men, women, and children passed on their way to the ships that would carry them, at least those that survived the horrific conditions on the ships, to a life of slavery in the New World.

February is Black History Month in the United States, which is when we celebrate the many important contributions that have been made by African Americans throughout our nation's history. However, despite the fact that many individuals of African origin have lived in the United States since colonial times,

including many who lived in the North and who were known as “free men”, it is the shameful period of slavery that still stains an otherwise noble and remarkable history of achievement by African Americans.

The great actress Ingrid Bergman once said that movies can give ordinary people a trip “deep into the twilight of the soul”. This movie, *Amazing Grace*, will do that for us. It will demonstrate both the worst aspects of humanity, and the best.

It is a story of passion and courage, of a man driven by his conscience to confront the diabolical slave trade and abolish a system that enabled one man to own another. It is an inspiring story, one that reminds us that individuals can indeed change the course of history.

But why am I standing here talking about this film, when we are fortunate enough to have the producer of this film here with us this evening.

Mr. Philip Anschutz certainly understands the power of film to tell a story in ways that can transport us to another time, to another place. He knows that films can give us new insights on the human condition, and that movies such as *Amazing Grace*, and his production of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the first of C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, can provoke thought and discussion.

But Mr. Anschutz is not just a successful producer of films. He has multiple interests, and is involved with numerous activities that span from sports to business to public policy. He is a man fully engaged in the world, with passions of his own. Like William Wilberforce, he wants to make a difference, and is actively addressing causes like human trafficking that is today's version of slavery.

Mr. Anschutz, thank you for joining us this evening, and for giving us an opportunity to hear you describe why you decided to make this film, and how you went about putting it together -- and tell us how you plan to use this film to help us all, particularly young people, better understand the true import of these past events, so that we will be vigilant about preventing such inhuman acts from recurring in the future.

So now please help me welcome Mr. Philip Anschutz.

---