

## The Tela Character Education for Tourism Project

“The Tela Character Education for Tourism” project is an outgrowth of the effort to enhance the image of the developing nation of Honduras.

In 2016, a project (UPF/PeaceIN) to build the *Only One America* Peace Park was conducted in Tela, Honduras. The park, which was built over several years, was designed and built by youth from North, South and Central America. On the foundation of this park and other activities, Tela registered itself as the 241<sup>st</sup> International City of Peace, calling attention to the city administration’s desire and intention to change the image of its city and ultimately its nation.

Tela should express the very best of Honduras, the "Honduran dream." People worldwide have, unfortunately, a very vivid picture of the Honduran nightmare (natural disasters, crime, instability), but it is time for Honduras to reveal its true self. The real Honduras is an attractive nation – a nation of kind people with wide and bright smiles, a nation of beautiful fauna and flora. The city of Tela is a peaceful community of black, white and indigenous peoples. Tela is rich in history, arts and culture.

### **The Purpose of the UPF / Y Service of North Jersey Project**

“The Tela Character Education for Tourism” project will allow us to:

- Teach the local children in the schools from an early age about the importance of a culture of service, toward developing and promoting the tourist industry
- Create a positive impact on the community to model a brighter future for the nation of Honduras.

### **Executive summary**

During the past four years, we have heard over and over about the crisis at the US southern border with immigrants from Central American nations fleeing their countries because the country cannot support its people socially or financially. Until Honduras can

change the nature of its society, Honduras and other CA nations will continue to seek help from the US making it dependent on the US and thereby slowing its social progress toward becoming self-sufficient.

PeaceIN, which led the building of the *Only One America* Peace Park caught the attention of the local authorities because it created a model of peaceful cooperation among diverse youth, encouraging youth to share strengths and abilities over borders in the effort to create a stronger America. The PeaceIN project is an outgrowth of the Religious Youth Service, a project of the Universal Peace Federation which has a history of 30 years of peacebuilding projects across five continents.

We will be engaging Alan Saunders

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/alan-saunders-20176512/> one of the authors, of the Character Education Manual *Discovering the Real Me* in training the school teachers throughout the Tela School System on guiding the children in a course to facilitate a life of service and an attitude of care and consideration for others. As future leaders of their own families and community, students will develop leadership skills. The course emphasizes taking responsibility by making good decisions, taking the lead in understanding others and developing relationship skills, being community-minded, being responsible in romantic and sexual relationships, coping with adversity and diversity, handling money, and being responsible for the environment.

The next generation trained as civic-minded individuals is a society with a vision for success. We believe that, if the proposed pilot project is successful in Tela, Honduras, other municipalities will become attracted to also implement character education as part of their school curricula as well.

### *1. Tela and the peace economy of tourism*

Honduras' main resource to become a peace-loving nation is tourism. Tela has so much to offer. Tela has beaches, is near the border and, from Tela, people can visit the Mayan temples. The future leaders of Tela – their young people have to become the players in

the attractiveness of the city. At first, people may come to see nature and attractions. But they will come again, with friends, because of their good experience with the friendliness of the people.

Tela must create "responsible tourism," "ecological tourism". Responsible Tourism was defined in Cape Town in 2002 alongside the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Responsible Tourism is about "making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit." Responsible Tourism requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists all take responsibility, and especially take action to make tourism more sustainable.

Responsible Tourism takes a variety of forms, and it is characterized by travel and tourism which:

- Minimizes negative economic, environmental and social impacts;
- Generates greater economic benefits for local people, enhances the well-being of host communities, and improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- Involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes;
- Makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- Provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- Provides access for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged;
- Is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.
- Ideally, we should motivate many citizens to prepare their houses to receive visitors – develop Airbnbs.

## *2. Tela can build an image of peace*

The sad news about the nation of Honduras is the urban criminality. However, there is a possibility of imagining a new Honduras, a new urban culture, and Tela has the

possibility of coming up with creative ideas. The city of Tela has some advantages as a starting point for this change of image: Tela already has assets toward tourism such as the second largest botanical garden of the world - Lancetilla Tela Botanical Garden, Punta Sal National Park and the history and presence of the Garifuna people. Also Tela is one of the few cities in Honduras that has kept away from the presence of organized crime and gangs.

### *3. Service*

Honduras is the nation made to serve in Central America. The spirit of service will be the key for Tela, the department of Atlantida, and the whole nation. Honduras needs to showcase a new paradigm, in other words, the serving nation. This has to be evidenced in Tela. We cannot bring a revolution of service in the whole nation overnight. Tela can be the pilot project to show that the new paradigm, and then other cities will follow.

### **Statement of Need**

Honduras is a poor country, and the majority of Hondurans work under extremely difficult conditions. Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Central America. About two-thirds of the population lives below the national poverty line. Poverty rates are especially high among rural and indigenous people and in the south, west and along the eastern border. Poverty in Honduras is compounded by the constant threat of natural disasters – hurricanes and floods – as well as land erosion.

Those living in rural areas are the most vulnerable to poverty. Most farming families are subsistence farmers, growing just enough to feed themselves. With restricted access to land, farmers depend on off-farm employment or remittances from family members for support.

When poor people have access to financial services and life-enhancing products, they can earn more, build their assets, create jobs and cushion themselves against external surprises.

## **Goals and Objectives**

The first objective is to lay a foundation for a successful tourist city, thus creating jobs, a better economy and a better image for Honduras as a nation. This foundation can begin to be laid by instituting Character Education to support the establishment of a Responsible Tourist Industry and thereby raising the spirit of the city.

We plan to hold a “Train the Trainers” workshop for 25-30 elementary and High School Teachers. This will be a pilot program. The development of the project should be an organic expansion in response to the feedback from the teachers.

## **Methods and Strategies**

The Training program was originally scheduled to commence in Tela with the teachers using the *Discovering the Real Me* manual. For two years, the Covid pandemic has hindered the progress of this program. Therefore, some consideration is being made regarding the possibility of holding a ZOOM seminar.

## **Evaluation**

The program evaluation will be done using an evaluation form, and testimony. Once the Character Education is in place in the schools, evaluation will be done by testimony of observed change in behavior. Relative to positive evaluation of the pilot project, the project can be implemented in other cities.

## **Budget Information**

To be determined by Mario Salinas.

Financial support for this project is being considered by Y Service International.

Financial support for the launch for the project, on June 13, is being provided by Y Service of North Jersey.