

A Service Project in Honduras, Central America

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The USA, in 1995, was given the mission by True Father to develop cooperative relations with countries in Latin America. In response to that providential calling the RYS initiated more than 40 Friendship America's Projects in Honduras and throughout Latin America. This project continues that work but has the unique focus of combining the Arts with service. This service project was intergenerational, and represented the cooperation of New Jersey FFWPU, WFWP and UPF (1). Therefore it included 1st generation members, non-Unificationists, Ambassadors for Peace and the children of Ambassadors for Peace.

The 10 New Jersey participants funded 75% of the 9 day project, including their own flights and the financial needs of all 24 participants. The Honduran Dept. of Education and local Municipality sponsored housing and transportation. North American members also stayed in local homes for part of the time; and community families cooked and served meals at a very minimal expense.



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Our group served two local schools in Honduras, Central America, and created a mosaic in which more than 100 community members also took part. Group or Community art is a joyful and inspiring way to create openness and friendship. All women participated in a WFWP Sisterhood Ceremony.

The 10 New Jersey participants, mostly older 2nd gen. are beginning to take ownership of this project. They are planning to invite friends to join in next year's project; and are creating their own website, and fundraising business to support activities. We are also planning to sponsor the FFWPU national leader and three Honduran youth to participate in a similar project here in the New Jersey.

In early January of 2014 twenty-four intergenerational participants from the US and Honduras, both UC and non-UC joined forces in a project themed, "It's not about the Pieces, but how they worked together". The project, a carry-over from the Religious Youth Service, Peace Park activities from the early 2000s, included an art based service project using mosaic as a catalyst for experiential learning of cooperation and peace.



Some might ask, with all the problems found in developing nations why would you choose to make a mosaic? Though we did repairs and constructed a security wall on two of the schools in the city during our short stay, the mosaic we created on the main boulevard in the historic City of Comayagua became the zenith of our service experience. Having degrees in both art and religious education it has always been my desire to develop activities combining the two fields of interest. I concur with Rev. Moon's words: "People often think that politics moves the world, but that is not the case. It is culture and the arts that move the world. It is emotion, not reason that strikes people in the innermost part of their hearts. When hearts change and are able to receive new things, ideologies and social regimes changes as a result."

In August 2000 Rev Sun Myung Moon introduced the idea of Peace Zones. He said, "These peace zones would be havens that exist for the sake of peace, prosperity, and reconciliation. They would be free of racial and sexual discrimination, human rights violations, and war.

These areas would also be ecological and environmental havens for the entire natural world." He suggested that they be created between, and on the borders of all nations. When I heard this speech, "Renewing the United Nations to Build Lasting Peace", I was working at the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) in the already successful

projects of the Religious Youth Service (RYS).



These service projects were basically carried out according to the vision of Rev. SMM by young people from various faith traditions, working cooperatively to service humanity. When I heard Rev Moon speak about the peace zones, I began to think how difficult it might be to create an entire zone of peace but maybe as an initial step a peace park could be constructed. I began asking the questions “How can art be a service to humanity? How can art be used for the sake of peace? And I began to see the arts; visual art, cooking arts, music, dance and sports as languages that go beyond national and even the religious spheres.

During my time in RYS, I was able to organize mosaic art projects in England, the Netherlands, New Jersey and then last year with GPA in Honduras (my family’s mission nation), and then this recent project. In each case the design for the project was made cooperatively by a group of young people (and in some cases, a composite design was made incorporating the work of young children). For example the recent mosaic done in Honduras was designed by 2 young North Americans and 2 Hondurans, the final piece was therefore the reflection of the unity of the two nations. The mosaic created in Honduras depicts a troubled world, symbolized by a tree in arid soil, trapped in a bubble,

and surrounded by a radiant ideal world of peace. Breaking the bubble was a drop melted from a composite symbol of peace and true love nourishing the arid world, and consequently bringing it new life.

Before one can really understand this project one needs to understand mosaics as an art form. Mosaics are made up of many small pieces of tile, glass, stone, beans or just about anything arranged harmoniously in a scheme. In order to make the mosaic 3 major things are needed: the design, the pieces you are using to create the design, and the grout or cement that wholes the whole thing together. In the deeper understanding of a religious principle, while we were creating this one Mosaic on a wall in the city, there was another mosaic that was being created simultaneously.



The designers of that mosaic were Mario Salinas, the director of FFWPU and UPF Honduras and myself; and the mosaic pieces were not tiles but the 24 participants and other project components. These included the 8 young adults, and 2 WFWP members from the US; and from Honduras: one Ambassador for Peace and 5 young guests (3 of which were adult children of Ambassadors for Peace), 3 of FFWPUs Honduran young adults and 3 WFWP women. Other pieces also included were the New Jersey church members who donated to the efforts of the fundraising participants before the event, and the 100 plus people in the community whom we stopped on the street and invited to put a piece of tile into our mosaic design. The ladies who cooked for us and their families who surrounded us with love, they

were pieces in this mosaic also. And all the home stay families who cared for us, the city workers from the Municipality who supported our activities, the dances who entertained us and the people from the city who will see or have heard our message “It’s not about the pieces, but how they work together”; these were all pieces of that mosaic. In that mosaic, the grout, that which held us together was our friendships, the relationships of love we developed with all of these people.

The mosaic is a strong metaphor for cooperation and harmony. As with all art forms the “creator” gleans through experiential lessons about creatorship, ownership, balance, harmony, dissonance, positive and negative use of tension, reconciliation, beauty, expression, communication and love. One learns through the mosaic that no one piece is more important than another, every piece maintains its own integrity while at the same time maintaining a responsibility to the harmony of the whole.

wThis project though initiated by myself was also designed in a “mosaic” sort of way by the participants. After sharing the vision of the project, Miwa Ishikawa and Yoshimi Suzuki designed the t-shirt which included the

words, “it’s not about the pieces but how they work together” which became the theme of the project. Throughout our time in Honduras we came to appreciate the strengths of each participant. Though we were unable to speak a common language, each found a way to relate and found their place in the larger design. Participants took responsibility for morning inspiration, monitoring group movement, project management and fulfillment, clean-up, bookkeeping and financial accountability; and everyone was an Ambassador for peace in their own special way. Photo records and the video were produced by the participants as well.



As for myself, the most important thing I have been able to contribute to the project was to initiate it. It seems to me that equal to the amount of inspiration God gives to me (to us) is an equal amount of discouraging self-talk that convinces us to give up on our ideas. Breaking through the discouragement and initiating the project was my greatest battle and the victory which became the seed to something that is developing a life of its own.

A recent follow-up meeting indicates that all the participants are interested to return to Honduras and/or bring Hondurans to US to share their culture with us, to bring friends and to further develop the project. My hope is to allow the project to develop organically relative to the participants in

both countries, the talents they bring, the needs they express, and the inspiration and calling that God whispers in the ear of each individual. I cling to the idea of developing actual parks in nations and on borders, as sort of “seeds” to the Peace Zones spoken about by Rev. Moon. I have delineated vision, purpose and goals for these parks below.* Abraham Lincoln said “Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?” Through cultural and art exchange we have the possibility to develop appreciation and friendships with our worldwide family, thus working proactively to avoid war. If anyone is interested in participating in this project, or developing a project of their own please contact me.

WHAT IS A “PEACE PARK”?

- A park (or garden) built in a place of conflict, yet reflecting the potential harmony of the conflicting peoples
- A place where art is used as a vehicle to express universal ideals of peace and harmony
- A place built by our future, youth with youth (world youth)
- An identifiable place reflecting universal ideals of the world family or community—the joint vision of the Religious Council and the United Nations
- A living art work, in which the people, the materials, space and all subsequent relationships created in building the park and appreciating the park are all part of the artistic event

PURPOSE

- To go beyond interreligious dialogue to engage in interreligious action
- To create a working model of interreligious and international cooperation
- To create substantial reflections of peace and harmony
- To provide an opportunity for young artists to develop a future art movement toward a “Culture of Peace” or “Art for Humanity’s Sake”
- To begin the work of creating Peace Zones, by building “Peace Parks”

GOALS

- To create a transforming learning experience through the process of building a Peace Park
- To create a park which reflects the individual beauty as well as collective potential of the conflicting peoples – A park which reflects Peace through its design
- To build a park as a seed to the Peace Zones, one of the goals of the UPF
- To bring youth who adhere to different beliefs, customs and perspectives together in cooperation, thus creating a sense of possibility and hope for the future
- To build a model of unity through the cooperative efforts of the youth

(1) FFWPU = Family Federation for World Peace and Unification; WFWP= Women’s Federation for World Peace; UPF= Universal Peace Federation