



Projects & Partnerships

De Leon-Arias Returns to Notre Dame to Strengthen TIES

About the time ADRIAN DE LEON-ARIAS was finishing his PhD in economics at Notre Dame, both sides of the US-Mexico border were anxious about the impact of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

On the US side, many feared that manufacturing jobs would flood into Mexico; less well known were the fears of Mexico's rural agricultural producers who felt wholly unprepared for the new free trade zone.

Nearly 12 years after first arriving at Notre Dame, de Leon-Arias has been putting his expertise with the "dismal science" to work

through an extraordinary partnership that promises to help rural Mexican farmers compete in the marketplace.

Known as US-Mexico Training, Internships, Exchanges, and Scholarships (TIES), this project brings together the Kellogg Institute, Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business, and the Universidad de Guadalajara, where de Leon-Arias is the dean of the school's college of business.

As part of the TIES project, faculty from the Universidad de Guadalajara spend time as guest scholars at the Kellogg Institute, and Notre Dame faculty teach modules to MBA students in Guadalajara. Notre Dame MBA students and selected undergraduate students sponsored by the Kellogg Institute also join their Mexican counterparts in summer internships to develop business plans and provide consulting services to small and medium-sized agricultural producers in the Mexican states of Jalisco and Michoacán.

During the 2005-06 academic year, de Leon-Arias returned to Notre Dame as guest scholar at the Kellogg Institute along with his wife, AIDA SERGOVIA, a professor of Universidad de Guadalajara, who also works on TIES.

"Mexican producers need help in areas such as production, prices, international trade, productivity and social aid programs," said de Leon-Arias. "But, above all, they need to develop entrepreneurial skills to enter global markets.

"The student interns have helped Mexican producers streamline operations and explore global markets for avocados and limes, among other specialty crops," said de Leon-Arias.

"With this small-scale program, we surely cannot solve all the problems in Mexican agriculture.

"But by searching for new methods and approaches and identifying better tools and practices, we can help individual producers in rural Mexico develop needed entrepreneurial skills."

Supported by a three-year grant from the United States Agency for International Development, the Notre Dame-Universidad de Guadalajara TIES project is co-directed by de Leon-Arias, Kellogg Faculty Fellow JUAN RIVERA, and Kellogg Associate Director SHARON SCHIERLING.

CHALLENGES

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In tracing the work of the Maryknoll sisters in Latin America, Fitzpatrick Behrens looks at one of the critical ways the Church expressed liberation theology and its long-term implications.

She studied the diaries of Maryknoll sisters who were invited to Guatemala to open a school for the children of the elite in 1958. The school, Colegio Monte María, educated a generation of girls and instilled in them a social and political awareness that can still be felt today.

One of the most prominent graduates was HELEN MACK CHANG, a Guatemalan activist who has worked to break the impunity enjoyed by the country's military and to bring justice for her slain sister. Monte María graduates also include Guatemala's first lady and journalists Rita Roesch and Tina Fernandez, who have been outspoken supporters of human rights, social justice, and women's rights.

"These women attribute their social concern and engagement to their education at Colegio Monte María."

For many of the sisters, opening a school for the elite was an assignment far from what they had imagined and it didn't take long for the Colegio to be dubbed "the Maryknoll Hilton" for its plush facilities.

"The missionaries were assigned not to save the poor as they had anticipated, but to save the rich from having to ship their little girls off to the United States to learn English and to protect them from 'communist' influence," writes Fitzpatrick Behrens in the magazine *Americas*.

Three of the sisters set out to assess the needs of the indigenous communities in Jacaltenango, a remote community in the Department of Huehuetenango. They channeled their privileged students into teacher-training programs in Huehuetenango, started a Junior Red Cross, and had the students volunteer in hospitals.

By 1967, relations between Guatemala's ruling elite and the Maryknoll sisters was growing tense. Several priests and sisters were linked to leftist guerrillas, and subsequently expelled from the country. While the school remained open, the residue of its association with left-wing causes continues to earn it the reputation of being "subversive," Fitzpatrick Behrens writes.

As Levine, among others, has noted, much of the inspiration of liberation theology now finds itself expressed through myriad nongovernmental organizations and indigenous rights groups, and for the most part they are no longer associated with the Church.

"In many respects, what we have is the Church and its activists transformed into civil society organizations that are carrying out much

of the work once done by the Church," said Fitzpatrick Behrens.

Gustavo Gutiérrez: 'New Expressions'

In reflecting on the contribution of liberation theology in the Church and its prognosis in this pluralistic environment, Faculty Fellow GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ, one of the seminal thinkers on liberation theology and the author of *A Theology of Liberation*, gave the following assessment in an interview with the magazine *America*.

"Certainly, it is true that many important events have taken place over the past decades and that the political climate is very different from that of the '60s and '70s. But the situation of the poor has not changed fundamentally. As long as there is a group of Christians trying to be faithful in these circumstances, a group trying to follow Christ among the poor, we will find something like liberation theology," said Gutiérrez.

"Even though it is common to refer to liberation theology in the singular, we are witnessing several new expressions of this theology in different contexts and continents—North America, Central and South America, Africa, and Asia. Each of these theologies has a particular point of view, but they also have much in common, particularly a concern for the poor and excluded."