

## Beyond Charity

All of us have had the experience of a person unknown to us begging us for a handout. Regardless of our philosophies or practice in such situation, the encounter is almost always an uncomfortable one. We don't know the person, and though it is generally obvious that the person has need, we don't trust that they'll use our donation to them in the manner they have claimed. It's hard to trust someone we don't know. If we give them money, we are burdened with the thought that we've been the victim of a scam. If we don't give them the money, we feel the burden of residual guilt. All of this because neither we, nor they, have the time or the inclination to invest in a relationship that would answer our questions on trust. At another time in my life, I was a priest. I had a lot of people whom I didn't know ask me for money, an occupational hazard. But at times, I also had the opportunity to give them time. They didn't expect this, and it often didn't work to their advantage. One man once knocked at my door and asked for bus fare to a distant state to attend his mother's funeral. What he didn't know was that I knew his mother was very much alive and lived a few blocks away. But I drove him to the bus station, bought him a ticket, sat him on the bus, and watched as the bus and he left the station. I'm certain he more than cursed my generosity. But on other occasions, I have sat down to meals with those looking for a handout who turned out to have very interesting lives. Some of these encounters have been life changing for me as well as for them.



The point is that helping someone is not something that can ever be reduced to a simple exchange of a quantity of money. Helping someone, anyone, involves investment, trust, and ultimately a relationship. That trust and investment, and perhaps the relationship that they generate, is what helps someone, usually the giver as well as the recipient. The material value of the gift is first the expression of trust and investment, and second the means by which help is accomplished. This is what happens beyond charity. This is the philosophy Shoulder to Shoulder embraces as it seeks to provide humanitarian and developmental aid. This is to honor and respect the dignity of the shared human journey.



I've taken some gentle ribbing for what I wrote at the bottom of our Newsletter. In very small print it reads, "It's not your money we are looking for. We want your heart." In fact, we do depend on your generous gift of US currency. But when you give it, we consider it a trust. You believe in our mission, or the particular program for which you have designated your gift. This means that we should honor and respect that gift as an expression of your heart. You may or may not wish to be recognized for your gift. We always try to express our gratitude. In fact, the legacy of your gift finds expression in how it creates avenues of development shoulder to shoulder among the people of the Frontera. We hope that you find trust in this organization that we are committed to honoring the integrity of your gift.



There are so many ways to give “beyond” charity. We welcome your involvement and your investment. We encourage you to build a relationship with us. You have shouldered this mission and are an integral part of it. Presently we are observing our annual **Virtual Fiesta**. We invite you to return to the newsletter, find the link, and join the party.