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Class Year: 2007

100 Projects of Peace Project Proposal – ‘Hope - Water Project’

Mberengwa is a rural community located in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. It is specifically located on the border between Midlands and Matabeleland Provinces, the traditional divide for the largest two ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, the Shona and Ndebele people. Having grown up there I can attest to the immense difficulties our community faced due to recurring droughts and famine there were always shortages in water and food. Drawn along ethnic lines, the region has been marred by great conflicts, all in the interest of controlling the scarce resources needed for survival, chief amongst them drinking water. Memories still are fresh in my mind, walking through the rugged terrain for miles at a time in the hot scorching sun accompanying my mother to the nearest open well to fetch water for the family.

In 1992, the tension and year-long conflicts culminated into the tragic poisoning of an open well resulting in the death of more than ten people and leaving many more seriously ill. The situation has gradually deteriorated more and more over the years and each year we have witnessed more fights, sabotage, and arson all this without an end in sight. I have a dream, and that dream is to bring peace to the community in which I was raised, whether my dream is a flirtation with an illusion or a goal worth fighting for, I have decided to concentrate my energy and education to make it a reality.

The 100 projects of peace present to me an opportunity of a lifetime. My project idea is to engage the community in a ‘Hope - Water Project’; this will entail the sinking of at least two boreholes in areas determined to hold water which will serve the community with clean and safe water. My idea is to have the community engaged in a project that is of chief importance. This will ensure dialogue and cooperation, and for the first time in my life I will see a community divided for so long come together for common good.

Water is life and the project will mean the people of the community will no longer die from ingesting the parasites and bacteria that exist in dirty water. Additionally, when

water is locally available, it will profoundly change how women and children spend their days. Children, for example, would then be able to attend school instead of spending hours a day fetching water. Beyond the issues of health, poor access to safe drinking water also causes overall development to stagnate, and that is a reason for unrest in settlements. In particular, water issues severely affect the lives of women as traditionally female family members are exclusively responsible for water collection.

If awarded the grant my plan of execution is as follows. Having spent most of my life in the community, I should not experience any difficulty in getting around; I am familiar with the port of authority and acceptable standards and practice of the community. I intend to make a formal presentation of the project to responsible authorities and I have no doubt of their support, as they have been looking for such an opportunity for quite some time. From here I'll proceed to propose the formation of a planning committee, comprised of myself and other community members. The project is all about people working together, and getting together. Amongst the committees responsibilities will be to organize a ground breaking ceremony as well as a concluding event for the handover of the boreholes to the community. Other responsibilities will include coordinating and signing up volunteers to help with labor when it comes to the actual labor. I intend to engage the services of a professional contractor for surveying and drilling to ensure durability and professionalism, because I want the boreholes to stand ten years from now as a symbol of change, peace and cooperation, and to be the grounds of the first steps taken by the community to achieve them.

In my heart, as a person from Zimbabwe a country characterized by poverty and conflict of many years, my quest for liberty, peace, improved access to effective education, health and entrepreneurship have lit a fire of sacred hope and belief that progressive change is coming. This project will give people hope and enable them to know within themselves that irregardless of the adversities of the past – there is a future to consider not only for ourselves and but also those who shall come after us.

To me the world is one massive coherent ball, but made up of tiny segments that seem incomprehensible to us. Life is like a newspaper with no headlines; you cannot tell which paragraphs go with which events. Propitiously, the pieces all come together when harmony and peace exist.