



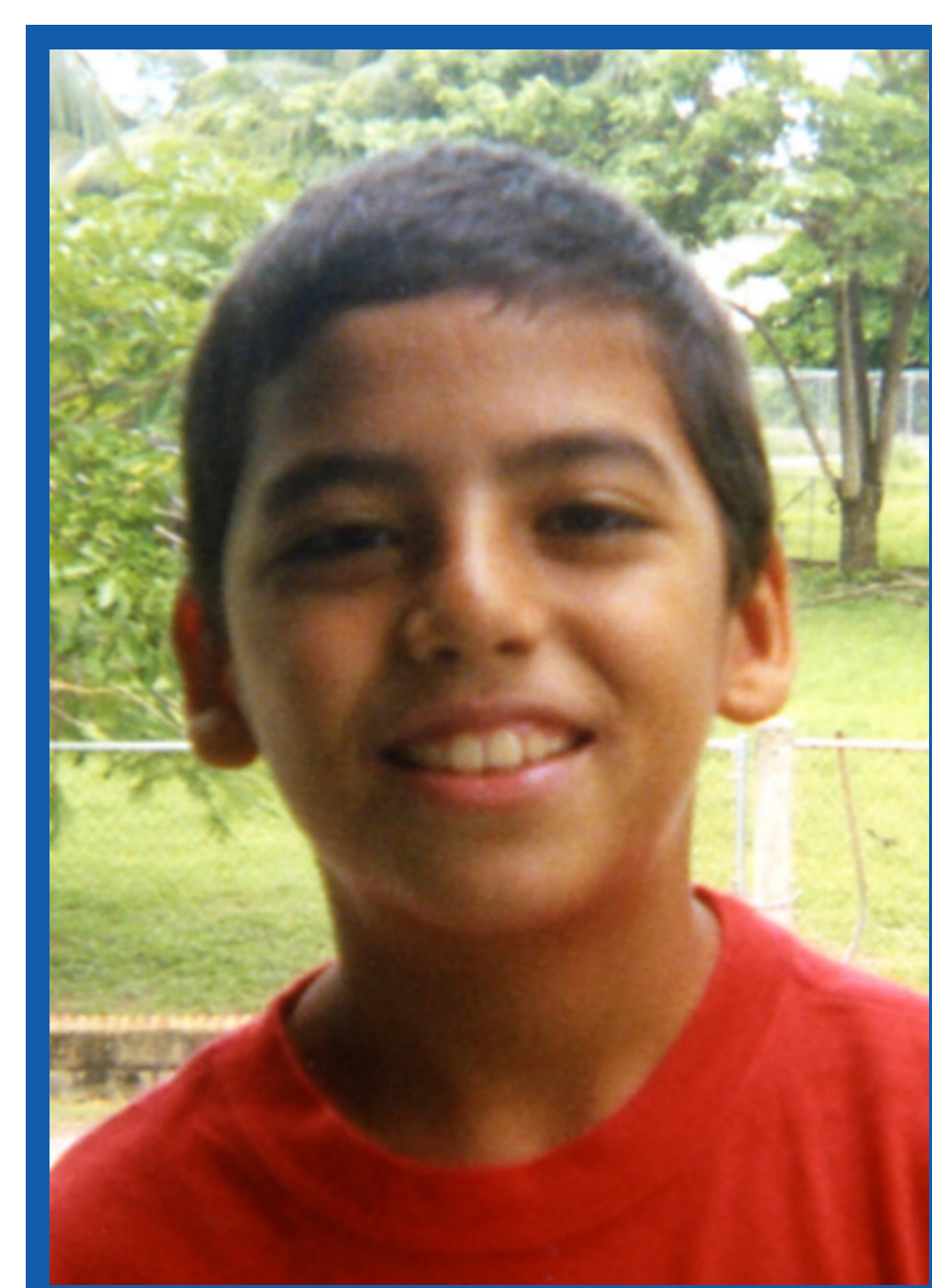
Belize

Alexander Fonseca

"Imagine you are the Minister of Tourism for your island. What would you do, and what projects could you create, to help bring locals and tourists closer together?"

Belize has a beautiful, unspoilt environment, magnificent Mayan ruins, world-class diving and beaches, and the friendliest people in the world. I want to share this with the world. As Minister of Tourism it is my job to make Belize attractive for tourists but at the same time make it worthwhile for our local citizens who call Belize home. The best way to do this is to create projects and opportunities that bring tourists and locals closer together. This would be a positive thing for everyone involved and tourists would be able to enjoy a richer Belizean experience.

The best way to experience a country is to immerse yourself into the culture and the best way to do this is to spend quality time with the local people who live there. For this reason, I would promote the idea of being a Belizean for a day. Tourists would get the chance to experience what it is like to be Belizean. Those who choose to do this would be served a true Belizean breakfast of fried beans and Johnny cakes and then taken for the day to experience fishing trips where they would catch and cook their catch of the day or they may choose to spend time inland where they would experience a local market or maybe visit a Mayan ruin. This would all be accompanied by local music and authentic local meals of rice and beans and stewed chicken or fried fish. They would also be treated to local desserts such as bread pudding or coconut pie. This would give locals a chance to mix with the tourists and teach them some history while giving them an experience they would never forget.



For those tourists who have a planned program and have less time to spare, there would be the option of becoming an honorary Belizean. These tourists would be required to fulfill the title of "Honorary Belizean" by learning and correctly reciting three Creole phrases, dancing the Punta (our local dance) for five minutes, and peeling a coconut to drink the coconut water inside. The tourists would then be awarded souvenirs hand-crafted by locals. Once again, this would involve the locals and give the tourists some sense of accomplishment.

Another kind of project would provide sections of the downtown area to the various ethnic groups of our country to sell its own food, play its own music, and display its crafts. They could recreate their local communities to give the tourists a chance to see them in action without having to visit the whole country. Both tourists and locals would be able to enjoy this experience.

Belize has a lot to offer tourists but it has to include the local citizens since they are the ones who have stories to tell and skills to show off. Tourism works best when both tourists and Belizeans participate and benefit.

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