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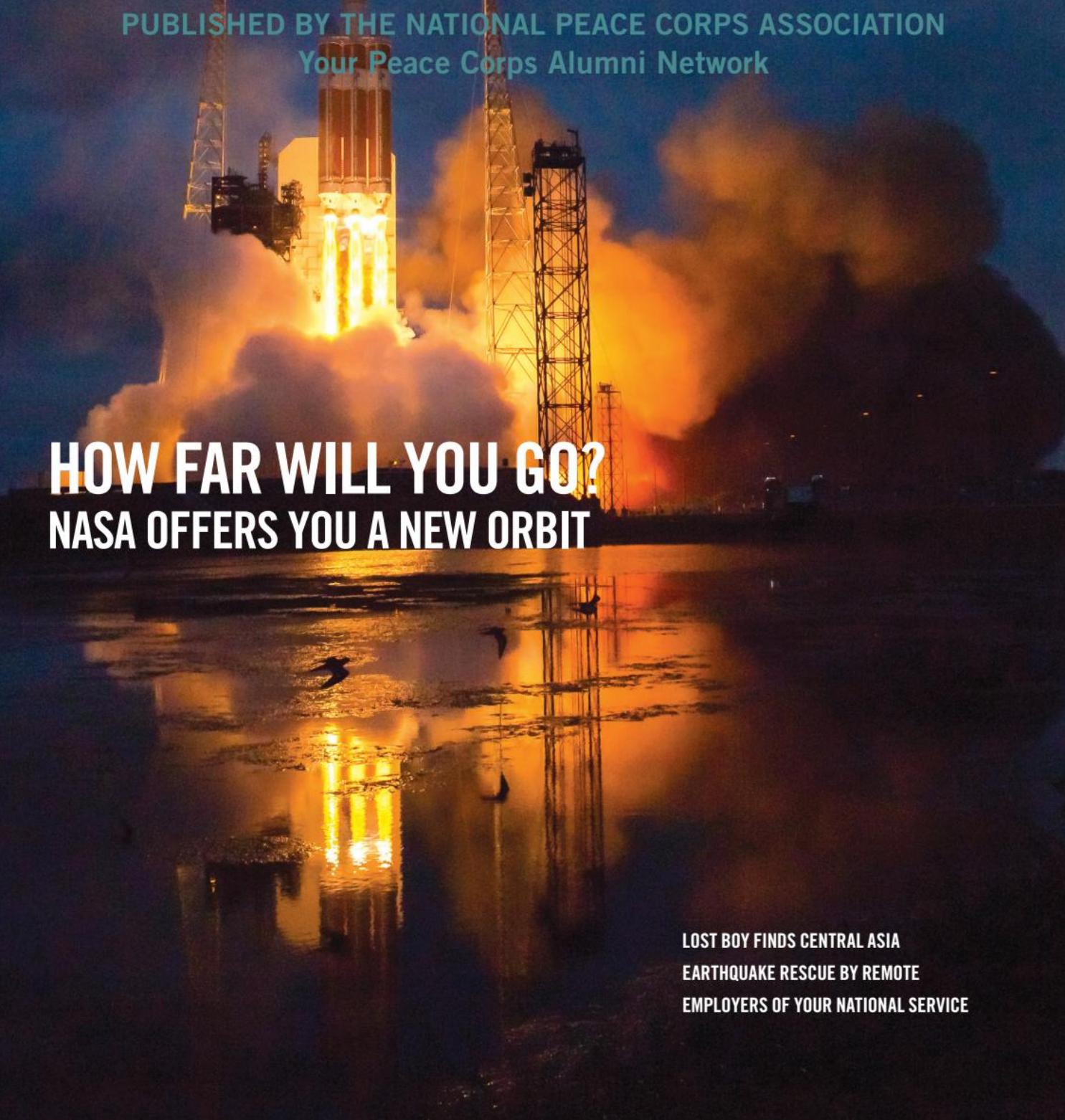
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# WorldView

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION  
Your Peace Corps Alumni Network

A large photograph of a rocket launching at night, with bright orange and yellow flames and smoke billowing from its base. The launch pad structure is visible to the left, and a tall metal lattice tower stands to the right. The scene is reflected in a body of water in the foreground, creating a symmetrical image with birds flying over the water.

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# WorldView

A magazine of news and comment about the Peace Corps world

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION  
Your Peace Corps Alumni Network



DAVID ALVARADO, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Former commander of U.S. and international forces Stan McChrystal now champions national service in the United States.

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**ON THE COVER** The Orion spacecraft lifts off at Florida's Cape Canaveral space launch complex 37 on December 5, 2014 on top of United Launch Alliance Delta IV Heavy rocket. CREDIT: NASA

# WorldView

National  
Peace Corps  
Association

A magazine of news and comment about the Peace Corps world

Winter 2015

Volume 28, Number 4

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## GRATITUDE

This season, we all have much for which to be thankful

By Glenn Blumhorst

**T**his holiday season I'm thankful for the United States Peace Corps. I'm thankful for 54 years, 220,000 Peace Corps Volunteers, and 140 countries served. I'm thankful for Swahili, Bahasa, Creole and the hundreds of languages and dialects that Peace Corps Volunteers learn and employ to bridge cultural divides around the world. I'm thankful for Rep Sam Farr (Colombia) and Anita Datar (Senegal), and countless Returned Volunteers like them who have dedicated their professional and personal lives to making the world more peaceful and just. I'm thankful that Peace Corps' transformative power lasts a lifetime. I'm thankful folks are taking note.

I'm thankful that in announcing his candidacy for president, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said, "I've learned from my travels that a small schoolhouse in a remote region educating a young girl can do more damage to radical Islam than any weapon we possess."

Senator Graham may or may not have been aware of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers David Miller (Brazil) and the late Robert Hull (Afghanistan) when he made those remarks. The Miller Hull Partnership architecture firm partnered with the University of Washington and Sahar Education International to produce the Gohar Khatoon Girls' School in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, which opened this summer and now serves 3,000 girls. Robert previously wrote about his vision for the school in these pages. ("Full Circle: Lessons from

Afghanistan," WorldView Vol. 24 No. 3, Fall 2011)

I'm thankful for the Peace Corps Nigeria Alumni Foundation, which has donated \$3,000 to pay teachers at a school created by a group of refugees displaced by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria.

And I'm thankful for the Malaysian government's recently announced plans to launch MYCorps, an international volunteer program modeled after Peace Corps, which served Malaysia with over 4,000 Volunteers from 1962 to 1983. At MYCorps' kickoff celebration, Malaysian Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said, "If you want to change the world, do it in a positive manner. Volunteer and help change the lives of the underprivileged...Do not join the IS [ISIS]. Help build facilities and infrastructures, not destroying buildings or killing people...We want to make MYCorps become a programme that is as good as Peace Corps, which is internationally-renowned. People who have received assistance from Peace Corps are left with fond memories, and we hope through MYCorps, we can leave lasting memories of Malaysia to the people we help."

These are all examples of the not always quantifiable, not always predictable and yet enormous return on investment that America and the world receive when a Peace Corps Volunteer is sent out into the world. I am confident in saying that our community has had a positive impact far beyond what our modest numbers would predict. As my friend and Volunteer, Peace Corps

Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet has said so eloquently:

"Sometimes it may feel that despite our very best efforts, for example speaking up against ignorance or bigotry, when we lead a campaign for a good cause or raise awareness about a global issue it is just a drop in the bucket, no bigger than a single raindrop ... but raindrops become rivers, rivers swell into the seas and the rise and the fall of the tides literally transform the landscape."

As America once again finds itself reexamining our means to engage a fragile world, I urge our leaders to reassess the role Peace Corps has played in shaping America's and the world's landscape, to equip Peace Corps with the necessary and *earned* resources to transform more of that landscape, and to give thanks—in stump speeches, on Web sites, and at the dinner table—for the more than 220,000 Americans and their host-country communities who have partnered in peace.

In continued service,

**Glenn Blumhorst**

*President, National Peace Corps Association*

*RPCV Guatemala, 1988-1991*

*You can reach Glenn at president@peacecorpsconnect.org.*

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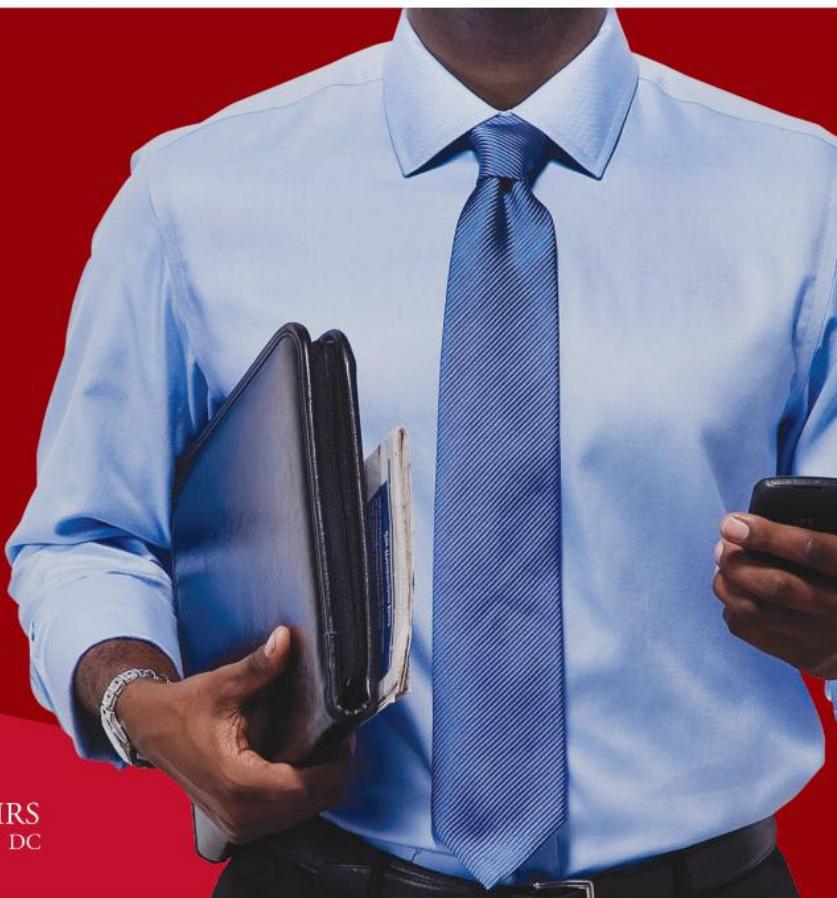
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# WHEN CONGRESS GOES HOME

Our advocates learn Congress pays attention to their own voters

By Jonathan Pearson

**W**hy does the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) advocacy program reach out to you with urgency, asking you to be a proud and loud citizen-lobbyist for increased Peace Corps funding? Why get involved? Why be a financial supporter of advocacy efforts?

Heather Robinson is a Peace Corps Volunteer in Zambia and she gave us the answer on the NPCA's Facebook page. "Thanks to everyone for their important advocacy work and support, all the way from PC Zambia!"

It is for Heather and other Volunteers. From Albania to Zambia, nearly 7,000 Volunteers are serving in the Peace Corps. In the past year, nearly 23,000 individuals applied to serve our country through the Peace Corps.

If we don't step forward on behalf of those who want to serve their country in peace, who will?

And we do. In the last few months our advocates responded with the largest level of activity yet. On more than 60 occasions Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) in small organized groups called for appointments when their members of Congress returned home to their Congressional districts in more than 22 states.

About two hundred of us became district advocates. When we conduct these Congressional home district meetings, they are important. Here's why:

#### The cumulative effect

District advocates are the building blocks to victory: Every meeting, every story shared, every added constituent voice has a cumulative impact with elected leaders. When NPCA staff meet with officials in Washington, it's the work of our citizen advocates that reinforces our efforts. Thank you.

And let's do more of the same. If you want to organize a future district office meeting in your hometown, contact us at [advocacy@peacecorps.org](mailto:advocacy@peacecorps.org).

District advocacy greatly expands our number of citizen lobbyists: While Capitol Hill advocacy is important and exciting, we can accomplish a lot in places like Kansas City, where members of the staff of Senator Jerry Moran (KS) met with Kansas City RPCVs. It was the group's first-ever advocacy effort. Their advocacy coordinator, Jessica Szalawiga, says, "I was thankful to have a great response from our group ... those who attended served during different decades, giving a wide representation of the Peace Corps experience."

#### They get to hear your Peace Corps story

District advocates have a powerful story to tell about the under-appreciated

domestic dividend they provide to local communities: In upstate New York, members of the Buffalo RPCVs met with district office staff of Congressman Brian Higgins. "We explained that in Buffalo, many of us come home and work as teachers," said group Chairman Andy Smith. "We shared how we worked with the refugee organization Vive, Inc. ...we were thanked for helping our growing refugee population."

#### Hitting the committee target

District advocates in key states and congressional districts are increasingly responding to the need for targeted action: When it comes to Peace Corps funding, no meetings are more important than those with members of the Senate/House Appropriations State/Foreign Operations Subcommittee. Seven members of the First Coast RPCVs met



RPCVs and visiting members of the NPCA staff met with the staff of Florida Senator Marco Rubio at his district office to advocate for increased Peace Corps funding. From left to right: Fernando Bolanos (Intern), Virginia Emmons (RPCVs of South Florida president, Niger 2001-2003), Gina Alonso (Constituent Services Representative for Senator Rubio), Alyn Fernandez (Regional Director for Senator Rubio), Helene Dudley (Colombia 1968-70, Albania 1997, and Slovakia 1997-1999), Ana Ciereszko (St. Vincent and the Grenadines 1969-1971), Kate Schwanhauser (NPCA Membership & Development Assistant), J.M. Ascienzo (NPCA Fellow, Thailand 2012-2015).

with Jacksonville area Congressman Ander Crenshaw. We also appeared before other committee members: South Florida RPCVs held two meetings with staff of Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, and other RPCV groups met with staff of senators Mark Kirk (IL), Roy Blunt (MO) and Jeanne Shaheen (NH).

#### **Meeting those lawmakers**

Elected officials home from Washington, D.C. are often more relaxed and take more time for their constituents. Washington meetings with lawmakers can sometimes be challenging, with committee hearings, party meetings and floor votes happening. More than 20 percent of our district meetings were with the lawmaker—not his or her staff—and some of those meetings lasted as long as an hour.

In the San Francisco Bay area, Northern California Peace Corps Association advocates met with Congresswoman Anna Eshoo. "It was a pretty emotional meeting for her and Peace Corps runs very deep in her heart," said Tara Trepanier, a member of our national public policy committee and a newcomer to our California group. "She has a son who was in the Peace Corps."

#### **Meetings last longer**

District advocates play a critically important role in introducing the Peace Corps to new members of Congress: Mississippi Congressman Trent Kelly met with local RPCVs just weeks after assuming his seat in a special election. Advocacy coordinator Carley Lovorn described it as a good relationship-building session. In Maine, advocacy coordinator Richard MacIntyre said staff of freshman Congressman Bruce Poliquin met for more than an hour and were fully engaged.

#### **Deeper exploration of issues**

When Congressman Paul Tonko met members of the Northeast New York RPCVs, group vice president Sarah Janeski thought they would only get 15 minutes. Then the Congressman heard



RPCVs met with California Representative Anna Eshoo in September to discuss Peace Corps funding. From left to right: Karen Keefer (Nigeria and Liberia 1966–1968), Tara Trepanier Gill (Macedonia 2006–2009), Kandis Scott (Romania 1994–1996), Representative Anna Eshoo and mother of RPCV Paul Eshoo (Nepal 1997–1999), Meredith Miller Vostrejs (Eastern Caribbean 1995–97), Ed Hannibal (Azerbaijan 2010–2011), Roy Kornbluh (Ecuador 1991–1994).

that two of the advocates served in Iran and Afghanistan, "He had so many questions to ask about what it was like when they were there."

Dave and Sue Castle, the parents of Nick Castle who died during his service in China, participated in several of the northern California district office meetings. For them, advocacy includes deeper exploration of health and safety issues.

Sue Castle supports Peace Corps but is

also interested in improving it. "My take is a little different," she says. "I ask for increased Peace Corps funding but not for more Volunteers. I want to see health and safety improved for all current Volunteers and RPCVs. I want to see accountability."

**Jonathan Pearson** is advocacy coordinator for the NPCA and served in Micronesia from 1987 to 1989.



New Mexico RPCVs met with staff at the district offices of New Mexico Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham.

# WE'RE IN HAVANA AGAIN

The NPCA visits Old Havana, Che's grave and Hemingway's farm

By John Coyne

I went to Cuba with the National Peace Corps Association's Next Step Travel Program in October on a trip arranged by Global Exchange, a San Francisco-based travel group that is one of only 12 in the United States currently permitted to sponsor tours to the island. There were just 25 of us. Eighteen were Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs): the NPCA president, Glenn Blumhorst, myself and another former headquarters staff member and more than a dozen others who had served in Nepal, Samoa and Ethiopia. They have tentative plans for another Cuba trip in June 2016, so we were kind of an experiment.

Let me say first that traveling with other RPCVs (if you have to go in a group) is the only way to visit a foreign country, especially a place like Cuba which is in

many, many ways, a Third World country. RPCVs know how to behave and respond to difficult situations; they know how to take care of themselves and take care of others. All in all, we had a great time in a country that is not yet ready for prime time.

Having been Peace Corps Volunteers, we knew how to be flexible which was a good skill to possess: Our departure from Miami to Cuba was delayed five hours. We arrived, not in Havana, but Santa Clara, the capital of a province in central Cuba. We drove several hours to Trinidad, to the province of Sancti Spiritus—a UNESCO World Heritage site—traveling overland on a China-built and very comfortable tour bus.

#### **Heritage, green hills and no traffic**

What is immediately obvious is that

central Cuba—at least at the end of its summer rainy season—is an island lush and green with rolling hills and valleys, small towns, few cars, fewer trucks, and one major and mostly two-lane highway. We drove in the dark to our first stop, the Hotel Finca Ma Dolores, just outside the city of Trinidad. It's a hotel of small wooden bungalow apartments spread generously over several acres of rolling lawns.

Together with the nearby Valle de los Ingenios, Trinidad is one of UNESCO's World Heritage sites. It is a cobbled stone town, a fairly well-preserved Spanish colonial settlement of around 75,000. The center of town is the Plaza Mayor, an open-air museum of Spanish Colonial architecture. And dominating the square, those cobblestone streets, and the town itself, is the brightly painted Santísima

JOHN COYNE



Trinidad Cathedral and Convento de San Francisco.

Morning, noon, and night ... there is music to escort you to a nearby restaurant. And wherever you go in Cuba, when you reach the top, there are always lovely gardens in the square, like the Plaza Mayor, built in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Trinidad was once home for wealthy landowners who made their fortunes trading sugar and slaves. When slave trading ended in the mid-19th century and the sugar market fell off, Trinidad slipped into neglect only to be rediscovered in the 1950s. The buildings in the city center have red terracotta tiled roofs and are well preserved. Major historical buildings are preserved but beyond the view of tourists, most of Trinidad is still crumbling.

#### **Where Che Guevara is buried**

On Sunday morning we drove for two hours to the Che Guevara Mausoleum and Monument in Santa Clara. Here are the remains of Che and 29 others, including one woman, who were killed in 1967 during Guevara's attempt to spur an armed uprising in Bolivia. There is also



a bronze 22-foot statue of Che in this monument complex.

Che Guevara was born in Argentina, his remains were discovered in Bolivia, exhumed, and returned to Cuba, where he was buried with full military honors

in 1997. His eternal flame was lit by Fidel Castro.

But Fidel takes second place to this

**Continued on Page 34**

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# GROUP NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

A look at what NPCA affiliate groups are up to

By Jonathan Pearson



## MASSACHUSETTS

### Boston Area Returned Peace Corps

**Volunteers** like to regularly get their hands dirty. In August, several members weeded rows of beans and picked squash and zucchini and learned some sustainable agricultural practices at Stearns Farm, a community-supported agriculture farm in Framingham. The next month more joined in to prune and weed flower beds at the Emerald Necklace Conservancy's Kelleher Rose Garden. Despite the New England chill, a couple of months later they conducted trail maintenance at the Blue Hills Reservation state park in the suburbs of South Boston.

## ALBANIA

**Friends of Albania** has raised funds for five Peace Corps Volunteer projects in Albania that provide prenatal care services, diabetes screening and education, primary education beautification, the integration of Roma and Egyptian communities, and raising awareness and screening for the blood disorder, thalassemia, on the Albanian coast.

## FLORIDA

The New World Symphony brought more than 340 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers together for an October 2 event on Miami Beach hosted by the **Peace Corps Volunteers of South Florida**, the Knight Foundation and Educate Tomorrow. TED-style talks were presented by Congressman Joe Kennedy, and the director of Best Buddies, Teddy Shriver. The president of the

group and producer of the event, Virginia Emmons McNaught, said they wanted to "shine a bright spotlight on the work and stories of so many great citizens who began their service in the Peace Corps."

## ILLINOIS

In spite of a disappointing ending for the Chicago Cubs, the Culture Shocks—local RPCVs under manager Brian DeFilippo—finished a season of 12-inch softball with a record of 4 wins and 4 losses and got to the championship playoffs. The Culture



Shocks regularly field 15 to 18 players and in the past 26 years have signed up more than 100 RPCVs to play during the summer season on the fields at the Chicago lakefront. The games give players a chance to tell their Peace Corps stories to the competition and raise funds for the **Chicago Area Peace Corps Association**.

## IRAN

Members of the **Iran Peace Corps Association** wrote opinion pieces for newspapers, lobbied members of Congress and drafted a resolution supporting the Iran Nuclear Agreement. The group's board issued a resolution stating that they believe "supporting this agreement offers a best chance at averting a significant threat to peace in the Middle East and is in keeping with the values and mission of our Association."

## LOUISIANA

The **Louisiana Peace Corps Association** celebrated its first-ever Louisiana Peace Corps Festival at the Rusty Nail bar in

New Orleans warehouse district by sharing Peace Corps stories with other customers and raising funds for their small grants fund. The bar supported the RPCV group by contributing a percentage of the night's sales to their grants program.

#### PAKISTAN

In light of the tragic events in Paris, the **Friends of Pakistan USA** affiliate feels even more committed to its work of supporting girls' education globally. So the group is proud to announce that six young women have been awarded two-year scholarships which will allow them to complete a two-year university preparation program. The \$10,000 which has been contributed will allow the groups to provide scholarships to six groups of young women through 2018. All students are enrolled at Government Girls Degree College in Rerra, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan.

#### NATIONWIDE

President Barack Obama has received a letter signed by 101 affiliate groups of the National Peace Corps Association urging him to take the lead on funding for the Peace Corps in the next Congressional budget request. The letter is an annual practice, but in this 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Peace Corps it will be the Presidents last chance to increase Peace Corps funding before he leaves the White House. The letter offered three good reasons to ask for higher funding: the growth of host-country requests for Volunteers; the 20-year high in applications by Americans to serve in the Peace Corps; and the outstanding contributions being made here at home and around the world by the greater community of returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

*Get connected and learn more about these and other achievements of NPCA's 149 member groups by visiting <http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/resources/member-groups/>.*

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## PEACE CORPS WEEK

**Highlighting Happiness:  
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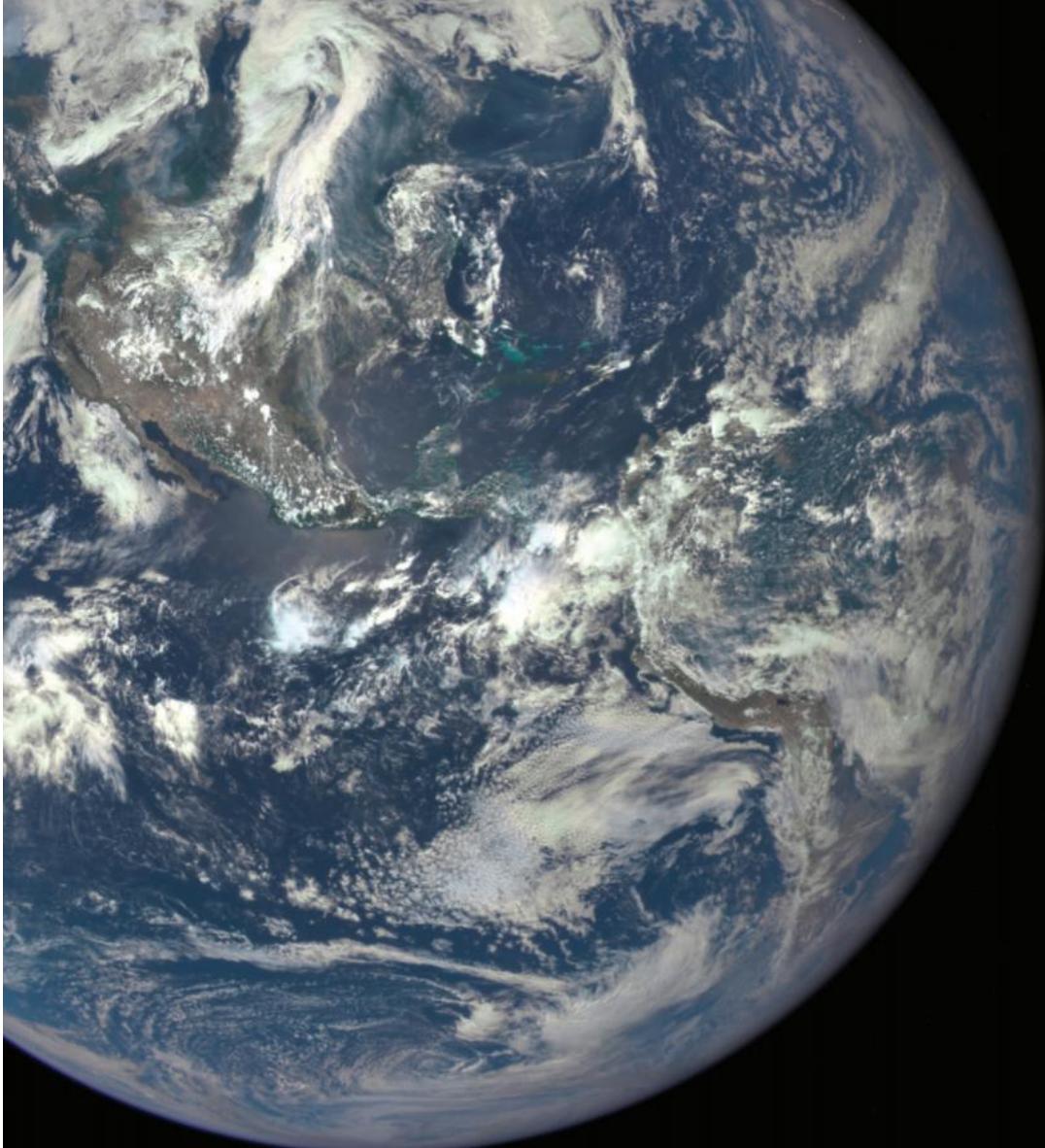
February 28 to March 5

Start to plan your own Third Goal activities!

This year, Peace Corps has a number of exciting initiatives, including a special challenge for RPCVs to bring the world home through creative group events.

Check out [www.peacecorps.gov/pcw](http://www.peacecorps.gov/pcw) for more details





From a million miles away, the Deep Space Climate Observatory satellite a NASA camera on July 6 captured the first view of the entire sunlit side of Earth showing North and South America. The central turquoise areas are shallow seas around the Caribbean islands. This Earth image shows the effects of sunlight scattered by air molecules, giving the image a characteristic bluish tint. Photo courtesy of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

# TAKE A STEP BACK

A four-time astronaut may have a job for you

By Charles Bolden

**P**resident Obama has said, "Citizens who perform national service are special. You want them on your team." At NASA we agree wholeheartedly.

That's why we've signed up to be an "Employer of National Service." If you're

a Peace Corps Volunteer that means you are eligible to apply for jobs at NASA with what in the human capital world is known as "non-competitive status for employment in the Federal Government." In other words, we move your resume to the top of the pile.

Having been blessed to see our world from space as a Space Shuttle Astronaut

on four shuttle missions, I can attest that when you look back at the beautiful blue marble of Earth, you don't see borders or conflict; you just see one incredibly beautiful, whole, mesmerizing planet.

If you look really closely you can also see something else: A sign that says, "help wanted" (ok, not literally). That's where you come in.

You presumably joined the Peace Corps because you wanted to make a difference for humankind. At NASA that's inherent in our mission. In fact, it's literally written into our vision statement: "to reach for new heights and reveal the unknown...for the benefit of humankind."

As former Peace Corps Volunteer and NASA astronaut Joe Acaba puts it: "If you want to impact the planet we inhabit, what better organizations for which to work than the Peace Corps and NASA?"

I hope you will find that NASA is one of the best places in the world to work on changing it for the better while also expanding humanity's reach to places that are also "out-of-this-world"! At the very least, we've been named "the Best Place to Work" in the Federal Government for four years in a row—and counting.

#### **It's not just about distant stars**

When you think of NASA, you likely think of stars and planets and galaxies far away. What many don't realize is that NASA's work makes a real difference here on Earth, too.

We're on a journey to Mars and this journey has the potential to touch the lives of people throughout our country and throughout our planet—even as we learn more about our universe and our place in it.

As you read this, NASA technologies are saving lives around the world. Technologies developed to help doctors on Earth communicate with astronauts in space are allowing doctors to diagnose medical conditions of populations in hard-to-reach places. Technologies developed for space are being used to purify drinking water on our own planet. NASA technologies are listening for beating hearts in the rubble after natural disasters. They are providing millions of people with flood warnings. They are helping people living with disabilities who rely upon artificial limbs to conduct their day-to-day activities with dignity. They are teaching us about our world's

changing climate. They are keeping food supplies safe and saving the lives of patients awaiting heart transplants. They are revolutionizing the way medical professionals take a patient's temperature and eliminating the risk of cross infections in the process.

Many NASA technologies hold great potential for future service to humanity as well: Expanding Wi-Fi to even the most remote corners of our planet. Using portable hyperbaric chamber technology to help people in more than 30 countries who are afflicted with Buruli ulcers. Expanding access to water purification technologies that could benefit as many as 894 million people worldwide who lack the necessary daily

amount of safe water.

For this reason, it's not surprising that the histories of NASA and the Peace Corps are intertwined.

Our histories are intertwined by people like Mae Jemison—a NASA astronaut and the first African American woman in space, who is also a proud member of the Peace Corps family who served as a doctor and Peace Corps medical officer for Liberia and Sierra Leone.

People like Dolores Beasley, the director of strategic communications and education at NASA's Ames Research Center. She served in the Peace Corps as a Public Officer Volunteer in Gambia from 1983 to 1985 and as a Peace Corps



NASA Administrator Charles Bolden stood at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station after watching the successful splashdown of the Orion spacecraft last year. Courtesy of NASA/Bill Ingalls.



## THE JOBS THEY OFFER

If you are interested in joining the NASA family, here are some of the positions you can apply for as part of the Employers of National Service program:

- HR Specialist
- Program Analyst
- Project Support Specialist
- Workforce Planning Analyst
- Contract Specialist
- Public Affairs Specialist
- Media Relations Specialist
- Community Outreach Specialist
- International Relations Specialist
- Equal Employment Specialist
- Education Specialist
- Financial Analyst
- Budget Analyst
- Procurement Analyst
- Management Analyst
- Grants Management Analyst
- Accountant
- IT Specialist

Learn more at <http://nasapeople.nasa.gov>

NASA flight engineer Joe Acaba adjusts instruments aboard the International Space Station with Japanese astronaut Aki Hoshida (left) and NASA's Sunita Williams (right) who gear up in extravehicular mobility unit spacesuits during August, 2012 duty. Acaba was a Peace Corps teacher in the Dominican Republic from 1994 to 1996. He began his NASA career in 2004, and launched aboard a Soyuz spacecraft in Kazakhstan to conduct a 2009 spacewalk and install solar arrays at the International Space Station.

Response Volunteer in Guyana in 2013 and 2014. Our histories again intertwine.

### Sensitive to the human system

Our histories converge as well in the service of people like Andrew Hunter, NASA's deputy chief financial officer for strategy, budget and performance and a former Peace Corps animal traction Volunteer in Togo.

"The Peace Corps set me on the path to public service and gave me some perspective about what constitutes a 'real' problem in today's world," Andrew has said. "I use the notion of culture every day in my present leadership role—being aware of and sensitive to the human system in which we work at the macro and micro level." Andrew chose to apply for a job at NASA after meeting a fellow Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who had previously interned with the agency.

In his landmark speech that

foreshadowed the creation of the Peace Corps, then presidential candidate John F. Kennedy told a crowd of young Americans in 1960 that the answer to the question of whether a free society can compete in a changing and challenging world depended on their willingness "not merely to serve one year or two years in the service, but on your willingness to contribute part of your life to this country."

Two years later, speaking at another university, JFK challenged NASA to put an astronaut on the moon, explaining that: "Our leadership in science and in industry, our hopes for peace and security, our obligations to ourselves as well as others, all require us to make this effort, to solve these mysteries, to solve them for the good of all men...We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained and new rights to be won and they must be won and used for the progress of all people."

Today, NASA has set sail on an even deeper sea of possibility and progress—a sea on which our astronauts will sail all the way to Mars in the 2030s. We are embarked on a sea—a journey that will allow us to reach new heights in medicine, science, technology, food safety, environmental protection, transportation safety, emergency preparedness, security and our day-to-day quality of life; a journey that will allow us to reach new heights in job creation and economic growth at home; a journey that will empower us to further the causes of peace, friendship and humanitarian cooperation abroad.

The most important asset we need to complete this journey is you.

**Charles Bolden** is the administrator of the National Aeronautic and Space Administration.

# BUILDING A TALENT PIPELINE

Employers of National Service rewards career and civic readiness

By Erica Burman

**“**We've seen again and again how national service helps people—young people gain valuable skills and training, and employers have noticed. So we want to do more to help talented national service members find good jobs after they wrap up their service. And that's the idea behind an initiative we're announcing today called Employers of National Service. If you are an employer ... who wants to hire talented, dedicated, patriotic, skilled, tireless, energetic workers, look to AmeriCorps, look to the Peace Corps.

—President Barack Obama, September 12, 2014 **”**

**F**or the many of members of the Peace Corps community, President's Obama's announcement of a new Employers of National Service (EONS) initiative at a White House ceremony celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peace Corps' sister-organization-in-service, AmeriCorps, was kind of old news. *"Well of course Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) bring back unique skills and talents that make them valuable employees! Of course hiring RPCVs is a great idea."* The president was merely throwing a welcome spotlight on what we have known all along: that, with all modesty aside, RPCVs rock. They are the rarely

discussed domestic dividend of the Peace Corps.

So why now? And what does this initiative mean for the Peace Corps community?

The seeds of this new attention can be traced to the 2012 Aspen Ideas Festival, a thought leader confab at which retired Gen. Stan McChrystal—then the Chairman of the Aspen Institute's Leadership Council—commented that very few Americans were serving in the military (less than one percent) or knew anyone serving in the military, and that overall there was growing disconnection in American society. He mused that having young people from all walks of life able to say "Hey, where'd you serve?"

Where'd you serve?" would be "really powerful."

"The payoff is not what they do," he remarked. "It's not whether they go build roads and parks... it's what you put inside of them. Because once you have contributed to something, you have a slightly different view of it."

His words struck a chord and led ultimately to the formation the following year of the Franklin Project Leadership Council. In the summer of 2013 the Franklin Project convened 275 leaders from business, labor, higher education, government, military, faith-based community, philanthropy, and nonprofit organizations for what was called the 21<sup>st</sup> Century National Service Summit

“Coming into my role at Apple, I didn’t have extensive technical experience. Yet, I quickly learned that emotional intelligence (EQ) is even more valuable than any technical skill. Peace Corps service is the best training ground for EQ. The ability to adapt quickly and to pick up cultural nuances is extremely important in today’s interconnected world.”

—Wendy Lee (Cameroon, 2008 to 2010)

to gather perspectives and chart a way forward for the concept of large-scale civilian national service. The following June a three-day follow-up summit was held in Gettysburg, Pa. to move the conversation from “big idea” to achievable goal. Because the National Peace Corps Association has long been committed to advocating for more opportunities for Americans to serve in the Peace Corps, it was invited to send representatives from

the RPCV community. Arianne Burger (Kazakhstan 1999-2001) of Colorado and Stephen Angelsmith (Turkmenistan 2005-2007) from the District of Columbia joined 275 civic leaders, including Meg Garlinghouse (Niger 1989-1992) representing LinkedIn for Good, to hammer out a plan of action. Millions of dollars were committed to the mission that McChrystal put forth at the start of the conference: “... a country where a year

of full-time national service is a cultural expectation, common opportunity, and civic rite of passage for every young American ... changing what it means to be an American....”

Which brings us a back to the White House and President Obama’s announcement. EONS is a partnership of the Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps’ parent agency), Peace Corps, National Peace Corps Association, AmeriCorpsAlums and the Franklin Project that seeks to formalize and scale up what has long been a quiet win-win relationship between civilian national service alumni and in-the-know employers; to build a deliberate, credentialed, mutually beneficial “talent pipeline” from service to employment.

Peace Corps Director Hessler-Radler described Volunteers in a Sept. 16, 2015 Huffington Post article as, “Mission oriented. Globally minded. Proven leadership experience in complex, unpredictable environments. Exceptional intercultural skills. Adept at managing limited resources to ensure long-term impact. Flexible. Collaborative. Passionate.” In an increasingly competitive, diverse and complex world, these are exactly the types of employees employers are looking to hire. Conversely, the ability to point to robust recruitment, hiring, and advancement opportunities for alumni of AmeriCorps and Peace Corps makes those national service options more prestigious and more

## HOW EONS WORKS

Some employers have gone even further. On January 15, 2015, Mayor Michael A. Nutter announced that as a demonstration of its commitment to EONS, the City of Philadelphia would award up to five points on its civil service examinations to national service alumni applicants, a national first. EONS partners hope that other organizations will make similar commitments.

In the meantime more work remains. In large organizations there can sometimes be a disconnect between executive leadership commitment and implementation by human resource personnel and recruiters; better outreach to the “deciders” via professional associations is planned. All the partners are striving to find ways to better communicate the value of the national service experience and spread the word about EONS to potential employers. For all, the goal is more opportunities for Peace Corps and AmeriCorps alumni.

Boost your workplace’s success and value by hiring national service alumni! Companies and groups that join EONS receive a number of benefits, like outreach to a large, diverse, and talented applicant pool, having their job opportunities featured on promotional channels, invitations to special events, and public recognition.

To become an Employer of National Service, please submit your organization’s information at [nationalservice.gov/employers-member-information](http://nationalservice.gov/employers-member-information). For additional information, please contact [employers@cns.gov](mailto:employers@cns.gov) or visit [nationalservice.gov/employers](http://nationalservice.gov/employers). Tell them the NPCA sent you.

**"We are making a strong statement that national service alumni—whether they served in AmeriCorps or the Peace Corps—have the kind of unique and transferable skills that are valuable in the Metro Government workplace."**

—Karl Dean, Mayor of Nashville

attractive to prospective applicants.

Since the initiative was announced, the number of employers that has signed on—in the private, nonprofit and education sectors, as well as state and local governments and federal agencies—has grown steadily and is on track to meet a 2015 year-end goal of 300 employers. When they enroll, enterprises commit to do at least one of two things: to indicate explicitly on relevant job announcements that they are interested in recruiting AmeriCorps members and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (for example, "AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, and other national service alumni are encouraged to apply."), and to provide a way for applicants to identify themselves as national service alumni (for example with

a checkbox on the application form.)

*Serving Volunteers and RPCVs can connect professionally by joining the Peace Corps Network on LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=39717>.*

*Looking for a job? Visit the NPCA jobs board at <http://jobs.peacecorpsconnect.org>*

*and visit the Peace Corps' RPCV Virtual Career Center at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/resources/returned/careercen/>.*

**Erica Burman** (*The Gambia 1987-1989*) is the director of communications for the National Peace Corps Association.



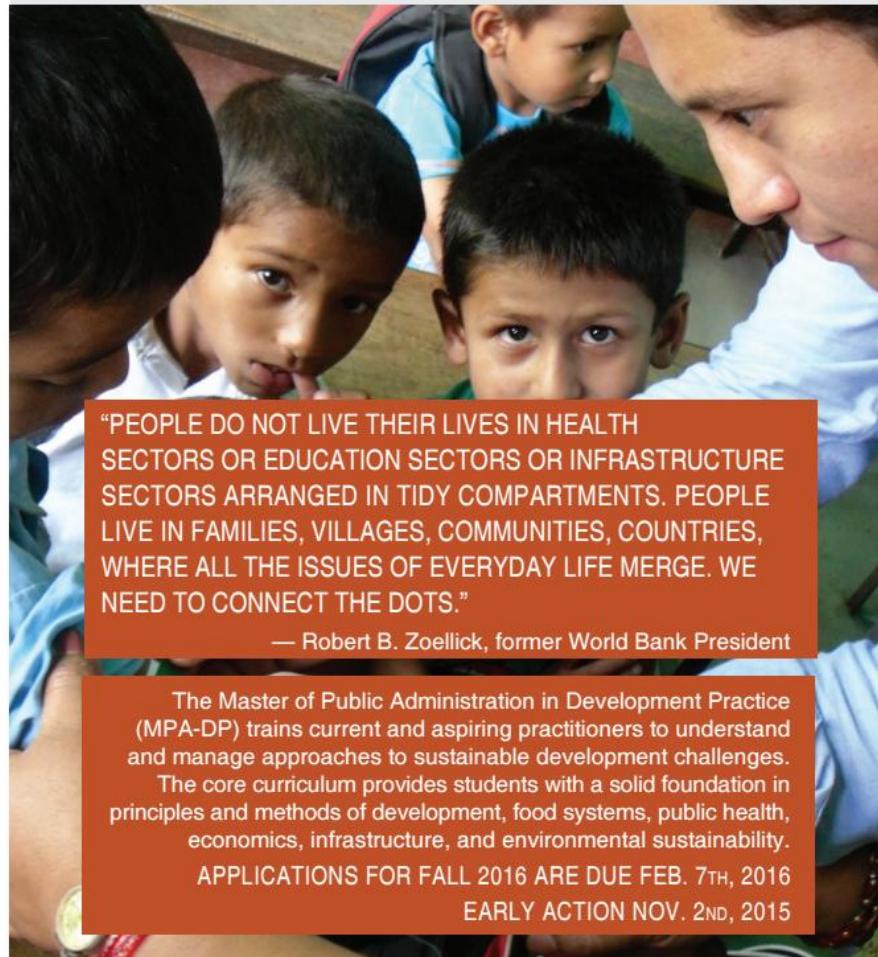
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— Robert B. Zoellick, former World Bank President

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# A RETIRED GENERAL CALLS FOR A NATIONAL SERVICE

The Franklin Project promotes a voluntary culture of national service

By Stan McChrystal

*This article is excerpted from two articles by Stan McChrystal. The first "A Million Young People to Empower America," published by CNN Opinion can be found at: <http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/02/opinions/mcchrystal-national-service/>. The second, "Securing the American Character," published by the Democracy Journal can be found at <http://www.democracyjournal.org/33/securing-the-american-character.php?page=all>.*

Duty. Honor. Country. These words were chiseled in granite above me, printed on the diploma in my hands and engraved on my class ring.

The year was 1976. I had just graduated from West Point. In return for four years of education, I owed the nation at least five years of Army service. I had become a "service member." But like most of my peers, I wasn't really thinking much about service. At age 21, I was focused on the adventure of becoming a good officer and leading soldiers.

After 34 years in the U.S. military, I learned that armies are built soldier-by-soldier, platoon-by-platoon. Like the bricks in a house, the soldiers in each unit contribute to a great military, just as the citizens of each neighborhood help determine whether the nation stands strong. Nothing is more important than developing in our citizens a sense of

responsibility to each other - and to the nation.

Service confers a measure of empathy, patience, and a willingness to sacrifice in those who are fortunate. It can empower those who are less so. Active citizenship, when tied to a common endeavor, instills pride in a nation. Civic participation grants a sense of ownership to citizens.

I believe our country would benefit greatly if we were to unite around a commitment to such service.

#### A call to high school graduates

The Franklin Project is an initiative that I chair at the Aspen Institute. Our goal is to have 1 million young Americans complete a civilian service year by 2023. We envision an American national service that is voluntary, but socially expected.

What would the concept of a service year entail? A young person would perform a year of full-time service between the ages of 18 and 28 and receive a modest stipend.

In a manner similar to participation in existing programs such as the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps, he or she would complete the "service year" at a host institution: a non-profit, university, or other institution, working in an array of fields from education to conservation, and performing tasks like building homes, serving meals to the elderly, and helping veterans transition back to civilian life.

This would not be a big new government program. Rather, the service year would be funded through public-private partnerships enabled by a national-service technology platform that would connect young people who want to serve, organizations that can host them, and funders.

As part of this effort, I've been calling for a few cities across the country to step up and lead by becoming Service Year Cities.

What if, upon graduating from high school, every young person in these cities is given an opportunity to complete a



DAVID ALVARADO, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

The author spent time getting to know some of the local Afghans when he served as commander of the U.S. and international forces.

service year with other young people? Each city could commit to a plan with an initial goal of having at least 25 percent of their graduating students from high schools stay in their communities to serve for a year.

Like many Americans, I believe our country would benefit greatly if we were to unite around a commitment to service. Creating model towns and cities of service across America could provide powerful local examples that capture our collective imagination and create ripple effects for more service opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

#### **What every citizen should do**

This reciprocal notion of citizenship is as old as the concept of self-government. In one State of the Union address, President Barack Obama told members of Congress

and the nation, "That spirit that has always moved this nation forward. It's the spirit of citizenship—the recognition that through hard work and responsibility, we can pursue our individual dreams, but still come together as one American family to make sure the next generation can pursue its dreams as well."

President George W. Bush earlier said, "Americans are generous and strong and decent, not because we believe in ourselves, but because we hold beliefs beyond ourselves. When this spirit of citizenship is missing, no government program can replace it. When this spirit is present, no wrong can stand against it."

Many Americans' sole connection to the country is through paying taxes and voting—not nearly enough to bind

people to their communities. Our politics lurch from one bitter breakdown to the next, consumed with petty partisan controversies.

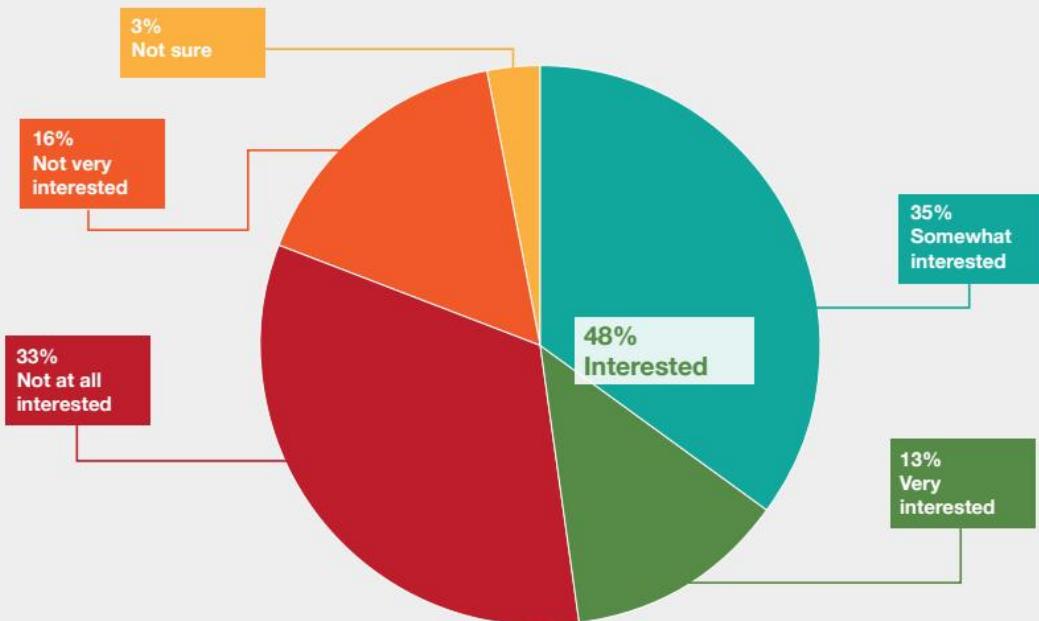
We are losing our concept of citizenship. The sense of responsibility and contribution that John F. Kennedy trumpeted, and the willingness to sacrifice for an idea that Abraham Lincoln immortalized in 272 words at Gettysburg, feel like faint echoes from earlier, nobler times.

Today, the need for such a common experience of citizenship is more poignant than ever. We are drifting apart. Contrary to the illusion of constant connectivity, Americans are isolated—geographically, ethnically, economically, religiously, and culturally. An affluent student from Greenwich, Connecticut will never meet a student from Harlem.

<sup>1</sup> The first portion of this piece is an excerpt from the piece originally written for CNN Opinion and the remainder of this piece is an excerpt from a piece originally for Democracy Journal.

## Perspective of American voters on national service

How interested would you be in participating in a voluntary national service program at some point in the future?



Report from the Franklin Project at the Aspen Institute, June 2013.

### A notion now more achievable

Young people want to serve, institutions of all kinds have the capacity to host them, and the technology exists to connect young people, institutions, and funders.

The demand for service exceeds the supply of service opportunities. AmeriCorps had more than 580,000 applications for just over 80,000 slots in 2011. In the same year, Teach For America had some 48,000 applications for just 5,200 slots. Peace Corps received 23,000 applications in 2015—the highest in two decades—but they can only take about 7,000 in any given year.<sup>2</sup>

A common pathway large enough to accommodate such enthusiasm no longer exists. According to a Pew survey, “relatively few millennials—just 2 percent of males—are military veterans. At a comparable stage of their life cycle, 6

percent of Gen-Xer men, 13 percent of Baby Boomer men and 24 percent of Silent men were veterans.”

It would be easy to look at these numbers and say that young people simply don’t want to join the military, but that’s not the case. The military is smaller than it was, and relatively fewer young people are considered fit for military duty.

Rather than expanding the military simply to provide more service slots, the country should work to create a new civic institution—the service year—that’s reflective of young people’s enthusiasm even as this national service functions to give everyone a stake in the outcome of the country.

To endure in the long run, national service and the service year must be something that young people want to do. Conscription movements fail, and become counterproductive, when they become

something that wealthier young people can avoid.

All young Americans, then, should have the opportunity—and feel the responsibility—to serve their country. What we need is to create a culture of service in America, one in which a year of service is culturally expected, if not quite mandatory by law. And we need a realistic pathway and mechanism for young Americans to be able to serve.

### A year of local service

The Franklin Project is working to connect service-year positions to existing civic institutions like schools, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and businesses.

When there were attempts to institute such a system of national service in the past, the nonprofit industry was not at the scale it is currently. In 1995,

<sup>2</sup> This information was not in the original version of the piece, but has been added based on new data from Peace Corps from 2015.

nonprofits reported \$1.39 trillion in total assets. In 2012, the nonprofit share of GDP was 5.5 percent. By December 2013, that number had risen to \$4.76 trillion, far outpacing inflation.

According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, there are more than 1.4 million tax-exempt organizations in the United States.

While a new system of national service would be expensive, we estimate it would cost \$22.3 billion for one million service-year positions. The return on investment is over three-to-one.

In fact, only a fraction of nonprofit organizations would need to host young people doing a service year, and that \$22.3 billion represents a fraction of the money that exists in the non-profit sector today.

To be sure, some Americans will continue to devote periods of their professional lives to public service, whether in the military, State Department, Peace Corps, AmeriCorps or intelligence community. Some Americans will choose careers as police, firefighters, EMTs, teachers, or some other civic profession.

These institutions should not be expanded simply for the sake of letting everyone serve—this is not federal make-work. The service year is intended for Americans who would otherwise live their entire adult lives as private citizens.

### **Start with school**

We are failing our children—the very Americans for whom we are most responsible. Every year, 25 percent of young Americans don't graduate from high school, making them essentially unemployable in a modern economy. Many of those who do graduate are not, in any real sense, educated.

Nearly seven million 16- to 24-year-olds are out of school and out of work, costing our nation billions of dollars every year in increased social services and lost productivity. More than two-thirds of fourth-graders in the United States do not read proficiently.

A recent study of an AmeriCorps service year program, called Minnesota Reading Corps, found that the “average

kindergartener with an AmeriCorps tutor performed twice as well as students without one,” and that “students with higher risk factors (such as dual-language learners and students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch) who received AmeriCorps tutoring significantly outperformed students who did not.”

Universities will find that service-year alumni are better students. Of the 20 million Americans enrolled in college, a strong majority do not graduate on time: A Harvard study published in 2011 found that just 56 percent of students at four-year colleges graduated within six years.

### **Life on its own terms**

A service year could provide an opportunity for a young person to mature and prepare for college. Such an experience would be more meaningful than a traditional “gap year” of taking a year off to travel.

Furthermore, our understanding of what predicts success in a career has shifted over time, from cognitive measures such as IQ and conscientiousness to non-cognitive measures such as creativity, grit, and persistence.

Creating a cultural expectation that every young person does a year of challenging, meaningful national service—whose goals are big and where success means solving complex, dynamic problems—would encourage more young Americans to have an experience that reinforces and instills values like grit and persistence, the very skills that predict career success and that employers are seeking.

In the 1970s, surveys of Fortune 500 companies demonstrated that employers were looking for skills defined by reading, writing, and arithmetic. But surveys of employers within the last year showed that the top skills they sought were the ability to work in a team; to make decisions and solve problems; to plan, organize, and prioritize work; and to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization—all skills that service years would foster.

In addition, depending on the nature

of the service program, young people can also develop specific hard skills associated with their area of service. For example, with YouthBuild and the Green City Force Corps, members learn construction skills. With City Year and Teach For America, members learn skills needed to work in education. FEMA Corps members learn disaster relief skills.

### **Mending the American society**

We have become a country of people who do not know how to relate to one another. More important than the skills a service year would impart on those serving is the ability of a year of service in the community to mend an increasingly shorn society.

People of different income levels interact with one another less and less and the income gap grows. The middle class shrank dramatically from 65 to 42 percent between 1970 and 2009, while the percentage of families living on the extremes more than doubled, from 15 percent to 33 percent.

Presidents have recently called for active citizenship, but I fear we've devolved to a condition that's heavy on rights and light on responsibilities; as a nation we've allowed our civic muscles to atrophy. Service has become someone else's job—an interruption on an otherwise straight path.

Despite dwindling social trust, there is much to be hopeful about. Young people are, in fact, more likely than their predecessors to try to serve in some way. More than half of millennials reported having volunteered in the last six months, according to one Pew survey. Thirty percent identified doing meaningful work as the single most important factor in a successful career. More than 70 percent identified meaningful work as one of the top three most important factors.

**Stan McChrystal** is the chair of the Franklin Project Leadership Council at the Aspen Institute. He is a retired four-star general and former commander of U.S. and international forces in Afghanistan.

Malawi home in Chakhutupa village.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY JON SOJKOWSKI

## GENIUS LOCI

An RPCV is doggedly determined to preserve vanishing African architectural traditions

By Jon Sojkowski

**A**rchitecture is a unique component of a country's culture just as much as its language, music, art, literature or food. Architecture is also the most visual of those cultural components; the pyramids in Egypt, skyscrapers in New York, a temple in Japan, or a cathedral in England all convey a unique image. This is called "genius loci," the "spirit of a place." Every country has its own genius loci, its own uniqueness. But vernacular architecture—architecture based on local needs, construction materials and reflecting local traditions—in most (if not all) African countries is disappearing, being abandoned for western materials and techniques.

I've decided to take action by crowdsourcing a database of images of African vernacular architecture. The reason is simple; for too long, African vernacular architecture has been a topic that has been both under-documented and, unfortunately, ignored.

Living in a mud hut in a tiny Zambian village while serving as Water and Sanitation and Health Education Volunteer was the beginning of my passion for vernacular architecture. My hut had a

thatch roof and though not large, it was very comfortable. The inside daytime temperatures were cooler than the outside temperatures due to the thermal mass of the walls. (The walls would soak up the heat of the sun making it cooler inside and at night the walls would radiate the heat to the interior, making it warmer than the exterior night temperatures.) The thatch roof also added ventilation, which allowed the home to breathe.

In 1997 I transferred from the village to teach architecture at Copper Belt University. It was there that I discovered that the University had no collection of Zambian vernacular architecture. Determined to document the vernacular architecture that I had grown to love over the previous two years, I obtained a Small Projects Assistance (SPA) grant from Peace Corps Zambia. The grant would pay for petrol, daily stipends when researching, and to purchase film and to have it developed. The university would provide a vehicle to conduct the research, a huge contribution.

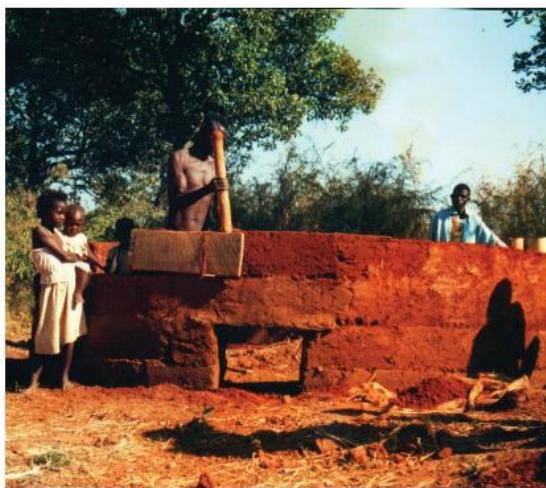
This was in 1997, a time when the Internet was just exploding. I decided that instead of publishing a book, which would

be available to the few and cost money, the research results would be published as a website, free to everyone worldwide who had an Internet connection. Now active for 16 years, having undergone many iterations, the result is a website ([www.zambiaarchitecture.com](http://www.zambiaarchitecture.com)) with hundreds of pictures and sketches as well as three-dimensional models.

Following completion of the Zambia research, I continued to keep up avidly with the topic, but as the years passed I was disappointed that there still were no real contributions by others to the documentation of African vernacular architecture. At the Relevance of Traditional Architecture conference hosted by INTBAU (International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture & Urbanism) in Kano, Nigeria in 2006, I presented on the need for documentation and of a database. People agreed, but whether due to difficulties in obtaining funding or just apathy, little progress was being made.

Determined, in 2013 I decided to go back to Africa to document vernacular architecture, and began by blogging and networking. The point of the blog was to

spotlight different Web pages pertaining to African vernacular architecture, and to demonstrate that what little information was out there was not at all substantial. Meanwhile, using LinkedIn, I connected with over 1,500 people: architects, urban planners, professors, students, artists and many other professions, both in Africa and around the world. The question I asked everyone was always the same: "Do you know of any existing database



Curious children follow the documentation in Fango village as Zambia structure (top) is being constructed with rammed earth, and woman (bottom) plastering a wall in Chisi village in Malawi.

or a collection of pictures about African vernacular architecture?" The answer, in almost every case, was "no." I had hoped to uncover obscure university or architectural society collections but there were none.

Determined to move the project forward, in 2014 I launched an Indiegogo campaign to raise funds to travel to Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho to conduct research. The campaign fell short of its ambitious goal but did raise enough to research Malawi properly. Besides conducting the research, which was definitely important, I also wanted to show that this type of research was not cost prohibitive. For three weeks my Malawian team and I traveled the entire country, stopping at 300 villages and homesteads to interview homeowners and taking over 4,700 images that are now at <http://www.malawiarchitecture.com>.

There are a lot of negative perceptions regarding African vernacular architecture. Whereas Western materials and construction techniques are seen as correct, modern, permanent, and for the affluent, the vernacular is viewed as substandard, outdated, temporary, or for the poor. These views are not only the ones of Western societies, but more importantly the beliefs of many people in Africa as well. In my interviews in Malawi, one man told me that he wanted a metal roof instead of a thatched one. When I asked why, he responded, "because then I will be somebody." People have absorbed these negative perceptions for lack of information that reveals

a different perspective, one that shows vernacular architecture to be beautiful, comfortable and practical.

In an attempt to change these perceptions, I launched the African Vernacular Architecture Database in May 2014 with the belief that even if there is no research being conducted and funding is very difficult to obtain, images and information can still be collected by individuals in-country. In this day and age of technology and communication, taking a picture and emailing it is not a difficult task.

And what better organization to participate than the Peace Corps? The challenging part of the research is to reach structures at the village level. Peace Corps Volunteers live and work in the villages—sometimes quite remote—where documentation is needed, and have strong ties to the host country's culture. Furthermore, they really care about their communities, and by documenting vernacular structures they can directly make a difference.

The African Vernacular Architecture Database is a platform to showcase images. My belief is that when people view these images it leads to awareness, which leads to appreciation—and when value is placed on vernacular structures perhaps these myths will change. The time for documentation is now ... before this part of our shared culture is gone forever.

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**Jon Sojkowski** (Zambia 1995-1998) is a registered architect with a passion for African vernacular architecture. Jon lives in Beaufort, South Carolina and is actively looking for opportunities to conduct more documentation in Africa. In addition to his African Vernacular Architecture Database ([www.africavernaculararchitecture.com](http://www.africavernaculararchitecture.com)), his research can be seen on his websites Zambia Vernacular Architecture ([www.zambiaarchitecture.com](http://zambiaarchitecture.com)), Malawi Vernacular Architecture ([www.malawiarchitecture.com](http://malawiarchitecture.com)), and Swaziland Vernacular Architecture (<http://swazilandarchitecture.com>). He can be contacted at [africanvernaculararchitecture@gmail.com](mailto:africanvernaculararchitecture@gmail.com)

# FRIENDING THROUGH AN EARTHQUAKE

Social media messages save lives, call in helicopters

By Ron Ranson

**I**t started as a laid-back April morning in San Diego. About 6 a.m., I had taken a sip my favorite Himalayan tea and walked down the driveway to retrieve my Sunday New York Times. When I saw the headline, my world turned upside down. Hours before, Nepal had been struck by an earthquake. My legs turned wobbly. I felt punched in the gut. Nepal has been part of the fabric of my life since the 1960s.

It was the beginning of an exhausting and unforgettable experience trying to help the injured, the dying and the homeless in a place where I once lived and worked—and still love. Nine thousand people died and more than 23,000 were injured in the Gorkha earthquake. From the United States, I joined with many others around the world to do all we could to help. What I have drawn from this experience is the certainty that my time as a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) is still a vital part of my life, and that the friendships I developed in Nepal have lasting repercussions I could never have

imagined. After the 2015 earthquake, I found that I could continue being a friend to Nepal without leaving home.

### Tragedy slowly revealed

That fateful April morning, the Internet was just coming alive with a few still photos, short videos and some rough maps showing the epicenter of the long rattling 7.8 earthquake: The Gorkha District. Both the Gorkha District and the town of Gorkha are in the middle of country. The maps showed that Chitwan, in the terai where I had been a school teacher in Peace Corps from 1964 to 1966, was also hard hit.

My heart sank as I thought of the thousands of unreinforced brick buildings that had probably collapsed. I immediately tried to contact former students and teaching colleagues who live in Narayan garh and Bharatpur in the Chitwan District. None of the phone and internet circuits were working and the electrical grid was down. I contacted a few of my Nepali friends living outside

Nepal, hoping to hear that they had made contact with relatives in the country. Most had not. We were all in the dark, sharing fear, worry and helplessness.

I spent a very tense and frustrating Sunday scrambling for any bit of information on TV, radio or social media. Trying to find friends in Nepal seemed to be a dead end.

By evening, a miracle happened: the often-maligned Facebook put its emergency protocol in place and sent me a list of my 89 Nepali Facebook friends with a well thought-out check list enabling me to see if they had checked in on Facebook and were safe; they hadn't checked in yet; someone else had checked in for them and they were safe or there were problems.

I'm choking up even now thinking about the hope and relief this provided. Over the next days friends checked in or were accounted for on the site. To each person on my Facebook list I sent a simple and heart felt message—"thinking of you," which I found out later was very much appreciated.

### A French Connection

It was extraordinary to me that social media connected Nepal's friends around the world, even while Nepal itself had much of its communications shut down. With many cell phone towers hit and no electricity for charging their phones, it was actually easier for Nepalis to communicate with people abroad than locally.

Scanning social media, I noticed a quick post from Dhawa Gyanjen Tsumba, a trekking guide friend who said he'd rescued two French trekkers from a landslide. I'd just seen an urgent request from someone in France looking for her parents who were trekking in Nepal. It was a match and I was able to put her in touch with Dhawa and let her know her parents were safe.

DHAWAGYANEN TSUMBA



Tsum Valley before the Gorkha earthquake that killed more than 9,000 people in Nepal.

NIMA LAMA.



Loading the helicopter for a flight to Tsum Valley at 13,000 feet.

That was a ray of light in a cataclysm of disaster. I still felt helpless. Surely I should be able to do more than send encouraging messages on social media? Should I figure out how to get to Nepal? How could I contribute and help the chaotic disaster relief efforts? Did Nepalis need foreigners to assist them or would we just get in the way? Many Nepalwallas from the Peace Corps days were struggling with the same questions. What was the best way to be helpful and not just satisfy our own need to be doing something?

As news began to trickle in, I found that Chitwan was indeed hit hard, but most buildings had experienced only limited damage due to, "more modern construction techniques and better building codes." What a pleasant surprise! Who knew?

My concerns then shifted to Tsum, a peaceful and remote valley in the northern part of the Gorkha District with several important Buddhist monasteries. The Tsumbas are ethnic Tibetans. No animals are killed in the valley and I've heard first-hand stories of Yetis sighted there. There are no roads.

#### A Tsumba down the street

A Tsumba friend, who lives down the street in San Diego, was the first to tell my wife, Nicola, and me the news from

Tsum Valley. Lotte Lama began receiving phone calls from his sister Karsang Lama, a Buddhist nun in Tsum who had the

community's satellite phone.

The news was not good. She was crying on the phone, pleading for help. There was so much physical destruction and loss of livestock. Precious food stocks, cooking utensils and water containers were all destroyed, and people were hungry.

Almost all the buildings were now twisted piles of wood and broken rock. It was starting to rain and they were cut off from the rest of Nepal. Lotte was shaken, but we no longer felt helpless. We were talking to Nepalis on the ground and knew we had to move quickly to help them.

The next few days were like living in Nepal through every available communication device in the house.

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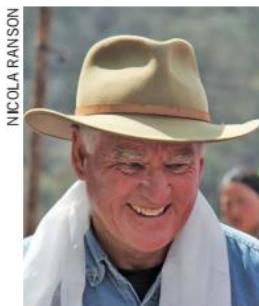
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Suddenly the world had shrunk, and we were being called to Nepal's service.

Back in Nepal, communications systems were being fixed, and cell phones were being passed out to the displaced. Nightly, Lotte received heart-rending calls from his tearful wife, Pema, who, with their two small boys, was living in the mud under a dripping tarp trying to



Ron Ranson

survive. One night, after yet another aftershock, she told her husband that she did not think that they would survive.

I searched the Internet

and found Don Messerschmidt, (Nepal group 2), who helped to create the Gorkha Foundation, which has an office in Virginia. They were already in Nepal rescuing the injured and locating supplies needed for such a massive relief effort. That job was made more difficult because the Nepali government was stopping supplies from India and other countries, seizing funds coming into the country, and attempting to stop the flights of all private helicopters.

Lotte contacted Nima Lama whose Tsum Valley Welfare Committee agreed to find supplies and coordinate with the Gorkha Foundation. Nima orchestrated the very hazardous helicopters flights from Kathmandu to the most needy villages in Tsum.

Pilots in the high Himalayas need almost perfect conditions on both ends of the run, but in bad weather and with communications disrupted, they had to take a guess and go for it. I broke out in a skin rash thinking about what could go wrong.

#### **Sending in helicopters**

Over two weeks we tracked down hard-to-locate supplies and arranged for two small helicopters to reach Tsum with a Tsuma/Tibetan passenger to organize

distribution. Nima was also able to make some unexpected landings to ferry critically injured Tsumbas back to Kathmandu. Unfortunately more than two runs turned out to be a practical and political impossibility.

Nepal is 12 hours and 45 minutes ahead of San Diego time. The Gorkha Foundation has its office in Virginia. Emails, phone calls and faxes were arriving at all hours of the day and night with news of progress and setbacks. More videos and photos of the quake appeared on the Web. The steady stream of bad news sent me into a daily slump. Nicola finally got me to cut back on the constant monitoring. She is a trauma therapist and she was afraid that if I kept it up I would get post-traumatic stress disorder.

I was not alone in feeling Nepal needed help. Friends around the world who knew I was a staunch advocate for Nepal would ask me, "How can we help?" I pointed them in multiple directions.

It was comforting to know that others who have served in Peace Corps Nepal were also working stateside. Scott Skinner, (Nepal group 4), runs the Phulmaya Foundation in Vermont, which builds well-constructed schools in Eastern Nepal. One of its board members, Rajeev Goyal—who served as a PCV in Nepal from 2001 to 2003—was in Nepal at the time of the earthquake and helped to raise over \$250,000 to deliver enough high-quality tarps to protect 200,000 people from the monsoon rain. Many others used their contacts to raise donations for other worthwhile relief organizations.

Nicola and I worked with the Bishwa Seva Foundation in Oceanside, California, a non-profit run by a local Nepali friend, Deep Deoja. Staff at their school in Nepal—Deep's brother, uncle and others—found remote villages along the Kathmandu Valley rim that were cut off from any relief. Many of our friends sent contributions to Bishwa Seva to send food aid—(products that didn't need to be cooked because most village kitchens were destroyed), and tarps for cover from the rains.

Three weeks after the initial earthquake, powerful aftershocks continued and conditions were grim. I received an urgent email from fellow film maker, Sudarson Karki, in a village near Banepa. Relief trucks headed further out of the Kathmandu Valley were passing by his village, where all houses had been destroyed and everyone was living in the rain. Through Bishwa Seva we delivered all the tarps we could find, 40 tarps. I knew that was not nearly enough but it was all we could find.

One of the disappointments during this crisis was my inability to get several Nepali relief groups to work together to maximize their efforts. We all knew each other—they said they would meet and develop a relief plan, but the egos were too strong to give up any territory, or to mix their volunteers and certainly not their donations. Despite my involvement, I must accept that I was not there and don't know the circumstances or pressures they were subjected to.

To end on a brighter note: after months of difficult dealings with the U.S. embassy in Kathmandu, Lotte's wife, Pema, and their boys have been reunited with Lotte in San Diego. When she arrived she wanted to tell everyone who had helped her, "Thank you. You saved us from hell."

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**Ron Ranson** served as a teacher in Narayan ghar from 1964 to 1966. He taught scenic and lighting design at the University of California at San Diego for many years and produced a meditation film about Tibetan prayer flags with his son, Tim.

*Editor: Countless former Nepal RPCVs mobilized in the wake of the earthquake, with the NPCA affiliate group **Friends of Nepal** serving as a trusted focal point of information gathering and sharing for the wider Peace Corps community. Even as the world's attention has shifted, the group continues to direct all of its fundraising efforts towards earthquake relief. You can learn more at [www.friendsofnepal.com](http://friendsofnepal.com).*

# GOING ORGANIC IN MALAWI

A former ag Volunteer builds his resume with USAID's Farmer to Farmer

By Chris Peterson

I have just spent two weeks on a farm in Malawi and I have learned as much as I taught, which shouldn't be surprising. This two-week assignment with Farmer to Farmer is a lot like the two years I spent on an organic farm in Uganda where I did Peace Corps that I feel like I can connect to the farmers and navigate my way through the community.

But here in Tithokoze Farm 20 kilometers from Lilongwe, Malawi I learned lots of new things and tried so many new foods. The chambo fish is excellent, and I've got some recipes to try at home. Lilongwe is much more relaxed than Kampala, with lots of green space and open areas. But on the other hand, there aren't as many restaurants or things to do, so I guess I have to choose which problem I'd rather have.

What's so awesome about this Malawi assignment is that I get to use everything I learned in Peace Corps as well as my experiences from my old job, and of course from grad school.

When I came home from Peace Corps, I had readjustment angst coming to terms with what Peace Corps meant. I mean, I went to all these places and did all these things for two years, and how am I different? Peace Corps was part of me for so long, but American life was so much like it was before that it was almost as if I did my 27 months for nothing.

Doing this Farmer to Farmer assignment allows me to see what I've learned and how it ties in with my previous experience. Not just with technical skills but the cultural aspects, too. I can use the whole me, if that makes any sense.

The Malawi farm is larger and more commercial than the farm in Uganda: 70 hectares and 10 greenhouses. They want to go completely organic, but that's not

something you can just decide to do and do it, especially in the middle of the season where the pest problems are wreaking havoc: the red spider mites have taken out an entire greenhouse of cauliflower and another one of green beans. And when the staff and management have been so reliant on non-organic practices up to now, I have to gauge where they are and direct them to where they want to go. Their challenges are many, as the locals say in their typically understated way. I told them that if I showed them 20 things, they tried 10, and 5 worked, then my mission was a success.

I've been showing them composting, mulching, insecticidal soap sprays, sticky and bottle traps for insects, companion planting and keeping infested plant material separate so the diseases don't spread. They really liked the soil

solarization technique for killing the weed seeds, nematodes and plant pathogens. In short, all that stuff we did in Peace Corps training and the youth agriculture camps. And in two weeks! It's kind of an ag boot camp, but with me as the drill sergeant.

But they're not organic yet, which is where my job from before Peace Corps doing pesticide research and safety comes in. The metal filing cabinet they use for pesticide storage scared me—actually scared me, and I have a degree in this stuff! Maybe that's why it scared me, actually. The instructions that come attached to the bottles were unopened, so I know they are not using them properly; they're just using each product the same way, no matter what it is. Not a pair of rubber gloves or safety goggles to be found anywhere, and there were about



Tithokoze farm workers grafting high-producing mango shoots onto disease-resistant rootstocks.

CHRIS PETERSON

# VOLUNTEERS FROM THE FARM

## USAID offers a chance to improve food security in 26 countries

The Farmer-to-Farmer program of the U.S. Agency for International Development is a unique opportunity for women and men with Peace Corps and agricultural experience to help farmers and farm organizations solve significant food security issues in the emerging economies of 26 countries of the world.

We are growing the capacity of the agricultural sector, providing new jobs, promoting involvement of the private sector in agriculture, and promoting climate-smart development.

Our goal is to help farm communities in these countries to manage real food security challenges by addressing topics as diverse as agricultural education and training, horticulture, staple crops, resilience to climate change, and food safety/quality. The program makes assignments in horticulture, dairy and livestock, staple food crops, producer organization development, financial services, marketing and processing, agricultural education and training, and natural resources management.

F2F is a volunteer program that has in 30 years helped more than 200,000 families improve their farming practices. Now, we're looking for another 3,000 volunteers to do much more. You have an opportunity to provide technical aid diverse areas: agricultural education and training, horticulture, staple crops, resilience to climate change, and food safety/quality.

If you have are a senior or mid-career professional with practical agro-industry experience, here is another chance to serve again as a F2F volunteer. Assignments are usually about three weeks, with travel and housing paid by F2F.

While other programs deliver aid from the American people, F2F is unique in that it delivers the American people themselves. Volunteers typically spend between 14 and 21 days in their host country, working closely with local farmers and agribusiness professionals on problems and priorities identified by their hosts.

F2F provides a hands-on, people-to-people approach, that ensures a long-term impact by connecting one practitioner to another. Other programs deliver aid from the American people, but F2F delivers the American people themselves.

The program relies on the expertise of volunteers from America's farms, land grant universities, cooperatives, private agribusinesses, and non-profit farm organizations.

The program currently sends volunteers to more than 26 countries, concentrated in 7 regions of the world. Six programs are implemented by major non-profits: Catholic Relief Services in East Africa; ACDI/VOCA in West Africa and in Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia; CNFA in Southern Africa' Land O'Lakes in the Middle East and North Africa; Partners of the Americas in the Caribbean Basin; and Winrock International in Asia and in West Africa agricultural education and training programs.

To learn more about Farmer to Farmer and to apply for assignments, go to <http://agrilinks.org/activity/john-ogonowski-and-doug-bereuter-farmer-farmer-program>.



DAVID GERMAN, TITHOKOZE FARMS

Chris Peterson double-digs the soils around the Tithokoze greenhouse for better tillage.

two years worth of old pesticide containers strewn in the trash pile with the chickens scratching and kids running around.

Scary-funny story with a happy ending: I told the farm manager he couldn't just throw the empty pesticide bottles in the trash pile, so he *burned* them. When I asked him if he thought it was safe to be burning all that old pesticide, he said "It is expired. It is safe."

We had a good solid talk after that, where I actually did most of the talking. This led to an impromptu pesticide safety training for him and the staff, which I think went well. I saw them using the things I taught them by the time I left, anyway. Oh, and recycling isn't as rare here as I thought: I talked with a pesticide retailer and he agreed to take back the empty pesticide containers.

I applied for this assignment through a parent organization, and they were great. They have staff in Malawi who met me at the airport, and they had arranged a pretty decent hotel, transportation, and would have found a translator if I'd needed one. They even gave me a phone and a USB internet modem. All I had to do was go to the farm and get to work. I also got to meet a few other Farmer to Farmer volunteers, including a guy who did Peace Corps in 1961. Yep! One of the very first ever and in the first group to go to India.

I'm hoping all of this will get the attention

of an employer. I love this work and want to keep doing it. Peace Corps was an awesome career builder, but it's not always easy to convey Peace Corps experiences on a resume. Farmer to Farmer give me a broader experience geographically and technically, and the assignments have clearly defined outputs and deliverables that I can point to and say "That's what I did." And even better: "This is why you should hire me."

I plan on doing more of these assignments when the opportunity presents itself. They do Farmer to Farmer all over the world, so there's no telling where I'll go next.

---

**Chris Peterson** was an agribusiness Volunteer at the Bega kwa Bega Uganda Orphans organic demonstration farm from 2012 to 2014. He now lives in Marquette, Michigan and conducts pesticide registrations for Summitec, an Environmental Protection Agency contractor.

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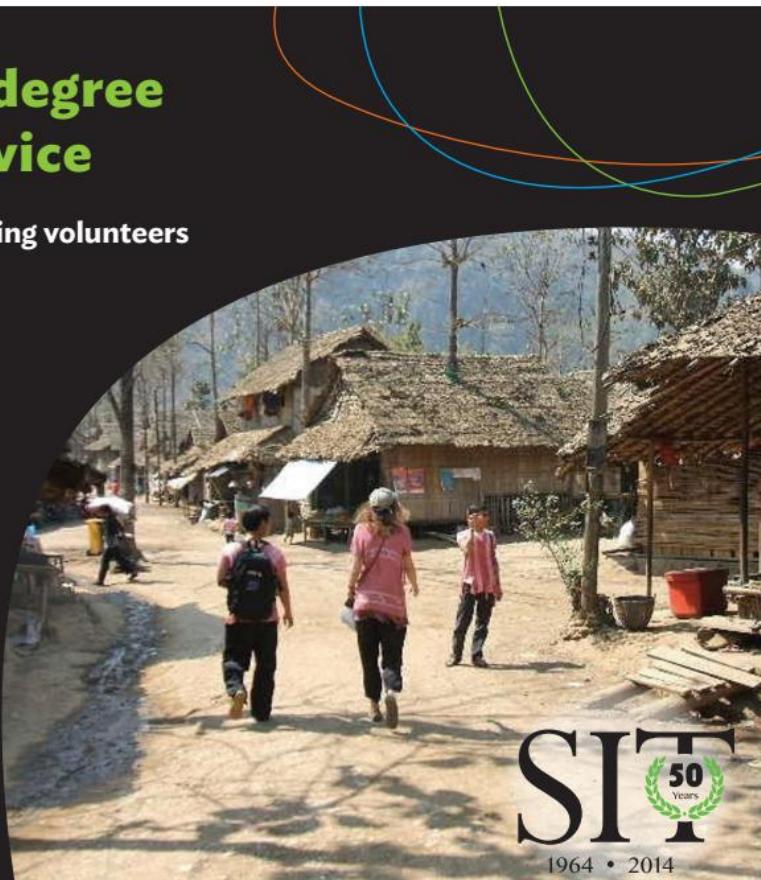
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# KILOMETER 99

A review of a novel about El Salvador

By Philip Damon

**T**yler McMahon's Kilometer 99 is a gem of a book. It's a coming-of-age saga that touches on visceral themes affecting many cultures in a disarmingly naïve narrative voice. Under the guise of a surfer's escape fantasy gone haywire, Tyler McMahon deftly enables his part-Hawaiian Peace Corps engineer Malia to narrate her story in such a way that it unfolds on numerous levels of situation and meaning.

At one level, it's a fictional chronicle of the El Salvador earthquakes of 2001, limning the experiences of two groups of people—the earthy class of Salvadorans and the 20-something Peace Corps Volunteers living and serving among them. At another level, it's a tale of intrigue and danger in a foreign land.

And at a subtler level, Malia's narrative breathes life to the conflicting pulls of responsibility and youthful indulgence, embedding them poignantly into the archetypal options of committing to "the rescue" or of finding the perfect wave. At that level, it is a novel for its generation. As a thriller call it a three on the salsa scale, but as an inner journey it's a solid five out of five.

Impossible to be given justice in a brief review, it's the kind of story-layered in when's and why's—that resists summary yet is hardly opaque. It's the kind of story that wants you to think

#### Kilometer 99 by Tyler McMahon

St. Martin's Griffin

\$14.99 (paperback), \$9.99 (Kindle)

344 pages

Reviewed by Philip Damon

it can be synopsized and paraphrased, but cannot. While *K 99* is not really my favorite title choice, the eponymous surfing locale has depths of meaning for Malia, and thus for the entirety of the novel. Poignantly conflicted as a character, she adroitly shifts tenses from the present-time plot line in the aftermath of the first quake, providing the reader (and herself) with aptly located past-tense chapters that revealingly recollect the story of her months in country leading up to that life-changing tremor.

It's a love story also, and the opening chapter is a lyrical memory of that earlier time, when she catches a rare tubular wave. As her PCV lover Ben cheers from his board, with Mariachi horns sounding on shore, she "wished I could always see the world that way: from out of the inside of a wave...a swirling set of blinders that block out all the second guesses."

After the wave closes and she rises to the surface, she declares for the first time her love for Ben, who echoes the sentiment as they swim back for more waves. Yet as they do, Malia the story-teller adds a foreshadowing touch: "We didn't know then about all the troubles that were only a few months into our future. Back

then, I didn't know how hard I'd try to regain that view from inside the tube... the perspective...fast, obvious, moving forward in one direction, with Ben at the center."

The prologue chapter closes on a telling note: "In some ways, it's what I'd always looked for in El Salvador: a small, safe place where I fit in, between layers of violence and gallons of water."

There are indeed layers of both to follow, some natural, others not so. Separately and harrowingly, they survive the first of the temblors on January 13, which leaves their projects in disarray and them in disillusionment—hers as the engineer of an ambitious aqueduct, his as an agro-forestry specialist.

Nor will it give away the intricate plot that follows to divulge their immediate decision, once they're safely reunited, to terminate their tours with just a half-year remaining,

in order to abandon the country for a surfing adventure southward all the way to the tip of South America. Before they've made their final goodbyes to the locals, however, they become involved, then entangled, in a web of schemes and scams that threaten their safety more direly than the earthquake they have miraculously survived—or the second one that is yet to come, a month later to the day.



The unfolding of these schemes and scams involves an array of characters and settings that bring life to the Salvadoran crisis and the couple's escalating predicament, not to mention larger themes of international monkey business. Details of setting and character are artfully spot-on, from idyllic surf spots to devastated adobe communities, from aimlessly idealistic Volunteers to mindlessly predatory village crack heads. The nifty choice to make Malia half-Hawaiian, half-Japanese even further enhances the ironies of colonial history, given that her own grandparents had met working on island plantations not unlike those across the countryside of this sadly struggling Central American nation.

McMahon thus covers a vast terrain of thematic ground in this story full of peril and heartbreak, but it is ultimately the inner ground of his young heroine that he brings to fruition. She is sorely tried by what she and Ben get themselves into—with the help of a shady cast of others—and therein lies the substance of the novel's soaring redemption. It is one of the givens of narrative that stories which open in first person must end that way as well. Yet how it unfolds for her along the way must remain for the reader to find out.

**Tyler McMahon** served in El Salvador 1999 to 2002. He teaches creative writing at Hawaii Pacific University and is the author of *How the Mistakes Were Made*, a novel about the Seattle grunge rock scene.

**Reviewer Philip Damon** served in Ethiopia from 1963 to 1965. He taught creative writing and spirituality in literature at the University of Hawaii for more than 30 years. Several of his many short stories have been published in literary journals including *Best American Short Stories* of 1977. He writes on-line columns called "Sacred Democracy" at [readthedirt.org](http://readthedirt.org) and "Just Thinking" at [whatcomwatch.org](http://whatcomwatch.org).



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**Continued from Page 11**

young revolutionary outsider, this lone cowboy, who rode into Cuba to free the land from President Fulgencio Batista Zaldivar and the American mafia who were running Havana's gaming tables.

What interests me is how much Che is remembered and idolized, particularly by young Cubans. He is the handsome young hero who died with his boots on fighting for the freedom of the peasants and the poor. And the Cuban Revolution, too, is recalled with the same sense of sentiment and nostalgia that the American South has for its Lost Cause.

It's all very romantic.

#### Abandoned tractors, urban gardens

Less than 30 percent of the country's

land is used for farming. Cuba imports about 80 percent of its food which makes it vulnerable to price increases, changes in food supply and the impacts of natural disasters such as hurricanes.

Much of this situation is due to the dependence on Russia, the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This hard-scrabble existence is made more obvious when you see how little farm equipment is available, all of it from the days of the Soviet Union. Here and there I spotted a tractor in a field or abandoned beside a farm building. What little land is plowed is being turned the way I saw I saw it tilled when I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in the 1960s.

There are bright spots. In the suburbs of Havana we saw Cuba's largest urban garden in the housing complex, Alamar. In 2008, Raul Castro allowed private

farmers and co-operatives to lease unused land. Neighborhood collectives could turn vacant lots into farmland. The leader of the Alamar urban garden said that after the Russians pulled out, the garden saved them from starving to death. There are about 2,000 urban gardens in Cuba now.

#### The view from room 511

In Paul Hendrickson's wonderful book entitled *Hemingway's Boat*, the author writes that Hemingway paid two dollars a day for Room 511 at the Ambos Mundos Hotel during his first year there. And when Pauline, his second wife, came to stay with Ernie, as she did on two separate occasions, it would cost him a half a dollar more.

Hemingway wrote in Esquire that from Room 511 he could see the cathedral, the sea, "and to the east to Casablanca peninsula, the roofs of all houses in between and the width of the harbor..... You look out the north window past El Morro and see that the smooth morning sheen is rippling over and you know the trade wind is coming up early."

In 1938, he and Pauline were in the final days of marriage and he was spending more time at the Ambos Mundos. He was also about to turn an affair with writer Martha Gellhorn into his third marriage.

In 1939, Hemingway began his novel of the Spanish Civil War in this hotel.

On the 400-year-old Plaza de Armas in front of the hotel we saw tourists gather to start the tour of Old Havana, watched by vendors hawking copies of Hemingway books in English and Spanish and guide books of the island.

Gellhorn later said of Hemingway, "I am really not abnormally clean. I'm simply as clean as any normal person. But Ernest was extremely dirty, one of the most unfastidious men I've ever known."

She found 15-acre Finca Vigia on a hilltop overlooking the village of San Francisco de Paula, 15 miles from downtown Havana. The outdoor pool was filled with green water and huge weeds. Gellhorn hired a painter, a carpenter, and

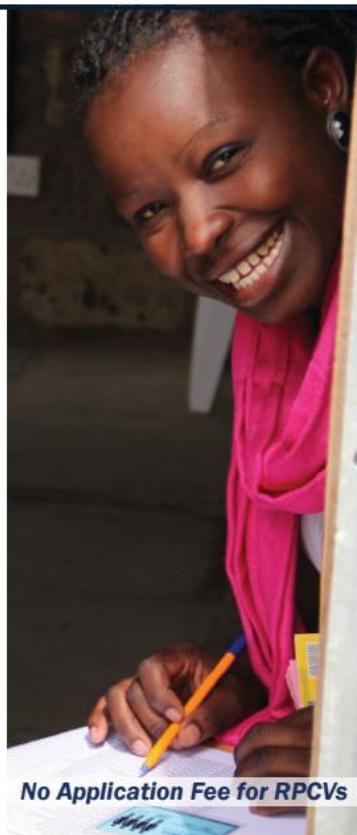
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two gardeners and brought the finca back to life. She added a special workroom for Hemingway for his writing but he preferred his bedroom with windows facing south and east that let in oceans of light and fresh breezes. Here he finished *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, writing as many as 70,000 words a week and dedicating the book to Gellhorn.

Hemingway spent most of his time there until the U.S. ambassador, Philip Wilson Bonsal, forced him to abandon the island on July 25, 1960.

#### **From socialism to tourism.**

The cities of present-day Cuba are full of crumbling and abandoned architecture, beautiful pre-revolutionary homes crying out to be saved. But there is nowhere to live.

After the 1959 revolution and the U.S. embargo that followed, most of Havana fell into ruin. Ten years later, all privately owned businesses were nationalized. Cuba is a land that stopped making progress when the Soviet Union turned its back on the island. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Cuba lost billions of dollars in Russian aid. And the U.S., 90 miles away, wasn't helping them.

A Cuban architect told us they are restoring about 10 percent of the city for tourism. He traced the city's changing architectural and social shifts since its beginnings in the 1500s to the present day. Well, actually, to the "special period" which is the name given to the years since the Soviets left Cuba to, we might say, twist in the wind.

"We're entering a very dark room and feeling our way through to get to the other side," Ralph Patino told USA Today recently. Patino is a Cuban-American who sells building materials to Cuban companies and the government for construction of hospitals and other structures. In an island where finding a piece of plywood, a toilet seat or a particular screw can take days or weeks Patino believes he stands a good chance of filling that hole in the Cuban market.

"It's obvious that the Cuban government wants to open their markets

to U.S. businesses," Patino said.

By chance, I met an American in the square in the city of Cienfuegos. He has been living in Cuba for 18 years. I asked what will happen when the embargo is lifted. It will never happen, he said, because the military controls the country and will not let go of power. He described the country as a violent one.

In my days on the island, the Cubans we met were warm and welcoming to Americans. They all appeared to want tourists from the United States and U.S. investment. While I wouldn't say the island is ready for prime time, it certainly is primed.

Maybe the Peace Corps needs to work on getting Peace Corps Volunteers or Response Volunteers to the island. Cuba could use Peace Corps in schools, agriculture and business. Maybe someone from the

federal agency should walk down L Street and knock on the door at the NPCA and ask its president, Glenn Blumhorst, how the agency can get into Cuba.

Until that happens, I suggest you contact Blumhorst and make him an offer he can't refuse for the next trip to Cuba. You'll feel right at home in downtown Havana. You're an RPCV; you can handle any Third World country. His e-mail is glenn@peacecorpsconnect.org

**John Coyne** served in Ethiopia from 1961 to 1967 as a Volunteer and staff. In the mid-nineties he returned to the agency for six years as the manager of New York recruitment. He is the editor of five Peace Corps collections and with Marian Haley Beil (Ethiopia 1962-64) founded the website: [www.peacecorpsworldwide.org](http://www.peacecorpsworldwide.org).

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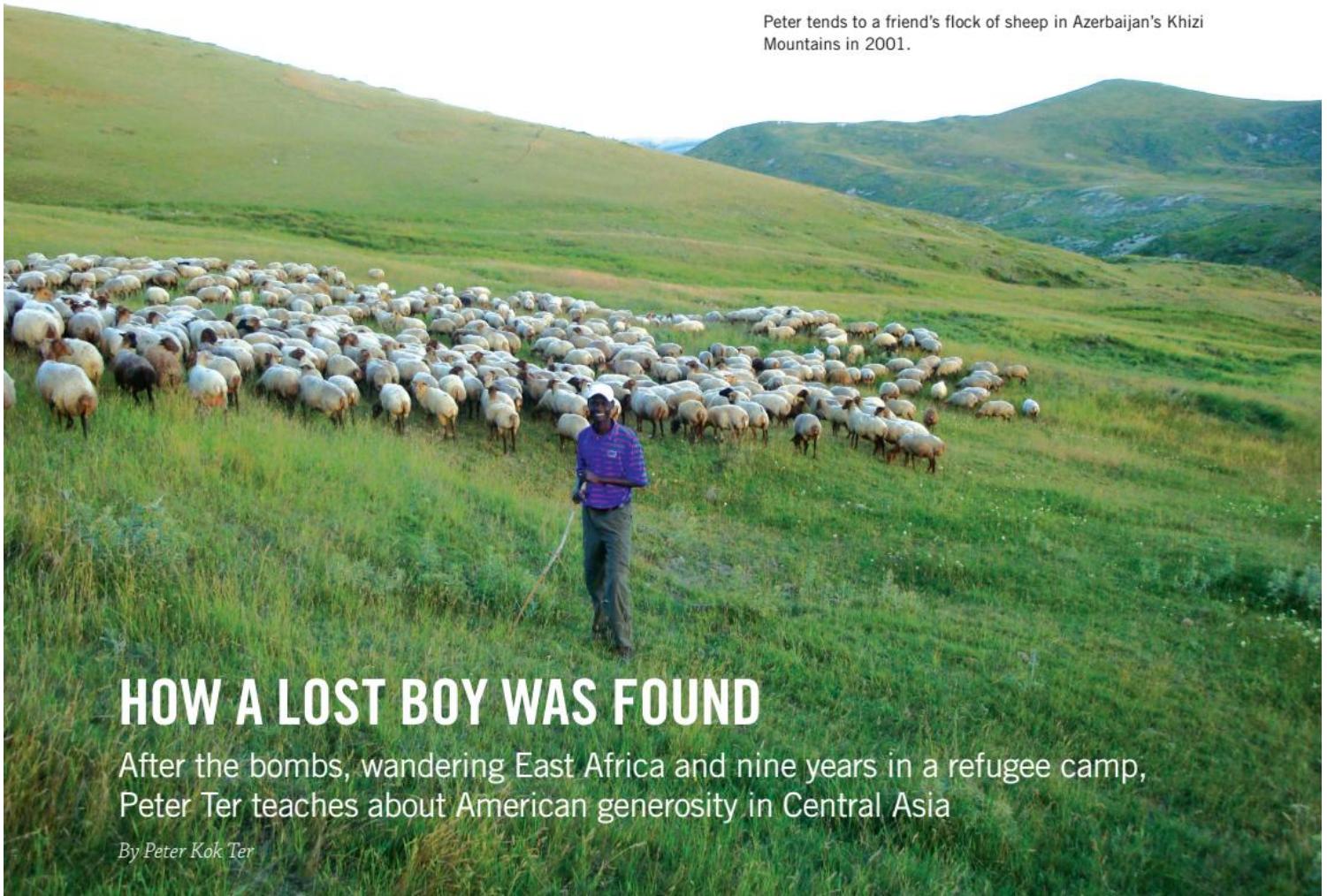
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Peter tends to a friend's flock of sheep in Azerbaijan's Khizi Mountains in 2001.

## HOW A LOST BOY WAS FOUND

After the bombs, wandering East Africa and nine years in a refugee camp, Peter Ter teaches about American generosity in Central Asia

By Peter Kok Ter

Serving in the Peace Corps is my way of defending America. As a teacher I tell people I meet that America is a kind and a generous society. All I have to do is tell my story about becoming one of the Lost Boys of Sudan.

People in developing countries believe me when—as a former refugee—I show my unconditional love for America. As a result, friends, teachers and students in Azerbaijan and in China have been telling me that the more I explain my new home in America, the more they like America.

I came to the United States from a refugee camp in Kenya. I did not come as an economic migrant obsessed with getting a good education, a high-paying job, a nice house and a nice car. I asked what I can do for the United States of

America, not what the United States can do for me.

America has restored my dignity and given me a solid education. I am grateful to America and decided to give back to my country unconditionally through by serving as a volunteer abroad as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Again and again.

Now, I am writing from the Republic of Georgia in the South Caucasus. I work with Georgians and Azerbaijanis, enjoying the fruits of co-existence in the South Caucasus.

Every evening, my Azerbaijani host family and I joke in Azerbaijani language and laugh in our living room. And former students and colleagues in Azerbaijan and in China send me thoughtful and thankful emails that make life worth living for me.

Life is good, nothing for me to whine about.

I have been serving America as a Peace Corps Volunteer in three countries for the past five years because it's a great way of representing America culturally and developmentally overseas.

What makes me feel good about Peace Corps service is that I can talk about the generosity of the American people from a different perspective - surviving civil war, bombs from Khartoum and nine years in a refugee camp as one of the Lost Boys of Sudan. Then, my hosts in Central Asia decide that they like the American people.

### When the Antonovs dropped bombs

My dad was a cattle keeper and my mom was a farmer. They could not read or write in their own language. The midwife who delivered me was also illiterate. I do not say that in a negative way but in a positive way. They were very hardworking people

and I have a very positive memory of them all.

I was born in a hut in the heart of southern Sudan at the southern tip of our state, which is now called Unity State in the new nation of South Sudan. The civil war there began in 1983 and lasted for 21 years. Regardless of my being born into a humble family and a civil war, I always had hope, not dismay.

I have five sisters and three brothers. We all slept in the hut where I was born and we kept the cattle in a larger hut. It was a beautiful hut. We built the beautiful bigger one for cattle and smaller one was a hut for sleeping. We built it and thatched it with grass and used wood and with mud at the bottom.

My dad has land and we lived on the same land from generation to generation. During the dry season, my dad and I would go with our cattle to the dam of the river or to the swamps where the cattle would drink water.

Because I was very young and unable to walk on foot—I was about two years old—my dad would carry me on his shoulders and at that time I was very nervous. I was afraid I would fall back onto my head and so I would cross my fingers around his face and my dad would tell me, “Son don’t be afraid because I cannot see and we are going to stumble and both of us will fall down.”

But the most damaging thing that happened was the bombing from the air.

The Russian-made Antonov cargo plane has a unique sound unlike the western ones. I can still distinguish the sound as if I were in Sudan right now. It’s like “oooh-oooh” ... the very thick sound and the movement was toward the sun so they could be hiding from us. It was made invisible to people in southern Sudan because the government in Khartoum was afraid the planes would be shot down by rebel anti-aircraft guns. People would dig holes in the ground to avoid the shrapnel that flew from those barrel bombs and hide until those

cargo planes passed.

Unity state bore the brunt of all of the bombings. I lost uncles on my mother’s side and my uncle on my father’s side.

#### **Thousands of boys were lost**

To be honest with you, I think all of us lost boys were caught up between the government of the Sudan and the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army. They were both predators. We were just caught up between warring factions.

There were thousands of us. We ran by groups. Some could walk well and some of us could not walk. Some were weak and were not able to walk. I was young but I made it because there were others who looked after my fate, a lot of guys.

We traveled with those we knew from the same place; The ethnic Nuer and Dinka groups plus others in South Sudan divided themselves into clans and sub-clans. Walking with boys from the same clan was the beauty of our miserable journey. In other words, it was helpful in terms of being looked after by older boys.



Ter stands with his program director, Betsy, in his office at Yangtze Normal University in Chongqing.

Most of us ended up in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. I was there nine years. Life in the camp was miserable, to be honest with you. It was hopeless. We had meals once a day and they had no nutrition in the food. It was a horrible life then.

But I had a good friend in Kakuma. His name is James. That guy was like a big brother to me. We were not related, but he took good care of me as though he was a blood brother.

One day when I was working with my fingers in the dirt, practicing my ABCDs, an old man saw me learning. He looked very educated and had gray hair. He said in my language, “Keep working like that and someday you will know a lot about the world and that it is round like a soccer ball in your hands.”

I learned to write my letters in second grade in the camp. I could not tell the difference between past, present and future tenses, but it was understandable. I was elated when I received my first stationery from

the United Nations International Children’s Education Fund. UNICEF opened my eyes to the world by providing me with rudimentary resources so that I could pursue my education in that poverty-stricken refugee camp.

I had to write on one page why I wanted to go to America. Some of us didn’t know how to read and write so their papers were written by others. They could not remember what was on the papers. A lot of us had psychological problems. I had to remember what I wrote on that paper.

I told them I wanted to come to America because I wanted to live a good life. I was hopeless, I just wanted to go to a place where I could restore my dignity and I wanted to labor in education to promote international development in the form of education, by educating myself. I was a strong believer in education.

It took them two years to approve my application.

### My America in Jacksonville

To be honest with you, I would be lying if I told you how old I was when the bombs started falling. I was very young when I flew to America. What the U.S. government gave me was kind of fake because they estimated my age based on how tall I was. The taller you were the more age they gave you. They estimated I was born in 1980.

When I talked to my brother in 2004 I asked him when I was born. He said I was born in 1985, June 21, but I don't buy it. I think it was just a way of making me feel good. In the back of my head I was saying no, no, no, that's not true. There were no papers in the hut where I was born.

My parents used to think of me as a dead person.

After I got resettled in my beloved hometown of Jacksonville, I regained my dignity and my freedom. Opportunities opened to me. I lived for two years in Boston when I was in graduate school at Brandeis, but I started in Florida and my whole life was in Florida. My friends in Jacksonville are the ones whom I call My America.

One of those close friends was Dennis Jett, a former ambassador and professor who was the dean of the international center at the University of Florida. He became my mentor.

I have military blood in me because all my uncles on both sides participated in the civil war and from the age of eight and ten my two brothers fought on the side of the SPLA. They were kidnapped and I did not know they were lost boys. My second brother was kidnapped in Ethiopia. They handed him an AK-47 and he ended up in the bush. Another brother fought on the side of the government.

After receiving my college degree at the University of Florida, I wanted to join the Marines badly to give back to America. I just love the Marines. But Dennis Jett said it would be a great idea if you joined the Peace Corps. At the time I had read about President Kennedy. He was a visionary, an intelligent guy and very logical.

My close friends encouraged me to join the Peace Corps, which would enable me to serve America in foreign countries as a cultural ambassador and as an

international development practitioner.

It has always been my dream to be an ambassador. But to be honest with you even if I don't become an ambassador, I just feel that I have been representing America in a very humble way and showing people that America is still a great society.

I will continue to serve America domestically and internationally because I am not afraid of people regardless of what they look like. In other words, my humanity is my gun.

### Three countries in five years

I'm now a Peace Corps Response Volunteer in the Republic of Georgia. My new long title is Azerbaijani-Speaking American English Teacher. I love speaking Azerbaijani and Turkish languages and enjoy teaching English to students in Azerbaijani language. I try to motivate the Georgian-Azeri minority students to learn English using the Azerbaijani language.

I began teaching five years ago in Azerbaijan. My friends in Azerbaijan and I will be friends for life. I appreciate them greatly for their kindness and their



The author poses with his students at Yangtze Normal University in Chongqing China. "I get emotionally attached to people everywhere I go" Ter says. "There is always human connection."

legendary hospitality. But it was not hard for us in the beginning.

As a minority Peace Corps Volunteer I have been serving in places where local people rarely encounter those who do not look like them. I had to face some extreme challenges, such as medieval racism, when I arrived because some Azerbaijanis in town did not welcome me because I am black. Peace Corps/Azerbaijan had a hard time finding me a host family to live with, because I am black.

However, I respond to challenges with respect and with maturity because I find reacting to unpleasant situations in an emotional way to be beneath my dignity. I do not let negative things consume me because I would debase myself. In the end, those who did not welcome me when I arrived in Azerbaijan became my best friends after they got to know me; they deeply regretted their judging me based on my skin color.

I told my Azeri friends if I had become an immigrant in Azerbaijan they would have made me a slave and they agreed. In many places I go, people talk about how America treats black people and I say I am an immigrant and being a minority is not easy but I still believe that America is still a better society than anywhere I have been.

Some of the teachers at Khizi City High School were not happy because they wanted someone who was white. They were against Principal Fazil Mammadov's plan to welcome me as a Peace Corps teacher there. Some of the guys, the teachers told me they made a regrettable mistake by judging me before they knew my personality. They are now my best friends.

And the family did not want to welcome me. Even the brother of my host brother who drives a public bus in the city did not want me to enter his bus. He pushed me back and he was shouting.

One of my friends told him, "This is a public bus. Why are you doing this?"

I was not upset about it. I thought it was bizarre, but it was not the first time. I just went on the bus. I refused to be held down by him. I said if you don't want me

on the bus call the police. The bus driver later changed his mind about me.

I taught there for three years and did not roam around; I stayed with my host community all the way through my service. I liked the challenge of learning about where I was. In those three years I never left the country. I stayed because I wanted to earn their respect. Every time I wanted to go somewhere in Azerbaijan, I would travel with my host family or with my friends from my host community.

They thanked me for not leaving them by traveling to other countries.

I now speak and read Nuer, English, Turkish and Azeri. But Turkish language became my passion; I have been studying it independently.

### **Stunned in Chongqing**

When I arrived in Chongqing, China last year as a Peace Corps Response Volunteer, I was stunned. Although they rarely encountered black people, they were so courteous and so appreciative.

My experience as a teacher in China was different from what happened in Azerbaijan. The Chinese in Chongqing did not look down on me because I am black. I think the Chinese judge a foreigner—a *waiguoren*—on how well the foreigner does the job, not what he or she looks like.

My students and my teaching colleagues at Yangtze Normal University in Fuling, Chongqing were very supportive and respectful; they treated me with a great degree of courtesy and respect. I was given the best classroom equipped with modern computers.

People in southern China are also thankful to the Peace Corps because of the work the Volunteers do there. Even local government officials are thankful to their American teachers, which I did not expect.

If I would brag about being a good teacher I would de-value what my students say about me. I was loved everywhere I went there. It made my life worth living. I am so humbled by it.

Two days before I left China, the

faculty had a big party for me and another teacher. They wanted me to come back as a contract teacher. I was writing all day long to my Chinese students who wanted me as their mentor.

### **Practicing diplomacy without portfolio**

It's humanizing and challenging to a minority serving in Azerbaijan, China and the Republic of Georgia. It takes resilience and humility to succeed. But it is worth it because I love America and my history in America changes the negative opinions people have about America. They learn from me that before I arrived in America I was nobody.

I have served so many times in the Peace Corps, so many times to say thank you to the United States for adopting me, giving me a good education and restoring my dignity that no one can take away from me any more.

If I had not joined the Peace Corps, I would have felt like a parasite or a burden on America. As an immigrant in America I owe a lot of debt to my new country.

Peace Corps has let me live in other interesting countries without putting up barriers between the Volunteers and their hosts. The connections continue to grow. My former students and my colleagues in Azerbaijani and China have been writing letters to me in Georgia. Those emails make my life worth living.

I learned a lot from people and life in Azerbaijan and China because I listened to my friends. I usually learn most of what goes on in the community from my students. Based on my observations, students feel valued and appreciated if their foreign teacher allows them to talk to him or her about their culture and their experiences.

I tell people, "I am a student of my students."

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**Peter Kok Ter** served in the Republic of Azerbaijan (2009 – 2012), the People's Republic of China (January 24, 2015 – August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015) and now serves in the Republic of Georgia (2015 – 2016).

# RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR COMMUNITY

By Michael Hamby and Erica Burman

## BELIZE

President Barack Obama appointed the Reverend **Jennifer Butler** (1989-1991) of Washington, D.C. to the Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. The advisory council works within the Domestic Policy Council to form partnerships between the federal government and faith-based and neighborhood organizations to more effectively serve Americans in need. Rev. Butler is the founder and executive director of Faith in Public Life, a strategy center advancing faith in the public square as a force for justice, compassion and the common good. She spent 10 years representing the Presbyterian Church (USA) on global human rights issues at the United Nations.

## COLOMBIA

**Charles "Chic" Dambach** (1967-1969) was elected to the Oklahoma State University's College of Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame in September. Dambach served as speaker and facilitator of the university's Difficult Dialogues program, addressing perspectives on citizen activism and direct engagement to transform societies from war to peace. Dambach, who is a former president of the National Peace Corps Association, is currently a Woodrow Wilson Center visiting fellow. He served as president of the Alliance for Peacebuilding for six years and as chief of staff to Congressman John Garamendi.

## ETHIOPIA

An international foundation supporting education, research and proper treatment of Guillain-Barre syndrome and other

related syndromes named Congressman **John Garamendi** (1966-1968) of California's third district the legislator of the year. The GBS/CIDP Foundation International honored Garamendi at their 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in Washington, D.C. John and his wife, Patti, served in Peace Corps in southwest Ethiopia. Two of their children suffer from Guillain-Barre syndrome. Garamendi has represented his California district since 2009. Earlier, he served four years as California Insurance Commissioner, four years as deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior. He also was Lieutenant Governor of California until his election to Congress.

**Barbara Wyatt Olson** has completed her first short fiction collection, *On the Rez and Other Stories*. Previous to this latest work, Olson authored two memoirs about her time in the Peace Corps in Gondar, Ethiopia. A longtime social activist, Olson has worked locally advocating for the homeless.

## GUATEMALA



**Carmen Gilbert** joined the University of Nevada Las Vegas Foundation this summer as a development officer. She is concurrently pursuing a degree at the William S. Boyd School of Law.

## HONDURAS

The Harrison (N.Y.) Youth Council has appointed **Perry Savino** to be the program director of that agency. Savino has served as director and coordinator

of various agencies involving substance abuse, mental illness, mental illness/chemical addiction issues, domestic violence, anger management and mediation. Most recently, he served as the Alpha School Director of Brightpoint Health-Help/PSI, as well as the clinical program coordinator for THRIVE, an HIV-prevention grant funded by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

## JAMAICA

**Tim Garvin** (1991-1992), CEO of the United Way of Central Massachusetts, is the recipient of the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network's 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award. The Network unites and strengthens nonprofits statewide. A presence in communities in and around Worcester, Garvin became CEO of the United Way of Central Massachusetts in 2006. Under his leadership, the organization has stabilized financially, increased investments in the community, and orchestrated several current partnerships with public schools, local and government officials, and partner agencies to support children and families.

## JORDAN

Rich Lee is running for a seat on the Asheville, North Carolina city council. Lee has taken a strong interest in infrastructure issues and currently is a member of the City of Asheville Greenway Committee. Lee moved to western North Carolina in 1997. In 2004, he and his wife Kylie joined the Peace Corps and taught in small villages in Jordan. Since 2011, Lee has been a financial advisor with Edward Jones Investments.

**MALI**

**Heidi Secord** recently gave a talk titled "Every meal counts: Growing a sustainable food system" at the Stroudsburg, Pa. TEDx event. Heidi and her husband own and operate the 48-acre Josie Porter Farm. Using biodynamic growing methods the farm supports a 100-member CSA on land leased from a local municipality. After receiving a degree in Business Management, Heidi joined the Peace Corps, where she worked with subsistence farmers and women's gardening cooperatives in Africa.

For the past two years freelance writer and consultant **Kitty Thuermer** (1977-1979) has served as a team leader for the America's Unofficial Ambassadors' program in Zanzibar, Kenya. The mission of AUA is simple: to make friends with the Muslim world through service. It



does this by sending American university students and graduates to volunteer in areas of human development in communities throughout Africa, Asia, and the

Middle East on a short term basis. You can read about her experience at <http://everydayambassador.org/2015/11/18/whatsapp-zanzibar-volunteers-stay-course/>.

**MAURITANIA**

Media streaming platform Hulu.com's new senior vice president and head of experience is **Ben Smith**. He previously was head of product management for Sonos, a maker of wireless and home audio systems, and led product design across multiple Xbox platforms at Microsoft. He is the author of two books for Microsoft, the *Microsoft Windows Security Resource Kit* and *Assessing Network Security*, both from Microsoft Press.

**MICRONESIA**

**Gretchen Carroll** (trail name "Ukalady") successfully through-hiked

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**T**here's always a first! That's what we thought when Sarah Jean Byce's underwater photo arrived at the National Peace Corps Association office. She wrote:

"I am a Peace Corps Philippines Volunteer, (Batch 273, 2014-2016) and serving in Coastal Resource Management. This photo is of me, and was shot by my Filipino counterpart, Clenessa Gabinete. We were swimming together to a provincial seaweeds farm in the ocean water just offshore of our work site, and I paused to catch up on WorldView news. Clen had borrowed my Peace Corps-issued life jacket as she practiced her snorkeling skills, and by the end of our session she was not only a competent deep-water swimmer but also a talented underwater photographer!"

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*Finally, did you know that a lesson plan accompanies each issue WorldView? Visit <http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/nPCA/news/worldview-magazine/lesson-plans/>.*



the Appalachian Trail from March 15 to September 16, 2015. In the course of her hike, she also raised money for Rippleffect, an organization that combines outdoor education and personal development for youth in Portland, Maine.

Associate Judge **David A. Wiseman** has announced that he is retiring from the bench, effective May 2016. At his retirement he will be the longest serving trial court judge in the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Wiseman first came to the islands as a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1977, working with the pre-commonwealth government on Rota.

## MOROCCO

President Barack Obama's new ambassador to the Republic of Haiti, **Peter F. Mulrean** presented his diplomatic credentials to President Michel Martelly in Port au Prince in October. Mulrean began his diplomatic career in the former Yugoslavia and has served in India, Netherlands, Belgium, Tunisia and Afghanistan and as deputy chief of the U.S. mission to the United Nations in Geneva.

## NEPAL

**Thomas Prol** (1994-1996), has been named one of New Jersey's 2015 Diverse Attorneys of the Year by the New Jersey Law Journal for his dedication and commitment to the advancement of diversity and inclusion issues in the state. The recipients for this inaugural honor were selected from a large pool of candidates and were cited for their work in advancing diversity in all its forms including ethnicity, race, gender and sexual orientation. Prol was recently installed as president-elect of the New Jersey State Bar Association and is expected to ascend to the organization's presidency in May 2016. He has previously been recognized for his advocacy concerning New Jersey's landmark anti-bullying bill of rights,

marriage equality and other civil rights measures.

## PHILIPPINES

**Bruce Nussbaum** has been the mentor-in-residence at NEW INC, the art/technology incubator of New Museum. Nussbaum is also professor of innovation and design at Parsons, The New School of Design and founder of both the Innovation & Design online channel and IN: Inside Innovation, a quarterly innovation supplement. He also writes for Fast Company and Harvard Business Review. He is the author of *Creative Intelligence, Good Intentions: How Big Business And the Medical Establishment Are Corrupting the Fight Against AIDS*, and *The World After Oil: The Shifting Axis of Power and Wealth*.

## RWANDA

**Nicholas McClure** is a student at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. He spent the summer as researcher for the Wildlife Conservation Society in Rwanda, studying the way businesses impact and depend on ecosystem services provided by Nyungwe and Gishwati forests in western Rwanda. He reported that "... a few times I ran into some of my former students during our research. It was lovely to be able to catch up with old friends unexpectedly!"

## TANZANIA

**Eleanora Robbins**—and several members of her family—was recently inaugurated into the Youth on the Move International Educators' Hall of Fame. Since its creation in 1992, Youth on the Move has recognized about 620 people from 30 countries. Robbins, an adjunct professor at San Diego State University, teaches geology to children on local Indian reservations. Robbins' two sisters, mother and late father were also inducted. "They're role models," said Pat Adelekan, founder and CEO of Youth on the Move. "And what better example of role models than a family who has given their lives to education?"

## TOGO

Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper named community leaders **Ann and Mike Moore** (1964-1966) recipients of his Governor's Service Award for their outstanding contributions to volunteerism and service throughout the state. A pediatric nurse, Ann taught nutrition education to villagers in Togo while Mike taught English in a French lycée. Inspired by her work with mothers in Togo, Ann returned home and created the Snugli baby carrier, based on her combined experiences in nursing and in Africa. Mike wrote a company business plan and the Snugli product became popular around the world. Mike continued his work with Denver Opportunity, a community action agency of the War on Poverty, encouraging people to get involved in their communities to eradicate poverty. During the civil rights movement they marched from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. They also worked to preserve green spaces, parks and recreation, and focused on environmental concerns such as sustainability and net-zero living, public health and education.

**Charles Gillig**, founder and CEO of RemitRight.com, took his company to the semifinalist level at this October's Splash LA startup competition. RemitRight



allows predominantly immigrant users to compare online money transfer operators, revealing hidden fees and exchange mark-ups. Gillig is a graduate of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and Georgetown University Law Center, where he received the Jeffrey Crandall Award for commitment to legal aid. Outside of RemitRight, Gillig is a Commissioner on the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission and serves on the Boards of Directors of several non-profits. He also writes for the Economist Intelligence Unit on politics and economics in Africa and recently acted as a NGO legal observer

to the Military Commission Hearings at Guantanamo Bay.

**When Emily Lagasse** (2008-2010) returned from her Peace Corps service in Togo with her African dog, Fenway, Fenway got so sick eating American dog food that she feared for his life. She learned to cook him a homemade diet, he recovered, and she decided to start a company and bring her product to market. Her company, Fedwell.com, is based on the recipes that healed her dog and keep him healthy.

#### TONGA

**Jonathan Foret**, executive director of the South Louisiana Wetlands Discovery Center, was recently quoted in an AlJazeera America article on Louisiana's

disappearing coastline. As a Volunteer, Foret worked in Tonga and flood-prone Bangladesh before returning home to help his own flood-threatened community in south Terrebonne Parish.

#### TURKEY

The University of North Carolina gave the Honorable **Sarah Parker** (1964-1966) their distinguished alumni award this fall. For 13 years Parker served as an associate justice and then chief justice of the Supreme Court of the State of North Carolina until her retirement last year. She had previously served on the North Carolina Board of Appeals. She is a fellow of the American Bar Association and has received several honorary degrees. Awards include a humanitarian award from the North

Carolina Association of Black County Officials and a lifetime achievement award from the University of North Carolina Law School.

#### UGANDA

**Amanda Milholland** (2007-2009) is the new director of the Port Townsend Farmers Market in Port Townsend, Wash. As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Uganda, Milholland carried out HIV counseling, but also became sensitized to the importance of agriculture to the health of local communities. She moved to Portland, Ore. in 2009 following her service, and recently returned to Port Townsend, her hometown. In her new position she hopes to increase youth programs and options for lower income families.

**WHAT'S NEXT?**

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**UKRAINE**

Second Lieutenant **Jessie Park** is the first female commander for a South Dakota National Guard (SDNG) field artillery unit, and the first female soldier for the Yankton unit, which is part of the 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery. Park, who joined the military four years ago at the age of 30, comes from a military family. After completing her master's degree in mental health counseling, she served two years with the Peace Corps in Ukraine and currently works as an expressive therapist and arts program coordinator for the Sanford Health system's arts therapy program.

**ZAMBIA**

Pittsburgh, Pa. residents **Carrie Pavlik** (2007-2009) and her husband Doug Placais recently formed a business called Steel City Grazers, which provides an environmentally-friendly alternative to herbicides and fossil-fuel powered machinery by using goats to remove weeds, brush, and vines. The idea for Steel City Grazers—the first business of its kind in the city—stemmed from Pavlik's Peace Corps stint in Zambia. The couple had been raising milk goats when people started asking if they could borrow them to eradicate backyard poison ivy.

**MULTIPLE**

**Teneasha Pierson** (Kenya, Senegal) is the founder and creative director of Teespoon Boutique (<http://www.teespoonboutique.com/>), an African-American owned company offering handcrafted handbags and accessories produced in Senegal, West Africa. Pierson oversees the entire creative process from start to finish, ensuring the ethical, traceable, and authentic development of each individual design.



**Jennet Robinson Alterman** was among the speakers at the recent Women's Salon gathering in Charleston, South Carolina, discussing life transitions, self-direction, choosing to be happy, and not being "Wonder Woman." Alterman is the President and CEO of Robinson Alterman LLC, a consulting practice that assists organizations in developing leadership and entrepreneurial training programs for women. She has worked in television broadcasting, state and federal government and the non-profit sector. Her extensive background in international development includes serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Afghanistan, Peace Corps Country Director in Swaziland and the Interagency Coordinator for Peace Corps worldwide. Ms. Alterman currently

serves as the Chair of Charleston County Housing Authority Board, the Vice Chair of the Spaulding Paolozzi Foundation and on the boards of Pro Bono Legal Services, the Girl Scouts of Eastern S.C., and the New Morning Foundation.

**For more Community News go to [www.peacecorpsconnect.org/nPCA/news/community-news/](http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/nPCA/news/community-news/)**

*We love to hear about recent professional and community service activities by returned Peace Corps Volunteers and former Peace Corps staff. Include country and years of service and an e-mail or phone contact for confirmation. Send with ACHIEVE in the subject line to [alumninews@peacecorpsconnect.org](mailto:alumninews@peacecorpsconnect.org).*

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## IN MEMORIAM

We remember those within the Peace Corps community who passed away in the last several months, and thank them for their service to our nation. For a more extensive list of those lost in recent years, visit <http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/rememberingthoselost/>.

We welcome you to send information on additional members of the Peace Corps community by sending a message to [obituary@peacecorpsconnect.org](mailto:obituary@peacecorpsconnect.org).

### STAFF

Ann Barr, 8/29/15  
Jerome Kopp, 8/31/15  
Robert McClusky, 9/11/15  
Christopher Mason Mould, 7/10/15  
James R. Patterson, 9/23/15  
Stacy F. Rockwood, 9/23/15  
Jerome Allen Smith, 10/20/15  
Philip W. Steitz, 7/29/15  
Fred C. Thomas, 9/16/15  
William F. Whalen, 10/13/15

### MULTIPLE COUNTRIES OF SERVICE

James Walden Dufour; Nigeria, El Salvador; 10/15/15  
Tom Gallaher; Colombia, Samoa; 9/30/15  
Irwin Hertz; Poland, Chile; 10/1/15  
Nancy Morgan; Thailand, Togo; 9/2/15  
Roland Pelletier; Guyana, Grenada; 9/29/15  
Jacob F. Price Jr.; Liberia, Cameroon; 9/11/15  
Celine Schretlen; Cameroon, Jamaica; 10/27/15  
John Thomas Sheehan; Tonga, Solomon Islands; 9/11/15

### AFGHANISTAN

Alan Farstrup, 10/31/15  
John J. Wall Jr., 10/26/15

### BENIN

Michael C. Lewis, 8/27/15

### BRAZIL

Joseph E. Dewey, 8/16/15  
Stephen Hill, 8/31/15

### CHAD

David Calvin Girven, 10/17/15

### CHILE

Gail B. Johnson, 8/1/15

### COLOMBIA

Orion Culver, 10/15/15  
Samuel Johnson, 9/3/15  
Kathleen Ann (Kilday) Noland, 10/18/15

### COSTA RICA

Robert Arthur Newell, 8/25/15  
George Milton Trebour, 9/6/15  
Hunter Wells, 10/11/15

### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Charles Robert Calhoun, 8/4/15

### DOMINICA

Patience M. Kirkwood, 9/3/15

### EL SALVADOR

Gayland Alton Josephson, 8/13/15

### ETHIOPIA

Judy (Harrel) Minkus, 8/30/15

### BENIN

Gerald S. Solberg, 10/4/15

### GHANA

Francis Harvey, 10/27/15

### GRENADA

Jay Stephen Hammer, 8/28/15

### HONDURAS

Mary Virginia Pace, 7/25/15  
Susan Ripley, 8/23/15

### INDIA

Michael J. Mitchell, 10/27/15  
Roderica Jean "Rica" Laymon (posted 9/16/15)

### INDIA

Barbara McWilliams, 9/12/15  
Charles Startup, 10/10/15

### KOREA

F. Glen Odell, 9/20/15

### LESOTHO

Ruth Brody, 9/9/15  
Augusta Needles Field, 6/25/15

### LIBERIA

Rose Hilliard Burton, 8/27/15  
Sally Aspra Marks, 9/30/15

### MALAYSIA

Mary Beeson, 9/27/15

### ETHIOPIA

Marvin Weaver, 10/21/15

### MICRONESIA

Robert F. Craver, 9/6/15

### MOROCCO

Jeffrey Marks, 10/4/15

### NEPAL

Annette C. Slowinski, 9/20/15

### NIGERIA

Benjamin Alan Underwood, 8/31/15  
Marianne H. Shellhamer, 10/11/15

### PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Donald W. Spigner, 10/31/15  
Clayton G. Ross, 10/22/15

### PERU

Robert deGreef Jacobi, 8/31/15

### PHILIPPINES

Thomas Charles Aring, 9/26/15  
Ronald George, 10/20/15

### SAMOA

Ayn Cabaniss, 10/18/15

### SIERRA LEONE

Michael Dilberti, 8/9/15  
Joseph C. Hadden, 9/19/15

### LIBERIA

Harvy Henchy, 9/7/15  
Anne Marie Sobiecki, 10/25/15

### SRI LANKA

Sister Joseen Vogt, 10/18/15  
Verna Mae Taylor, 9/17/15

### SWAZILAND

Dennis S. Friday, 9/3/15

### THAILAND

Thomas Edward Morgan, 9/4/15

### TOGO

Jeannette Crim, 8/5/15  
Ralph P. Stredwick

### TUNISIA

Kevin J. Dempsey, 9/15/15  
Aggie Wild, 9/26/15

### TURKEY

John Francis Gallivan, 8/25/15

### COUNTRY OF SERVICE NOT SPECIFIED

Joyce Jett, 8/31/15  
Evelyn Joan Baker Koch, 9/24/15  
Gloria Jean Finnie Legay, 9/11/15  
Iris M. Martin, 9/6/15  
Rodney Trammell, 8/22/15

**Anita Ashok Datar** was one of 27 guests at the Raddison Bu hotel in Bamako, Mali, who died in a hostage-taking by terrorists on November 20. She was a senior manager working in HIV AIDS and reproductive health for a consulting firm, Palladium Group, and a co-founder of

Tulalens, a non-profit health group for women in India. She was 41 and a mother of a seven-year old son, Rohan. She served in Senegal from 1997 to 1999.



## Legacy of Peace

The National Peace Corps Association offers an opportunity for you to leave a legacy of peace by naming NPCA as a beneficiary in your will, life insurance policy or IRA. This is an opportunity for you to support the values and actions of the Peace Corps well beyond your lifetime. In addition there can be significant tax advantages to making a gift to NPCA from your estate. Learn more at [www.peacecorpsconnect.org/legacy-of-peace](http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/legacy-of-peace).



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# Next Step Travel

a program of the  
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October 2014

A woman in a white t-shirt with a red star and the word "JAZZLIDS" is kneeling on the ground, interacting with a group of children. She is holding a pink object and gesturing with her hands. The background shows a green wall with colorful handprints and drawings. Other children are visible in the background, some sitting on steps. The overall atmosphere is one of a community event or cultural exchange.

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