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# WorldView

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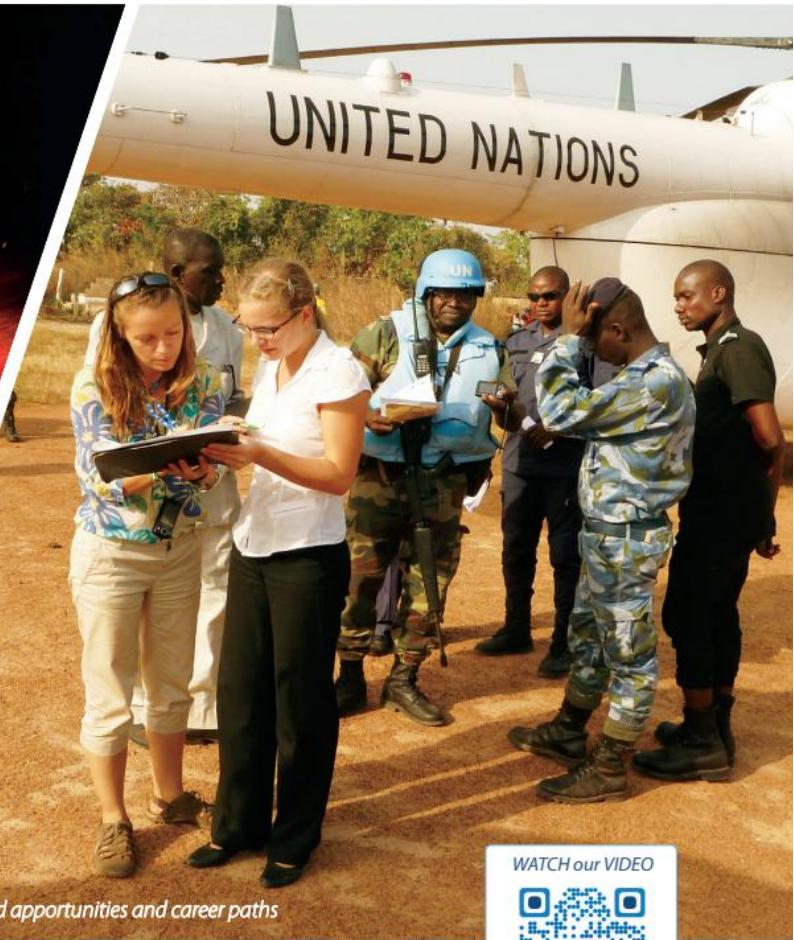
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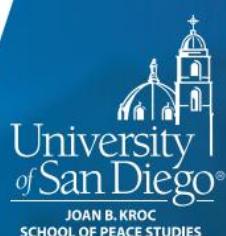
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# WorldView

A magazine for the greater Peace Corps community



AFOLABI SOTUNDE/REUTERS

**ON THE COVER** A girl stands in the doorway of an Islamic school in Zaria, a Shiite town in Nigeria's Kaduna state, where hundreds of civilians were killed in clashes with a government military convoy two months earlier.

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## CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITIES

I've discovered Alaska is not that far from Guatemala

By Glenn Blumhorst

*"So, what brings you to these parts?"*

It's a question I'm often asked when traveling around the country to meet other Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

No matter where I am at the moment, the answer is almost always the same—to connect with the Peace Corps community. As I write this column, I am connecting with RPCVs in Alaska, the 28<sup>th</sup> state that I've visited as NPCA president in the last three years.

Nearly 1,000 Alaskan citizens have served in the Peace Corps since 1961, and another 33 Peace Corps Volunteers are currently serving around the world. On a per-capita basis, Alaska is tied with Washington and Wyoming in ranking third among the 50 states for sending volunteers.

It wouldn't be surprising if Alaska RPCVs felt somewhat disconnected from the broader Peace Corps community. After all, it's a longer flight from "the lower 48" to Anchorage or Fairbanks than it is from Houston to Guatemala City. Yet, I found robust and active groups of RPCVs in the Anchorage and Fairbanks areas during my visit.

In a very different context, I also found a similar spirit when I landed in Guatemala City in 1988 to spend three years as a PCV in the village of San Miguel Chicaj. I discovered the power of community among the Achi Indians of the mountains of Baja Verapaz. That was the start of a career in community

development that eventually led to my return to the greater Peace Corps community a few years ago and landing here in Anchorage.

In their own purposeful way, these Alaska RPCVs are making an impact in their global community. Take folks like author Frank Keim (Bolivia 1966-1968) who taught for 22 years in indigenous Alaskan bush villages; then there is the 2003 Lillian Carter Award winner Tony Gasbarro (Dominican Republic 1962-1964 and El Salvador 1996-1998). Gasbarro oversees an extensive scholarship program providing support to over 200 middle school, high school and university students in El Salvador as a board member of the 30-year-old Project Salvador.

RPCV Penny Gage (Nicaragua 2009-2011) is deputy director of the Institute of the North, a think tank whose mission is to inform public policy and cultivate an engaged citizenry. Attorney Forrest Dunbar (Kazakhstan 2006-2008) is an elected member of the Anchorage Assembly. Marcella Hill (Bulgaria 1996-1998) at 86 serves on the board of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. These Alaskans continue to reflect their lifelong commitment to Peace Corps ideals.

By strengthening our local-national connection, we build an ever more thriving and impactful community. NPCA's two local affiliate groups, Alaska Returned Peace Corps Volunteers in

Anchorage and Northern Alaska Peace Corps Friends in Fairbanks, offered me more insight into how the national organization can help them achieve their objectives.

The NPCA's new open membership model, mission-driven approach, and strategic objectives match up well with the Alaska Peace Corps community's priorities. As a result of my visit, an effort is now underway to recruit Alaska's first Employer of National Service, in a demonstrated commitment to hire RPCVs and other national service alumni. Alaska RPCVs have become re-invigorated advocates for the Peace Corps, in part because Congressman Don Young demonstrated his support for a major increase in the Peace Corps in the fiscal year 2017 budget. Young is considered a moderate Republican and is the third-longest serving member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Alaska Peace Corps community, like the dozens of other NPCA affiliates, is eager to connect, engage and support Peace Corps community initiatives that educate and empower women and girls, increase access to clean water and sanitation and enhance our impact through human development in many parts of the world in urgent need.

---

*The author is president of the NPCA and served in Guatemala from 1988 to 1991. Contact Glenn at president@peacecorpsconnect.org*

# TIME TO BE BOLD

One of Peace Corps' founders says the agency must think big

*J.M. Ascienzo*

**F**rom a cafeteria on the 25<sup>th</sup> floor of One New York Plaza at the southern tip of Manhattan, with helicopter tours passing the windows to touch down and take off from landing pads on the East River, Bill Josephson is concerned about visibility, relevance and substance.

"Carrie Hessler-Radelet strikes me as the best Peace Corps director I've seen in a long time," Josephson begins. "She's committed to Peace Corps values, has energy, and has a good sense where the Peace Corps needs to go."

Josephson is not alone in his praise. Congress, former directors, and members of the Peace Corps community, in public and private, all give Hessler-Radelet similar, if not higher marks, and for good reason. The commitment, energy and vision that Josephson sees in the director has, in just under four years since Hessler-Radelet assumed the title of acting director, produced a legacy of reforms and initiatives for the agency to celebrate and build upon.

Though long overdue and not without controversy, under Hessler-Radelet the agency has made strides in reforming health and safety. The number of Peace Corps Response Volunteers—many working through the Global Health Service Partnership—increased by almost 40 percent in a single fiscal year, and are expected to continue increasing. Peace Corps Volunteers—the farm system of America's overseas assistance—have become so indispensable to the implementation of President George W. Bush's Plan for Emergency AIDS Relief, that this year the program supplemented the Peace Corps with almost \$50 million for Volunteers to carry out HIV/AIDS projects in 25 nations.

Furthermore, by the end of this fiscal year Volunteers are projected to re-enter all of the West African nations stricken by Ebola, begin service in Myanmar, continue to increase the number of Volunteers in Ukraine, and begin operations in Vietnam. Many countries regularly request more Volunteers or a program opening. And of course there is the skyrocketing interest in the Peace Corps, a result of recruitment and application reforms that resulted in approximately 25,000 applications in the last fiscal year, more than double the number two years before that and a 40-year high. Of those 25,000 applications a little less than 4,000 opportunities existed for Volunteers to begin service last year, leaving

at least an additional 5,000 qualified applicants—and communities—with an opportunity. With adequate funding and staff capacity, the Peace Corps has enough supply and demand to more than double.

Furthermore, the Peace Corps has been buttressed by a fresh wave of support. Rising calls for the urgent need to cultivate a national culture of service - backed by public opinion polls and led, in part, by former Gen. Stanley McChrystal and the Service Year Alliance - have championed the Peace Corps experience as a force multiplier for citizenship.

Congressional support—bipartisan and consistent—of the agency recently produced a Dear Colleague funding letter with a record number of signatures. Foreign policy expert Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), chairman of the Peace Corps' appropriations body and recent champion of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century "Marshall Plan" for the Middle East, has championed the agency as providing a crucial role in preventing and countering extremism. At a recent Peace Corps recruiting event at Kennesaw State University, Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), with Director Hessler-Radelet by his side, found himself answering questions on that morning's Brussels terror attacks. "The Peace Corps," Sen. Isakson said, "is the best kind of soft power." And writing in Politico, former Commander in Chief of U.S. Central Command Gen. Anthony Zinni and former NATO Supreme Allied Commander for Europe Admiral James Stavridis said, "Working together with the military, our civilian agencies—including USAID, the Peace Corps, the Millennium Challenge Corporation—are essential to preventing conflict and keeping our men and women in uniform out of harm's way unless absolutely necessary."

Why then, Josephson wonders, has the Peace Corps not received funding support from the Oval Office commensurate to Director Hessler-Radelet's achievements, historic supply and demand, and overwhelming public and Congressional support? Why, under a President who promised to double the Peace Corps during his 2008 senatorial campaign, did the Peace Corps shrink from 7,332 to 6,919 Peace Corps Volunteers while that same President has been in office? Why did the same administration that chose the Peace Corps as a primary partner of the First Lady's Let Girls Learn initiative also decide in its final budget package to request level funding for the Peace Corps? It cannot be

because the Peace Corps is expensive. At \$410 million, the Peace Corps costs a little more than three of the 63 F35s the President requested for next year.

"It's fair to say that Director Hessler-Radelet labors under some severe handicaps," Josephson says. "Perhaps the most severe is that while every recent president, Republican or Democrat, pays lip service to the Peace Corps and a goal of reaching 10,000 Volunteers, no president has put his money where his mouth is, and that includes President Obama."

"Reforms that have led to 25,000 applications are a significant accomplishment. However, that 5,000 of those applicants were qualified for positions but turned away for lack of funding is of even greater import, and this piece of information, as with other significant pieces of information, needs to be sold, and therefore needs to be seen."

"Politics," Josephson affirms, "is a question of visibility."

That Director Hessler-Radelet strikes Josephson as the best Peace Corps director since Loret Ruppe, who led the agency from 1981 to 1989, is no small compliment. The director he thinks bested directors Ruppe and Hessler-Radelet is Sargent Shriver, the standard to which 18 subsequent directors have been held—perhaps unfairly; it is worth considering, as Josephson points out, that the Peace Corps' first director enjoyed the support of a president who created the agency, and of a successor, President Johnson, who believed in it. That the Shriver standard towers and looms is not what concerns Josephson, but rather that perhaps no subsequent director has taken proper stock of how that standard came to be: the politics of Shriver—and Presidents Kennedy and Johnson—were bold.

Josephson knows a thing or two about politics. A graduate and current instructor in the Sargent Shriver Public Service Fellowship Program at the University of Chicago's Institute of Politics, Josephson, now 82 years of age, is a Peace Corps architect. He and State Department colleague Warren Wiggins co-authored *A Towering Task*, the policy paper that instructed much of the Peace Corps' formation, which they viewed as a successor to President Truman's Point Four Program. Josephson has been employed by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, directed Shriver's 1972 vice presidential campaign, worked for a number of initiatives under New York City Mayor John V. Lindsay and New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, and from 1967 until 1999 was a partner of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, an international law firm with approximately 500 attorneys. Yet he remains largely unknown.

Spending time with Josephson, you begin to understand why. Despite his decades of engineering politics, he remained largely in the shadows. The one opportunity that would have guaranteed his name a place in history—to become Counsel to the Defense Department in 1966—he chose not to pursue ("I had significant misgivings about the war").

That Josephson remains largely unknown may be a product of his profession. "It is not always true, unfortunately," Mr. Josephson says, "but lawyers are supposed to be advancing the interests of their clients, not themselves." It is also a product of his character and beliefs, and his character and beliefs are a product of postwar ideas. Those ideas—the United Nations, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan (which Wiggins worked for as an economist), the World Bank, the Agency for International Development, the Peace Corps—were idealistic and visionary. Their implementation and spirit had opposition from the American public, Congress, and the Soviet Union. In order to work, they required teams dedicated to collaboration and selflessness—teams of public servants—and political will.

For this article, Josephson made it clear that he had no interest in discussing "the good old days." But Josephson, thoughtful and deliberate, couches his most instructive points in parables and anecdotes derived from those days.

What Sarge and Wiggins and Wofford and all the rest did, Josephson instructs us, "was bold, and they sold it.

"If Director Hessler-Radelet is to sell the Peace Corps during the remainder of her tenure, then the Peace Corps need be bold, and the Peace Corps need be visible. And I don't just mean application numbers. I mean bold, visionary ideas. And I mean walking the halls of Congress like Shriver and selling those ideas to all 535 Members."

Josephson has been thinking of how to boldly utilize the Peace Corps. What if, Josephson ponders, at the beginning of the migrant crisis the Peace Corps had joined forces with other international volunteer organizations to form a Refugee Corps? Thousands of Refugee Corps volunteers could have worked in refugee camps in Jordan and Turkey, building schools and latrines and clinics, teaching democracy and music and hygiene, organizing soccer clubs, playing cards, exchanging culture.

What if, Josephson continues, the Refugee Corps became wildly popular, and spurred the creation of an even larger International Volunteer Service Corps? And what if that International Voluntary Service Corps' first mission was to serve in Ukraine? And what if the 5,000 qualified applicants who were turned away were instead used to help resettle refugees and migrants in the United States? Or what if those 5,000 qualified applicants were enlisted to become remote digital mappers for a myriad of crises, and their future Peace Corps invitation was contingent on their participation? What else could they do digitally? What else could they do in general? If they're qualified to serve in the Peace Corps, then certainly they could be of more use to the country and the world than waiting to apply again. How can they be put to work? How can it be repackaged? How can it be sold?

An international volunteer corps is not a new idea. Josephson himself had once been part of a team that

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- Jason Rhoades

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had conceived a similar volunteer corps. In 1965 Wiggins and Josephson wrote a paper that advocated the creation of an international volunteer organization to send thousands of volunteers to Vietnam, certainly to South Vietnam, in the North if they would be accepted, working in rural and urban community action programs. The theory was that so many young, international volunteers would stabilize the situation, because the North Vietnamese would be extremely hesitant to continue an insurgency that could result in the deaths of thousands of international volunteers. The idea reached the highest levels, including a discussion with National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy. "Johnson liked it. I'm sure McNamara liked it," Josephson says. And then?

"And then...."

"I don't often quote President Nixon," Josephson wryly concludes. In the fall of 1968 he and Shriver met with President Nixon to discuss the President's request that Shriver simultaneously become the United States Representative to the United Nations as well as the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs (Nixon's choice of Shriver was later vetoed by incoming Secretary of State Bill Rogers). The two offices had never been combined. After the three discussed the Vietnam initiative, Josephson looked at President Nixon and said, "This is quite an idea," to which President Nixon responded, "Well, you know in politics it's very important to be bold!" the President slamming his fist on the table as he finished the sentence. Josephson illustrated the Nixon gesture so effectively that the rest of the cafeteria fell silent.

Still Josephson wonders: Is there political will in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for a Refugee Corps? Will Sen. Graham's Marshall Plan need willing and able Americans to help facilitate it?

"These are bold ideas," Josephson continued. "The Peace Corps was a bold idea. There aren't enough bold ideas around. We need more bold ideas."

J.M. Ascienzo, RPCV Thailand (2012-2015), is a Government Relations Officer at NPCA.

## A Quaker heritage America returns peacefully to Vietnam Earning a degree by remote Gathering Congressional autographs

### PEACE CORPS PRELUDE

The roots of John F. Kennedy's Peace Corps sprang from overseas movements much earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the work of Brethren, Mennonite and Quaker religious organizations, President Harry Truman's Point Four Program to deliver progress in science and industry to developing countries, and the evolutionary successes of the International Voluntary Services that began a decade before Peace Corps. The soil for these roots came in President Harry Truman's Point Four Program to make "benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas." Early Point Four Program administrators saw the potential in people-to-people level work, as done by these church groups, and worked with them to establish IVS in 1953.

Much of the shape of IVS came from its first executive director, James Noffsinger, whose international experience began when President William McKinley sent him and about 500 other Americans on the steamer Thomas to teach in the Philippines, which the U.S. had recently taken from Spain as a colony. If that sounds a bit strange, it shouldn't. Noffsinger and company—they called themselves the Thomasites after the ship—were establishing the first public school system to teach democratic principles and develop a literate, English-speaking population.

In 1951, Noffsinger molded the IVS after his Thomasite experiences of decades earlier: two-year contracts to work in "people-to-people" community development, agriculture, and education projects. They were expected to learn the culture and language and live at the same level as their co-workers. This coalition

of historic peace churches sending volunteers to international service resulted in an organization founded in a philosophy of secular, non-profit and non-political development work and a moral and ethical mission to serve the disadvantaged in other countries.

In 1953, IVS sent two volunteers to Egypt to work at an agricultural training center and soon after, sent a team to Iraq. Laos was added in 1954; Vietnam and Jordan in 1955; and then Nepal, Liberia, Ghana, Cambodia, and Jordan. Over the years, IVS worked in 40 countries, though many programs were small and short-lived. Most of its funding was from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

During a 1960 trip to Southeast Asia, then-Senator Hubert Humphrey and a couple of congressmen—Henry

Reuss and Richard Neuberger—met IVS volunteers and were impressed by them and their work. Humphrey proposed a Point Four Youth Corps that evolved as Kennedy's Peace Corps.

Lawyer Bill Josephson and Warren Wiggins, a deputy director of Far East Operations for what was then called the International Cooperation Administration, drew on the mission and management of IVS when they wrote "The Towering Task," the document that guided the 1961 birth of Sargent Shriver's Peace Corps.

Noffsinger moved from IVS to work as an advisor to the Peace Corps. During the early 1960's IVS grew with agriculture programs in Laos and Vietnam. Eleven volunteers died or disappeared there during the Vietnam war. The inevitable political controversy followed. IVS pulled out of Indochina altogether and eventually revised its international mission. IVS eventually closed as a result of loss of funding.

Josephson, who helped steer Peace Corps through its early years as the agency's general counsel, is now a lawyer



KHAM/REUTERS

Peace Corps Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet and Vietnamese ambassador to the U.S. Pham Quang Vinh trade signed documents at the Government Guesthouse in Hanoi May 24. Applauding witnesses are U.S. ambassador to Vietnam Ted Osius, U.S. secretary of state John Kerry and Vietnam's foreign minister, Pham Binh. The historic agreement invites Peace Corps to send teachers to teach English as a second language in 2017, 42 years after U.S. troops withdrew from a controversial and costly war in Vietnam.

# FEEL GOOD ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN RACE.

For MPH student Elizabeth Toure, the word "community" conjures an unlikely picture: a bowl of rice with sauce. When she shared the dish with a group of women in Guinea, as a Peace Corps volunteer, she felt welcomed into their community.

Establishing community trust is central to breaking down barriers to advance public health and health education globally. As a neighbor, teacher and friend in her Guinea community, Elizabeth led reproductive health and family planning classes, went door-to-door to hang mosquito nets and even founded a girls' soccer team in the village.

Elizabeth joined the Peace Corps to challenge herself and help a community. Now she's earning an MPH from the Bloomberg School to change the world.

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in New York. He would like anyone who knows of Peace Corps Volunteers who served in Vietnam as International Voluntary Services volunteers or in any other capacity to contact him through his assistant at June.Little@friedfrank.com.

*Gary Alex*

## MASTER OF THE INTERNET

When roosters crowed on cold, damp dark Addis Ababa mornings, John Coyne was writing a few pages of a novel on his typewriter. His secondary school students weren't even awake yet.

Decades later he is author or editor of 26 fiction and nonfiction books, champion of the Peace Corps booklocker, the driving force behind Peace Corps Writers and a daily blog on Peace Corps debates, golf and Peace Corps writing of all kinds. He has enabled, promoted and brokered the literature of hundreds of Peace Corps writers from Peter Hessler to Sarah Erdman.

Now he's negotiating with an accredited university to offer Peace Corps Volunteers and returnees a Master of Fine Arts degree on the Internet. If you're interested, contact him at [jcoyneone@gmail.com](mailto:jcoyneone@gmail.com).

*David Arnold*

## HILL WORK

For more than a decade we have followed a democratic ritual on Capitol Hill.

As members of the House of Representatives circulate what they call a Dear Colleague letter to support a vote on annual Peace Corps funding, National Peace Corps Association advocates have urged members to sign the letter. Our members come to Capitol Hill from all around the country on our early-March Day of Action to knock on Congressional doors for signatures on that letter.

Ten years ago, we persuaded 46 members to sign on—43 in the House and three in the Senate. Over time, we've seen a steady increase in signatures,

regularly breaking records and becoming one of the most impactful letters of its kind.

For two weeks this year, our advocates went to Congressional offices in home districts, called their elected House and Senate officials, emailed and Tweeted them. It worked. We came together and were successful once again.

When the House letter was closed and Congressional staff went door-to-door to collect the signature stamps of those who agreed to sign, a record-setting 165 lawmakers added their stamps to what was an ambitious letter. This year's Dear Colleague letter urged the crucial House Appropriations subcommittee to support \$450 million for the Peace Corps—a \$40 million increase over President Obama's request for the same funding as the previous year.

This year's House letter was authored by five members of Congress. Four have served in Peace Corps and three represent California districts: Sam Farr (Colombia 1964-1966), John Garamendi (Ethiopia, 1966-1968), and Mike Honda (El Salvador, 1965-1967). The fourth was Joe Kennedy (Dominican Republic, 2006-2006) from Massachusetts. A fifth author was Florida's Ander Crenshaw.

On the Capitol's Senate side, previous letters had avoided quoting dollar amounts and vaguely urged "robust" funding instead. Senators Johnny Isakson of Georgia and Dianne Feinstein of California once again circulated a Peace Corps budget increase letter following that same outreach and mobilization strategy.

Thirty Senate sign-ons did not reach the historic boost we saw in House signatures, but coupled with the House, the 195 signatures were a record for Congress. But the total Capitol Hill support has created a solid foundation for our Peace Corps 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary Capitol Hill Lobby Day on September 22. That's when we begin to make the closing argument for the fiscal year 2017 budget cycle.

*Jonathan Pearson*

## SCHOOL FOR ALL CHILDREN

Ask your member of Congress to sign on to Bill 4481

*Ashley Wilson*

**E**ducation makes the difference. It builds lives, communities and economies. A child born to an educated mother is 50 percent more likely to live beyond the age of five. Each additional year of schooling can increase a child's future income by 10 percent.

For girls the rate of return is as high as 15 percent and the more schooling males receive, the less likely they are to become involved in armed conflict. For every additional year of formal education, the risk is reduced by 20 percent.

Despite the promise of these benefits, an estimated 124 million children—boys as well as girls—are not in school today. Some have never entered, many have dropped out under great community and family pressures, and in 2015 the schools of more than 80 million children were destroyed by rockets, bombs, and attacks by warring armies and the militias of non-state actors.

### A bill that benefits

To ensure equal access to education around the world—no matter where a child is born—Congresswoman Nita Lowey and Congressman David Reichert introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on February 4 the bipartisan Education for All Act of 2016 (H.R. 4481). The legislation focuses on the following principles: Reaching the 124 million youth and children who are unable to access primary or secondary school; improving the quality of education for those enrolled in school; and building sustainability and country independence.

The Education for All Act aims to develop a comprehensive integrated U.S. strategy that improves educational opportunities and addresses key barriers

to children's school attendance, retention, and completion.

It will help countries build long-term sustainability and country ownership, improve the transparency and accountability of U.S. investments in global education programs, and engage with key partners to leverage U.S. support for organizations like the Global Partnership for Education. The legislation also aims to assure a continuum of education services for children specifically effected by conflict and other emergencies.

**The bill focuses on reaching 124 million youth children unable to access schools and improve the education of those already enrolled.**

The political power of the bill depends on the support of other members of Congress. We are asking you as veterans of Peace Corps service, and those currently serving, to share your Peace Corps story while you ask your representative in Congress to co-sponsor H.R. 4481, the Education for All Act. It can and will make a difference.

Ken Patterson and Tom Sabella are staunch advocates of the bill's passage because of what they learned as Peace Corps Volunteers.

### Learning in a foreign language

"There was a primary school in the small village of Ourogo where I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger," says Ken Patterson. "It was a gathering place for the community, and most of the nearby children went to school, though not all."

Patterson discovered that the



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children in Ourogo faced tremendous barriers to get a decent education. Attendance was often sporadic in this southwest corner of the nation. “There were the kids who only made it sometimes because of the distance. They were being taught their subjects in French when none of them spoke French upon entering.” There were the “années blanches” when all of the schools were closed due to lack of funds, or teacher or student strikes. “For the girls, there were the societal pressures to stay at home and do household chores. And there were parents who just didn’t believe it was a good use of time, so they didn’t send their kids at all if they could avoid the authorities.

“At the end of the year, there were one or two who went on to middle school while the rest just went back home to continue life as though school never happened.”

#### The long road to school

Tom Sabella taught special education and general education in U.S. schools before he took his Peace Corps assignment as an environmental education volunteer in El Estor, a town on the shores of Guatemala’s Lake Izabal. Like Ken, his Peace Corps experience in a less-developed rural environment in another country now informs his work here at home.

“That experience exposed me to the realities of schools in most of the world. While the countries of Central America have good enrollment rates the quality of education is still a major issue. It inspired me to explore the issues of education access and quality for children around the world.

“I witnessed the discrepancies between education options in El Estor and some nearby villages that usually

only had a two room mixed-grade primary school with no secondary school. Beyond sixth grade, they had a long road to travel for every day of classes.”

Many of Sabella’s students were Mayan Q’eqchi’. “Mayan students in public schools were required to study all academic subjects outside their mother tongue,” says Sabella. “Only one private school offered education programs in Spanish and Mayan languages.”

The only school in El Estor offering special services for children with disabilities segregated them from the rest of the students. It was funded by a non-profit in Spain.

“This school did not have the resources to provide sign language instruction for several students who were deaf,” says Sabella. “Children with disabilities from villages outside of the town were only able to learn when the organization was able to transport them for occasional workshops.”

Whether you taught in a school or not, as a Peace Corps Volunteer you have seen the importance of education throughout your service. Now, you make a difference by asking your government to guide the future of global education in other parts of the world in strategic and sustainable ways.

Share your stories. It can and will make a difference in the world.

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**Ashley Wilson** is Communications and Youth Engagement Director for the Global Campaign for Education-US. **Ken Patterson** served in Niger from 1987 to 1990 and is Director of Global Grassroots Advocacy with RESULTS. **Tom Sabella** served in El Estor, Guatemala from 2002 to 2004. He is an advocate for the Global Campaign for Education-US.

AFOLABI SOTUNDE/REUTERS



A young girl joined Bring Back Our Girls protestors as they observed 500 days since Boko Haram insurgents kidnapped more than 270 schoolgirls in Chibok in northeast Nigeria.

## ABSENT FROM CLASS

**O**ne dark night, Islamist gunmen rode onto the campus of a girls' boarding school in a small Nigerian town. In a jihad against western schooling, they abducted more than 270 girls and took them away in white pickup trucks. More than a year later, most of the students are still missing.

The Chibok kidnappings make tragic drama of the need to *Let Girls Learn*, a U.S. government campaign led by First Lady Michelle Obama and backed by Congressional funding for a U.S. Agency for International Development program. That campaign marshaled the forces of hundreds of Peace Corps Volunteers to keep girls in school in countries where schoolboys vastly outnumber schoolgirls.

There are in Africa and other parts of the world many causes for the classroom absence of 62 million girls—forced child marriage, substandard schools, traditional social and family systems and dysfunctional economies ruled by old men with the wrong ideas about where girls belong.

Here we offer stories and arguments by a Presidential appointee, a public health researcher at Columbia University who once taught in Eritrea, a techie building the sneakernet in California, a Peace Corps Volunteer who discovered the power of the stage in the High Atlas mountains of Morocco, and the president of Water Charity, a non-government foundation that partners with the National Peace Corps Association to support dozens of water and sanitation projects from Cambodia to Zambia.

*The Editors*

# WATER SOLUTIONS

NPCA and Water Charity let girls go to school

*Averill Strasser*

In March of last year, the National Peace Corps Association and Water Charity joined together to implement community-driven development projects to be identified by serving Peace Corps Volunteers and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers throughout the world. We immediately began developing the program.

In the same month, the President and the First Lady launched Let Girls Learn, a U.S. government initiative aimed at helping adolescent girls in developing nations get a quality education that empowers them to reach their full potential. The Peace Corps, with over 7,000 Volunteers serving in the field, was designated as one of the key implementing agencies.

Our NPCA and Water Charity partnership has taken on a strong leadership role on water issues since the inception of the partnership between Water Charity and the NPCA. In less than one year we have implemented about 200 development projects in 35 countries serving over 200,000 people and there is more to come.

Some of these projects were conducted with Peace Corps Volunteers and others with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. Our partnership has implemented over 50 Let Girls Learn projects. We've implemented another 55 projects that do not fall under the official Let Girls Learn designation, but that carry forth the same goals and objectives to enable girls to remain in school.

## Water opens school doors

Access to a clean and safe bathroom is crucial for all children, but it's especially

important for young girls as they reach adolescence. In most developing countries, schools lack running water and bathroom facilities. This means girls have to return home to use the bathroom, often not returning to classes. In addition, during the time they are menstruating, they lack the sanitary facilities and necessary privacy.

Without running water at home, girls in rural communities usually have the responsibility for collecting water to serve the needs of their families. This often takes several hours per day, and leaves

province. The town of Svey Leu has a high school with 425 students. Nearly 60 percent of them are girls. Choi supervised completion of two new latrines and water systems that led to hygienic and sanitary conditions, as well as privacy, safety, and dignity. The latrines are for the exclusive use of the 246 girls in the school. Some of the girls helped complete the work.

We funded and provided technical supports for a more ambitious program in Albania where Peace Corps Volunteers Teresa and Graham Anderson completed five bathroom and water projects during

The broken water system of rotting and broken pipes began at a small dam that delivered a flow of unfiltered brown water to more than 14,000 town residents.

little time for studying, doing chores or pursuing recreational activities.

Clinics also present problems. Many of the medical services where girls and women receive their health care don't have running water—making the delivery of services difficult and unsafe. This is especially true for maternity clinics, where clean water is essential.

Water Charity and the NPCA decided to focus on these problems by supporting Peace Corps Volunteer projects. The volunteers have a unique perspective of living in the community and interacting with those affected, and possess the ability to work with the people to implement changes.

## Working in schools

The Peace Corps' very first Let Girls Learn project was identified by Ann Choi in a district in Cambodia's Siem Reap

their term of service. Their work led Peace Corps Volunteers all over the country to complete the first 25 projects in just one year.

One project supervised by Graham was a bathroom and water project for Pinellopi Pirro School where 900 students and 40 teachers had no sanitary facilities. The completed project includes all necessary piping, a water deposit tank on the roof, 12 toilets and 8 hand basins, and partitions and doors were put in to provide security and privacy.

Teresa supervised a similar project, building a bathroom with walls, windows, running water, faucets, piping for sewage and supply lines, a water tank and a pump for the 255 students at the Jani Bocova School.

The NPCA and Water Charity have continued funding for the rest of the



Workers rebuild a well and water system for the 14,000 residents of Lavie, Togo, supervised by Colette Van Dyke.



100 Water Projects in Albania, a Let Girls Learn program that has caught the attention of neighboring countries.

### An entire town in Togo

Colette Van Dyke directed the rebuilding of an entire water system for the town of Lavie, Togo. The existing water system of rotting and broken pipes began at a small dam that delivered a flow of unfiltered brown water to more than 14,000 town residents. According to the local clinic's registry, 127 girls suffered giardiasis, dysentery, diarrhea, gastroenteritis, or typhoid in 2014. The next year the number of girls slowed by such waterborne diseases rose to 169.

"The lack of potable water has a huge effect on students, especially girls, who are consistently absent from class due to our unsanitary water," says Colette. A bad water system makes it hard for girls to keep up their studies and that "jeopardizes their potential to graduate and pursue a career."

But the girls of Lavie have become major beneficiaries of the town's new water system.

### Giving LGL a 'Plus'

Shortly after the White House announced the Let Girls Learn initiative, NPCA's president, Glenn Blumhorst, proposed that we have a name for projects falling outside of the Peace Corps structure but well within the spirit of Let Girls Learn. He called it "LGL+."

Many Peace Corps projects were being identified that, for technical reasons, could not fall within their official Let Girls Learn program. The principal reason was that the Peace Corps LGL staff training effort had not yet ramped up to the point where Peace Corps Volunteers could be guided through the process. Peace Corps is remedying that limitation by conducting training programs for volunteers and staff.

Meanwhile, NPCA and Water Charity began to solicit project proposals from Returned Peace Corps

Before she started graduate school, she went back to Zambia to implement the Water for Zambia program



Colette Van Dyke directed the rebuilding of a broken water system for the town of Lavie, Togo.

Volunteers to advance the LGL+ concept. A large number of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers stepped up: Some had just completed service and others closed service as many as 50 years ago. They were given technical and financial support to return to their countries of service to implement projects. These LGL+ projects maintain the same goals and objectives with the same strategies to assist young girls to continue their educations.

Under our LGL+, the key missions

of the Peace Corps LGL initiative were further expanded to include projects with additional health, environmental, and economic benefits. For example, irrigation projects for school and community gardens were begun to provide increased nutrition, add to the food security of the community, and provide the potential for economic benefits.

### Zambia, The Gambia and Tanzania

While serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Zambia, Emily McKeone worked with

Teresa and Graham Anderson completed five bathroom and water projects during their term of service.

The volunteers have a unique perspective of living in the community and.... possess the ability to work with the people to implement changes.



The children of Myli, Tanzania have a health clinic and new water well compliments of Peace Corps Volunteer Mia Young and the NPCA-Water Charity partnership.

Water Charity to build three wells. During that time, she had identified safe drinking water as a major problem in the district's primary and secondary schools. Before she started graduate school, she went back to Zambia to implement the Water for Zambia program with the support of NPCA and Water Charity.

She proceeded to restore full functionality to the wells at Kaole Primary School and 12 other schools. Until she finished rebuilding the well at Kaole, many of the 2100 students were either not able to attend classes or couldn't stay in school for health reasons. Emily's work provided them with safe water for drinking, cooking, hygiene, sanitation, and gardening.

Pleased with her project, Emily realized that the rebuilt well improved health and sanitation, school attendance and education experience, and "knowledge of gardening and agriculture, food security, and community development."

Mike McConnell is managing trustee of the non-profit GambiaRising and a former Gambia country director. McConnell proposed another LGL+ project for a water well for the Fula Batang Senior Secondary School and he recruited a Peace Corps Volunteer serving in The Gambia to get the job done.

The well is now under construction at the school, but there are more

beneficiaries than students; the well also supplies water to a local clinic that offers maternal and child care and it offers clean water to the entire nearby community, reducing the time women and girls must spend hauling buckets of water to their homes.

Another great well-building project is now under way in Mtii, Tanzania, where Peace Corps Volunteer Mia Young is supervising construction of a clinic and dispensary.

She looks forward to the day when the dispensary will provide all health services and medicines for the citizens of Mtii, with ample water for hydration, hygiene, and sanitation.

### Moving Forward

The partnership of NPCA and Water Charity has proven to be extremely effective in its first year of operation. The entire Peace Corps community, including serving PCVs, RPCVs, and Peace Corps staff, have come together to provide a huge amount of assistance to those in need throughout the world, especially girls.

Funding for the partnership has come from foundations, corporations, and individual donors. To expand upon this base, NPCA has established its Community Fund, which includes the sub-fund entitled Water and Sanitation for Health. If you like the work that has been done to date, please contribute generously to help expand this effort.

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**Averill Strasser** is co-founder and chief operating officer of Water Charity, a 501(c) (3) nonprofit headquartered in California. He served in Bolivia from 1966 to 1968. Water Charity provides funding and technical support for water, sanitation, and public health projects around the world. Since 2008, it has implemented about 2,700 projects in 67 countries, the vast majority of which have been through working with Peace Corps Volunteers and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

# WHY MILLIONS DON'T LEARN

Discouraged by gender-based violence and child marriage

Gemma Wilson-Cark

**V**isualize for a moment a child in an isolated, poverty-stricken, and perhaps even a conflict-affected part of the world, a community with limited infrastructure and lack of services. Now picture that child as a 12-year-old girl whose brothers go to school while she stays at home to help around the house. Imagine a girl who is at risk of being married off to a man many times her age; who is denied the right to go to school simply because she's a girl.

It's not hard to imagine a girl like this. She's real, and we've seen her story many times. It's this girl—and the other 62 million out-of-school girls—that we have to reach. That's our ambitious Sustainable Development Goal to have all girls and boys in school and learning by 2030.

We know that this is possible. We saw progress as a result of investments made by governments to reach the previous Millennium Development Goals, and now there is almost an equal amount of girls enrolling in primary school as boys. But the most disadvantaged and marginalized girls still remain out of school. A poor girl from an ethnic minority living in a rural area is unlikely to ever set foot in a classroom.

Poverty and distance are the biggest factors preventing both girls and boys from being in school. However, both poverty and distance tend to have an even greater impact on girls than boys. For example, even where school tuition is free, there are additional expenses such as for uniforms, books or exam fees. When parents are deciding how to spend limited finances, societal expectations often

lead them to investing in their sons, in preference to their daughters.

## Victims of violence

Distance from school brings additional

problems for girls' education, especially for adolescent girls. With the danger of attacks and gender-based violence, if a girl lives in a remote area, her parents may fear for her safety on the way to

A poor girl from an ethnic minority living in a rural area is unlikely to ever set foot in a classroom.



A girl who ran away from a forced marriage in Baringo County, Kenya, is returned to her home for the wedding. Pokot custom is to give a daughter in marriage at the start of adolescence. The groom gave the family three camels, 10 cows and 20 goats in the exchange.



school and stop her from attending. This is especially the case in areas in conflict. School-aged girls in conflict zones are two-and-a-half times more likely to be out of school than boys.

Girls may be victims of violence at school. In Uganda, 78 percent of primary, and 82 percent of secondary school students reported having experienced sexual abuse at school. Globally, an estimated 246 million children suffer school-related violence every year, with the prevalence higher in areas affected by armed conflict.

Even when girls go to school, adolescence brings an added danger: this is the time when they are particularly prone to dropping out. In many parts of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, schools are not equipped to deal with the needs of

Education of girls is critically important, not just for the sake of the girl, but for the sake of economies and societies as a whole. More time in school allows them to acquire information and skills that lead to increased earning power. Estimates suggest that just one year of secondary education for a girl correlates to a 25 per cent increase in wages later in life than if she only had primary education. Educating girls has intergenerational benefits—better educated girls have fewer and healthier babies and they are more likely to seek medical help for their children.

Since many barriers to girls' education come from outside of the classroom, only a multi-pronged approach will work. Education staff need to work alongside those in health,

## When parents are deciding how to spend limited finances, societal expectations often lead them to investing in their sons.

menstruating girls—there may be no separate toilets, no water for proper hygiene. So the onset of the girl's period usually means she stops going to school.

### Confronting child marriage

UNICEF is working to break down the barriers keeping girls out of school. In Tanzania, we helped the ministry of education revise and strengthen a code of conduct and professional ethics for teachers. In Mali, we helped establish referral and prevention mechanisms in 104 schools in order for them to better detect and respond to gender-based violence.

Girls who attend school longer get married later and have children later. This is why UNICEF is supporting girls to stay in school in 12 countries as a strategy to end child marriage. In Bangladesh, for example, we've helped with the training of more than 27,000 primary and secondary school teachers to organize campaigns against child marriage.

social protection, child protection, and communication to help adolescent girls continue their education.

UNICEF is working to make schools more affordable, more accessible, and more responsive to the specific needs of both girls and boys. We are working with communities to empower children, adolescents and parents to become their own advocates for relevant, good quality and inclusive education.

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goal targets in education we need to invest in quality learning for both girls and boys. Governments and their partners must prioritise their investments in education to make sure that no child, no matter what gender, is left behind.

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**Gemma Wilson-Clark** is a senior education advisor at UNICEF who has worked for the UK Department of International Development and Save the Children UK.

## Letter From Morocco

Anooj Bhandari

I recently finished my service in Morocco working in youth development. I started out in Sidi Yahya Lgharb, a small community in northwest Morocco, and finished up in Boumalne Dades, a small town in between the High Atlas and Anti-Atlas mountain ranges in the Sahara Desert.

Although they look different based on their surroundings, each town has about 15,000 people and both are best described as rural towns based on farming economies. Both sites are pretty much entirely Muslim, but Sidi Yahya Lgharb is racially Arab and Boumalne Dades is Amazigh, or Berber.

The question of literacy of Morocco is a challenging one. The primary language in one town is Darija and in the other it's Tamazight. Neither language is written. That makes access to any education difficult and college—where instructors lecture in French or standard Arabic—impossible.

My assignment was youth development but like many other Peace Corps Volunteers in Morocco I quickly learned that problems of gender equity were knitted into the fabric of pretty much all of my work.

Traditional gender norms in these towns keep women in the household. This mindset was hard for me to hear during those two years. Even though learning in a government school can make the girls better mothers to raise strong families, many parents brush the importance of girls' education under the rug; If girls are destined to fulfill their role in the home, the house is the best place for them to stay.

Fathers, teachers, community leaders, and some of my own students told me that there was no value in giving girls an opportunity to learn. How could I change those attitudes? Did I have the right to argue with them?

### Unsafe spaces

The public and private spaces of life in these two towns are dominated by men and boys who maintain traditional expectations of

women and girls. For the girls, the community spaces—the distance between home and school—were uncomfortable and sometimes unsafe. Often, some parents did not trust their daughters to walk in those public spaces.

To avoid possible harassment, the girls who came to our classes would often ask us to change the places and times when we would meet.

Four girls in our youth development program emerged to serve as resolute allies in the fight to let girls learn in town. They were students at a nearby university, aged 18 to 20. And they were eager to serve their community and address issues of opportunities for women.

We met on Fridays and talked over potential lessons and joined discussions at a town center where the ministry of national development held literacy classes. These young women possessed natural leadership and it showed. They led discussions based on the needs of the women in the room, and often allowed the conversation to wander off-topic to let the girls of the town talk about their lives and what they wanted.

One day one of the students in a class on how to get a job came to me with tears running down her face.

I want to learn how to read, she said, so that someday I can pass that knowledge on to my daughters.

#### A dream in Arabic

The director of the community's cultural center proved to be one of my strongest



JORDAN EDELMAN

Bhandari sits with two children in the family that lives above Bhandari.

allies. She is also a part-time journalist, reading teacher, and member of the town's women's associations.

Together, we had directed two public programs called Girl Rising. Each time, she spoke about educational opportunities for girls. The second was her own Arabic translation of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

At the end of the second program two students stepped up to speak out.

With heads bowed, the two girls carried their chairs onto the stage and sat down. Both looked quite unsure of what was about to come out of their mouths.

We watched as they relaxed and, in turn, spoke. What fell from them were poetic stories about their fathers wanting them to stay home, insisting that an education was not meant for them, and how they pushed back and told their families that they deserved an education.

#### How it worked

I cannot write about community solutions and problem-solving without talking about the importance of theater and improvisation as a way to address issues facing girls and women.

These tools of public drama placed audiences in real-life scenarios of positive decision-making in order to experience individual and current issues and to feel what the future could be.

We sometimes used a theater device called Theatre of the Oppressed to present scenes of problems and conflict in the community to draw emotional support from the audience. Public instances of emotional support are rare but they occur. You can feel the changing, a softening of the air in the room as people consider their roles as supporters for those who feel oppressed.

Students discovered themselves. They would begin by looking at their audience, not knowing what to do. Slowly and softly they began and by the end they were telling their community they had to be in school and to stay there.

The notion grew that if there are all of these girls sharing their stories of triumph, there are also certainly girls within a yell's reach whose stories have yet not been told.

Along the way in my work, I met people who believe in equality and opportunity; young people who told me that when they have children, they will all be in a classroom; young girls telling boys they must respect them and feeling their own self-worth.

There are Moroccans who carry hope for the girls who are not in school and the girls who struggle to stay there. They are the reason that I felt value within my Peace Corps service, and the reason why girls should continue to be inspired, challenged, and motivated to consider the options that exist for them.

**Anooj Bhandari** served as a youth development worker in two small communities in Morocco from 2014 to 2016.

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# THE PUBERTY CHALLENGE

Finding ways to make menstruation acceptable in school

*Marni Sommer*

**M**y classroom in Segeneiti was packed with about 90 students, 3 or 4 crowded on each of the wooden benches. Many had walked an hour each morning from their villages where they had spent the night studying by candlelight.

I never understood how they were able to keep up with their homework. Especially the girls who stayed in school past puberty—with no latrines on the school grounds. How could they manage their sanitation needs, particularly during monthly menstrual blood flow? The Eritrean government was very concerned about girls dropping out at puberty; it was generally assumed that the girls would leave to get married.

Many years after Peace Corps I wondered about that assumption, and whether other aspects of the school environment might have also created challenges for post-pubescent girls. I wondered how the onset of menstruation (or menarche) might provide signals to her family or community that she had become a young marriageable woman who no longer needed schooling; or perhaps, that the distance a girl had to walk to school, and inadequate toileting facilities on school grounds, might create more hurdles in her pursuit of an education.

My doctoral dissertation examined the onset of menstruation in girls' education in Tanzania. I continue to conduct research on girls' experiences of menstruation and education in a number of countries, along with doing related program and policy work on the issue of menstrual hygiene management for

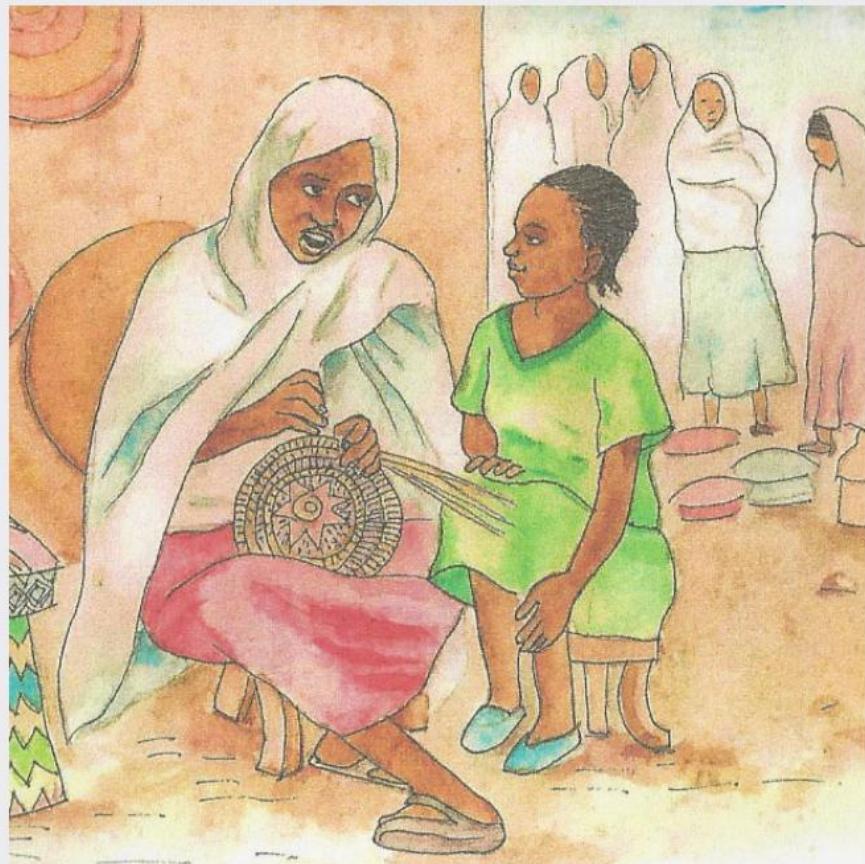


Illustration by Yared Olivelli from a book of experiences of Ethiopian girls written by the author and Dana Smiles and published in Amharic and English by Shama Books and Grow and Know.

girls and women across low- and middle-income countries.

There is increasing global interest in how the onset of menstruation may be impacting thousands of young girls' school experiences in low- and middle-income countries and how it hinders their ability to participate fully in the classroom.

More studies in Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Bolivia, Nepal, Cambodia, India, the Philippines and many other countries reveal that large numbers of girls are poorly equipped to face the consequences

of getting their first menstrual period, not knowing if the blood they see is a disease or something for which they would be punished.

Several years ago in Ethiopia's Oromo region a young student shared with my research team the on-going secrecy around menstruation. "The first time I menstruated," she said, "I had stomach cramps and I was very shocked! I told my friend that I had started menstruating because my mother did not tell me about it before. This is because my mother

never learned about it and it is very taboo."

Across rural and urban environments in many countries, girls have described the difficulties they experience trying to manage their monthly menstrual blood flow because their schools lack adequate numbers of safe, clean, private latrines with doors and locks on the inside.

They describe the challenges of sanitation facilities that lack easy access to water, and mechanisms for disposing of used sanitary materials. They also describe how the lack of practical guidance on menstrual management leaves many girls with unanswered questions about how often to bathe and change their menstrual materials—and about why they experience menstruation in the first place.

Girls have shared their stories about the lack of guidance and support they receive about managing menstrual blood flow and how coping with the monthly event prevents them from feeling confident and comfortable participating in the classroom.

### What girls want

When I ask girls how their schools can better help them as they reach puberty, girls from very different country contexts have said that they need improved water supplies, sanitation and disposal facilities, and practical guidance about menstruation, including details on what it is and how to best manage menstruation both in and out of school. They even suggest that schools supply emergency sanitary pads for those girls who get their menstrual period when they are not expecting it.

There are lots of reasons why millions of girls throughout low-income countries may be struggling in school but the issue of menstrual hygiene management is a significant barrier for girls. It has only recently been recognized and addressed as a factor impacting their education.

Schools across low-resource countries often are gender discriminatory environments when it comes to

supporting girls who are menstruating. UNICEF reported in 2013 that almost half of all schools in the least developed countries lacked adequate water and sanitation. Even schools offering what they describe as adequate water and sanitation may not provide a basic level of comfort for menstruating schoolgirls because those toilets and washroom facilities may be far from the classroom, unsafe, or kept locked.

Another big factor is the predominance of male teachers in many schools; girls are shy about asking adult men to be excused from class or for the key to a locked toilet. And for those girls who experience a menstrual blood leak on their school uniforms, many describe being too embarrassed or ashamed to return to class.

An important step forward in managing menstrual hygiene is equipping schools with adequate water, sanitation and disposal facilities. Another is to sensitize teachers to girls' menstrual needs and to educate both boys and girls about the normal changes in girls' and boys' bodies and to respect and support each other.

### Growth of a global campaign

Each year, UNICEF and Columbia University host a virtual conference on menstrual hygiene management in WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) which showcases new research, program and policy efforts across the low- and middle-income world to address challenges facing girls in schools.

One such effort has been the development and distribution by Grow and Know of puberty books in four countries. Each book is developed in partnership with the country's Ministry of Education, with content created after conducting participatory research with adolescents. The books in Tanzania, Ghana, Ethiopia and Cambodia include young girls' stories from each country about experiencing their first menstruation, and practical guidance on menstruation management.

Other organizations are developing puberty books as well. In a number of countries, policy makers are starting to pay attention to menstrual hygiene management in discussions of curriculum, water supplies and sanitary toilet facilities in schools.

Save the Children and other non-governmental organizations have developed school guidelines on menstrual hygiene management in many countries. WaterAid, WASH United and other advocacy groups are raising awareness about the need for more dialogue about menstrual hygiene management in schools.

Removing barriers to menstrual hygiene management in school requires various actors. UNICEF and Columbia University have brought together academics, non-governmental organizations, other U.N. agencies, donors, social entrepreneurs and the private sector to focus on transforming menstrual hygiene management in schools situation across low-resource countries in the next 10 years.

A global effort is underway to include targets related to menstrual hygiene management in school in the new Sustainable Development Goals. Global level measuring would influence what national governments focus on in schools in order to meet those annual targets, and help to transform schools in the coming years.

**Marni Sommer** taught English as a second language in Segeneiti, Eritrea from 1995 to 1997. She is an associate professor of sociomedical sciences at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. She focuses her research on adolescents, healthy transitions to adulthood, public health and education, gender and sexual health, and implementing adolescent-focused interventions. Her non-profit Grow & Know develops puberty books for boys and girls in low-income countries at [www.growandknow.org](http://www.growandknow.org)

# GIRLS ABDUCTED

The world's largest number of unschooled children are Nigerians

*Ambassador Melanne Verveer*

In April 2014, the militant group Boko Haram kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in northern Nigeria and held them hostage. Boko Haram, which roughly translates to "Western education is forbidden," sold some girls into slavery, and is believed to have forced others to convert to Islam and marry members of the extremist insurgency. These atrocities triggered global outcry. Now, two years later, some of the girls have escaped or been freed. Some have shared their stories with the international community, while the vast majority of the girls remain in captivity.

The plight of the Chibok schoolgirls shed renewed light on the importance of safe access to education for girls in Nigeria and beyond. As many as 62 million girls around the world lack access to basic education, the majority of whom live in conflict-affected or fragile settings.

In Nigeria, 10 million children are out of school—making it the country with the most out-of-school children in the world. Though significant progress has been made to increase primary school enrollment and completion, secondary school enrollment remains limited. Access to secondary education must become a top priority. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 75 percent of girls start school, but only eight percent finish.

The fact remains that educating girls is the single best investment that a country or community can make. Education is a tool for preventing early or forced marriage, lowering maternal and infant mortality, increasing financial independence, reducing fertility rates, improving health and nutrition outcomes for a family, and boosting economic growth. Simply put, when girls receive

an education, not only do they thrive, but their families, communities, and countries are more likely to prosper. When ten percent more girls go to school, a country's GDP increases on average by three percent. And wages rise 20 percent for every year beyond fourth grade that a girl remains in school.

Though the benefits to girls' access to safe and quality education are clear, persistent barriers remain for many girls in Nigeria and throughout the world.

## Barriers to Girls' Access to Education

Due to poverty, worries about personal security and persistent cultural pressures, families often prioritize sending boys to school instead of sending girls, because they believe that educating the son is an investment, while educating the daughter is not. In addition, many families resort to marrying their daughters off to avoid paying for food or school fees, to earn extra income, or because they feel that

**The fact remains that educating girls is the single best investment that a country or community can make.**

their daughter will be safer married and in her new home than she would be going to school.

The new husbands and their families often insist that child brides drop out of school to care for the home, making it unlikely that they will ever return. Child brides will never get to realize their God-given potential. In Nigeria, only two percent of married adolescent girls are

still in school. Even for girls who are not married, inadequate sanitary conditions and lack of private toilets force some girls to drop out of school on a monthly basis during the time they menstruate.

In addition to these persistent cultural norms, girls in regions of conflict often face significant and insurmountable safety and security threats that undermine their access to education, including sexual violence, acid attacks, kidnapping, and murder. The high-profile case of Malala Yousafzai brought attention to this critical issue. In these circumstances, families are often forced to make an impossible choice: to send their daughters to school and risk their lives, or to keep them out of school and jeopardize their long-term potential.

Compounding these challenges is the persistent issue of inadequate capacity. As families are displaced or flee from conflict zones into other areas—rural, urban, and refugee or IDP camps—schools must, rightfully, absorb swaths of new students. Oftentimes, these overburdened schools lack the financial or human capital to meet the needs of their growing student population. In Nigeria specifically, the pupil to trained teacher ratio is 150:1 in the most disadvantaged 25 percent of schools. Humanitarian assistance often cannot keep pace with the current rates of displacement, and inadequate funding in these contexts goes toward schools. As education straddles the funding streams directed to development and humanitarian crises, a funding gap persists. Moreover, as conflicts and crises worsen, the capacity of schools to deal with these challenges steadily declines.

All of these issues exist in the Nigerian context, particularly as families continue to be displaced from their homes due to



Children look through the window of a classroom destroyed by Boko Haram insurgents at Yerwa Primary School in Borno State's capital, Maiduguri. It was the first primary school in the northeast.

violence from Boko Haram. To counter these threats, groups across sectors and around the world are driving innovative approaches to advancing girls' education.

### Innovative Solutions

The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security recently released a report, "Private Sector Landscape Analysis of Nigeria: Empowering Women and Girls through Partnerships." The report was conducted in collaboration with Accenture Federal Services and maps corporate social responsibility and development initiatives on health, education and women and girls' empowerment among eight multinational corporations in Nigeria, and then identifies potential synergies. The authors recommend efforts to reduce redundancies and foster collaborations to leverage the work that is being done on the ground. Following this model, corporate partners can play an important role in helping to respond to the funding gap for girls' education in conflict-affected and fragile settings.

Further, the Institute is embarking on new research on the challenges and opportunities for effective action to improve access to education for

adolescent girls in conflict-affected settings. This is being undertaken as part of the White House's Let Girls Learn initiative in collaboration with Georgetown's Institute for the Study of International Migration and the REAL Centre at the University of Cambridge.

In Nigeria and beyond, groups are working to find innovative solutions to break down the barriers that girls face

*... as conflicts and crises worsen, the capacity of schools to deal with these challenges steadily declines.*

in accessing safe and quality education. To address the financial constraints and cultural norms many families face, governments like Jordan—with the support of the international community—have been able to waive school fees for displaced students. Nongovernmental organizations are making scholarships available for girls specifically to deal with the broader

set of costs—uniforms, books, shoes, stationary—associated with attending school. And in India, the government in Haryana created a conditional cash transfer program to incentivize girls' education, where mothers receive payment if their daughters are in school and not married by the time they reach the age of 18.

To deal with the lack of capacity in the public school system, children in places like Rwanda, Lebanon, Jordan, and Kenya are receiving nontraditional educational support. This comes in a variety of forms, from "catch-up" courses to accelerated learning programs, from courses in a variety of local languages to education orientation programs, and from open-source technology to distance learning courses.

In addition to investments in infrastructure improvements, we are also seeing innovative solutions to address the personal security of girls—like the "walking school bus" for community members to ensure safe passage for girls to go to and from school. In Lebanon's Beqaa Valley, a non-government organization runs a classroom in a bus, making use of a mobile learning center so that students have access to resources and services in their own communities.

Through the efforts of governments, the private sector, and such initiatives as Let Girls Learn, millions of dollars are being invested in innovative solutions to addressing the barriers to girls' education worldwide. These investments have the potential to pay huge dividends as these educated girls contribute to more prosperous economies, and reinforce world peace and stability. Only through increased support, prioritization and coordination across sectors can we truly let girls learn.

*Ambassador Melanne Verveer is the executive director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. In 2009, President Barack Obama appointed her to serve as the inaugural U.S. ambassador for global women's issues.*

# FLOATING YAK HAIRS

## Building tech for Liberia's fragile Internet

*Michael Gallaspay*

I recently learned of a new term: yak shaving. Yak shaving is what you're doing when you decide that you're going to clean out your cluttered garage this weekend. You take a look at the heavy boxes and that dusty old dresser and realize you'll need your dolly to move everything, but you remember you lent your dolly to your neighbor a few months ago. You call him and ask if you can come get it and he says sure, but can you bring over the Office Space DVD you borrowed while you're at it? You say yes and go find the case, but when you open it to double check you find you're staring at The Big Lebowski instead. You figure you must have lent it to your friend, so you call him up and he's delighted to hear from you, he was just going to call you because he needs help moving a couch... Later your brother calls you and asks what you're up to and you tell him you're shaving a yak. Why on Earth are you shaving a yak, he wonders? It's because you wanted to clean out your garage last weekend.

Yak shaving is a seemingly pointless if amusing activity. Yet it's the unexpected result of pursuing a distantly related goal—once you're done shaving that yak you can stuff the decorative yak-hair pillows for your uncle, and so on and so on until you can finally clean out your garage. Some mornings when I haven't yet left my bed and I'm listening to the sounds of traffic outside my window, quietly reflecting on my life as a software developer, I feel that I have become a professional yak shaver.

### Deep in the forest

In 2013, I set out for a small Liberian village deep in the forest, where I was tasked by the Peace Corps to teach high

school in a brightly colored and mostly leak-proof brick building sporting a corrugated tin roof. Some students walked to the afternoon sessions after working on their family's farm all morning. Others lived farther away, eking out a living in the village during the school week in order to attend, but returning by foot along a tree-threatened motorist's nightmare of a dirt road to their more distant hometowns on the weekends. Armed with a bachelor's degree in math and physics, an untested confidence in my ability to make positive change, and a few months' crash course on pedagogy and Liberia itself, I began to teach.

... the Peace Corps taught me that simple solutions don't exist for complex problems.

Of course, I found it challenging. My own shortcomings notwithstanding, the school itself often failed to meet the students' educational needs. Basic resources, like textbooks and stationery, were either entirely absent or not readily available. The teachers themselves were frequently not empowered to succeed due in part to lack of supporting materials or inadequate training. My naive ambition of churning out Liberian math geniuses was undermined by the reality of overcrowded classes, diverse ability levels, and poverty. Yet there was an unharvested source of energy that drove my students to school, to extra study sessions after regular class, to tutoring on the weekends. My students' curiosity and eagerness to learn fueled me through my personal challenges. I wondered if a shortcut existed between their untapped potential and the vision of a generation empowered

by education to make a better life for themselves and their communities.

As a self-described "computer person," I recognized technology as an effort multiplier. Judiciously used technology could shrink the resource gap from an unspannable chasm to something bridgeable. I had brought along a credit-card sized computer called a Raspberry Pi loaded with a snapshot of Wikipedia articles, with a vague plan of setting up a sort of public-use information terminal that ultimately went unrealized. But the idea stuck with me. My own community didn't even have a telephone, but one day when walking in a Monrovian market I saw an internet cafe powered by the cellphone

network. It was prohibitively expensive to browse Wikipedia and much too slow to use free educational sites with streaming video, but a stray yak hair riding a breeze landed on me and tickled my brain.

### Learning equity on a sneakernet

Naturally that's how I ended up a few years later making software for a nonprofit called Learning Equality. I'm shaving a yak so that I can stuff the yak hair pillows for my uncle and so on and so on until I can bridge the educational resource gap.

In places like Liberia, a few computers and the right software could become the library a school never had. A set of tablets can transform understaffed classrooms into student-centered learning environments with endless catalogs of digital exercises. A student can study world history, calculus, nutrition, or



## In places like Liberia, a few computers and the right software could become the library a school never had.

other subjects even when a teacher isn't available. And these are just the most elementary uses—the right application of technology promises to remember a student's past performance and respond to their interests to devise a personalized learning plan. It's the kind of thing we see emerging in the developed world with the convergence of massive open online courses and big data.

But the Peace Corps taught me that simple solutions don't exist for complex problems. There are still a lot of barriers denying technological solutions to developing countries. Among them is the fact that Internet access is virtually unavailable to many. But what if we could develop a system to share digital resources via the "sneakernet" of people carrying hardware and software into otherwise unreachable areas? This is one of the goals of software developed by Learning Equality—to spread education from hand to hand, tablet to tablet, like a viral video that jumps to different machines even offline.

Founded in 2013 by a group of University of California San Diego students, the nonprofit Learning Equality first developed free and open-source software called KA Lite with the blessings of Khan Academy, but no financial support. Khan Academy is a website that provides videos and exercises for individuals to self-teach a variety of subjects, from simple arithmetic to art history. KA Lite allows users to essentially host a clone of Khan Academy offline, and permit other devices like tablets and smartphones in the same offline network to connect to it, as well as making opportunistic use of intermittent internet access to download new content and upload students' progress.

Now Learning Equality is hard at work developing Kolibri, the next generation of free and open-source software to tackle the educational technology gap.

Kolibri will offer many improvements over KA Lite based on the feedback we received from users on the ground who have deployed KA Lite for use by millions of learners in over 175 countries and territories by our estimation.

Among the improvements are the possibilities of distributing arbitrary educational content as well as enhanced tools for sharing content offline, for instance, by allowing two different installations of Kolibri on the same offline network to exchange educational resources that one has but the other lacks. It creates the potential for a visitor to seamlessly upgrade the software in remote locations just by traveling there, and carry back automatically collected outcome data for subsequent analysis.

It's tempting to believe that the advance of technology will automatically solve these problems, or indeed that existing technology is already equal to the task. The reality is that complex problems must be attacked from many different angles and that existing technology has to be applied in previously unanticipated ways to come to fruition.

That's why I do what I do, shaving yaks in San Diego for a nonprofit developing software. My experiences have led me to believe that the most effective use of my skills to help my former students in Liberia is to tackle apparently distantly related problems in technology. Through a chain of reasoning, I see these as essentially the same problem. And when I'm done I'll finally be able to clean out my garage, too.

**Michael Gallaspy** is a software developer at nonprofit Learning Equality, based in San Diego. He served as a teacher in Liberia and returned to the United States to dedicate his time to creating tools to support educational opportunities for disconnected learners in some of the world's most remote contexts.

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Floods bury crops in one country as drought takes lives in another. Water - or the lack of it - is one of the threats of climate change. In our fall issue, WorldView looks at water and other challenges to our planet's climate in some of the places where we've served. We'll report on problems and solutions. We'll discuss who controls the Nile, the cost of a borehole and where those plastic bottles of Fiji water come from. And we'll ask the question: Who owns water?

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**APRIL & SARAH**

*April and her daughter Sarah* is a 30-inch by 40-inch archival inkjet photograph by Claire Beckett. It is part of a series called *The Converts* and is reprinted with the courtesy of the Carroll and Sons Art Gallery. The portrait was selected for the 2016 Outwin Boochever national portrait competition and hangs in the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. through January 2017.

*The Converts* is a project that explores the experiences of individual Americans who have converted to Islam. Beckett used a 4' by 5' view camera to create portraits of women and men who were not born into families practicing Islam, but have chosen the faith.

Beckett is on the faculty of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. She was a rural community health volunteer in Dassa-Zoumé, Bénin, from 2002-2004.

Her photographs have also been exhibited at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum in Hartford, Connecticut; the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City; and other exhibitions in the United States and the Netherlands. She is the recipient of an Artadia Award and a Massachusetts Cultural Council Grant, and was artist-in-residence at Light Work.





A Jordanian soldier stands guard in May over Syrians who have fled the five-year war in their own country and are trapped along the Jordanian border.

**T**he first time I visited Damascus was in August, 1983 in the middle of a hot night after an eight-hour journey from Amman. My friend Nathan Brown (now a professor at George Washington University) and I lumbered with backpacks to the one hotel we knew of only to find the hotel full.

Another nearby hotel also was full; the clerk shrugged and said Iranian pilgrims had taken all the rooms. At a third cheap hotel, the desk clerk shook his head and said there were no rooms.

"The Iranians," he explained. Looking at the clock which showed nearly 1 a.m., he invited us instead to accompany him to his apartment. He promised to bring us back first thing in the morning when we'd easily find a room. Out of options, we reluctantly agreed.

The desk clerk's sisters were still up watching television when we arrived at their small apartment. They warmed up food—I still remember the stuffed grape leaves, tabbouleh, bread and yogurt that

we devoured—and we stayed up talking until almost dawn.

The next morning the desk clerk helped us find a room. He and his sisters asked for nothing and we had to beg to convince him to let us invite him to lunch in the old city.

A few days later we bought tickets for the local bus to Palmyra, site of the ruins of the ancient desert trading center. We

**It is shameful that American politicians claiming to represent our best traditions seek to close our country off...**

boarded the bus just before it left and it was completely full—of Syrian soldiers in uniform. In August 1983 the U.S. Navy's battleship New Jersey was pounding Syrian army positions above Beirut, and the last thing we wanted was to get involved in any way with soldiers in Syria.

We started to get off the bus, but the soldiers insisted we board. Two got

up to give us their seats and stood the whole three-hour trip to Palmyra. They were as surprised as we were nervous when we told them we were American. There followed many questions about the popular television series "Baywatch" and "Dallas", the beaches of California and Florida, Texas, and German soccer. They could not have been nicer. The soldiers were going farther east past Palmyra. As we were getting off at the ancient city, the soldier who gave up his window seat so I could have a view the whole way said to me, "When you get back to America, please tell them we are not barbarians."

**Low odds of survival**

I hope that soldier and all his colleagues have survived the horrible war ravaging Syria for the past five years. Their odds aren't good. Around 250,000 Syrians have died (no one knows the exact figure). About eleven million from the pre-war population of 23 million have had to leave their homes to escape fighting and mayhem. They have fled Syrian government chemical

## HERE COME THE SYRIANS

Presidential candidates argue over 10,000 Syrian refugees. Why not 100,000?

Robert Ford

weapons attacks and barrel bombs landing on schools, apartments and hospitals; they have fled indiscriminate shelling by the armed opposition; they have fled the shocking brutality of the Assad regime and the Islamic State.

Of those 11 million displaced, about 4.5 million are refugees now living outside of Syria. Children have frozen to death in informal or ill-funded refugee camps. Food is scarce and jobs even scarcer. Women and children face sex-trafficking; a major ring was just broken up in Beirut. In the summer of 2015, hundreds of thousands decided to risk sea crossings to reach Europe; hundreds drowned when overloaded boats and life rafts overturned in choppy Mediterranean waters. The numbers, boosted by people fleeing Iraq and Afghanistan, are causing Europeans to question the entire European Union project. The UN has said it urgently

needs to resettle about 10 percent of the refugees—about 480,000 persons.

#### **Syria's huddled masses**

In response to this Syrian misery, the greatest humanitarian disaster since

#### **The American politicians railing against refugees are playing directly into the dirty hands of the Islamic State recruiters.**

World War II, President Obama said the U.S. would increase its intake of Syrian refugees from a couple of hundred per year to 10,000 in the fiscal year running from October 2015 to September 2016. Canada, by contrast, accepted 26,000 Syrian refugees between November and February alone. Still, even the American goal of ten thousand seems impossible.

Only about 1400 have been admitted to the U.S. according to the State Department.

Every Syrian lucky enough to reach the U.S. will face huge challenges. Few speak English; most have little more than a basic secondary education. The majority are women and children, and in Syria many women have little work experience outside the home. Their children likely have had no access to school for several years. They will need support in their first years here, and it will have to come from taxpayers and charities that step forward to try to catch people falling through the cracks. It usually takes several years for refugees to be fully independent before they can contribute to the broader economy.

We shouldn't be surprised or angry that Syrian refugees will arrive needing a

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hand at the start. The ode at the base of the Statue of Liberty doesn't say, "Give me your rich businessmen and your middle-class, college-educated, trilingual engineers and doctors." Instead, the Statue of Liberty calls for the Old World to "send your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shores, the homeless and storm-tossed to me..."

It is shameful that American politicians claiming to represent our best traditions seek to close our country off instead of offering help to these refugees who already have suffered more than almost any American mercifully will ever endure. The politicians claim it is for security reasons even though, unlike

**It is not a coincidence that both the Islamic State and an al-Qaida affiliate in Somalia have posted recruitment videos on line that feature Donald Trump.**

Europe, refugees from Syria don't come overland but rather on aircraft after long, time-consuming screening.

These Syrian refugees don't squat at railroad stations in Greece or march through fields in the Balkans; they board aircraft with packets full of papers after thorough background checks.

The U.S. has accepted more than 150,000 Iraqi refugees in the past 10 years. Out of that number, only 5 have been arrested for terrorism-related offenses, and only two were arrested in connection with an immediate plot against Americans.

Was there zero threat? No, there is never zero threat.

Does this mean the U.S. should not accept refugees? No; to barricade ourselves against victims of violence does violence to our own national psyche and our own national security by violating our own fundamental principles.

The American politicians railing against refugees are playing directly into the dirty hands of the Islamic State

recruiters. The Islamic State seeks to paint its conflict against us as one between the hateful Christian West, going back to the Crusades, and Muslims. It is not a coincidence that both the Islamic State and an al-Qaida affiliate in Somalia have posted recruitment videos on line that feature Donald Trump. Strategically it makes no sense to undertake U.S. Air Force bombing missions and deploy U.S. special operations forces against the Islamic State while facilitating Islamic State recruitment by targeting Muslim refugees. We are undermining our own military effort.

That is why I co-signed a letter last autumn with other former administration officials urging the president to marshal the resources to enable 100,000 Syrian refugees to come to the United States promptly. We will need more screeners, processors, and human services personnel; we will need more funding. To those who say we can't afford it, I remind them that F16s and special operations forces are expensive, too.

We didn't ask for this fight but we have it. Therefore, our military right hand must be in sync with our political statecraft left hand. And even beyond that, as the statue in New York harbor reminds us, taking in many, many more refugees in the hour of extreme crisis is consistent with our country's most basic values—it is worthy of the nation we aspire to be.

---

**The author** served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco from 1980 to 1982. He is a Middle East Institute scholar and Yale University senior fellow. He served the last three years of a 30-year career in the State Department as the last U.S. ambassador to Damascus and retired in 2010. In 2012 he received a Presidential Honor award, the Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Award, and the 2012 Profile in Courage award from the John F. Kennedy Library. His earlier diplomatic posts included Algeria, Iraq, Bahrain, Cameroon, Egypt and Turkey.

## A CAMERA IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

*The Self-Forging of a Banana Republic*



*Kevin Coleman*

## A Camera in the Garden of Eden

*The Self-Forging of a Banana Republic*

BY KEVIN COLEMAN

This pioneering contribution to visual culture studies reveals how banana plantation workers and their families used photography to visually assert their identities and rights as citizens, despite being outmatched by a powerful multinational corporation.

16 color and 98 b&w photos

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# THE BANANA WORKERS

## Discovering Rafael Platero Paz and his photographs

*Kevin Coleman*

**E**arly in my research for the book that became *A Camera in the Garden of Eden*, I went looking for photographs of the 1954 banana workers' strike in Honduras. I had seen pictures of the strike reprinted in magazines, newspapers, and books, but I had not been able to figure out who had taken those shots.

Because *El Progreso* was the epicenter of both the Honduran labor movement of the 1950s and the campesino movement of the 1960s and 1970s, I began working through the internal records of the local municipal government and of the Jesuit priests who had been based in *El Progreso* since 1946. I also conducted a series of oral history interviews, attempting to understand the confluence between popular Catholicism and the iconography of the subsistence farmers who had created one of the most successful movements for agrarian reform in Central America. They had helped Honduras to head off, at least according to the traditional historiography, the crisis that convulsed the rest of the region in the 1980s.

As I went along, I would ask people where I might find photographs of the 1954 strike. Several of my interviewees pointed me to Juan Bendeck, the son of immigrants from Palestine and the owner of *TeleProgreso*, a local television station: "Don Juan has lots of old pictures!"

So one day, I took a taxi out to the offices of *TeleProgreso* to see if I could meet Don Juan. As I walked into the studio, I immediately saw the kinds of pictures that I had been yearning to see.

On the walls, some two dozen framed black-and-white photographs hung with brief captions that narrated the history of *El Progreso*, including, at long last, photographs of the workers on strike in 1954.

After looking at a couple of pictures, I walked up to the receptionist, introduced

myself, and asked if it might be possible to get an appointment with Juan Bendeck. She hesitated and asked me some questions.

As I described my interests, a middle-aged man interrupted me from behind the receptionist. "Those pictures aren't Don Juan's," he said. "They were taken by my grandfather. Everybody thinks that these photos are Don Juan's."

It had been only a few minutes since I had asked about the pictures, and already the key issues—of who owned

himself as Oswaldo Castillo, the manager of the TV station.

Together Oswaldo and I looked at the photographs on the wall. He explained that his mother had curated an exhibit in *El Progreso's Casa de la Cultura* to display these photographs. She had selected which images would be presented and had written the captions. Image production seems to run in the family: his grandfather was the town's first studio photographer, his mother displayed the images that her father had taken, and



Banana plantation workers on strike in Honduras, 1954. A studio photographer in *El Progreso* named Rafael Platero Paz documented the historic strike and the life of a town run by United Fruit Company.

the images, who had produced them, and who cared for them—forcefully presented themselves. From behind the large desk, the confident man in an apricot-colored shirt and black trousers introduced

Oswaldo was now the manager of the local television station and the host of his own TV show.

Oswaldo then took me back into the studio so that we could talk some more.

As we sat on the set of TeleProgreso, with a backdrop that simulated a window looking out at the clock tower in the Plaza Ramón Rosa, he began to tell me about the station—whose corporate slogan is “The Channel of Our Identity”—and about his grandfather, Rafael Platero Paz. After a while, he suggested that we drive over to his mother’s house so that she could tell me about her father, the photographer.

Oswaldo’s mother, Profesora Aída López de Castillo, is a retired schoolteacher, a dedicated local amateur historian, and the guardian of the photographs that her father took over the course of more than 50 years of working in El Progreso. She greeted us at the front door and brought us out onto her patio to chat. After we got to know each other a little, she took me into a part of the house that she had converted into a small dressmaking shop that opened onto the main street. On the walls, she had displayed her father’s pictures, with a short description carefully affixed to the bottom of each one. I was taken by the breadth of subject matter depicted, from the photographs of political events that I had just seen displayed on the walls of TeleProgreso to the pictures of local beauties that I was now being shown. We continued talking, and she brought out some family albums with pictures of her father.

An hour or so later, she led me through the house and into a non-operational bathroom that the family had converted into a vault. In the dry shower stall, Profesora Aída showed me 10 cardboard boxes, each 10 × 12 × 24 inches. She opened a couple to reveal that each was chock-full of thin negatives and occasional paper prints. I would estimate that each box contained at least 500 negatives. The next day, I was to board a plane to return to the United States. My three months of exploratory research had come to an end.

As an artisan and an entrepreneur, Rafael Platero Paz dedicated 57 years to documenting everything from children receiving their First Communion to the 1954 banana workers’ strike. With

his photos, he enabled a racially and ethnically diverse labor force—including women, subsistence farmers, and children—to inscribe themselves as honorable, respectable participants in the construction of a new national imaginary.

When Platero Paz died he left everything—including the ten boxes of prints and negatives as well as three of his old cameras, some lenses, receipts, and other equipment—to his daughter, Aída Dolores López de Castillo. As an amateur historian, Profesora Aída has published several pamphlets on the local history of El Progreso.

She took a keen interest in my project and would subsequently help me as I struggled to understand the links between

visuality, the local and transnational agents of capitalist development, and the ways that working-class people have sought to gain a measure of autonomy over their own lives.

Within a year, I was back in El Progreso, digitizing nearly two thousand negatives on Profesora Aída’s back porch and interviewing her about the content of the images.

---

**Kevin Coleman** is assistant professor of Latin American history at the University of Toronto. He served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Honduras from 1997 to 1999. The above is an excerpt from his book, *A Camera in the Garden of Eden*, published by the University of Texas Press.

## POETRY

# What I remember from that country I loved

*The little block house I lived in,  
and the rainwater I captured off my roof,  
and my three-burner stove,  
which, awaiting your arrival from the orchid field,  
I lit one afternoon with a match from the book  
you'd given me, its fire golden and blue.  
The sound my teakettle made  
was like the hum of Semuc Champey's waters  
as they rushed to the mouth of the Cahabón Cave,  
which welcomed them as we welcome  
what we most want to devour,  
with a silence like our blood makes in our bodies,  
like our dreams make when we wake.*

---

**Mark Brazaitis** is the author of seven books, including *The River of Lost Voices: Stories from Guatemala*, winner of the 1998 Iowa Short Fiction Award. He served as a Peace Corps Volunteer (1990-93) and technical trainer (1995-96) in Guatemala.

# VINEGAR WARS

## Modern methods join Lebanese tradition

*Lawrence Diggs*

**W**hen I first entered the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon it was hard to imagine that war-torn Syria was so close. The peacefulness of this beautiful valley hid the ugliness of the war that raged within a few hours drive.

Strangely enough, however, the war in Syria is part of the reason I came to Lebanon. Vinegar is a crucial ingredient in the production and preservation of food, especially in the Middle East. The Syrians were major manufacturers and exporters of vinegar to the Middle East region, but now that their country was at war, exports of vinegar had evaporated like vinegar splashed on a desert baked tin roof.

Lebanon's vinegar producers are eager to fill this vacuum but they've been unable to consistently produce the quality of vinegar demanded by the regional market; Their vinegar was being rejected by customs officials at the borders of their

Middle Eastern neighbors.

I've built a career helping people make vinegar out of anything that has enough sugar or starch. That's why the U.S. Agency for International Development's Farmer-to-Farmer program asked me to consult with Lebanon's vinegar producers.

I'm the author of a textbook on vinegar and I've consulted with people on all things vinegar. In 1999, I created the International Vinegar Museum in the small, quiet out-of-the-way town Roslyn, South Dakota. That's how I came to the attention of the Farmer-to Farmer Program. They asked me to help the vinegar makers in Lebanon.

I made two trips. The first was organized by the Farmer-to-Farmer program which is a public/private effort with Land-o-Lakes, Development Alternatives Incorporated and USAID. The second was organized by Development Alternatives Incorporated and USAID.

Landing in the middle of the night in

Lebanon is a blessing because the daytime traffic feels more like a linear parking lot than a highway. The relative absence of streets laid out on a grid system is disorienting. It requires rethinking how one negotiates space.

**They had earned the right to every inch of ground they stood on. They simply lacked the nuances of how to make better vinegar**

When we headed into the countryside, my hosts were constantly checking security conditions. Everyone knew things could turn volatile without warning. The heavily armed guards at checkpoints were a constant reminder that we were in a war zone.

The vinegar makers I met in Lebanon are well-educated. They have real-life stories written in their faces and hands. They've earned the right to every inch of ground they stand on. They simply



A village on the edge of the Beqaa Valley.

lacked the nuances of how to make better vinegar.

World-class wine is produced in Lebanon. Vinegar making is another time-honored tradition, but the processors were using materials, equipment and techniques that rendered their product noncompetitive in the markets outside of Lebanon. To make matters more challenging, recent changes in their national laws concerning vinegar means they could lose their local markets as well.

Lebanon's vinegar producers range from small farmers to food manufacturers with sophisticated equipment. Those I met were intent on improving their product, but they didn't understand some of the fundamentals critical to modern vinegar making.

Most of the vinegar in Lebanon is made from apples and grapes. Some of the people I worked with are growing their own apples in a co-operative. Many buy their grapes and apples from others. But the supply and prices of these local fruits can be spotty and inconsistent.

While they had equipment to process their apples and grapes, the conditions and methods under which these fruits were processed meant that much of the vinegar value was being lost.

They were making vinegar in large glass jars, 50-gallon plastic barrels, or epoxy-coated cement tanks. While any of these could work under the right conditions, the right conditions were rare.

Some of the equipment being used contributed to metal and chemical contamination of their vinegar. The signs of that deterioration were in plain sight if you knew what to look for. Few processors were creating the right conditions to make good vinegar. Unwanted organisms were attacking the juice before the sugars could be converted to vinegar, potentially producing undesirable tastes.

There are organisms like vinegar eels that, while harmless to people, are considered contaminants by health officials in many countries. These organisms can be seen with the naked eye, but only if you know how and where

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to look. Getting rid of them is not so difficult, but getting rid of them will not happen if you don't know they even exist.

Trying to impart so much information in such a short time to so many people who live and work in various parts of the country wasn't possible with one trip. Since many of the producers had less than an hour with me, and so many demonstrated lack of basic knowledge of modern vinegar making, it was clear that I needed to come back.

The second trip attempted to move towards a remedy. A full day workshop on modern vinegar making was presented. Trips around the country to see more vinegar production facilities were organized. Another full day workshop with an apple farmer's coop was also presented.

### I asked him to show me a bottle of his cloudy vinegar. I could see the vinegar eels floating on top

These workshops and visits allowed me to give more individual attention to the problems and objectives of the producers.

It was gratifying to see the progress they made since my first visit. Some producers have torn out cement walls to make way for a new approach to making vinegar. One producer has imported a small modern vinegar-making machine, an acetator, to try making vinegar using a submerged fermentation method.

American University in Beirut staff I met on the first trip have begun helping the farmers. New people were hired to work directly with me on the project.

In between the meetings and

workshops, with the help of the driver/guide I was provided, I was able to see a bit of the underbelly of Lebanese culture and got a quick view of the day-to-day life in Lebanon. We drove into mountains and valleys. I observed economically deprived neighborhoods that reveal the struggles poor people deal with daily.

Some of the vinegar producers introduced me to Lebanese cuisine and Lebanese hospitality. Lebanon is a foodies paradise. I experienced many new flavors, smells and the rituals of enjoying Lebanese food. One of my favorites is the labneh, which is somewhere between yogurt and cream cheese. I was surprised how much they use flowers in flavoring food. And when they make sandwiches with grilled meats, they innovate.

When I saw Muslims and Christians working side by side, joking freely with one another, it made me wonder how the world works and why we focus on dysfunctional sociopaths as examples of human nature. The people I have met in Lebanon have found ways to work together despite the perceived difficulties.

I continue to research solutions for the vinegar makers of Lebanon. I see the designs and workflow suggestions I made taking shape. But the real test of the value of my efforts will be in seeing new and better vinegar and vinegar products being made efficiently and profitably.

The spirit of Lebanese people determined to rebuild their country was palpable. It felt good to add a small puff of wind to their sails. I am committed to helping Lebanese producers make better vinegar.



## EVENTS

### National Day of Action\*

Join fellow RPCVs on Capitol Hill to advocate for a bigger, better Peace Corps  
**Location:** Capitol Hill  
**Date:** September 22, 2016

### Affiliate Group Network Annual Meeting

**Location:** TBD  
**Date:** September 22, 2016

## WASHINGTON, DC

### Peace Corps Beyond-Conference\*

**Location:** George Washington University  
**Date:** September 23-24, 2016

### NPCA Walk for Peace\*

**Location:** walking route through downtown  
**Date:** September 25, 2016

\* Save the date! Registration will open shortly

**Lawrence Diggs** is the founder of the International Vinegar Museum in Roslyn, South Dakota. Visit: [vinegarman.com](http://vinegarman.com), [internationalvinegarmuseum.com](http://internationalvinegarmuseum.com). He established emergency medical services while a Peace Corps Volunteer in Burkina Faso from 1979 to 1981. 30 years later that government gave him a medal of honor with gold stars and a bronze stallion for launching the nation's emergency medical system.

# GROUP NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

A look at what NPCA affiliate groups are up to

By Jonathan Pearson

## SCHOOL FOR TAILORS

The small rural town of Petauke in Eastern Zambia will have a tailoring school thanks to the efforts of the **Western North Carolina RPCVs**. Member Katie Ryan recently mentored Matildah Zulu, a young and talented tailor in Petauke. She sews suits, dresses and school uniforms made out of the traditional chitenge cloth on her 2 treadle



MARTIN SICKLE

sewing machines. Matildah wanted to teach other girls who didn't finish school and want to gain financial independence. So about 50 members of the North Carolina group attended a fundraising dinner in Asheville and raised the school's \$2,000 start-up the costs: Matildah will become a certified instructor, buy five new sewing machines and a computer and market the new school. Matildah and her husband will chip in \$1,000 to rent temporary classroom space.

## GEORGIA ON THEIR MINDS

Our affiliate, the **Megobari Foundation**, joined forces with the American Friends of Georgia to support projects in Georgia and build networking between the friends group and younger Georgia RPCVs. They recently supported Biliki, a charity that helps Georgia's orphans and street children. The American Friends of Georgia's chief executive officer and its vice president, Sharon Miles, spoke to

a group of Megobari members recently. Miles is the wife of Richard Miles, the former U.S. ambassador to Georgia. See [megobari.org](http://megobari.org) or [afgeorgia.org](http://afgeorgia.org).

## CYCLONE RELIEF

Within a few days of the devastating category-5 cyclone that struck Fiji in February, **Friends of Fiji** set up a fund on its website and within several days raised \$5,000 among its members. Days later they organized a Kava night fundraiser at the Renaissance Hotel Dupont, in Washington D.C. where RPCVs got a taste of the island's traditional and ceremonial drink that's based on the pepper plant. Two weeks after the destruction, they had raised a total of \$13,000 for the rebuilding fund. Currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers and local community groups can request funding of reconstruction projects. Funding applications can be found at [fofiji.org](http://fofiji.org).

## LIFELONG LEARNING

The University of Dayton's Lifelong Learning Institute organized six sessions on the Peace Corps experience with lots of help from the **Southwestern Ohio Returned Volunteer Organization**. A dozen presenters participated in the six sessions of the RPCV seminar and discussed how to prepare for Peace Corps, in-country living conditions and local cultures, and how the experience changed their lives. Speakers included former Ohio Governor Bob Taft and former Ohio Congressman Tony Hall.

## TALLAHASSEE GLOBETROT

In partnership with the Florida State University Peace Corps Club, the **Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of North Florida** hosted a Third Goal event in early March to kick off the 55th anniversary year and Peace Corps week. RPCVs who served in nine countries joined the "March around

the World." They exhibited and discussed their art at the university's "The Globe" as students and community members visited each country around the room. FSU's Peace Corps Club was established in 2015 to inform students about the Peace Corps mission and promote a more diverse view of the world.

## GIRLS AT UNIVERSITY

**Friends of Pakistan USA** continues to award school scholarships to young women. The group provides two-year scholarships to six women each year. The program is conducted in cooperation with the government girls degree colleges in Rerra, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The scholarships enable the women to prepare for university level studies study at the 13th and 14th grades.

## STRONG START IN SOUTHERN OREGON

One of our newest affiliates has started off with lots of energy and commitment. The **Southern Oregon Returned Peace Corps Volunteers** held a storytelling event late last year and raised \$1,900 for disaster relief and at the suggestion of Vanuatu RPCV Willow Denker raised another \$2,000 by January for a water storage project. For Peace Corps Week they showcased books about the Peace Corps at their local library and hosted a panel of book talks featuring five members.

## THREE NEW AFFILIATE GROUPS

Our list of affiliate groups continues to grow. The National Peace Corps Association's board of directors is pleased to welcome the following groups to our network: The newest approved groups are the **Peace Corps Nigeria Alumni Foundation**, the **Peace Corps Association of Southwest Michigan**, the **Green Mountain RPCVs of Vermont**, and the **RPCVs at USAID**.

# AS NEPAL CHANGES

An urgent quest to document its past

*Duane Karlen*

Doug Hall and Kate Rafferty Hall served in Nepal in the 1960s and two years ago began collecting, digitizing and cataloguing hundreds of Nepal photographs taken by Peace Corps Volunteers between 1962 and 1975. Many are the only photographs taken in villages and rural areas outside of Kathmandu, the capital.

Doug says their project has taken on new urgency because it documents profound changes taking place in Nepal that affect almost every aspect of everyday life.

The top photograph was taken of Baglung, a district in Nepal's western hills, in 1964: a quiet rural landscape of rice fields interspersed with a few houses and numerous stands of green trees. Another picture was taken from the same spot in 2014. The trees and farmlands are gone, replaced by hundreds of multi-story buildings—complete with roads and power lines to serve a growing population.

The Halls have collected more than 13,000 images from 90 RPCVs so far. They arrive as prints, negatives, slides, or digitized media. Contributors add short descriptions to their images, which are then catalogued and added to a photo library using Adobe Lightroom software. Each image also includes year, location, donor's name and assigned keywords. This information allows the library to be searched with a great deal of specificity.

You can see a few albums of selected photos from the project on Facebook by doing a search for "PC Nepal Photo Project 1962-1975."

"The digital archive will be made available to libraries, schools and researchers in Nepal, where Nepalis will be able to search for old photos

DAVE CARLSON



NIRANJAN SHARMA



of their village, their school, or their grandparents as young children," Rafferty says. Access will also be given to colleges and universities in Nepal, the United States and elsewhere upon request.

Hall says the project is addressing a big challenge: how to save thousands of valuable historical images of a rapidly changing country. Hundreds of Americans who served there and brought their slides and prints home are growing older and down-sizing their lives. He worries about what will happen to the photographs of Nepal taken by those volunteers who are aging or whose families think the old photographs are of no value.

"Nepali friends have suggested that these should be collected and archived before they are lost to posterity," says Hall. "That is the reason for this project."

Hall also hopes that RPCVs from other countries might be inspired to establish their own photo projects, documenting life as it was years ago in the communities where they served.

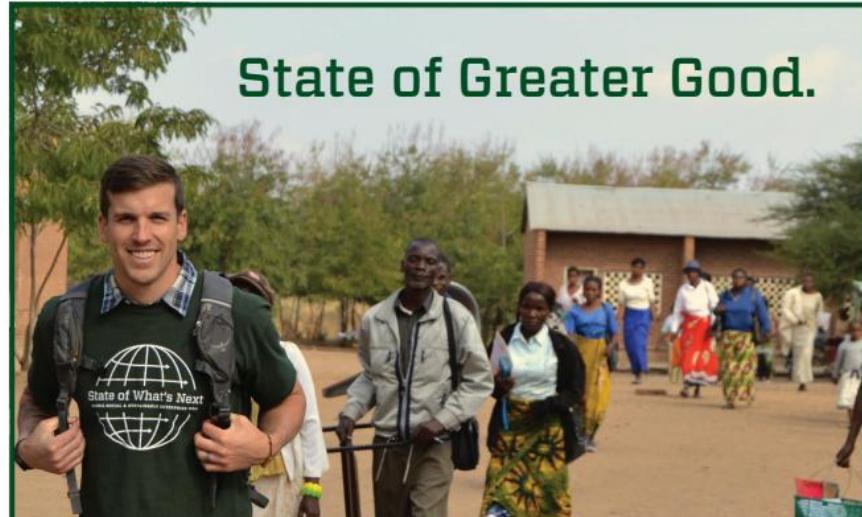
*Submitted by Duane Karlen (Nepal from 1970 to 1972) who later worked on staff in the Eastern Caribbean and in Washington, D.C. headquarters.*



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National Peace Corps Association

## 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/>.

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

Catherine Barber, 1/30/16  
Denver Collins, 2016  
Floyd Merton "Mert" Cregger, 3/28/16  
Michael Williams Edwards, 1/24/16  
Glen Fishbach, 3/8/16  
James Edward "Jim" Huttar, 2/4/16  
Asako "Susie" Ichiuji, 3/10/16  
Tommy Kelly, 1/26/16  
Ben Knopp, 3/27/16  
William O'Connor, 2/8/16  
Samuel B. Rentsch, 2/24/16  
Joan W. Smith, 3/7/16  
Sidney K. Werkman MD, 2/28/16

### MULTIPLE COUNTRIES OF SERVICE

Hazelmarie Anderson, Senegal, Sierra Leone, 1/25/16  
George E. Koskey, Colombia, Lesotho, Cook Islands; 3/15/16  
Emile Pelletier, Africa, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Thailand; 2/5/16

### AFGHANISTAN

Mary Ellen Earles, 2/6/16

### ANTIGUA

Rebecca Turner Westmoreland Flinn, 2/20/16

### BENIN

H. Thomas Francis, 3/6/16

### BOLIVIA

Neil Vander Linden, 4/3/16

### BRAZIL

Alfred Chamberlain M.D., 3/9/16

### BURKINA FASO

Michael W. Sozansky Jr., Esq., 2/16/16

### CAMEROON

Gerald Schumann, 4/11/16

### CHAD

Carl L. Mattioli, 3/31/16

### CHILE

Mary Garrett Dieterich, 4/2/16

Virginia Ann "Ginny" Malbon, 2/3/16

James Patrick Powers, 2/15/16

Charles "Roy" Wilson, 12/18/15

### COLOMBIA

Mike Doyle, 3/23/16

Lawrence Ervin

Jasman, 3/14/16

Thomas Joseph Kenworthy, 4/7/16

Rev. Jeanne Mills, 2/2/16

Stephen Michael "Mike" Murray, 2/24/16

Benjamin Rowland, 3/1/16

### COSTA RICA

Cara Connors

Esquivel, 3/7/16

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Gloria Barr Cochran, 2/14/16

Thomas I. Johnson, 1/16/16

### ECUADOR

Karl Kuhlman, 3/5/16

### ETHIOPIA

John Edward Carr, 3/16/16

Joel Dick, 3/28/16

Jane Dolph, 4/15/16

Michael Feldstein, 4/13/16

### FIJI

Stefan Matthew Pakulski, 3/5/16

### GHANA

Helen Abbott "Abbie" Stahlman, 3/5/16

### CHAD

Ruth L. Hughes, 2/8/16

### CHILE

Gregg Stratton, 12/20/15

### GRENADA

Helen Klueber, 3/8/16

### HONDURAS

Thom Saunders, 4/12/16

### HUNGARY

June von Ruden, 3/25/16

### INDIA

Judith Ellen Forsberg Griggs, 1/22/16

William Hankins, 2/7/16

### INDONESIA

Nikolai Horb, 3/14/16

James "Jim" Pauwels, 2/8/16

### IRAN

Patrick Bradley, 2/5/16

David Michael "Dave" Skinner, 1/28/16

### IVORY COAST

David C. Zimmerman, 2/8/16

### JAMAICA

Frank Kircher, 3/14/16

Martha Osborn, posted 3/14/16

### KENYA

Kenneth Billmeier, 12/15

### KOREA

Patricia Ann Hayward, 1/20/16

### LIBERIA

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### MALAWI

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### MALAYSIA

Dale Brunotte, 3/12/16

Rodger Martin Jr., 4/6/16

### MOROCCO

Linda Stackhouse, 2/10/16

John G. Zehmer, Jr., 2/7/16

### MOZAMBIQUE

Mary Ellen Allen, 1/12/16

Elizabeth Ahlgren "Libby" Gartner, 11/16/15

### NEPAL

Jeffery Anthony Malick, 2/17/16

James Paul Sweet, 3/10/16

Thaddeus K. "Ted" Szostak, 3/12/16

### NIGERIA

Karen Simmons, 2/4/16

### PARAGUAY

Thomas Edwards, 3/19/16

Patricia Lee Simmons, 3/31/16

### PERU

Harold Joseph "Joe" Marsh Jr., 3/8/16

### PHILIPPINES

John T. Craig, 1/16

Andrew McCabe, 4/1/16

William Knight "Bill" Peck, 3/10/16

Robert L. Reddig, 3/3/16

Virginia Ladd (Warr) Rubin, 2/26/16

Warren Williams, 2/9/16

### SAMOA

Dr. Stuart Tinkler, 4/5/16

### SOLOMON ISLANDS

Tyren L. Haynes, 12/19/15

### ST. LUCIA

Thelma Hill, 2/25/16

### THAILAND

Gawain Mainwaring, 2/1/16

### TONGA

Rosella May Corbin DeRiemer, 2/17/16

Jim Swaaby, 3/14/16

### TURKEY

Patrick Fitch, 1/17/16

Ronald L. Rabin, 2/15/16

### VENEZUELA

James Gerwin, 2/22/16

### YEMEN

Daniel L. Hedrick, 3/5/16

### COUNTRY OF SERVICE NOT SPECIFIED

Peter Abeles, 1/12/16

Sarah Elizabeth Apollony, 3/11/16

Kenneth Allen Corcoran, 2/11/16

Sean Patrick Dixon, 3/23/16

Paula Ann Holliday, 1/27/16

Randall L. Hunnewell, 4/7/16

Reverend Frances Melis Mills, 2/2/16

Richard D. "Monty" Montress, 1/14/16

Orinda Rozella Nelson, 1/26/16

David Michael Skinner, 1/28/16



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# RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR COMMUNITY

## BENIN

Following his service in Benin, **Jace Rabe** (2003-2005) became a commodities trader and is now the chief executive officer of Tolaro Global, a community development project that has opened a cashew processing factory in Parakou,



Benin. With support from Technoserve, the facility was recently approved by the African Cashew Alliance for international food safety, quality, and labor standards.

## BOLIVIA

Retired U.S. ambassador **David Greenlee** (1965-1967) is a Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow. He is a senior advisor in the office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. He was previously senior advisor in the bureau of political affairs of the U.S. Africa Command and in the transition of the U.S. Southern Command. His last diplomatic post was as U.S. ambassador to Bolivia. He also served in Bolivia, Spain, Chile and Israel and was chair of the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group. For his military service in Vietnam he was awarded the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster and the Vietnam Service Medal.

## BOTSWANA



**Stephanie Funk** led a discussion among stakeholders at a meeting on Stimulus Innovation Centre in Harare, Zimbabwe, on Women in Entrepreneurship. Funk was sworn in as USAID mission director for Zimbabwe in June of last year.

## BURKINA FASO

**Amanda Denney** (2012-2014) has become the University of Alabama's first Peace Corps recruiter on the Auburn campus. She will also travel the state

promoting Peace Corps service. In Burkina Faso she taught English, coordinated projects for World AIDS Day and facilitated women's empowerment activities.



## HONDURAS

**Michael Donald** (1986-1988) has been named deputy forest supervisor of Colorado's 2.3-million-acre White River National Forest. The forest surrounds much of the Western Slope including Summit County.

## IRAN

The president of the Clinton Global Foundation, **Donna Shalala** (1962-1964), and addressed Drexel University's graduating senior class at their June 11 commencement ceremony. Shalala previously served as president of the University of Miami, secretary of Health and Human Services and president of the University of Wisconsin at Madison. She currently serves on the NPCA advisory council.



## MALAYSIA

**Michael Saba** (1965-1968) is an international development officer for the Avera McKennan Foundation in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He previously helped build a children's hospital in Egypt and ran for a South Dakota District 9

House seat in 2016. Michael was among a group of Americans taken hostage in Iraq by Saddam Hussein during the 1990 Gulf War and escaped through the Jordanian border, leading to appearances on "Nightline" and "Oprah."



## MOROCCO

The University of California at Berkeley's Center for Middle Eastern Studies is honoring the late **Chris Stevens** (1983-1985) with one of 10 new virtual exchange programs to increase cross-cultural understanding and equip young people for a global economy. The program is funded with a two-year grant from the Aspen Institute's Stevens Initiative which honors Stevens. He was a UC Berkeley alumnus and was killed in 2012 by terrorists in Benghazi, Libya, while serving as the U.S. ambassador.



## MOZAMBIQUE

**Elisabetta Colabianchi** (2011-2014) operates "Kurandza," a social enterprise

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with an online marketplace to showcase women's creations. She lives in Petaluma, California. Colabianchi served as a community health volunteer for three years in the small village of Guijá. She taught HIV-positive pregnant women how to prevent the transmission of the virus to their children.

**Peter Carolla** (2006-2008) completed a documentary film on Dr. Omer Omer, a former Sudanese refugee who directs a refugee resettlement organization in Greensboro, North Carolina. The 37-minute documentary, *The One Who Builds*, received awards from more than a half a dozen film festivals.


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<b>Early Action:</b>	<b>Nov. 2nd, 2016</b>
<b>Fellowship consideration:</b>	<b>Jan. 5th, 2017</b>
<b>Final deadline:</b>	<b>Feb. 5th, 2017</b>

## NICARAGUA

**Kitty Cardwell** was recently appointed director of the National Institute for Microbial Forensics and Food and Agricultural Biosecurity at Oklahoma State University. Cardwell is a plant pathologist who specializes in food safety. She spent 15 years as a national program leader and grants administrator with the U.S. Department of Agriculture-National Institute of Food and Agriculture in Washington, D.C. She spent three years working in her field of study as a Peace Corps volunteer in Nicaragua and Colombia. After the Peace Corps, she remained in South America eight more years overseeing a large-scale rice farming operation and 12 years investigating plant diseases and promoting food safety practices in the fight against hunger in Africa.

## PARAGUAY

**William T. Harris** has been named the chief executive officer of Space Center Houston. The center is a non-profit science museum, a Smithsonian Institution affiliate and the official visitor center at Houston's NASA Johnson Space Center.



## ST. LUCIA

After her service in the Eastern Caribbean, **Caroljean Willie** (1972-1974) became a nun. She recently served two terms as a representative at the United Nations for the Sisters of Charity Federation, regularly crossing borders and oceans.

## SENEGAL

**Rebekah Johnson** was recently named manager of the Tosa Farmers Market near Milwaukee. She said her travels helped her value locally-produced food sources. Her travels took her to Mali and South Africa for her college studies and later to Senegal with the Peace Corps. She spent five years working in refugee resettlement in Washington, D.C. and Wisconsin.



Fombori residents gather at Mali's first culture bank.

## CULTURAL DEPOSITS

Todd Crosby is a dreamer who makes things happen. Unlike many of us, his Peace Corps legacy is not a failed chicken project, but rather the creation—along with RPCV Mark Berryman and the village of Fombori—of the prize-winning Culture Banks of Mali.

Eighteen years after his service in Mali, Crosby was googling the project and staring at a video of French President Francois Hollande congratulating Aldiouma Yattara, the director of the Gao Museum. Yattara was attending a ceremony in Paris honoring the Mali Culture Banks. The Chirac Foundation awarded the Culture Banks the 2015 Culture for Peace Prize for “protecting and safeguarding Mali’s cultural heritage.”

The four Malian Culture Banks enable villagers to protect their family artifacts from pillaging by smugglers through a special loan system. The concept came together as Todd worked on two projects—helping build a museum in Fombori, and designing banking projects in other villages. One day he had an epiphany: He needed to integrate a loan system into the museum.

“I saw how the loan needed to be based on the provenance of the art objects. To operationalize it we needed to combine the loan application process with the museum documentation system,” he says. “The people in Fombori liked the idea and we started to build out the system from there.”

Over the years, the Malians expanded the reach of the Culture Banks to serve outlying villages and to include literacy and other community projects. The banks have also been replicated in Benin and Togo, prompting Todd to remark “how incredible it is that the idea gained traction around West Africa.”

Mali continues to struggle with extremist attacks, but the Chirac Peace Prize is a reminder that the preservation of culture is the preservation of life itself. In the words of Aldiouma Yattara upon accepting the Chirac award, “Culture is in our soul. It does not kill. Culture gives us life.”

—Kitty Thuemer

## SIERRA LEONE

**Susan Eastwood** (1978-1980) is running for Connecticut’s 53rd District seat in the state legislature. She is a founding member of Conversations for a Green Connecticut.

## THAILAND

**Jessica Goodkind** is a sociology professor at the University of New Mexico and co-director of cultural competence in the office of diversity at the university’s health sciences center. She recently co-authored a study of Iraqi refugees in the United States for a professional journal on migration and immigration. In the Peace Corps, she worked with the Hmong people of Southeast Asia.



## UGANDA

**Judith Fleming** (1967-1979) will, at 70 years of age, begin her second Peace Corps tour in Uganda helping farmers and community groups develop their businesses.



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