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**ARTISANS AND
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA AND THE PEACE CORPS

What to Expect

by Kevin F. F. Quigley

Ever since Harris Wofford introduced Sen. Barack Obama during a speech at Cornell College in the pre-caucus days in Iowa, candidate Obama spoke frequently about his goal of doubling the Peace Corps by the time of the 50th Anniversary in 2011. The most high profile of these mentions came during his acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention in Denver and during two of the three presidential candidates' debates.

In the previous issue of *WorldView*, "Peace Corps: Looking Back/Looking Forward," candidate Obama called for "A Quantum Leap" with the Peace Corps. He asked all of the Peace Corps community for continued service and ongoing active citizenship.

Now President Obama's "Quantum Leap" would take place in the context of a comprehensive plan for an expansion in domestic and international voluntary citizen service, first articulated at Cornell College on volunteer day last year. Expansion of the Peace Corps is the centerpiece for President Obama's planned expansion of voluntary citizen service abroad.

In addition to expanding the Peace Corps, President Obama seeks to find ways to internationalize the Peace Corps. Here in *WorldView*, he pledged "...to reach out to other nations to engage their young people in similar programs, so that we can work side by side to take on the common challenges that confront all humanity." Internationalizing the Peace Corps has been a dream of many of the founders and the broader community since its inception.

Since Senator Obama spoke at Cornell College in December 2007 and wrote in *WorldView* in early October 2008, "All is changed, changed utterly," as the Irish

poet W.B. Yeats wrote. The financial crisis and the U.S. government's \$700 billion dollar response will severely tie the hands of President-elect Obama and may prevent the implementation of much of his ambitious agenda.

Given the growing evidence of a serious recession, there will probably be a new economic stimulus package. With these new expenditures coupled with the significant costs related to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, without direct intervention of the new President a significant expansion of the Peace Corps or creation of any new programs is unlikely.

Nearly seven years ago, President Bush pledged to double the Peace Corps by 2007. When the Congress failed to provide the requested funds that year, this effort to expand the Peace Corps was stymied. It fell far short of the goal, although there has been an approximately 15% increase since 2002—bringing the Peace Corps to the highest level of volunteers in more than three decades.

Given this experience, the More Peace Corps campaign is critically important. We expect that President Obama will honor his campaign pledge and request significantly more resources for the Peace Corps. However, we do not want to risk what happened previously. We have to work relentlessly to ensure that Congress appropriates President Obama's full request for a significant and sustained expansion of the Peace Corps.

Although President Obama will not have a great deal of discretionary budgetary resources to work with, I think it is very likely that he will honor his pledge to double the Peace Corps. The main reason he will do this is because expanding the Peace Corps relates to a critical challenge he will face, that is

restoring U.S. standing in the world.

Without a restored U.S. standing, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for President Obama and his new government to make significant progress on a range of pressing global issues including climate change, global poverty, stemming the proliferation of nuclear weapons, not to mention resolving the global financial crisis.

With the Peace Corps being one of the most respected "U.S. government brands," a significant expansion of the Peace Corps could be a modest investment yielding high returns. Expansion is also something that could be done relatively quickly and at modest cost.

This will not happen, however, unless we all play our part. Our legislators must hear from that they need to fully support President Obama's request to double the Peace Corps by 2011.

So, if you have not done so already I urge you to sign up for our MorePeaceCorps campaign at www.morepeacecorps.org. And let your legislators know by phone, fax, e-mail or better yet in person, that they need to honor President Obama's pledge to expand the Peace Corps because it is in the national interest.

Kevin F. F. Quigley is President of the National Peace Corps Association. He served in Thailand, 1976-79. Please send you comments to president@rpcv.org.

READERS WRITE US

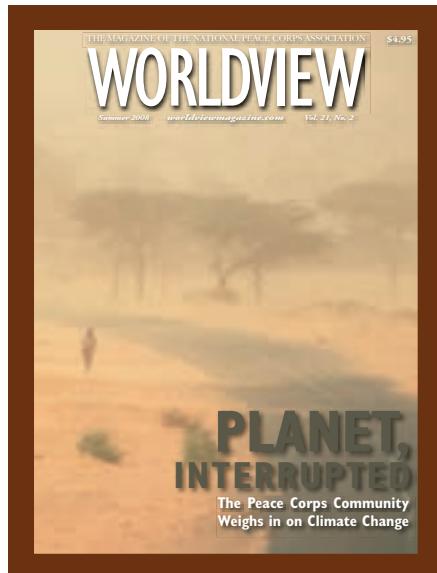
I found it troubling that Joshua Busby's article ("Insecure about Climate Change" in the summer 2008 issue) places so much emphasis on the military. Soldiers should not be providing environmental security; trained civilians should. The presence of armed soldiers sends an unfortunate message (the people are the enemy). The U.S. military (and those of other countries too, or course) has been responsible for much environmental destruction and many atrocities, and the Defense Department has a mindset of "show force first, think about soliciting cooperation later."

The armed soldiers standing around in Grand Central Terminal do not make me feel safer. I would rather see my tax dollars spent to "climate-proof" housing, not military installations. It is also important to get people involved in planning for their own protection, to listen to their ideas of what is needed, and address them. Their input is a significant factor in creating an emergency plan that will work.

When a crisis arrives, a knowledgeable, disciplined group of some kind is indeed needed to keep order and help those who need help, but they don't need to be soldiers.

Judith Inskeep
Peru 62-64

A reconceived U.S. Peace Corps project initiative must recommit to and reinvigorate its compelling visionary message — promoting selfless humanitarian service with dedication to moral consciousness ideals. A universally recognized vital positive energy force since 1961, Peace Corps' future thrust should focus on



child-centered international educational reform featuring creative thinking skills development; self-access learning paved with Information Superhighway know-how; Save the Planet sustainable eco-environment green initiatives; emergency disaster relief; and respectful tolerance and acceptance of person-to-person understanding through cross-cultural diversity awareness.

Projected cuts to the already meager federal allocation are alarming. The Peace Corps must continue to make a profound global impact in fighting hunger, disease, poverty and lack of opportunity. America's most precious resource is its people who, given a proactive concerted effort, additional funding and more budgetary support, can and will again demonstrate compassionate caring by sharing cooperation-based experiences, developed for and along with our most promising up-start/start-up future leaders.

Charles Frederickson
Thailand 64-70

In Casey B. Welch's letter, published in the Summer 2008 issue of this magazine, Welch argues for more benefits for Peace Corps Volunteers, comparing our jobs with those of military personnel. While the author was correct in mentioning some similarities between the hardships both PCVs and soldiers face, I found their letter disappointing for several reasons.

First, the Peace Corps is not the military, and I hope that every opportunity is taken to differentiate us from the armed forces. Comparisons between the two, whether examining the roles of soldiers and volunteers or the benefits they receive, are not worthwhile.

Second, it seems contradictory for a volunteer to complain about the compensation they receive for their service. A volunteer is distinguished from others by their willingness to do something regardless of what they receive in return.

Finally, I believe that the lack of benefits is helpful in ensuring that volunteers join Peace Corps for the right reasons. Offering an excellent benefits package (aside from ballooning the budget and making PC more like other government institutions) would attract the attention of people who are interested in personal gain, and not those who really want to serve others.

The other side to this argument is that better benefits will ensure higher-quality candidates join. However, I believe that, in finding people who want to serve for the right reasons, PC does much more to ensure enlisting good volunteers than it ever could by enticing people with benefits.

Matt Rosensteel
Costa Rica 08-10

JOAN VELASQUEZ

Winner of the 2008 Sargent Shriver Award for Distinguished Humanitarian Service

by Ilana Kalmbach

Vast week Segundo attended the dedication of a new road that Mano a Mano constructed in the high Andes. Before that road was built, area farmers had to travel for three days to reach the nearest market, a trip that they simply could not afford to make. Now they will be on a truck route and will arrive in less than an hour." It was a stunning achievement stated with modesty by Joan Velasquez, co-founder and co-director of Mano a Mano as she accepted the 2008 Sargent Shriver Award for Distinguished Humanitarian Service.

The Minnesota native graduated from Macalester College with highest honors and earned her master's degree at Case Western Reserve University before entering the Peace Corps in 1967. Velasquez's service took her to Cochabamba, Bolivia in the midst of political turmoil with no solid assignment. She went door to door to determine how she would be most helpful and discovered that the community was still traumatized by the death of a young child who had died in a home fire while her parents were at work. Joan's response was to single-handedly create and direct a day care program that, as her Shriver nominator Christine Ver Ploeg wrote, continues to thrive today and "remains a model for day care programs throughout the entire country."

Velasquez's service, however, continued long after her Peace Corps experience. After returning to the States, she received her Ph.D. in social work from the University of Minnesota and became the director of research and evaluation for Ramsey County Human Services. In 1994 she retired to co-found Mano a Mano with her husband Segundo Velasquez. A non-



Joan and Segundo Velasquez hold the Shriver Award.

Brezina. "It's her life's passion."

Her passion became more and more evident as the success of Mano a Mano grew. Within two years of its launch, the organization was overseeing a massive clinic-building program that has created a health care infrastructure of 89 community clinics. The quantitative successes of Mano a Mano grew as Velasquez helped its infrastructure grow. As Ver Ploeg wrote: "Through this network more than 700,000 Bolivians have access to healthcare for the first time. All mothers and all but 29 infants whose births were attended by Mano a Mano medical personnel survived childbirth, a stunning accomplishment in rural areas in which, statistically, one would have expected that, with 6,911 deliveries since beginning its clinic program, 45 mothers and up to 690 infants would have lost their lives."

The organization has also built schools, roads, public showers, bathrooms and laundry tub facilities in Bolivia. In addition to having an aviation program to airlift the critically ill or injured, Mano a Mano has also built 21 airstrips to connect isolated communities. It recently completed its third agricultural water reservoir, providing water not only for people, but for the crops that sustain them. All of this operates through a largely volunteer network with administrative and fundraising costs at less than 5 percent.

The achievements of Mano a Mano are vast, steered by the passion and guidance of Velasquez. As volunteer Patricia Ohmans wrote, "Writing grants, filing reports, supervising staff, meeting with funders: this is the essential work that Joan has done for more than a decade—quietly, diplomatically, and brilliantly."

NPCA RECOGNIZES MEMBER GROUP ACHIEVEMENTS

Friends of Malaysia, Heart of Texas, Amigos de Bolivia y Peru

by Ilana Kalmbach



May Maniam accepts the Loret Miller Ruppe Award for Outstanding Community Service on behalf of Friends of Malaysia.

FRIENDS OF MALAYSIA WINS THE RUPPE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE

This year the Loret Miller Ruppe Award for Outstanding Community Service goes to Friends of Malaysia's Project Wizard of the World (WOW). The Ruppe Award is presented by the NPCA to an outstanding member group for a project or projects that promote the Third Goal of Peace Corps or continue to serve host countries, build group spirit and cooperation, and promote service. Eligible projects either have been completed within the past two years or have been on-going for at least three years. The award not only recognizes the great work that NPCA's groups are doing, but also generates ideas that other groups may emulate in their communities.

Friends of Malaysia's Project WOW brings Malaysia RPCVs to grade school classrooms around the country in an effort to fulfill the Third Goal of Peace Corps—bringing the world back home—by promoting global awareness and cross-cultural understanding among young Americans.

Juliet Dervin

The 42 RPCVs use Malaysian folktales as a gateway for children to gain broader cultural understanding of Malaysia. In 30 states, over 3,300 elementary school students have gained some familiarity with Malaysia via these folktales, multi-media presentations, flashcards, show-and-tell, discussion, and Malaysian memorabilia—all provided by Tourism Malaysia and a variety of corporate donors. Project WOW has been remarkably successful in organizing the project, engaging RPCVs, and reaching out to their communities nationwide.



Jane Taylor accepts the NPCA Print Media Award on behalf of Amigos de Bolivia y Peru.

2008 NPCA PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA AWARD WINNERS

After a summer-long deliberation process, the NPCA chose the winners of its 2008 Print Media and Electronic Media Awards. As part of a commitment to keeping connected, informed and engaged, the NPCA honors those affiliate groups that innovatively keep in touch.

Heart of Texas Peace Corps Association won first place in electronic media category for their website. The award honors groups that have labored to create and maintain effective

services for "bringing the world back home" and enhancing the RPCV community through innovative use of electronic media, such as websites, blogs, discussion forums, and RSS Feeds. Heart of Texas' creative use of interactive features like calendars, photos, and surveys is an example for other NPCA member groups developing their own websites. The other organizations recognized for their excellent use of electronic media are the Minnesota Returned Peace Corps Volunteers for their website, the San Diego Peace Corps Association for their website and the Friends of Kyrgyzstan for their e-newsletter.

In the print media category, Amigos de Bolivia y Peru won first place for its newsletter *Yachaspa* (Knowing). The award recognizes the diversity of print media produced by member groups, such as newsletters, how-to guides, and educational materials. The other winners of the print media award are Friends of Nigeria for the *Friends of Nigeria Newsletter*, the Central Missouri Returned Peace Corps Volunteers for the *Central Missouri RPCV Newsletter* and the San Diego Peace Corps Association for the *Pacific Waves* newsletter.



Anne Baker

Juliet Dervin accepts the NPCA Electronic Media Award on behalf of Heart of Texas Peace Corps Association.

A GROWN SYNERGY

Aid to Artisans Teams up With Peace Corps Volunteers to Show the World that Craft Means Business

by Joanna Smiley

When Lisa Smith arrived in Boujad, Morocco two years ago as a Peace Corps Volunteer, a group of women weavers welcomed her into their homes.

Lisa quickly learned that home, in Moroccan culture, meant more than blocks of concrete shelter. It signified family, friendship, and a communal approach to life that seemed all too unfamiliar back home in the U.S.

In her first week as a PCV, the women brought Lisa into their day-to-day lives. She joined them for afternoon meals. She started learning how to weave carpets. She began speaking in Arabic, their native tongue.

As the days went by, she realized these artisans were not only talented weavers, but equally skilled multi-taskers who smoothly juggled work, socializing, and parental roles. She saw how important it was that they weave from home—it allowed them to watch their young children play on the dusty roads right outside their doors.

Lisa soon became an informed and passionate advocate of artisans. She felt privileged to be among women

who were under acknowledged and underpaid masters of handmade craft.

Though these artisans were immensely skilled weavers, Lisa, who was fresh out of The Wharton School of Business, learned where her help was needed most—business training. The women had only very basic literacy and arithmetic skills, as most of them attended school up to the 6th grade.

"I worked to transfer many of my business skills to the group's project coordinator. He knew Moroccan culture, how to get things done there and also was a great product designer, but he lacked basic business skills, such as accounting, setting up a balance sheet, marketing, and expectations of foreign buyers. With the women, I worked on pricing and costing of their products, making products to specification and on time so that we could accept custom orders, and sharing larger orders amongst themselves to increase efficiency," Lisa said.

As part of her Peace Corps training, Lisa participated in a two-day workshop with Aid to Artisans (ATA), which had a project in another area of Morocco. For

anyone who is unfamiliar with ATA, the 32 year-old international nonprofit creates economic opportunities for artisans around the world by helping them to build sustainable businesses inspired by their handmade traditions. ATA has a long history of working with Peace Corps

Volunteers in dozens of countries.

While Lisa had a great deal of economics knowledge from her academic experience, ATA staff brought real world Moroccan examples into the classroom, giving practical tools for teaching artisans business skills despite potential language and education gaps. They showed the volunteers how to conduct pricing and costing workshops, explained many of the principals involved in exporting crafts, and provided training materials that could be used on site.

"ATA's workshop was great. Later in training I also had the chance to visit another volunteer's site whose artisans were working directly with ATA on a project, and I was extremely impressed by what I saw," Lisa said.

A previous PCV in Lisa's town had already been teaching the women that their carpet designs could be versatile. For example, they could transform their material into a handbag with an added zipper. Their traditions could be maintained yet enhanced with product innovation that would appeal to an export market, thus bringing artisans the lasting income they deserved. This type of product development training is exactly what ATA strives to teach the artisans it works with.

Perhaps most importantly in the course of her project, Lisa watched first hand as the weavers began to realize their talents could translate into income-generating craft businesses. She saw them gain pride and confidence in the economic viability of their crafts, another critical mission at ATA.

When Lisa began looking at jobs after her service ended, she knew she wanted to continue using her business degree to help people like the weavers. She also knew she had been inspired by ATA and the sustainable incomes she had seen the organization bring to artisans in the



Four Tawli weavers show off their wares.

Aid to Artisans critical resources for us.” Since Peace Corps’ founding in 1961, nearly 200,000 PCVs have completed service. Many of the Volunteers have MBAs, law degrees, and a variety of other academic qualifications. Others have real life experience running retail businesses, web sites or successful start-ups. And yet others come from professional pottery backgrounds, are renowned photographers, or artists. This colorful mix of life experience is another asset when working with and understanding artisans, who themselves are creative entrepreneurs.

In the future, David hopes that ATA can offer more PCV workshops in business training. He hopes that as PCVs are on the ground working with artisans, they can show them that the craft sector, with proper business training and product development, is a major engine of economic growth. In fact, craft constitutes the second largest sector of rural employment after agriculture in the developing world.

According to the Peace Corps, in 2007 at least 15% of current PCVs were working in business development, many within the artisan sector.

As ATA and Peace Corps continue to expand their operations in regions across the globe, the possibilities for continued collaboration are limitless. ATA invites PCVs around the world to join its mission—change the world with the power of handmade.

Joanna Smiley is Communications Manager for Aid to Artisans. For more information about Aid to Artisans, please visit www.aidtoartisans.org.



Peace Corps Volunteer Lisa Smith attends a craft fair in Morocco.

field. She perused through various job postings before spotting a marketing coordinator opening at ATA's home office in Hartford. The rest was history. She relocated to Connecticut and officially joined the ATA team.

“It’s great for us to hire Peace Corps Volunteers,” said Mary Cockram, Director of Programs at ATA who first interviewed Lisa over Skype. “They have an understanding and sympathy of challenges, conditions of artisans, and life in other countries. I give a second look if a job applicant is a PCV.”

PEACE CORPS CONNECTIONS RUN DEEP AT ATA

Lorraine Johnson, ATA's Regional Director in Africa, is a former PCV in Liberia. She has lived in Africa for nearly 16 years and has authored two books: *Who We Are: Voices from Mozambique* and *We Are People: Voice from Mozambique*.

ATA's Small Grants program, which provides up to \$1,500 to eligible artisan groups in need of immediate help, relies heavily on PCV recommendations.

“Their vetting is invaluable. They can monitor grants, spending and fill out grantee follow-up information. We always feel better about awarding small grants when a PCV has vetted the group. Out of 40 small grants ATA awarded this year, 14 came from

PCV recommendations, which is a large increase from previous years,” said Joanne Heard who manages ATA's Small Grants program. She also noted that another advantage to working with PCVs on small grants is that they see artisans' needs first hand.

Last year, a PCV pleading for a small grant to assist artisans in Ifrane, Morocco wrote Joanne a heartfelt recommendation letter. She described a bus ride she took with a handicapped artisan, capturing details that only somebody working in country could see. The PCV wrote how “one undeveloped leg in a brace” didn’t stop that artisan from traveling nearly 10 hours in a day, negotiating all of the necessary details she needed to bring income to her community.

With the help of this recommendation letter, these artisans were awarded a small grant.

ATA's own president, David O'Connor, is a former Volunteer and former Peace Corps Country Director. He spent nearly six years overseeing operations in China, Nepal, and Moldova and has a keen understanding of the invaluable synergy between ATA and Peace Corps.

“We are working with Peace Corps Volunteers in several of our projects right now from Mali to El Salvador,” David said. “PCVs are fantastic. They live right in the communities and are

LOCAL MARKET, GLOBAL COMMUNITY

How the growing success of a folk arts market is changing the world

by Ilana Kalmbach

The day after the fifth annual Santa Fe International Folk Art Market, Judy Espinar sat down with other planners of the event to review how the 2008 market went and start planning for the next year. "It takes a whole year to plan," she said. "It's very, very complex. It's huge." In 2007, the market drew over 110 artists from 40 different countries across six continents. More than half of these artists were at the market for the first time.

Enticing all of them to come was never the most difficult part of setting the market in motion—finding them and communicating with them was. Partnerships would prove to be key to locating artists that fit the market's qualifications.

Early support came from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Because the missions of both the market and UNESCO are similar in many ways, enthusiasm for the project at the UN organization was high. A call to UNESCO from one of the folk art market's initial planning meetings prompted an immediate response: the organization promised to send 11 artists to the event. That support was then leveraged with other craft development projects. "We were able to say 'This is our project and UNESCO is sending 11 artisans, can you help us?' It helped us make strategic partnerships, many of which we still have today," said Espinar.

These partnerships have been enormously successful. In the 2007

market, for example, over half of the artists who attended were sponsored by partnering organizations. Artist's cooperatives and non-profit organizations sponsored about one-third of the artists while art dealers sponsored another quarter. Additionally, contributions from both private foundations and individual donors allowed the market to fully sponsor 30 artists.

But monetary donations are not the only thing necessary to bring the market to life. Volunteers were involved in nearly every facet of the market, dedicating thousands of hours of work towards planning, overseeing and executing artist coordination, hospitality, marketing, events, office assistance, and market production.

According to Espinar, over 1,050 registered volunteers have signed on since the market's inception and their impact has been huge. In fact, volunteers worked so hard that the dollar value of their time dedicated to the 2007 market was estimated at more than \$600,000. "The experience of the market is pregnant with possibilities and opportunities," Espinar commented, "and people want to be a part of that in whatever way they can."

Many of the market volunteers are Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. Espinar, an RPCV herself, says that the market exemplifies the Peace Corps ethos. "The Peace Corps is an opportunity to connect with the world from a



Aristude Mukashyaka shows off her colorful baskets.



Thousands of visitors throng Museum Hill for the annual Santa Fe International Folk Art Market.

different point of view and experience culture on a one-on-one basis. In my opinion, the Peace Corps created a whole team of better Americans. They understand their role on the planet and value being a citizen of this country. At the market, we try to show people those same things," she said.

They have the opportunity to show a lot of people those things. In 2007, 17,000 people attended the market, representing 41 different states and six different countries. The market also welcomed international dignitaries from Mexico, Russia, South Africa, Uzbekistan and more. "There is an enormous amount of enthusiasm for the market. We know that anybody that attends will say that this event changed their life," said Espinar.

Part of the success of the market is due to its selectivity. "It's important that this is a curated market," Espinar said. "We only take the best and we only include extremely high quality work."

Due in large part to this high quality, artists' sales at the market are significant. The average revenue generated per booth was \$15,000 in 2007. Of the booths for which the market handled sales, 73 percent earned more than \$10,000. That kind of money has a major impact on the lives of the artists and their families, and helps to sustain entire communities.

Raising awareness about this community impact is one the market's main goals. "The market is really about community sustainability, both through the income it generates and the community infrastructure it helps to build. The sustainability of these cultural treasures is incredibly important to us," Espinar said.

An integral part of the market's mission is to find ways to support cultures. Currently, the market is looking for ways to scale up and to promote more folk arts markets around the world. It is not just about getting bigger; it is about

getting more global. Espinar argues that markets like the one in Santa Fe are essential survival mechanism for communities and their cultures. "These traditions are the voices of these cultures. Every time a folk art tradition disappears, we lose an expression of that culture," she said.

It is a theme she believes people attending the market understand. They are doing more just than just buying beautiful pieces of art; they are participating in a meeting ground where people can get to know and understand each other on both cultural and personal levels.

The folk art market, said Espinar, for all of its complex goals and challenging aims, runs with one simple principle constantly in mind: "The more culture we can preserve, the better off we all are."

Ilana Kalmbach is an intern at the NPCA. She attends American University's School of Communication in Washington, DC.

CRAFTING A CLOSER WORLD

One woman's journey to honor artisans and bring us all together

by Ilana Kalmbach

The music played, the room was full, and everywhere people were celebrating. At the closing ceremony of the International Folk Art Market in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Mexican merchants danced with Chinese vendors, a line of diverse people snaked around the room in rhythm, and everyone was celebrating the same thing: folk art. At that moment Robin Reider, 62, currently a teacher of English in Vietnam, whose life has taken her from tapestry art to Kenya and back, knew she was finally where she wanted to be. "It feels like the whole world is dancing with you," Reider said, "and that is the most

wonderful pact of peace there is."

A self-described "leftover child of the '60s," Reider had been accepted into Peace Corps in the 1960s, but decided not to go at the time. As she got older, she said the Peace Corps became a more realistic opportunity. Reider had been working in retail selling Native American crafts while at the same time teaching weaving, when she decided she was ready for something new. "When I was 55, my life freed itself up and I wanted to do something that was completely different from money and greed," she said.

Reider entered the Peace Corps in 2001 in the area of small enterprise

development, based on her experience as a small business owner. Her Peace Corps service took her to Kenya where it allowed her to participate in the activities she loved while spreading knowledge about her passion. She was able to do weaving from the ground up, literally starting with the process of planting trees to make the material needed. She also helped teach banana fiber weaving, in addition to teaching classes on HIV/AIDS and business practices.

After her service ended, she was not ready to end her volunteerism. She hoped to connect what she had learned in Kenya with her love of



Judith Haden/Santa Fe International Folk Art Market

Elizabeth Savhannu of South Africa in front of one of her vibrant "story quilts."

folk art. Fortunately for her, the International Folk Art Market in Santa Fe was just beginning. "My passion has always been crafts and when I got back from the Peace Corps the market was in its first year. I went on to volunteer in South Africa for a year, but the market was on my mind the whole time," she said.

The memory of the folk art market led her to make some meaningful connections. One day, wandering a market during her free time, Reider encountered a woman named Elizabeth Savhannu sitting her market stall surrounded by beautiful handmade story quilts. "When I looked at them my mind was blown," she said. The quilts, which Savhannu called appliqués, were absolutely gorgeous. They reminded Reider a project she had been doing in her hometown of Chimayo, New Mexico with a group of women, making quilt squares for babies.

The first thing she did was tell Savhannu about the arts market in Santa Fe. Reider convinced her to apply to participate in market with the serendipitous help of another African woman who had actually been a vendor at the market the previous year. "For a woman from Zimbabwe who hadn't been anywhere really, who couldn't tell if what I was telling her even actually existed aside from the confirmation from her friend who had been there, this was a huge deal."

Savhannu was sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation to come to the market. Since then she has come to two more of the events in Santa Fe and has been very successful at each. Part of Savhannu's participation in the market, much like the participation of her fellow vendors, has been characterized by the help others offered her, from Reider who gave her a home to stay in for the duration of the market's run to the dental hygienist who took her to buy quilting materials to take back to Zimbabwe.

Connections like these are not uncommon in Reider's world and she has seen the positive impact that crafts and folk art have on communities. By crossing boundaries and borders, folk art is often able to

FAIR TRADE *On The Web*

Fairtrade Labelling Organizations Int'l

www.fairtrade.net

TransFair Canada

www.transfair.ca

The International Fair Trade Association

www.ifat.org

World Fair Trade Day

www.wftday.org/english

The Fairtrade Foundation

www.fairtrade.org.uk

Oxfam: Make Trade Fair

www.maketradefair.com

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Youth performer from Los Niños de Santa Fe y Compañía.

Mark Romanelli

bring people together in unexpected ways. In fact, much of Reider's motivation for volunteering with the International Folk Art Market is the desire to connect to craftspeople in a way that is more than just business. "I wanted to be with people who made things, not people who just sold things," she remarked.

She decided to volunteer as the Africa Regional Coordinator for the market. Preparing for the market includes pursuing promising leads to craftspeople, following through with those craftspeople who are and are not selected to participate, arranging visas and helping with housing arrangements, assisting with travel plans and navigating the logistics of shipping. While the yearlong time commitment was heavy, Reider says every minute was worth it. The minimal challenges, like the

Santa Fe heat and the market's busy schedule, are entirely outweighed by the communal spirit and the overall exuberance of the market, Reider said. Her only frustration is that she does not have time to do enough.

"When you get back from the Peace Corps it's hard to grasp onto something that has that much meaning again. The folk art market has that. It has the depth of sharing that I found in the Peace Corps and haven't really been able to find anywhere else," she said.

For her, part of the market's appeal is its focus. Although the market was begun and sponsored by galleries, the real draw is the folk artists and their art. "The market is staying true to itself, staying centered on bringing the real artists and the real art over," Reid said. This is an important priority in a world where sometimes a day of sales

at the craft fair in Santa Fe can bring in more than the vendor will earn in a year at home. She also thinks markets like this should spread globally. "These markets are *the* way to honor the artists and to get the money back to the village."

Reider's ambitions don't end at her current level of volunteerism. In addition to hoping to travel back to Africa and around the world, Reider says she wants to dedicate herself to continuing to support crafts and folk art across the globe. She dreams of working with craftspeople from around the world, combining her love of volunteerism with her passion for crafts.

"You're dealing with not only beautiful things, but with the beautiful people that make the beautiful things. And, to me, that's what makes the world go 'round."

Learn more about the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market at www.folkartmarket.org.



Judith Haden/Santa Fe International Folk Art Market

Dance: The Universal Language

THE WORLD COMES TO SANTA FE

Art builds community in the U.S. too

by Paige Anna Grant

While much is made of the impact of the Santa Fe Folk Art Market on the artisans and their home communities, the market also has a profound impact on the local RPCV community.

Since its inception, RPCVs have engaged in virtually every aspect of the Market's imagination and execution. Three RPCVs serve on the governing board, two hold key positions on committees, and 45 RPCVs were among the volunteers who made the 2008 Market run like a well-oiled machine. The volunteers help craftspeople apply for booths at the Market and find funding to bring them to New Mexico. They meet the Market artists at the Albuquerque airport and help them get to Santa Fe. They translate, handle the credit cards, pass out hats and bottled water. They escort visiting dignitaries and host artists at their homes.

Melinne Owen (Micronesia, 68-70) has been involved with the Market since its second year, and now is essentially unpaid full-time staff. For her first three years of the Market, she was the Artist Assistant Coordinator, organizing and training the volunteers who would help the artists set up and sell their work. This year she created the Artist Liaison Committee to oversee the subcommittees responsible for handling sales. She is also Regional Coordinator for China and Mongolia, chair of the Regional Coordinators, and the Artist Financial Assistance Coordinator. The litany of her activities on behalf of the Market gives a sense of the complexity of the operation.

In 2008, the Chijnaya Foundation brought Zenovia Paricela to the Folk Art Market (see related story on page 19). Zenovia needed to arrive early and stay after the Market to organize the



Judith Haden/SF Se Int'l. Folk Art Mtg.

Volunteers are integral to the success of the Festival. Here, a volunteer works with two artisans from Ghana during the craft marketing workshop.

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Going over the finances.

Judith Haden/SIE Int'l Folk Art Mkt.

embroideries, so her sponsor Ralph Bolton (Peru 62-66) put out the word on the New Mexico RPCV listserv, looking for hosts. I answered and my family had the pleasure of Zenovia's company for the better part of a week. Her wide-eyed interest in everything around her was so infectious that we gave her a camera to record her impressions. She shared with us pictures of her new Asian, African and Latin American friends, their arms around each other, celebrating their kinship as artists from their unique traditions. We took her to see the tapestry at the church in Villanueva, a folk art masterpiece created by the women of that village in the Pecos Valley to celebrate America's bicentennial. She took pictures of that, too, and hugged the old woman who was one of the tapestry's artists.

The RPCV e-mail circuit also hooked Tom McDermott (India 67-69). Tom answered a plea for Urdu/Hindi translation for a Kashmiri artist. "That was a challenge!"

Tom laughs. "As an agriculture volunteer in Rajasthan and later on the Subcontinent with UNICEF, I never really picked up the vocabulary to describe the fine embroidered fabrics this gentleman dealt in. But we got by."

Other RPCV translators included Geoffrey Sloan (Colombia 66-68), who used his Spanish to assist a couple from Oaxaca, Mexico in selling their wildly imagined creatures in painted wood. Earl Kessler (Colombia 65-68) proudly wore his Columbian *sombrero vueltiao* while helping out a San Jacinto artist whose workshop produces the iconic headgear. Barbara Belding (Nigeria 65-66, APCD Niger 81-84) worked at a weavers' booth. "I had known them in Bolivia, so it was

quite a memory feast," she recalls.

An article about the Market in *Worldview* magazine caused Virginia "Ginn" and Mark Pulver (Ukraine, '05-'07) to steer a course toward Santa Fe. "I read the article about the RPCVs and their energy behind this amazing folk art market, and that conjured up enough magic to make me seek out a life here," says Ginn. At the 2008 Market, Ginn and Mark welcomed the thousands of people arriving at the event by shuttle, managed the flow of buses and kept the departing shoppers happy while they waited for the next bus. It brought back their years performing at a Renaissance Faire near Boston, where all the performers were obliged to "work the gate." Says Ginn, "We went into 'improv' mode and kept the buses moving and people smiling and laughing—even the bus drivers got into the act!"

What is it that draws so many RPCVs to take an active role in Santa Fe's Folk Art Market? "It gives us a chance—if only for a few hours—to re-enter the world we lived in as PCVs," muses Lorraine Goldman, a Costa Rica RPCV who with RPCV husband Don was an assistant to a group of Oaxacan rug makers at the last two Markets. "To be involved with people very different from us—to learn from them, and let them learn from us, and maybe help them gain a foothold in a difficult life—is just very satisfying."

Martha Wallace (Nigeria 26), a past Regional Coordinator for India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, says the Market is always looking for more RPCVs. "Peace Corps people are so quick to respond to need—they are just great at coming forward in response to a call for help. And besides their obvious skill as translators, they have a sensitivity to the reactions of the artists they work with that makes them wonderful Market volunteers. They've been out there, all by themselves in a foreign culture, and know how it feels. They are true friends to the artists, and many of those friendships outlast the Market."

Paige Anna Grant (Nepal 74-77) is a freelance writer and half of a Santa Fe-based engineering/hydrology firm, Watershed West (her husband is the other half).



Zenovia Paricela of Centro Poblano De Chijnaya, Peru.

Judith Haden/SIE Int'l Folk Art Mkt.

FULL CIRCLE

A chance e-mail reconnects an RPCV with his Peruvian village—and prompts him to start a foundation

by Andrew Hoffman

Forty-five year-old Ciriaco Quispe is sitting at his computer in the University of the Altiplano's accounting department. It is June 2004 and he is thinking about writing a history of his birthplace, Chijnaya. He does a Google search for "Chijnaya" and what pops up on his computer screen is a link to the curriculum vitae of Dr. Ralph Bolton, an anthropology professor at Pomona College in California; Bolton was a Peace Corps volunteer in Puno, Peru in 1963.

Quispe remembers Bolton: He founded the village of Chijnaya 45 years ago when Quispe was five years old. He immediately e-mails Bolton. And the professor responds instantly. They reminisce about the village through their e-mail exchanges, and Quispe encourages Bolton to visit.

That special homecoming would re-ignite Bolton's love for his Peace Corps days in Chijnaya, and would impact

him so deeply that he now spends 100 days each year in Peru.

But convincing Bolton to return wasn't easy. At first, he balked at Quispe's urging. "All of my friends—all of the villagers I worked with—were long gone," says Bolton. "No one would remember me. I didn't see any reason to go back."

Quispe persevered. He sent Bolton a long list of his Chijnaya friends still living in the village.

In December 2004, Bolton returned to Chijnaya with his partner and son in tow. The townsfolk welcomed Bolton as a hero. They all remembered how he saved their village after a disastrous flood. They remembered how he coordinated the move of 72 families to a former hacienda, the current location of Chijnaya. They remembered how Bolton encouraged the village's children to make and sell embroidered folk art tapestries—a project that helped people

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The village of Chijnaya honors Ralph Bolton.

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The Centro Poblado de Chijnaya, Puno, Peru as it looked in 2005.

to survive during this difficult time.

Returning to the United States, Bolton recruited a group of friends and colleagues to do hands-on community work for the village. The Chijnaya Foundation was born. With limited resources, the foundation provides guidance and project funding so that the villagers can improve their lives. The board of directors of the foundation includes six RPCVs and the foundation's work is a striking example of how RPCVs can continue the community work that they began as Peace Corps volunteers many years before.

"When I came back to Chijnaya 45 years later, the entire village embraced me—they held a day-long festival in my honor," Bolton says. "I was honored and touched by their appreciation for the work I did so many years ago. I couldn't believe they remembered me after so long. The Peace Corps work was that meaningful to them. I knew I wanted to help the village more."

In three short years, the foundation has provided numerous scholarships so young Chijnayans can attend local universities or technical schools. The foundation also has assisted the community in renovating the local health clinic. A micro-loan program lent \$250 to each participating family for building livestock sheds. Each shed, which shelters the family cows from

inclement winter weather, helped to significantly increase each family's milk production and double each family's annual cash income, from \$125 per year to \$250 per year. Another initiative involves recruiting volunteer college students—more than 30 to date—to do community work in Chijnaya each May and June.

Other ongoing projects, all of which are selected and directed by the community members themselves, include providing materials for families to convert to smokeless stoves; building a small hotel (which is in its planning stage), and helping the community obtain a new tractor. These projects have provided such large, measurable results that the surrounding communities are now asking the foundation to help their villages prosper and grow.

In 2007, at the urging of local women, Bolton and three student volunteers decided to help revive Chijnaya's art of embroidered tapestries. These *bordados*, called *achachis*, are hand-embroidered scenes that depict village life and celebrations. They are beautiful creations embroidered with dyed alpaca yarn on a hand-loomed burlap-like sheep's wool fabric.

Back in the 1960s, the original tapestries garnered international attention. Museums throughout the

United States displayed Chijnaya's handmade folk art; newspapers and magazines, including *Woman's Day* in 1966, wrote stories about it. The tapestries generated income for the village, but without a continuing market for their goods due to the interruption of exports during a period of local terrorism, the handmade craft became a lost art.

To resurrect this embroidery art, Bolton helped the community form an artisans' committee, which is comprised of 11 groups of 10 villagers. Many of the older villagers, who stitched the original embroideries in the 1960s, are involved. The foundation provided seed capital for materials and the artisans went to work.

In June 2008, Bolton returned home with 11 panoramic tapestries. The tapestries, similar in concept to France's famed Bayeaux Tapestry, are vibrant, detailed and beautiful. The foundation's Arts and Crafts Committee—under the direction of Andrew Hoffman (Peru 66-68), who, coincidentally was trained by Bolton for his Peace Corps assignment—started looking for ways to market this long-lost art form in the US. Hoffman approached the International Folk Art Museum in Santa Fe and, with critical assistance from Board Member Connie Jaquith (Bolivia, '65), the foundation presented Chijnaya's *achachis* to the International Folk Art Market Committee, applied to participate in the 2008 market and was accepted. The International Folk Art Museum even selected one panorama *achachi* for its permanent collection.

The Chijnayans selected Zenovia Paricela, president of the artisan committee, to attend the July 2008 market as Chijnaya's representative artisan, along with the foundation's Peruvian-based board member David Cajo. Paricela and Cajo brought more than 800 pieces to the market, ranging in size from 8-by-10 inches to 28-by-54 inches. During their two-week stay in Santa Fe, they participated in the museum's day-long seminar about export business, and they researched new products ideas for their art work. By the end of the weekend-long International Folk Art Market, the



Achachi Panoramas from Chijnaya, 84x48.

Chijnayans sold more than \$13,000 worth of *achachis*. In September, Bolton returned to Chijnaya to present the funds to the very grateful community.

The application to participate in the 2009 International Folk Art Market is underway.

Andrew Hoffman (Peru 66-68) serves on the board of The Chijnaya Foundation.

For more information about the Foundation, please call 505-954-4555 or email chijnaya@aol.com

An advertisement for ALPACA artwear featuring a young child wearing a hand-knit alpaca fiber hat. The hat is light green with colorful, geometric patterns. To the right of the child, the text "alpaca, naturally..." is written in a cursive font. Below the child, the brand name "ALPACA" is prominently displayed in large red letters, with "artwear" in a smaller script below it. A descriptive text box to the right reads: "Soft, warm, beautifully hand-knit child's hat richly detailed in natural Alpaca fiber. \$34.50 (plus tax and shipping)". At the bottom, a larger text box states: "Alpaca Artwear expresses your love of natural comfort, timeless design, and hand-crafted clothing. Fair trade, Andean-crafted wearable arts for the whole family. Luxurious, natural Alpaca - amazingly light, warm, soft and hypoallergenic. www.AlpacaArtwear.com".

THE MILLIONTH BEAD

How old magazines and glue built a village in Africa

by Joshua Berman

Sometime during the summer of 2008, a group of African and American women, through a cooperative organization called BeadforLife, quietly hit a milestone: they sold their *millionth* piece of handmade jewelry. It all began when three Colorado women traveling in Uganda had a chance encounter with a woman selling tightly rolled paper beads in front of her hut in an impoverished district of Kampala. Torkin Wakefield, her daughter, Devin Hibbard, and their friend, Ginny Jordan proceeded to strike up a conversation with the woman and buy her entire stock of beads. Back home, where customers loved hearing the story of hard-working women climbing out of poverty, the beads sold like hotcakes

and they realized they were on to something.

Since its first days, BeadforLife has had a wildly successful ride as they built on their vision of lifting people out of poverty with such a low-tech, low-cost solution. When Oprah Winfrey mentioned the organization in a short piece in her magazine, *O.*, Torkin, Devin, and Ginny—and the group of Ugandan beaders with whom they had teamed up—sold \$90,000 worth of beads for the holidays. Since then, BeadforLife's growth has been steady.

FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE

"There are 300 women enrolled in the 27-month training program," reports Devin. We are sitting at an outdoor café in Boulder, Colorado, the

North American operations base for BeadforLife. It is a warm, sunny Rocky Mountain morning. The cheerful scene humming around us—healthy children, smiling families, open spaces and parks in every direction, \$4-coffee drinks in our hands—could not be farther from reality in the slums of Kampala, which we are discussing in between high-priced sips. Most residents there struggle on less than \$1 per day, Devin tells me, and many resort to crushing stones by hand in a nearby quarry—those who do not succumb to drugs or prostitution, that is. Women in Kampala's slums are among the poorest, most disenfranchised inhabitants in the country; many migrated to the city after being widowed by war or AIDS;

some are HIV-positive, have small children, and no healthcare, let alone dreams for a better life.

However, with the millionth bead sold, not only have hundreds of families in the BeadforLife program turned their lives around, they have saved enough money to buy a solid brick home on land purchased by BeadforLife. There are now 120 homes on the land.

"It's called Friendship Village," says Devin.

In a phone call from Uganda, Torkin had told me about the opening ceremony for the first homes built in the village. She said, "One woman pressed her cheek against the warm mud bricks and cried. I told her, 'You built this with beads!'"



Charles Steinberg

"Kamu kamu gwe mugaanda:" An Ugandan proverb that means "One by one makes a bundle."

BEADPARTIES: A MODEL OF SIMPLICITY

Ugandan BeadforLife members each employ several other people to help fill orders. During their two-year commitment, they receive practical and small business training so that when their time is up, they will be able to continue with the businesses they created while the next group of poor women enters the program. The next group, Devin tells me, will receive agriculture training in addition to small business skills.

Distribution throughout North America is handled through neighborhood events called "BeadParties." These grassroots gatherings allow friends to come together, browse massive mound of beads, and watch a video about the women who made them. BeadforLife provides the beads to sell up front, an educational DVD, biographies, a CD, and ideas for a successful event—all free of charge.

In 2007, over one hundred thousand people attended nearly two thousand BeadParties. Sales at these parties generated \$3.5 million in revenue last fiscal year, nearly all of which helped people in extreme poverty—and not just in the form of cash. Indeed, benefits for participating beaders extend far beyond mere profit generation.

The idea is to "create a ladder out of poverty," says Devin, "providing women not only income, but entrepreneurial training, business funding, and health programs." Many beaders have started small businesses, reinvesting their profits to create poultry farms, vegetable stalls, a brick factory, a nightclub, and more. The women and their families, whether they opened side businesses or not, now have access to health, financial security, and education they did have before.

THE POWER OF STORY

Torkin traces BeadforLife's roots much farther back than 2004. The organization really began four decades ago, she says, with her Peace Corps service in southern India. A member of India 29, Torkin (then named Kathie Kaufman), worked with teachers and health educators in Mysore. A mysterious virus sent her back to New Delhi and the Peace Corps



Charles Steinberg

A profusion of handmade paper beads.



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physician. "Two years later," she says, "I married my doctor and it is our talented daughter, Devin Hibbard, who co-founded BeadforLife with me and now works by my side as co-executive director."

BeadforLife is about much more than mere products and profit, though. "There are many nice fair trade products out there," says Torkin, "but it is the power of story that sets us apart." The women's stories "are every bit as important as the beads themselves." Their stories are of suffering, strength, and perseverance; they are stories about war, abuse, and disease. They are also stories about overcoming

such challenges and discovering unknown strength and talent. Africans have the ability "to hold suffering and joy at same time, which is not something we know how to do in the West anymore."

Adds Devin, "We use the power of our members' stories to help us involve North Americans. The stories create a circle between our beaders and our buyers, a circle that enriches everyone."



Charles Steinberg

Painstaking handiwork.

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

Of course, this is also a story is about people throughout North America, the ones who have already bought beads and hosted parties to help alleviate poverty—and the ones who would get involved if they only knew how.

Now you do.

Begin by browsing BeadforLife's necklaces, bracelets, loose beads, jewelry bags, note cards, and African music at www.beadforlife.org. Then take it one step further and host your own BeadParty. The instructions are on the website; they make it incredibly easy.

Our cups drained, Devin gets up to go. She is in the midst of final preparations to move back to Uganda with her family. "I try to live abroad at least one out of every five years," she tells me, "or else we start thinking this is how things really are." She sweeps her arm to indicate the shiny-happy bubble around us. I understand completely, and wish her happy travels.

Joshua Berman (Nicaragua 1998-2000) is a freelance writer and Spanish teacher based in Boulder, Colorado. His website is www.joshuaberman.net.



Charles Steinberg

Bead for Life has launched a cottage industry in Uganda.



Partnership enriches all.

WEAVING COMMUNITIES

One organization's efforts to end child labor and sustain livelihoods

by Judith Ritter

As many former Peace Corps volunteers know, the intensity of the experience—its challenges and joys—may fade over the years, but the lessons live on, often inspiring later efforts to serve the community. Peace Corps experiences became the foundation of a lifetime of service for former volunteers Maureen Orth and Stephanie Odegard. Both are successful in their careers—Orth as an award-winning journalist and special correspondent for *Vanity Fair*, Odegard as the founder of a company known for its stylish, modern and child-labor-free rugs—and both express their



Robin Romano

Girls can now stay in school.

social concern through their work with RugMark, an organization established

to abolish the use of child labor in the handmade-rug industry.

RugMark works to end illegal child labor in the carpet industry and bring education to children in India and Nepal. Its approach is unique because RugMark works not only with factories in the carpet weaving country of origin, but also in North America where RugMark enlists the support of importers, designers, retailers and consumers of handmade rugs. In Nepal and India, the organization monitors factories and provides education to former child weavers. In the North America and Europe, RugMark invites



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Robin Romano



Robin Romano

Nearly 300,000 children in India, Nepal and Pakistan are spending long days working in poor conditions. Child labor also drives down adult wages and keeps entire communities in poverty.

interior designers, rug designers, and purveyors of rugs to commit to manufacturing, selling, and providing clients with carpets certified by RugMark as child-labor-free. The result is a satisfied consumer who can purchase and enjoy a beautiful carpet that is not the product of child exploitation.

Odegard's company, Odegard, Inc., was the first in the US to join RugMark. In the late 1970s, she volunteered in Fiji where she set up marketing possibilities for traditional crafts. Now, three decades later, as the head of a company that sells custom-made carpets, her commitment to the development of indigenous crafts is stronger than ever. "During my time in Fiji I became committed to this idea as my life's work. At the base of this is affording every child the opportunity for education which inevitably means an end to child labor—RugMark is helping me fulfill my goals, while addressing the mission of peace", says Odegard. As a longtime RugMark board member, Odegard is preserving traditional crafts

and creating a better life for artisans.

And a better life is needed, especially for the children. It is hard for many of us to believe that in the 21st century child labor is a major problem throughout the world. Yet, it is. According to Nina Smith, executive director of RugMark USA, over 218 million children are victims of child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, bonded child labor, child domestic work, or have been recruited for armed conflict or drug trafficking. "Many of the worst forms of child labor are found in places where RugMark operates, such as India, Nepal, and Pakistan. There are nearly 300,000 children working in intolerable conditions in the carpet industry to provide rugs for North American and European homes. Children as young as 4 to 14 are kidnapped or trafficked and sold into debt bondage or forced labor."

Although so many children are suffering physically and mentally, RugMark's work is having a profound effect. Since 1995, RugMark has freed

more than 3,000 children from looms and deterred thousands more from entering the work force. Education programs funded in part by the sale of RugMark certified rugs and by donations to RugMark help rehabilitate these children by providing daycare, literacy training, formal schooling and vocational training. One example of RugMark's success is found in Nepal, where, over the last 12 years, child labor in carpet production dropped from 11 percent to 3 percent. "We are credited for much of this success because during the same years that child labor decreased, the number of licensed factories we inspected in Nepal grew to 65 percent," says Smith.

With each percentage point that RugMark market share increases, it is estimated that 750 children are rescued from the workplace and 1,000 more are saved from entering the industry. As Smith puts it, "*That is definitely progress!*"

"When you're in the Peace Corps you are immediately drawn to how

beautiful the children are and, at the same time, saddened by how their lives are limited by poverty," Orth says. Orth has dedicated much of her time to helping these children, establishing two foundations to continue educating the children of Medellin, Columbia where she did her Peace Corps service. She also serves on RugMark's advisory board. "When you see an organization such as RugMark that directly affects the lives of children, you have to support it!"

A founding principle of RugMark is that consumer choice is a powerful tool capable of transforming markets, industries and the face of the global economy. Complementing the legislative and policy work being done by international and civil society organizations, RugMark's product-labeling system is a smart economic model that provides a market-based solution to exploitative child labor. The theory of change is straightforward: If enough people make preferential buying



RobCatal/Steven Miller Gallery rug

The certified and individually numbered RugMark label assures that no child labor was used in the manufacture of a carpet or rug.

choices and demand certified no-child-labor carpets, the industry will make and sell carpets without child labor.

Over the next five years, RugMark plans to raise the market share of certified child-labor-free rugs from the current 3 percent to 15 percent. That 15 percent is the estimated tipping point needed to completely eliminate child labor from South Asia's handmade-

rug industry. RugMark's successes are making a huge difference in the lives of children around the world.

To find out where you can purchase a RugMark rug or to learn more about the issues and how to get involved please visit www.rugmark.org.

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THE BEST PRESENT EVER

An order for felt Christmas stockings opens the door to economic independence

by Yildiz Yagci

Although Peace Corps has not had a program in Turkey since 1970, the Friends of Turkey (Arkadaslar) group remains vibrant. Since its inception in 1991, the group has raised \$66,000 for selected projects in Turkey and the U.S. Among the recipients is Anatolian Artisans, an organization dedicated to providing sustainable income to low-income artisans through product development, marketing and training, and raising awareness about the arts and culture of Turkey. Here, artisan Yasemin Bilici tells founder and president Yildiz Yagci how Anatolian Artisans has made a difference in her life.

I am the first woman shopkeeper in Sanliurfa. I used to be a CATOM (Multipurpose Community Center) participant. I never imagined starting my own business. Under the supervision of an instructor at the CATOM, we were engaged in making bags out of felt. One day a group of people arrived from America. They

were the directors of the Anatolian Artisans. They asked, "What can we do to help promote the work of the young women of the CATOM?" I told them, "Send us whatever [samples] you like, we will make it." They gave funds to the CATOM for the purchase of felt and they also sent a designer, Fatma Hanim, to teach us how to make the new product.

Fatma Hanim had samples of Christmas stockings. She asked us, "Can you make these?" If someone mentions "work," it will make me stop in my tracks, even if I have my wedding dress on! We were simultaneously receiving her training and working on the order for goods that we had received from America. We were very happy. Education and a merchandise order—at the same time! We completed and shipped the order in August of 2001. As a whole, 150 persons at the CATOM benefited from the work for this special order. This was an order totaling US\$12,500. Almost everyday,

I was giving interviews to radio and television programs.

My contract ended at the CATOM in January 2003. When I left my job at the CATOM, I became like a bird with a broken wing. Two months passed by without any employment. All I had was the last salary payment I had received. Was I going to use this money to support myself or to start a business? I was thinking about starting a business by obtaining credit. But we (my family and I) were not able to take on this risk.

I would think to myself "Yasemin, did you take these training courses for nothing?" I had taken a micro-enterprise training course sponsored by Anatolian Artisans. I thought of the owner of the shop I am currently in. Because he worked in a government office, he himself could only open his shop and tend to business during weekends. His son kept the shop open after school hours, but this store was closed to business most of the

time. One day I asked the owner, "What would you say to our working together?" He responded, "Sure, be here at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning." He put the key to the shop in my hand. Now we work together. He said to me, "The store is not mine, it is yours; if you wish, gather the women, you can all work here or you can give them work to take home." But we had no raw materials with which to produce anything.

My sister was working at a market for a monthly salary of 100 lira. At



Yasemin in her store.

home, in addition to my sister and my mother, we had my grandmother and grandfather, as well as my bedridden father who has been paralyzed for the past 15 years. I thought to myself, "Put everything else aside and rely on your own personal trustworthiness." I went to visit the bead vendor. He said, "Sister, the store is yours, take what you need, and if you can't pay it back, let it be yours to have and enjoy." The felt vendor said, "I freely give you all the felt you want." I was in shock. I went to the women who would do the handcraft work and said, "Here are raw materials for you to work with, we are starting a business. If I cannot pay your salaries...." The women said they would give their time freely.

Currently, I am employing 90 of the 400 CATOM participants. Before I assign work to a woman, I talk with her. I only employ them if they are sending their children to school. They must give me their word that their children, and particularly their female children, are attending school.

I learned how to turn work into a real business activity from Fatma Hanim. I learned that when I was making something, I should strive for a flawless product. I learned about quality. I learned the correct way to dye felt. Now we do all our own dye work.

The micro-enterprise training course I took taught me how to run my own business. I believe that the education I received from the course sponsored by the Anatolian Artisans has played a very large role in my success.

Presently, Yasemin is running a crafts boutique at the lobby of an elegant new hotel in Sanliurfa. As her story demonstrates, Anatolian Artisans' mission is to assist low-income artisans of Turkey by providing them training in product development, micro-business management and links to markets.

We work with international designers who develop trendy new crafts based on the regional culture and artistic traditions. In addition to production training, our artisan groups in the least developed parts of Turkey receive micro-business management training. The new products are sold at the Smithsonian and



Anatolian Artisans designers Sue Heathcote and Deniz Betil at a product development workshop.

Textile Museum gift stores, boutiques and at our own periodic sales events. MUDO department stores in Turkey carry our artisans' products as part of their social programs.

Anatolian Artisans also organizes annual cultural tours to Turkey to raise awareness about the rich cultural

heritage of the country and its artistic traditions. Each year we sponsor an artisan from Turkey to represent his/her traditional craft at the wonderful Santa Fe International Folk Art Market.

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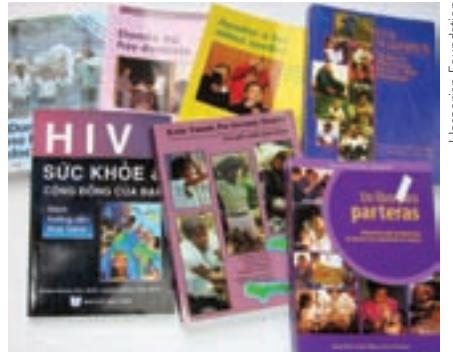
The Peace Corps-Hesperian Relationship

by JoAnna Haugen

Far from modern technology, men and women in underserved communities across the United States and around the world must use creative practices in order to live healthy and productive lives. Hesperian Foundation bridges the gap between those who can provide sustainable solutions and those who need them most by presenting health-related information in understandable and useable language so that people like Peace Corps Volunteers can find realistic ways to help these communities.

THE PEACE CORPS-HESPERIAN CONNECTION

Best known for its book *Where There Is No Doctor*, which put community-based



Hesperian Foundation

A sample of Hesperian titles.

solutions to common health problems in the hands of aid workers, Hesperian has been providing educational materials to neglected populations since 1977. Consequently, the organization's books are often considered some of

the most valuable materials available to Peace Corps volunteers around the world. "There is a natural connection between Hesperian and Peace Corps," says Elizabeth Shapiro, a former Peace Corps volunteer in El Salvador (94-96) and a writer and researcher for Hesperian's latest book, *A Community Guide to Environmental Health*. "Hesperian writes for the communities that Peace Corps volunteers serve."

With similar goals of helping underserved communities help themselves, it should come as no surprise that a number of Peace Corps volunteers have worked for or with Hesperian over the years, including a country director from the Central African Republic who was an editor.

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Hesperian Foundation

A Peace Corps facilitated Water for Life workshop in El Salvador.

"The common thread among all of Hesperian's employees and volunteers is that most people have extensive experience overseas or with non-profit organizations," says Jen Ward, marketing and publicity coordinator for Hesperian. "One of the appealing things about Hesperian is that people who work here have walked the walk." In her training as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana (03-05), Zena Herman, foundations manager at Hesperian, says she received dozens of guides and books during training, but not all books are created equal. "*Where There Is No Doctor* is the only book I had that I really relied on," she says.

Pam Fadem, co-author, project manager and senior editor of *A Community Guide to Environmental Health*, also has a long history with Hesperian's collection of books. A public health educator and practitioner in underserved areas throughout the United States, she has used *Disabled Village Children* and *Where There Is No Doctor*. "As a healthcare practitioner, you're always looking for things that don't require extensive technology and therefore lots of money," she says. "Hesperian's books give people the tools to make health-related decisions when they matter the most."

Hesperian's books, which provide information from women's health to helping blind and deaf children, are

filled with case studies, illustrations and activities that are culturally diverse and sensitive in a simple, timeless language. And perhaps that's what allows Hesperian to fill such a unique niche. It provides both specialized and non-specialized health-related information in such a general and targeted manner that everyone can use. "Hesperian excels at putting information in a language that is both empowering and immediately useful to people who need tools," says Jeff Conant, co-author and project coordinator of *A Community Guide to Environmental Health*. Hesperian publications coordinator Todd Jailer agrees. "We're able to fill the needs we do because of how we do our job. Extensive collaboration on all of our books and field testing around the world means our books don't go out of date. We talk to people who specialize in these areas of health and empower people to take control of their lives," he says.

A NEW TOOL FOR THE COMMUNITY

In writing *A Community Guide to Environmental Health*—and with all books they produce—Hesperian tapped into groups dealing with environmental issues through extensive field testing of the activities and strategies outlined in the book. "Generally we looked for places where communities could use the information in a project they were already engaged in," Conant says. For

this book, the Peace Corps agro-forestry and environmental education program and rural health and sanitation program in El Salvador took an active role in providing feedback on the forestry and watershed chapters.

The environmental health guide was born from a needs-assessment done in the late 1990s, and, Conant says, "looking at the needs of Hesperian's audiences, there were issues tied to the medical and community concerns that needed to be addressed. We asked allies what they needed, and they said 'we need information on potable water, erosion control and waste management.' Cancer and toxics-related issues were also a growing problem."

Environmental concerns frequently lack "quick fix" solutions and are often politically charged. "This book specifically has activities that help navigate potentially controversial topics, such as gender issues and distribution of resources," Conant says. The book encourages communities to hold multinational corporations responsible for their actions, discourages the use of genetically engineered foods and provides information on how people can use laws to fight for their environmental rights.

Like all of its predecessors, *A Community Guide to Environmental Health* is a comprehensive guide bound to find its way into the hands of Peace Corps volunteers and community-based aid workers as they navigate the many issues that bind people to the land they live on. "The problems aren't going away," Conant says, "and in many cases they are getting worse."

As long as communities throughout the world need health-related materials, Hesperian and its on-the-ground partners will continue to deliver. After all, notes Fadem, "Building a community is the most important step in building a sustainable world."

*JoAnna Haugen (Kenya 04-05) is the community news editor for the National Peace Corps Association. She read *Where There Is No Doctor* cover-to-cover as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Learn more about Hesperian Foundation at www.hesperian.org.*

THE POWER AND THE POTENTIAL

High Atlas Foundation's Model for Continued Service

by Kate McLetchie

A year after finishing my Peace Corps service, I had the opportunity to return to Morocco to visit the village where I had served. While there as a volunteer, I attempted to introduce several different projects into the community, and although they were met with some success, they were met with even more challenges. With that said, the one project that really seemed to take off was a literacy program for women and girls—something deeply advocated for by the entire village. I left shortly after it began and sadly was never fully able to understand how important it might have been or what an impact it would have on the community.

However, during my reunion visit, all of that changed.

Greeted by the familiar faces and laughter that had lingered in the back of my mind for so many months, I was

told that I was to attend that evening's literacy class. I was thrilled to see that it was still so successful. Sitting among the women as they proudly showed me their graceful writing and recited verses from the Koran, it hit me—this project was successful because it was something the community really wanted and owned.

Whether it was fate or just random luck, I learned about the High Atlas Foundation (HAF) shortly after returning from my trip. HAF is a nonprofit organization that was started by Peace Corps Volunteers who served in Morocco, as a way to continue to build upon the knowledge and relationships they developed during their years of service. The organization helps to establish development projects that local communities design and manage, and that are in partnership with government and non-government agencies. I started volunteering, then



The author with community members during a tree planting project last winter.

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joined the Board of Directors, and last October I became HAF's first staff member, moving back to Morocco in order to manage projects on the ground and expand the organization. It didn't take long to convince me that there is a place for High Atlas Foundation not only in Morocco, but in every Peace Corps country throughout the world.

It goes without saying that there are plenty of RPCVs doing good things to benefit their countries of service. But what sets a group like the High Atlas Foundation apart from the rest is that it seeks to leverage the entire Morocco RPCV community (all 4,000 plus of them going back 45 years, as well as former Country Directors and U.S. Ambassadors who once served Morocco) along with Peace Corps counterparts from various government ministries. The model is simple and effective: using a grassroots participatory approach, we facilitate community meetings where beneficiaries determine for themselves their priority development projects; introduce the partnerships and raise the funds necessary to support the projects that are designed, implemented, and managed by the communities themselves.

Need evidence of the power and effectiveness of this model? Until just recently, HAF was an all-volunteer organization, and since its founding in 2000, it has planted nearly 150,000 fruit trees, benefitting over 23,000 people; funded the construction of three women's cooperatives and one irrigation basin; supported numerous Peace Corps Volunteer projects; facilitated with its partners dozens of community meetings; formed instrumental partnerships with Morocco's High Commission of Waters and Forests and Ministry of Agriculture; hosted six fundraising receptions in the United States that brought together the Moroccan expatriate community, RPCVs, as well as academicians, politicians, and private sector leaders with an interest in Morocco, including one just this past June that celebrated 45 years of Peace Corps service in Morocco; and hired its first full-time staff—and most of these accomplishments happened just in the past few years.

As Peace Corps prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary, HAF can serve as model for strategically developing ways to leverage the power and potential of the RPCV community to address the myriad social problems around the globe. Creating a robust network of RPCV groups with a development focus and providing the training, technical and financial support they need to get their organizations off the ground is the place to start. After all, what sub-set of the American population can you tap into that has spent two years collectively living at the grassroots level in 139 countries, experienced first-hand the intricate social and economic challenges of some of the most under-resourced areas of the world, learned the local languages and culture, and upon returning, often seek out advance degrees and training, including those available through Peace Corps-affiliated graduate programs?

We know that in general, host countries like Peace Corps Volunteers; after all we are there by invitation from the host countries' governments. So think about how much it means to those countries when Volunteers continue to serve beyond their two year commitment. When RPCVs organize themselves to support projects of current Volunteers and their communities, when they assist the most remote villages in their development efforts, and when they create dialogue between government agencies and local communities—all of a sudden Peace Corps is not just a two-year program that parachutes in wide-eyed idealists looking to change the world. Instead, it is seen as a sophisticated international development agency, one that leverages the knowledge, skills, and relationships of RPCVs—and most of all, the genuine love for the host country and its people.

Kate McLetchie is the first Country Director of the High Atlas Foundation – a NPCA member group. She served as a Peace Corps Volunteer from 2001-2003 in Morocco. You can learn more about the High Atlas Foundation at highatlasfoundation.org.

IS AMERICAN FREE SPEECH WORTH SOUTH AFRICAN BLOOD?

Gangs in Cape Town Named after 50 Cents' Group, G Unit

by Jesse Scaccia

Afew months ago I was walking through the Khayletsha township with a 24-year-old resident named Wandesille. As we passed through the maze of inhumane windy shacks the people here call home, Wandesille made a reference to a certain American rap star that stopped me in my tracks.

"At night is when it gets really bad because that is when the gangs take over," Wandy, as he is known, said. When I asked him what the worst gang was, he didn't hesitate. "G Unit," he said.

G Unit is, of course, the rap group led by the New York-born hip-hop mogul 50 Cent.

Whenever G Unit comes to South Africa, as they did last May, every word 50 Cent sings is echoed in Xhosa accents by a tribe of devout followers.

Some in the crowd are part of the G Unit gang, and also from gangs such as 8 Mile (named in honor of Eminem's group), the Backstreet Boys, and one of the oldest gangs in Cape Town, The Americans. To pay for the 250 rand ticket the gang members undoubtedly committed violent crimes against some of the poorest, and thus most vulnerable, people in the world.

The reasons for South Africa's "gangsterism," as they call it, are complicated, and surely not one rapper's fault, but it got me wondering: Has 50 Cent's violence-celebrating brand of music somehow made this faraway country less safe? And if this is true, do we honestly believe that American free speech is worth the price of South African blood? Rather than consult PhD's who work in posh offices, I spoke to the real experts, the young people who face a daily battle for survival in Cape Town's townships. Here is what some of the students at Cape Town's School of Hope, a secondary school, had to say.



Wandy outside of his home in the Khayletsha township of Cape Town.

"Yes, (American rappers) should feel a heavy responsibility," said Masixole,

a resident of the Nyanga township. Masixole said that the youth of South Africa are "obsessed" with American rap artists. "They know a lot of young people are listening to their music and they only portray a bad side in their music. They should feel a sense of responsibility for the gangsterism and violence that occurs (here)."

One student, Tamsyn, 15, sees a connection between 50 Cent's "bling bling" lifestyle and a poor student's desire to rise out of poverty.

"Everything we see Americans doing or wearing, we want the same thing," he said. "He has a great life so



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they want to copy him to get the nice life he has."

According to the School of Hope's principal, Laura, the beatification of American hip-hop artists did not start with 50 Cent. When she asks her students to name their hero, the most popular answer is Tupac, at a rate of roughly ten-to-one to Nelson Mandela.

The fact is, much of the youth of South Africa are not equipped to discern between the bravado in 50 Cent's lyrics and what could be viewed as a crime-filled path out of poverty. Only 14% of black South African adults have high school degrees, thus denying most young people the benefit of an educated parent to shield them from bad influences. To wit, many of the children I spoke to openly questioned whether condoms prevented the spread of AIDS, and this in the country with the most HIV infected people of any in the world.

According to Wandy, American hip-hop artists have the potential to make

a change in South African society, but they chose not to. He said that it is good that rappers purge their emotions through singing, but the residue lands on neighborhoods like his.

"A more peaceful attitude might change a lot," Wandy said. "But artists don't seem to care. They are just making money and passing on a very bad message."

Of course, violence has been an epidemic in South Africa long before 50 Cent, a rapper/former drug dealer famous for being shot 9 times, became an instant superstar with his album "Get Rich or Die Tryin."

"The gangs of Cape Town have been around long before the hip-hop culture made it on the beat. And they were violent then and still remain violent," said Irvin Kinnes, a criminologist and an expert on Cape Town's gangs.

Many of the students were quick to point out that each individual must make their own choices, regardless of

influence. The expert, Kinnes, said that unless the population finds its way out of poverty, American hip-hop does not matter.

The fact remains, though, that 50 Cent is a hero to millions of South Africans because of his undeniable talent, yes, but also because young, black men see something of themselves in his songs of urban struggle and oppression.

"50 and other rappers who grew up poor are role models," said Charlynn, a 20-year-old 12th grader.

When asked if Charlynn thought if 50 Cent changed his ways it would have an affect on Cape Town's gangs, she said, "I think it would translate to less gang violence in my neighborhood. Everything (American hip-hop artistis) do is cool."

South Africa still has the second worst murder rate in the world. According to a report issued by the City of Cape Town last year, almost one out of every 100 people experienced a violent crime in 2005/2006, and that is only of reported cases. When 50 Cent brags about dealing drugs or proudly displays his bullet wounds, the young residents of Cape Town's townships need to only look out their front door to relate. Unfortunately, they also see the violent path that led to his success as a model of their own.

G-Unit's new album is called "Shoot to Kill," which could be a metaphor, or it could be taken as advice to the wrong ears. 50 Cent will face no legal challenges to this album name, nor will anyone suggest he does not deserve the millions he will earn from its sales. And somewhere in Africa, a young man named Wandesille will never know what it is to feel safe in his neighborhood.

Jesse Scaccia has been published by the New York Times, the San Diego Union Tribune, and the Virginian-Pilot. He co-executive produced a documentary series for BET about post-Katrina life for the band and football team at an HBCU in Louisiana. He is currently the Perry Morgan Fellow in the MFA program at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.



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"PETIT À PETIT" THE MINISTRY PROMISES POSITIVE CHANGE

As Teachers Strike for Pay, the Government Delays

by Caron Alarab

On a foggy morning in Guinea, as uniformed students surrounded a rusty flagpole, the faculty lounge of a typical lycée buzzed with news of a strike.

Of the teachers at this small public high school, most complained about restrictive annual contracts as the rest denounced poor retirement benefits for those with tenure. But the main reason behind the strike was pay.

While contractual teachers in Guinea earn half the salary of civil servants, or titulaires, all middle and high school teachers supported their union in a nationwide protest in June.

Pressured by rising food prices, the union scheduled the strike to interfere with the high school and college entrance exams—better known in Guinea as the Brevet and the Baccalaureate—to get the government's attention. A week before the scheduled "stay-at-home" protest, two teachers voiced their views.

"We want a change," said Madame Diallo*, a titulaire who supports a 10-person household. "If we have more money, we will have motivation to teach better."

One of Diallo's contractual coworkers said the Ministry of Education is to blame. "Our salary is tiny and the government refuses to listen," said Mr. Baldé, father of three. "The government isn't kind, it's cruel."

In an effort to placate the union and to fill the positions of thousands of recently retired teachers, the Ministry promoted the majority of contractual positions to civil servants in the last year. But even long-standing titulaires, who earn around 500,000 Guinean Francs a month—about \$4 USD a day—say their salary just isn't enough. And while the Ministry claims it needs more time to make a positive change in Guinea's

education system, the teachers say they fear for the future of their families.

Like his fellow titulaires, middle school teacher Mr. Diallo said he struggles to support his family of seven after more than 20 years of teaching in Guinea.

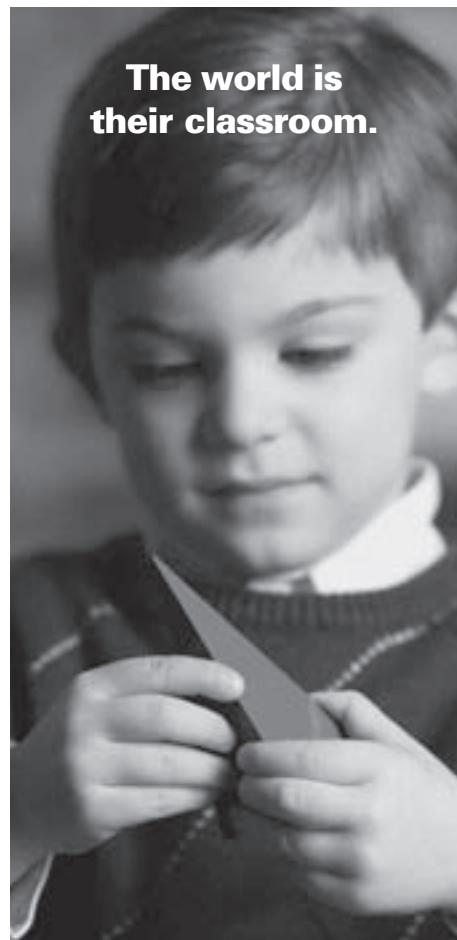
"My main concern is educating my children," he added.

But for traditionally larger families, the concern isn't the cost of education but the price of rice. In the last year, the price of a 50-kilo sack of rice in Guinea has doubled, averaging more than 210,000 GF. For contractual teachers like Baldé, who depend on one sack per month, roughly 90

percent of their salary is now spent on food for their families.

To increase their income, rural teachers opt to work in fields or sell wares at open-air markets. Urban teachers charge students for tutoring or straddle schedules at more than one school. When all else fails, the most desperate for money can make it by selling grades and national exam questions to students.

"The teachers have no motivation because they're not well paid," said titulaire Madame Barry. "So the students cheat. There is constant corruption. Everyone is jaded."



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A HISTORY OF BROKEN PROMISES

In 2001, after years of calling for updated salaries, the teachers' union declared a nationwide strike, which led to serious negotiations with President Lansana Conté. Even when Conté agreed to double the civil servants' salary, most teachers said it wasn't enough.

"It calmed the people down but it didn't make a big enough improvement in their lives," former college professor Mr. Diaby said.

Within a few years, the teachers started striking again and continued to do so during subsequent school years. However, the strikes never lasted more than two weeks at a time as the Ministry made empty promises to get the teachers back in class.

Then, in January 2007, a nationwide strike took hold of Guinea one week before midterm exams, causing outrage among students. As protests turned violent

and more than 120 civilians were injured or killed in scuffles with the military, Peace Corps evacuated 106 volunteers and suspended the program a month later. When Peace Corps reopened the program in July 2007, the government had elected a popular Prime Minister and had started promoting contractual teachers to civil servants. While only 16 of the original PCVs reinstated, 10 of those were teachers who hoped for a smooth school year ahead.

Unfortunately for the teachers' union, the government made sure of that.

When the union threatened to strike in April 2008, the Ministry extended spring break by a week to talk the teachers into finishing the semester. When the union planned the strike in mid-June to disturb national exams, the Ministry changed exams dates three times, delaying the Baccalaureate exam by almost a month.

"It's just bad governance," said Mr. Diallo.

A PESSIMISTIC UNION, AN OPTIMISTIC MINISTRY

To this day the teachers' union of Guinea is dissatisfied with its salaries and had threatened yet another strike if their demands were not met by October. As expected, the Ministry delayed the start of the 2008-2009 school year and the first week of classes started without a hitch—or a pay raise for teachers.

Some believe the government is merely biding its time, hoping to receive money from aid agencies or the World Bank. Despite this strategy, the teachers' union is not rolling over any time soon.

"The union will never sit back and simply wait for miracles to happen," Mr. Diaby concluded. "The government will always try to gain more time and we will continue to fight."

"But as long as Conté is in power, the people will not have much influence over the political and economic situation in Guinea."

The Ministry of Education, on the other hand, seems hopeful for the future of its system. Magassouba said he is optimistic because the Ministry is in a position to prevent strikes like the one in 2007 and make much needed changes.

"But it is not an easy process," he added. "Corruption is a big problem and our country lacks infrastructure. There are too many needs...it [will be] very, very difficult."

While Magassouba knows the teachers' union wants more money and less corruption right now, he said positive change for Guinea's education system will take a lot of work over a long period of time.

Or, as Guineans like to say, "petit à petit."

*Guinean names have been changed.

Caron Alarab served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guinea, West Africa from July 2006 to October 2008. She was evacuated with the program in January 2007 and reinstated at the start of the 2007-2008 school year to continue teaching high school English in Dalaba. She helped design the English section of the 2008 Baccalaureate exam in Guinea and trained G16, the first education stage since the 2007 evacuation.

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WHO'S ON STAGE NOW?

When you're a volunteer, everything is performance art

by Greg Alder

Weekends were for washing. Each Saturday and Sunday, the students who stayed in the school hostel brought their clothes to the water pump and spent hours there scrubbing together. It was a scene of colorful plastic tubs, sloshing water, white shirts hung on the barbed-wire fence, and teenage Africans chatting and laughing. I thought I should join it.

I hauled my green tub of dirty laundry up the hill and set it beneath the pump's spout. The metal pump lever clinked as I worked it up and down, drawing water out of the ground through the borehole. The two dozen students around me paused—suds clothes in hand—and watched.

It was my first Saturday at Ngoana Jesu Secondary School, where I had arrived to be a Peace Corps English teacher. At just over a hundred students, Ngoana Jesu—translated from Sesotho, “Child Jesus”—was a small collection of cinderblock classrooms on the outskirts of a village. The classrooms were surrounded by fields of corn, sorghum and wheat. Beyond the fields were mountains. It was hard

for me to pay full attention to any task in the early days of living there, whether washing clothes or playing soccer, because the vistas of those surrounding mountains grabbed at me like hungry toddlers. Close by were the volcano-like peaks of Tsoeneng and Kolo; farther away was the plateau of Qeme; even farther, the jagged teeth of the Maloti range. Entirely above 4,000 feet, Lesotho has the distinction of being the world's highest country. It rises from the high plains of South Africa like a ripe pimple.

At the pump, students continued to watch me as I opened a box of Surf and poured the detergent into the tub. My thought was to mimic a washing machine, so I swirled the clothes around. I squished them together and then swirled some more. The students had yet to resume their washing; they were fascinated by mine.

This was the difference between traveling through a foreign country and going there to stay. While a tourist you goggle at the local people and what they do, but the tables are turned when you are there to live—you become the one on

stage. You perform for them. My washing was a performance for the hostel students, and as an audience I found them to be not only discriminating but downright meddlesome.

“Sir, u tseba ho hlatsa?” a girl named Nthabiseng asked. “You know how to wash?”

“Yes,” I said. “I know how to wash.”

“Sir, you don't know.”

Nthabiseng came over to my tub and bent at the waist to lift a pair of socks from the water. “Like this,” she said, as she squished them down her left forearm and onto the butt of her palm. She repeated that, dipped the socks into the water, and then went through the motions again. Next, she took a sock in each hand—with thumb and forefinger—and rubbed the toe and heel together.

Instead of letting me try, she proceeded to wash one of my shirts. The other students continued to watch the show. Then she asked, “Sir, do you use the machine in America?”

“Yes,” I said. “I used a machine in America.”

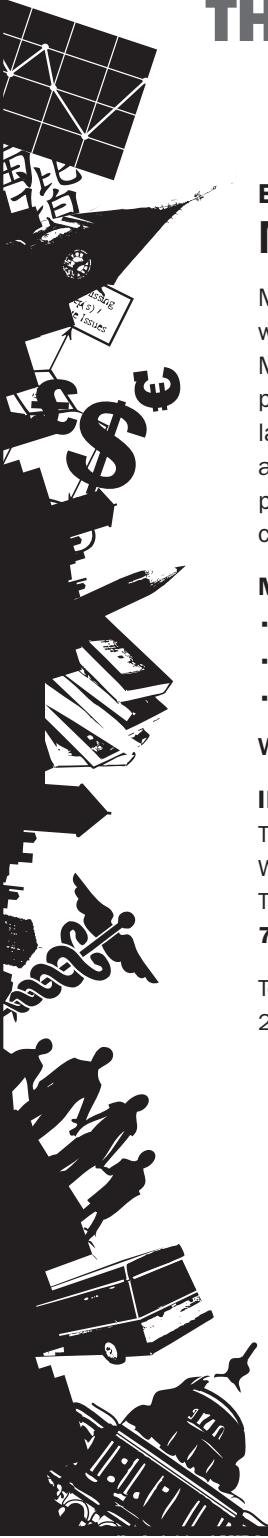


Drew Card pumping a bucket full of water to wash clothes.



John Ormond and Drew Card being shown how to wash by Ngoana Jesu student Tholang Sekoati.

Greg Alder



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"Oh, so you only know how to push the buttons," she said, and she snickered along with the other girls.

She pretended to push buttons in the air.

Then Nthabiseng pulled a dishcloth out of my tub. "Sir, do you use this on the dishes?"

I knew she would not be asking unless there was a problem with that, and I recalled being told of the Basotho custom of keeping food items separate from everything else. For example, in a house one was to draw an imaginary line—some erected a curtain—and kept pots and flour on one side while clothes and bedding always on the other.

"I don't use that on the dishes," I said. "I wipe the floor and things with that."

At this point, Nthabiseng had to let me go or else call her teacher a liar. No Basotho student would call a teacher a liar. But she clearly did not believe me, and she picked up washing again after a sigh: "Ach, Sir."

I didn't try to wash my clothes in public again until the end of that first semester. Rather, my weekends were spent furtively watching the hostel students wash. I walked up to the pump to fill my water buckets and noted their moves. They scrub waistbands by taking an end in each hand and rubbing one against the other. They hang pants to dry inside out, pockets exposed. Then I spread out my tubs inside my house and tried to copy them.

Near the end of the first semester, about the time I started joining the hostel students at the pump to wash on Saturdays again, Nthabiseng and some of her friends visited me one evening. My mother had sent me a nice radio from America, and they all noticed it on my table. They admired its shine and sophistication. Nthabiseng ran her fingers over the radio's surface.

"How do you open it?" she asked.

"Open it?" I said.

"How do you make it sing?"

"Oh," I said. "You don't know how to push the buttons?"

Greg Alder taught English in Tsoeneng, Maseru, Lesotho from 2003 to 2007.

JUSTICE IN THE SADDLE

His 10-year-old in tow, an RPCV returns to settle an unusual dispute; Excerpts from My African Horse Problem

by William F.S. Miles

Three rows behind us, on the KLM-plane bound for Nigeria, a stout black man is shrieking. "Look at what you have done!" he wails accusingly at the three burly white men hovering around him. "You have broken my hands!" Tears stream from his eyes. "Oh, Aje," he weeps, invoking the name of an African deity. "Aje, see what they have done! My hands are broken. Broken!"

"Dad, what's the matter with that man?"

We haven't even left the runway, and already my son Sam's first journey to West Africa is marred by this traumatic scene of deportation.

A petite Dutch stewardess hurries over to reassure us. "Don't worry about that man," she says, with a broad but forced smile. "He thinks that by making a big fuss now he can still leave the plane. He'll calm down once we're in the air."

We were on that plane purely on account of a letter I'd received from a black African Muslim priest I'd befriended sixteen years before but hadn't seen since. It had been ten years since I had last been to the remote village, in a region of the Sahel I first encountered as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger in the late 1970s. The letter, painstakingly handwritten in Hausa on French-lined school notepaper, informed me of the death of the village chief and the resulting inheritance dispute surrounding the horse that more than a decade prior I'd left deep in the African bush.

That's the simple explanation why I was now on a Royal Dutch Airlines flight bound for Kano from Amsterdam, the horse's proper heir—my ten-year-old son Samuel—fidgeting excitedly beside me. We were on a quest for universal justice and family honor.

* * *

While wholly unpractical, even in America owning a horse in Africa commands some social capital: think of Sa'a ("Luck"), our steed, as a status symbol. There are Americans who impress by tooling around in Porsches and BMWs; by sailing in yachts; by owning cottages on the Cape. These people need not even actually show off their boasted car, ship, or house. Mere mention of their expensive toys arouses desired envy.

And so it has been with us: we too gain status through the simple assertion that, regardless of our actual financial

condition, we lay claim to a horse cared for by an African chief. Like a seldom handled heirloom in the family vault, just knowing it is there—and being able to remind the children every so often—provides sufficient psychosocial uplift.

But is it not paternalistic to relegate a relationship to the realm of exoticism, merely because African villagers are concerned? Was my horse dilemma academically curious, comically bizarre, or tragically serious?

Local friends in whom I confided my African horse problem were at a loss: why, after all these years, did I still care about my rights to an animal in far-off

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Africa? Was it worth a lot of money? Was it worth exposing my ten-year-old child to the economic ends of the earth, where tropical disease is common, infant mortality runs rampant, and local food and water pose constant gastric threats? (They didn't even know about the illegal border crossings.) Why didn't I just forget the whole matter?

Because, I tried to explain, to dismiss the horse affair would be the height of betrayal. It would also be a kind of suicide: the death of Mista Bello, my Hausa persona in the village of Yekuwa.

On account of the legalistically religious aspects of the dilemma, I approached two local authorities for canonical advice: a Muslim scholar and my rabbi. Neither could provide the clear-cut guidance I sought.

"How would *shariah* deal with such a property and inheritance dispute," I asked Dr. Shawkat Toorawa, a Muslim from Mauritius. Although I knew that in the village itself African custom might trump Koranic law, it would still be helpful to know beforehand how Islamic jurists would approach our case.

"Well," answered my young but full bearded friend, "it would depend on which school of *shariah* they follow there. Is it Maliki? Hanafi?..." I was stumped. All previous attempts to determine denominational affiliation level had met with the same village response: *Musilimi kawai* ("Just plain old Muslim").

Rabbi Wayne Franklin of Providence did not ask if my Muslim African acquaintances inclined towards the Babylonian or Palestinian Talmud, the equivalent of Maliki-Hanafi divide. Neither of us actually presumed that halacha – Jewish law – carried any weight in Hausaland. But disputed ownership of a dead chief's twice removed horse would be precisely up the ecumenical alley of any expert whose legal training begins with a case of ox goring. Or so I thought.

As I explained the detailed reasons for my son's and my imminent African journey, seeking some Semitic precedent of possible relevance, Rabbi Franklin took an unexpected tack. Rather than providing a detached

talmudic perspective based on rabbinic reason, this modern, clean-shaven, ever-poised cleric of a Conservative Temple turned kabbalistic on me.

"You've left part of your *neshuma* there," he pronounced. Your soul.

In Hausa, the term for inheritance—*gado*—conveys so much more than material benefit. Embodied in the word is the spirit of the departed, so that you inherit not merely the deceased's objects but his soulful legacy. When the chief and I spoke of "inheritance," it meant much more than the imparted possessions of the dead: we were talking about the future, about preserving the memory, the very soul, of the original owner.

* * *

We do not shun discussing death in Hausaland. It is a common reality well integrated into community life. Death—including our own—is not the taboo subject it usually is in polite discourse in the West.

"Isn't it so?" I ask the new chief. "If God calls me, do I not pass on my *gado*?"

The new chief falls silent.

"Before, we had a patriarch in my family. His name was Samuel. He was my father but he passed away before I ever came to your village. We gave his name to my son. The one who is here with me now."

"Allah Akbar. This way, you are always reminded of your father. *Allah Akbar*: God is great. This is good, what you have done..."

Although he will not pass judgment or provide direct advice, my old friend the Muslim priest, Alhaji Mallam Harouna, is an excellent sounding board. The afternoon has slipped by and I still have not conveyed my decision to the chief—whether to accept compensation money in lieu of the actual inheritance horse. I am mulling things over with my host when, out of the darkness from the compound antechambers, a figure appears:

"Asalam aleikum," he calls out, using the Arabic greeting which I still automatically, Hebraically, translate as *Shalom aleichem*. "Peace unto you."

A figure appears from the antechamber, carrying a paper, the type ripped out of



Samuel Miles

Samuel Miles

French school notebooks. "Alhaji Mallam Harouna, a message for you." It is from our nemesis, the late chief's son who had absconded with our horse and denied it belonged to me.

Alhaji Mallam Harouna furrows his brow and shakes his head before forcing a smile. He is reluctant to convey the contents.

"Please read it," I ask.

"A letter from the hand of ___" he deciphers. "To Mallam Harouna, Son of a Jackass."

The insult is brazen.

"You have brought Mista Bello to me," Alhaji Mallam Harouna continues reading. "All that remains is that you bring forth the Angel of Death."

The threat is my tipping point. With it disappears the last shred of Western objectivity I'd been harboring, the paternalistic attitude of viewing the horse dispute coolly and from some antiquated anthropological distance.

From this moment forward I am, once again, completely Mista Bello, ready to use every arm at my disposal to protect my interests and the people here who are on my side.

But can I protect my son from the threat of black magic?

William (Bill) Miles (*Niger 77-79*) is the author, along with his son Samuel Miles, of *My African Horse Problem*, just published by the University of Massachusetts Press. This essay is adapted from the book.

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Community News

Recent achievements of our community

by JoAnna Haugen

AFGHANISTAN

Jill Vickers (69-70) and Jody Bergedick, youth program coordinator of Middlebury Community Television, produced a 70-minute documentary film called Once in Afghanistan. The film is about the group of smallpox vaccinators of which Vickers was a member when serving in the Peace Corps. It explores the group's often-humorous recollections of adjusting to life in Afghanistan and the profound impact being part of the country's culture had on them. It aired in October 2008. All profits from screenings of the film and from the sale

of the movie will be donated to NGOs working in Afghanistan.



CHILE

Jesse Dubin (64-66) of Frederick, Md., is trying to develop a scholarship honoring Peace Corps volunteers at the State University of New York-College of Environmental Sciences and Forestry. More than 100 Peace Corps volunteers have come out of the college, and Dubin is trying to get in touch with them in order to fund this scholarship. Please contact him at hjdubin@comcast.net if you have names or e-mail addresses of RPCVs from SUNY-ESF who might want to participate. Dubin also recently started funding a travel award for graduate students to attend the annual meetings of the American Phytopathological Society.



COSTA RICA

Sandra (Goode) Del Prado (Peru, 62-64) and her husband, **Guido** (Costa Rica, 78-80), retired to Peru in 2001 where they founded and run Kausay Wasi Clinic in Coya, Cusco, Peru. Over the past three years, Del Prado, her husband, and visiting U.S. nurses and surgeons have served more than 50,000 patients.

David Ives (80-82) was recently appointed to the International Steering Committee for the Middle Powers Initiative (MPI). The MPI uses the power of “middle powers” that are not major players in the nuclear proliferation playing field to influence those with more sway. An adjunct professor of Latin American studies, philosophy and international business, Ives will be responsible for attending conferences, strategy sessions and lobbying sessions around the world. For the past seven years, Ives has served as the executive director of the Albert Schweitzer Institute, one of eight international organizations that make up the MPI.



GEORGIA

While foreign aid of food and first aid poured into Georgia after the recent civil conflict with Russia, **Jennifer McFann** (06-08) is providing Georgians with something else they'll need as the winter approaches: warm clothing and blankets. She recently launched a drive to collect these items and is working with another former Peace Corps volunteer to secure shipping for the 63 boxes (1,977 pounds) of donations. A group of former PCVs who has returned to the country will coordinate the receiving and distribution of the items.

PANAMA

Lauren Burger and **Justin Feezell** (05-06) recently opened The Handmade Life, a gift shop in Bellingham, Wash. The shop features items made by local and regional artists, including jewelry, photos, paintings, wood-carved housewares, clothing, pillows and stuffed animals. Because of the nature of the products, each item promises to be unique and different from anything else available in the store.



PARAGUAY

Adam Goodman (98-00) has launched Kombucha Botanica, a fermented tea drink brand. He earned a loan through the Local Producer Loan Program from Whole Foods Market Inc. which has allowed the production of his brand to grow significantly. An advocate of fair trade, Goodman purchases Fair Trade Certified sugar from Paraguay and Fair Trade Certified tea from various parts of Asia. His business also gives back one percent of its annual net revenue to the community through the 1 Percent For The Planet program. Goodman currently sells Kombucha Botanica at Whole Foods stores in Northern California, and before the end of his year, Kombucha Botanica products will be available in all parts of California, Arizona, Southern Oregon, Nevada and Southern Utah.



PHILIPPINES

Daniel Bowman Simon (04-05) and **Casey Gustowarow** (04-06) are driving around America on TheWhoFarmMobile, an upside down bus with an edible rooftop. They are raising awareness and circulating a petition to request that the next president of the United States plant an organic farm on the lawn of the White House. This project, known as TheWhoFarm, is built on the domino theory of change that a president who eats healthy food from his own yard is likely to positively influence the food choices and policies of America and international food-related bodies.

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