

Village Station
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January 31, 2004

Minority Peace Corps Association

Dear Members and Supporters:

Thank you for your continued support of the Minority Peace Corps Association. With your help MPCA was able to accomplish a tremendous amount in 2003. The Minority Peace Corps Association has come a long way in such a short time and with your continued support we are advancing toward full realization of our mission.

The mission of the Minority Peace Corps Association has evolved in the last two years. However, the core of our mission is to promote a more diverse Peace Corps. I am grateful to be the President of an organization with such a great mission. I am even more grateful to have been a Peace Corps volunteer. It is my hope that more minority communities become aware of opportunities in the Peace Corps. In the Peace Corps I realized that you do not have to be perfect to make a difference, you do not have to be a superstar to be appreciated and you do not have to be a blood relative to become part of a family. As a returned Peace Corps volunteer, each day that you share your experience with someone who would otherwise not have thought about the Peace Corps, or speak in a community that has not seen many Peace Corps recruiters, or do a presentation at a school in a minority community is a day of success for MPCA. We are not "re-inventing the wheel," we simply hope to increase the involvement of more minorities in the international arena through the assistance.

We were incredibly busy in 2003. MPCA worked with the regional Peace Corps offices in New York, DC, and Chicago to co-host nine diversity dinners. Returned Peace Corps volunteers, family, friends, community leaders and Peace Corps applicants came together to share ideas and stories and to enjoy each other's company in a relaxed atmosphere. A few of the dinner participants are now in the Peace Corps application process or have already become volunteers.

The Minority Peace Corps Association worked with the New York regional Peace Corps office to secure Proclamations in recognition of Peace Corps Day 2003 from the Mayors of the City of Trenton and the City of Philadelphia.

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We also partnered with the New York Regional Peace Corps office, Columbia University Teacher's College, Peace Corps Headquarters, and Paul Robeson High School, to host our first Community Teacher's Awards Ceremony. This ceremony not only brought the Crown Heights, Brooklyn, community together, but it also allowed us to show our appreciation for five special teachers who have made significant contributions to their school and their community. Each awardee received a monetary award and certificates from the MPCA and the PTA of Paul Robeson High School. This event also gave MPCA the opportunity to make a difference overseas. On behalf of the Minority Peace Corps Teacher's Awards we were able to make a small donation to the Peace Corps Partnership Program to enable a PCV working in community development to construct a school in a small village in Niger, West Africa.

In working to fulfill our commitment to increasing the number of minority PCVs, MPCA worked with an independent organization to make a donation to help defray dental expenses for a nominated Peace Corps applicant. The applicant went on to become a Peace Corps volunteer in Southern Africa.

August marked a milestone for the Minority Peace Corps Association. With the help of the San Francisco Peace Corps office MPCA hosted an unprecedented National Conference attended by MPCA leaders, members and supporters, in the City of Philadelphia. The conference attendees addressed serious issues like financial reporting, reporting structures, fundraising and MPCA 501(c) 3 status, and helped develop the 2004-2005 schedule of events and begin planning the 2004 Conference. The conference brought together MPCA minds from the Chicago, California, Philadelphia, Delaware, Washington DC, and New York groups. It was kicked-off by a well attended diversity dinner that gave the attendees the opportunity to enjoy Philadelphia. Following the conference attendees participated in the annual Center City Philadelphia Unity Day celebration. This celebration brought thousands of people together in a diverse setting with health, educational and spiritual booths, live music and plenty of ethnic food.

On a business note, through the concerted effort of the Board of Directors and the support of the Minority Peace Corps Association membership we were able to secure a pro bono lawyer to help complete our 501 (c) (3) application.

These are only a few of the events and activities facilitated by the MPCA in 2003. We continue to support Peace Corps applicants of color by pairing them with individual members who share their interests in Peace Corps assignments or regions. We continue to reach out to our communities through park adoptions and clean-ups, church talks, school presentations and other community events. This is only possible through your continued communication with each other and your support of our mission.

Looking ahead, we have created a preliminary list of MPCA events that are scheduled throughout 2004. This list is a work-in-progress and may be amended.

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It will help our members and supporters plan well in advance for our upcoming events.

MPCA is always interested in your ideas, comments and suggestions. If you have an event that you would like to post, please send it to community@minoritypca.org. Additionally, any suggestions for events can be forwarded to the above email, as well.

I would also like to take this opportunity to point out the major events that MPCA will be hosting or co-hosting in 2004.

First, MPCA will be hosting the second annual Community Teacher's Awards. This event needs both monetary support and the participation of our members. For more information on how you can help please contact Bruce Thomas at bruce@minoritypca.org.

Second, MPCA will be hosting the second annual National Conference in Washington, DC. The conference is sponsored by the Board of Directors of MPCA and will be co-hosted by the MPCA National Committee and the MPCA DC chapter. This event is sure to be great and we look for the support of our members and supporters. The national conference provides us the opportunity to come together and network, share ideas, and support the Minority Peace Corps Association in its mission. Please contact Marcia Parks on how you can help at Marcia@minoritypca.org.

Third, MPCA has embarked on an unprecedented endeavor. The Connecticut RPCV group, the Big Apple Corps, the New Jersey RPCV group and the Minority Peace Corps Association, along with the support of the New York Peace Corps Office, the National Peace Corps Association and the Peace Corps Fund have come together to co-host an unforgettable fundraising event. We have planned a casino night and carnival to be held in New York City on October 2, 2004. For more information on how you can help please contact leslie@minoritypca.org.

As expected, our schedule is full again this year. Each of these events takes tremendous effort in planning and organization. I hope that each of you can take part in these events and that you will volunteer to help in the planning and organizing efforts. Your monetary support is always appreciated, as well. MPCA depends upon the help of each of our members and supporters to make things happen, so please make every effort to participate in any way you can.

Again, thank you, and I look forward to working with each of you this year.

Leslie Jean-Pierre
President

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