

MPCA Makes Its First Public Appearance at the Peace Corps 40th + 1 Anniversary

From June 20-23rd, the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) held a commemorative celebration of the Peace Corps' 40th +1 Anniversary in Washington DC. On this historic occasion, the Minority Peace Corps Association (MPCA), Returned Peace Corps volunteers, family, friends and honored guests celebrated the commitment of the 7,000 Peace Corps Volunteers currently serving in 70 countries, and the 165,000 Americans who have continued the spirit of service, domestically and abroad, after their Peace Corps experience.

The event was originally set for September 2002, canceled in the wake of the tragic events of 9/11/01 and then was postponed. Even after its transfer, the celebration was a success. The opening ceremonies included poignant speeches by the following keynote speakers: Sargent Shriver, Peace Corps' first Director; Senator Christopher Dodd; Gaddi Vasquez, Peace Corps Director; Dane Smith, NPCA President; and Alejandro Toledo Manrique, President of Peru, who was mentored by Peace Corps volunteers as a child and whose speech was transmitted via a live feed.

The MPCA was delighted to take part in the celebration, liaise with attending diversity groups and individuals and provide a voice to underrepresented minority RPCVs and current volunteers in the Peace Corps. Ten of MPCA members were active participants in the conference. We were inspired by Director Vasquez' commitment to diversify the Peace Corps in the 21st Century and motivated by the level of interest of potential MPCA members. In addition, we were encouraged by the positive feedback received from other NPCA affiliate groups, Peace Corps and even Director Vasquez himself, who was very supportive and enthusiastic about the MPCA.

The MPCA had the wonderful opportunity to attend educational seminars spread out in two full days ranging from Eliminating Racism, Philanthropy and HIV/AIDS in the Peace Corps to Understanding Islam. In keeping with the Peace Corps mission of intercultural exchange, the celebration also included a World Bazaar featuring affiliate groups representing countries of service arts and crafts, and A World Music, Dance and Film Festival at the Smithsonian and nearby National Zoo. To top off the celebration, RPCVs and guests danced the night away to Brazilian, Latino and African music at the World Beat Music Dance at the Omni Shoreham Hotel.

The event was memorable and inspiring to all MPCA member attendees. We reconnected with old friends, made new ones and more importantly had the opportunity to share with the Peace Corps our organizational mission to raise the level of awareness of Peace Corps in minority communities to increase minority recruitment in the Peace Corps.



Members of the MPCA Celebrate the 40th +1 with members of the LBG RPCV group.