

# Diversity Matters

## MINORITY PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Quarterly

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### Our Mission

The Minority Peace Corps Association is a non-profit organization founded by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of color, committed to broadening the awareness of Peace Corps in minority communities while promoting community service and supporting minorities applying for, serving in or returning from Peace Corps, in order to continue building diversity within Peace Corps.

*“Communication is the key and action is the vehicle,  
together it will take us where we need to go.”*

MPCA President, Leslie Jean-Pierre

### PHILLY STARTS A NEW MPCA CHAPTER



MPCA members and Peace Corps applicants get together during November's Philadelphia Diversity Dinner at "Dahlak" Ethiopians Restaurant.

On November 15, 2002 the New York Regional Peace Corps Office and Minority Peace Corps Association co-hosted a Diversity Dinner for the local RPCVs and applicants in the Philadelphia area. The event also served as a celebration of the start of a new Philadelphia MPCA chapter. While enjoying good authentic Ethiopian cuisine, the new chapter took the opportunity to introduce itself to the attendees.

The Philadelphia chapter is already active and on the move with a panel discussion at the University of Pennsylvania, and is also collaborating with AmeriCorps on diversity recruitment efforts.

### MPCA STARTS ITS INTERACTIVE LISTSERV

Minority Peace Corps Association officially launched its interactive listserv last month. The *minoritytpca* listserv is a project of Minority Peace Corps Association, Inc. This listserv is a worldwide network open to MPCA members, RPCVs, PCVs, & individuals interested in advancing the MPCA's mission.

We connect individuals & groups; share information & resources; & help individuals & organizations collaborate on various projects & issues.

The *minoritytpca* listserv is part of a Yahoo group; therefore we're able to do a lot more than an ordinary listserv. As members we have the ability to share photos, post links, and maintain a calendar of upcoming events. One of our additional features includes weekly chat sessions.

Although this listserv offers members a forum for addressing Peace Corps and minority issues, it also provides a venue for general connections. To join, simply send an e-mail to [minoritytpca@yahoo.com](mailto:minoritytpca@yahoo.com) requesting an invitation. Please include your name, preferred e-mail address and your Peace Corps connection, if any.

*If you would like to have an event, program or job posting included in the minoritytpca Bulletin, email it to us at: [minoritytpca@yahoo.com](mailto:minoritytpca@yahoo.com). Information must be received by Monday morning to be included in the current week's Bulletin. Submission must be no longer than one paragraph.*

# Minority Peace Corps Association

**Who we are:** The Minority Peace Corps Association is a non-profit organization, founded by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of color, committed to promoting community service and broadening the awareness of Peace Corps in minority communities and supporting minorities applying for, serving in or returning from Peace Corps in order to continue to build diversity within Peace Corps.

Through partnerships, special events and outreach activities the MPCA strives to *strengthen Americans' understanding about the world and its peoples.*

The MPCA is funded through fundraising activities, membership dues and through generous contributions by members and supporters, which helps pay for the community projects, website, MPCA newsletter, and other printed material.

Membership is open to all who share our mission. You do not have to be a returned peace corps volunteer to be a member of the MPCA

**What we do:** **Diversity Dinners**

- Hosted at ethnic restaurants by MPCA and local Peace Corps recruiting offices.

### Mentor Program

- RPCVs of color connecting via email with minority Peace Corps applicants to share their Peace Corps experiences.

### Community Service

- Volunteer events such as park clean-ups and "youth talks".
- Visiting minority communities and working with youth groups.

### Speakers Bureau

- RPCVs speaking to schools and community groups that want to know more about Peace Corps host countries and RPCVs experiences.

### Fundraising

- Funds raised through t-shirt sales, special events, and donations are used for local and international projects and Peace Corps Partnership projects.

### Annual Events and Biannual Events

- MPCA Community Teacher's Award
- MPCA Connection Conference
- International Group Trips

**Membership Benefits:** As a member of the MPCA, you are entitled to the following benefits:

- Quarterly MPCA newsletter
- Discounts on MPCA merchandise
- Invitations to MPCA community/social events
- Opportunities to create volunteer initiatives in your community under the auspice of the MPCA
- Free membership on the listserv (coming in January 2003)
- Opportunity to nominate a candidate for the Franklin H. Williams Award and the MPCA Community Teacher's Award
- Opportunity to start a MPCA chapter in your area

Membership is open to family, friends & supporters. Please complete and submit the registration form on our website on the membership page at [www.minoritypcap.org](http://www.minoritypcap.org)

You can receive additional benefits if you also join the National Peace Corps Association.

### (VOLUNTEER ACTIONS continued)

contributions in areas such as arts, literature, sports, science, and history. Serving ages 9 and up, "Brain Quest Black History" is great for family game nights.

In celebration of Black Heritage Month MPCA will **raffle** off 5 of these great gifts, donated and signed by the author, on Friday, February 14, 2003. To enter raffle send email to [mPCA\\_raffle@yahoo.com](mailto:mPCA_raffle@yahoo.com), subject line should read **Brian Quest**. Last entry must be received no later than 2/13/03.

**Brain Quest** sets are available at bookstores, or contact Workman Publishing Co., 708 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003-9555; visit [www.workman.com](http://www.workman.com), or call (800) 722-7202.

### Officers

President	Leslie Jean-Pierre
Financial Officer	Marisol Vigil
Membership Officer	Carmenza Cespedes
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Newsletter	Gigi Ndiaye
NY Representative	Marisol Perez
NY Representative	Brian Harris
D.C. Representative	Marcia Parkes
Philadelphia Representative	Juanita Celix
Philadelphia Representative	Caroline Hossein

**PEACE CORPS DAY**  
*Celebrate a Legacy of Service*  
**Friday, February 28, 2003**

To commemorate the 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Peace Corps, returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) will celebrate Peace Corps Day on February 28, 2003. RPCVs will be visiting classrooms, community organizations, and workplaces throughout the United States to share the knowledge and insights gained from their overseas experiences. As every RPCV knows, part of the Peace Corps' mission is to educate Americans back home about the people with whom they lived and worked. When RPCVs speak about their Peace Corps experiences, they enrich the lives of students, neighbors, and colleagues. RPCVs also raise awareness of the Volunteers' ongoing global contributions and plant the seeds of community service.

Peace Corps Day is your opportunity to promote a better understanding of the people of your host country among the people of your current community. You can participate in a variety of ways: Perhaps you have photographs, artifacts, music, or folktales that you could share with students or other groups. Consider asking another RPCV to make the presentation with you. Two or more viewpoints will give your audience a broader perspective of the work of Peace Corps Volunteers and might make the experience more enjoyable for you. You might encourage your local newspaper to run a story about your experiences in the Peace Corps or to publish a letter to the editor about Peace Corps service. You might also want to participate in one of the events being organized by Peace Corps recruiting office. If you would like to get involved in planning local Peace Corps Day events contact Leslie Jean-Pierre, Village Station, P.O. Box 244, New York, New York, 10014 or call 212-352-5452, e-mail [info@minoritypca.org](mailto:info@minoritypca.org).

Last year, more than 6,000 RPCVs shared their overseas experiences in elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges and universities throughout the United States. Nearly 500,000 students were visited by an RPCV. RPCVs also gave presentations to community groups, at their workplace, and in places of worship. Through the reporting of their overseas experiences, RPCVs continue to build bridges across cultures—bridges to friendship, cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and, ultimately, peace.

Whether you choose to bring your Peace Corps experience to a local school or take part in one of the activities mentioned above, participation is key in helping Peace Corps achieve its third goal. Sign up to participate today! Online registration is available on the Peace Corps Day website ([www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/peacecorpsday](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/peacecorpsday)). All respondents will receive a free presentation kit. The presentation kit includes souvenirs for you audience and materials to help you prepare for and promote the day. Visit the Peace Corps website for more information. If you have any questions, contact the Peace Corps Day Coordinator at [pcday@peacecorps.gov](mailto:pcday@peacecorps.gov) or call 800.424.8580 (press 2, then ext. 1961).

**VOLUNTEER ACTIONS**  
***Making a Difference***

**Keeping Up With Ellis, An African American RPCV**

Darius Kenyatta Ellis began his public service career in New York City with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and has since established a career for himself in economic and community development at home and abroad.



Ellis completed his Peace Corps service in Uruguay (1991-1993) among the first group invited to re-establish the Peace Corps program in Uruguay after a 17-year hiatus. His area of service, Small Business Enterprise, focused on strengthening the capacity of local small businesses to provide services to their clients.

Back at home, Mr. Ellis worked for two years as Special Assistant in the New York State Senate in NYC's South Bronx. Ellis spearheaded the Senator's community affairs efforts routinely conducting community meetings and working with community-based organizations to address local economic, environmental and political issues.

Ellis, who speaks fluent Russian, Spanish, and has a knowledge of Persian, Kartuli and Turkish, has also served as Advisor/Field Representative for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia. He worked with parliamentarians and interested stakeholders of the newly formed independent country to develop the infrastructure for a fully representative, democratic local governments.

Among serving on the Board of Directors of the Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO), and Beyond Food Coalition, Mr. Ellis is also an MPCA Board Member and co-founder. Mr. Ellis is currently the U.S. Program Director for the nonprofit Trickle Up Program, an international organization which works to alleviate poverty through microenterprise development.

Between finding time to obtain an FAA aircraft private pilot's license and teaching himself to play the piano, Mr. Ellis served as a consulting editor for a fun, educational game entitled "**Brain Quest Black History**".

The game, which comes in two pocket-size booklets printed on 2 1/2-by-7-inch cards, is published by Workman Publishing Company, Inc. and Group Play Bac, S.A. The game consists of 850 *Questions & Answers Challenging Your Knowledge of African-American Heritage*. Coincidentally, his mother, Barbara C. Ellis, member of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City, and an instructor in New York State United Teachers' Effective Teaching Program, is the author of the booklets.

The booklets, which may be used as teaching tools, provide educational tidbits covering African/African-American

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## Diversity Dinners/ Black Heritage Month

The **diversity dinners** are opportunities for people interested in Peace Corps to informally meet Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. It is also an opportunity for RPCVs to connect with each other. The diversity dinners are generally held during a heritage month and take place at least four times a year.

### Philadelphia – Big George’s Dine Stop-N-Dine

Wednesday, February 12, 2002 @ 7:00PM  
285 South 52<sup>nd</sup> at Spruce Street, Philadelphia,  
PA (212) 280-8779

For more information please check out the calendar section on our website at [www.minoritypca.org](http://www.minoritypca.org). RSVP by email at [juanita@minoritypca.org](mailto:juanita@minoritypca.org) \*

### New York City – “Spoonbread Too”

Friday, February 21, 2002 @ 6:30PM  
547 Lenox Avenue Between 137<sup>th</sup> & 138<sup>th</sup> Street, Harlem,  
New York (212) 690-3100

For more information please check out the calendar section on our website at [www.minoritypca.org](http://www.minoritypca.org). RSVP by email at [diversitydinners@minoritypca.org](mailto:diversitydinners@minoritypca.org) \*

### Washington DC – Wazuwi

Friday, February 28, 2002 @ 6:30PM  
1836 18<sup>th</sup> Street, NW Washington, DC (202) 280-8779

For more information please check out the calendar section on our website at [www.minoritypca.org](http://www.minoritypca.org). RSVP by email at [marcia@minoritypca.org](mailto:marcia@minoritypca.org) \*

\*Please indicate event date and number of guests attending when you rsvp.

## Black Heritage Month/ Special Events

### MPCA visits Paul Robeson High School

MPCA visits *Paul Robeson High School* from 1:00pm to 3:00pm, on Peace Corps Day. If you would like to participate or get more information about MPCA activities on Peace Corps Day please contact Leslie at [info@minoritypca.org](mailto:info@minoritypca.org)

### Fundraising Activities

**T-shirts** are still available. Buy yours today by logging on to [www.minoritypca.org](http://www.minoritypca.org) and clicking on to t-shirts.

**March 22, 2003** is our next Fundraising event. 670 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, NY. For more information, contact [fundraising@minoritypca.org](mailto:fundraising@minoritypca.org), or call 718-230-5604. MPCA is raising funds for its first annual Community Teacher’s Award.

### NPCA News

**Peace Corps Day** is Friday, February 28, 2003. Come out and participate! Online registration is available on the 2003 Peace Corps Day website, so don’t forget to visit [www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/peacecorpsday](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/peacecorpsday). Also check out MPCA’s website to see what activities are going on in the NY, DC, and PA areas. You can also get more information by visiting the National Peace Corps Association’s website as well, at [www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org).

**Group Award Nominations:** Shriver, Ruppe, Newsletters and Website awards. Deadline for nomination is April 18, 2003. To nominate an individual or group, log on to [www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org).

Minority Peace Cops Association  
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