

Diversity Matters

MINORITY PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION, INC.

Vol. 2, Issue 3

Quarterly

Summer 2003

Our Mission

The Minority Peace Corps Association is a nonprofit organization founded by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of color,
* created to promote community service,
* committed to 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

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

MPCA President, Leslie Jean-Pierre

MPCA COMMUNITY TEACHER’S AWARD HONORS MINORITIES IN EDUCATION



2003 MPCA Community Teacher's Award Finalists.

The MPCA Community Teacher's Award is an award given to minority educators in appreciation of their dedicated service in the minority community.

This year’s Minority Peace Corps Association Community Teacher's Award ceremony was held at Paul Robeson High School for Business and Technology in Brooklyn, NY. All five finalists received honors and cash awards. The recipient of the 2003 Award, Adam Steven, (pictured above, second from right) received a plaque, and a \$500.00 grant.

The MPCA Community Teacher's Award celebrates the efforts of teachers, particularly minority educators, in the face of the many challenges to education today. Specifically, MPCA hopes this recognition will:

- contribute to Peace Corps' third goal and also promote the MPCA mission,
- promote education for all, especially education in minority communities and abroad
- build awareness about, and support the need for, more minority educators within Peace Corps and throughout the nation and
- encourage teachers to continue to inspire, motivate and facilitate discovery and learning for children and young people in minority communities and settings.

PEACE CORPS STORY HIGHLIGHTS



Isa, Gwen! A Fiji Experience

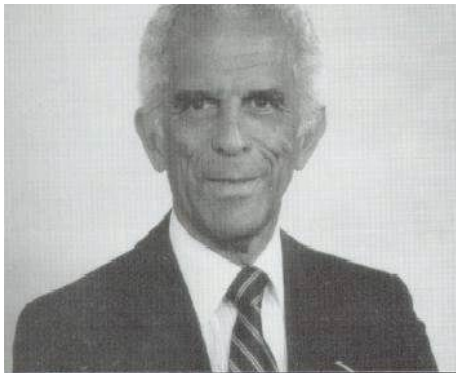
Gwendolyn Ross,
RPCV, volunteer in Fiji from
1994 to 1997

On a wintry Friday night in July, the open-air market in Lautoka, Fiji was not deserted, as you would expect. Instead, clusters of people, mostly women, bundled up as best they could against the cold, sat or lay around the outside of the market, their crops packed up around them ready for busy Saturday morning trading.

Children, wrapped tightly in tattered blankets, lay on old sacks or cardboard on the frosty, damp cement, while their parents either slept beside them or huddled together talking quietly.

(continued page 2)

**PEACE CORPS HONORS COMMUNITY SERVICE
LEADERS OF COLOR AT 5TH ANNUAL
FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS AWARDS**



Franklin H. Williams, noted civil rights attorney and U. S. ambassador

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 4, 2003 -Peace Corps Director Gaddi H. Vasquez honored 12 nationwide recipients of this year's Franklin H. Williams Award.

Established in 1999, the Franklin H. Williams Award honors outstanding returned Peace Corps volunteers of color who have put their overseas experiences to work in their communities and in their professions to promote a better understanding of other peoples and their cultures.

The award winners follow in the service-minded footsteps of former ambassador and Peace Corps director of the Africa region Franklin H. Williams. Mr. Williams served as an ambassador to the United Nations and Ghana, as an advocate for civil rights, and as one of Sargent Shriver's trusted deputies during the formative years of the Peace Corps. He also served as president of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, which focuses on educational opportunities for Americans of color and Africans.

The Peace Corps Director's Award honors an individual who has served the Peace Corps as former staff or through a commitment to international development and cross-cultural understanding. The keynote speaker and Peace Corps Director's Award-winner this year is Melvin P. Foote, president and CEO of the Constituency for Africa (CFA). CFA is a U.S.-based network of organizations, groups and individuals committed to the progress and empowerment of Africa and African people worldwide. Foote was a Peace Corps volunteer and teacher in Ethiopia and Eritrea from 1973-1976, where he remains engaged in service to this region.

The award winners were selected from each of the 11 Peace Corps regional offices nationwide. This year's notable list of winners included: Anjabehu (Lily) Asrat, avid student and world-wide volunteer, Louisiana; Walter M. Baker, Peace Corps recruiting resource, west Texas; Anson Chong, Food Bank of Hawaii volunteer and Global Hope faculty advisor, Hawaii; Darius Kenyatta Ellis, country director for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Refugee Trust of Kenya, Kenya; Paul Goodrich, founder and president of African Sports Outreach, Oregon; Albert S. Liu, president of Milwaukee Peace Corps Association, Milwaukee; Walter Mau, active member of the Boston Area Returned Peace Corps Volunteers,

Massachusetts; Solema V. Neary, active community member, Colorado; Ed H. Smith, chairman of Chicago City Council's Committee on Health; Amanda Wash, founder of A Foundation for African Children Today (AFACT), Los Angeles; and James A. Wilson Jr., assistant professor of history at Wake Forest University, North Carolina. For individual biographies on the award recipients, please visit the following link:

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/noteworthy/fwa/index.cfm>.

See Franklin H. Williams award at www.peacecorps.gov

**MINORITY PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2003**

EMBASSY SUITES CENTER CITY, PHILADELPHIA

Friday, August 15, to Sunday, August 17

Guest Speaker

RPCV Melvin P. Foote

President, Constituency for Africa

For more information on this year's conference please contact Ettice Womble at ettice@minoritypca.org

MPCA DIVERSITY DINNER

(FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO WOULD LIKE TO COME A DAY EARLY, ALSO OPENED TO ALL OTHERS IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA)

Thursday, August 14, 2003, @ 7:30PM

Dahlak Ethiopian Restaurant (215) 726-6464

4708 Baltimore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA

A full dinner menu for \$10.00 includes tax and tip.

RSVP by sending an email to diversitydinner@minoritypca.org

**MINORITY PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION
CELEBRATES HAITI'S BICENTENNIAL**

MPCA will be celebrating Haiti's 200th year of independence with an international group trip to Haiti in Winter/Spring 2004.

For more information, please contact Events Coordinator Ettice Womble at ettice@minoritypca.org.

(Isa Gwen continued)

Near the bus station entrance to the market, some enterprising vendors had set up a cooking stove and were selling tea and warm meals to the women, some of whom had traveled more than five hours by overcrowded boats to get to the market. Occasionally, drunks made their way through the groups, singing or cursing—or both—and at one point three young women ran, gasping, for some unknown reason, past them to the nearby police post. After two days of selling from sunup to sunset most of these vendors would take home less than \$30.00 (about \$15.00 US), frequently the only income their families would have until the following market weekend.

This was the scene in which I often found myself on countless weekend nights. Most of the women around me were my clients, beneficiaries of the small business advice and training that I dispensed during my three years of service as a Peace Corps volunteer. They kindly explained to me that this was a typical Friday night for them. Drunks, shivering sleepy children, the unbearable heat, (or the biting cold), rain, and the tension from staying on guard against the occasional sneak thief, were what the women had come to expect on market nights.

(continued page 5)

Minority Peace Corps Association

Who we are: The Minority Peace Corps Association is a nonprofit 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 at schools and to 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 Teachers' 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
- Participation in the MPCA Book Club
- Opportunity to nominate a candidate for the Franklin H. Williams Award and the MPCA Community Teachers 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

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

NATIONAL PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION NEWS

NPCA New Membership Rates: Has your membership expired? Sign up today!! Remember, if you select MPCA as your affiliate group, then NPCA sends us \$15!! For more information, please visit the NPCA's website: <http://www.rpcv.org/index.cfm>

Your NPCA Membership Benefits Include

- Subscription to Worldview Magazine
- Free membership in one affiliate group
- Free participation in our programs: Global Teachnet, Emergency Response Network, Advocacy Network, Peace building
- Subscription to alumni newsletter 3/1/61
- Discount on NPCA merchandise and conferences
- Special service project travel opportunities
- Special short term travel insurance
- Discount on the Hospitality Network (a network of RPCV hosts throughout the country)
- Eligibility for scholarships
- Alamo rental car discount
- Choice Hotels International discount
- Access to online RPCV directory

\$50/individual

\$65/family

\$135/individual three-year

\$180/family three years

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

MPCA Membership / Renewal Form:

Minority Peace Corps Association membership is not restricted to only Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. It is also open to prospective volunteers, family, friends and to anyone whose goals are similar to those of the Minority Peace Corps Association.

Anyone interested in becoming a member can contact **Carmenza Cespedes**
carmenza@minoritypca.org or fill out the form below and send it to:

Membership Officer
 Minority Peace Corps Association
 Village Station
 Post Office Box 244
 New York, NY 10014

This form can also be used to update your information.

As a MPCA member you are entitled to the following benefits:

1. Quarterly MPCA newsletter
2. Discounts on MPCA merchandise
3. Invitations to MPCA community/social events
4. Opportunities to create volunteer initiatives in your community under auspices of the MPCA
5. Free membership on the listserv
6. Opportunity to nominate a candidate for the Franklin H. Williams Award and MPCA Community Teacher's Award
7. Opportunity to start a MPCA chapter in your area or join an existing chapter in your area.
8. Participation in the MPCA Book Club.
9. Access to MPCA Career Development Website, Members Section.

You can receive additional benefits by joining the National Peace Corps Association.

- \$15.00 MPCA membership only \$ _____
- \$50.00 NPCA and MPCA one-year membership (\$15.00 per each additional affiliated group) \$ _____
- I would like to make a donation to the MPCA at this time in the amount of \$ _____

Enter the total amount of the check you are sending \$ _____

First Name	Last Name
Street	City
State	Zip Code
E-mail	Work Phone
Home Phone	Country of Service
Peace Corps Assignment	Years of Service

Please indicate areas of interest by checking the boxes below:

Diversity Dinners <input type="checkbox"/>	Social Activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Events <input type="checkbox"/>
Membership <input type="checkbox"/>	Community Service <input type="checkbox"/>	Education Program <input type="checkbox"/>
Speakers Bureau <input type="checkbox"/>	Newsletter <input type="checkbox"/>	Website Design/Administration <input type="checkbox"/>
Listserv/Yahoo groups Moderator <input type="checkbox"/>	MPCA Book Club <input type="checkbox"/>	Officer Position <input type="checkbox"/>

Enclose your check along with this membership form and send it to the Minority Peace Corps Association

(Isa Gwen continued)

Unfortunately, however, some nights were more violent than others. Sometimes, after the bars closed, men stumbled into their midst and harassed them. Secure in their alcohol-induced haze of self-confidence, the men drunkenly begged for money, food, friendship, marriage, and oftentimes, sex. Usually—but not always—there were enough male vendors and police around to chase them off.

The situation for Fiji’s women market vendors was indeed grim and potentially perilous—and I felt an intense empathy for them. As a black woman I felt a remarkably strong connection with them. After all, we shared the same skin color, gender, and probably, somewhere in time and place, the same ancestors. Apart from the geographic boundaries, any of them could have been my mother, grandmother, aunt or sister. Despite the language barriers that separated us, we managed to connect and create a bond that many of the white volunteers weren’t able to establish. After all, I was their very own Merikan loaloa (black American), the first most of them had ever seen.

The women treated me with a great deal of respect and, sometimes, awe. We sat up late at night around the yagona bowl and shared stories about men and relationships. We talked about our children, our goals, and our futures. They fed me strange food and watched with barely concealed amusement as I ate it...whatever it was. I gave them my skirts, shoes, sunglasses, and sweaters.

They gave me beautiful, finely woven mats, fans, hats, and more freshly-caught seafood than one person could ever eat. They taught me how to make roti (a tamale-like fried bread) and curried goat. I taught them how to set goals and run a successful business.

The link, the bond, between the market vendors and me made me decide to establish some type of safe, affordable, temporary lodging for the women and their children while they were at market. During my mission to help them however, for the first time since I arrived in Fiji, my physical similarity to the Fijians appeared to be a barrier instead of an asset. When I telephoned to make appointments with various officials, I always identified myself as a Peace Corps volunteer (a position of some importance and high regard in the Fiji).

Unfortunately, African American volunteers in Fiji are as rare as snow in this South Pacific nation. Consequently, there was an understandable expectation that I would be white. Sadly, as soon as I stepped into a room and introduced myself the barriers came up. Inevitably I was forced into a conversation that ended with me declaring “Yes. I was *born* in the United States and so were both of my parents.” The statement, along with my American accent, appeared to be proof enough that I was indeed a “real” American. As such, I was then accepted and treated the same as the white volunteers. Regrettably, despite this acceptance, the vendors never got their lodging. When I said *moce* (goodbye) to the women they were still asking when it would happen. *Isa*.

(continued page 6)

Kevin Quigley Named NPCA President

Kevin F. F. Quigley was named president of the National Peace



Corps Association on Monday, July 14. Quigley succeeds Dane Smith, a former Foreign Service Officer and U.S. ambassador who has served in the position for the past four years. Quigley has more than 20 years of experience working in the not-for-profit community for such organizations as the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Asia Society, and he most recently served as executive director of the Global

Alliance for Workers and Communities. He has written for many publications and appeared on various network television programs to discuss civil society and other international issues. A Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand from 1976 to 1979, Quigley takes office as NPCA president at the organization’s annual general meeting and the summer meeting of the board of directors on Aug. 1-3 in Portland, Oregon.

"Given recent events in the world, the 25th anniversary of NPCA and the upcoming 50th anniversary of Peace Corps, there could not be a more opportune time for an organization like NPCA," said Quigley. "I am honored and privileged to have the opportunity to work with the NPCA in its mission to lead the Peace Corps community to foster peace by working together in service, education and advocacy."

Quigley brings to the association leadership experience in financial management, strategic planning, membership development, fundraising, and human resources development skills in both the public and non-profit sectors and has served on a number of boards of directors. He is ably suited to lead this national network of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, former staff and friends of the Peace Corps through a period of sustained growth as a leader for active citizen engagement in world affairs.

Quigley is a graduate of Swarthmore College, University College Dublin and Columbia University and received a doctorate in comparative government from Georgetown University. Among his many honors, Quigley has served as a Council on Foreign Relations international affairs fellow, a U.S.-Japan Leadership Fellow, a guest scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars and a resident associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<i>MPCA Officers</i>	
President	Leslie Jean-Pierre
Financial Officer	Marisol Vigil
Information Officer	Carmenza Cespedes
Database Manager	Bruce Thomas
Events Coordinator	Ettice Womble
Grant Writer	Lyra Alicea
Newsletter Coordinator	Gigi Ndiaye
Education Officer	Marisol Perez
Chicago Representative	Liz Thomas
D.C. Representative	Marcia Parkes
NY Representative	Brian Harris
Philadelphia Representative	Juanita Celix

(*Isa Gwen* continued from page 5)

As my time in Fiji drew to a close I felt compelled to spend more time with the women. I visited villages deep within the interior as well as settlements on the outskirts of towns. As I traveled throughout the country I always took along my pictures from home. The women were dumbfounded that my family looked so much like theirs. They finally understood that probably only geography and time separated us. Despite my failure with the market vendor project, the women helped me to see that I had made a difference with the people with whom I spent most of my time.

I know that I helped many Fijians overcome media-promoted misconceptions about black Americans. For example, they were amazed that I didn't own a gun but that I *did* own my own home. These talented people laughed when they discovered that I could neither sing nor dance. They were in awe when I told them that almost all black Americans could drive *and* they owned their own cars. However, mixed with this wonder was some pity. After all, past years of British rule and infiltration by the Chinese and Indians, the Fijians had retained both their language and culture while African Americans could not claim a similar ethnic heritage.

So, I said goodbye. I said goodbye after three years of building friendships and trust. I said *moce* to children I had known since birth. I said *moce* to women that I had learned to admire and to love. I said goodbye to my little house on the hill with the outside toilet, no hot water, and the flying cockroaches.

Gwendolyn Ross, RPCV, Fiji 94 - 97



MPCA

Minority Peace Cops Association
Village Station, P.O. Box 244, NY, NY 10014



"Me with some of the boys from one of the villages I often visited. The boys always looked out for me during my visits, including waking before dawn to catch shrimp for my breakfast and heating water for my shower."

I said *moce* to the family that had adopted me and loved me even though I wasn't Fijian. I left friends and new family. It was sad and I cried because I had to leave.

Isa, Gwen. It is so sad.

Isa, Gwen. We will miss you.

Moce, Gwen. Goodbye.t

Make sure to check out the MPCA website for additional photos: www.minoritypca.org/PCStories.