

Diversity Matters

MINORITY PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Quarterly

Winter 2004

Our Mission

The Minority Peace Corps Association is a nonprofit organization founded by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of color, which aims to:

- * promote community service,
- * provide support and assistance to returned, and serving Peace Corps volunteers and applicants of color,
- * enhance the awareness and participation of Americans of color in international experience, international careers, and international affairs

“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 HOLDS ITS FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN PHILADELPHIA



Artistic rendering: 2003 MPCA National Conference participants.

The Minority Peace Corps Association’s first annual national conference was a great success. The event was hosted by the MPCA Board of Directors in Philadelphia, PA. MPCA members traveled from as far as California to attend the three day conference.

The event was preceded by a well attended Diversity Dinner co-sponsored and coordinated by the MPCA Philadelphia Chapter and MPCA Board. The dinner brought out over thirty participants RPCV’s and candidates alike.

The following two days charged the conference attendees with serious issues like; financial reporting; 2004 - 2005 schedule of events; 2004 Conference; reporting structures; fundraising; and MPCA 501(c) 3 status. The conference brought together MPCA minds from Chicago, California, Philadelphia, Delaware, Washington DC, and New York groups.

(MPCA National Conference.... continued on bottom left of page 6)

FIRST ANNUAL NY AREA RPCV FUNDRAISER PARTY!

Save the date, and get involved! On October 2 at an historic site in New York City, a consortium of RPCV groups, including the Minority Peace Corps Association, is hosting a fun-filled night of music, entertainment, dancing, casino prizes and international food – all proceeds to be used for RPCV – supported projects at home and abroad. It will be a major event, the first combined regional RPCV fundraiser ever organized and, we hope, a model for other regions with large concentrations of RPCVs. If successful – and we need you to help assure this – we will make this an annual event, starting this year in celebrations of the 25th anniversary of NPCA, through 2011, our beloved Peace Corps’ 50th!

The Connecticut Returned Peace Corps Volunteers has played a lead role. Bob Graulich a member of the group came up with the concept and pulled an organizing committee together toward the end of last year. In additions to the Connecticut group, commitments (both financial and staffing) have been made by the Minority Peace Corps Association, New York’s Big Apple Corps, RPCVs of New Jersey, and the Peace Corps Fund. Each participating group, plus the NPCA will share in the revenues.

The event is still in its planning stage, therefore there is still some flexibility. These are some of the proposed ideas for the evening.

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| Inclusions: | International Food Vendors, Free Wine and Beer, Live Music, Dancing, Casino Chips, Casino Winners Prizes, Major Prize Raffle, Silent Auction, Gift Bags for Attendees |
| Attractions: | Guest Entertainers, Presentation of Project Awards, 1 st Annual Northeast Regional RPCV Volunteerism Awards |

Excerpts from the Connecticut Returned Peace Corps Volunteers



IN THE SPOT LIGHT

RPCV Gamal Dillard

RPCV Gamal Dillard is at it again. This young comedian will be performing in his first off-Broadway Show January 14-17, 2004. The show is entitled "The Mikey and Gigi Show" and is a combination of comedy skits that will have you on the floor. In addition to the skits, there will be dance sets and live music. Gamal

will be performing in the comedic skits and will also perform a 15 minute stand-up routine! (The boy is workin' it!) Come and see this future SNL member! "The Mikey and Gigi Show" will be held at the Irish Arts Center, January 14-17: **553 West 51st Street New York, NY 10019 in midtown Manhattan.** Tickets may be purchased by calling (212) 592-0099.

PROMOTE WORLD PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP DURING PEACE CORPS WEEK - MARCH 1-7, 2004

To commemorate the 43rd anniversary of the founding of the Peace Corps, returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) will celebrate Peace Corps Week on March 1 through March 7, 2004. 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 Week 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 the Peace Corps recruiting offices. If you would like to get involved in planning local Peace Corps Week events, please call 1-800-424-8580 (press 1, then 1).

(Peace Corps Week.... Continued top on bottom right of page 6)

"FROM A GHETTO BROWNSTONE TO A JUNGLE BROWN HUT"

An enduring image that signaled the end to the Vietnam War was the rooftop landing of a helicopter evacuating Americans from Saigon. It was April of 1975. Halfway around the world, I began my Peace Corps service in Belize, Central America. Whenever I reflect back, those two seemingly short years spent in the Peace Corps were undoubtedly, some of the most important and rewarding years of my life.

Fresh out of junior college, I longed for an opportunity to travel, to meet new people, experience new cultures and to ply my skills as an apiculturist. By joining the Peace Corps, I was to fulfill all those things and more. According to my Peace Corps job description (sometimes likened to: 4 rms. w/a vu), I was going to be stationed in the southernmost portion of Belize, the Toledo District. Moreover, I was going to be living in the rural village of San Antonio among Mayan Indians. The ancient Mayan civilizations were empire builders in Mesoamerica and were the first beekeepers in the New World. Ironically, 1200 years later this young African-American from the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn would be teaching the Maya, how to raise the European honeybee.

Shortly after arriving in Belize City, some of the new PCV's in my group became apprehensive about staying. Their trepidation concerned the country, their proposed jobs and even their own commitment. My only lament was to learn that some PCV's would be living in Victorian style homes in the city, whereas I was slated to live in a thatched "house" in the rainforest. Imagine, going from a ghetto brownstone to a jungle brown hut. Two years later, however I could say that I was not cheated, but rather it was I who had received dividends for the experience. A matter of fact, during my entire tenure it seemed I received special treatment by the host country, perhaps as much for my work ethic as it was for my being an African-American.

Belize has many ethnic groups, represented by people of African, Hispanic, Asian and Indian decent. To the Mayans, I later discovered, I looked to be Creole but I confused them with a distinctive "Brooklyn" accent. For weeks on end, many of the San Antonio's villagers did not believe that I was a Peace Corps Volunteer. The only Peace Corps Volunteers the Mayans ever knew or saw, had been White Americans.

Perhaps it matters little that the Mayans and I accomplished more than what had been expected. We increased the number of beehives in the country five-fold, built a honey processing plant and exported tons of honey to England. Never lost, was the fact that the Mayans now had a new dependable cash crop to purchase seed, soap and kerosene.

Still, some of my fondest memories are of the Mayan children who would come to my village extension office by the droves and inquire about every conceivable thing off my desk. I can still hear the short staccato sounds of their Mopan language, "Qua bail teck Mista Hendree?" "That's a magnifying glass," I would explain and then proceed to demonstrate.

(Henry C. Mulzac From Ghetto.... continued on bottom left of page 6)

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 the membership committee at membership@minoritypca.org or fill out the form below and send it to:

Membership Office
 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 household member) \$ _____
- 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

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE CONT'D

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 communities of color 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 community of color 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.

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. 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.

(Past, Present, Future.... Continued on page 6)

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE CONT'D

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
MPCA

(Henry C. Mulzac From Ghetto.... continued from page 2)

"Qua a bail ada Mista Hendree?" "That's a label maker," I would say, then spend an hour or so making everyone a label of his or her name. But the most amusing recollection of all was when one of those kids picked up my calculator, and started to peg away at the buttons as the whole group of seven watched and giggled. Peering over at the calculator's display, I had to say, "Oh...let me turn it on for you." These were just a few of the thousands of vignettes that personify the Peace Corps experience. It includes, the kind of discourse and disbelief surrounding a brightly lit night sky and my assertion.

(Henry C. Mulzac From Ghetto.... continued from bottom left column)

that men walked on the moon. And about the time I wished for and told the toiling women who were washing clothes in the green tea of a river, about a time saving device called a washing machine only to be asked, "Do hands come out?"



I was the outsider let in, a confidante, a translator of technological mumbo-jumbo, an unraveler of red tape, an advance man for the nations Premier, and a

friend the Maya called, Mr. Hendree. I do not know, if it was from growing up in Bed-Stuy or if it was from my village in the Mayan mountains, that I came to realize, "One is content until he sees better, one isn't appreciative until he sees less."

Epilogue: Henry Mulzac (Belize 1975-77) is an entomologist and recently retired as a Detective from the NYPD's Crime Scene Unit. Henry and his wife Karen (whom he met as a PCV in Belize) reside in South Salem, N.Y.

(Peace Corps Week.... continued from page 2)

Last year, more than 7,000 RPCVs visited elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges and universities throughout the United States. More than half a million students welcomed RPCVs into their classrooms nationwide. RPCVs also gave presentations to community groups, at their workplace, and in places of worship. Through the sharing 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 Week website (www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/peacecorpsday). All respondents will receive a free presentation kit. The presentation kit includes souvenirs for your audience and materials to help you prepare for and promote the week.

Visit the Peace Corps website for more information. If you have any questions, contact the Peace Corps Week Coordinator at pccday@peacecorps.gov or call 800.424.8580 (press 2, then ext. 1961).

2004 ACTIVITIES 2004

2004 ACTIVITIES 2004

CONTINUED

JANUARY

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

MPCA Member Spotlight: Off Broadway show with RPCV
Gamal Dillard

FEBRUARY

Black Heritage Month

*MPCA Diversity Dinner-NY -27th

*MPCA Diversity Dinner-DC -29th

MARCH

Women History Month

Peace Corps Week

APRIL

Earth Day

MAY

Asian & Pacific Island Heritage Month

National Teacher Day

AIDSWALK NY - 16th

*MPCA Diversity Dinner-NY – 20th

*MPCA Community Teacher’s Awards-NY – 13th

*MPCA Diversity Dinner-DC

JUNE

World Environment Day

Peace Corps' Franklin H. Williams Awards

*MPCA International Trip-Haiti -17th - 24th

JULY

*MPCA 2nd Annual National Conference- Washington, DC

(MPCA National Conference.... continued from page 1)

The 2004 National Conference will be hosted by Washington, DC MPCA chapter this summer. We expect the 2004 conference to be bigger and better than the first. Please keep your calendars clear for **July 2004**.

AUGUST

NPCA National Conference –Chicago

SEPTEMBER

Hispanic Heritage Month (9/15-10/15)

*MPCA Diversity Dinner-NY- 23rd

OCTOBER

****NORTHEAST REGION RETURNED
PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS HOST:
CARNIVALE & CASINO NIGHT – 2nd**

Halloween

NOVEMBER

American Indian Heritage Month

Thanksgiving

DECEMBER

International Volunteer Day

*MPCA Diversity Dinner-NY – 9th

Chanukah

Christmas

Kwanzaa

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ASSOCIATION

** CO-SPONSORED BY THE MINORITY PEACE CORPS
ASSOCIATION

This calendar is not conclusive and is subject to change or be altered. There are many other events that may happen throughout the year. To keep posted please visit the Minority Peace Corps Association’s website at www.minoritypca.org

Board Members: President- Leslie Jean-Pierre, Secretary- Bruce Thomas, Financial Officer- Carmenza Cespedes, Operations Officer- Ettice Womble, Overseas Liaison- Marisol Perez, Resource Officer- Michael Seo, Chicago Representative- Liz Thomas, D.C. Representative- Marcia Parks, Philadelphia Representative- Juanita Celix



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