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Peace Corps Times



Celebrating diversity
throughout the
Peace Corps

Diversity: Challenges and Opportunities

All Peace Corps Volunteers go through the trials and tribulations of adjusting to a new culture and integrating into a community, but their experiences vary significantly based on various aspects of their identity. Everything from race to socioeconomic status shapes the lenses through which an individual sees the world, and how he or she is seen.

Depending on where they serve, Volunteers from different racial and ethnic backgrounds may have different experiences adjusting to a new culture. “I was very taken aback by the fact that people were always staring at me and that cars would always come to a screeching halt every time I was around,” says Allison, a Bulgaria Volunteer.

As an African-American, Allison was subject to a lot of attention and curiosity. She says the key to her successful integration was learning the language.

This unwanted attention also poses some safety and security concerns. In Allison’s case, police officers stopped a bus she was riding, demanding she explain why she was there and that she produce legal documentation.

With the assistance of the safety and security officer, such incidents stopped. Allison says when people in her village heard what happened, several of them went to the police station to tell them “*tja e nashtata mumiche*,” which means, “she is our girl.”

Safety and security concerns also apply when a hidden aspect of identity is revealed. Religion, disabilities, and sexual orientation are not always apparent, yet they often impact a Volunteer’s adjustment to a new culture.

In some countries, for example, Jewish Volunteers are advised to be careful about sharing their religious or cultural identity.

In a number of countries, in a context in which homosexuality is not only socially unacceptable but illegal, some



Rachelle Olden, a Community Development Volunteer in the Dominican Republic, assists kids in painting a mural on the main street of their town.

Volunteers are advised not to share their sexual orientation. Such warnings are relevant and necessary, but taken alone, they can cause anxiety and fuel fear.

The warnings can be balanced through such formal mediums as a Peer Support Network (PSN), Diversity Committee, or diversity training; or through everyday interaction. In a number of

In Bulgaria, staff and Volunteers co-facilitate a “Diversity Story Circle” during PST. During this activity, four to six Volunteers from diverse backgrounds share their experiences with trainees. Instead of a panel format, all trainees and Volunteers sit in a circle and group sharing is followed by a reflection activity on how to be allies.

teen and PSN member Frances Marte is a first generation Dominican-American who found herself among peers with whom she did not easily relate. Sometimes Volunteers learn as much from each other as they do from the people they serve.

Karen Peebles, a white Volunteer in Swaziland, helped an African-American Volunteer when she was approached on a bus by a man who assumed she was Swazi. The man thought the black Volunteer was being disrespectful by speaking in English instead of siSwati.

Karen told him the Volunteer was American. She explained there are all kinds of Americans and you cannot always tell just by appearance. After he recovered from his disbelief, the man left, no longer angry.

Brasil Miller, an African-American Volunteer, tried to educate her coworkers at an NGO about the diversity of Asians. Her Korean-American friend and fellow Volunteer was often mistaken for being Chinese and was associated with disreputable factory owners.

In conversation with her coworkers, Brasil highlighted the diversity in Asia, Africa, as well as within Swaziland itself. The Korean-American Volunteer later expressed her appreciation for Brasil’s efforts.

These are just a few examples of how Volunteers around the world recognize and address diversity-related challenges. To learn more about how you can support diversity, contact Cross-Cultural and Diversity Training Specialist Shilpa A. Hart at shart@peacecorps.gov.

To learn to co-facilitate diversity training during pre-service training and beyond, the “Diversity Training Modules for Pre-service Training” manual is available in the Volunteer Resources and Support section of the Peace Corps website: www.peacecorps.gov/library.

“The reaction I’ve gotten here has been really interesting, and I like being able to talk from a different perspective about the United States.”

Kadesha Thomas, PCV, Nicaragua

posts, diversity issues have been integrated into PSNs. Volunteers are trained in coaching and active listening skills to help support fellow Volunteers.

In Bolivia, trainees not only explore perceptions in the local cultural context, but also the impact it has on relationships within their training group. Volun-

Volunteer Voices

I really like being an African American in the Peace Corps because in this community, I don’t think a lot of people have ever seen an African American.

They’d ask questions about my hair—they’d come up and touch it.

I think that’s one of the intricacies

of just being somebody different from the United States. The reaction I’ve gotten here has been really interesting, and I like being able to talk from a different perspective about the United States.

Community Health Education
Volunteer Kadesha Thomas,
Nicaragua

At first, when I got to my town, people would ask me where I’m from and I’d say, “The United States,” and then they would say, “OK, but no, where are you really from?”

And so I would say I was born in Bangladesh and they’d say, “Oh, so you’re Asian.” And then they understood that I was an immigrant and that made me a little closer to them.

They understood what the immigrant experience was like because so many of their sons or daughters or nieces or nephews are often immigrants in other countries, so they understand what the struggle is about. I was much more easily accepted here, I think, because of that.

RPCV Tanushree Dutta,
(Nicaragua, 2006-08)

The following is an interview with Shirley Everest, Manager of Peace Corps' American Diversity Program:

Anyone meeting Shirley Everest will quickly learn of her love of penguins. On her office door at the Peace Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C., hangs a cartoon depicting one of the birds taking a photograph of his (or her) peers.

"Why on earth would you spring for colored film?" an inquisitive penguin asks the photographer.

Everest would likely tell the inquiring bird that it's important to look beyond the surface. After all, in her role as manager of the American Diversity Program, nothing is merely a matter of black or white.

"It's important for staff and Volunteers to realize Americans come in many different colors, ethnicities, religions, and ages, and all of those differences may be understood differently by Americans and host country nationals," she says, adding, "To understand the way we interact with people who are different than we are, I think we really need to recognize our own personal frame of reference about how we perceive ourselves and other people."

Such a frame of reference may find Volunteers reacting to a similar situation in different ways. "Each of us can only

communicate what we have experienced, and that comes from such things as our education and influences from family and friends. An individual's experience is unique in every country," says Everest.

A broadened workplace can also contribute to the challenges both staff and Volunteers face. While an employee in the U.S. may be limited to an office cubicle, the work environment of the Peace Corps staff and Volunteers overseas is expanded due to the organization's mission.

"The workplace may be a vehicle, with a driver taking a Volunteer back to his or her site; it may be in a village where a staff member is visiting the Volunteer. Anytime a Peace Corps employee is in that capacity of representing the Peace Corps, they are in the workplace environment," says Everest.

This is among one of the realizations Everest must relay to staff members. Having traveled to 10 countries since stepping into her role six years ago, she also presents training sessions for Program and Training Officers, Peace Corps Medical Officers, and others to explain the relationship between appropriate workplace behaviors and the impact of American diversity and host country national cultures.

"Community style is a big part of what we talk about. Within the U.S. we have a very wide range of management and community styles. How we socially



Members of the Peace Corps Swaziland Peer Support Network.

interact in order to work together is very important to understand," she says, adding, "Not having good information about American diversity and foreign cultures can damage a relationship, which can become a disruptive influence in the workforce and can also reach the point where it's detrimental to the staff as a whole. When that happens, it hinders the level of support afforded each Volunteer."

Referring to the differences in cultures, where a woman's role at work may be more limited due to accepted norms, Everest says sexual harassment remains

at the forefront. However, a proactive approach has lessened such incidences within the Peace Corps family.

"We discuss how certain attitudes exist. In countries where we have had a longer presence, the chance of resolving issues is very real and possible. ... I have to start from a point where people don't raise their eyebrows, wondering, 'What is she talking about?' In many of the posts we go to, diversity is just not something they've heard a lot about."

However, that has changed since management adopted a more aggressive approach. "Even though our office is

(Continued on page 4.)

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

Volunteers in the Dominican Republic Create Diversity Camp for Kids

Referred to as the Island of Hispaniola in the Eastern Caribbean, the Dominican Republic occupies two-thirds of the island's eastern region. Haiti occupies the remaining western region.

In 2003, Volunteers noted tensions between Dominicans and Haitians were affecting the island's youth, provoking existing hardships and preventing solidarity among young people. A number of Peace Corps Volunteers in the Dominican felt it was important to take action.

Volunteers in the Cibao region, on the northern coast, organized the first Celebrando el Cibao ("Celebrating the Cibao"), a three-day youth camp designed to promote diversity and cultural awareness.

The goal was to encourage youth to explore their own cultural identity, understand the strengths of diverse cultures, and to feel empowered in their own lives.

The camp included 60 Dominican and Haitian youth, who were given the opportunity to foster relationships and gain a better understanding of one another's culture.

Highlighting topics such as Dominican and Haitian culture, global cultures, and personal identity, the youth participated in discussions and activities aimed at finding solutions to prejudices, and

shared their experiences and ideas to initiate cultural exchange within their communities.

Participants also learned about different world cultures, and discussed and acknowledged prejudices in their communities. They also sought to define their own personal and professional goals as future leaders of their country.

"Celebrando el Cibao empowered Dominican and Haitian youth to abandon years of prejudices," said Rachele Olden, a returned Volunteer who helped establish the camp. "It helped them to begin cultural reconciliation in the Dominican Republic."

Each participant received a diversity awareness toolkit, with ideas for interactive games and campaigns to reproduce in their respective communities. With the assistance of Volunteers, each youth assessed the specific needs, strengths, challenges, and limitations within their own communities, then created a strategy to incorporate their assessments within their respective communities in an attempt to affect further change.

To organize the camp, a "host committee" was comprised of 20 Volunteers of the Cibao Region of the Dominican Republic. The host committee met monthly for six months to coordinate the logistics and implementation of

the conference.

The estimated cost of the conference was \$5,000, funded through the Peace Corps Partnership Program, small grants, and in-kind contributions from family and friends of Volunteers in the U.S.

The Celebrando diversity camp idea has continued in Cibao and has been adopted by Volunteers in other sections of the Dominican with Celebrando El Sur (Celebrating the South) and Celebran-

do El Este (Celebrating the East). The Celebrando groups are now official PC/Dominican interest groups and, as such, will continue indefinitely.

Peace Corps/Dominican staff say some of the best program ideas come from Volunteers, and the Celebrando diversity camps are a good example of how Volunteers can find new and exciting directions for a national Peace Corps program.

Activities at Camp:

Present regional and global cultures through an interactive setting to promote a better understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Discuss the stereotypes and prejudices that perpetuate inequality in the world and in the local region.

Foster national and personal pride among Dominican and Haitian youth.

Encourage the development of personal goals and self-identity of each youth in relation to the world around them.

Motivate participants to organize activities in their respective communities to eliminate racism, end negative stereotypes, and promote peace.

50+ Volunteers in the Peace Corps

Introduction by Peace Corps Director
Ron Tschetter

Since becoming Peace Corps Director in September of 2006, one of my priorities has been the 50+ Initiative, which aims to increase the percentage of 50+ Volunteers in the Peace Corps from approximately 5 percent to 15 percent over the next few years. While the initiative is called 50+, it is not just about broadening our organization's demographic profile—it is also about broadening the diversity of life experiences and professional expertise the Peace Corps can offer to our partner agencies, and the communities served by our Volunteers.

The Peace Corps is generally thought of as an organization of young people, but 5 to 10 percent of Volunteers have always been 50+. Surveys and work with Volunteers in the field have shown there are remarkably few differences in motivation and service experiences between older and younger groups. Both are motivated by ideals, a desire for adventure, and a strong commitment to volunteering.

50+ Volunteers tend to have added responsibilities, with three and even four generations (siblings, children, grandchildren and aging parents) back home. They also tend to have more “stuff” (houses, finances, pets) to deal with before leaving home.

They share other concerns with younger Volunteers, such as appropriate training, site placement that utilizes expertise and life skills, and the desire to work with counterparts, staff and fellow Volunteers in the exciting process of becoming useful partners in their communities.

The following stories demonstrate this group's enthusiastic engagement.

Dale Mosier, Malawi CD

My wife and I served as Volunteers in South Africa after retiring from the business world. This provided a total change of life's direction – part of which was anticipated and part of which was not. I am currently the country director for Malawi and have observed, for the young Volunteers, that no two experiences are the same. This is even truer for 50+ Volunteers as we bring our broader experience base to our Volunteer role.

Additionally, age is more respected than we typically find in the U.S., giving us an even further advantages in use of



Volunteer couple Anne and Mel Strieb with a host-country counterpart in Romania.

our skills and experiences. One delightful surprise that came with the job was the number of lifelong friendships we made with young Volunteers.

IAP: Martha Landis, St. Kitts (Eastern Caribbean)

Here I am, 2,000 miles from “home” (and I use that word lightly), having spent almost two years in the village of Mansion on the island of St. Kitts. My life has been irrevocably changed. I will never see anything the same. I left four grandchildren behind and gained a village of them. At 7 a.m., they arrived at the gate to put the finishing touches on their kites to fly today.

It is Good Friday. Most every day here is good. Even the worst of them. No car to drive, unbearable heat, the snail's pace of accomplishment, letting go of outcomes and expectations, and missing “home.”

I've learned more about myself in these two years than in the 65 previous ones: That I can persevere. That there are always options. That there are other ways to think about things.

It's been a journey into the great unknown, literally and figuratively. I've learned “the stuff I'm made of” and, so far, I like what I see. They told us that when we started, and I can tell you “for true” (as they say here), that it is so.

AFRICA: Madeline Uranek, Lesotho

There are many photos I don't take here in Lesotho, southern Africa's tiny mountain kingdom. I have photos of thatched-roof rondavel huts and cemeteries with fresh HIV/AIDS graves. But I have few photos of myself, since I'm seldom with anyone who has used a camera.

I planned my Peace Corps service as a late-in-life career change—from international education to international

development. I'm less sure about the wisdom of that now: grass-roots development is so hard.

I did not plan, however, for the gifts I have received: My healthiest year in ages—25 pounds lost to mountain walking; my most challenging career assignment ever—training isolated teachers who have few desks, chairs, or textbooks; my strongest lessons in patience and compassion—the death of a teenage orphan neighbor to HIV/AIDS and the death of my brother in the U.S. to cancer. Both times, neighbors gathered to share my tears and teach me the importance of joy amidst sorrow.

I didn't plan on feeling, for the first time, that I'm a member of this planet's human community – sharing its scarce resources, looking up at clear mountain stars, imagining a better way.

EMA: Dorie Mueller, Romania

At the ripe young age of 63, I decided to pack away my golf clubs and do something meaningful. Here I am in Romania, serving in the Peace Corps. Yipes! From North Carolina's mountains to the rolling hills of Romania! Living in another culture is a new experience for me; one that I find challenging (my lack of language skills) and at times stressful (my lack of language skills), but always interesting (wonder what I just said to that woman in the bakery?).

I am living with a *gazda* (host) so I can learn more about the culture. “Living with Lili” is an adventure in itself. She is very superstitious and has found my happy-go-lucky attitude both puzzling and entertaining. After a year together, we have found a common ground to navigate our living situation.

She knows I love having my window open and I know she thinks I am going to die from the “draft.” I've shown her how to make a mean grilled cheese sandwich, and she has shown me how to make *choirba* (sour soup).

Although I miss my two children more than I ever imagined, the most difficult aspect of living in a culture where my language skills are so weak is the inability to converse with the older population. I enjoy hearing people's stories. Doing this through a translator loses its appeal.

My love of children has brought me to an organization whose focus is on the Roma community. Children laugh, play, and cry in the same language. They are



Garred Giles (Colombia, 1963-65, and Ecuador, 2003-05) walks with children on a main street of a town in the mountains of Ecuador.

patient with me and accept my hugs without question. When one of their mothers said, “I hope you stay past your 2009 end of service,” I felt my presence here had made an impact. My life has meaning beyond the golf course.

The PC Times Reader Survey—Here's What We Heard from You

The majority of PCVs are receiving the *PC Times* “reliably.” Some Volunteers may not get the *PC Times* delivered to their site, but the majority (71 percent) do.

The most popular feature right now is “Volunteer Life,” followed in order by “Notes from the Field,” feature stories, blogs, recipes, and agency news.

Community development is the most popular subject of interest, followed by HIV/AIDS, education, youth development, health, environment, business/ICT, and agriculture.

Eighty-four percent of readers want the *PC Times* to run longer (6-8 pages), a preference in line with suggestions that content be “meatier”—that the feature articles run longer, and delve more into technical issues relevant to Volunteers and staff in the field. In addition, Volunteers are asking for less veneer and more realism.

The *PC Times* staff appreciates hearing your point of view and is working hard to respond to your requests. We also appreciate your stories and articles—submitting material to us is the best way to get representation for your projects, and countries.

So...take your best shot—put something together about your Volunteer experience (between 250-750 words is the desired length for articles) and send it to: peacecorpstimes@peacecorps.gov.

We look forward to hearing from you soon!



agency NEWS

Former Volunteers Receive Peace Corps 2008 Franklin H. Williams Award

Eleven RPCVs were awarded the Franklin H. Williams Award in Washington, D.C. on June 19, honoring RPCVs of color who continue the Peace Corps mission through their commitment to community service and who support the agency's Third Goal. The award is named for Franklin H. Williams, former Peace Corps regional director for Africa and U.S. Ambassador to Ghana.

Peace Corps/Kenya Program Reopening

Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter announced the return of Volunteers to the Republic of Kenya. After a four-month hiatus due to unrest after elections in December, all 24 Volunteers who had been serving in Kenya when the instability began, will return. Kenya Prime Minister Raila Amolo Odinga visited Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. on June 19 to celebrate the reopening of the program.

Peace Corps/Liberia and Rwanda Programs Return

President George W. Bush announced the reopening of Peace Corps/Rwanda on February 19. The Peace Corps will establish an office in Rwanda this summer, and by December, 35 Peace Corps trainees will arrive in the country. Peace Corps will also be returning to Liberia. The first group will depart for the country by September 2008 and will serve as Peace Corps Response Volunteers.

PC Food Security Task Force Monitors Global Food Shortage

The Peace Corps Food Security Task Force continues to collect information and monitor the global impact of the worldwide food shortage. Country Directors and Volunteers are collecting information to be shared throughout the Peace Corps community. The task force is looking into identifying successful Volunteer project models that already exist, collaborating with organizations outside of the agency, and ensuring strong support to Volunteers during the ongoing crisis.

If you have any observations or suggestions for the task force to consider, please e-mail:
PCTimes@peacecorps.gov.

(*"Behind the Volunteer," From page 2.*)

mandated and regulated by federal laws, this agency's approach is to provide proactive training. In conjunction with the host country nationals, our whole purpose is to provide a positive working environment for everyone involved."

When the American Diversity Program meets with staff members overseas, the many aspects of hiring responsibilities are at the forefront of discussions. "By their employment status, they do have obligations to come forward and report incidents that could result in discrimination and harassment. All employees and Peace Corps Volunteers have direct access to our office," says Everest.

Noting the many differences in a foreign culture, Everest cites the importance of adopting similar styles of communication. "Communication is a big part of what we talk about. There are everyday interactions, where the greetings are often more drawn out in foreign countries than in American society and it's important to respect that culture.

There's an importance in how you connect to a person and spend time greeting them, with eye contact and various gestures being a part of the formula," she says.

There's also the American relationship between space and privacy of an individual, something that isn't always apparent in the countries served by the Peace Corps. "How two societies interact in order to work together is very important to understand."

Also meeting in the field with Volunteers, Everest notes that an initiative such as the Volunteer Support Network goes a long way toward assuring a safety net for those in a foreign environment. "We encourage VSN, especially in countries that have a strong history of diverse opinions about a particular minority or aspect of another human being.

It's important for Volunteers to support one another until they are fully embraced by their communities."

Everest has met with Volunteers of varying religions and cultural norms. Citing an African American man and



RPCV Tom Peng (Philippines, 2005-07), teaches math in a classroom in the Philippines.

young Jewish woman she had spoken with overseas, Everest asked if false perceptions or the inability to reveal all of their dimensions as individuals had hindered their service, and says they agreed it had not.

"We are all individuals and deal with things in different ways, but the Volunteers I've spoken with have been able to be productive, despite the necessity of hiding some things about their personal lives or having to break down racial barriers in instances where all Americans

appropriate behavior in the workplace, Everest encourages staff interaction. "We try to keep in touch with regional directors and country directors to see if it has had an impact. The biggest indication is when staff comes to us for resources and advice," she says, adding, "Hopefully we can provide the type of support where the post is a safe haven."

Encouraged by the reception she has experienced thus far, Everest states, "We are careful to let staff know that we embrace all cultures, but there are aspects

"This agency's approach is to provide proactive training... our whole purpose is to provide a positive working environment for everyone involved."

Shirley Everest, Peace Corps American Diversity Program

are perceived as being blue-eyed and blond," she says.

Emphasizing the need to let all employees know they have the right to come forward with reports of inappro-

within the workplace where certain standards have to be met. ... People realize these initiatives are important in fulfilling the goals of the agency."

The Food Crisis: Top 10 List of Things Volunteers Can Do

Excerpt from a letter by Jeffrey Cornish, country director, Tonga

1) Start a vegetable garden.

2) Promote the use of improved storage facilities.

3) Work to improve irrigation systems that sustain food crops.

4) Improve the pest control of local crops and gardens, preferably without expensive

and difficult to manage man-made chemicals.

5) Create a seed bank either at a household or on the community level.

6) Establish a market price surveillance system with your fellow Volunteers and promote collective marketing.

7) Promote the consumption of locally produced foods.

8) Help individual families reduce household costs, which will provide more income for needed food.

9) Conduct an agroforestry project if you have the resources.

10) Decrease consumption of scarce food and promote healthy eating.

VOLUNTEERlife



Lissa Karim
SAMOA

Where are you from? I have been asked this more times than there are curry dishes in India.

Growing up in Alexandria, Virginia, in the 1980s, I was one of a handful of first generation American born Guyanese.

I certainly didn't fit into one of the race check boxes when I went to school: "White," "Black," and "Hispanic." The boxes have changed to "Caucasian," "African American," and "Latino" now, but at that time I was considered an "Other."

In the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, most people think I am Ethiopian, especially Ethiopians. When

I visited St. Lucia in 2005, the locals thought I was from Kolkatta, India. When I visited Guangzhou, China, in 2006, the locals thought I was from Sri Lanka. Now that I am serving in Samoa, the locals think I am from Fiji.

I even had a Samoan woman tell me her daughter didn't believe there were non-palagi Pisikoa. (Palagi is the Samoan word used to describe those of European descent. Pisikoa is the local term for Peace Corps Volunteer.) After I stopped laughing, I took the time to educate her. "Yes," I said. "I am

a Pisikoa. I am an American."

In pre-service training, I learned in Samoan how to say my great-grandparents were born in India and emigrated to Guyana, South America, to work on a sugar cane plantation.

My grandparents and parents were born in Guyana. My parents emigrated to the United States for a better life.

I was born in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in Alexandria, Virginia.

I am a Peace Corps Volunteer.

I am an American.

WHAT VOLUNTEERS ARE BLOGGING...

Nicaragua

A Change of Pace

We've been attending our assigned schools for about two months. The needs of this task were to survey the families in my schools' community. Although Peace Corps Volunteers tend to be very unique people, they are surely products of their culture. Along with our flexibility and hunger for cultural difference, we intend to work hard to produce tangible results. Three houses in a total of over four hours.

Initial frustrations led to deeper understandings and appreciations ... and resignation.

Our own concept of how to approach "work" does not always coincide with those here. People do not walk into someone's house and start firing questions all in the name of efficiency and progress. Relationships are everything and work is not done before relationships are forged.

<http://alexandkaitlyn.blogspot.com>

Cape Verde

An Honorary Man

It is strange to be an American woman in Cape Verde. At times I feel as though I am seen as an honorary man. I have a career, my own house, and the freedom to go wherever I please without being confined to a restricted role. Yet I constantly teeter between this recognition and the newness of living in a foreign country.

One moment I am treated as an elite celebrity that commands the respect of even the highest community members and country nationals. The next moment, a 5-year-old is laughing at me for mispronouncing a simple word or concept.

So who am I here? Where is my sense of role and purpose supposed to lie amidst this enormous canyon of perception?

http://peacetothe-core-alexisbrittany.blogspot.com/2007_10_01_archive.html

Morocco

Green Lenses

I have to express that "I'm in love." This country has transfixed me to see with green lenses. There was a story that a man was from a village where everyone had yellow eyeglasses. This man wanted to travel to distant lands. He traveled to a land where everyone had blue lenses. When he returned to his village they asked him, "How were the people? What was their culture like?" He responded, "It was green."

I hope everyone understands that we will always see with our yellow lenses, yet we can still see the green ones. The main goal of Peace Corps is to promote peace and friendship in the world. Peace Corps wants to define peace.

<http://arielinmorocco.wordpress.com>

Costa Rica

Dispelling Stereotypes

Saturday we went with the dance teacher and his friend to their house for lunch. We met the grandma, who was really sweet and ended up staying for four hours. After we had eaten, the grandma told us she was really nervous when her daughters told her two gringas were coming to eat, because she thought we wouldn't like any of the food she served.

We definitely broke the stereotype of the picky-eater gringo by eating (and loving!) everything she made. The fact

that we were able to dispel the idea that all Americans only like certain kinds of food for this *abuelita* is an accomplishment.

<http://lavidatica.blogspot.com>

Honduras

Gender Roles

I have this friend in town. We usually end up talking about machismo, or the difference between dating customs. We were talking about it and the subject got heated. He seemed to get offended and left.

I sat there, wondering what I had done to make him mad. The more I thought about it, the more I realized I really don't understand. Things that bother me about the culture, I will never understand fully, because I wasn't brought up in it. I hope to come to a better understanding of the differences in culture. It is a delicate situation, and I have to begin with a more respectful attitude.

<http://elizabethclare.blogspot.com>

Bulgaria

Spring Holidays

Saturday, March 8, was Women's Day (March is women's month). This day has a lot of symbolism. Not only is it a day to recognize all the efforts of women, but it also follows the continuation of holidays in spring that celebrate new life, a new start, and good health. Women give life and maybe even one can connect women with keeping the family/children healthy.

I had been invited to a little banquet. I was at least one-third the age of most of the women there, but it was so much fun. We danced the *horo*, ate till I thought I would never move, and

exchanged spring bouquets with each other.

<http://cynthiamccoy.blogspot.com>

Zambia

Mid-Service Reflection

I've been in Zambia a year and two months, so I should do some mid-service reflection. Is my Peace Corps experience what I thought it'd be? In many ways, it's much better than I ever expected.

Naively, I assumed that living in Zambia would be similar to Jamaica. Because race was such an issue in Jamaica, I figured it would be here too, but it's not. In the village, I really don't notice they are black and I am white. Lately, I literally can't tell the difference. Maybe I need new spectacles, I don't know.

<http://carriezambia.blogspot.com>

Editor's Note: For practical purposes, the PC Times excerpts blogs for length..

CORRECTIONS

Some of the people we gave major props to last time for their help with the Food Crisis issue of the *PC Times* had their job titles listed incorrectly—we apologize, and have made corrections to e-version of the issue, housed in .pdf format in the "Media" section of the Peace Corps website:

www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=resources.media.pctimes

Biennial Volunteer Survey

Let your views be known—provide feedback in training, work and overseas experience through the 2008 Biennial Volunteer Survey online:

BVS2008@peacecorps.gov

EASTERN CARIBBEAN For All Children

At St. Benedicts Day Nursery and Infant Hospital, Volunteer Katie Sheridan works with special needs children, engaging in tutoring and behavioral therapy. The Day Nursery and Infant Hospital, were established in Georgetown, St. Vincent, as a response to the malnutrition and other associated complications of local children. The Infant Hospital has extended its services to abandoned, orphaned, and battered children, as well as children with physical and mental disabilities.

BELIZE Art & Identity

Married Volunteers Cheryl Frances, an artist and art educator, and John Tuck, a counselor, have developed the Art & Identity Program (A&I) for youth of the Toledo District. Representing Mopan and Kek-chi Maya, Garifuna, Creole, East Indian, Mestize, and Chinese ethnicities, a great mix of populations come together in this district. The A&I program asserts, "In our multicultural world, images are increasingly necessary to communicate across language and cultural barriers," and aims to encourage tolerance and emphasize celebration of diversity. Students of A&I incorporate diversity into many aspects of their program, including the



creation of a tapestry as part of a group art project.



Volunteer John Tuck teaches in a classroom in Belize.

GEORGIA Crossing Boundaries

One of the largest minority groups in Georgia, the Azeri population, is concentrated in the region of Kvemo Kartli. Volunteer Ruth Decalo works with four NGOs in this area, including the region's

first community radio station. Radio Marneuli runs news and music shows in Russian, Georgian, and Azeri, so all communities may benefit. IREX Europe, a nonprofit organization working to develop the station, says, "The community radio approach allows the raising of awareness of diversity issues, the rights of ethnic minorities, and the responsibilities of journalists and journalism."

SWAZILAND Walk for HIV/AIDS

Walk the Nation is a grassroots campaign initiated by Volunteers to promote awareness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in rural Swaziland. Participants from villages across Swaziland walked from the Mozambique border to the South African border for two weeks in March 2008. Over 100,000 residents participated in the campaign to create awareness and spur behavioral change.

Walk the Nation raised funds as it raised awareness among local and international communities. The "Walk the Nation Journal," an account of HIV/AIDS in rural Swaziland, was then given to the government to inform HIV/AIDS policy.



Walk the Nation campaign participants raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in Swaziland.

PHILIPPINES Between the Ages

While 50+ Volunteers help youth around the world, younger Volunteers are reaching out to older community members as well. Jill Kwan is working with a local senior citizens association on a rice wine production project in the Philippines. Essential to helping the program succeed, Jill must understand how the older community members accept new attitudes and behaviors. Senior citizens, in turn, are enthusiastic about being models for the local youth by maximizing their full potential, as their ages permit.

RECIPES

BUEA DIRTY RICE

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups rice, washed
3 cups water
1 medium tomato, chopped
1 medium onion, diced
2-3 large cloves of garlic, crushed and minced

Prep Time: 25 min. Cook Time: 20 min.

1 or more hot peppers, cleaned & minced
2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 tbsp ground cumin
Salt and black pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

Wash the rice well (especially if using local rice), add water, salt, tomato, onion, garlic, pepper, and oil. Bring to a boil uncovered over high heat. Stir once. Reduce heat and simmer, covered with a tight lid for 15 minutes or until rice is done. Remove from heat. Fluff with fork. Cover and allow to steam an additional 5 minutes. Add plenty of cumin and black pepper. Serve.

RECIPE AUTHOR: PCV BILL ZIMMERMAN, CAMEROON

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Says Bill: "When I lack the creativity, wherewithal or money to make something more original, this is the one I turn to time and again. It's simple, has a lot of flavor, and I'm willing to bet it tastes good on any continent."