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Fellows

NEWS ABOUT PEACE CORPS FELLOWS / USA

Four Blocks From Ground Zero: Columbia Fellow Shares Personal Accounts of September 11

Reprinted from the October 2001 Peace Corps Fellows Times Newsletter of Teachers College, Columbia University.

By Amy Steffes
(Jamaica 1997-99)
Fellow, Teachers College,
Columbia University

Tuesday morning started off as any other normal day. I changed my outfit three times and then decided the red pants made me look too fat, and even though I just had them taken in, I would take them back to the seamstress. I got to school at 7:45 a.m. My school, as many of you may not know, was located four blocks north of the World Trade Center. I got to school and put my lunch in the fridge and greeted the students. I then went down to the second floor to make photocopies of the homework assignment that I was giving to my students when I heard the first blast.

We immediately went to the window and saw people running through the streets. We looked up at the WTC north tower and saw a hole and a lot of smoke coming out of the top. A parent came into the office and said it was a plane that hit the WTC, and we were told it was an accident. All teachers without a class were told to go to the classrooms with students and calm everyone down—it was just an accident. I went to a classroom with students, and we discussed calmly the tragedy just outside our door. I was saying how sad it was that the pilot obviously must have had a heart attack and

how horrible that this happened. I returned to my classroom to close the shades, because my room faced the north and I was concerned the smoke would distract my students. Then, the second blast was heard. We could not see the south-facing building, so we saw only debris. We assured the students that it was from the plane that hit the north-facing building.

Shortly after the second blast, we evacuated the students into the cafeteria. Parents were running into the school and taking their children out of the school

Dear Readers:

As this issue of Fellows goes to press, we are off and running into year "2K2," but when we started conceptualizing Volume X, Number 1, we were approaching the end of the old year. I was recalling telling my children on many a New Year's Eve, "The days come back, the months come back, but not the years — the old year never comes back again! Goodbye, 1980!"

"Goodbye, 1980 (or whatever the year!)" they would exclaim after me.

Of course, no day or month comes back either, just the names. And the first year of the 21st century was one many in our country would not want to see again even if we could; the terrors of September are still etched so deeply in our individual memories and in the national psyche. Yet these events have

given rise to unprecedented opportunities for Peace Corps Fellows to open conversations that can begin to help Americans understand other peoples and cultures of the world. This is of course the third goal of the Peace Corps' mission to promote world peace and friendship. The need for such understanding has never been more urgent.

I hope that in 2002 each of us in the Fellows/USA part-

nership will seek both to teach and to learn more—in more depth—about those who live oceans and miles apart from us in other countries. It is so clear that those distant lives are inextricably bound up with ours by "family ties" — those of the human family. May we recognize and honor this reality.

Peace,

Michele Cisco Titi, Ph.D.
Director, Peace Corps Fellows/USA

Greetings from Peace Corps Fellows/USA

PROGRAM UPDATES

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Peace Corps Fellows/USA

Fellows newsletter is mailed to Peace Corps Fellows and alumni, Fellows/USA program coordinators and community partners, and domestic and overseas Peace Corps staff. Fellows is always looking for story ideas!

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building. The teachers were asking them to remain calm and told them to quietly sign out their children. Everyone was quiet. Some students were asking us, "How can you keep us here? The building is going to fall on us." "My mom/dad/cousin/friend/neighbor works in the WTC." We replied in calm voices that everyone was taken out of the building after the first crash, and everyone was fine.

Slowly (maybe quickly), parents started becoming more frantic, and we noticed people running past the building. I decided to go back to my room to get my purse. My coworker came with me, and we never said a word. I noticed I could see nothing out of my windows. My radio was on and it seemed so loud that I turned it off. We went back downstairs, and the bomb squad and police department were in the cafeteria yelling that we had to move out quickly. The teachers were trying to organize the students in class order. We walked quickly out the north side of the building.

People were all over, running—but it was incredibly quiet. I only remember images as we exited. I must say that I did not want to leave because I was afraid of

what I would see. There was ash everywhere and as we headed up the Westside Highway, we heard an incredible CRACK. We turned around and saw the north tower fall. It was unbelievable. My coworker looked at me and we just turned around and told the students to keep moving...no one was speaking, we were all stunned...the images I remember were all the people looking in disbelief and walking solemnly away. The kids were asking us if we thought anyone had escaped. We kept saying, "Yes, they are trained to save everyone, and they were evacuated immediately." All the while, I was praying "Hail Marys" like a mantra.

We walked two miles to another grade school. The emergency vehicles were zooming by and we had to cross the road. We did it in shifts. Then we got to the school. We waited for the parents to come get their children. While we waited, we talked, and some students were asking me, "Isn't the WTC on wheels? They probably moved the building to let the people out." Then they said, "Do you think that anything fell on our apartment buildings?" I said, "Oh no, engineers are so smart they built that building so

that it will fall down, not to the side. Remember when it fell? No one was there. It fell into itself so no one was hurt."

Eventually, I called home and found out the Pentagon was hit, too. By then, most of the students were gone. Finally, my co-workers and I discussed the magnitude of the event only in terms of how it would change the United States. We said war. If you were watching the news, my school was the one beside the white archway they kept showing. It was to the right side of the highway, next to the Hudson River. They were using the building as a rest stop for the emergency workers.

Because we didn't have school until the following Monday, I left town to be with my aunt in Maryland. I was and still am very distressed along with the whole United States.



AMY STEFFES

Hopi High Hailed as RPCV Magnet

Located in the middle of the Hopi Reservation in Northern Arizona, Hopi Junior/Senior High School, a decade ago, suffered from many of the same problems as other reservation schools. It had a high turnover of both teachers and administrators, low test scores, little technology, and few supplies. Today that has all changed. In fact, Hopi High attracts and keeps so many Peace Corps Fellows (PCFs) and RPCVs who are not Fellows that the term "Mecca Effect" was coined by Gary Robson in his doctoral dissertation on the Northern Arizona University (NAU) Fellows program. During the past eight years, 18 RPCVs and PCFs have worked at Hopi High, and most have stayed more than the two years required for the program. The current number of RPCVs and PCFs teaching at the school is eight (one-fifth of the teaching staff), with half of those having stayed six years or more. I am also in my third year of teaching on a reservation. I transferred to Hopi High from another school because of the reputation it has in the Fellows community.

Three events coincided to create this amazing change. First, the school was changed from a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) school controlled through the federal government, to a locally controlled grant/charter school. This allowed for more local decision making and created new funding sources, which have

been wisely used and invested. Because of this change in funding, materials and technology are now available for the teachers as needed.

Second, the administration stabilized. Previously, the school had 15 principals in nine years and a 90 percent turnover rate for teachers. Our current superintendent, Paul Reynolds, Ph.D., and principal, Dave Herbert, Ph.D., both began working at Hopi High at about the same time the school changed from a BIA to a grant school. The two have worked very diligently to improve the school. They have made student performance, quality staff, and teacher resources a priority. The result of their combined effort is teachers who are content to stay and work at the school. This last year saw a turnover rate of only 10 percent.

Finally, the Peace Corps Fellows program at NAU began during this same period. I interviewed several people about the Fellows program, including non-Fellow RPCV teachers, and their opinions were unanimously positive. The general perception is that Peace Corps Fellows care. "That is the crux of teaching and why the Fellows Program works," said one longtime Fellow. "It's a natural match."

Herbert is also a strong supporter of the program. "As far as an organization pro-

ducing teachers, (Fellows/USA) is as good as I've ever seen," he said. "The Peace Corps experience of teaching in a different culture plays hand in hand with living in an isolated area."

One last but very important thing I discovered in writing this article is that RPCVs and PCFs improve the school

During the past eight years, 18 RPCVs and PCFs have worked at Hopi High, and most have stayed more than the two years required for the program.

through activities that are the equivalent of Peace Corps secondary projects. Current RPCVs or PCFs started the after-school tutoring program and the honors math program. They lead the special education pre-referral process, oversee the GATE program, and serve as department heads, helping to guide the direction of the school.

Hopi Junior/Senior High School has turned itself around, and we are all proud of the results. Peace Corps Fellows have played an important role in this transformation and will continue to do so as each year brings new Fellows to the school.

By [Saundra Schimmelpfennig](#)
(Thailand 1997-99)
Fellow, Northern Arizona University



Dave Herbert, Ph.D., is principal at Hopi Junior/Senior High.

Cairo Honors Fellow for Dedicated Service

Congratulations to Patrick Welch of Seattle, Washington, who received an award for his "unswerving service" to the community of Cairo, Illinois, and the Cairo Chamber of Commerce during his 2000– 2002 Peace Corps Fellowship through Illinois State University. Chamber of Commerce President Mike Hileman presented him with a plaque at the annual Chamber meeting in the spring of 2001.

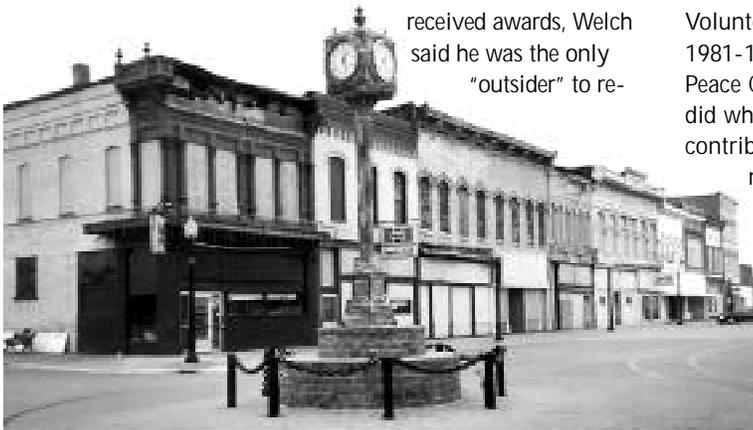
Although other Cairo residents and Chamber members also received awards, Welch said he was the only "outsider" to re-

ceive one. "The presentation of the plaque may not have been that big a deal, but it meant a lot to me," he said.

According to Welch, he received the award because of his ability to maintain focus in his work with the Cairo Chamber of Commerce and a federal empowerment zone program called the Southernmost Illinois Delta Empowerment Zone (SIDEZ), despite the numerous obstacles, changes, letdowns, and funding shortfalls he experienced. As a returned Peace Corps Volunteer (Sierra Leone 1981-1984) adhering to the Peace Corps philosophy, he did whatever he could to contribute to the development and economy of his community.



Cairo is located at the southernmost tip of Illinois, bordered by both Missouri and Kentucky. It is also at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Because of these rivers, the Cairo area once had the busiest riverboat and waterway transportation industries in the nation. Currently, however, Cairo is in a severe community and economic development crisis.



Cairo, Illinois, where Welch completed his internship, is in a severe community and economic development crisis.

Peace Corps Welcomes New Leadership

President Bush presided over the swearing in of the Peace Corps' 16th Director, Gaddi Vasquez, on February 15. Judge Alberto Gonzales, Counsel to the President swore in the Peace Corps' first Hispanic American Director in a ceremony held in the White House Oval Office. The ceremony was witnessed by his wife, Elaine, and his son, Jason.

Following the swearing-in ceremony, President Bush introduced Vasquez as the Director of the Peace Corps in the Briefing Room of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building (OEOB). In his introductory remarks, President Bush reiterated his

support for the Peace Corps. His administration has challenged the Nation to commit to volunteer service in the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, or the Citizens Corps. President Bush also emphasized his support for doubling the number of Peace Corps Volunteers over the next five years.

Among the numerous guests in attendance were Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Mel Martinez; U.S. Representatives Thomas Petri and Christopher Cox; first Director of the Peace Corps Sargent Shriver; foreign dignitaries from a number of

countries; Peace Corps senior staff members; and several currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers.

In a subsequent ceremony, held in the Director's Office of the Peace Corps, Vasquez administered the oath of office to Jody Olsen, the Deputy Director of the Peace Corps.

How did you spend Peace Corps Day 2002? Send your story to gwynn@peacecorps.gov. It may appear in a future issue of Fellows.

Dreamkeepers Learn to Teach Multicultural Students

By Rosemary Traoré
(Central African Republic
1976-79)

World Wise Schools Offers New Teaching Resource

The Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools (CWWS) program was created by the Peace Corps in 1989 to provide American educators with resources that engage students in inquiry about the world, themselves, and others in order to promote peace, understanding, and service.

Inspire Your Students, Try Service Learning

CWWS has developed a new Web-based service learning module that gives educators and students the tools and resources to plan, develop, create, perform, and evaluate a service-learning project. This new section of the CWWS Web site features service-learning project ideas, lesson plans, guides to standards, and links to useful service-learning sites. Stories and tips from returned Peace Corps Volunteers will inspire your students to make a difference in their schools and communities. To learn more visit: www.peacecorps.gov/wws/service or call 1-800-424-8580, ext. 1450.

If I could recommend one book to Peace Corps Volunteers who are considering teaching in an urban school back in the U.S., or to Peace Corps Fellows who are teaching in inner-city schools, it would be *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, by Gloria Ladson-Billings.

In this book, Ladson-Billings profiles eight successful teachers, one of whom is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer. Ladson-Billings argues that teachers do not have to be African American to teach African-American children successfully, nor do they have to be Latino to teach Latino children, but they do have to be culturally relevant. To be culturally relevant, teachers first must be culturally aware, and understand they have a culture that may not be the same as that of their students. Second, teachers have to be attentive to their students' cultures and find ways to make learning culturally appropriate, connected to who they are and where they are from.

Ladson-Billings asked parents, administrators and students for the names of the best teachers in an eight-school district in Northern California. The lists were identical. After interviewing teachers and observing them for more than a year, she found they share common characteristics of cultural relevance:

- cultivating relationships with their students beyond the boundaries of the classroom;

- believing all students can succeed;
- helping students make connections between their community, national, and global identities;
- encouraging a community of learners and expecting students to collaboratively teach each other and take responsibility for each other; and
- seeing teaching as an art and themselves as artists, "digging knowledge out" of students (pp. 44-70).

A culturally relevant school, according to Ladson-Billings, provides educational self-determination, honors and respects the students' home cultures, helps the students understand the world as it is, and equips them to change it for the better. The teacher-student relationship is fluid and "humanely equitable" (pp. 137-139).

She proposes the following tenets to follow:

- 1) when students are treated as competent, they are likely to demonstrate competence;
- 2) when teachers provide instructional "scaffolding," students can move from what they know to what they need to know;
- 3) the focus of the classroom must be instructional;
- 4) real education is about extending students'

- 5) effective teaching involves in-depth knowledge of both the students and the subject matter (pp. 123-125).

The returned Peace Corps Volunteer who is highlighted in this book "had her first contact with Black people as a teacher in West Africa." The RPCV "describes her experience of teaching African and African-American students as 'transformative.'" She is quick to point out the value of kinship relations that she has learned from her students and asserts that she "has never met an unsuccessful student" (p. 45).

This book gives us as RPCVs the opportunity to remind ourselves of what we learned adjusting to the culture of the people of our country of service. We gained far more than we gave. Teaching students of other cultures is also an opportunity to gain more than we give.

For further reading on this topic, I recommend two other books that are inspirational and practical for teachers: *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare to Teach*, by Paulo Freire, and *The Courage To Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, by Parker J. Palmer.



Coordinators Meet in 'Charming' Baltimore

Representatives of 12 of the participating Fellows/USA universities attended a coordinators' meeting in Baltimore "Charm City", Maryland, from October 31 to November 2, 2001. The annual meeting gives program coordinators the opportunity to share ideas on program management and resources, acquire up-to-date information on Peace Corps and Fellows/USA issues, and plan future activities.

At the opening session, Lloyd Pierson, acting deputy director of the Peace Corps, provided comments on the current status of the agency and his perspectives on Fellows/USA. He said that he looks forward to welcoming Gaddi Vasquez as the new Peace Corps director and Jody Olson as deputy director, and expected that their confirmation by the Senate would be completed soon. The Peace Corps is expecting its largest budget appropriation ever (\$275 million), and Pierson believes the increase in funding should be used to promote the "third goal" of the agency, under which Fellows/USA falls. Pierson wanted to learn more about Fellows/USA. Among the responses were requests for additional budget support, with suggestions that funds be used for increased Volunteer post-service support, conferences, marketing, and tuition and stipends for Fellows.

Cary Ballou, Ph.D., associate director of Fellows/USA, reported on a survey recently administered to RPCVs who have inquired about the

program but not enrolled (report results are on page 7). Coordinators again talked about the need for increased financial support. With the large number of returning Volunteers each year (about 3,500) and a significant portion interested in graduate school, Fellows/USA should increase its enrollment based on survey findings and recommendations, including expanding the offerings academically and geographically, increasing financial support, broadening recruitment activities, and making it easier for PCVs and RPCVs to get information.

Gina Wynn, marketing coordinator, outlined basic marketing needs, goals, targets, tips, and strategies, and pointed out successful examples. She described plans for the next few months, such as improving the Web site, publishing newsletters, updating the program catalogue, creating a program development guide for potential partner universities, and expanding media coverage. Coordinators said that recruitment efforts at the upcoming Peace Corps 40th anniversary "plus one" activities would be useful.

Steven Weinberg, M.D., J.D., newly appointed associate director for Volunteer Support, the division in which Fellows/USA is housed, also met the coordinators. A strong believer in academics, he said the new Peace Corps administration is firmly committed to Fellows/USA, although there are other things commanding

their attention since the events of 9/11. He acknowledged that the current reduction in job opportunities is likely to make Fellows/USA even more important to returning Volunteers.

Nadine Hathaway (RPCV, Lithuania), Meridian program and resource development consultant, gave a thorough and practical overview of fundraising. She engaged the coordinators in several exercises designed to sharpen their skills, and provided related handouts.

David Povey, Ph.D., coordinator emeritus of the Fellows/USA program at the University of Oregon, presented the results of a survey administered in 2001 to current Fellows. Results showed what Fellows appreciate about the program, including the opportunity to provide service, earn a reduced-cost graduate degree, network in their chosen field, and open possibilities for future employment.

Fellows/USA Director Michele Titi, Ph.D., updated the group on the "white paper" that had been conceptualized at the Fellows/USA Convocation last spring. She distributed a draft with an invitation for coordinators to comment. Titi advised the coordinators that Fellows/USA had submitted a proposal for fellowship funding to the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, and that a response was expected in early 2002.

Ballou spoke about the possibility of Fellows/USA being featured on the Public

Convocation to Complement NPCA Event

The 12th annual Fellows/USA Convocation will be held immediately before the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) Conference celebrating Peace Corps' 40th anniversary "plus one" in Washington, D.C. The NPCA Conference starts June 20, 2002; the Fellows/USA Convocation dates will be Monday, June 17, through Wednesday, June 19. Please note that this June Convocation date is for 2002 only, to encourage participation of more Fellows – particularly those who wish to attend the NPCA Conference – in the Convocation.

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Broadcasting System *Visionaries* series, which profiles organizations working to create positive social change. A half-hour production highlighting several of the programs would increase the visibility of both Fellows/USA and the Peace Corps. A short video also would be created to help with recruiting and fund-raising efforts.

Initial funding must first be secured, and it is hoped that production will be completed by the 2003 season.

In response to two questions posed by Titi, coordinators acknowledged that (1) Fellows/USA could do more to promote Peace Corps' third goal, and (2) it might be beneficial to form closer

partnerships with the Corporation for National Service, the Department of Education, and other organizations and agencies.

A detailed report on the meeting was distributed electronically to program coordinators.

Survey Investigates 'Why They DIDN'T Enroll'

A survey with returned Peace Corps Volunteers who have inquired about Fellows/USA and have not enrolled was conducted in Summer 2001. The purpose of the survey was to determine the reasons for their non-enrollment in order to improve the program and attract more enrollees. The survey was mailed in June to 2,234 inquirers, and 376 responded, for a response rate of 16.8 percent, giving the results a good degree of validity.

Most inquirers did not enroll because they could not find programs in the academic field and/or geographic location they were seeking (38.6 percent and 26.1 percent respectively), and one in five (20.2 percent) enrolled in another graduate program. In addition, one in five inquirers (20.2 percent) stated that the financial benefits of the program were insufficient, and about one-fourth (26.3 percent) sought employment instead.

Although a wide variety of academic fields were sought, a large number of RPCVs indicated interest in health- and science-related disci-

plines. Business, law, and policy fields also were cited. Many inquirers were looking for programs in the West or Midwest, although sought-after locations crossed the country broadly. Many stated they were looking for a particular field *and* location, and Fellows/USA did not offer the desired combination.

Other findings included:

- Inquiry about and enrollment in Fellows/USA is widely distributed among Volunteers' countries of service.
- Most inquiries (79.5 percent) came from Volunteers who completed their service in the last five years.
- Most inquirers learned about Fellows/USA while they were Volunteers.
 - 17.3 percent cited in-country staff, resources, or events as their source of information.
 - 16.8 percent cited their Close-of-Service Conferences.
 - 10.1 percent cited word of mouth or other PCVs or RPCVs, although it was not clear whether this was before, during, or after service.

19.9 percent cited printed materials, although they did not state the source of those materials.

Although a relatively small number (7.4 percent) indicated they got information from the Fellows/USA Web site, outside anecdotal evidence suggests this number is on the rise. Nearly one in 10 said they did not get information about the program in time or they found it difficult to get information.

Recommendations include expanding Fellows/USA to offer a broader array of opportunities. New programs are unlikely to compete with existing ones since most inquirers are not enrolling because they cannot find a program that is suitable for them academically and/or geographically. It is therefore recommended that Fellows/USA be expanded to additional academic fields, especially in health- and science-related disciplines, and that geographic diversity be expanded. Additional funding support is also recommended.



Manny Sanchez

Sanchez Joins Fellows/USA as Student Assistant

The Peace Corps Fellows/USA staff has welcomed Manny Sanchez to its team for the 2001-2002 academic year. Originally from Michigan, Sanchez is a student assistant from The George Washington University (GWU). His primary focus during his time at the Peace Corps will be working with databases and responding to RPCV inquiries.

In his third year at GWU, Sanchez is working toward his degree in international affairs.

He also brings Capitol Hill experience to Fellows/USA, having worked as an intern for his senator from Michigan, Spencer Abraham, who is now the U.S. Secretary of Energy.

Through these activities and his work with Fellows/USA, Sanchez is making the most of his time in the nation's capital. With no pressure from Peace Corps staff, of course, he says he has not ruled out becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer some day and a future Peace Corps Fellow!

CALL FOR PAPERS

Fellows/USA Seeks Teacher Submissions

Partners in Fellows/USA teacher education programs are invited to submit articles of professional and scholarly interest for a spring 2002 publication on teaching-related topics supported by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds. Authors may be individual Fellows, faculty, university administrators, program coordinators, Fellows/USA alumni, school system community partners or collaborative teams of such persons.

Although we originally planned to publish two

monograph volumes on *Change* and *Institutionalization*, because of the lack of response to these topics, we have decided to publish one volume of articles focusing on both scholarly research and teaching practice instead. All of the content is to come from the Fellows/USA program experience, and is to be of use and interest to teachers and teacher educators.

We will consider papers that have already been submitted for course work or that have been presented at conferences.

Below is a list of suggested topics. Submissions are not limited to these:

- Teacher retention
- Reflections on first year teaching experiences
- Best practices of new teachers (teaching tips and survival skills)
- Reports on research projects
- Institutionalization

Contact Gina Wynn at gwynn@peacecorps.gov for guidelines or to submit a proposal. Final submissions should be e-mailed to Wynn by March 29, 2002.

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