

"A QUANTUM LEAP"

By Senator Barack Obama

Congratulations to Peace Corps Volunteers of the 20th century. Congratulations, too, to the National Peace Corps Association and to current Volunteers and staff in this first decade of our new century. You are setting the pace and pointing the way to a 21st century Peace Corps that will be bigger, better and bolder.

In this presidential campaign, I've set forth a comprehensive plan for a large expansion of voluntary citizen service, at home and abroad. An integral part of that plan is the growth of the Peace Corps in quality and quantity – a quantum leap. We recall that President Kennedy hoped the Peace Corps would grow to 100,000 volunteers, but the program peaked at 16,000 in 1966. Today there are about 8,000. If Kennedy's vision had been fulfilled, there would have been more than two million returned Volunteers with first-hand experience in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe, with a commitment to help America play a more constructive role in the world.

To restore America's standing, I will call on our greatest resource – our people. We will double the size of the Peace Corps by its 50th anniversary in 2011. And, we'll reach out to other nations to engage their young people in similar programs, so that we work side by side to take on the common challenges that confront all humanity. The Peace Corps has been a key part of meeting those challenges such as overcoming poverty, combating diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria, and reducing the global education deficit. This will not be a call issued in one speech or one program. This will be an important and enduring commitment of my presidency.

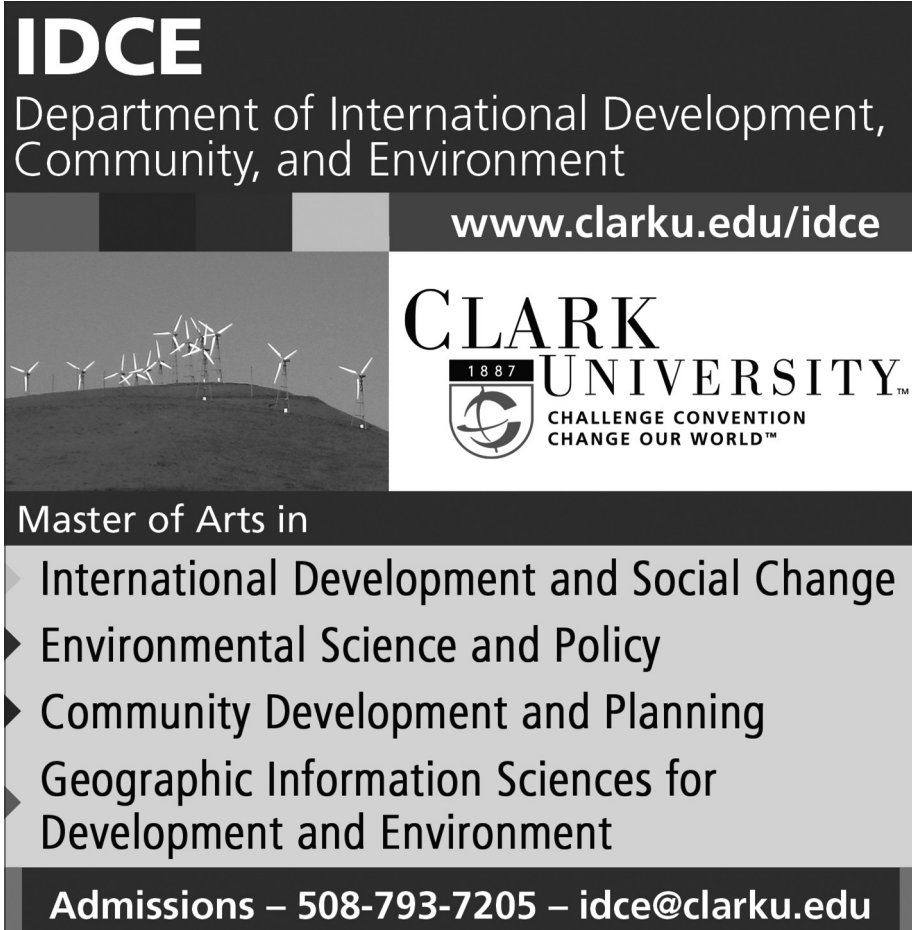
To resume the Peace Corps' growth, we will push Congress to fully fund the expansion to 16,000 by 2011. I will work

with former Peace Corps Volunteer Sen. Chris Dodd and the other returned Peace Corps Volunteers in Congress, Republicans and Democrats, and with the National Peace Corps Association to bring this about.

One of the Peace Corps' founders, Harris Wofford told me how the petition to Senator John Kennedy by nearly 1,000 University of Michigan students who pledged their support of his proposed volunteer corps was the trigger that caused him to give his major address proposing a Peace Corps at the Cow Palace in San Francisco. Generations of Peace Corps Volunteers, as active-duty

citizens, have turned Kennedy's call to service into reality.

Almost half a century later, I am not just asking for your vote as a candidate. If I am elected President, I will ask for your continued service and your active citizenship in the years to come. With the Peace Corps' present emphasis on recruiting Volunteers age 50-plus, an expanded Corps will open new opportunities for service to young and old, and help move America closer to the day when voluntary service, at home or abroad, in some form, at some stage of life, becomes the common expectation and experience of all Americans.



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