

## **Peace Corps 50th Anniversary Nationwide University-based Seminars**

*A proposed framework of collaboration between the National Peace Corps Association and its member groups, the Masters International and Fellows programs, American colleges and universities and Peace Corps' Regional Recruiting Offices*

### **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Goals**

1. Make the public aware of the success and impact of PC
2. Advance the 3<sup>rd</sup> goal of PC – sharing its value with the American public
3. Support recruiting efforts to expand PC
4. Recognize and honor those who have contributed to PC's success – Volunteers, host countries and communities, national leaders

### **Proposal**

Universities across the country - in collaboration with Peace Corps, the National Peace Corps Association and its member groups of RPCVs, Peace Corps Regional Recruiting Offices, and sponsors of the PC Masters International and Fellows programs – will sponsor a series of seminars in honor of Peace Corps' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The overall purpose of the seminars will be to help carry out the four goals of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. While each proposed seminar is framed around a date of historical significance to Peace Corps, the seminars themselves are intended to only briefly introduce that historical significance while focusing on current context and future possibilities.

The seminars proposed below offer *optional guidance*; event organizers are warmly encouraged to develop seminars such as these or other events, as appropriate, to commemorate the anniversary. Understanding the complexities of implementing such events, Peace Corps also encourages participating institutions to plan and implement in accord with their own schedules and obligations and in partnership with any other relevant agencies (e.g., World Affairs Councils or Rotary clubs). We hope you will be creative. We will do all we can to support you!

### **Key 50 Years Later Linkage Dates to be recognized**

#### **I. October 14, 1960 – JFK introduces PC at University of Michigan**

October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010: Kennedy's first PC speech at U. Mich

*Theme:* This anniversary celebrates the “**Call to Service**” and the resounding Affirmative Answer of American citizens, particularly college students! Senator Wofford put it succinctly, when reflecting on President Kennedy's inaugural speech, he said, “He turned Ask into a strong verb.” Similarly, for years after Sargent Shriver would conclude speeches with the enthusiastic and infectious call to: “Serve, Serve, Serve!”

There are many *subthemes* to explore, for example:

- The role of leaders and vision in making service a movement
- Is there a call to serve today? Who is giving it? What is it? Who is responding?
- What is the ongoing role of higher education in the call and response of service? Not only recruiting for Peace Corps service, but re-engaging RPCVs?
- Is there an organic or grassroots Service Movement today? Is it connected to its historical roots such as that which launched the Peace Corps? Is there a similar Call to Intercultural Understanding or Global Citizenship?

## II. March 1, 1961 – JFK signs executive order to establish PC

March 1, 2011: honoring signing the Peace Corps Executive Order

*Theme:* This anniversary celebrates **decisive action**, specifically the ability of government to cut through the tape and enact progressive programs. President Kennedy’s Executive Order required both politically savvy and a recognition of the urgency with which Government can/should respond to the call of its citizens and the needs of broader society. This anniversary is succinctly summed up in another verb: to Shriverize...which in the early days of the Peace Corps meant to do something Big, Bold, and Fast. It is also reflected in Shriver’s ideal of “Practical Idealism,” that combination of social hope, hard work, and political savvy!

There are many *subthemes* worth exploring, for example:

- The Towering Task...going bigger and bolder with Peace Corps and service! (note: I believe that TT co-author Bill Josephson was also the person who recommended the Executive Order jump start strategy...pretty smart!).
- Practical Idealism...What is it? How can we teach, nurture, instill it?
- Making/teaching a middle path between naive idealism and cynicism...that's where social hope lies...
- More Peace Corps: Bigger, Better, Bolder in 2011? Where are we? What needs to happen?
- Government, Social Hope, and Action: Can government lead us today? Is it?
- Research, Reflection, and Action: When do we know enough to act? (guarding against what Dr. King called the “paralysis of analysis”)

## III. September 22, 1961 -- Congress formally authorizes PC

September 22, 2011: Week of events marking the Peace Corps Act

*Theme:* This anniversary celebrates the full **commitment and institutionalization of service**, specifically marking the beginning of the permanent Peace Corps agency now a half century old. It’s about firmly establishing and operationalizing an idea, and settling in for the long haul! On the political level, the Peace Corps had to move beyond being an executive vision, to being a bi-partisan and public vision. On the cultural level, the Peace Corps has needed to expand its call to a diverse citizenry, and to adjust its focus to fit new and different times (at home and abroad). On the personal level this theme calls us from isolated acts of volunteering to integrated and full lives and careers of service.

There are many *subthemes* worth exploring, for example:

- How is Peace Corps (and National Service) a bi-partisan (or multiparty) activity?
- How have service, service-learning, civic engagement, or other related ideas been institutionalized since? Is there a firm foundation for this movement and an ongoing call to action?
- How can Peace Corps the Institution, continue to be flexible and responsive to changing times and needs? Does institutionalization bring its own challenges?
- How is Peace Corps a transformative experience (not just two years, but for life)?

### **Support and Expectations**

Peace Corps agrees to:

- Share access to its digital library
- Facilitate connections with local RPCVs and potential speakers
- Publicize events, including on the Peace Corps 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary website
- Compile seminar results for national publication
- Link to Peace Corps countries
- Provide recruiting and promotional materials
- Contact RPCVs connected with the university, upon request
- Attend events, as invited and as schedules permit

National Peace Corps Association agrees to:

- Facilitate connections with member groups (based on geography or country of service), local RPCVs and potential speakers
- Publicize events, including on the NPCA website
- Provide informational materials
- Attend events, as invited and as schedules permit

The universities agree to:

- Publicize events, including on their website
- Compile seminar results to share with Peace Corps and with NPCA
- Coordinate all university-based logistics
- Collect and share any sign-in sheets as appropriate
- Distribute/post materials provided by Peace Corps and NPCA, as arranged

### **Interested? Already scheduling a program? Contact us.**

Peace Corps: Regional Recruitment Offices at

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=meet.regrec> or  
[50thanniversary@peacecorps.gov](mailto:50thanniversary@peacecorps.gov)

National Peace Corps Association: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Coordinator at

[50thcoordinator@peacecorpsconnect.org](mailto:50thcoordinator@peacecorpsconnect.org) (or learn more about our member groups at  
<http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/member-groups>)