



Thursday, September 17, 2015

## First Person: Frank Zadroga Becomes Coverdell Fellow 40 Years after Peace Corps

I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Colombia from 1969–71. I served as an environmental planning and management specialist and established a project to protect the watersheds and irrigation infrastructure of the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, on the northern coast of Colombia. I worked for the Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute out of its headquarters in the renowned and mystical Macondo of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "One Hundred Years of Solitude."



After completing my Peace Corps service and graduate studies, I went into a 30-year career in Latin America as an environment specialist. Two-thirds of my work was in Central America and Mexico with USAID: managing projects, ensuring environmental compliance, and promoting sustainable development. After retiring from this incredibly satisfying and successful career, I decided to return to academia to reengineer my environmental knowledge and apply it in the much-needed field of education for sustainability.

I am currently a Coverdell fellow at the University of Arizona pursuing a doctoral degree in the College of Education in the field of environmental learning. My goal is to perfect an educational methodology for youth that will lead them to more sustainable lifestyles. I hope that my work will effectively enable young people to understand the concepts of sustainability and adopt behaviors leading to sustainable lifestyles.

For my service component, I am working as an intern at the Manzo Elementary School in Tucson, teaching K-5 school children the concepts of sustainability through the integration of diverse farm chores with the standardized elementary curriculum. Research all over the world has shown that the school garden approach not only helps to develop in children a critical connection with nature (mitigating "nature deficit disorder") but also improves overall academic achievement. Manzo has a nationally acclaimed school garden program, has been featured in National Geographic, and was recently named "The Best Green School of 2012" by the U.S. Green Building Council's Center for Green Schools.



I am in the process of designing my dissertation research, which I expect will focus on student environmental learning and sustainability and take place at Manzo. After completing my doctorate, I expect to return to work through international consultancies promoting environmental learning and

## Campus Ambassadors Program Grows by Leaps and Bounds



The Peace Corps Campus Ambassadors Program recently brought on 475 new ambassadors representing over 245 universities across the United States. This represents a substantial growth from last year when 225 ambassadors were brought on from 130 college and university campuses. Campus ambassadors are competitively selected students who intern with the Peace Corps over the course of a school year, providing information to other students about Peace Corps activities, opportunities, processes, and culture.

"We are tremendously excited about this growth in the Campus Ambassadors Program," said Clayton Kennedy, acting director of the Peace Corps Office of University Programs. "This tells us that there is an interest in the Peace Corps

sustainability in formal and informal educational organizations around the world.

I think Peace Corps experiences are extremely important because they allow young people to discover that we are one humanity, all interconnected and aspiring to successfully address similar challenges, needs, and dreams. The Peace Corps helps us to experience this diversity, appreciate its power, learn from it, and aspire to work together to constructively sculpture our common destiny. I began this process as a Peace Corps Volunteer and now, 40 years later, I am taking my career to a new level through the Coverdell Fellows Program.

## First Person: Asiha Grigsby Prevails as Master's International Student Despite Medical Delay

My Master's International journey began in August 2009, when I arrived for graduate student orientation in the main lobby on the Rutgers-Camden campus. I was one of 10 enthusiastic individuals who would be pursuing a Master of Public Administration in the International Public Service and Development (IPSD) concentration. We were a diverse group of people who came from all over the United States, Africa, and the Middle East.



From September 2009 to June 2010, my cohort and I endured heavy graduate course loads of five or six classes per semester. In retrospect, I would have enjoyed my academic experience more if I had had a less-accelerated timeline to complete all the requirements. The small class sizes and the cohort-style setup, however, made the rigorous academic schedule much more palatable. Without the support system within my cohort and the easy accessibility to staff and faculty, I doubt that I would have been so successful in the IPSD program.

In April 2010, my pre-departure medical evaluation uncovered a medical condition that immediately put a red flag on my Peace Corps application. I was later diagnosed with an uncommon kidney condition. My candidate file was put on medical hold immediately following the diagnosis. One by one, the members of my cohort set off to serve in the Peace Corps or in other assignments around the world. My application, however, was ultimately denied and I was declared unfit to serve.

I returned home where, for the next three years, I underwent various studies, biopsies, and blood tests to stabilize my condition. I bounced around in different jobs and even took an overseas assignment in Beijing to complete the final nine credits of my degree. However, I could not deny my insatiable desire to serve in the Peace Corps, so I left Beijing and went home to apply once again for service.



Thankfully, with my condition stabilized, the second application was received without issue. I was invited to serve in El Salvador in the tiny rural village of Estanzuela in June 2013.

In my work as a Volunteer, I assist the people in the Estanzuela community in developing basic business and organizational skills so they can create income

and that young people are still asking, 'What can I do for my country?' The 475 ambassadors that we have this year will allow us to help potential Volunteers prepare for the Peace Corps application process, and will also allow us to diversify our reach—recruiting from a more representative spectrum of American society."



Each campus ambassador works closely with a Peace Corps recruiter to raise the Peace Corps' profile on his or her college or university campus. Ambassadors may post and tweet content, identify and connect with diverse students across the campus, help set up and publicize events hosted by the Peace Corps, and participate in nationwide ambassador photo and video competitions.

Moreover, being a campus ambassador offers a prestigious, internship-like experience with the Peace Corps. Ambassadors are considered local experts in their school communities: They know their campuses better than anyone, and help recruiters to connect with new pockets of potential Peace Corps applicants.

The Campus Ambassador Program started four years ago, and the Peace Corps plans to continue to grow the program. "This program is a win-win for the ambassadors and for the Peace Corps," said Kennedy. "We'd like to keep the momentum going forward."

To learn more about being a

and operate more efficiently. My main project in Estanzuela has been building a bakery cooperative and training the participants in business and accounting. Aside from learning Spanish and teaching business development, I have worked with women's savings groups, taught HIV/AIDS awareness, collaborated in a community water project and, most importantly, formed life-long relationships with truly inspiring people.

Upon completing my service I plan to backpack through Southeast Asia in order to process my Peace Corps experience. I have aspirations to eventually work in the State Department as a foreign service officer or at an NGO that focuses on empowering women and girls through micro-entrepreneurship. I am most interested in career opportunities where I can continue to develop my language skills in a professional setting. Most importantly, I will take time to enjoy the company of family and friends whom I have missed dearly during my service.

campus ambassador, [read this article](#) or [visit this webpage](#). For more information on the program, write to [UniversityPrograms@peacecorps.gov](mailto:UniversityPrograms@peacecorps.gov).

## Contact University Programs

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