

## **The 2002 National Peace Corps Conference**

This is the first time that I had gone to the National Conference, this year held in Washington, DC, mainly at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. The conference was attended by RPCV's from across the country, with experiences from around the world having served from the 60' until today. I was able to see how other regional groups are active and learn more about the many affiliate and 'friends of' (in my case, Friends of Niger) groups. The conference began with an Advocacy Day and Business Symposium and the next day an address by President Alejandro Teledo as well as many workshops on the environment, writing and group organizing to name a few.

On Saturday I attended both the President's Forum and the General Meeting/Newsletter and Website Awards to represent our group. The groups represented ('Area' groups like ours and all the other affiliate and 'Friends of' groups) make up most active part the membership of the NPCA and also pay membership dues get part of that money to operate as well, just as we do. Which brings up the most contentious issue of the forum – the membership dues increase of \$10 being proposed. A resolution was proposed to recommend to the NPCA board a dues increase of \$10. This would mean that you would all pay \$50 to be a member of NPCA and RPCV-NENY. Of that \$35 goes to NPCA and \$15 back to us. The argument was that costs have increased for the NPCA especially a jump in the cost to rent office space for the NPCA in DC. The main argument against was that this would discourage membership, particularly new members. Now, I only heard about the issue a short while before going so that I couldn't present the issue at one of our meetings and get a response from all of you. Personally I thought both sides of the argument had merit but that I couldn't really express how our membership felt, so I abstained on the vote. The measure passed away and the board is generally already in favor of the increase, so it is likely that it will happen.

One of the main attractions at the conference was the Bazaar, held in one of the large conference rooms and with a vast array of beautiful handmade bags, shirts, sculpture, pottery, music, pictures and on and on available. Also with tables were such groups as Pedals for Progress, Books for Africa, People Trees and Food, Friends of the Falun Gong, Friends of Afropop Worldwide, plus RPVC groups of the Boston Area Wisconsin and Michigan and many other groups and Universities were represented. The conference ended with a procession to Arlington cemetery and the Kennedy grave.

I was happy to see several of our members (or former members) there including Bob Gallagher, The Gottliebs, Kim Swanson. John Kucij and Terry Amrhein were also there, I believe, but I didn't find them.