

FQ THE NEWSLETTER

Fondo Quisqueya



"To provide for low income Dominicans in the Dominican Republic, grants for educational and training purposes designed to assist them in bettering their lives and designed to help them attain personal development, skills and advancement." Fondo Quisqueya since 2007

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Covid-19 in the DR

December 7, 2020

Confirmed cases: 148,453

Deaths: 2,345

Source: Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/region/dominican-republic>

President's Report - FQ & The Future

We live in interesting times, and recent events seem like they are pushing new limits of the probable and possible. But then a quick jump back into history and it is all too familiar. Vividly remembered was the Great Apogon of 1990: Balaguer was losing, and the lights went out across the country. We woke up to Balaguer claiming victory. But lives continue, along with the challenges, and the responses. As is too often the case, tragedy hits hardest those who have the least to begin with. The pandemic has hit the Dominican Republic hard, decimating the tourist industry and causing ripples throughout the economy. Education can only happen through distance learning, ensuring that any students who don't have access to a computer or the internet are left even further behind.

With no clear timeline for the Peace Corps to begin again in country, Fondo Quisqueya has focused on establishing new channels to fulfill our educational mission, and we are pleased to be able to expand and adapt our support for the Instituto Tecnico Comunitario by converting travel scholarships into internet access scholarships. Our new partnership with Entrena, S.A. opens a new network of youth leadership primed and ready for our support, and we are now distributing tablets and internet cards to a new cadre of young leaders and students. We are excited as these new programs roll out and welcome your engagement and questions.

As always, we can only continue these programs through your support, and hope that the article on tax strategies for giving is helpful at a time when traditional incentives are reduced. Every contribution small and large goes 100% towards our programs.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

FQ/Entrena Partnership Supports Young Leaders

In our last newsletter we told you about our exciting new partnership with Entrena to support distance learning for at risk youths. FQ provided \$10,000 to purchase Chrome tablets and other essential items to support the program. The 55 tablets have been

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Update from Jennifer McGowen PC/DR Director

While the COVID situation in the DR gradually improved over the late summer and in early fall, in recent weeks, there has been an increase in cases. As such, both the US Embassy and the Peace Corps continue to maintain a conservative stance with the majority of staff working fully remotely. While the exact return date of Volunteers is still undefined, PC/DR has tentatively pushed the estimate from spring to summer 2021. Despite this, Peace Corps staff continue to work diligently for the return of Volunteers. They are in contact with the communities we support, and counterparts continue to express their interest in and support for Peace Corps Volunteers.

The news of the vaccines is quite exciting, but we still do not know how this will affect incoming PCVs. The Dominican government has announced that they plan to make the vaccine available to its citizen by spring 2021.

One silver lining has been our ability to move forward on construction of our new building. As many of our FoDR and Fondo Quisqueya friends are aware, PC/DR will be moving its offices soon. Although quite bittersweet as we enjoy the beautiful grounds of the Pantoja training center and the quaintness of the old Gazcue building, the new facilities / infrastructure will allow us to provide more complete and professional services to Volunteers. It will also allow us to have all staff under one roof, creating opportunities for a more inclusive workplace. The new building is still located in Gazcue and the move is planned for January 2021.

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distributed through participating organizations. The FQ Board had the opportunity at its November 20th meeting to hear directly from some of the recipients and hear first hand the difference that the program has made in the lives of the "becarios". Not surprisingly they told us about some of the challenges of distance learning and technical issues. This program is providing essential support to young Dominicans who were educationally at risk in the challenging pandemic environment.

Some Recent DR Election History

by Tito Coleman



"Balaguer was successful in his use of brazen fraud in 1990. Beyond simple on-the-ground fraud, he ably secured U.S. backing for his presidential race"

"In 1990, the PRD finally decided to nominate its most popular, albeit controversial, personality, José Francisco Peña Gómez. The bitter disputes within the opposition's forces were not sufficient to ensure Balaguer's victory through a democratic victory. Suspiciously, the

vote tally was suspended only hours after the polling places had closed. Two months later, the Central Electoral Board reported that Balaguer had triumphed once again, barely defeating Bosch, with Peña Gómez running a distant third."

By 1994, the PRD was solidified and motivated, and Peña was once again the party's standard-bearer in the presidential election. Even by Dominican standards, the 1994 campaign was violent and dirty. Peña lost to Balaguer in an extremely tight election marred by numerous irregularities. A number of Peña supporters showed up to vote only to discover their names had vanished from the rolls. Peña called a general strike which was widely supported by his followers. After international protest, an investigation was mounted that raised grave concerns about the poll's legitimacy. The electoral board didn't know the total number of registered voters, and the voting lists distributed at polling stations didn't match those given to the parties. The investigation also revealed that about 200,000 people had been removed from the polls. After intense negotiations, Balaguer announced that he would leave office prematurely in 1996 after serving seven terms in power.

Can I Save Some Taxes by Donating to FQ?

Is my contribution tax deductible? Far be it from us to give you tax advice, but here are a couple of ideas to make it easier for you to contribute this year. The rule for the past couple of years has been that if you don't itemize deductions (which most people now do not), your contribution was not deductible. However, **this year and only this year** there is a provision in the 2020 Cares Act that allows a deductible contribution up to \$300 even if you take the standard deduction. Check out this article in the New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/20/your-money/charity-deductions-taxes-coronavirus.html?referringSource=articleShare>) for more information.

Another way to get some tax advantage while contributing to FQ is to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). If you have an IRA and are of an age that you must make a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), your plan administrator can pay whatever portion of your RMD you designate directly to FQ. In this way you avoid being taxed on that portion of your RMD paid to FQ. Check it out with your accountant. It will be good for you and good for FQ. See the following for more information: <https://www.fidelity.com/learning-center/personal-finance/retirement/qcds-the-basics>

Our Man in Santo Domingo by Mike Benson

As DR has been locked down from 7 to 5 for 9 months, rates are 3 to 8 deaths daily for 11M pop. Masks are well accepted and ICU use is about 30%. We feel much safer here than up there.

Now the big news is OPERATION PULPO, (octopus) which has been the arrests and searches of 11 of the top ex directors of the past government for massive graft and misappropriation of public funds. Four or five of them are brothers of Daniel Medina, former president along with others involved in the scams. Three days before the change of power the government made huge payouts to them, one for 860 million Pesos or about \$125 Million. The general population is very happy with this turn of events and even had a pot banging concert at 8PM under curfew in support of the Justice minister and president. It has been handled very well.

For those who would like to practice their Spanish I am including these details with amounts and scam:

Comenzaron a salir detalles de la barrida que hizo el Pepca el domingo por la madrugada, donde se llevaron 10 exfuncionarios morados presos al mismo tiempo. Parece que el factor común entre todos los tentáculos de "muchos cuartos" es Alexis Medina, el más pequeño de los 7 hermanos de Danilo. Mira quién es quién en lo que la Procu-

raduría bautizó como "Operación Anti Pulpo".

Alexis Medina: ...Alias el pulpo. Es el más pequeño de los 7 Medina Sánchez, y en la Procuraduría le pusieron así porque dizque sus tentáculos alcanzaban todos los ingredientes que necesitaba –en las diferentes instituciones del gobierno– para cocinar ventas al Estado por cientos de millones, sin licitación y siempre "de urgencia". Como si fuera un pulpo en una pulpería.

Magalys Medina: La otra hermana metida en el bollo. Fue vicepresidenta del Fonper (una institución que se creó en el 2001 para "administrar" las empresas reformadas del gobierno), que le hizo varias compras a Alexis. Fernando Rosa también está porque era el jefe del Fonper.

Francisco Pagán: Exdirector de la Oisoe, otra de las instituciones que se van porque son nidos de corrupción, según Abinader. Les dio contratos a testaferros de Alexis, según la PGR. De paso salió embarrado Aquiles Cristófer Sánchez, que era quien "fiscalizaba las «obras»".

Freddy Hidalgo: Ministro de Salud Pública del 2012 al 2014. Ahí fue que Alexis hizo su agosto, según el expediente, pues le adjudicaron compras de equipos médicos por unos 200 millones y pico de pesos.

Rafael Germosén: Fue contralor General de la República del 2012 al

2016. En su descripción de puesto dice que tiene que velar por el buen uso de los fondos públicos. Bueno, pues dice la acusación que él facilitó el uso de fondos públicos para esos contratos entre Alexis y SP.

Julián Suriel Suazo y José Dolores Santana: los supuestos testaferros de Alexis. Domingo Santiago también está, pero todavía no sabemos qué pinta ahí.

¿Qué dice la familia?

Lucía (o Yomaira), la hermana más conocida del expresidente Medina, cogió para el Palacio de Justicia de Ciudad Nueva para ver a sus dos hermanos presos, pero ni la dejaron entrar. Danilo dijo lo que iba a decir el mismo domingo, pero ayer habló Carlos Salcedo, el abogado de Alexis. Dijo que Danilo le pidió a su hermano que tratara de no venderle equipos médicos al Estado mientras él fuera presidente, y que después "ni se enteró" de que no le hizo caso.

¿Qué viene ahora?

Pues audiencias y más audiencias. En lo que el hacha va y viene, el Ministerio Público solicitó prisión preventiva para todos los acusados y el cierre de todas las empresas involucradas. Como la solicitud fue anoche, de seguro la audiencia será durante esta mañana.



There is an excellent new documentary about the Peace Corps, "**A Towering Task - The History of the Peace Corps**". The Dominican Republic is one three countries visited by the filmmakers, and several former DR volunteers are featured, including Randy Adams, Kirby Jones, Chris Dodd, Joe Kennedy, and Daniel LeRoy. Our own Emily Nuss was also in the film and helped with some of the translation. We also see pictures of younger versions of Rik Laird, Jerry Murray, and Bob Tafelski, among others. Visit the film's website (<https://www.peacecorpsdocumentary.com/>) for more information and viewing options.

Visit our website at www.FondoQ.org

Speaking of Friends

Our sister organization, FDR, like FQ, is a 501(c)(3) organization. FDR focuses on helping bring together the community of DR Returned PC Volunteers and staff in the US. It also raises money for two funds: the Program Support Fund, which assists Volunteers and PC programs with donations such as equipment, software and workshops; and the Community Challenge Fund, which provides grants for small-scale community infrastructure projects in poor communities. For more information, go to www.fotdr.org. Contributions may be sent to Mary Britt, FDR Treasurer, 2-2nd St Apt 3604, Jersey City, NJ 07302.



Order Your FQ T-Shirt Now Before They Run Out



A t-shirt with this beautiful design can be yours for a modest \$20 contribution. We have sizes medium, large, and extra large.

Christina Houtz hails from Dayton, Ohio and graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 2011. Before joining the Peace Corps in March of 2014, she worked in the Cincinnati area as an Assignment Clerk for the Hamilton County Municipal Court. Once in the Peace Corps, Christina lived outside of Dajabon close to the Dominican – Haitian border and served as a Primary Literacy Promoter. After her initial two years of service, she continued her commitment to the DR as a Peace Corps Volunteer Leader for the Education Sector. In this role, she served as a bridge between PCDR, local Dominican educators, and on the ground Peace Corps Volunteers. These incredible 3+ years of experience confirmed Christina's passion to work as an international development practitioner. On her return to the states, she moved to Washington DC to begin study at American University where she eventually earned her Master's in Public Administration all the while working for The Kaizen Company (A USAID Implementing Partner). Christina is thrilled to continue to serve a country that became a second home through her involvement in FQ as Vice President.



Meet Our Board

FQ has a board that brings a breadth and depth of experience to the task. So you can become better acquainted with FQ we'll be profiling board members in the next several newsletters. We start with our president, our treasurer, and one of our vice-presidents.



Tito Coleman's connection to FQ goes back to when the Peace Corps was attempting to genetically engineer future Volunteers through their parents. His father George Coleman was on Sargent Shriver's team to set up the new agency and first programs in 1960, and then took his young family to Brazil as the first Country Director (1961-1964). The early Brazil experience translated forward to a permanently altered understanding of the world, and the US role in the world. Additional influences came from a 2 year stay in Paris (1969-71) as a family assigned to the US OECD delegation, during Sargent Shriver's role as Ambassador to France. The US years were based in McLean, Virginia, then to St. John's College, University of Copenhagen, and finally Virginia Tech for Architecture and a Master's in Urban Planning. Marriage, a return to Brazil working with the Futures Group and Pathfinder Fund in 1985, and an amazingly fast 30 year journey working mostly in Public Health in Latin America & Caribbean region, including most notably 16 years in the Dominican Republic as a USAID Project Director focused on HIV/AIDS, TB, RH, water and vaccine programs. A reconnection to all things Peace Corps began when I joined the Entrena training team for two training groups (which included Bill Threlkeld!!), and began to always tie PCVs into the USAID health projects at their sites. Very pleased to be invited to join Fondo Q back in 2009 at BJ Warren's invitation, and here I am!!



Bill Threlkeld is from, well... Virginia. He was not born there (that would be Missouri), but it is where he has spent most of his life. He got his first taste of the Shenandoah Valley portion of Virginia (beautiful!) spending four years at James Madison University, to become a geographer. After working for a few years in local government land use planning, he got the itch to live overseas, and eventually landed in the Dominican Republic for Peace Corps service in Villa Elisa as a part of his studies to complete a Master of Public Policy with Rutgers University. He married in the DR, to Carine, extended service for another year, and then moved to the DC area for nonprofit work, both internationally (12 years) and, now, domestically. He is currently a division director for community building and self-sufficiency programs with Cornerstones, a human services agency based out of Reston, Virginia.