

Summer 2021



"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 Bylaws 2005

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Keisel (third from the left) meeting with (left to right) Xochilt Estrada, dean of the environmental school, Frank Badia, faculty member serving as Keisel's mentor, Keisel, and Guy Baehr, RPCV/DR supervisor of the program on behalf of FQ & FDR

FQ & FDR Support Outstanding Student

Keisel Robelin Rivas Sena, now 23, grew up with his single mother and an older brother in Pedernales. He graduated from the Instituto del Ambiente in Jarabacoa in June 2019 with a three-year technical degree in forestry science. Attendance at that residential school, run by the Dominican Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, is free to those admitted through a nationwide competitive exam. More than 700 high school graduates took the exam for the 40 available places in the last class. Under an

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agreement with Friends of the Dominican Republic, Keisel was chosen from the graduating class of about 35 students by the faculty as the candidate most likely to benefit from and successfully complete the newly created four-year Brigada Verde University Scholarship Program, co-founded with Fondo Quisqueya. Keisel was not planning to go on to a university education for lack of funds. The FDR/FQ scholarship covers tuition, books, transportation, and some living expenses as long as the student continues making satisfactory progress towards a four-year degree at a recognized university-level institution in the Dominican Republic. As part of the agreement, the Instituto del Ambiente provides continuing mentorship by a member of its faculty. Funds are disbursed monthly by FDR and grade reports and other documentation are required for each trimester.

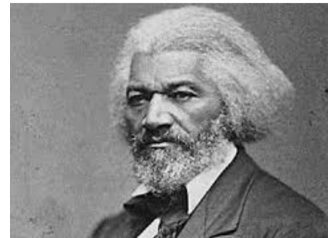
Keisel decided to study industrial engineering at the Santo Domingo campus of the Universidad Tecnológica de Santiago (UTESA). As an industrial engineer, he sees an opportunity to bring energy conservation, decreased pollution and recycling to industrial processes. He has been studying with a full course load (three trimesters a year) since September 2019 with average grades above A and is scheduled to graduate in August 2023.

The cost of the scholarship is currently just under \$1,800 per year, in part due to the stronger dollar and in part due to Keisel's winning a scholarship from the Dominican government's Ministry of Higher Education that covers a portion of his tuition. FDR and Fondo Q have each committed up to \$1,000 per year to support the scholarship for up to four years. Although the dollar has stayed steady, inflation has been increasing in the Dominican Republic and is expected to hit about 10% this year. Keisel's transportation and living allowance have been increased somewhat to offset the higher costs this year.



Did You Know?

There are 80 Dominican baseball players in the Major Leagues? That's a little more than 10% of all major league players - more than from any other country - other than the US of course. The next two countries are Venezuela with 54 and Puerto Rico with 19.



Another Interesting Factoid

President Benjamin Harrison appointed the renowned abolitionist, writer, and statesman Frederick Douglass as US minister resident and consul-general to Haiti and charge d'affaires to the Dominican Republic in 1889. Douglass resigned two years later because of his disagreement over US policy in Haiti.

Please support Fondo Quisqueya with your contributions. In this era of the pandemic and Peace Corps hiatus, your contributions are needed more than ever. Our address and a link to our website are at the end of this newsletter. Thank you

PC/DR Needs Your Help - Report from PC/DR

*** Tell Your Story to Incoming PCVs ***



PCDR continues to prepare for the re-entry of Volunteers to service, although we still do not have specific dates for volunteers' return to country. The staff has maintained



contact and consultation with all our host country partners; government, community and families during the last year after volunteers were evacuated. They, like us, are looking forward to the volunteers' return. PC/DR plans to continue with three programs: Spanish Literacy, Community Economic Development and Youth Development. The objectives of these programs have changed very little, although the need for them is just as vital, if not more so given the impact of the pandemic in the DR. One example of this impact is the formal education system where the Education Ministry has mounted an impressive program of distance learning using television, radio and on-line resources both synchronic and asynchronic that began in the Fall of 2020. Nonetheless, given the related challenges of electric power, access to devices, and families with multiple children that may require simultaneous access, the overall results for many children fall short of daily in-school education. It should be noted that all three PC/DR programs contain objectives consistent with the Dominican Education system.

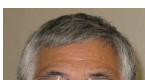
One of our goals to **"Build Back Stronger"** is to provide more support for volunteers of all identities. We are currently preparing an on-line portal that invitees to the Dominican Republic can access prior to staging. We hope that this portal, known as "Learning Space", will include descriptions of service from different identity groups. These descriptions of service will ideally be volunteers sharing stories, experiences and tips on what a new PCV can expect when serving as a Person of Color including but not limited to Black, Asian American, or Latinex volunteers, an older volunteer, or as someone who identifies as LGBTQAI+, among others. This list of identities is just an example, as other identities around nationality, ethnicity, religion, able-bodied, language levels, etc. are also welcome and encouraged. Our hope is that RPCVs with these identities are willing to share their stories with invitees, to foster a better understanding of what the PCV/DR experience will be. In addition, we can begin the process of creating a support network and fomenting allyship with this new cohort of PCVs. As we do not have PCVs currently serving in country to draw upon, we are reaching out to our RPCV community with the hope that you will be willing to **share your stories**. All RPCVs are welcome to respond, although experiences from 2015-2019 may have more relevance for our incoming PCVs.

What will these descriptions look like? Perhaps the ideal medium would be short (1-4 minute) videos. However, narrated PowerPoint presentations, voice recordings or short essays may also be submitted.

Our goal is to have this portal up and running by late summer. If interested RPCVs want more information or would like to participate, please contact the PCDR Training Director, Tim Kiefer (tkiefer@peacecorps.gov) or the PC/DR Equity, Diversity and Inclusion working group EDI (DO-TodosSomosEDI@peacecorps.gov)

Thank you in advance for your help and support.

Attention Southern California!!



Over 3,000 former PCVs and friends of the DR from all 50 states are receiving our newsletter and many also contribute to our educational



mission. But, over the years since FQ's founding in 1987 most of the board members have been drawn from the Washington, DC area. One of the benefits of the pandemic (and there are precious few) is that our board meetings are now on Zoom and thus can be more inclusive. We want to expand participation in FQ's board by focusing on metropolitan areas where there is a concentration of our membership. We have over 300 former DR Volunteers in California, mostly in the Greater Los Angeles area. One of those is our newest board member John Yuasa, and he has agreed to lead an initiative to develop more of a West Coast presence for FQ. The goals of this outreach are to broaden our base of support and participation, encourage greater networking and interaction among former DR Volunteers, and identify people who are interested in serving on FQ's board or committees. By broadening our base, we also hope to develop new ideas based on the experiences of former DR volunteers about educational programs in the DR that FQ can support. Other ways you could become involved include mentoring FQ scholarship recipients, contributing content for our newsletter, hosting events in your area to broaden awareness of FQ's mission, host fundraising/crowd sourcing initiatives, etc. If you would like to meet kindred spirits and be a part of this initiative, please contact John at john@johnyuasa.com.

Fondo Quisqueya Holds Annual Meeting

The Fondo Quisqueya Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, June 21st, by Zoom. The highlight of the meeting was the visit by DR Peace Corps Director, Jennifer McGowan, who shared insights on the current situation in the Dominican Republic given the COVID Pandemic and the status of Peace Corps in the DR. A main event of the meeting was the election of new directors, who will serve for three years, and the officers, who will serve for the upcoming year.



Christina Houtz, Vice President and Chair of the Nominating Committee, presented the slate of directors for the coming three years: Tito Coleman, Michael Benson, Janet Kerley, and John Yuasa. Mary Ferrand was nominated to become a Director Emeritus. All were elected with a unanimous vote. John is the newest member of the board of directors and will lead the effort to establish a West Coast presence for Fondo Quesqueya (see article above).

The officers for 2021-2022 are: Tito Coleman, President; Christina Houtz, Vice-President, Minor Anderson, Vice President, Bill Threlkeld, Treasurer; and Janet Kerley, Secretary.

Additionally, John, Tito, Minor, and David Padilla led an enthusiastic discussion of the potential for broadening the reach of FQ beyond the DC Metro area, by working with the growing number of DR/RPCVs in Southern California.

Short updates were provided on the ongoing programs with two partner institutions through which FQ is providing assistance. FQ is currently providing funds for students at the Instituto Técnico Superior Comunitario (ITSC) to help with the transportation costs of attending college. FQ is also supporting Entrena's work to provide distance learning through computers and other assistance during the pandemic. Christina noted that the support for Alerta Joven, in the form of

WIFI and Computers was very successful.

Ten RPCVs also joined the meeting, each with an interesting story to tell about their service. Michael Hirsch, former DR/PC Director from 1992-97 joined in, along with Jerry Murray who served with Minor, in the early years, and Jarrad Radloff who also served in the early years, from 63-65. He said he was relocated to Colombia because of the revolution; Anne Weeks served from 1981 to 83, working with Entrena under John Seibel; Brian and Lois Redman noted that Lois worked in the School for the Blind in Santo Domingo from 1972-74 and Brian served from 1969-76 with INAPA. We also enjoyed having Steve (Pablo) Schurch, Charles De Bose, Jerry Lutes, and Joan Galles on the zoom call.

[Visit our Website](#)

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