

**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**  
**University Seminar on Innovation in Education**  
**Faculty House, Columbia University**  
**New York, New York 10021**

**Ronald Gross, Co-Chair**  
**Conversations New York**

To prospective supporters of PEACE CORPS HOUSE:

I write with unqualified enthusiasm and deep conviction in support of the proposal for Peace Corps House in Washington.

I believe that the goals, programs, and style of the proposed House are extraordinarily well conceived: from finding inspiration in the proven dedication of RPCVs and building on the noble Settlement House Movement, to assuring complete community engagement from the start and throughout the development and leadership of the program.

While supporting the entire concept, I would have a special interest in contributing to the Peace Corps Café. That initiative embodies all that's best in my current work through the non-profit Conversations New York ([www.conversationsnewyork.com](http://www.conversationsnewyork.com)), in which thousands of city residents are engaging in the kinds of free expression, learning and development, debate, and reflection which would be encouraged at the Café.

Of course, a program of community Conversations could be developed in Peace Corps House itself. The topics could be suggested by any of the House's visitors as they pass through, and anyone could launch a conversation at any time by borrowing a signaling device (a statuette, special balloon, etc.), a poster with some ground rules (like Listen, Question, Be All There) and finding a nook or cranny for 5-7 people.

Additionally, regularly scheduled Conversations could address topics of wider interest, also generated and vetted by a community committee, so that folks knew to come every Wednesday at 6:00 for this offering.

Finally, Tom Hebert is a colleague and friend going way back, and I have seen his mettle tested in the trenches and in board rooms – he's got the right stuff to make this happen.

Respectfully,

**Ron Gross**