



PEACE CORPS

PCIA IRAN ASSOCIATION

انجمن گروه صلح ایران

From the Field - PCIA Board Newsletter

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I will meet you there." Jalal ad-Din Rumi

February 2021



Diane Welzel Hargreaves (Tehran, 1970-72)

For her PC assignment, Diane was a clarinetist with the Tehran Symphony. This photo was taken at a State Dinner for President and Mrs. Richard Nixon, held at Niavaran Palace, 5/30/72. There were several Iran PCVs who played in the Tehran Symphony.

Ja-ye Jackie (Jackie's Place)

So Begins the Journey of a Thousand Miles

By Jackie Spurlock (Abadeh, Riz/ZarrinShahr, 1974-76)

Last month we witnessed the strength and beauty of America's system of peaceful transfer of power – a new president inaugurated in the midst of a pandemic and civil unrest. The country and the world watched as Joe Biden was inaugurated. The weather, cold with snow flurries, yet sunny at times, suited the mood. The music, by Jennifer Lopez and later, Lady Gaga, was inspiring. And the incredible poem by a new voice, American's National Youth Poet Laureate, Amanda Gorman, captured the power and intensity of

the moment, the rage and grief, horror and sorrow, but also hope and pride and maybe, the beginnings of unity.

So now the work begins. The task is daunting. We are in such a challenging historical time, a deep hole. This will not be easy. The honeymoon will be short, the work will be slow going. But to quote Lao-Tzu, “the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”, or “with the ground we stand on”, depending on your translation. So here we go with our new leader, President Joe Biden, who inspired us that day with his courage and optimism, but who in one fleeting moment that I, and perhaps others noticed on camera, looked tired and a little terrified. Just for a moment. Then he went off and signed 18 Executive Orders, including one rescinding the Muslim Ban.

I wish him - and us - well. May we begin the fraught work of healing. May we bring the spirit of Peace Corps to our interactions within our families and communities, and may we begin to build peace in our world.

Dooreh-ye Ketaab (PCIA's Book Discussion Group)

By Jackie Spurlock and Jim Goode

Please join us on Wednesday, March 10 for a discussion of [*A Social Revolution: Politics and the Welfare State in Iran*](#), by Kevan Harris, a 2017 examination of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s unique system for taking care of its citizens.

Here are the other books and authors we’ll be reading in 2021:

- May 12 – Maghbouleh, Neda. [*The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race*](#) (2017)
- July 14 – Briskin, Dennis (Arak, 1967-69). [*The Face of Iran Before*](#) (2020) **AND** Phinney, Alice Preston (Kerman, 1965-67). [*Yekke bude yekke na bude*](#) (1975) **PLEASE NOTE: These two works will be read together for a single discussion session.**
- September 8 – Bahrapour, Tara. [*To See and See Again*](#) (1999)
- November 10 – Azar, Shokoofeh. [*The Enlightenment of the Greengage Tree*](#) (2020)

All dates are Wednesdays; time is 5:00pm (Pacific). We meet on Zoom. All living authors have agreed to join us for the discussion of their books.

The *Dooreh* is open to all. You do not have to be a PCIA member or a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer. If you have not yet attended a *Dooreh*, [email us](#) to be included on the invite list. If you have participated in previous *Dooreh* meetings, we have you in the list, you’re good! Please let one of us know if you have any questions.

[Jim Goode](#) (Tuysarkan, 1968-1971) and [Jackie Spurlock](#) (Abadeh, Riz/ZarrinShahr, 1974-76)

Iran Issues Discussion Group

By Jackie Spurlock and John Salamack

Ever wish you had someone to discuss Iran issues with? What's going on over there and why do Iran and the U.S. behave the way they do? Is there anyone who is actually interested in my opinion?

The answer to that last question is yes! PCIA offers a monthly friendly discussion of current events having to do with Iran. All are welcome. You don't have to be an expert, or even know much at all. Bring your interest, your questions, your opinions, and your love of conversation. Meetings are on the fourth Monday of every month at 5:00 pm PDT. The next one will be on Monday, February 22. If you have never attended the PCIA Iran Issues Discussion Group and would like to receive a Zoom link, [let us know](#).

[John Salamack](#) (Bojnoord, 1965-67) and [Jackie Spurlock](#) (Abadeh, Riz/ZarrinShahr, 1974-76)

Board News

- Despite the weather, spring is coming. It is time to start your sabzi for Nowruz and to **mark your calendar** for the PCIA Virtual Nowruz Celebration. Date: March 20, 2021. Time: 12noon Eastern. If you have a story about celebrating Nowruz while you were in Iran and would like to share it, please contact president [Jeanette Gottlieb](#) (Noshahr, Hamadan, 1965-67).
 - The date for our **Virtual Conference** has been moved to October 2, 2021. The conference will begin at 12noon Eastern time and last until approximately 8pm Eastern time. Content and registration information will be provided closer to the date. We look forward to seeing everyone then. Questions? [Jeanette Gottlieb](#)
 - The [PCIA website](#) not only contains current information such as copies of *From the Field* and the *Advocacy Bulletin*, but much that documents the legacy of our service in Iran. Here is a link to [stories by and about volunteers](#). Undoubtedly, you will find many that you will enjoy reading. Comments? [Doug Schermer](#) (Semnan, Shahrud, 1966-67)
 - **Open Board Position.** There is an open position on PCIA's board. We encourage you to consider getting involved in this way. Please contact [Jeanette Gottlieb](#) or any other board member (emails at bottom of this newsletter) with questions about the commitment.
 - **Action Alerts.** Over the last month, the board sent two Action Alerts to the membership, as follows:
 - **1/24/21** – Encouraging members to sign onto a letter circulated by [Ploughshares](#) supporting diplomacy with Iran and the appointment of persons knowledgeable about Iran to engage in that diplomacy, such as Rob Malley, in particular.
 - **2/6/21** - Encouraging members to contact their Congressional representatives, urging them to sign on to the “Omar-Garcia-Warren” letter, which requests that the administration take steps to end the harmful impacts of sanctions.
 - **Strategic Planning Update.** The board is in week 7 of our strategic planning process with our consultants, [Telesto Strategy](#). A member survey has just been completed and the results are being compiled. Members will be kept apprised of the project over the next few weeks.
 - **Documentary Update.** The two filmmakers who are working on a documentary of Peace Corps Iran have finished the first step, a survey of Iran RPCVs. Thanks to all who completed it. (We know that was two surveys in one month – we are grateful!) **Abbas Motlagh** and **Hossein Mahallati** report: “We feel we have sufficient resources to complete this phase and move into the next.”
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We Get Mail

- From **John Lorentz** (Karaj, 1962-64), responding to the news that one member of the mob who stormed the U.S. Capitol on 1/6/21 had once been a Peace Corps volunteer. “It is beyond my comprehension how any Returned Peace Corps Volunteer could have taken part in the despicable actions yesterday. The Peace Corps experience itself profoundly impacts one’s sense of the value of a smoothly running democracy. I am delighted to see that our National Peace Corps Association has been quick to weigh in on the matter.”
 - **Glenn Blumhorst** (NPCA CEO, RPCV Guatemala), on the storming of the Capitol building on January 6. “We must be unequivocal: Violence and hatred have no place in the Peace Corps community. Those who took part in these violent acts — and those who incited them — must be held accountable. I sincerely believe that the Peace Corps community can and will play a pivotal role in the U.S. reengaging with the world. And during these months of crisis, we’ve seen many take inspiration from the model of the Peace Corps in looking for solutions to big domestic problems. This moment also underscores once more that, as we undertake the work we do, we must do it with a sense of humility and solidarity — and a sense of what’s at stake, not just for the Peace Corps, or even for our country.”
 - From **Kerry Segel** (Khonsar, Isfahan, 1964-73), referring to *Believers*, by **John Limbert** (Sanandaj, 1964-66) and **Marc Grossman**, the title discussed in the January 2021 *Dooreh* meeting, “This novel, whether it's labeled as historical fiction or a spy novel, demonstrates the dictum that fiction can represent reality better than reality. So much of the history I am aware of, so as it was interwoven into the novel, I was completely drawn in to each and every happening, each and every phrase. The emotion I felt as I was reading was so intense that I could only read so many pages at a time. On one occasion, when I feared something life-threatening was going to happen to [the main character] the thought was overwhelming, and it took me two days before I had the courage to pick up the book again. This is by far the best crafted work of fiction I have read about Iran.”
 - From **Joel Hettger** (Tehran, 1970-72). “You are doing a great job! More on Persian cuisine, *dankoni*, Persian philately, postal history, Persian numismatics.”
 - From **Joan Gaughan** (Lahijan, Rasht, 1964-66). “I love the pictures that are posted on [PCIA’s] Facebook page. But I have a better idea...you cultivate the friendship of an Iranian that loves to cook and you never have to get into your own kitchen. The *sabzi khoreshht* last night was to die for.”
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Member News

- **Barry Rosen** (Tehran, Bandar Pahlavi, Hamadan, 1967-69) is featured in [this profile](#) in Columbia University’s alumni magazine.
 - **Mike Metrinko** (Songhor, Mamazan, 1970-73) is featured in [this interview](#) that aired on a northeastern Pennsylvania television station.
 - **Andy Mott**’s (Shiraz, 1965-67) new book, *Preparing to Win: Developing Community Leaders, Organizers, and Allies*, shares best practices for forming academic programs and internships to bolster the pool of community change leaders in low-income and workingclass communities and communities of color. Download a [PDF of the book here](#) or purchase a Kindle or paperback version on [Amazon](#).
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Member Support

Ideas for Staying at Home

By Jackie Spurlock

...relations between Iran and the U.S. continue to unfold. Here are a few upcoming free virtual events where you can learn more:

- **Artists on the Future**, a conversation between **Shirin Neshat** and **Abbas Milani**, Monday, February 8, 5:00pm Pacific time. [Register here](#). Shirin Neshat is an Iranian-born artist and filmmaker living in New York, who works with the mediums of photography, video and film. Abbas Milani is the Director of Iranian Studies and Adjunct Professor at the Center on Democracy, Development and Rule of Law at the Freeman Spogli Institute at Stanford University. The conversation will be moderated by Stanford's Interim Senior Associate Vice President for the Arts, Matthew Tiews.
- **Coup 53** - While making a documentary about the [CIA/MI6 coup in Iran in 1953](#), Iranian director [Taghi Amirani](#) and editor [Walter Murch](#) (*Apocalypse Now*, *The Conversation*, *The English Patient*) discover never seen before archive material hidden for decades. The 16mm footage and documents not only allow the filmmakers to tell the story of the overthrow of the Iranian government in unprecedented detail but also leads to explosive revelations about dark secrets buried for 67 years. Working with [Ralph Fiennes](#) (*The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *Schindler's List*, *The English Patient*) to help bring the lost material to life, what begins as a historical documentary about four days in August 1953 turns into a live investigation, taking the filmmakers into uncharted cinematic waters. The roots of Iran's volatile relationship with America and Britain have never been so forensically and dramatically exposed. Watch the film [here](#).
- Watch the powerful new documentary [NASRIN](#), about imprisoned Iranian human rights lawyer and activist [Nasrin Sotoudeh](#).
- [Peace Corps and Peacebuilding Through a Diversity Lens](#). We know that equity and peacebuilding are works in progress — and that intentionality matters. Along with colleagues in the peacebuilding community, NPCA is convening an important conversation around this topic on [February 11](#) at 12:00pm Eastern time.

...Persian arts

- Iranian films. Watch Iranian movies with subtitles in English (and over 20 other languages) at [imvbox.com](#).
- [Online course in Persian calligraphy](#) offered by the Iran Heritage Foundation. Friday 2/12/21 – Friday 4/16/21. Suitable for all levels, from beginners to advanced.

PCIA Board

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[Marie Mitchell](#) (Mahallat, 1974-75)
[Paul Barker, Advocacy Bulletin Editor](#) (Bidokht, Shiraz, Tehran, 1971-76)
Open position

Other PCIA Leaders

[Genna Wangsness](#), Historian (Shiraz, Tehran, 1965-71)
[Jim Goode](#), Dooreh Co-leader (Tuyserkhan, 1968-71)
[Joan Gaughan](#), *KhabarNameh* Editor (Lahijan, Rasht, 1964-66)

Comments

We welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please submit to jackie@peacecorpsiran.org.

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