



## SHRIVER PEACEWORKER ALUMNI PROFILE

**Radha Kramer**

**Founder and Director, The TE'A Project**

Radha Kramer has always loved the arts, but a life in the arts didn't hold meaning until it connected her to serving the needs of a community. With time she has found that arts are a bridge across cultures. After pursuing undergraduate degrees in both American Studies and Musical Theater she briefly pursued a career as an actress in NYC where she connected to the Nightstar program, which uses theatre for HIV prevention and education. She found exactly what she had been missing. She stayed with the program for four years before a lingering interest in the Peace Corps resurfaced. She approached a recruiter, who was very interested in her skills, and made her confident that the agency would be supportive of diverse volunteers in the field.



As a Peace Corps Volunteer, Radha went to Vanuatu, where she was able to use theatre with groups of peer educators and create a handbook using the exercises around HIV prevention. She and her colleagues traveled around the islands conducting workshops and connecting to residents in their local languages. She describes the experience as incredible, and beams when she talks about it. After Peace Corps her thoughts turned to graduate school and opportunities available to RPCVs. She was most interested in Peace Corps Fellows programs, and in particular the combination of program components in the Shriver Peaceworker program.

As a Peaceworker, Radha embraced everything that was offered, especially the interplay of reflection and service. She had the opportunity to explore service with the Aspen Institute and Nonprofit Management, Inc., both in Washington, D.C. The community of recently returned Peace Corps volunteers were intellectually stimulating and she found inspiration and guidance in the program's leaders and structure. Radha was particularly moved by the program's approach to religion and spirituality, which helped her reflect upon her own experiences and gave her language to help communicate and explore her interests.

Her time in the Peaceworker Program left Radha ready to continue her learning and reflection in the area of conflict resolution. She pursued a M.A. at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University where she held an internship with Search for Common Ground, one of the leading NGOs in peacebuilding and conflict transformation. After graduation, her continuing work there reengaged her interest in the role of theater for social change.

These diverse interests coalesced for Radha in founding the TE'A Project (Theatre Engagement and Action). In creating TE'A, Radha combined the interactive style theater techniques she learned in New York with the theory and practice of conflict resolution that she learned in the Peace Corps, the Peaceworker Program, and at ICAR. The TE'A Project brings together Companies of talented young artists who conduct "insight conversations" with individuals from communities whose cares, concerns, and voices are typically misunderstood or distorted by the dominant culture and mainstream media. TE'A artists use these conversations to create high quality performance pieces that enable community members to gain insights into each other, and to de-escalate the feelings of threat that lock them into conflict on issues of race, class, culture, and religion. The TE'A Company/NYC created and performed "Under the Veil: Being Muslim (and non-Muslim) in New York, post 9/11." Webisodes capturing the creative, transformative power of the TE'A Process can be viewed at [www.teaproject.com](http://www.teaproject.com)

Radha is looking ahead as TE'A expands from the original company with Nightstar in New York to a new partnership in Washington D.C. with the George Washington University. She plans even more interaction through the group's website and webisodes, and one day envisions an interactive series reaching a national audience. She continues to seek new ways to capture the unique processes of the different TE'A companies. Her vision is big - five years down the road she'd love to see a TE'A company from Julliard and a TE'A company in Cairo work together in both countries. Her own experiences teach her that the power of arts to create social change can't be limited by geography.