

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

Volume 28 Issue 3



December 2013

One Million Facing Food Shortage in Niger

In early November, Ambassador Maman S. Sidikou informed FON of the severe impact of the food shortage in Niger, along with a detailed analysis of the vulnerability of specific areas of the country.

About one million people in Niger, one of the world's poorest nations, are facing severe food shortages due to poor harvests after a drought and flooding, Prime Minister Brigi Rafini said.

"This season was not what we expected," Rafini said during a parliamentary debate on Saturday according to a television report on Sunday. "We can write off this year." Rafini said that according to a first evaluation "about one million are at risk and must be assisted".

Figures about the actual needs would be published shortly, so people could be helped until the end of December at a cost of about €84m which would be financed with the support of international partners.

Niger, 80% of which is covered by the Sahara desert, was hit by severe floods earlier this year, that killed at least 32 people and left 230,000 homeless, also wiping out crops.

Recurrent food shortages in the country are one reason for a high rate of malnutrition among children. A lack of hygiene and drinking water as well as epidemics also contribute.

Since 2010, 300,000 malnourished children have been given medical attention every year, but up to 6 000 still die, according to government figures published by the United Nations Children's Fund last month.

**It's time to support Friends of Niger (FON)
with your DUES!**

Please send your dues in January

To simplify dues collection and bring in more support for FON's projects, we ask that annual dues always be paid in January.

For details on the Simplest and the Preferred Way to pay your dues, see page 4.

Thank you for supporting FON!



Board of Directors Friends of Niger

Greetings from the FON President

DEAR FRIENDS,

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

AND PEACE TO

ALL FOR 2014.

JOHN

**WELCOME TO NEW
BOARD MEMBERS**

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The Camel Express is the periodical newsletter of **Friends of Niger (FON)**. FON can be contacted via the post at P.O. Box 5823 Washington, D. C. 20016-9998 Or by e-mail at president@friendsofniger.org and you will find **FON** on the web and this newsletter in **FULL COLOR** at: www.friendsofniger.org.

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Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at the address above.

Remembering Barbara Kirker

Maman S. Sidikou, Ambassador of Niger to the U.S., sent the following letter to Barbara Kirker's husband.

Dear Dr. William Kirker,

The Niger Embassy staff and the Nigerien community in Washington, D.C. are very sad to hear about Barbara's passing last week.

We will remember her as a deeply caring and generous person. She went out of her way to reach out to our people, back when she was a Peace Corp Volunteer.

Many among our fellow-citizens had the privilege of working closely with her in improving our grass root communities' life in Maine-Soroa. She was truly open-minded and generous and many children have benefited enormously from her experience and talents.

Barbara will be remembered fondly and with deep gratitude for all the excellent work she did in my country. She was a true friend of Niger. That the Kirker family's name is so closely associated with everything good that happens to our people (including the great work AFRICARE is doing to strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable in Niger) is testimony to Barbara's dedication to service to Humanity.

May her gentle soul rest in peace and may God grant you, William Jr. and your entire family the fortitude to bear this immense loss.

Kind regards,

Ambassador Maman S. Sidikou

Peace Corps Niger Reunion in Rural Wisconsin

By Robert Jackson

Thanks to all who were able to attend and help with the Peace Corps Niger Reunion in rural Wisconsin (July 2013). The reunion was a 3+ day event complete with a virtual visit by Nigerien Ambassador (to the United States) Maman S. Sidikou, morning prayer calls, live music, goats chewing on sleeping bags, bouncy house, horse rides, campfires, hay rides and much more. Not only did the farm provide a great space for entertainment but much of the food menu was produced there as well. To our culinary delight, we feasted on many fresh fruits and vegetables, turkeys, chickens, beef, and goat. The Marley's are grateful for the reduction in livestock as food expenses for the animals has been halved since the reunion.

Although all the activities were fun and the food was great I think most would agree that the highlight of the extended weekend came in the sharing of past and present stories with fellow RPCV's and great friends from Niger. So glad we could relive all those spectacular yet challenging times in Niger.

Lastly, a huge thanks to all who worked so hard providing us with the manpower to host the event. Most of our friends and family traveled long distances from as far away as Florida to help out with the event. Without them we could not have done it. Along with the manpower we also had many donations above and beyond what was hoped for. Those two things made hosting the event a walk in the park. Who's next? Where are we getting together in 2018?

Joe and Sharon Marley

Ed note: Three Friends of Niger Board members attended and all agree that the Marleys and their friends really extended themselves to make all attendees feel welcome and have a great time. The food was superb, much of it cooked by Sharon's college roommates who remain great friends after more than just a couple of years! Joe and Sharon have built a fine farm in the Driftless Area of SW Wisconsin. Those of us who attended this reunion are grateful to the Marleys for hosting us in such a beautiful setting with wonderful, Niger-like hospitality.

It's time to support Friends of Niger (FON) with your DUES!

Please send your dues in January

To simplify dues collection and bring in more support for FON's projects, we ask that annual dues always be paid in January.

The Simplest Way: Make your \$20 check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: PO Box 5823, Washington DC 20016-9998. Please give your name and email address. Otherwise, please use the Preferred Way below. Please keep in mind that dues & contributions help fund FON activities including The Camel Express, the FON website, the FON Archives, and local Nigerien Projects. The Friends of Niger is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) -- all contributions are fully tax deductible.

The Preferred Way:

Print out the Membership Form page of this newsletter and mail that in with your payment. We would like to know more about you and stay in touch, so this form asks for more contact information as well as for information about your connection to Niger, your dates and location in Niger, and your program or involvement in Niger. You can also order Friends of Niger T-Shirts with this form. If you want to support both the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) and FON, a \$55 check will cover both. A 3rd option is to pay dues through the NPCA website.

Thank you for supporting FON!

The Archive of the Republic of Niger at Boston University African Studies Library of Boston University's Mugar Memorial Library

By John Hutchison and Frances (Beth) Restrict

The African Studies Library at Boston University's Mugar Memorial Library is now preparing to begin contacting stakeholders interested in contributing to the Archive of the Republic of Niger (AREN), which was proposed by Professor John Hutchison to Frances (Beth) Restrict, African Studies Librarian and to S.E. M. Maman Sidikou, Ambassador from the Republic of Niger to the USA. AREN has now been approved. The partners anticipate holding an opening ceremony some time early in 2014 in the presence of Ambassador Sidikou.

Thus far, there are about 30 items in hand to start the archive, these are donations from John Hutchison and Jamie Thompson. Thus far, all donations are printed works, as well as 4 maps of Niger, and an older National Geographic issue (Nov. '65) with an article on Niger.

1. Digital Archives: One of the limitations to creating a digital archive is copyright. Most of what has been donated so far was formally published, and thus it will be necessary to review all of them to see what would be possible to digitize and what wouldn't. Even if they couldn't be digitized, we could still have a bibliography with a detailed listing all of those titles. However, if people contribute their own notes, photographs, etc. and agree to sign Boston University's Deed of Gift, they are essentially giving us permission to put them up on the digital archive. The library has an Institutional Repository: [OpenBU](#) which is where everything would be stored and it is open access, searchable via Google. In Open BU there would be a large, archival quality file saved as well as a more standard JPG, much smaller that would be hopefully more accessible to someone on a computer in Africa. They are still working to try to get streaming of audio, video, etc. in order to save people from having to download things.

2. Correspondence: People may want to donate their correspondence relating to Niger to other archives, for example former Peace Corps volunteers may decide to donate materials to the Peace Corps Digital Library. That said, correspondence would nevertheless be welcomed for digitization and inclusion in AREN's digital archive. Also welcome are field and research notes, illustrations, maps, photos, etc.

3. Artifacts: A photo library of artifacts would make the most sense at the moment. The librarian Beth Restrict will set something up so that people can submit photographs online (or through the mail for scanning). Restrict notes that "once we know the types of artifacts people have, we could possibly make a decision about whether to pursue things further."

4. The next step: An outline of this proposal for the structure of AREN was presented to the Meeting of the Board of the Friends of Niger on the 3rd of November 2013, and it was approved by a unanimous majority of the Board.

Hutchison and Restrict have developed a contributor's form for AREN that will be used to get people's contact information, find out about their willingness to participate and what materials they have to contribute. This form is available in a pdf format that can be printed and mailed in via the post, as well as an online format. Here is how to access the online form through the Mugar Library of Boston University where AREN has its own url: Submission Form (including a link to Boston University's Deed of Gift form and other information):

<http://tinyurl.com/NigerArchiveSubmission>

ABC Schools Need Your Support

by Pat Johnson Alio
(RPCV Niger 1964-66)



On October 1, 2009 ABC Schools opened with 2 students in a rented house in Niamey. By the end of the school year there were 8 students in 2 preschool classes. On October 1st, 2013 the school year began with 116 students enrolled in 8 classes: 4 preschool and 4 elementary classes.

Académie Bilingue Cornerstone (ABC) Schools is a private Nigerien school founded by Dr. Amina Alio, a Nigerien-American, daughter of former Peace Corps Volunteer Pat Johnson Alio. ABC is affiliated with Cornerstone, an organization of Nigerien Christian educators that offers administrative assistance to anyone looking to open a Christian school in Niger.

The school aims to prepare students for life in the world today, a world where English is necessary, as is information technology. ABC follows the Nigerien academic program with the added components of English and computer classes, as well as encouraging students' analytical skills, intellectual curiosity and creativity. French and English are spoken at school. Classes are small: 15 per class on

Doing exercises in workbooks.

average, so teachers can give individual help to everyone. Students are of different nationalities, religions and economic levels. About 1/3 of the students come from low/no income families and pay part or none of the tuition. The school finds sponsors for them or allows them to pay what they can. Some of the best students, academically, are in this category. Every year a new class level will be added until there are classes through high school.

Why is "Schools" plural? ABC is a non-profit organization with the goal of helping children and families in Niger by opening other schools in more remote regions of the country. The long-term goal is to have a series of schools with a realistic plan for sustainability. Establishing the first school, in Niamey, the capital and largest city with the highest income earning families, allows for charging tuition to those who can afford to pay and will enable the school to eventually become independent and less reliant on outside financial assistance. As the Niamey school becomes more established and begins to make a profit, these moneys will serve to open and maintain other schools in villages where a school is needed. In a country where the literacy level remains among the lowest in the world (30% in 2011), it is important that quality education be accessible for all children. Even though the school has not yet made a profit, ABC is working to raise funds to open a school in the village of Goubawa. For further information or to contribute, see:

<http://www.abcschools.org>



Personal attention from the teacher .

Zoolkoski Update - November 2013

from Dr. Chris Zoolkoski, physician at SIM Galmi Hospital, Niger

Dear Family & Friends,

When we travel the long road between Galmi Hospital and the capital of Niamey, it's hard to decide whether to set the alarm clock that morning. The trip normally takes us around 8 hours, including food and drink and personal stops. If we don't set the alarm clock, I feel more rested for the trip. If I wake up unnaturally, we get on the road earlier and it allows for margin in the event of an unanticipated problem. It's dangerous to travel after dark. If we don't get on the road until 10AM, then it increases the anxiety level of an unanticipated delay. Last year I left Niamey early and when I got a flat tire I found it to be a surprisingly fun and relaxing hour on the side of the road fixing it and interacting with the bystanders and playing with my jack and tire irons that I don't get to play with very often.

This time, we decided to leave early and we were on the road at 8AM after the goodbyes. Since sunset is around 6PM, that gave us a generous 2 hour margin for the expected unexpected. An hour after leaving Galmi, we hit a sandy place in the road that required downshifting. At the same time, we lost our clutch. There was an old Toyota Corolla stuck in the sand. The driver asked if I could pull him out using our four-wheel drive. Normally we would have been able to help him but I had to apologize that we, too, were stuck since I couldn't get the transmission back into gear. I looked under the hood and there was hydraulic fluid from the clutch line sprayed around the engine and a leak at one of the connections. I had a spare can of hydraulic fluid in the back which I used to top off the reservoir. That allowed us to have the minimum pressure needed to get into first gear, get out of the sand, and continue on to the nearest town. At the blockade where they collect a road tax, I had to run through it without stopping. I looked in my rear-view mirror to see the toll collector staring at our vehicle with his mouth open. I'll explain to him what happened next time we make the trip.

Arriving in the next town, I asked around for a mechanic, hoping he might have some of the tools and spare parts we needed. I was introduced to Sani, who was probably 25 years old. I questioned his youth and wondered about his experience but was told that he could fix "any problem on any car". Sani looked under the hood, went away, and came back with a couple of open-ended wrenches. He removed the cracked hydraulic line going to the clutch cylinder. Then I walked with him to a nearby *banco* mud structure with a thatched roof which had used tires piled on one side and some used car parts hanging on the exterior wall.

Sani showed the hydraulic line to the used parts dealer who climbed on to his roof, and brought down a section of hydraulic lines that had been salvaged from the brake system of a wrecked car, for which I paid him 2 dollars. Sani then took a hacksaw and removed the cracked portion from my clutch line and a good portion from the salvaged line. Then we walked with the pieces of tubing to another young man wearing sunglasses. Next to him was a tank coated with white powder into which he put a large rock which must have been calcium carbide. He added water to the tank and screwed the lid on tight. A hose coming from the tank formed a Y with another hose coming from an oxygen tank. When the oxygen began to mix with the acetylene being produced from the reaction of calcium carbide with water, he lit the torch connected to the Y and suddenly had a very hot flame. He carefully juxtaposed the ends of my clutch line with the salvaged piece and welded them together. Then, to prove that he hadn't inadvertently welded closed the lumen of the hydraulic line, he filled his mouth with water and blew the water out through one end like backwashing water out of a straw. I was reassured to witness water flowing freely from his mouth through our newly welded hydraulic line. I paid the welder 2 dollars . . . 1 dollar for the work and an extra tip for the entertainment value and personal enrichment of seeing such resourcefulness and the practical application of high school chemistry. Sani and I walked back to the Landcruiser, reinstalled the refurbished line, and refilled the clutch reservoir with hydraulic fluid. To bleed the residual air out of the line, Sani crawled under the vehicle and on his commands I pumped the clutch pedal from the driver's seat. When the pedal felt firm again, he crawled back out, I descended, put my hand on his shoulder, and thanked him.

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Nigeriens in Greensboro, NC

by Adamou Mohamed



Ambassador Maman Sidikou meets with Ms. Marikay Abuzuaiter, At Large City Councilwoman for Greensboro.

On Sunday, October 27th, Niger Ambassador to the US, M. Maman Sidikou and his advisor, M. Moussa Rilla Boubacar, concluded a 3-day visit to Greensboro, North Carolina, where they took part in the shooting of a film documentary titled “Muslims and Religious Tolerance in the US”. This event was an initiative of the US State Department, Bonferey TV from Niamey in collaboration with the Niger Embassy in Washington, DC, the US embassy in Niamey, the Council of Nigeriens in the US (Conseil des Nigeriens aux USA- CONUSA) and the North Carolina Nigeriens Association (Association des Nigeriens en Caroline du Nord- ANCN).

The TV crew wanted to see how Nigeriens live their lives and practice their religion and the Ambassador wanted to be part of this historic event and share in our experience. While there are other Nigerien communities spread out across the US, the Nigerien community in Greensboro was recommended by the Niger Embassy in Washington, DC and the US Embassy in Niamey to showcase how

the Islamic faith brings our people together and helps strengthen tolerance, solidarity and compassion among us as well as with the larger US host communities. The choice of Greensboro as the filming location of the Nigerien community was not a random one. In fact, Greensboro is the pioneer city for Nigerien migration to the US. It has become a reference city for anyone coming from Niger and serves as a major hub for most Nigeriens coming to the United States.

For nearly twenty years, Nigeriens have been settling in Greensboro. Their number in this city was estimated to be over 2,000 before the 2008 economic crisis hit the manufacturing industry in the area. Their number is now around 1,500 as some have migrated to other cities for better opportunities. Nigeriens of diverse backgrounds live in Greensboro, so much so that Greensboro is sometimes referred to as “petit Niamey” by other African communities. They chose Greensboro partly because of the small-town atmosphere, a welcoming community and the mild winter weather that is conducive for someone coming from one of the hottest spots in the world. The demographics of those who are here vary from students attending community colleges and prominent universities in the area, to businessmen who have their own car and dealerships and export cars to Africa. There are also those who own car repair shops, or telecommunications accessories stores. However, many more Nigeriens who have settled in Greensboro with their families work in the service sector.

The important economic, cultural and social contributions of Nigeriens to Greensboro has not come without challenges. The need to address these challenges led to the creation in 1999 of an organization called Association des Nigeriens en Caroline du Nord (ANCN). The ANCN became a registered 501 (c) 3 organization in 2003 and functions under the banner of the Conseil des Nigerien aux USA (CONUSA). One of the goals of the ANCN is to promote the integration of Nigeriens in their host community through cultural and social exchanges with local organizations and the City of Greensboro and promote the respect of local laws.

For the last year and half, the ANCN has been actively working to bring Niger out of the shadows of the 54 African nations represented in Guilford County, of which Greensboro is the largest city. We are actively involved as partners with immigrants’ service providers, faith based

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Nigeriens in Greensboro, NC *continued from page 9*

organizations, and the International Advisory Committee under the umbrella of the Human Relations Commission for the well-being of our community. It is through these partnerships that the ANCN has built a solid relationship with one of the At Large City Council members, Councilwoman Marikay Abuzuaite, and the Greensboro Police Department. The ANCN has also been successful at placing members of the ANCN on the boards of several local organizations that serve immigrant communities so that our voices could be heard.

On his first official visit in March of 2012, Ambassador Sidikou met with Ms. Abuzuaite and discussed many topics related to the well-being and contributions of the Nigerien community in the city of Greensboro. On his most recent visit to Greensboro at the end of October, during the documentary filming, the Ambassador met again with Councilwoman Abuzuaite and Greensboro Deputy Chief of Police, A. Holder.

After discussing the situation of Nigeriens in Greensboro, the Ambassador talked about the possibility of a sister cities cooperative agreement between the city of Greensboro, North Carolina and a city in Niger to foster friendship and promote cultural, educational and commercial ties. He emphasized the importance of Greensboro to Nigeriens and that of the Nigeriens to Greensboro when he said "If there is a city in the United States that should partner with a city in Niger, that city no doubt has to be Greensboro."

Ms. Abuzuaite welcomed the Ambassador's idea and promised to get a sister city partnership resolution passed by the City Council. The Ambassador, his advisor and ANCN president, Adamou Mohamed promised to work towards making the partnership a reality and a success in accordance with applicable laws.



Ambassador Maman Sidikou meets with Ms. Marikay Abuzuaite, At Large City Councilwoman for Greensboro.

Zoolkoski Update *continued from page 7*

In circumstances like this, I've given up asking how much I owe the person who has provided me with a service. The answer is always, "Pay me whatever you think is fair." So I didn't even ask Sani. I just did a quick mental calculation of how much a Nigerien would have paid him for the same work, added a couple dollars extra as a tip to show my appreciation, and handed it to him. The look on the face then tells me whether I've paid enough or not. In this case, Sani said non-verbally that I had paid him at least what he had expected to receive. Our family of 6 got back in the Landcruiser and we had a fun remaining 7 hours on the road, stopping for cold drinks in Dogondoutchi and hot fried bean cakes further west. The AC worked the whole way! We arrived in Niamey 30 minutes before sundown and I was very thankful we had set our alarm clock that morning. As with all of life, the journey is often at least as enjoyable as the destination.

Gratefully serving with you, Christopher & Nancy

Mailing address: SIM, B.P. 10065, Niamey NIGER Visit us online: www.galmi.org

To give: SIM, P.O. Box 7900, Charlotte, NC 28241

Starting Kuli Kuli

by Lisa Curtis

I never thought I would start a food company. I'd always liked food, but then again who doesn't? It wasn't until I lived in a country where having a meal wasn't a given that I began to really think about food.

The strangest thing about living in Niger was that people were constantly giving me food. It didn't seem to make sense. Here I was in one of the poorest, most malnourished countries in the world receiving an opulent Peace Corps salary of \$75 per month (double the country's average wage). Shouldn't I be giving *them* food?

And then one night I did in an event that I'll never forget. I was sitting around the campfire with my tea group -- a hilarious group of young Nigerien men who drank sugary sweet tea boiled over a small coal fire. This qualified as nightlife in a village with no electricity. I have to say that I enjoyed it far more than any bar in San Francisco.

My friend Ilya had just finished telling a story that had everyone doubled over in laughter when a small form entered into the light of our fire and promptly collapsed. Chaos ensued with all of the men crowding around the child that had just entered our circle. Ilya restored order, speaking in rapid Hausa. I didn't catch much but I gathered that the boy was extremely malnourished. The men brainstormed, trying to figure out where to get food but all of the women had put out their fires and none of the shops were open this late.

No one kept ready-to-eat food on hand. No one, that is, except for me. "Laila, kina da kuli-kuli?" Ilya realized this and asked me if I had any kuli-kuli, a form of lightly fried peanut balls that I ate constantly to get protein.

"I, ina tsammani." I think so, I told him. I ran back towards my little mud home. Crap. I'd eaten all the kuli-kuli the day before...I spied a box on my floor with a white letter shining under the light of my flashlight. It was a letter from my mom, describing how she'd managed to lose twenty pounds through her new diet. At the end of the letter, she'd expressed concern that I was looking too skinny in the two pictures I'd managed to post on Facebook. Hence she'd sent me a plethora of nutrition bars. I grabbed as many as I could carry and ran back towards the tea circle, stuffing the brightly wrapped bars into Ilya's arms.

That was three years ago. Now I'm back in the U.S. and am the founder of a mission-driven company called Kuli Kuli. We sell gluten-free nutrition bars made with moringa, a superfood sourced from women's cooperatives in West Africa. Moringa is one the most nutritious plants in the world and grows naturally in many parts of the world that suffer from malnutrition. Our goal is to enable more women to grow moringa; use it to nourish their families and communities and then sell a portion of their harvest to us in order to turning growing moringa into a sustainable livelihood. We want to ensure that no child ever collapses from malnutrition again.

Starting a food company is hard! As my team and I quickly discovered, its nearly impossible to do everything yourself and once you grow to the level of having a co-manufacturer, distributor and a retailer (like Whole Foods), all of those entities take a big chunk of the profits, leaving you with little to work with.

It's hard but its not impossible. We've had an incredible outpouring of support from people who believe in our vision and have pre-sold over 9,000 Kuli Kuli Moringa Superfood Bars. Our manufacturing run of 18,000 bars will be completed by Thanksgiving and we'll be launching with Whole Foods shortly after that.

I never thought I would start a food company, but I'm so glad that I did!

Lisa Curtis began working on Kuli Kuli while in the Peace Corps in Niger, West Africa. As a volunteer in her village's health center, she gained a first-hand understanding of the common nutritional challenges faced in West African villages and how moringa can play a role in helping to address a few of those challenges. For more about Kuli Kuli, please visit www.kulikulibar.com

Bill Miles is Busy by Joel Neuberg

William F. S. Miles (Niger 1977-79), former Stotsky Professor of Jewish Historical and Cultural Studies at Northeastern University and currently professor of Political Science in Northeastern's College of Social Sciences and Humanities, is the author (with his son Samuel) of the funniest book ever written about buying a horse in Hausaland (*My African Horse Problem*, University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), *Hausaland divided: colonialism and independence in Nigeria and Niger* (Cornell University Press, 1994), *Political Islam in West Africa: State-Society Relations Transformed* (Lynne Rienner, 2007) and a number of other books dealing with Niger and Nigeria, where he spent many years working and studying after Peace Corps service. Miles's latest work was launched in November: *Afro-Jewish Encounters: From Timbuktu to the Indian Ocean and Beyond* (Markus Wiener, 2013).

A Muslim curator and archivist who preserves in his native Timbuktu the memory of its rabbi. An evangelical Kenyan who is amazed to meet a living "Israelite." Indian Ocean islanders who maintain the Jewish cemetery of escapees from Nazi Germany. These are just a few of the encounters the author shares from his sojourns and fieldwork spanning thirty-five years in sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian Ocean, the West Indies, and the Holy Land. In this collection of new and revised essays, Miles vividly illustrates how Africa, Israel, and their diasporas constitute an extraordinary crucible for African Jews, wandering Jews, and the unforgettable Afro-Jewish encounters that ensue. With a foreword by Professor Ali A. Mazrui, Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities, Director, Institute of Global Cultural Studies, Binghamton University, New York.

And John Coyne posted the following to Peace Corps Worldwide on Thursday, November 7th 2013: The back page of *The Chronicle Review* always has a thoughtful short essay written by an academic (yes, some academics can write) and it is usually what I turn to when the weekly *Chronicle of Higher Education* arrives. (This publication, by the way, is one of the best edited papers in the U.S.) The November 8, 2013, issue has an essay entitled "A Used Book, A Lost Era" by William F.S. Miles (Niger 1977-79) that tracks how he found a used copy of R.C. Abraham's 992-page *Dictionary of the Hausa Language*, that he had as a PCV in Niger, and that he would use later when he was a Fulbright Scholar in Niger. He found a used copy of Abraham's dictionary on sale at Amazon for \$25, bought the book and writes with great feeling and great regret:

"I opened the shipping packet with the kind of anticipation usually reserved for reuniting with an old friend. I pulled the book out slowly, carefully, lest I wrinkle or tear the dust jacket. The front cover was as bright an orange as I remembered. But then my heart sank as I processed the meaning of the purple-inked notice on the jacket. There it was again, even more firmly stamped on the front cover and on the book's first and last page: "Property of Peace Corps Niger." In my hands, I realized, I was holding a facsimile of the very same book I had left behind in Africa, this other rare copy having served as a reference for countless volunteers and staff in the Peace Corps headquarters in Niamey. It was also the ultimate, tangible evidence of the end of an era." Miles writes that two years ago, in response to an attempted kidnapping of a French volunteer in the capital by the Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the Peace Corps closed its program in Niger. The Peace Corps was just months shy of celebrating 50 years of continuous service in the country. Miles writes that today "thanks to Amazon and Al Qaeda, I found myself refilling the empty space in my bookcase with an artifact from my idealistic past" though he sums up that it hurts him to realize that while the Hausa-English dictionary helped him "navigate the complexities of Niger's culture" today it is "being discarded along with the rest of JFK's brainchild in that unjustly beleaguered nation." A "strange karma" Miles adds, "of online book selling and international terrorism" brought Abraham's book back to him to "preserve and protect — and for Niger and the Peace Corps — to mourn." More at:

<http://peacecorpsworldwide.org/pc-writers/2013/11/07/william-fs-miles/>

What is CONUSA?

by Abdoul Kader Kaigama, Rabiou Yari and John Hutchison

The Friends of Niger have now made official contact with CONUSA which is the Conseil des Nigériens aux USA. Through Ambassador Sidikou and based on his recommendation, FON contacted Abdoul Kader Kaigama, the national president of CONUSA, who resides in Houston, Texas. (contact information: 513 551 0398 kaigama@hotmail.com). When Hutchison spoke with Kaigama he learned that the latter's mandate as President of CONUSA will expire in April of 2014. He therefore recommended that we might want to enlist participation perhaps from 2 members of CONUSA, and he recommended a younger officer of the CONUSA bureau named Rabiou YARI, who lives in Maryland. He is the CONUSA Secretary in Charge of Academic Affairs, Investments and Projects, so this would seem to connect well with FON's agenda. (contact information 917 557 8898 variable@gmail.com) Mssrs. Kaigama and Yari both participated in the board meeting of the Friends of Niger on November 4, 2013. Both CONUSA officers were invited to become CONUSA representatives to the Board of the Friends of Niger, and it was agreed that CONUSA would always have up to two representatives serving on the board of FON.

CONUSA is the only Nigerien organization at the federal level to represent any and all federated Nigerien structures. CONUSA is an organization that provides a solid reference point and a source of information and support for the community of Nigerien women and men in the United States, and also for other Nigeriens who want to attempt to venture into the USA from no matter where they are in the world. According to the texts that regulate CONUSA, it is led by a Federal Executive Bureau (FEB) which coordinates its activities. The members of the FEB are elected during the Ordinary General Assembly meeting for a two year mandate of service that can be renewed only once. The FEB is accountable to the General Assembly (GA), and its members responsibilities are, among others:

1. Promote the objectives of CONUSA.
2. Be responsible for the tasks that are confided to them by the GA.
3. Submit a Trimestrial Report of Activities to the Forum of the Organization.
4. To work in perfect harmony together.
5. In all situations and circumstances, their comportment will be exemplary of their position.
6. They must remain neutral in carrying out their mission and thus they are prepared to serve the Nigerien Community of the USA without any discrimination or distinction, in keeping with their responsibilities.

The FEB has the following officers: A President, Secretary General, Treasurer and Assistant, Secretary in charge of Sports and Community and Assistant, Secretary in charge of Communications (community outreach), Secretary in charge of Cultural Affairs, Secretary in charge of Academic, Investments and Projects.

Secretary Rabiou is responsible for helping Nigeriens in the U.S.A. explore business opportunities both in the U.S. and in Niger and also to help American businesses expand their operations in Niger. He also provides guidance to international students from Niger. All FEB officers are elected for two years renewable once.

Another component of CONUSA is a commission called CAJEE, which is in charge of overseeing and interpreting the official status and regulations governing CONUSA. The officers of CAJEE include: President, Secretary General or Vice President, Reporter, among others.

At the level of the states, CONUSA has elected councils in the following states structured and ran like the FEB: New York, Pennsylvania (including Philadelphia), Washington, D.C., the Virginia and Maryland region, North Carolina, Indiana, Ohio, Georgia, and Michigan, and Maryland.

Other organizations that are affiliated with CONUSA include Niger Students' Organizations in the U.S.A and Niger Muslims Organizations (based in New York).

The Friends of Niger organization is pleased to be officially connected with CONUSA and its representatives from the FEB. We all look forward to exploring opportunities for collaboration and cooperation that will lead the development of activities and projects that will benefit CONUSA, the Friends of Niger, and of course, the Republic of Niger.

Peace Corps Connect Conference— Boston 2013

by Larry Koff & John Hutchison

The purpose of the Peace Corps Connect meeting was to bring together the officers of the National Peace Corps Association and local chapters to discuss issues of mutual concern. Here are presented some of the points John Hutchison and Larry Koff learned when they attended the meeting on the 28th of June, 2013. (John is Professor Emeritus of African languages and linguistics at the Boston U. African Studies Center where he was involved with the Niger study abroad program directed by Susan Rosenfeld.) Hutchison assisted Koff at the FON information desk and attended some of the sessions on various topics of concern. John has since become a member of the FON Board. There were a total of 6 other former Niger volunteers who registered : Joel Neuberger, Sandy Leeder, Mason Hults, Deborah Bloom, Becky Raymond, and Allyn Writsel.

"Orphan" Groups of Return Peace Corps Volunteers. It was interesting for Koff and Hutchison to make contact with other groups like Niger where Peace Corps no longer serves. Friends of Niger only recently joined the ranks of this group. We discovered that regardless of how long a group has been severed from its host country, it does not preclude their continuing to be active and successful in fulfilling their 3rd goal and continuing to contribute to significant development work in the former host country. For Nigeria and Iran for example, there have been no new RPCVs since the 1970s. Numerous orphan groups, particularly the Friends of Iran, contributed significantly to this Peace Corps Connect conference. They have recently organized and are exploring ways to connect back to Iran. They held a reunion in Portland, Oregon, which featured films, books, a panel discussion, memorabilia, and a photo board, and keynote addresses from important RPCVs or host country personalities. Among their activities and events



Larry Koff & John Hutchison at the Niger Table at Peace Corps Connect in June.

are many ideas that the Friends of Niger might want to pursue, as well as some that the PC NIGER III group might consider for next year. In the story that was told by the President of the Friends of Iran, Jackie Spurlock, Hutchison was struck by the critical role in their success that was played by their effort to link with the Iranian community in the diaspora. In fact they set the date for their 3-day reunion based on an Iranian festival celebration that takes place in Portland, OR every year in early August. They then also connected with the American-Iranian Friendship Council in Portland. Together the three constituent groups organized a collaborative 3-day reunion and celebration.

Hutchison feels that the connection of the Friends of Niger with Ambassador Maman Sidikou and the Nigerien community in Washington, D.C., as well as the connections that have been made with CONUSA (Conseil des Nigériens aux USA) in its various important chapters in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Connecticut and Indiana, among others, are extremely important in this regard. The Friends of Iran enable us to see the potential of a Peace Corps reunion in a new light – one in which it is possible to reunite also with Niger through the members of CONUSA as well as with our fellow RPCVs, and to jointly carry out activities that honor our host country and raise funds together, and lead to collaborative efforts that make giving back much more feasible. Subsequent to PC Connect, the FON Board with the assistance of Ambassador Maman Sidikou voted to include two Nigeriens to the FON Board. These individuals are the national President of CONUSA, Abdoul Kader Kaigama, and the Secretary in Charge of Academic Affairs, Investments and Projects, Rabiou Yari. Major topics included:

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PC Connect — *continued from page 13*

On-Line tools and social networks can strengthen an organization's membership base and can be critical to the success of one's group. FON has now, with the support of FON member Joel Meyer, established a Facebook page.

RPCV opportunities to return to a Peace Corps country. In one panel Koff and Hutchison learned of official programs that have been organized to help RPCVs achieve their *3rd goal*, by returning to a Peace Corps country in a service or employment capacity. The Discover Corps – for short term work projects - and Peace Corps Response, formerly the Crisis Corps - for 3-12 month employment opportunities for former volunteers to work in response to host government requests in countries where the Peace Corps is active. This program has also been used as a first step in re-starting the PC program in various countries. The next Peace Corps Connect conference is in Nashville, June 20-21st, 2014. Koff and Hutchison feel that it is important and worthwhile for the Friends of Niger to be represented at the NPCA meeting, and hope that RPCV's from Niger, both FON members and non-members, will be able to attend.

Niger-Senegal 1965-67 Reunion Held in Colorado

by Tom Lightbown (Niger 1965-67)

With spirits undampened by Colorado's mid-September torrential rains and floods, twenty-five 1965-67 Niger and Senegal volunteers who had trained together at Carbondale, IL—and a total group of 42—assembled at the Loveland Embassy Suites near Fort Collins to celebrate the group's first reunion. The group included the widows of two volunteers, one accompanied by her two daughters.

The reunion had been planned to take place September 30-October 1 at the YMCA of the Rockies near Estes Park, but the floods had washed out all access roads to the Y and suspended the Y's operations until October 4. Too late for the planned "Grand Reunion"! But the organizing committee quickly found an alternative venue at the Embassy Suites. The volunteers travelled from France, Canada, and 13 states.

The principal purpose of the reunion was to reconnect and catch up after nearly 50 years—part of which had already been achieved through the reunion's website that provided access to 64 bios (100% of the volunteers found) as well as photos from training at Carbondale, IL and in-country service in Niger and Senegal.

Highlights of the two-day reunion included:

- Welcome Reception, with West African and 1960s Oldies music
- Review of memorabilia brought by volunteers
- 'Round-the-room' group discussion of different Peace Corps work and living situations in Senegal and Niger
- Group photo session on the hotel lawn
- Planning for next year's reunion (2014) at YMCA of the Rockies
- Discussion of a project to develop a Niger-Senegal '65-'67 "anthology" of memories and works about Peace Corps

At the October 2 breakfast, Joey Jeter (Niger IV), who was wearing his Agadez cross from PC years, learned from one of the widows (Ann Cahill) that she had lost her cross—a gift from Chris Cahill, who had died in 1993. Joey took the cross from his neck and put it around Ann's.

The Loveland gathering was a success: Virtually all who attended the Embassy Suites reunion in 2013 plan to be at the Y September 29-October 1, 2014. Add in those volunteers who chose to postpone until next year, and we can expect to have a truly "Grand Reunion."

2013-2014 FRIENDS OF NIGER MEMBERSHIP FORM

It's time to support Friends of Niger (FON) with your DUES!
Please send your dues in January (unless you paid anytime during 2013)

Name(s) _____ Date _____

Address _____

City/ State _____ Phone(h) _____

Zip _____ Phone (w) _____

E-Mail Address _____

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) _____

Dates in Niger _____ Location in Niger _____

Program or Involvement in Niger _____

*Membership Dues & Contributions Help Fund **FON** Activities - including The Camel Express, the FON website, the FON Archives, and local Nigerien Projects .*

The Friends of Niger is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3).

Membership and contributions to Friends of Niger are fully tax deductible.

Please Check Appropriate Boxes

☐ Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON

☐ **\$55 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA**

☐ Enclosed is \$35 for a FON Family Membership (2 Members at One Address)

☐ I am a New RPCV or new to FON, entitled to a 1-Year Free Membership

☐ In Addition to my Membership, I have enclosed a General Contribution of _____

☐ Instead of Joining FON at this time, I have enclosed a General Contribution of _____

Free Newsletter

☐ Please send paper copies of the Camel Express by U.S. Mail

☐ Please send links to PDF version of the Camel Express by e-mail

Merchandise

☐ Please send _____ Friends of Niger T-Shirts at \$15 each (Shipping Included) _____

T-Shirt Sizes: S _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____ T-Shirt Color: _____ brown _____ beige

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

Make Check or Money Order Payable to Friends of Niger and mail with this form to: P. O. Box 5823, Washington, D. C. 20016-9998

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