

Hello and welcome to Presidential Archives Uncovered--the podcast that brings to you cool clips from the collections of the Presidential Libraries of the U.S. National Archives.

Today we have a clip from the Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston Massachusetts.

Less than two months after President Kennedy's inauguration, he established the Peace Corps, a bold experiment to promote cultural understanding and to provide support to developing countries.

Avoiding a drawn out legislative process, Kennedy launched the Peace Corps on March 1, 1961, by executive order. To learn more about the Peace Corps, visit the Presidential Timeline, [www.presidentialtimeline.org](http://www.presidentialtimeline.org).

Now listen to President Kennedy as he speaks to the first group of Peace Corps volunteers before their departure to Africa.

I want to express my great pleasure at welcoming all of you who are the first members of the Peace Corps to be graduated from these schools and also the first members of the Peace Corps to go overseas.

Those of you who are going to Ghana to teach, I am sure that you realize how important and valuable is the work in which you are engaged. One of the great-problems that the people of Africa face are the comparatively few experienced, educated leaders that they have for positions of responsibility during these first days of their independence. And to indicate the intimate relationship between teaching and leadership, the President of Ghana, President Nkrumah, studied here in the United States, at Lincoln College in Pennsylvania. The Prime Minister-to-be of Tanganyika, Mr. Nyerere, studied at St. Andrews in Scotland, and both of them of course are among the most vigorous leaders of the new Africa.

I feel a particular satisfaction because this is the most immediate response--the Peace Corps--that I think the country has seen to the whole spirit which I tried to suggest in my inaugural about the contribution which we could make to our country.

The fact that you've been willing to volunteer, that you've gone through very detailed, demanding tests, that you are willing to go to Ghana and Tanganyika, and other countries as time goes on--Americans who are without great compensation, all of you with special skills, which could mean that if you stayed home you could pursue your own private interests with a good deal of assurance of success--the fact that you are willing to do this for our country in the larger sense, as the name suggests, for the cause of peace and understanding, I think should make all Americans proud and make them all appreciative. There are of course a great many hundreds of millions of people scattered throughout the world. You will come in contact with only a few, but the great impression of what kind of country we have and what kind of people we are will depend on their judgment, in these countries, of you. You will be the personification of a special group of young Americans,

and if you can impress them with your commitment to freedom, to the advancement of the interests of people everywhere, to your pride in your country and its best traditions and what it stands for, the influence may be far-reaching and will go far beyond the immediate day-to-day tasks that you may do in the months that are ahead.

So I hope you realize--I know you do--that the future of the Peace Corps really rests with you. If you do well, then the Peace Corps will be developed and more and more Americans will go abroad and will find a greater and greater response to this idea of serving our country.

I'm glad that those who are going to Tanganyika, who are going to take part in surveying--it's desperately needed, it's the kind of skill which I think can bring great benefit to the people that are involved. Tanganyika is gifted with unusual leadership, and I'm particularly glad that you are going there to help open the back land.

So that you're very welcome here, and we're all proud of you. And I must say, we put a good deal of hope in the work that you do.

Thank you.