



Just who is this

Lisa B. Lee?

Perhaps a better question might be *What Will I Bring to the Peace Corps?*

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- 1) 59 years old, divorced, kids are grown, nobody depending on me for anything. ✓
- 2) I'm in excellent health, great teeth, no history of any hereditary illnesses in my family, really happy, and ready to make a major change in my life. ✓
- 3) Volunteering has been a big part of my life all my life and I've lived my life being of service to others in big ways and small. ✓
- 4) I love adventure and look forward to meeting new people, experiencing new things, learning, and sharing the gifts I've been given. ✓
- 5) I'm a quick study, think well on my feet and enjoy challenges and finding ways to overcome them. ✓
- 6) I'm incredibly creative, like to think out the box and love coming up with new and exciting ways to connect with people. ✓

Professional Experience

- An I.T. Professional for over 20 years, during the dotcom boom of the late 1990s, I moved around a lot, and worked for some pretty amazing companies. I was a Systems Administrator and a Desktop Support Tech, two jobs I adored, because they allowed me to interact with end users and help them solve their computer/network problems. You can read all about it on my resumé, which is attached.
- I've also worked several **“odd or interesting”** jobs along the way (these didn't make the “cut” and are not included in my resumé), and I'm mentioning these to give you a better understanding of who I am and why I know my well rounded set of experiences would be the perfect fit for the Peace Corps, including:

CROUPIER - I dealt poker at an Emeryville, CA card club for just over one year. At first, it was fascinating and interesting work, mainly because I'm not a gambler, and learning how to deal poker and all the nuances that went with that, and keeping the players happy while being the poker traffic cop kept me on my toes. On the flip side, though, because I'm not a gambler, seeing how gambling had completely overtaken the lives of so many people – who were visibly miserable yet unable to stop – was heart wrenching. This is what drove me to quit. I felt like I was enabling their pain.



COCKTAIL WAITRESS - I cocktailled for several Oakland and Berkeley, CA nightclubs over the

Professional Experience...

years, and totally enjoyed meeting new people, remembering the drinks of my *regulars*, and ensuring everybody there had a good and safe time. I'm a people person, and no matter the job, when I get to meet new people, I know I'm gonna have a good time, no matter how challenging they decide to be.



PIZZA DELIVERER - For several years, I delivered pizza for a couple of Dominos Pizza stores, as a way to supplement my full-time I.T. job, and to help save up to buy a house and prepare to send my daughter to college. Though some of my co-workers were robbed, at gunpoint, the only trouble I had was with one drunk woman who attempted to hit me (her family members stepped in to stop her) and another situation where, the minute I set foot inside the open lobby of an apartment building, I could tell it was a setup. I'm not a fearful person, but I could FEEL, in my bones, that if I'd continued any further, I was going to be robbed, or worse. I listened to my little voice and backed out of that building (with the pizza), hightailed it back to the store and added that address to our NEVER DELIVER list.

STEEL, ALUMINUM and PLASTICS SALES - This was one of my all-time favorite jobs, inside sales of steel, aluminum and industrial plastics for Ryerson Steel, in Detroit. Breaking into this male-dominated industry came when, as a secretary there, my boss saw something in me and thought I'd be great in sales, and he was right. I used to chuckle to myself when some male customer on the phone would ask me a question like what were the chances of getting a couple hundred pounds of some 1212 steel, knowing full well that 1212 hadn't been made in years. "Sir, you and I both know that 1212 is no longer made, but I'll be happy to sell you some 12L14. Will that work for you?" Trick question? Yeah, nice try, buddy.

OWNER, GOTGENEALOGY? - I'm also a professional genealogist and in 2005, I opened my own genealogy company, *GotGenealogy?*, designed to help make family history research more accessible to the masses, by combining my computer skills with my love for all things genealogy. Though the GotGenealogy.com Web site is still up, I virtually shut down the company a few years ago, following my divorce. I used to publish a monthly newsletter, the *Got Genealogy Gazette*, where I showed my subscribers truly easy ways to manipulate search engines and overcome the many shortcomings on ancestry.com. I have a way of taking difficult topics and making them stupid simple to understand. I also traveled around the U.S. and Canada, speaking at family history events, "spreading the gospel of genealogy" in my own unique way.



I also worked as an independent consultant for ancestry.com's product, *ExpertConnect*, which united professional genealogists with customers willing to pay to have their family history researched. This was a blast and I helped over a dozen clients from the U.S. and Europe discover their roots, until ancestry very unceremoniously shut down the service less than two years after the launch. I was one of the dozen or so original researchers chosen to work on behalf of ancestry.com in this undertaking.

Connecting with your roots, finding the stories the ancestors wouldn't or couldn't tell is what I was born to do. And as a black American, I've lived my whole life knowing that, due to the ravages of chattel slavery, I may never know the countries where many of my ancestors originated, but that hasn't stopped me from trying. Though the advent of DNA and genetic genealogy is a young and growing field, this science is extremely limited and often provides more questions than answers. From oral history, passed down for generations, supposedly my LEE ancestors originated in Madagascar, a county that has always fascinated me.



When I had my DNA tested and that of several family members, I was told there are people living in the Mende region of Sierra Leone who share the same DNA as my mother. On my father's side, the LEE side, however, I was told there were no African ancestors on this line, but after a bit of research I discovered that none of the DNA companies had collected any Malagasy samples at that time. Not to be dissuaded, my goal is to move to Madagascar and bring my talent, skills, curiosity and work ethic to improve the lives of the Malagasy in any way I can. Sometimes, it's the smallest efforts we make that make the greatest impact.

Volunteering

Helping others in need, finding new ways to teach old topics and just stepping in to do the grunt work is something I've done often in my life. Some of my more notable volunteer experiences:

- **SAN FRANCISCO AIDS FOUNDATION** - When I worked in I.T. for the SFAF, I took the opportunity to volunteer at many of their community outreach events, including conducting confidential HIV awareness surveys (as well as designing FileMaker Pro databases to manage the data), working with HIV+ individuals, many of whom were also opiate drug abusers, educating them about better ways to do the things they enjoyed doing without putting others at risk. It was an incredibly eye-opening experience, especially when I encountered "Bug chasers," those who intentionally wanted to get infected with HIV in order to fit-in, get a sexual thrill from riding the knife edge that is HIV, and/or qualify for programs and assistance only available to those who are HIV+. This blew my mind. My oldest brother died from AIDS, years ago, and seeing him dwindle down to nothing, knowing there was nothing I could do to help him was heart breaking. Thankfully, with drugs, HIV is no longer an automatic death sentence, at least in the U.S. I can only imagine how different it must be in underdeveloped countries where these drugs might not be available. Educating these people, in a loving, supportive, firm yet non-judgmental way goes a long way when trying to connect with people.
- **CITIZEN SCHOOLS** - This is such a great organization, where working or experienced adults volunteer to teach a variety of classes to middle school students in seven states. I volunteered to teach Beginning Genealogy to a class of 30 5th, 6th and 7th graders in an inner-city school in Oakland, CA. When I arrived at Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy, expecting a class of mostly black kids, when I walked in and found that 95% of the school was latinx (that's a fairly new term, which respects the desire to move beyond the masculine-centric term "latino"), with kids from over a dozen countries, my neatly prepared course plan went up in smoke. The problems stemmed from two factors:

- 1) Many of their parents had come into the country without documentation and didn't want to talk about it with their kids;
- 2) Most of the parents and grandparents of the students hadn't been born by the time of the 1930 Mexico Census, which was the latest census available at that time, so researching these families was going to be next to impossible using traditional means.

I had to totally revamp my lesson plans, on the fly, so I had the kids bring in a family heirloom, photograph, award, whatever, anything that had a lot of value to their family. I scanned/or photographed the item, had them take the items back home, and from there, we worked on telling the stories of those artifacts. This involved family interviews in person and on the phone, and one by one, the students learned as much about their families through the process as I did. At the end, I compiled all of the stories into a booklet and printed out a copy for each child. This wasn't at all what I'd planned, but it was probably better in a lot of ways. The kids loved it, which made it even better.

VARIOUS GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES - Including serving on the board of several genealogical societies, I was also the Journal Editor of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California for many years, elevating the publication "From the Baobab Tree" from a mere newsletter into a full blown journal, for which I won several awards. I've been a Board Chair, Board Member, Recording Secretary, Society President and Programs Committee Chair, where I organized the first of eight annual conferences, the *West Coast Summit on African American Genealogy*, which brought together all of the independent black genealogy societies in the West, something that had always been discussed but never done before. After the last *Summit*, in 2008, we decided to broaden our scope and the *West Coast Summit* became the *International Black Genealogy Summit*, which is held every two-three years, and the next IBGS will be held in Washington, D.C. in September 2016, for which I am the Web Mistress (another volunteer position).

Lifestyle Changes

Never one afraid of change, I always just *know* that things will work out well for me, and at this time in my life, I'm truly ready for this major change that working for the Peace Corps will present for me. I'm selling my house (where I've lived for nearly 20 years), the kids are all grown and thriving, and about to turn 60, it's now MY time to live my dreams. One of the dreams I've held since I was young was working for the Peace Corps. The images of seeing people working in fields, providing clean water, providing opportunities for girls to get educated and more has always fascinated me. PLUS, the whole Madagascar connection, when I saw that you have positions there, I couldn't sign up fast enough. Madagascar has been calling me all my life. Every time I've watched a TV show where the winner could go anywhere in the world, without hesitation, I always thought, "Madagascar." Funny, though, nobody ever chose that. I can feel Madagascar. I see myself living there. I see myself just FEELING *something*. I don't even know what I'm supposed to find, but I know I must go. There is something waiting for me to discover. Having researched my Lee ancestors back to the 1700s in New France (which would become Canada), I doubt there are any printed records that would document my grandfather's grandfather's grandfather, William Lee, but my desire to go to Madagascar and work, and experience, and share, and feel – I know that, for whatever reason, all the tumblers of the universe have dropped into place and this is the next step I'm meant to take. I hope that you'll consider my application and decide to grant me this opportunity to work on your behalf, in the land of my ancestors. This will be my life's dream come true.