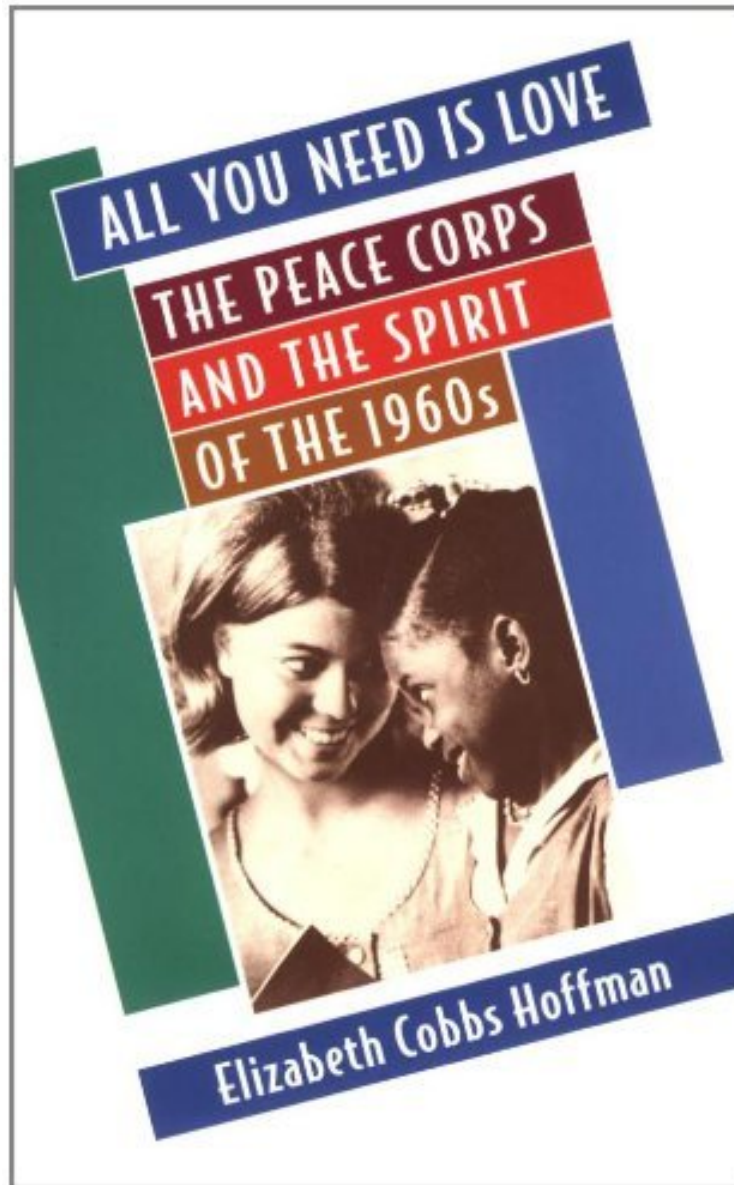


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All You Need Is Love

Elizabeth COBBS HOFFMAN

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By Michael Stewart
In the 1960s many Americans attempted to redefine their nation's identity both at home and abroad. No institution reflected this attitude better than the Peace Corps. In *All You Need is Love* Elizabeth Cobbs-Hoffman explores the history of the corps, and reveals, that by tracing its development in the last forty years, one can gain a better understanding on how it became the quintessential institution of social reform in the 1960s. Cobbs-Hoffman begins her narrative by exploring the background of American idealism. She asserts that the United States, since its founding, has perceived itself as a crusading nation whose mission has been to promote the spread of its form of "benevolent" democracy. This idealism, however, has often clashed with the reality that states, like individuals, sometimes act for selfish reasons, and not for the good of others. This contradiction has often made Americans uncomfortable with their role in the world of power-politics, and as a consequence Cobbs-Hoffman asserts that, "Paradoxically when the United States has been at its most expansionist, it has been most subject to idealism. The late 1950's and early 1960's was one such a period. The country, in the twenty years after World War II, experienced an era of unprecedented economic growth, and increased military and political might. This preeminence, however, created conflicting emotions for many Americans, whose pride in this strength, was matched by their historical perception that power corrupted Americans' virtue. Revolted by the consequence of extreme nationalism and racism in Nazi Germany, numerous Americans took to the concept of universalism, and its belief that all humans deserved the same rights, regardless of nationality. McCarthyism, and the overt racism of the 1950's, made Americans grapple with their vision of what kind of country they lived in. Were they becoming just another fascist state; a place where the individual had no power over the vast machinery of an unfeeling state? With the election of the John F. Kennedy in 1960, Cobbs-Hoffman shows how these feelings of unease were coalesced into the foundation of the Peace Corps, a movement that attempted to show the world the altruistic side of U.S. power. Cobbs-Hoffman's history shows that Americans and historians have tendency to divide the world into good and evil, and that the political right and the left have a tendency to perceive each other as diametrically opposed. Cobbs-Hoffman would argue that both are inexorably linked. She calls the Vietnam war the Peace Corps evil twin, and in many ways this is true. Both were initiated with a spirit of naivete and the belief that they could show others American superiority. Each had their view of the world altered by the cultures and realities which they encountered, and often for both it was a humbling experience. In the end, the left's and the right's disdain for the spirit of the sixties reveal that the Peace Corps attained its objective in creating better understanding among Americans and the rest of the world.

Traversing four decades and three continents, this story of the Peace Corps and the people and politics behind it is a fascinating look at American idealism at work amid the hard political realities of the second half of the twentieth century.

.com Everyone has heard of the Peace Corps, and that's no accident. When the agency was started in the early days of the Kennedy Administration, one of the top priorities was making it known virtually overnight, and some of the most talented advertising professionals in America donated their expertise to publicizing it. With John F. Kennedy's brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, as director, the Peace Corps represented the high ideals of a crucial decade in American history. Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, a professor of American foreign relations at San Diego State University, details the first decade of the Peace Corps, focusing on the struggles to create the agency, the political skill that made it flourish, and the influence of the Vietnam War, which Hoffman refers to as the Peace Corps's "evil twin." From *Library Journal*
By 1996, almost 150,000 Americans had served in the Peace Corps, the Kennedy administration's bow to the idealism of the 1960s. Hoffman (history, Univ. of San Diego) ably describes the genesis of the corps in the search for meaning that characterized that decade, the concern about the American image as portrayed in the 1958 novel *The Ugly American*, and the desire to ameliorate America's heritage of racism. She goes on to recount the corps' struggles in the 1970s and 1980s and its rejuvenation in the 1990s with the end of the Soviet empire and renewed interest in offering assistance to former Soviet bloc countries. Treating both policy matters and the experience of the volunteers, Hoffman places the Peace Corps in the context of other international volunteer efforts, including the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) and the British Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), to incorporate humanitarianism into foreign policy. Though intended for an academic audience, Hoffman's accessible writing will reach any interested reader.
ACynthia Harrison, George Washington Univ., Washington, DC
Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. In this brief but brilliant book, Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman sets out to explain the enduring appeal of Kennedy and 'his' Peace Corps...[She] adds a welcome international perspective to a concept--and an era--that most American scholars continue to examine through their own parochial lenses...Hoffman has written a superb and--in the best sense--old-fashioned book. Although concepts such as 'national character' and 'national identity' went out of style long ago, she successfully shows how the Peace Corps embodied important strands of both. Second, Hoffman's qualified praise of the agency stands in sharp contrast to the arch, postmodern sensibility that marks so much contemporary scholarship about American politics. Finally, she writes in a lucid, jargon-free prose that will

make her book accessible to any intelligent reader, not just her fellow historians. Like the Peace Corps itself, Hoffman's effort to reach the nonexpert resonates loudly with 'The Spirit of the Sixties.' (Jonathan Zimmerman *Journal of American History*) Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman has given us the most comprehensive, balanced history of the Peace Corps to date. Grounded in a multinational archival base and supplemented by interviews with former volunteers...her book covers the span of the Peace Corps' existence from 1961 to the 1990s...This finely crafted book demonstrates the author's sophistication in her ability to tell stories and explain developments at many levels. From the opening chapter, Hoffman deals carefully with both the ideology and the institution of the Peace Corps as each changed over time. She reveals both the construction of U.S. foreign policy by presidents and their advisers and the experiences abroad of individual volunteers. While focusing on this specifically American agency, she also clarifies the international context of 'a larger global movement of volunteers' from Britain, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, France, Germany, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China...[The 'soft' face of empire] has found one of its best and most sophisticated historians in Hoffman. Her book abounds in insights and will reward a close reading by all whose business is either the 1960s or the American relationship with the rest of the world. (Thomas Borstelmann *American Historical*) A thoughtful history setting the Peace Corps in its place and time...[The] chapter [on volunteers] is the truest, most moving thing I have ever read about Peace Corps service. (Bruce Watson *Smithsonian Magazine*) With breathtaking eloquence and a strong objective tone of analysis, Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman has recreated the mood of the New Frontier's 'can do' ethos in the 1960s and delivered an exhaustive and up-to-date examination of successes and failures of the Peace Corps...Overall this very thoughtful and readable account of the Peace Corps' ongoing history stands as a marvelous testament to all those who have given their time, effort and skill for nearly forty years of developmental aid around the world. The Peace Corps was and is, a tool of self-interest for the United States, but in adversity it also stands as a monument to hope and promise that transcends borders, cultures and politics. The author has brought the legacy of both these positions into sharp focus with this excellent account. (Ian Scott *American Studies in Europe*) Elizabeth Hoffman has written a thought-provoking, scholarly account of the Corps' development...By using compelling stories from former volunteers and gently weaving them into the underlying politics of each era, Hoffman's work becomes more than a historical account--it's a good read. (Eilene Zimmerman *San Diego Magazine*) How can we not love this book? It confirms what we hoped for ourselves when we first joined the Peace Corps. It was this notion of 'love' that kept us going on long nights when we were alone in a strange land and asking ourselves the hard question, why? And we were alone in the highlands, on the islands, in the tropical forest when we first heard the Beatles sing 'All You Need Is Love' on our static-filled shortwave radios. And we knew that they were singing our song. Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman has written us a love letter. A thank-you note. She has offered us a wonderful toast in her book to the unheralded and often forgotten work we did as Peace Corps Volunteers. From the safe distance of time, All You Need Is Love is how I want to remember myself as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Thank you, Elizabeth, for caring. Thank you for telling our story. (John Coyne *RPCV Writers and Readers*) Hoffman's work is the latest and probably the strongest in a line of objective examinations of the Peace Corps...Hoffman writes persuasively about the Peace Corps as an expression--almost a nexus--of dualities in the American national identity as we relate to the world: a balancing act between the extension of power and virtue; between idealism and pragmatism; between populism and professionalism; between market forces and human compassion. One of the genuinely interesting things about Hoffman's analysis is how she sheds light on these tensions in everything from placements of volunteers, rumors of C.I. A. connections, outlooks of agency directors, battles over sustainable development programming, cold war strategy, agency advertising propaganda, and what might be called the spiritual journey and adjustments of Peace Corps volunteers at their sites...An important dimension of this book is Hoffman's careful comparison of the American program to other volunteer-sending groups formed before and after the Peace Corps: The National Union of Australian University Students, the British Voluntary Service Overseas, Canadian University Service Overseas, the Dutch, Japanese, German, and French volunteer programs. No one has examined the similarities and contrasts so well, connecting the Peace Corps to wider populist and secular volunteering trends in the industrialized world...[This is an] admirable and even wise book...Read Hoffman's All You Need is Love. (Roger Landrum *Worldview*) Exploring the paradox of a foreign policy that simultaneously embraced altruism and destruction, she observes: 'desirous of but uncomfortable with power, the nation is driven to find ways of convincing itself that its power is beneficial.' (*Stanford Magazine*) Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman carefully documents why America was ready to accept Kennedy's challenge to venture beyond the safe and familiar into the 'New Frontier' and chronicles the trials, successes, and failures that have ensued. The best part of Cobbs Hoffman's account lies...in the flavor that she provides to the lives of volunteers (strikingly supplemented with 18 pages of photographs and early Peace Corps advertisements). (Rachel Taylor *Brill's Content*) Hoffman ably describes the genesis of the corps in the search for meaning that characterized [the 1960s]...and the desire to ameliorate America's heritage of racism...Treating both policy matters and the experience of the volunteers, Hoffman places the Peace Corps in the context of other international volunteer efforts, including the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) and the British Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), to incorporate humanitarianism into foreign policy. Though intended for an academic audience, Hoffman's accessible writing will reach any interested reader. (Cynthia Harrison *Library Journal*) Ms.

Hoffman, a professor of foreign relations at San Diego State University, eloquently structures the story of this institution's genesis and development around the question whether the Peace Corps was more useful to host countries or to the United States. Using a wide range of private and public archives in the United States and abroad and extensive personal interviews, she provides excellent insight into the thoughts and motives of many of the players. Painting on a large canvas, both globally and historically, with a wide pallet of vignettes, Hoffman persuasively depicts the innovative, consequential, and enduring features of the organization. (Ida Oberman *History of Education Quarterly*)