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Achieving Change Together

March ClassACTions

GOING VIRAL: COMBATING CORONAVIRUS

By Jonathan Sprague, Board Co-Chairman

The following is adapted from a message Jonathan sent to the ClassACT board.

When my alarm went off yesterday, it was set to NPR and *Living on Earth* was on. There was a guy being interviewed about COVID-19. He (and the interviewer) were calm, he had good answers and made a lot of sense. Voice sounded familiar. I thought, "Geez, if I was President, I would put this guy in charge and in front of the cameras." Turned out it was our classmate **Jono Quick!** If we had the right President and he did a Roosevelt-like fireside chat with the President interviewing Jono. It would go a long way toward de-intensifying concerns. I am sure that each of you can picture at least one, more recent, past President doing this.

Jono made several good points about getting the facts out clearly (see below) and the value of known public health strategies. One good point he made was that if you are older and have not had a pneumonia vaccine it makes sense to get one. It will at least protect you from bacterial pneumonia though not the viral kind. There's no vaccine for COVID-19, but it is the pneumonia that is the killer. Wash your hands and keep out of large crowds, etc. This story was followed by an interview with a Harvard student leader talking about divestiture. Also a good listen.

Here is the [link](#) and I would suggest listening to both.

Jono wrote a book, “The End of Epidemics,” which is extremely timely. Here are a couple of additional references. The [first](#) is for his website and the second a recent [interview](#) in the Guardian.

Fear and panic are exacerbated by a lack of knowledge and truth delivered in a calm manner—see above. This is of course heightened by the stock market’s response, which contributes to a vicious cycle, further intensified as the truth has been turned into a political football.

This is really serious stuff. The [Center for Disease Control](#), the [World Health Organization](#), state and local health officials, and all of us should be properly concerned and responsive to taking what actions we can. BUT...I think that much is overdramatized and sensationalized, so be careful about finding facts. You will soon be able to find helpful links to information on the ClassACT Website.

By the way, I am not cutting my beard off to respond to the hoax that the CDC has recommended all men cut their facial hair to match suitable patterns for wearing respirators, as shown on a CDC poster. (Although, yes, the poster is real).

Please stay safe.

Jonathan

Jonathan is president of Rocky Coast Consulting, a health-care consulting firm.

RSVP: VIRTUAL INFORMATION SESSION WITH JONO QUICK

Monday, 3/23 7pm EDT



Don't forget that our classmate **Jono Quick**, MD, MPH, and international epidemics expert, will lead an information session with questions and answers about the current pandemic. To sign up:

[Email us here](#)

GETTING OUT THE VOTE



Therese Steiner



Bahman Mossavar-Rahmani

ClassACT board members **Therese Steiner** and **Bahman Mossavar-Rahmani** both have had a lifelong commitment to voting rights. But they have exhibited that passion in different ways.

“I always took my kids into the voting booth with me when they were little,” says Therese. *“You’ve got to imprint on your kids very early that voting is a critical right. My son was at the University of Edinburgh and I stood in line so I could express-mail him an absentee ballot because I thought it was so important. I feel that the democratic right to vote is one of the core standards of our democracy. And denying the access to vote is a real sacrilege.”*

Bahman is a native of Iran, where during revolutionary times he was a candidate for local office. *“When I ran for election I was arrested at midnight by a whole bunch of armed soldiers in a truck when I was putting up my posters,”* he recalls. *“That was a frightening experience. I was running to represent an area north of the capital, an agrarian district. Just weeks before the election they—the mullahs— redistricted to eliminate people like myself who had a strong base. It was arbitrary, without any conscience. They just took over and muscled their way in. And there was no appeal.*

My previous experience helped me appreciate how important, how valuable and fragile American democracy is. It helped me that I experienced the other side.”

Thus indoctrinated, Therese and Bahman, at the board’s behest, are heading ClassACT’s Voter and Civic Engagement Initiative. This is a broad, non partisan, multi-faceted campaign in collaboration with Bridge organization [JusticeAid](#) on the importance of voting and issues surrounding that democratic right, with a 2020 focus on voter registration, education and getting people, especially youth, to the polls on Election Day, November 3rd.

The details can be found [here](#). On that page is a [survey](#) which you are urged to fill out (if you haven't done so already) so you can join the 70 or so classmates who are involved.

Currently, says Therese, activity is three-pronged. “First, to try to get some assessment of what classmates were already doing so that ClassAct could be a resource,” she says. “Second, is to try to support JusticeAid on their initiative, whose theme is voter suppression and voting rights. They mobilize a group of lawyers locally who will become experts on policy in each particular state. And they mobilize people locally to work at the polls—to literally become poll monitors. Third, also along with JusticeAid, is mobilizing youth.” To this end there is a contest called “[The Democracy 2020 Youth Film Challenge](#)” in which kids ages 15 to 25 submit mini-documentaries on issues that matter to them and the election, all including a call to vote. The winners will receive cash prizes ranging from \$500 to \$5000. “We can't wait to see the submissions that come in,” says Therese, who notes that “Donna Brown will be one of the judges.”

Activity will not cease on November 3rd. “Our goal is to get people engaged this year and then to begin discussions on projects that will have long-term impact,” says Therese. “We're hoping that many other classes will want to get involved with this.”

Bahman similarly takes the long view. “I have a sense of urgency about preserving American democracy,” he says. “I see this country as an extraordinary experiment which has created the most prosperous country in the history of humanity. And it all starts with that vote. Every single American, every hour of the day, should have a sense of urgency about preserving and protecting this system.”

CLASSACT WELCOMES YOUNGER SIBLINGS

Our ClassACT model is spreading! Prompted by the Harvard Alumni Association, board co-chair **Marion Dry** and board members **Bahman Mossavar-Rahmani** and **Therese Steiner** met with representatives from the classes of 1969, 1979, and 1985 who expressed specific interest in the [Voter & Civic Engagement Initiative](#). There was excitement around the range of projects and lots of creative brainstorming about ways other classes may

get engaged. ClassACT will be crafting a short survey for representatives of other classes to send to their classmates, soliciting interest and outlining ways to participate. More to come!

BRIDGE WORK

Highlights from our collaborative organizations

White Pony Express, San Francisco



Emily Fields Karakashian, left

As [WPE](#) volunteer **Emily Fields Karakashian** says, “WPE helps eliminate hunger and poverty by distributing the abundance all around us to those in need – with love.” WPE’s founder, Dr. Carol Weyland Connor, elaborates, “Many friends in Contra Costa County can’t afford to feed or clothe themselves properly. And nonprofit organizations and shelters here often don’t have enough resources to serve them. But we’ve found that many businesses would be pleased to donate their excess food and goods if someone could just pick it up and deliver it. That’s why we created the White Pony Express. We are the link between those with surplus and those in need.”

In six years, WPE (motto: *All of us taking care of all of us*) has redistributed 10 million pounds of fresh, high-quality food and handed out more than 500,000 items of new or like-new clothes, shoes, books and toys through 60 “pop-up” Mobile Boutique events. The ultimate goal is to create a “circle of giving” model that can be replicated anywhere.

Kids Care Everywhere, Berkeley, California



Dr. Ron Dieckmann

In December, **Dr. Ron Dieckmann**, [KCE](#)'s executive director, led a mission to Lima, Peru and the Amazonian town of Iquitos, Peru. During an International Global Health Conference in Lima, Ron delivered an address on "Mobile Apps in Global Health."

Ron recently received the 2019 Watson Award, honoring his more than 30 years of career advocacy and leadership that have resulted in improved prehospital and emergency care for children throughout the state of California. Congratulations, Ron!

United Nations Association of Greater Boston





SDG 15: Life on Land

“UNAGB's new [UN Perspective Series](#) is off to a strong start!” reports executive director Caitlin Moore. "These free programs run every other month and feature global and local speakers on one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as updates and opportunities for local action and advocacy. So far in 2020, we've focused on *SDG 15: Life on Land* and on *SDG: 5: Gender Equality*. Our next program will take place **May 4** and focus *SDG13: Climate Action and the Green New Deal*. All are invited and are encouraged to register as soon as possible as these events have been reaching capacity quite quickly.” Register [here](#)!

Additionally, members of ClassACT are invited to join UNABG's Charter Circle, an inner circle of donors who share a vision for a better world. Learn more about the Charter Circle [here](#), and email [Caitlin](#) directly if you'd be interested in attending their May gathering at the British Consul General's residence.

Sports Analytics Club Program



College basketball’s March Madness has been called off and the NBA has suspended play, but that has not stopped the [SACP](#) members at Armstrong High in Richmond, Va. and Cass Technical High in Detroit from preparing their advanced analytics-driven performance portfolios to make the cases for former NBA stars Ben Wallace and Chauncey Billups to be inducted into the 2020 Class of the Naismith Hall of Fame. The youthful hoops savants are under the overall guidance of Bobby “Dean” Clayton. The SACP portfolios

have been delivered to the Hall, and the Class of 2020 honorees will be announced on April 4.

Interested in helping ClassACT?

If you are interested in learning more about ClassACT and how you can be involved, please visit our website or send us an email. ClassACT is built on classmate participation and we are interested in having every classmate as a member of our ClassACT community.