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**Achieving Change Together**

## ClassACTions June Newsletter

Ah, normalcy! (Or at least nearly so.) Thanks to Moderna and Pfizer, ClassACT happily joins the rest of society in planning to resume regular activities, including (but hardly limited to) attending in-person meetings and concerts, and going on vacation. Speaking of which: The ClassACT Newsletters and Bulletins will take a well-deserved break during July. Enjoy the first part of your summer, and we'll see you again in August!

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### **THE TEAM BEHIND THOSE FABULOUS FORUMS**

By Dick Friedman



*Panelists from our Racism and the Criminal System #ClassACTForum*

Terrible as the pandemic has been, it also has allowed us to discover Zoom. And like a rose poking out from a slag heap, ClassACT's Zoom Forums have emerged with their timely, entertaining and substantive discussions on topics

such as health, politics, social justice, the arts and sports. The technology has allowed the Forums to cast a far-flung net, not only in terms of moderators and panelists but also in attracting audiences composed of classmates and interested outside parties.

ClassACT's first [Zoom Forum](#) featured **Jono Quick '73**, on March 23, 2020, and discussed COVID-19 just as it was beginning its rampage through the nation. The most recent, June 10's presentation, [Gerrymandering: Our Democracy at Risk](#), was the 13th in the series. (It is available for viewing at the webpage provided soon.) That's a dozen plus one in less than 15 months. For a complete list, take a look at our website [here](#). That would be a dizzying pace for anyone, but it's especially so for the tiny, all-volunteer, behind-the-scenes band producing them. So, we'd like them to come out from behind the Zoom curtains. Ladies and gentlemen...introducing:

**Executive Producer: Marion Dry '73.** The Zoom Forums were the brainchild of Marion, ClassACT Board Co-Chair. She has been the sustaining force through the challenging transformation and rapid expansion of ClassACT's outreach and educational efforts. Marion's leadership and her investment of considerable time was critical to building the Forum Team and teamwork was essential to the ability to produce such an extensive Forum series.

"ClassACT had planned several regional events for summer and fall 2020," she says. "We wanted to continue to build community, and with the success of the first Forum it seemed a no-brainer to keep at it."

"What I didn't expect was how meaningful the Forums would become to our audience and to our mission or how much they would expand and diversify our community. The core group working on them reached out to classmates far and wide, many of whom had had little connection to ClassACT beforehand, to help us with program development and to recruit panelists. Now many of those folks are core contributors to our work. All of us who have worked together on these forums have found a new sense of community and endeavor. It really has been thrilling. I have met and worked with classmates whose names I had never heard before. They are extraordinary people and I am grateful that I can count some of them now as my dear friends. This is the magic of ClassACT as witnessed in the development and production of these Forums."

**Casting Directors: Donna Brown Guillaume '73 and Therese Steiner '73.** Led by Marion and working with others such as **Steve Milliken '73** (who corralled the panelists for this past March's Forum on Racism and the Criminal System) and **Becky Miller Sykes '73** (who invited the panelists for the Education forum in November), Donna and Therese—both veteran TV producers—brainstorm topics and then with the help of the ClassACT board and others seek expert moderators and panelists from among classmates and

outside experts. Basically it's Networking 101. "How do we cast them? It's

largely who you know,” says Donna. “We’ll just start throwing names out there while we are ruminating about the subject matter. People just pitch in if they know someone and that’s their field of expertise.”

Steve, a former judge in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and founder of JusticeAid, notes how much care goes into panel-building. For the grouping on Racism and the Criminal System, he recounts, “We needed a D.A.’s voice but we wanted to get a progressive voice [New Orleans’s Jason Williams]. We needed a defender’s voice but I needed it to be somebody who has really pioneered holistic defense as Neighborhood Defenders Service and Rick Jones have done. We needed to have a community organizer’s voice, and that was Gina Clayton- Johnson from Essie Justice Group. And we also wanted to have a police voice...I wanted it to be [Georgetown Law’s] Christy Lopez who has been working with police forces around the country on bystander intervention and other reforms. We took four progressive voices who represent the pillars that constitute the criminal system....So that’s how we approached the composition of that panel and then I went and reached out to people I have known in each of those walks of life.”

“We have made it a mission to have a woman and a person of color on each panel,” says Therese. “After the first three panels, we really started broadening the scope. We expanded to the Zoom Webinar format, so we can get more people involved. Now the Forums have become something that a lot of people outside of ClassACT and even outside of Harvard have been interested in.”

“You want expertise, you want representation, you want participation, and you want a broad audience to be listening,” says Donna. “I think that as Ivy Leaguers we sometimes fall into the pattern of just talking to ourselves and each other. That can be very stimulating but I don’t think that necessarily advances the goals of ClassACT. If we’re really trying to achieve change together we really have to talk to people outside the Harvard/Radcliffe Class of ’73.”

**Producers: Sarah Ulerick ’73 and Sara Greenberg ’73, Andrea Kirsh ’73, Jacki Swearingen ’73 and Marion Dry ’73** (Executive Producer).

Without these five, the Forums would not have happened. When the pandemic hit, Marion reached out to what was then the ClassACT Event Group and asked them to pivot from producing in-person regional events to producing Zoom Forums. They jumped in with both feet and we should now really call them, along with videographer and designer **Rick Brotman ’73**, and production crew members Diana Lobontiu and Katie Marinello, the ClassACT HR73 Forum Production Company! They have demanded excellence of themselves and their product and the Forums keep getting better and better.

**Staff Production Crew:** Diana Lobontiu and Katie Marinello. Diana, ClassACT’s dauntless executive assistant, sweats the details. She’s the person

who, with the assistance of Sarah, Sara, Andrea, Jacki, and Marion, is in charge of making sure the show sticks to the script and follows the minute-by-minute schedules known as “run of show” that are a godsend to the moderator. (As a former moderator, believe me, I know.) She also guarantees that everyone has the information he or she needs. That includes posting panelists’ bios and relevant links in the Chat area.

Diana shows up in so many places, including moderating each Forum’s Chat discussion, that at first I thought there must be two of her. And then I found out that in a way, there are! She has a twin sister, Ioana, whom she has involved in the process. “We did the first few [Forums] without a checklist,” says Diana. “Then last summer we all got together and made a checklist. We have an elaborate system. My twin sister emails us with reminders twice each week.”

(Says Donna Brown Guillaume: “The fact it plays as well as it does—all praises to Diana.”)

As time went on, a process emerged. “We figured out that we had to standardize things,” says Katie, who is the maestro of ClassACT’s social media initiatives and live-tweets each Forum. “We should be playing from the same playbook. What information are we gathering from the panelists? Let’s put that in one document. What do our runs-of-show look like? Do the panelists need to see the runs-of-show? And the other thing is that the checklist is only as good as the people who use it.”

With so many safeguards, what could go wrong? “Several things have already happened,” says Diana. “I lost control of the host command and couldn’t turn a panelist’s video on so he just didn’t go on. I recorded a whole panel but my computer shut down so we lost the whole thing.”

**Videographer and Designer: Rick Brotman ’73.** In addition to overseeing the Forums’ visual presentation, veteran video guru Rick creates a pre-show “teaser” designed to bring folks into the tent, then edits the show afterward for later viewing.



Says Therese, “Rick has helped professionalize our look and have an afterlife for people’s comments on the website.”

“This feels like the same thing I’ve always done,” Rick says of the Forums.

“It’s just that everyone’s dialing in rather than walking into a ballroom.” He

sees his job as an exercise in brand-building, “to give people a sense of what this thing is about. What’s the emotional tug of this? What’s the thing that makes us us?”

“I always felt that what I was doing in editing was leaving the breadcrumbs. The video is much clearer, much cleaner than the actual event. We’ve got damned good people doing damned good content....When I go back in and realize the nuances of what people are doing, it’s really good content and helps me think about the issue in a much better way.”

Rick lauds the choice of Forum subjects. “The fact that this has all been topical, present and immediate has just been really important,” he says. “What’s really been lovely about ClassACT is that we put into practice the thing we have learned, which is, how are you connected to people and how are you connecting, and what kind of conversation can come from that. The fact that [the Forums] have resonated with people has just been really rewarding.”

Rewarding it has been, and it’s getting more so all the time. So take a bow, folks.

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## SPREADING THE ACT TO OTHER CLASSES



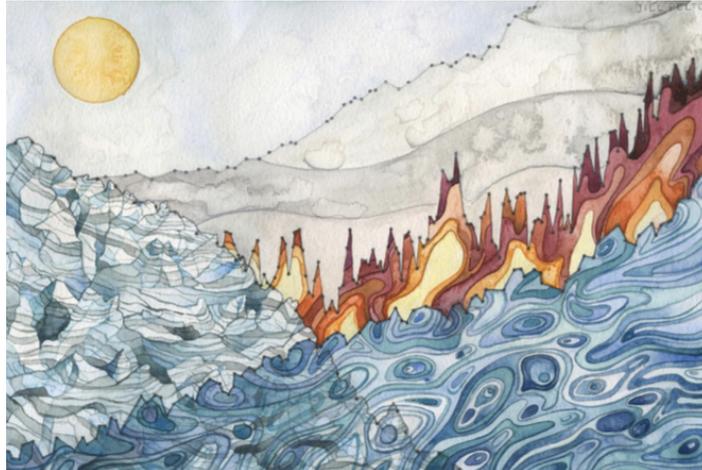
*Harvard alums from other ClassACT's at our Zoom Forum meeting*

As discussions about ClassACT and other models for classmate engagement have expanded, there are now twelve classes that have participated in multi-class conversations and several others that have heard about ClassACT concepts. On June 3, in response to conversations about expanding the ClassACT model, 22 participants joined discussion leaders **Marion Dry '73**, **Sarah Ulerick '73**, Rachel Kemp '79, Dorien Nunez '79, Liz Losos '85, David Schanzer '85. and ClassACT’s Executive Assistant Diana Lobontiu to share

experiences creating, promoting, and hosting online forums. A follow-up session on communications strategies, using websites, newsletters, and other tools, is in the planning stage.

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### CLIMATE CHANGE GETS CHRONOLOGICAL



Don't say you weren't warned about the greenhouse effect back in '24...1824. This and a thousand other fascinating facts about climate change can be found in "A Climate Chronology," an ongoing book and interactive illustrated website produced by classmate **Sharon Shurts Tisher '73**. A former trial lawyer, Sharon returned to her home state of Maine in 1993 to become a college teacher and engage in a variety of pro bono and non-profit commitments. As a part-time lecturer at the Honors College and the Ecology and Environmental Sciences program at the University of Maine, she teaches environmental law and policy, climate policy, and Great Books courses.

Nine years ago, Sharon began developing the chronology as a resource for students in her environmental law and climate policy courses. A staggering document, it is a searchable, color-coded record of events in climate science, U.S. policy, and international policy. Updated every January, the chronology begins with that 1824 hypothesis by French mathematician Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier that the atmosphere plays a significant role in mediating temperatures on earth, and its current final entry is the January 2021 notification that 2020's temperatures tied the record high set in 2016. The book can be found online in pdf form [here](#). The website is [climatechronology.com](http://climatechronology.com). Both soon will be available on [classacthr73.org](http://classacthr73.org).

This has been a labor of love for Sharon, but a labor nevertheless. "I spend about half an hour on it pretty much every other day of my life: reviewing digitally the NYT, Washington Post, WSJ, InsideClimate News, the Daily Climate, Bill McKibben's newsletter in The New Yorker, The Guardian, etc. for articles that might be significant enough to make the chronology," she says. "I copy links to them and file away the links with a view to the month

every year that I spend full time writing the previous year's entries.”

Even as she is adding to the content, Sharon is looking to raise funds so she can continue her work; anyone with any leads should contact her at [Sharon.tisher@maine.edu](mailto:Sharon.tisher@maine.edu). “Fortunately, there are many resources available to me at the university for grants development,” she says. “And for the first time in 27 years, I am taking next semester off from teaching to focus on this. The timetable moving forward is to widely distribute the link to the new website in the month of June to journalists, academics, and scientists often cited in the chronology, activists, climate-focused environmental organizations, and their related listservs, etc. to elicit feedback on both content and design, suggestions on funding sources, and, hopefully, some blurbs from recognizable names to use in fundraising.”

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## CLASSACT LINKS TWO '73 HARVARD GRADS FOR A JOINT HEALTH-CARE PROJECT IN HAITI

By Ron Dieckmann



*Ron Dieckmann '73 in Peru*

Two '73 Harvard doctors are bringing their nonprofit healthcare groups together for a physician training and software giveaway this summer in the country of Haiti. **Dr. Ron Dieckmann** and his California-based KidsCareEverywhere organization has joined forces through ClassACT with **Dr. Dan Scoppetta** and Grand Anse Surgery Project for the first-time exercise in the city of Jeremie, where the project is based. The project will be

completely virtual and conducted with Zoom technology.

Ron and Dan met through the ClassACT healthcare group and have been planning the joint project since January 2021. “Ron and his team have been extraordinary,” says Dan. “In Haiti close to 100 individuals were identified as participants in a project that would provide an educational tool of great utility. To me it is having a ‘library on your cellphone’ providing accurate, thorough, practical information about medical management.”

[KidsCareEverywhere](#), a public charity founded by Ron in 2006, has provided free medical software and software training to physicians in 23 countries on three continents: Africa, Asia and South America. KidsCareEverywhere’s mission is generously supported by EBSCO Health (Ipswich, MA), which donates powerful, up-to-date medical software called DynaMed for distribution in under-resourced countries. The software is primarily used as a mobile app on smart phones and has been extensively used by physicians worldwide for patient-care decision-making, education and teaching.



*Dan Scoppetta '73 in Haiti with a fellow doctor*

Dan’s nonprofit group, [Grand Anse Surgery](#), began in 2016 at the invitation of the Grand Anse Women’s Health Program. The Grand Anse Surgery Project (GASP) then started periodic visits to Haiti to provide breast surgery and to help build an in-country surgical program in Jeremie. The surgical mission quickly expanded to include thyroid surgery and hernia surgery. A third nonprofit group that works with Dan in Jeremie, the Grand Anse Health Development Association, is also an active partner in the summer training exercise.

The Haiti program will be the first completely virtual training for KidsCareEverywhere. “This virtual model is what we will be primarily using going forward,” Ron envisioned. “With so many barriers facing us now for on-

the-ground conventional training, I am extremely pleased to have the chance to collaborate with Dan in Haiti and develop this new, inexpensive approach to our worldwide mission.”

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## HEALTH DISPARITIES AND THE COVID-19 VACCINE

#CLASSACTFORUM

The banner features a blue background with the title "Health Disparities and the COVID-19 Vaccine" in white. Below the title is a collage of hands in various colors. To the right, the date and time "May 20, 2021 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM (EDT)" are listed, followed by "A ClassACT Forum". Below the banner are five speaker portraits with their names and titles:

- Johnson B. Lightfoote '73, MD, MBA, FACR**  
Moderator  
Chair, Commission for Women and Diversity,  
American College of Radiology
- Deborah Winn '73**  
Moderator  
Retired Acting Director,  
Division of Cancer Prevention,  
National Cancer Institute
- Uché Blackstock '99, MD '05**  
Founder and CEO  
Advancing Health Equity  
@uche\_blackstock
- Kenneth Chien '73, MD, PhD**  
Distinguished Professor  
of Swedish Research Council  
Karolinska Institutet and  
Co-Founder Moderna, Inc.
- Nina Schwalbe '88**  
Principal,  
Spark Street Advisors  
@nschwalbe

On May 20th, ClassACT HR73 put on a [Forum](#) about the decisions made around the development and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. Moderator **Dr. Deborah Winn '73**, who has held leadership positions at the National Cancer Institute and at the National Center for Health Statistics at the CDC, together with **Dr. Johnson Lightfoote '73**, MD, MBA, FACR, radiologist and Medical Director of the Department of Radiology at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center, led a discussion among **Dr. Kenneth Chien '73**, MD, PhD, Distinguished Professor of the Swedish Research Council, Karolinska Institutet and Co-Founder of Moderna, Inc.; Dr. Uché Blackstock '99, MD '05, Founder and CEO of Advancing Health Equity, which partners with healthcare and related organizations to address racism in healthcare and to eradicate racial health inequities; and Nina Schwalbe '88, Principal at Spark Street Advisors, a global health think tank, and previously managing director at Gavi, the vaccine alliance leading the global COVAX facility and acting chief of health at UNICEF. They discussed how development and distribution decisions led to the amplification of health disparities set in place long ago through structural racism towards Black and Brown communities and their disproportionate status as essential workers. The conversation then turned to disparities between wealthy countries and low and middle-income countries, and, ultimately, to lessons learned from our struggle with COVID-19 that can improve our response to the next global pandemic.

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## GERRYMANDERING: OUR DEMOCRACY AT RISK

#CLASSACTFORUM



Ryan O'Connell HR '73  
Moderator  
Author, *The Wall Street Democrat*  
Political Newsletter  
@wallstdemocrat



Alicia Bannon  
Managing Director  
Democracy Program  
Brennan Center for Justice  
@alicia\_bannon



Brian Cannon  
Director of Campaigns  
Institute for Political Innovation  
@BrianRCannon



James P. Harbison HR '73  
Harvard PhD Applied Physics '77  
@jimharbison



Michael Li  
Redistricting and Voting Counsel  
Brennan Center for Justice  
@mcpili

Gerrymandering threatens an already imperiled democracy. Under its sway, the congressional and state legislature districts carved out in secret by hyper-partisan map makers end up distorting voter representation and concerns. The result in states such as North Carolina and Maryland is that one party maintains a disproportionate (and undemocratic) hold on offices and policy agendas. Voters in both parties agree that the time has come for reforms to make the process of redistricting fairer. With the recent release of the 2020 census data and the possibility of passing new voting rights legislation, we have a chance to undo the excesses of gerrymandering that have fed political frustration and extremism.

On June 10th, **Ryan O'Connell '73**, one of the authors of a new ClassACT primer, [Gerrymandering: Our Democracy at Risk](#), moderated a Forum on the topic of how to reform the redistricting process. The expert panel included Alicia Bannon, Managing Director, Brennan Center for Justice at New York University; Brian Cannon, Director of Campaigns at the Institute for Political Innovation and former Executive Director of OneVirginia2021; **Jim Harbison '73**, PhD '77, former physicist and computer scientist at Bell Labs and IBM, now focused on the mechanics and mathematics underlying gerrymandering; and Michael Li, Senior Counsel, Brennan Center for Justice. This Forum was developed by our gerrymandering subcommittee, led by **Bahman Mossavar Rahmani '73**, co-chair of ClassACT's Justice & Civic Engagement Initiative.

Look for videos and resources from this Forum in your inbox this week!

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**JUSTICEAID UPDATE**



More than 600 fans joined JusticeAid on May 27th for [Change of Tone](#), a one-night-only concert with multi-Grammy Award winning jazz keyboardist Robert Glasper, in support of JusticeAid's 2021 grantee-partner the Neighborhood Defender Service (NDS) and its Police Accountability/Community Empowerment ([PACE](#)) Program.

"We are extremely grateful to ClassACT and the many classmates who have joined our efforts to address the critical justice issues surrounding racist policing and civil rights, both through donations and participating in ClassACT and JusticeAid Forums," says **Steve Milliken '73**, CEO and Founder of JusticeAid. "One hundred percent of all monies raised go directly to NDS/PACE and will continue to be matched by the JusticeAid Board." (To donate, go to [justiceaid.org](http://justiceaid.org).)

Stay tuned for exciting news about JusticeAid's fall concert in Washington, D.C.

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### Interested in helping ClassACT?

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

While encouraging the sharing of time and willingness to work together, ClassACT also welcomes financial support. To support our work in this way you can donate below.

[Donate Here](#)

Please add [ClassACTHR73@gmail.com](mailto:ClassACTHR73@gmail.com) to your contacts so future messages don't end up in spam or some other odd spot in your inbox.

[Class Achieving Change Together \(Class ACT\), Inc.](#)