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ClassACT



Achieving Change Together

September ClassACTions Newsletter

We've seen fire, and we've seen rain (and a batch of other climatic catastrophes). The summer of 2021 has left few of us unscathed. This has only redoubled the efforts of many in the ClassACT community to search for solutions, to rebuild and repair, and to revive spirits relentlessly battered by horrific headlines. We made it to autumn, folks. Hang in there.

UNAGB: A BRIDGE TO SUSTAINABILITY



Rising Leaders Model UN Conference. Photo courtesy of UNAGB

“There’s a saying: Think globally but act locally,” says classmate **Richard Golob**. Rich gets to put this precept in action every day as a board member of the United Nations Association of Greater Boston, one of ClassACT HR73’s newest Bridges.

The UNAGB has been around for 68 years—“around the same amount of time we have,” notes Rich. “We aim to produce model global citizens and spread global awareness in the Greater Boston area.” In that vein, ClassACT has helped UNAGB find experts to serve as speakers at their programs. Most notably, Benazir Bhutto Leadership Program Associate and international water expert Erum Sattar was chosen to be keynote speaker at UNAGB’s annual meeting.

UNAGB’s traditional mission has been conducting Model UNs for middle school and high school students in the Boston area. As its website (unagb.org) reveals, during the last school year, 80 schools and 3700 students participated in virtual Model UN events. There are 11 model UNs for middle and high schoolers scheduled for this school year. The first is on October 2, via Zoom: [The Global Leadership Conference](#), with the topic of Internet Access as a Human Right.



Students from the UN Perspective Series, photo courtesy of UNAGB

But now, with so many problems pressing on society, UNAGB offers another initiative: Sustainable Development Goals. These were adopted in 2015 in the U.N.’s “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” There are 17 such SDGs, all of which dovetail with the work of ClassACT HR73. Go to sdgactioncorner.org and you can see each listed. The top six: No Poverty, Zero

Poverty, Good Health and Well-Being, Quality Education, Gender Equality,

Clean Water and Sanitation. Per Rich's "act locally" admonition, each is rated, with Greater Boston receiving a "moderate to good" performance in education but a "poor to moderate" rating in water delivery. (Such specificity can be most dismaying.) Each SDG page also offers ways to help, from everyday acts ("Learn how to filter your water") to political action to organizations worthy of support.

"We think our initiative could be a model for classmates around the country who want to set up a similar organization," says Rich. Those interested in learning more can contact him at richard.golob@gmail.com or executive director Caitlin Moore at Caitlin.moore@unagb.org.

OUR NEXT ZOOM FORUM

Climate Change and Water Crises: Drought, Flood, Contamination ...
and What We Can Do About Them

*Monday, October 25
7 PM-8:30pm ET*



Photo from [Campden FB](#)

[Register Here](#)

A changing climate acts first and foremost through the water cycle. Extreme weather events in 2021 have severely disrupted ecosystems and the quantity and quality of water available for humans and other species. Bringing together an expert panel to discuss these disparate and interrelated problems, we aim to attain greater understanding of the immense challenges to global

and local water security and to begin to chart future actions.

We are delighted to introduce our extraordinary panel of experts.

Moderator:

- [**Erum Sattar**](#) is the leader of the multidisciplinary Sustainable Water Management Program (SWM) at the Friedman School and the Tufts Institute of the Environment.

Panelists:

- Classmate [**Andy Sawyer**](#), Assistant Chief Counsel at California State Water Resources Control Board.
- [**Jeff Hebert**](#), former First Deputy Mayor & Chief Administrative Officer, Chief Resilience Officer, and Executive Director of the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, and current President of [**HR&A**](#), a firm that aims to help create more equitable, resilient and dynamic communities.
- [**Kelsey Leonard**](#), water scientist, legal scholar, policy expert, writer and enrolled citizen of the Shinnecock Nation.
- [**William Moomaw**](#), Emeritus Professor of international environmental policy and founding director of the Center for International Environment and Resource Policy at the Fletcher School of Tufts University.

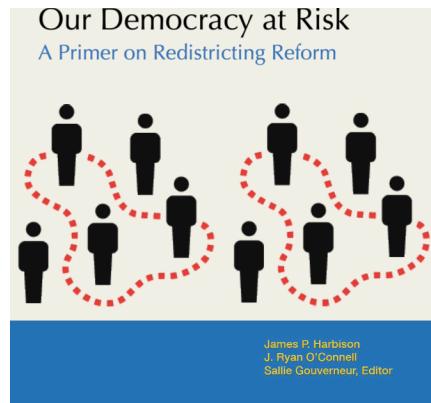
We hope you will join us.

ClassACT forums are open to all, so please feel free to share this information with others who might be interested in registering.

GERRYMANDERING AND VOTING RIGHTS: AN UPDATE

By **J. Ryan O'Connell**

The news on gerrymandering and voting rights since June, when **Jim Harbison** and I presented our ClassACT Zoom Forum, “[Gerrymandering: Our Democracy at Risk](#),” has been grim.



Click above to read Gerrymandering: Our Democracy at Risk, graphic by Pamela Garlick

The “For The People Act” is stalled in the Senate, where Republicans have threatened to filibuster it. The act would end gerrymandering in Federal elections, by requiring that states use independent commissions to draw voting-district maps for Congressional races. The act, which the House passed in March, would also provide for early voting, automatic enrollment and other measures to make voting more convenient in Federal elections.

In July, the Supreme Court severely weakened Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) in *Brown v. National Democratic Committee*. The Court rejected challenges to two Arizona laws that would make it harder for Native Americans, Latinos and Blacks to vote, on the grounds that the state legislature could take steps to prevent voting fraud even if those measures created some obstacles for minority voters. The Court reached this ruling even though there have not been any significant instances of voter fraud in Arizona. The decision essentially gives a green light to the numerous voting restriction laws that 14 states have passed since the 2020 election.

The Court, in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), had previously nullified Section 5 of the VRA. That provision had required 15 states with a history of racial discrimination to submit their proposed laws and regulations on voting for pre-clearance by the Department of Justice (DOJ).

The Court decided that racial discrimination was no longer a major issue in those states and ruled that Congress should update its formula for determining if material discrimination occurred in any of those jurisdictions. A wave of restrictive voting laws followed that ruling.

Because of *Shelby*, for the first time in almost 60 years the 15 states with a history of racial discrimination can draw their voting maps, and engage in gerrymandering, without submitting their proposed maps for approval by the DOJ.

In an effort to overrule the *Shelby* ruling on August 24, the House passed

another voting rights bill, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021 (H.R. 4). This measure would restore and expand the system of pre-clearance that the Supreme Court ended in 2013. The bill probably will face a Republican filibuster in the Senate. We urge you to contact your Senators, regardless of their political party, and ask them to support passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

J. Ryan O'Connell is co-author with classmate **Jim Harbison** of ClassACT HR73's primer on gerrymandering titled "Gerrymandering: Our Democracy at Risk." Edited by classmate **Sallie Gouverneur**, the primer is a product of ClassACT HR73's [Justice & Civic Engagement Initiative](#). Through this initiative, ClassACT has already hosted forums addressing issues such as voter suppression, racism and social justice, and racism in the criminal justice system. The primer instructs how to stop lawmakers from gaming the map-drawing process. It is written for all Americans, regardless of political affiliation, who want elections to be fair and their votes to count.

HELP FOR HAITI...

Classmate **David Weeks** put it most succinctly: "The people of Haiti cannot get a break." David was speaking following the magnitude 7.2 earthquake that devastated the Caribbean nation on August 13, leveling structures and killing more than 300 people, with hundreds more injured or reported missing. This was a rerun of a similar quake 11 years ago, and it came on top of a presidential assassination the month before.

David is the Board Chair of the Build Haiti Foundation, which supports programs and projects in agriculture, education, and healthcare while providing training and professional development to encourage sustainability and decentralization. "It continues to be perilous for me and my partner Bob Anantua, Haitian President of the Build Haiti Foundation, to travel to Haiti to check on our projects in the north of Haiti," he reports. "Through the funds we can generate on thebuildhaitifoundation.org website, we hope to provide some support for those in need in the wake of the earthquake from our contacts on the ground in Haiti. To donate funds, please go to Build Haiti Foundation's [website](#)."



Meantime, two of our classmate physicians are experiencing some of the

same frustrations. Classmate **Dan Scoppetta** operates the Grand Anse Surgical Project (GASP) in the city of Jeremie. He has teamed with classmate **Ron Dieckmann**, founder and executive director of Kids Care Everywhere (one of ClassACT HR73's Bridge organizations), which distributes software for physician training. If, that is, the software ever can get there. "It is total chaos in Haiti, and the earthquake's epicenter was not far from Jeremie," says Ron. "We have just heard that our closest colleagues on the ground are safe. We have reached out, and the main request of course is for money."



Photo from gahda.org

Says Dan, "The most reliable way to donate money is through www.GHADA.org. This is the organization that my project GASP is affiliated with. Bette, the executive director, will do what is best in this tragedy with any donations. She is the most reliable person I know in Haiti."

David, Dan and Ron all thank you for your support.

...AND HELP FOR NEW ORLEANS



Image from www.cultureaidnola.org

New Orleans, too, has once again suffered a natural disaster. In the wake of Hurricane Ida, classmate **Rick Weil**, a New Orleans resident and ClassACT HR73 board member, has a recommendation for those wishing to help feed hard-hit sections of the stricken city.

“Erica Chomsky-Adelson (erica@cultureaidnola.org) runs an organization called Culture Aid Nola,” Rick says.”Erica has been a disaster relief professional in Nola for 12+ years and is a specialist in logistics. During Covid, she brought in two 18-wheelers of fresh food every week and distributed it with no red tape and no paperwork for recipients, twice a week. Of course, there have been massive needs during Covid, and now after Ida, the needs are even greater. Interestingly, she not only operates large distribution points; she also partners with block-level community leaders in what I call ‘from the firehose to the capillaries’ distribution to shut-ins and people who can’t get to the distribution centers. And if you are interested in providing larger assistance or linking to an organization that could, I’d be happy to put you in touch with her. I think she’d be able to do some good as fast or faster than almost anyone else.” If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Rick at fweil@lsu.edu.

JOIN JUSTICEAID FOR A DAY OF SONG AND PUBLIC CONVERSATION

JUSTICEAID PRESENTS:
MAVIS STAPLES WITH GUEST ARTIST AMY HELM

October 19th, 7pm ET
Lincoln Theatre, Washington, D.C.



Photos courtesy of JusticeAid

“The soundtrack of our movement.”

Congressman John Lewis on Mavis Staples and the Staples Singers

[Reserve Tickets Here](#)

Early in her legendary career, social justice activist, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee and multi-Grammy Award winner Mavis Staples and her family toured Civil Rights rallies with Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and “opened” King’s speeches and sermons with “Freedom Highway,” his favorite Staples Singers’ song, which became an anthem of the Civil Rights Movement. Since then, Mavis Staples has continued to entrance listeners and effected social change and awareness for more than half a century, including collaborations with a range of artists from Bob Dylan to Hozier, Norah Jones, Prince and Jeff Tweedy.

On Tuesday, October 19th, at 7 PM (ET) LIVE* at the Lincoln Theatre in Washington, D.C., JusticeAid, a ClassACT HR’73 sustained partner of many years, is proud to present Mavis Staples with special guest Amy Helm in a concert supporting the work of JusticeAid’s 2021 grantee-partner the [Neighborhood Defender Service’s Police Accountability/Community Empowerment \(PACE\) Program](#).

Ms. Staples will be joined by musician, singer and songwriter Amy Helm. A scholar of American roots music, Helm has contributed her signature grainy alto to record after record over the last 30 years, including a number of solo albums and as a co-founding member of alt-country collective, Ollabelle.

All proceeds from ticket sales and sponsorships will go to support the work of NDS/Pace, which helps individuals and communities secure their futures by addressing the police misconduct that marginalizes them, providing them with resources and working alongside them to reshape policy in ways that reverberate across generations. For additional information on the concert and the artists, [click here](#).

**COVID protocol: Public health is paramount to JusticeAid, and event organizers are taking all precautions to ensure the safety of artists, attendees, and venue staff. Proof of full vaccination will be required for entry along with a matching photo ID. Proof of vaccination can be a physical vaccine card or a photo; JusticeAid will observe Washington, D.C. indoor masking mandate, and as such masking may be required.*

**IN CONVERSATION: KRISTIN NICOLE HENNING
AND ANGELA J. DAVIS**



*Dr. Angela J. Davis and Dr. Kristin Henning at the JusticeAid 2021 Spring Forum: Safety For Whom? Racist Policing in Communities and Schools,
photo courtesy of Rick Brotman*

On October 19th, across the street from Lincoln Theater at the historic True Reformer Building, Kristin Nicole Henning, Blume Professor of Law and Director of the Juvenile Justice Clinic at Georgetown Law, will discuss issues raised in her book “The Rage of Innocence: How America Criminalizes Black Youth” with Angela J. Davis, Distinguished Professor of Law, American University College of Law. Details to follow - stay up to date with JusticeAid events on their [website](#).

GREETINGS TO OUR NEW BBLP FELLOW

After a one-year gap because of the pandemic, ClassACT HR73 is especially delighted to welcome our newest Benazir Bhutto Leadership Program Fellow, Zeina Majdalani. Zeina, who is from Lebanon, is our fourth Fellow and our first who is not from Pakistan.



Photo courtesy of Zeina Majdalani

An engineer, Zeina resides in Beirut, where she works in the office of the Lebanese Prime Minister as a senior economic expert, dealing with various infrastructure/development projects related to the water and energy sectors. She also is a lecturer on sustainable engineering at Lebanese American University.

Zeina is a founder and current President of the Lebanese Women Engineers committee, and represents Lebanon on the Arab Women Engineers Committee. Her publications include "[Sustainability in the Construction Industry: A Lebanese Case Study](#)." Global Thinkers Forum has selected Zeina for the category Leadership/Women Empowerment and shortlisted her for the [Award of Excellence](#).

Zeina has a BE in civil/environmental engineering, a master's in engineering management, and an MBA, all from the American University of Beirut. She also holds an international diploma from ENA school/France. At Harvard she will be working toward her mid-career masters in public administration degree.

ClassACT looks forward to welcoming Zeina publicly and to presenting her to our classmates later this fall—alas, probably via Zoom, given the ongoing presence of the Delta Variant.

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](#)

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