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Achieving Change Together

February ClassACTions Bulletin

From weather predictions to love, February is the shortest month, but it gives us a great deal to think about. Most importantly, we are given the opportunity to celebrate and reflect more deeply on the African American experience. Students at Kent State, the first university to celebrate a **Black History Month**, discussed the month's modern iteration in 1969, the year we entered college. It was officially established in 1970. On many campuses and for many individuals, it marked the beginning of a generational awakening, a desire to change the world and one of the first sparks that would contribute to the present work of ClassACT HR73. It is said that "February is the border between winter and spring." Spring is coming. There is reason for hope.

NEPAL SPINE FOUNDATION: A CLASSMATE'S LIFE-CHANGING EFFORTS

**click the image below to view the video on our youtube page*



Video by Rick Brotman '73, featuring Dr. Richard Wohns '73

A climbing expedition to Mr. Everest and treks through Nepal in the 1970s and 1980s led **Dr. Richard Wohns '73** to found the Nepal Spine Foundation in 2013 as a way to give back to the people there and to bring cutting edge neurosurgical techniques to a country often lacking in the latest medical resources. Today Dr. Wohns, a Seattle resident, and a team of fellow surgeons and nurses travel annually to Kathmandu to help perform spine surgery on patients at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH) who suffer from debilitating and excruciating injuries and diseases including tuberculosis. In the months between those visits, Dr. Wohns and the foundation's neurosurgeons meet monthly via Zoom with the faculty members and residents of TUTH to discuss surgical cases.

"I love the country, and I love the people," said Dr. Wohns, who began trekking through the majestic Kathmandu Valley and climbing peaks such as K2 back when only a small number of climbers ventured up the world's tallest mountains. Yet the splendor of the Himalayas has not blinded him to the country's health-care crisis, especially in rural villages. With its population of 30 million, Nepal has only 100 neurosurgeons. "The implication is that people are waiting for care or never getting it," Dr. Wohns added.

Arriving each year with donated spinal instruments, equipment and implants, Dr. Wohns and his team offer Nepalis who otherwise could not afford the devices and surgery a chance at a new life. Among the Foundation's success stories is that of one young man, a laborer, who fell from a tree and broke his neck. Despite the collar prescribed by the local doctor, his pain worsened and some extremities grew numb. The young man walked nine days to the teaching hospital in Kathmandu where Dr. Wohns' team was working. The donated screws, plates and expertise the team brought allowed the young man to receive the care he could otherwise not afford. "He did fine. He went back to the village and he could do work," Dr. Wohns recalled.

Dr. Wohns estimates that Nepal needs at least 200 more neurosurgeons to provide the level of care that its population requires. Consequently, another key mission of the Nepal Spine Foundation is training faculty and residents in the latest techniques they normally would have difficulty learning without traveling outside Nepal. When the pandemic hit, Dr. Wohns and his team started monthly online meetings in which they lecture, help to read MRI's and guide residents learning to present complicated cases.

"It's always fun. It's always interesting. It's always educational," said Dr. Wohns of collaborating virtually with his Nepali colleagues, including Dr. Sushil Shilpakar and Dr. Mohan Sharma, the first neurosurgeons trained at TUTH in the 1990s. Both physicians are now members of the Nepal Spine Institute's Board of Directors. "We've got a growing audience with more people coming in from the Kathmandu community of neurosurgeons, not just those at TUTH."

In November Dr. Wohns and the foundation team plan to return to Kathmandu for Spine Week, during which they hope to deliver 20 lectures and perform "a significant number of new spinal procedures," he said. **"I would love to have some of my 1973 classmates who are**

neurosurgeons join me,” he added, extending the invitations to others who are neurologists, physicians assistants, operating nurses, and pain specialists as well those skilled in online medical education. “People who have come with me have gotten the bug and have gotten to make really good friends there.”

Classmates and others who are not in health care can lend their support by donating to the [Nepal Spine Foundation](#) or joining in fundraising events such as the [2022 Trek to Everest Base Camp](#). Scheduled for November 11 to December 1 (with the option of helicoptering out of base camp earlier), the trek includes a significant donation to Tribhuvan hospital to promote neurosurgery as well as a final day spent observing the remarkable work of the hospital’s staff.

“The neurosurgeons at TUTH are tremendously skilled. We want to help them obtain all the tools needed to provide state-of-the-art care,” Dr. Wohns said.

THE CLASSACT HR73 BOARD WELCOMES 3 NEW MEMBERS

It is with great joy that ClassACT HR73 welcomes **Ron Dieckmann, Dan Hoffheimer, and Henrietta Wigglesworth Lodge** to the board. Each of them brings with them great skills, wonderful vision, and inspiring enthusiasm. As ClassACT has grown, so has our need for strong leadership and innovation. We look forward to discovering the contributions that each of these wonderful classmates will make to our work. Please join us in a toast to Henrietta, Dan and Ron.

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RON DIECKMANN



After Harvard, Ron swerved west and attended Stanford Medical School, and the Berkeley School of Public Health. For 25 years. he was Professor of

Pediatrics and Emergency Medicine at University of California, San Francisco and Director of Pediatric Emergency Medicine at San Francisco General Hospital. Triple-board certified in pediatrics, pediatric emergency medicine, and general emergency medicine, Ron published extensively in the newly-evolving specialty of pediatric emergency medicine, following the conventional hard copy format--editing five first edition medical textbooks, along with journal articles, chapters and editorials. Then he became disenchanted with the limitations and rigidity of the written word as a beacon for clinical practice. Instead, as a means to rapidly access current medical knowledge, Ron envisioned a flexible, updatable, expandable and scalable digital platform built virtually around the mobile phone. In 2003, he ventured outside academia into the commercial world of medical software, founded a software company with an Australian partner, and developed an interactive pediatric software program viewable on both computers and mobile phones. He named it PEMSoft; it was the first virtual pediatric knowledge system. After release of the first for-profit version of PEMSoft in 2005, Ron gifted the software to colleagues in Hanoi, Vietnam. He perceived its monumental application in the low-income world, where physicians had only decades-old medical textbooks as information sources, even as they toted around modern smart phones. Ron surmised that physicians worldwide, almost all of whom owned mobile phones, would benefit from instant access to comprehensive, up-to-date medical information. Back in California, he spun-off KidsCareEverywhere (KCE) as a nonprofit charity to empower doctors in the low-income world. In 2013, his company PEMSoft was acquired by EBSCO, a multi-national information services company in Ipswich, MA and EBSCO agreed to support continued donations of the software through KCE. Over 16 years, KCE has gifted medical software to doctors in public hospitals in 23 countries on three continents: Africa, South America and Asia. Meanwhile, at home in Northern California, Ron has soldiered on as a pediatric consultant to hospitals and health systems, and as Executive Director of KCE. He has been married his entire adult life to his best friend Patty Gates, a labor lawyer. They have three daughters and three granddaughters.

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DAN HOFFHEIMER



A former president of both the Cincinnati Bar Association and the Federal Bar Association, Cincinnati chapter, Dan Hoffheimer has practiced law with Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP since 1976, where he is now Of Counsel. His law practice has varied over the years through trial and appellate litigation, immigration law, domestic relations, estate planning, trust, and probate law, and charitable and nonprofit organization law. He earned his bachelor's degree from Harvard College in 1973 and his law degree in 1976 from the University of Virginia Law School, where he was Editor in Chief of the Virginia Journal of International Law. Dan is a Fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel and is Board Certified as a Specialist in Estate Planning, Trust and Probate Law by the Ohio State Bar Association Specialty Board. He is admitted to the Bar of the Supreme Court of the United States, to the Supreme Court of Ohio, and to numerous other courts.

In addition, Dan currently serves on the Board of Advisors of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, as Chair of the Board of Linton Chamber Music, on the Advisory Board of Cincinnati Public Radio, Inc. (WGUC, WVXU), the Dean's Council of the College-Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati, the Advisory Board of The Seven Hills School, and on other nonprofit organization and bar association committees. He has served on many nonprofit boards including as Chair of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Co-Founder and Presiding Chair of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Chair of Cincinnati Public Radio, Vice-Chair of the Jewish Hospital of Cincinnati, President of Kehal Kodesh Bene Israel/Rockdale Temple, and Vice President of the Jewish Community Relations Council. He has served as legal counsel to many charitable and nonprofit organizations and political campaigns, including two candidates for President of the United States, as Legal Counsel to the Cincinnati AIDS Commission and to The Greater Cincinnati Foundation. Dan is the author of many articles on legal and other subjects, and has received honors or citations from the American Bar Foundation, Ohio State Bar Association, Cincinnati Bar Association, Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, and Supreme Court of Ohio.

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HENRIETTA WIGGLESWORTH LODGE



After close to 40 years as a school social worker helping middle and high school students and their families navigate the challenges of adolescence, Henrietta retired in 2019, just before the pandemic changed everything. Her plans for travel were put on hold, but the opportunity to join ClassACT's communications committee that year came at a perfect time. "I have been passionate about making a difference for individuals, families, communities and the world since college. Being on the communication committee has provided me with a way to make a difference while staying home. I am pleased to be asked to become a member of ClassACT's Board and look forward to becoming more involved. I am convinced that ClassACT is a 'movement' for positive change to be duplicated across Harvard/Radcliffe classes and other institutions."

Henrietta grew up in Ipswich, MA and moved to New York in 1976. She has been married to Peter Lodge (Colgate '72) for 41 years. They have two sons, John (1983) and Ben (1988).

LGBTQ CIVIL RIGHTS: CLASSACT HR73 AND JUSTICEAID



Graphic by Pamela Garlick

CLASSACT FORUMS RETURN AGAIN THIS SPRING!

ClassACT Forums have been on a winter break, but we are gearing up to return this spring with a forum on LGBTQ youth: the many challenges they face, the policies that affect their lives, and the impact on their mental health, development and well-being. This forum is presented in conjunction with ClassACT partner JusticeAid. This year JusticeAid has chosen [SMYAL](#) as their beneficiary, and we are pleased to announce that an activist from SMYAL will be a member of our panel. **Dr. Harold Cottman '73**, a psychiatrist who has served members of the LGBTQ community and others who have been marginalized, will also be on the panel. The date, our moderator and other panelists are still in development. Later in the year we plan to present forums

on health, voting rights and our changing climate.

Classmates engaged in planning the first forum are: **Steve Milliken**, Founder of JusticeAid, **Therese Steiner**, ClassACT HR73 and JusticeAid board member, **Donna Brorby**, **Rick Brotman**, **Harold Cottman**, **Marion Dry**, **Sara Greenberg**, **Andrea Kirsh**, **Nancy Saarman**, **Lindsey Straus**, **Jacki Swearingen**, and **Sarah Ulerick**.

We hope you will join us for all of our 2022 forums. Stay tuned!

JUSTICEAID FOCUSES ON LGBTQ CIVIL RIGHTS

For 2022, JusticeAid will focus on LGBTQ civil rights, specifically the challenges faced by queer and trans youth who are often marginalized, criminalized, and dehumanized. JusticeAid's 2022 grantee-partner, Washington, D.C.-based SMYAL (Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders), creates opportunities for LGBTQ youth to build self-confidence, develop critical life skills, and engage their peers and community through service and advocacy. SMYAL's work includes mental-health counseling; after-school programming; teaching leadership, advocacy, and training skills; and providing housing for homeless youth (40% of homeless youth across the nation self-identify as queer.) Click [here](#) to learn more.



Photo from smyal.org

SAVE THE DATES: MAY 15TH & 16TH IN NYC MAY 15TH: JUSTICEAID/ RIVERSIDE CHURCH PUBLIC FORUM

For the fourth year in a row, JusticeAid is partnering with The Riverside Church in New York City to host a free program that spotlights JusticeAid's annual issue. This year's in-person Forum will center on the societal and legal challenges faced by LGBTQ youth, with music and other arts elements.

MAY 16TH: JUSTICEAID CONCERT AT CITY WINERY

CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF BESSIE SMITH

Not to be missed! Join classmates Steve Milliken, JusticeAid Co-Founder & CEO, and Therese Steiner, ClassACT HR73 and JusticeAid Board member, and lovers of justice, jazz and the blues, for an incredible night of music honoring “the Empress of the Blues,” Bessie Smith. The concert at the new home of City Winery in New York City will raise vital funds to support the work of SMYAL.

FEATURING LGBTQ ART & ARTISTS

Each month, JusticeAid is featuring films, artists and musicians that illuminate the LGBTQ experience, in the hopes that these works will spark conversation between friends, colleagues and family members, and deepen our understanding of queerness. [Check it out!](#)

BRIDGE UPDATES: OSILIGI HOPE FOUNDATION AND THE SALIH SELF DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Since we last heard from him in August, **David Weeks ‘73** reports that progress has been made on his projects with the Maasai community in the district of Narok, about a three-hour drive southwest of Nairobi, Kenya. He and his partner and former student, Kikanae Punyua, have constructed a medical dispensary, the Osiligi (Hope) Medical Dispensary, for emergency care and to support the childbirth needs of women. In addition, they have almost completed the construction of a facility that will house a pharmacy, dentist’s office, vision center and lab for the making of traditional Maasai medicine to complement western medicine. They have received a \$5,000 grant from the Fund for the Future of Our Children Foundation in Washington, D.C., but still need an additional \$20,000 to complete construction. Following the construction, a wish list of equipment needs will be developed.

As part of his overall vision for the community, David is now in the process of working with an architect on a design for a small hospital ward to provide a residential facility for staff and patients. He has already established a MOU with the Narok Health Department which has staffed and made the Osiligi (Hope) Medical Dispensary operational. The Narok Health Department is expected to also support the pharmacy/dental/vision center and the hospital ward, once completed.

When the three medical facilities are complete, David hopes to see a community center constructed to support traditional Maasai song and dance school competitions and presentations to tourists, to house artifacts from their proud past and to provide a display and marketing room for the beaded handicrafts of the women. He is involved with the Fair Trade Movement and has been supporting the Osiligi Women’s Craft Cooperative and selling their beaded jewelry in Maryland.

Please see David's [GoFundMe site](#) for further information about projects and the history of his association with this Maasai community in Kenya.

In addition to his work in Kenya, David is involved with the establishment of the Salih Self Development Center in Ghana. Along with another former student, Ibrahim (Anyars) Salih, David has developed a 501(c)3 to help support the Center to address the needs of the community in Kumasi. A sewing vocational training program and a computer design program have been developed to provide valuable skills to the youth in the Aboabo township. Ibrahim has also been consulting with Kumasi government officials who have wanted to provide more vocational training in the industrial arts: plumbing, electrical, carpentry, automotive and computer. Since the programs take place on rented property, David and his team have wanted to establish a centralized Salih Self Development Center. Land has been purchased on the outskirts of Kumasi, a well has been dug and plans have been drawn for the construction of the center. The design for the facility will be large enough to provide the support being sought by the Kumasi government. David also hopes to establish a MOU with the Kumasi government to assist in staffing this facility upon completion. It is estimated to cost \$500,000.



Salih Center for Self Development building plans, from David Weeks '73

Essential to the work of David's projects in Kenya and Ghana are his former students. In Kenya, former student Kikanae Punyua graduated from the University of Maryland with an economics degree and is presently studying for his MBA at a university in Nairobi while working at a hotel in Narok. He lives in Narok with his wife and two daughters. In Ghana, Ibrahim (Anyars) Salih graduated from Hood College with a business degree and is presently working with a company in San Diego and living there with his wife and daughter.

Please check out both websites to gain a better appreciation of what David and his former students have been doing:

- [Osiligi Hope Foundation](#)
- [Salih Center for Self Development](#)

UPDATE ON GERRYMANDERING



Video by Rick Brotman '73

Last June, ClassACT HR73 presented an eye-opening forum on gerrymandering featuring our classmates **Ryan O'Connell** and **Jim Harbison**. Here is an 18-minute video update, shot by **Rick Brotman '73**, in which, interviewed by **Jacki Swearingen '73**, Jim and Ryan provide timely analysis on the current state of gerrymandering in the nation. Click the image of the video and you can watch it on our youtube page!

If you missed the original forum, click on this [link](#) to view it.

Also, here is the link to the [Primer on Gerrymandering](#).

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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