

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



Achieving Change Together

March 2022 ClassACTions Newsletter

At long last it is March, which in the wintry climes brings warmth, and light. Long-dormant trees and lawns are dotted with pale green. During this terrible winter, we have held our breath waiting for such signs of spring, and even more, hope. As we at ClassACT HR73 continue to discover, often such signs reveal themselves at the grass roots. (See next item on New Orleans.) It is a reminder that, even when it is cold and bleak, we must continue our work. The light will come.

THE BRIDGES OF NEW ORLEANS

Click below to view the video by **Rick Brotman '73**



Video by **Rick Brotman '73**, image from *Roots of Music*

New Orleans is the home of jazz and gumbo—and of two of ClassACT HR73's Bridges, both focused on young people: The Roots of Music, and Ole and Nu

Fellas Social Aid and Pleasure Club. Classmate and Board Member **Rick Weil**, an associate professor of sociology at Louisiana State University, has been doing informal field research. “New Orleans is a lab for ClassACT and for sociologists,” Rick says. Invoking the concept of social capital, he explains, “Social capital means community cohesion. It is how community people go out and change the world, which is what we’re trying to do from our approach in ClassACT.” Roots of Music and Ole Fellas each provide mentorship. “It’s what I call grass-roots mentoring,” says Rick. “The grass-roots mentors come from the same neighborhood as the kids. They’re not trying to bring external ideas. They are trying to use the kids’ own desires and the kids’ own culture to build up their own pride and self-confidence. They can give the kids strength and say, ‘You can do this.’” For more about our Bridges in the Big Easy, including comments from Roots founder Derrick Tabb and Ole and Nu Fellas founder Sue Press, see the video above, created by classmate **Rick Brotman**.

**CLASSACT HR73 PRESENTS:
A CONVERSATION ON RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE**

Wednesday, March 16, 7:30-8:45pm ET

[Register here](#)

**CLASSACT HR73 PRESENTS:
A CONVERSATION ON RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE**
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16TH, 7:30PM ET

EVAN THOMAS **ROGER MYERSON** **MARK CANSIAN**

ClassACT 

ClassACT HR73 invites you to an in depth conversation about the Russian war against Ukraine. Noted historian and former Washington Bureau Chief for Newsweek **Evan Thomas '73** will lead a discussion with Nobel Prize winning economist **Roger Myerson '73** and international security expert and retired Marine Colonel **Mark Cancian '73**. Drawing on their knowledge of Ukraine’s past tragedies and its immediate crisis, these panelists will analyze the current state of the war from military, political and economic perspectives. Questions they are likely to consider include: What were Vladimir Putin’s and his Russian Army’s objectives when they invaded this sovereign democratic nation? Why has the Russian Army performed so badly

in the early stages of this war? Will Ukraine's army and its citizens continue to resist despite the gap in air power and other resources? What are the prospects for peace and the dangers of a protracted war? What will the economic consequences of this war and unprecedented Western sanctions be for Russia, Europe, the United States and the rest of the world? The plight of the millions of Ukrainian refugees who have fled the bombing of their homes, schools and hospitals lies at the heart of concerns about the war's impact, a humanitarian crisis the panelist are certain to address.

After a 40 minute conversation these experts will open the floor to questions from the audience.

This Zoom conversation is open to everyone. Please share this invitation with anyone you know who is deeply concerned about the fate of the Ukrainian people and global stability.

LGBTQ YOUTH RIGHTS: PROTECTING THE QUEER FRONTIER

Thursday, April 7, 7-8:30pm ET

[Register here](#)



From top left, clockwise: Taz Jones, Li Nowlin-Sohl, Jorge Membreño, and Alana Jochum. Photos courtesy of the panelists.

For young people who identify as LGBTQ, these are perilous times. Adolescence and young adulthood for them often mean conflicts with family, classmates, and community members who cannot accept who they are. The results of this intolerance can be depression and anxiety, homelessness, and even suicide. Now, along with these stresses, young trans and queer people are confronting a global pandemic and renewed assaults on their rights in states like Texas, Florida and Ohio.

In our upcoming ClassACTForum, we examine the challenges LGBTQ youth face and the ways that advocates, friends and families can offer support. Join us on Thursday, April 7, from 7:00 – 8:30PM ET for LGBTQ Youth Rights: Protecting the Queer Frontier. Our co-sponsor for this ClassACT HR73 forum is JusticeAid, a non-profit founded by HR73 classmate Stephen Milliken, that raises money through music concerts to aid organizations working for justice and equality. This spring JusticeAid is focusing on [SMYAL](#) (Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocate Leaders), a Washington D.C. organization that mentors LGBTQ youth and provides housing and mental health services as well.

Our moderator will be **Tazewell Jones**, a JusticeAid board member and an attorney who has fought against injustice since law school when he volunteered for Lambda Legal Alliance and the Innocence Project. Our panel will include **Li Nowlin-Sohl**, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union's LGBTQ Rights team which works to ensure transparency, accountability and adequate mental health treatment in jails and prisons. Li will be joined by **Jorge Membreño**, a social worker who has helped to provide clinical services and housing for youth and families in Brookline and Washington, and who now serves as deputy executive director of SMYAL. Our final panelist is **Alana Jochum**, the executive director of Equality Ohio and a co-chair of Equality Federation's Board of Directors, which advocates in State Houses across the country to safeguard LGBTQ rights.

FROM CLASSACT TO CLASSES ACT





ClassACT HR73 continues to facilitate discussion with ten other Harvard classes about the ClassACT model. Several have developed their own ClassACT organizations. Others are less formal, but are working on various approaches for engaging their classmates in creating positive change.

A multi-class work group met on February 8th. ClassACT HR73 also presented the ClassACT model to a small group of leaders from additional classes during a Zoom call on February 16th. This session was organized by the Harvard Alumni Association. There are good prospects for some of these classes to join our multi-class discussions, to which any class is welcome.

Upcoming multi-class activities include a cross-class information-sharing session about strategies for addressing climate change and other environmental issues; a separate session addressing strategies for building systems to communicate with classmates; and the further development of a multi-class “toolbox” that provides supportive materials, such as sample governance documents and a guide to development of Zoom Forums. The ClassACT approach is to build a community of interested classes that will collaborate and freely share their experiences and the tools they develop.

TARGET: CLIMATE CHANGE



The Climate Change and Environment Working Group met on February 9 with a renewed sense of energy and engagement. Led by classmates **Anne MacKinnon** and **Bill Hedden**, a myriad of topics were discussed including the rights of nature, the Methane Rule (in November, the EPA proposed new

regulations to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas industry), how to finance climate change, and E.O. Wilson's Half-Earth Project, a call to protect half the land and sea in order to manage sufficient habitat to reverse the species extinction crisis and ensure the long-term health of our planet. The group will meet again this month with the hope of narrowing down to a specific topic that will appeal and excite a significant number of classmates.

If you are interested in joining this group, please email us at classacthr73@gmail.com.

FOCUS ON HEALTHCARE



Graphic by Rick Brotman '73

The Healthcare Working Group met on March 2nd for a brainstorming session in an effort to revitalize the group. Led by classmates **Vivian Lewis** (a ClassACT HR73 board member) and **Debbie Winn**, the group discussed various topics that they were interested in pursuing, including access to health care, mental health and emotional well-being, and global health. The group is looking to reconvene later this month to continue its discussions.

If you are interested in joining this group, please email us at classacthr73@gmail.com.

SAVE THE DATE: Two Great JusticeAid Events in New York City!

.....

JUSTICEAID AND RIVERSIDE CHURCH PUBLIC FORUM:

Erasure - The Otherization of Queerness

May 15th, 4pm ET



Image from justiceaid.org

For the fourth year in a row, JusticeAid and The Riverside Church of New York will present a free public forum on issues related to civil and human rights. This year's forum Erasure - The Otherization of Queerness, focusing on understanding the challenges for LGBTQ youth, will include a keynote speaker, a panel on how discrimination of LGBTQ youth can lead to disenfranchisement, homelessness and criminalization, and a celebratory musical performance by the Resistance Revival Chorus. The Forum will take place in the nave of the historic Riverside Church (490 Riverside Drive, NYC) and will also be live-streamed across the country. Click [here](#) for more information!

JUSTICEAID CONCERT: Bessie Smith! Empress of the Blues

May 16, 7pm ET



Bessie Smith, photo credit: Bettman/Corbis

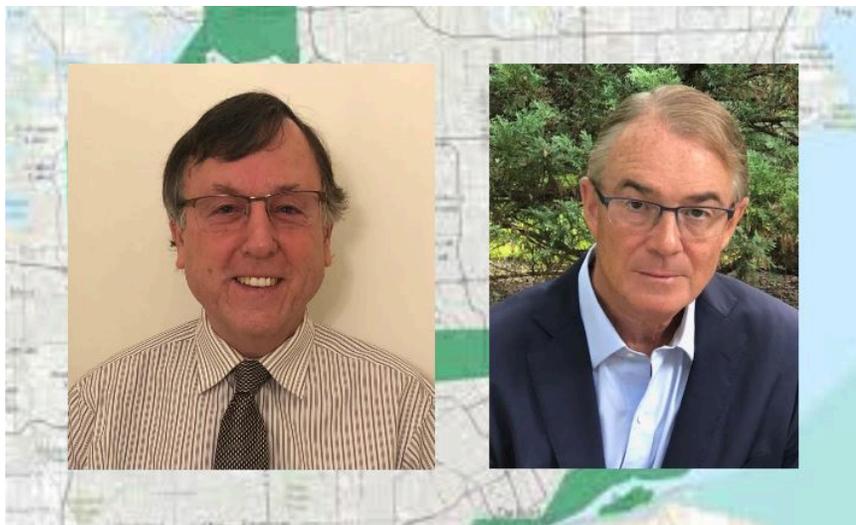
The next evening, JusticeAid hosts an unforgettable evening of live music by celebrated contemporary artists in a tribute to Bessie Smith. The evening includes a three-course dinner plus the concert at the new City Winery venue in Chelsea: 25 11th Avenue at 15th Street, NYC. Your host for the evening will be Emmy Award Winner, Sirius/XM Satellite radio broadcaster and musicologist, Mark Ruffin. Performing artists include: Paula Cole with Chris Bruce & Ross Gallagher, Valerie Simpson, Nona Hendryx, Terri Lyne Carrington, Madeleine Peyroux, Allan Harris, Morely, Chris Bergson and Ellis Hooks.

100% of ticket sales and sponsorships will provide unrestricted support for SMYAL (Supporting Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders), JusticeAid's 2022 grantee partner. Sponsorships, tables for groups, and individual tickets will be available soon through JusticeAid.org.

SOME GOOD NEWS ON GERRYMANDERING:

From Jim Harbison and Ryan O'Connell

We provided an extensive update on Gerrymandering and Voter Suppression in the February ClassACT Newsletter through a [video interview](#) conducted by Rick Brotman and Jacki Swearingen. Here are recent developments.



Jim Harbison and Ryan O'Connell

As of the last week in February, 42 states had adopted their districting plans for the 2022 House race, although more than a dozen plans are facing

challenges in court. With the 2022 state primaries close at hand, politicians have been scurrying to redraw voting districts to take into account the 2020 census numbers. They are focusing on the creation of new districts in areas with a growing population and the elimination of districts in areas where the number of voters has been shrinking. This has led to much creative use of the new tools that enable precise gerrymandering, down to the precinct level.

Not surprisingly, the overall trend has been that in states where the legislature carries out the redistricting (the case in most states), the gerrymandering has benefited the dominant political party. Since Republicans control more legislatures, you would expect that the net gains overall to be greater for the G.O.P. than for Democrats. But in fact, the Democrats have been able to tilt things their way very effectively in the states where they call the shots, such as Illinois and New York. For their part, Republicans have used their redistricting power mostly to make existing Republican-controlled districts even more one-sided, to protect incumbents and keep those districts Republican-controlled well into the future, rather than trying to flip as many districts as possible in their favor right now.

In New York, an advisory commission whose members were split 50/50 between the two parties deadlocked and failed to propose a unified redistricting plan. Instead, each side presented its own plan, one drawn to the Democrats' advantage and the other to the Republicans'. The legislature, which is Democratic-controlled, ignored the two plans and drew up its own, which shifted three seats toward Democrats. Furthermore, the legislature did this in a rush, refusing to hold any public hearings to get input on the proposed maps...

[Click here to read the whole article](#)

IT'S "GO" TIME!



Marilyn Go '73, photo credit: New York Law Journal

Congratulations to classmate Marilyn Go, who has just been named as one of seven new members to the New York City Districting Commission, appointed by incoming mayor Eric Adams. The commission — comprised of seven members appointed by the mayor and eight members appointed by the City Council — will be tasked with redrawing council district boundaries in advance of the upcoming City Council elections in 2023. (Sound familiar, gerrymandering buffs?)

This is the latest entry in Marilyn's distinguished and trailblazing resume. A graduate of Harvard Law School ('77), in 1993 she was the first Asian-American woman appointed as a judge in federal court, serving until 2019 as United States Magistrate Judge for the Eastern District of New York. Marilyn began her career as a clerk for Court of Philadelphia Common Pleas Judge William Marutani. From 1978 to 1982 she worked as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Civil Division of the Eastern District of New York, then joined the law firm Baden Kramer Huffman Brodsky & Go, where she became a partner in 1984.

Says Marilyn of her newest post, "I was nominated by APA Voice, an Asian Pacific American voting advocacy group that I had joined as the representative of the Asian American Bar Association of New York. I had developed an interest in redistricting many years ago because of the absence of any elected Asian-American official in New York City or New York State through the early 2000s. In the 1980s and '90s, district lines cut through New York City Chinatown, where the largest concentration of Asians in NYC lived."

Like a lot of us who had thought that we were good and retired, Marilyn suddenly finds herself extremely busy. "Commissioners are not paid and perform services on a voluntary basis," she says. "So, I guess I can still claim I am retired, but I expect to be working very hard until at least the end of the year. I just signed my Oath of Office and expect to begin working with due deliberate speed."

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 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.](#)

