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ClassACT

Achieving Change Together

May ClassACTions Bulletin

This month we are shocked and dismayed by much of the news. We see terrible war crimes. Rights we thought were established are under attack. We learn about Harvard's deep human and financial involvement in slavery. The warming planet experiences devastating tornadoes, wildfires and plastic-filled oceans. A new COVID variant is identified. At times like this it's easy to have feelings of helplessness, anger, anxiety and even despair. It's similar to the end of April in 1970, when Nixon ordered US ground troops to invade Cambodia. But that event unleashed a redoubling of efforts and led, eventually, to the passage of the War Powers Act and the end to the war in Vietnam. Setbacks are inevitable, but they can be powerful motivators to create positive solutions. Class ACT HR73 urges you to "keep on keeping on" and together we can change the world.

JUSTICEAID UPDATES



Romare Bearden, Empress of the Blues

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase in part through the Luisita L. and Frank H. Denghausen

Endowment

We all remember dancing to Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Nona Hendryx's #1

hit *Lady Marmalade*. (“voulez-vous coucher avec moi, ce soir?”)

On May 16th at 7pm at New York’s City Winery, **Nona Hendryx**, a founding member of Patti LaBelle & the Blue Belles, joins with **Valerie Simpson** of Ashford and Simpson, breakout artist **Samara**, and other musical talents, to pay tribute and celebrate the music and life of Bessie Smith at JusticeAid’s 2022 spring concert, titled **Bessie! Empress of the Blues**. Emmy-Award broadcast journalist and Sirius/XM Satellite Radio personality **Mark Ruffin** will host.

100% of ticket sales and donations will go to support JusticeAid’s 2022 grantee-partner SMYAL. JusticeAid’s 2022 focus is on LGBTQ civil rights. SMYAL (Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders) empowers and uplifts lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth ages 6-24 through youth leadership, daily community programs, housing, mental-health services, and advocacy.

Bessie Smith used her magnificent voice and theatricality to pioneer the genre of blues music and propel it into popular culture. Her music empowered women to be fearless, to express their sexual freedom, and to understand that a working-class woman doesn’t need to alter her behavior to be worthy of respect. Indeed, her songs still live and breathe because they are relevant today.

Join in! For tickets, or make a donation and find additional information about the artists, [click here!](#)

Covid Protocol: Socially distanced tables, proof of vaccination required. Masks requested— except when enjoying dinner and vino!

CLASSACT HR73 BRIDGE UPDATE: WHITE PONY EXPRESS



Video created by **Rick Brotman '73**

As Americans watched in horror last March while Russian missiles slammed into Kiev and other Ukrainian cities, the members of White Pony Express noticed that a neighbor had begun to collect supplies in his garage for the refugees who were now streaming into Poland. Volunteers and staff at the Pleasant Hill, Ca. non-profit, which delivers food, clothing and other essentials throughout Contra Costa County, began bringing canned food and diapers to the neighbor to add to a hastily assembled supply line that managed to get necessities to Ukrainian troops and desperate civilians. Within a few weeks, WPE had grown its own network to deliver pallets of medical supplies, hygiene kits and clothing to Ukrainians on both sides of their country's borders.

“Our circle is large, the need was so dire,” said Eve Birge, executive director of WPE, which has become a model for repurposing food, reducing greenhouse gasses, and creating a “circle of giving” that honors those who receive as well as those who volunteer and donate.

- Cash donations earmarked for WPE’s Ukrainian relief efforts can be made [here](#).
- For those who want to purchase priority items on Amazon to be sent to WPE, the list is available [here](#).

“We would never give out food or clothing that was not the best quality,” said **Emily Karakashian ‘73**, who connected the non-profit with ClassACT’s Bridge Program. “It is a sense of unity. We are one family...”

[Click here for full article](#)

VOTING ACTIVISM OPPORTUNITIES



The Justice & Civic Engagement Committee of ClassACT HR73 has focused on promoting and protecting voters' rights as both a short-term initiative and a long-term project.

To encourage ClassACT HR73 members throughout the country to volunteer

with organizations committed to protecting voting rights, the Committee is creating a list of organizations for members to consider joining and supporting.

The organizations are nonpartisan non-profits, and focus on important aspects of voter engagement, including voter mobilization, registration, education and outreach.

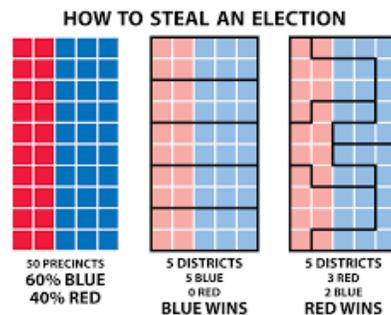
The J&CE Committee will launch this spreadsheet in the next few months, which will be posted on ClassACT HR73's website, and promoted in this bulletin, as well as on our social media channels. We hope that members of the ClassACT community will seize the Voting Activism Opportunities presented by the list and in doing so, help secure and promote our constitutional right to vote.

Special thanks to HR73 classmates **Marilyn Go, Ryan O'Connell** and **Jim Harbison**, and **Nini Cohen '79** for their work and dedication putting together this list.

As Archibald MacLeish aptly observed: "Democracy is never a thing done. Democracy is always something that a nation must be doing."

NEW YORK DEMOCRATS ARE HOISTED ON THEIR OWN GERRYMANDERING PETARD

Ryan O'Connell, Jim Harbison, and Marilyn Go



New York State's highest court has thrown out the electoral maps for Congressional and State Senate districts that Democrats had rammed through the legislature. The Democratic-controlled legislature had rejected maps drawn by an independent redistricting commission (IRC) and substituted its own maps.

The Court of Appeals ruled that the legislature had ignored the procedures in the State Constitution which required it to consider maps drawn by the IRC and had abused the map-drawing process through flagrant gerrymandering. The Court has appointed a special master to create new maps.

This decision has ramifications for politics on the national level as well as for

Congressional and State Senate races in the Empire State.

Democrats had hoped that the New York maps would allow their party to pick up several additional Congressional seats in the state and give them a better shot at maintaining their majority in Congress in the upcoming midterm elections. Democrats are keenly aware that Republicans have gerrymandered maps in many states and that the party in power generally fares poorly in midterm elections. However, the Court's decision may reduce or eliminate the party's opportunities for gaining seats in New York.

As background, in 2014, New York voters approved amendments to the state constitution that prohibited partisan and racial gerrymandering and established an advisory commission, the IRC, to draw maps for state-wide and Congressional election districts. Unfortunately, the reform suffered from several major flaws.

Truly independent commissions, such as California's, hold the power to draw maps, instead of the legislature. However, in New York the IRC could only make recommendations; the legislature retained final authority over maps.

There were other critical flaws: in New York, politicians appointed the members of the commission, and the commissioners were essentially split 50/50 between Democrats and Republicans.

Not surprisingly, with the New York commission composed of two partisan groups, the members deadlocked. Rather than compromising and proposing one set of maps, each side proposed its own maps.

Democratic lawmakers, who have super-majorities in both houses of the legislature, summarily rejected both sets of maps and developed their own. As the Court noted with disapproval, the Democrats drew their maps behind closed doors, refusing to hold any public hearings and rushing to approve the maps within days. The IRC had conducted public hearings throughout the state, as required by law.



CA Redistricting Illustration by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters; iStock

By contrast, in California, an impartial group vets candidates for the

redistricting commission, ensuring they do not have ties with politicians. Commissioners are divided equally among Democrats, Republicans and independents. This structure forces the Democrats and Republicans on the commission to woo their independent counterparts by making compromises. The process is highly transparent, with extensive public hearings.

The New York primary elections were scheduled for June 28, 2022. However, since it will take time for the special master to create new maps, the Court has moved the primary election for Congressional and State Senate races to August 23. The decision does not affect races for the State Assembly.

HR73 PRE-50TH REUNION IN OHIO



Bob Dohner, Kathryn Tolbert Dohner, John Noran, Carl Muller, Nick Sakellariadis, Marion Dry, Patty Potter, Therese Steiner, Janet O'Connell, Ryan O'Connell, and George Putnam at the Dayton Dragons park suite

HR73 classmates assembled in Ohio for the first of many pre-50th reunion gatherings around the country. The weekend began in Dayton where “Take me out to the ballgame” was the theme.

Hosted by **Nick** and **Julie Sakellariadis**, **Ken Bartels** and **Jane Condon**, and **Allison** and **Carl Muller**, we cheered on the Dayton Dragons for a [double-header](#), and sipped mint juleps while watching the Kentucky Derby on screen in the owner’s box between games. Nick led us on a tour of the park and we had plenty of time to share stories, meals, and laughter. **Fred Bartenstein**, former executive director of the [Dayton Foundation](#), took some of us on a wonderful tour of Dayton that included views of poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar’s home; the Wright Brothers’ airplane factory, bike shop, and homestead; and a walk through the Grotto Garden (designed as a healing place for Civil War veterans) on the grounds of the [American Veterans Heritage Center](#). Each evening in Dayton ended with a trip to the local Graeter’s ice cream parlor for more fun and great ice cream.



Marion Dry, Therese Steiner, Dan Hoffheimer, Jane Condon, Bob Dohner, Patty Potter, Ken Bartels, Kathryn Tolbert Dohner, George Putnam, Janet, O'Connell, Ryan O'Connell, Carl Muller, Allison Muller, Nick Sakellariadis at NURFC

On Sunday we all traveled to Cincinnati, where we spent the day at the [National Underground Railroad Freedom Center](#) situated downtown on the Ohio River.

Our hosts, ClassACT HR73 board members **Dan Hoffheimer** (a founder of NURFC), and **Marion Dry**, organized a docent tour, followed by lunch at the Moerlein Lager House. Many of us returned to NURFC after lunch to see more of the museum on our own and to experience a moving film about the underground railroad.



Patty Potter, Marion Dry, Fred Bartenstein, Nick Sakellariadis, and Therese Steiner at the Grotto Gardens at the National Veterans Heritage

Center in Dayton

Over the weekend we deepened friendships and made new ones as we shared stories about college and our lives, participated in two great American sports traditions, learned new things about our history, and experienced the joy of being together again.

Look for notices in your inboxes about more pre-reunion events around the country. This one was in the “pre-season,” so expect the next invitations to start rolling out in the fall and keep on coming right through the spring till just before our 50th. All classmates are invited to every single one of these, so don’t feel that you need to wait for one in your local area. If the spirit moves you, come to a bunch of them. They are lots of fun!

HR73 SHARES COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES WITH OTHER CLASSACTS

May 18th @2pm ET



Photo from criminallyprolific.com

We are excited that there are several other Harvard classes in various stages of developing their own ClassACTs! On May 18th at 2pm, the communications committee of ClassACT HR73 will host a zoom session in order to share our strategies for communicating about our efforts and accomplishments over the past 9 years. Highlights will include committee formation, bulletin and newsletter writing and distribution, and the use of social media. We will also welcome ideas, questions, and suggestions from all participants. If you are interested in attending this meeting, please contact classacthr73@gmail.com for a zoom link.

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

