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Achieving Change Together

September ClassACTions Newsletter

For many of us, September brings the real New Year. This rhythm was established during childhood, when a new school year began. So it continues into our eighth decade. Often we have spent the summer months in a holding and recharging pattern. Now we return rededicated, faces scrubbed and pencils sharpened, and it's a good thing: In these final months before our 50th reunion—our senior term, so to speak—more than ever ClassACT needs your aid in changing, repairing and healing the world. This newsletter suggests many ways you can help. Please join us!

[Register here!](#)

CALLING ALL CLASSMATES: OUR 50TH REUNION VIDEO SERIES

The idea was born, as are so many things, in the fertile mind of classmate **Rick Brotman**. ClassACT's video guru, Rick pondered how he could provide a dual celebration: first, telling the stories of those in our organization who continue to work toward a more equitable, responsible and engaged community; and second, of our impending 50th reunion. The result: an ambitious ClassACT video series illustrating the stories of how our classmates are working towards positive change in their communities, the nation and the world.

To kick things off, Rick assigned ClassACT Communications Committee staffers to seek out likely candidates and interview them via Zoom. The earliest efforts have rolled in and they are available for viewing below.



*Videos created by **Rick Brotman '73***

With the series, says Rick, “we have the opportunity to check in with what we’ve done and how we’ve done it—with ClassACT HR73 being the glue.” (Think of it as a Video Red Book.) Credit the pandemic for providing the format. “Zoom changes the game!” says Rick. “During COVID, we all became much more engaged. We couldn’t have done this two years ago. And we have a team!!! It could become a collective.”

Nominations will remain open indefinitely. In addition to honoring classmates we already know, we hope to discover the good works of others as well. As we approach the 50th reunion, the project will help us learn more about the Class of ‘73 and focus our conversation on how ClassACT can support these types of activities. Our Bridge program has provided a starting point for this project, but we know there are more classmates out there who are promoting positive change.

If you would like to be interviewed about a project you are doing (don’t be shy!) or an organization you are affiliated with, please fill out the form below and someone from the ClassACT HR73 team will get back to you. (Feel free to nominate others that you know of.)

[Click here for the self nomination form!](#)

How many videos will we end up with? The notion of “50 for 50” has been floated, but really, there is no limit.

“We grew up in a tumultuous time and it imprinted on us the importance of making a difference,” says Rick. “This becomes part of the thread for the reunion, and consequently the thread for ClassACT afterward. I see the conversation as becoming more interesting as we go along.”

VOTER SUPPRESSION POST FORUM NOTE



Thanks to all who attended our ClassACT HR73 **Forum Voter Suppression: A Cancer in Our Body Politic** on September 12, 2022.

John Lewis, the great civil rights leader who almost lost his life on the Edmund Pettus Bridge fighting for voting rights, once said:

The vote is precious. It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democratic society and we must use it.

Moderator **E.J. Dionne '73**, the renowned Washington Post columnist and Distinguished University Professor at Georgetown University, led an enlightening and energizing discussion about the newest barriers to voting this November and the ways to overcome them. Joining him was an eminent

panel that included **Rep. Joaquin Castro, HLS '00**, the Democratic Representative for the 20th Congressional District of Texas; **Cecile Scown '81**, a civil rights attorney who is president of the League of Women Voters of Florida; **Michael Waldman**, president of the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law; and **Samuel Spital '00, HLS '04**, Director of Litigation at the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.

“The democratic psyche has taken a real beating in the last few years,” said Rep. Castro. “I would ask folks not to give in to cynicism, not to be paralyzed by fear of the future and to continue to vote and to encourage their friends and family members to vote. We can beat back this wave of authoritarianism and creeping fascism we see if we continue to vote.”

Together the panelists examined such crises as the legislation in some states which restricts the ways that citizens can vote at polling stations or by absentee ballot as well as the purging of voting rolls and the harassment of some registered voters, tactics that are often designed to target minority voters. They warned against the deliberate spreading of misinformation about candidates and the voting process. Looking toward upcoming elections, the panelists expressed concerns about both policy proposals and pending court cases at the state and federal level that would give state legislatures the power to determine voting outcomes. They also worried about the alarming number of candidates on ballots across the country who deny the results of the 2020 presidential election and might try to interfere with vote-counting in the 2024 election.

In their calls to action the panelists urged listeners to participate in the electoral process by volunteering to register voters, by reminding citizens to vote and then helping them get to the polls. They encouraged listeners to join civic action groups like the League of Women Voters that are already working to ensure the fairness of this fall’s elections. Finally, the panelists urged the audience to correct election disinformation at every opportunity and to speak out for the preservation of democracy in conversations with family and friends.

“If you don’t do it, if you don’t defend democracy, it is not going to be defended,” E.J. Dionne said at the conclusion of the stirring event.

At the forum’s end ClassACT HR’73 Chair Marion Dry underscored the importance of finding ways to “get out the vote.” These include signing up at the precinct level as a poll worker

or using digital devices and phones to connect with multiple efforts directed at battleground states like Georgia and Wisconsin. ClassACT HR73 has compiled a [list of civic action groups](#) as well as [voter suppression techniques](#) and how to help combat them.

Classmates who are lawyers can also volunteer for Election Protection, which trains volunteers to help eligible voters across the country cast their ballots and have them counted. Those without legal experience can volunteer as poll monitors. You can click [here](#) to learn more about both opportunities.

In a few days, ClassACT HR73 will share videos of the complete forum, shorter topical segments, and relevant audience suggestions. To broaden your understanding, we also share an extensive list of resources, organized by topic. Please take time to review this material with care and share it with others.

Thank you to our extraordinary panelists, Rep. Joaquin Castro, Cecile Scoon, Michael Waldman and Samuel Spital, and to our moderator E.J. Dionne, for his depth of knowledge about politics and his love of democracy, and for the powerful discussion he led on defending every citizen's right to vote.

OCTOBER FORUM UPDATE:

HALF-EARTH: CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY FROM THE DEEP SEA TO MT. EVEREST

Thursday, October 20th, 7-8:30pm EDT

[Click here to register!](#)



Image from <https://www.half-earthproject.org/>

In his 2016 book *Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life*, Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson (1929-2021) proposed that half of Earth's surface, both terrestrial and marine, be designated as a natural reserve to safeguard the remaining biodiversity of the planet, including ourselves. Today about one-sixth of land and one-twelfth of marine areas receive (on paper) protection of the kind Wilson envisioned. Tough economic, social, political, and psychological forces work to impede any further expansion of protection.

During the coming year panel discussions among HR73 classmates who have worked towards environmental conservation and in related fields, along with current Harvard faculty, will explore the background, merits, and feasibility of "Half-Earth." These conversations will lead, we hope, to collective action and to exciting activities at our 50th Reunion.

ClassACT HR73 invites everyone to register below for the initial Zoom Forum, which aims to scope the challenges we face in the protection of Nature. We are proud to announce that this Forum will feature five classmates: moderators **Jesse Ausubel** (oceans) and **John Kress** (tropical forests), plus **Brot Coburn** (mountains), **Sharon Tisher** (rivers), and **Deane Wang** (temperate ecosystems). We hope you can participate.

JUSTICEAID AND RIVERSIDE CHURCH FORUM: ERASURE: THE OTHERNESS OF QUEERNESS

SEPTEMBER 18TH, 4PM
RIVERSIDE CHURCH, 490 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, NEW YORK, NY (free)



Photo courtesy of JusticeAid

We all know and love someone who identifies as LGBTQ... but how much do we really know about the issues confronting their community and freedoms as Americans?

Please join JusticeAid on September 18th, @4pm for the JusticeAid and Riverside Church Public Forum: "Erasure: The Otherization of Queerness."

The forum will be held in the historic nave at The Riverside Church of New York, 490 Riverside Drive, and be live-streamed. The forum is free and open to the public.

With so much anti-gay rhetoric and at least 22 anti-gay state laws passed this year, JusticeAid believes that raising awareness about LGBTQ rights is among the most pressing social justice causes today.

Emmy and Peabody award-winning journalist/media creator and LGBTQ activist Imara Jones will set the stage for a panel discussion, "Freedom to Be Queer," exploring how discrimination, especially for LGBTQ youth, is setting in motion an arc of intolerance that can cause depression, anxiety, and isolation from their families, schoolmates, and society at large. Rep. Ritchie Torres (D -NY15), an openly gay member of Congress, will speak to the current culture of anti-LGBTQ legislation in America and what it means for the future of LGBTQ human and civil rights.

Rev. Bertram Johnson, Chaplain at Union Theological Center, will moderate a panel including Charles King, Housing Works ED; Cayenne Doroshow, Trans activist, Founder and Executive Director founder G.L.I.T.S.; and Jorge Membreno, Deputy Executive Director, SMAYL—JusticeAid's 2022 grantee-partner.

Musical performances by The Resistance Revival Chorus and jazz pianist Matthew Whitaker will help us celebrate openness, acceptance, and tolerance.

If you can't attend in person, just RSVP and JusticeAid will send you a reminder and the link to the livestream. [Please RSVP here.](#)

Please share with friends and colleagues!

[**For additional information, CLICK HERE.**](#)

KIDS CARE EVERYWHERE BRIDGE

AND DR. RONALD DIECKMANN



*Click above to view the video, created by **Rick Brotman '73***

Providing pediatricians in the world's poorest countries with the most recent medical information at no cost has been the mission of **Dr. Ronald Dieckmann '73**. Dr. Dieckmann, who recently joined the ClassACT HR73 Board, launched KidsCareEverywhere in 2006 to bring clinical decision software to doctors in low-income countries. The free software provided by EBSCO Publishing of Ipswich, Ma. allows these physicians to access life-saving recommendations with the touch of an app. To date, KidsCareEverywhere teams have traveled to 26 countries, among them India and Ghana, to train more than 10,000 pediatricians, nurses and pharmacists. Despite pandemics, floods, and conflict, Dr. Dieckmann and the volunteers of this critical ClassACT HR73 Bridge continue to empower these health care providers to access the same clinical methods and research data upon which their counterparts in wealthier countries rely.

Please click above to view a short video, and read more about KidsCareEverywhere and how members of ClassACT HR73 and others can provide needed expertise to the organization in the article by **Jacki Swearingen '73** below!

[Click here for the full article!](#)

OUR NEWEST BBLP FELLOW



*Click above to watch video, created by **Rick Brotman '73***

Laila Khondkar is ClassACT HR73's Benazir Bhutto Leadership Fellow for the 2022-23 academic year. Originally from Bangladesh, she will be studying for her Mid-Career Masters in Public Administration in the Mason Fellows Program at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. She is our fifth BBLP Fellow. (Her arrival was delayed two years by the pandemic.)

Laila holds degrees from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and the International Institute of Social Studies in the Hague, Netherlands. She has conducted research on public health issues at Harvard's Center for International Development, the Africa Center for Health and Population Studies (South Africa), and the Institute of Population and Social Research at Thailand's Mahidol University.

Laila has two decades of experience in international development. She has spent 14 years with Save the Children in Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea and Liberia, and in the organization's offices in Melbourne and London. Now, she says, "I wanted to take a step back in my life and reflect on what I wanted to do in the next phase of my career." Among the areas she is pondering are climate change, children's rights, gender equality and digital governance—particularly how we can benefit from the positive aspects of technology.

We plan to hold events at which you can get an opportunity to meet Laila. For now, she says, for making this fellowship possible, "I would like to thank all of you from the bottom of my heart."

[Click here to learn more about the BBLP](#)

THANKS, PART ONE



Ellen Faran '73, Bridge Sponsor for the Cole Resource Center

*A letter from classmate **Ellen Faran**, president, CFO and sponsor of the Cole Resource Center, a ClassACT HR73 Bridge Partner:*

Just a note to say thank you for the warm welcome that ClassACT has given to the Cole Resource Center.

Our launch in the [August bulletin](#) was excellent. I've received many comments on both the excellent article by **Jacki Swearingen** and the moving video by **Rick Brotman**. Already one classmate made a donation to CRC!

My first two connections with classmates, thanks to your referrals, have been outstanding. Fred Bartenstein's comments and questions on this stage of a

nonprofit organization's growth were insightful. One hour with Fred completely sharpened my thinking about our next steps. **Lenny Easter** immediately grasped our legal issues and knew exactly what was needed for improving our policies and practices. He is great at explaining the purposes and protections that underlie the legal specifics. Lenny generously offered to handle the updating of our very outdated corporate documents himself and that process is well underway.

Thank you both for making all this happen! The support of the ClassACT community is actually transformative to my motivation for this work. Lonely no more.

THANKS, PART TWO

ClassACT Board member **Leigh Hafrey** helped arrange for 250 students from the United Nations Association of Greater Boston's Summer Institute in Global Leadership Program to spend time at MIT, where Leigh is a senior lecturer. Here is a note from Emma Bezla, education director at UNAGB (one of our Bridges):

As we bring UNAGB's Summer Institute in Global Leadership Program to a close for 2022, I've been reflecting with gratitude on how instrumental you were in making our programming happen! Thank you so much for taking all of my emails and calls as we made sure that all the details were perfect for our young delegates. Your help really did make all of the difference.

I know that navigating the logistics around young guests on campus can be a challenge (even before COVID!) so I really appreciate all that you did to ensure that they had the opportunity to learn in such a beautiful and safe space.

Here is a photo of our students at MIT!



Photo courtesy of UNAGB

Over the course of the summer, we were able to work with over 250 students across multiple locations. This would not have been possible without your

help.

[Click here to read more about UNAGB's Summer Institute](#)

FROM WHITE PONY EXPRESS TO THE WHITE HOUSE



(R-Clockwise) U.S. Rep. James P. McGovern (D-MA) discusses operations Thursday with White Pony Express officials Pete Olsen, Eve Birge, Gary Bostick, Gwendolyn Hamilton, Robert Carpenter, and Mindy Bush. (Ray Saint Germain/Bay City News)

What was Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Massachusetts) doing dumpster-diving outside the headquarters of Bridge organization White Pony Express in Pleasant Hill, Cal.? As classmate sponsor **Emily Karakashian** reports, the vice chairman of the House Hunger Caucus was performing due diligence on White Pony Express's food distribution methods in advance of the impending White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health. The link below reports on McGovern's investigation into how hummus stays fresh enough after collection to be safely redistributed.

[Click here for the article!](#)

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.

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