Addressing Pandemics Through a Chorus of Voices

Susan Mapp¹ · Shirley Gatenio Gabel²

Published online: 7 December 2020
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As this writing in October 2020, we are well into the COVID pandemic with no clear signs of progress. While some countries have done well in controlling the spread and responding quickly to new pockets of infection, others have seen it roar back when it had appeared to be waning. Our own country, the USA, continues to lack a coordinated approach and fears of a worsening situation abound as winter approaches.

The pandemic has exposed social cracks due to human rights violations around the world, as they all seem to have been exacerbated by the pandemic: poverty, intimate partner violence, child maltreatment, education, and mental health are just a few examples. The UN has found that global poverty is rising for the first time in over 20 years as approximately 71 million people are expected to be newly pushed into extreme poverty (United Nations, 2020).

It is clear that COVID-19, poverty, violence, and many more social issues cannot be addressed in silos as each is related to the other, and one country's response affects the force and course of an issue beyond that country. The only way to address them effectively is together as a global community—together as a broad chorus of voices. In our last issue, we noted our priority as editors-in-chief of this journal to help de-colonize academic scholarship and to support the publication of voices not often heard, especially in US-based journals. We are very proud that this issue already reflects that priority. Our authors are from a broad range of areas of the world: Hungary, India, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, Ghana, South Africa, and Canada, while our sole US author is an MSW student.

Their articles are on a broad range of topics. The first two pieces relate to issues faced by non-dominant racial groups. While racial profiling by law enforcement has received a

great deal of attention in the USA, Giwa, Mullings, Adjei, and Karki extend that analysis to Canada, lamenting the lack of social work research and attention to this vital issue, while Smith Ahern looks at food sovereignty issues in the USA given the historical use of food control as a method of social control.

The next four articles explore issue related to children, starting with Mohammed and Nooraini reporting on their qualitative study that explored potential precursors to rape in juvenile offenders in Malaysia. Muridzo and Chikadzi move us to the continent of Africa by exploring the Victim Friendly System for survivors of sexual abuse in Zimbabwe and factors that keep it from reaching its full potential. Sarfo, Yendork, and Naidoo look at effective methods of working with married girls in Ghana, and Ninkov, writing from Hungary, analyzes the education of gifted children by comparing the approach of countries in Eastern Europe with those in Western Europe and elsewhere.

Grudziewska and Mikołajczyk keep us in Eastern Europe through their study examining the personal dignity of those with disabilities in Poland, while Dutta rounds out this issue with a “Human Rights in Action” piece discussing the importance of aligning the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights with internal frameworks in India.

We continue to urge our readers and partners to work together to support those voices less heard and issues that do not receive enough attention. Human rights as well as our social work values require us to work together in such a fashion, and it is the only way forward to a world based on human rights.

✉ Susan Mapp
mapps@etown.edu

Shirley Gatenio Gabel
gateniogabe@fordham.edu

¹ Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA, USA

² Fordham University, New York, NY, USA

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