Turning the Calendar Page to a New Era

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At this writing in late Spring 2021, COVID vaccines are rolling out and, in some nations, are now widely available. However, this progress is uneven across nations, both within and between them, with poorer nations and peoples once again being left behind in the global race to vaccination. This issue of the journal sees the publication of the first articles related to our ongoing call for papers related to COVID-19 and human rights. Much like the pandemic itself, we do not expect to see human rights issues related to it resolved in the near future.

For example, in one of these articles examining the impact of COVID-19, Libal et al. examine the impact of the pandemic on forced migration, where countries around the world, even those countries who had been traditionally welcoming, have erected barriers to those seeking safety outside of their national borders. However, in all times of crisis, it is also the potential for massive progress. Yingling explores this potential in her article on how the pandemic can open up the possibility of passing universal health insurance in the USA. On another front, one of President Biden's initiatives in the US is a massive infrastructure bill to include access to broadband in an effort to overcome the "digital divide," which as Sanders and Scanlon remind us is a human rights issue as well. For those sent to work or learn from home during the pandemic, the necessity of affordable, accessible, and reliable internet access and up-to-date equipment was made glaringly obvious. The internet and social media tools can also be used to help fight back against human rights abuses, such as in Nigeria during the anti-SARS protests, as noted by Ekoh and George in their Letter to the Editor.

Recent years have also laid bare long-festering issues of social injustice, including within social work itself. Brantley et al. educate us about three important human rights events

in social work history that have been excluded from our teachings: the Combahee River Collective, the Black settlement house movement, and the Compton's Cafeteria Disturbance. Continuing with educating us about history that has been suppressed since it focuses on those who are oppressed, Clarke explores forced sterilization of indigenous women in Canada as a method of genocide. However, it is not truly accurate to call it history since the last known instance occurred in 2018.

Once we recognize a human rights issue, we must also think of how best to address it, and two of our articles in this issue offer guidance in seeking to learn how to chart a course forward. Nyahunda helps us think about how social workers can draw those in historically marginalized populations into the conversation through his exploration of a model to include rural women in southern Africa into the discourse on combatting the climate crisis. Donoso et al. examine the response of social workers to human rights violations in two different generations in Chile to help us determine how best to educate our students on how to advocate for human rights and work in collaboration with affected communities.

This spring brings the hope of turning our calendar page not just to a new month, but to the hope of a new era. Recent years have shown us that battles fought and won should not be considered over, as we see attempts to roll back access to human rights across the world from voting rights in the USA to LGBT rights in Poland to a free press in Hungary. Human rights advocates must remain ever-vigilant, and the authors in this issue point us to issues that we should consider in building our new future on how to use this knowledge to chart a course to fulfillment of human rights for all.

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