

The Journal of Humanities in Rehabilitation

A creative exploration of the human
experience of disability and healing

JHR Special Edition 2020 Summer Newsletter

“If I ever write my autobiography, I’m going to title it: ‘I was born colored and crippled but now I’m black and disabled.’” — Kate Gainer

At *JHR*, we believe the humanities serve a fundamental role within healthcare to address uncertainties and offer opportunities to reimagine a more equitable and just future. This underlying belief rings true, now more than ever, as we work to dismantle the systemic racism that has plagued Black bodies and communities for centuries. I do not think we can move forward toward true change until we recognize the fundamental need for humanism in healthcare. We at *JHR* are eager to use the journal as a platform to help our readers see these connections and feel inspired to become moral agents of change. One of the ways the humanities can be used as a vehicle to address this work is by highlighting the value of individual stories and collective narratives. *JHR* is committed to publishing articles that explore these narratives more deeply while discussing the role they play in the work of rehabilitation professionals and within the context of our society. This special summer issue highlights previous articles featured in *JHR* and announces new calls for submissions.

In *JHR*'s Fall 2019 issue, we published [Reviving and Reflecting on “Portrait of Spirit: One Story at a Time.”](#) The article challenges the way we view the lived disability experience and advocates for continued societal change. In light of the recent surge in the Black Lives Matter movement, we aim to underscore another important takeaway from this article as we more deeply consider the intersections of race and disability. As the photographer Billy Howard says:

“This book is not so much about the subject of ‘the disabled’ as it is about the cultural context in which disability occurs. That culture is shaped by the fact that we live in a society which is largely uninvested in the experience of being disabled.”

For our upcoming issue, we revisited Kate Gainer, a participant in the “Portrait of Spirit’ project. One of 18 students to attend Atlanta’s first special-education class for black children in the 1950’s, she felt it was an empowering experience for a black child growing up in the segregated South. In a compelling reflection that mirrors the lessons of our current day, she said:

“If I ever write my autobiography, I’m going to title it: ‘I was born colored and crippled but now I’m black and disabled’”

We asked Kate about her thoughts (and hopes) now regarding the #Black Lives Matter movement and what it is like being disabled in the time of a pandemic. She shared her feelings that “Being black and living with a disability in the US in 2020 is scary and exhilarating at the same time... Realizing what little value society places on people with disabilities and the elderly and having a history of asthma, in this era of COVID-19, I am an endangered species. This pandemic has identified the US as a country of limited resources. And ... the present administration’s unwillingness to address our limitation puts us all in danger.” Concerning the country’s current focus on racial injustice, she spoke from her experience as a civil rights advocate.

“Covid-19 forced the country to sit still and look at our surroundings. George Floyd was not the first man to die the way he did. But the advent of the cellphone and the virus making us sit still, put us in a position where we all heard him call out for his mother. We saw a man realize he was going to die and give up. We were placed in a position where we had to react. In a position where you had to say, ‘Enough is enough, and this is too much’. It was reminiscent of when Dr. King called for marchers after ‘Bloody Sunday’ in Selma, and when Hosea Williams called for marchers in Commerce, GA. The difference was, no one had to call Black Lives Matter. Young people were ready, willing, and knew what to do. It really felt good to watch. What they are asking for probably will take years to implement, but it has been put in motion, and this generation will not let it stall-out.”

Where can we go from here?

The COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled an uncomfortable truth about our world and how deeply rooted our problems with racial injustice and health inequity are

in our society. So, what do we do? We believe, in moments like these, that the next right step begins with seeing each other more clearly and using the humanities as a conduit for exploring the lived experience of others, especially those of our Black patients and colleagues. We are designating a themed series dedicated to topics of social justice as well as the experiences of people caught in the COVID-19 pandemic in each *JHR* issue moving forward. We encourage our readers to consider sharing their reflections and perspectives as we forge deeper connections together to envision our collective future.

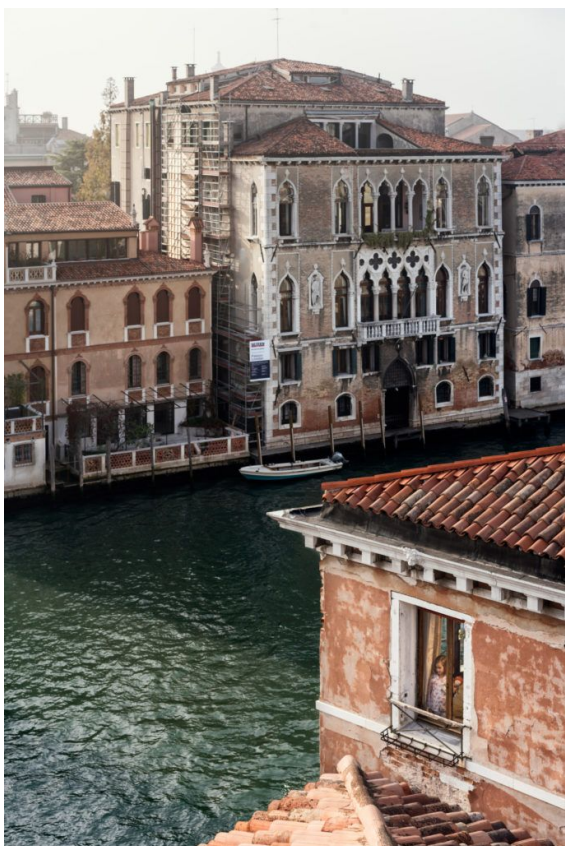
Emphasizing the qualities of humanism, the noted Boston College Theologian Roberto S. Goizueta believes that when each of us learn "how to embrace our common vulnerability and suffering, then we are free to live lives committed to justice, committed to freedom." As witnesses to this part of our collective human experience especially inherent in the disability journey, we are uniquely poised in this world of rehabilitation to participate in the healing not only of our patients but also of each other and society.



Reviving and Reflecting on "Portrait of Spirit: One Story at a Time"

Both a book and an exhibit, *Portrait of Spirit: One Story at a Time* by Billy Howard and Maggie Holtzberg offers new perspectives while challenging the way we view the lived disability experience. Using stunning photographs and beautifully written narratives from *Portrait of Spirit*, this piece serves as an ode to the groundbreaking stories that started it all while advocating for continued societal change for people living with disabilities.

[Read more](#)



"What is saving you now?"

None of us could ever have imagined that we would be a part of one of the generations of history. But our challenge has arrived. In an inspirational message, JHR Editor-in-Chief Dr. Sarah Blanton examines what it means to navigate these uncertain times. She demonstrates how a humanities perspective can well be what saves us and makes us stronger. "I truly believe this cohort of clinicians, experiencing this pandemic, will emerge with exceptional levels of resiliency, compassion, cognitive flexibility, and critical thinking skills..." she concludes. "Our world will be remarkable in ways we have yet to imagine."

[Read more](#)

COVID-19 Resources: Health, Humanities, and Pandemic Intersections

To help JHR readers—and clinicians dealing with the pandemic—find inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and even some entertainment during these days of crisis and necessary isolation, Jamie Fleshman, SPT has compiled an extensive list of thought-provoking resources. The materials



accessed through the links offered here address ethics, disability, a wide range of the arts, education, and clinical information—all collated from a humanities perspective. Readers are invited to access it frequently for inspiration during the weeks ahead.

[Read more](#)



Call for Submissions: Journal of Humanities in Rehabilitation Physical Therapy Student Essay Contest

The Consortium for Humanities, Ethics and Professionalism (CHEP) of the American Council of Academic Physical Therapy (ACAPT) advocates for the importance of the humanities, ethics, and professionalism in physical therapy education practice because excellent clinical practice requires the ability to make meaningful connections with patients and to make decisions in unclear or vulnerable circumstances.

[Read more](#)



Special Call for Submissions

This ongoing call for submissions on the topics of the pandemics of COVID-19 and social justice is open to scholars and clinicians who are interested sharing their experience in these areas as it broadly relates to rehabilitation medicine. We hope that you will reflect on your experiences in the humanities of rehabilitation and consider submitting a piece to our journal.

[Read more](#)

JHR Special Summer Newsletter Sponsor

Pt Pal is honored to sponsor this special edition JHR summer newsletter. A unique and innovative telehealth and condition management platform, we are dedicated to the concept of humanism in business and healthcare by bringing the patient into the clinical conversation on equal ground with the clinicians who are treating them. We are eliminating the barrier of paper instructions to participation in an electronic medical record conversation that currently only clinicians can employ. By doing so, we are elevating the patient and caregiver to be full-fledged participants in their care by being an active participant in their electronic medical record. Pt Pal is employed to see the human in care, increase access, and remove inequities in healthcare. — Naveen Khan, CEO Pt Pal



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