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Letter From The Editors

Editorial Board

DePaul University College of Law: Center for Public Interest Law

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Raven Villegas; Editor-in-Chief:

Dear Loyal Readers,

The DePaul Journal for Social Justice's Editorial Board continues to be a third year, student run publication. Each editor plays an integral role in producing every issue of the Journal, in addition to participating in their individually selected social advocacy causes.

It has been over a year since the inauguration of our current President, and his Presidency has ignited a renewed commitment to social justice causes. Much has come under attack in the past year, but not all of the news has been bleak. In the past year, we have seen lawyers volunteer time and services to immigrants effected by travel bans issued via executive order. The #MeToo movement has brought issues of sexual violence and workplace harassment to the fore, and has led to important conversations regarding women in both society and the workplace. We have also seen communities come together to recover from natural disasters stretching from hurricanes in Puerto Rico and Texas, to wildfires across California.

Maintaining optimism is necessary in current times. In that spirit, the Board held an event this Fall highlighting Restorative Justice. Our panelists described and examined the positive role restorative justice can play in communities struggling with the criminal justice system. The successful stories of our panelists aided attending students, staff and the Editorial Board in maintaining optimism.

In their own words below, Editorial Board members will give their perspectives on the importance of, and why they chose to work for, the Journal. While hard work lies ahead, maintaining optimism is key to the daily work of being in the field of social justice work. We hope you find our words insightful, and as a means of inspiration for the continued advocacy of those who need legal assistance the most.

Heather Stallings; Acquisitions Editor:

My name is Heather Stallings and I am the Acquisitions Editor for the DePaul Journal for Social Justice. My area of interest is international humanitarian law and military justice. I have been working in the criminal justice system for the past year and before that I devoted myself to several non-profit organizations. My main goal was to be a resource and a liaison between the public and organizations who offer assistance to the public. In a world flooded with information (and misinformation) I found it absolutely necessary continue to work in that regard. And this is what led me to the DePaul Journal for Social Justice.

This journal is a novel concept when it comes to law-review type journals because it is not limited by traditional notions of legal scholarship. This journal is a platform for all types of well-respected and peer-reviewed academics and professionals, and as a consequence this journal is a resource for all types of audiences. To me, that is the best approach to educate the general population on many important social justice issues. Further, the journal promotes reasonable recommendations for solutions to these issues. This concept - giving people something they can actually *use* - is exactly what attracted me to the Journal for Social Justice and is the reason why I am passionate about being a part of the journal.

Joseph Benak; Article Editor:

I told myself that this essay was not going to be about President Trump; that I was not going to use up any more of my time or energy discussing the many ways in which he

has subverted and attacked the principles of equality and justice that — at least superficially — our country claims to hold dear. But there is simply no way around it. This is the *Journal for Social Justice*. We are dedicated to highlighting and advocating for issues of *social justice*. And every day, it seems like, the current administration does something that make our work that much more vital.

Like a lot of people, I would imagine, I spent the day after the 2016 election in a state of despair. I was shocked, angry, and scared. Mostly, though, I was confused: How had I not seen this coming? Had I been too idealistic, perhaps even naive? I came to law school because I wanted to help people, but now I was being forced to consider what, exactly, this meant and whether it was even possible.

Working for the Journal and being surrounded by so many wonderful, like-minded people helped snap me out of my funk. What we were doing was important, and I was proud to tell people that I worked for the Journal. And I'm still proud. Within this edition of the Journal, you will find articles on topics that are as important as they are varied, touching on everything from immigrant detention to transgender rights. I hope that you enjoy reading them and that they inspire you -- as they inspired me -- to continue working to advance the cause of social justice. The Journal has been a continual source of solace for me over the past two years. I hope that it can be the same for you.

Samantha Zullo; Article Selections Editor:

The reason I chose to work on the DePaul Journal for Social Justice stems from my belief that all people are worthy of respect, dignity, and compassion. As an undergraduate student, I

was a social work major. I had the privilege of working with various populations: homeless families, foster care children, and low-income individuals. Through my experiences, I have witnessed first-hand the power of a helping hand, or even a smile, to those in need. However, there needs to be more than just helping hands and smiles to fix the systemic issues present in today's society, both domestic and abroad.

A goal of this journal is to promote justice through a wide array of topics related to the broad social justice category. I believe that to combat social justice issues, there needs to be people who are willing and able to speak out about the problem. Moreover, there also needs to be people willing to be good listeners. My hope is that this journal reaches enough persons willing speak *and* willing to listen, and that the articles published spark new and motivating dialogues.

Ericka Coners; Citations Editor:

My passion for the Journal for Social Justice is closely intertwined with my decision to enroll in law school. I believe, that as citizens of the world, we have the responsibility to support and protect others by promoting social justice. During my undergraduate career at the University of Michigan, I studied social psychology to understand the interactions between individuals and its impacts. With a deep desire to learn more, I volunteered for service and other opportunities. I spent months teaching prisoners finance skills before their release date and countless hours working at a domestic violence shelter on the crisis line. Volunteering gave me a sense purpose. It allowed me to get involved and fulfill the role of a world citizen. The Journal of Social Justice gives me the same fulfillment through opportunities to discover the impacts of

our legal system and by molding me into a well-rounded attorney: not afraid to analyze various areas of the law or to adapt to the world around us.

As a future attorney, I have seen obstacles that hinder the promotion of social justice: flaws in our legal system; deep-rooted stereotypes masked under labels of tradition, poverty, unemployment, and rape culture; and a lack of awareness. Despite these obstacles, attorneys have the responsibility to create awareness and to speak for those without a voice. DePaul's Journal for Social Justice creates awareness by discussing debated or concealed issues in aims of bringing solutions and information to the others. Specifically, the journal aims to create awareness by publishing articles that are intended to be read by the everyday reader whether to satisfy their curiosity about international law or provide guidance with regards to practical matters that impact one's daily life. It is my hope that our readers will use this journal as a useful tool; one that challenges them to think and encourages them to start a conversation about how progress can be made and the actions that we can take as social advocates and citizens of the world.