

Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Transformative Social Work*: A special issue on Social Work and the COVID-19 pandemic

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It is our privilege to welcome you to the new journal *Transformative Social Work*. After many months of planning, it is a thrilling moment to launch our first issue. *Transformative Social Work* is a scholarly refereed open access journal designed to exchange knowledge and promote transformation in the field of social work. The journal aims to advance theoretical understanding, share policy, and inform practice. We welcome submissions from all areas of social work. Collaboration with other disciplines on social work-related issues are welcome. This journal takes a future-focused social justice perspective on theory, research, education, practice, and policy. *Transformative Social Work* considers publishing as a pathway to transform societies and respond to human dynamics in a changing environment. The profession of social work urgently needs to transform social work research, practice, and policy to meet local and global challenges associated with climate change and environmental degradation, social and health inequities, workplace issues, Indigenous reconciliation, and pressing social issues related to poverty and sustainable development. The journal offers a publishing space to consider ‘transforming social work’ through a critical and proactive social agenda, that considers equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization.

Transformative Social Work is an academic journal supported by the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. The journal publishes Canadian and international articles in English and French. In addition to full-length articles, the journal features shorter “brief notes” contributions, as well as “voices from the field” to showcase practitioner and field educator perspectives, practice issues, innovations, and insights of about 2000 words. Letters to the editors are also welcomed. The journal reports on transformative research, discussing practice, and examining principles and theories, and we believe it will be read by social work educators, researchers, practitioners, and students who wish to keep informed of innovations and developments in the field.

We would like to introduce our Associate Editors – Adugna Abebe of the University of Gondar in Ethiopia and Phyllis Muraguri of The Technical University of Kenya – for their support and contribution to the development of the journal. We thank members of our Editorial Board for serving in this capacity: Margaret Alston (Australia), Uzo Anucha (Canada), Grant Charles (Canada), Lena Dominelli (Scotland), Robin Erasing (USA), John Graham (Canada), Wassie Kebede (Ethiopia), Antoinette Lombard (South Africa), Julie Mann-Johnson (Canada), Golam Mathbor (USA), Sheri McConnell (Canada), Barbara Muskat (Canada), William Pelech (Canada), Roshini Pillay (South Africa), Miriam Samuel (India), Monica Sesma Vasquez (Canada), Kathleen Sitter (Canada), Christine Walsh (Canada), Yue Wang (China), and Ajwang Warri (Canada).

In this inaugural issue, we are focusing on social work and the COVID-19 pandemic. At this juncture, pandemic restrictions have largely been lifted, but the impacts of the pandemic are far from over. We recognize the enormity of the pandemic on local and global experience—the personal and public. The profundity of the pandemic on social work and society warrants critical reflection, including impacts and lessons. Social work, as integrally engaged within issues of society, has been deeply affected by, and offers critical reflection on, the pandemic and related decisions made in organizations, communities, and society.

Social Work is concerned with, and committed to, social justice, and specifically, the aim of redressing equity gaps in seeking a just society. During the years of the pandemic, we have been reminded of deep chasms of inequity—social and racial injustice and violence inflicted on individuals and groups in society. This journal is committed to critically addressing injustice in a changing world – in this issue, injustice that has emerged or been amplified in these difficult years of the COVID-19 pandemic. This issue addresses a range of diverse considerations – inequitable access to resources at an individual, community, societal or discursive level, as illustrated by Marcela Nava and colleagues’ paper on health education, outreach, and efforts to galvanize equitable resources across community groups; and Angela Baerwolf’s examination of the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in connecting with affirming services. Diverse and concerning issues are addressed in these articles, including considerations that have a bearing on social work into the future. For instance, Marcela Nava et al. amplifies concerns related to underfunding and supports needed at a community level. Angela Baerwolf addresses the work of Gender and Sexuality Alliances in schools during the pandemic, importantly eliciting the perceived experiences, and risks to well-being and safety, among LGBTQ+ youth in the constrained context of the pandemic. In the article by Andrew Mantulak and colleagues, implications for social workers in health care practice are addressed. In that paper, social work is shown to have been drastically affected both during the pandemic and after restrictions have been lifted. And in several papers, implications on social work education are offered for both within and after this (or potentially another) pandemic. This is demonstrated in Kelly Allison’s article in which she identifies diverse experiences of social work students during the pandemic, with implications for social work education as we move through and beyond these challenging times. The Special Issue is introduced by a Roundtable paper comprising panelists who have focused on or researched the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of social work and/or the social service sector.

The papers in this Special Issue amplify micro, meso, and macro issues related to service delivery and societal structures and attitudes at this juncture of having come through the pandemic. The pandemic indeed has yielded seismic shifts, but we yet lack sufficient critical reflection, understanding and action in terms of how we move forward as a profession. For instance, how are online applications of practice balanced with relationality, safety and advocacy in moving forward? How can long-standing and heightened inequities in society be addressed proactively and in ways that authentically integrate the voices of key actors, and identify the breadth of experience of varied people? How did (and do) we advance our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and de-colonization in ways that are truly authentic? And finally, how do the voices of social workers emerge in a changing world facing unparalleled challenges such as systemic inequity, pandemic recovery and climate degradation?

Forthrightly, bravely and humbly, we move toward transformative social work. At this juncture, like times past, we need to be resolute, reflective and critical in amplifying and addressing societal inequities and challenges, with purposeful change at micro, meso and broader

levels. To that end, the papers in this issue offer critical reflection on relevant issues, and applied examples of social work within the adversities and shifts wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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