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Editor's Essay

Brigitta R. Brunner

Auburn University

Deepak Chopra (@DeepakChopra) tweeted:

“All great changes are preceded by chaos. The disruption we see in the world is the prelude to emergence. Lets [*sic*] all commit to a more peaceful just sustainable healthier and happier world. We must become what we wish to see by transcending our limited tribal identities.” (Chopra, 2018)

I believe the above quote from Deepak Chopra sums up 2020 quite well. Change can be scary. Change can bring chaos. Change can offer both bad and good. However, change is necessary for evolution.

Looking back on this year, we can all see how COVID-19 has changed our lives. Many businesses and schools were closed in the spring. Many businesses have, unfortunately, closed forever. People have lost their livelihoods and homes. Health systems and healthcare providers have been pushed to their breaking points. Our holiday season will look very different this year. And most sorrowfully, over 1.6 million lives worldwide have been cut short by this virus (Worldometer, 2020).

Some organizations have been able to adapt. Online shopping, contact-free grocery pickup/delivery, virtual school, and Zoom calls most easily come to mind. Some of us found new interests such as baking and art and long walks—things our busy lives didn't always allow us to do. Others found new appreciation for teachers and their abilities to work with and inspire children to learn. We also took time to remember and think about some new heroes—those on the front lines and those who work in healthcare. With the approvals for the vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna going forward and the start of the vaccines' distributions, perhaps we can

**Please send correspondence about this article to Brigitta Brunner, School of Communication & Journalism, Auburn University. E-mail: brunnerbr@auburn.edu.*

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find ways to thrive in what's being called a new normal. Perhaps we can find ways to balance both the schedules we need to keep and the schedules we want to keep, thus allowing for more happiness, downtime, and the ability to cultivate our interests.

This summer the United States saw much unrest following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN. Floyd was being arrested for allegedly passing off a counterfeit \$20 bill at a store (Hill et al., 2020). A police officer knelt on Floyd's neck for what is reported to have been more than 7 minutes leaving Floyd unable to breathe (Hill et al., 2020). As protestors took to the streets to demand justice and end police brutality, especially brutality toward African Americans, we heard more about other cases of police brutality such as the deaths of Breanna Taylor, Elijah McClain, and Rayshard Brooks. We also were reminded of the death of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old boy killed by a police officer in Cleveland, OH, while he was carrying and playing with a toy gun outside a city recreation center (Justice, 2020). Sadly, there are too many other cases with similar outcomes to share in this forum.

From this social movement, many necessary, difficult, and uncomfortable conversations were had. Activists were born. People took to joining protests in support of the BLM movement. Others sent monetary support to causes and to HBCUs. Still others thought deeply about such concepts as privilege, what changes they could make in their own lives, and ways to make life in American more equitable.

Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, wrote a letter to President-elect Biden in mid-December 2020. The letter, which ran as a full-page ad in *The Washington Post*, asks Biden to remember his promises to hold police accountable for their actions and for policy changes once he is sworn into office (Heyward & Willingham, 2020). She said, "We need your actions to show that you are different than those who pay lip-service to our losses while doing nothing to show that our loved ones' lives mattered" (quoted in Heyward & Willingham, 2020, para.10). Although the outcomes of this social movement are still unknown, there is hope that important changes will be made in the near future.

Another important story this year was the 2020 election in the United States. The U.S. public is perhaps at its most divided at this point in time (Dimock & Wike, 2020). People are sharply divided on issues such as the economy, climate change, racial justice, international involvement, response to the COVID-19 crisis, and many other issues (Dimock & Wike, 2020). The United States is not alone in these divisions as some European nations are also dealing with polarized factions—most notably, Brexit. However, it seems the U.S. two-party system, social media, partisan media, and cultural differences have made these divisions even more significant (Dimock & Wike, 2020).

Nevertheless, there is hope for refocusing on core values. According to research conducted by the Pew Research Center in September 2020, 89% of Biden supporters and 86% of Trump supporters said their candidate should focus on the needs of all Americans, even if that meant disappointing some of the candidate's supporters (Dimock & Wilk, 2020). Although we are still more than a month away from President-elect Biden's inauguration, there is optimism and anticipation for shifts that will bring people back together. Biden, in his November 7, 2020,

acceptance speech, said, "I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide, but unify, who doesn't see red states and blue states, only sees the United States" (as quoted in Phillips, 2020, para. 5). Therefore, we may be on the cusp of an important shift—one that will bring healing, growth, and opportunity.

Perhaps the one constant of 2020 has been knowing that despite chaos and change, public interest communications is an area of stability on which we can count for creating positive change that benefits society. Public interest communicators develop effective messaging to build relationships among organizations, policymakers, media, and constituents to achieve goals of social change. Public interest communicators use facts and science to provide truth and uphold ethics. Public interest communicators use storytelling to engage constituents and compel them to care about societal concerns. This issue's manuscripts exemplify these examples of public interest communicators at work and center on making change during times of crisis.

Melissa Adams and Melissa Johnson's manuscript, "Acculturation, pluralism and digital social advocacy in nonprofit strategic communication," examines how nonprofits doing soft advocacy work are struggling with issues such as immigration policy, the pandemic, social media conversations, and partisan media while working to effect change. "Impression management after image-threatening events: A case study of JUUL's online messaging," written by Nicholas Eng, speaks to the ethics of changing message strategies and impression management tactics when faced with negative publicity and potentially image-threatening events. Kaitlin Fitzgerald, Melanie Green, and Elaine Paravati's piece, "Restorative narratives: Using narrative trajectory for prosocial outcomes," investigates the use of restorative narratives in storytelling and its advantages for storytelling in times of change and crisis. Finally, we also offer our first book review in this issue. Jasper Fessmann's review of Caty Borum Chattoo's latest book, *Story Movements: How Documentaries Empower People and Inspire Social Change*, looks at the power of documentary films to tell stories of social change and the pursuit of truth.

Wishing all of you a happy, safe, and healthy holiday season and new year.

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