

## Passing the Baton

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As our term as the inaugural editors-in-chief of this journal concludes, we trace the journal's path and welcome the incoming editorial team. Created as a public administration journal focusing on all issues related to social equity, the range of topics covered is already vast and promises to grow. Articles published in the first two volumes range from racial healing to invisible disabilities, from Medicaid expansion to school resegregation, from white supremacy to the equity challenges that confront Tribal communities, from critical race theory to policing, from gender equity to equity in death, from retirement funds to equitable budgeting, from voting to UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and many more. JSEPA draws attention to the social equity pillar in public administration and joins the many journals dedicated to the other pillars of the field.

The *Journal of Social Equity and Public Administration* is a living thing. It has a short past, a vibrant present, and a glorious future. Thanks to their intrepid persistence, JSEPA's founders Susan Gooden, Richard Gregory Johnson III, and Sean McCandless, set the stage for success. They secured a sponsor (the Democracy and Social Justice section of the American Society for Public Administration), a publisher (University of Minnesota Libraries), and startup funding (from University of Minnesota, University of Nebraska Omaha, and Virginia Commonwealth University).

The founders' work allowed us to get to our work. As inaugural editors, we started in 2021 and set forth with a commitment to integrate JSEPA into the psyche of the field. Production editor Stacey Victor, editorial assistant Adam Croft, and professors Jodi Benenson, James E. Wright II, and Tia Sherée Gaynor joined the editorial team and together with a stellar editorial board, we mapped a plan. After promotional events in 2022, the first issue appeared in January 2023 and has appeared every six months thereafter.

### JSEPA's Raison d'être

JSEPA's pages are the documentation of how administrative decisions, public policies, laws, and power intermingle to perpetuate or dismantle inequities. The journal is a scholarly resource that heightens sensitivity to intersectionalities and to the effects of ethnocentrism, colonialism, racism, colorism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia.

JSEPA was created to provide an outlet that identifies, probes, and corrects institutions and conditions that create and perpetuate inequities. Published for a global audience, it is a theoretically and methodologically inclusive journal that encourages authors to illuminate equity ironies that exist. For example, at the 2024 Democratic National Convention, former First Lady Michelle Obama captured the equity irony in American culture when she spoke about the affirmative action of generational wealth that benefits those already advantaged, while cultural values denigrate affirmative action that benefits those already disadvantaged. She also spoke to how the advantaged are accorded the grace to fail forward, a luxury not granted to those already disadvantaged. Obama's observations are similar to Martin Luther King Jr.'s observation that there are two Americas, one providing "subsidies" for the well-off while the other provides "welfare" for the poor. Such contradictions are many in the United States and elsewhere.

It is the taken-for-grantedness of the ironies that Obama and King point out that makes them pernicious. It is up to the artistry of social equity activists to illuminate contradictions such as these. It is up to policy experts and public service professionals to conduct equity audits in their work. This is how the architecture of policies and programs that perpetuate inequity can be revealed. The journal will have arrived when equity audits are as commonplace as expenditure audits already are. It will have reached its destination when it has unveiled all the inequities that hide in plain sight.

While engineers talk about hard infrastructure in the form of bridges, tunnels, and roads, JSEPA's focus is on the soft infrastructure that connects us with, or separates us from, one another. Encoding values and norms in institutions is how public administration becomes the software of democracy. The pages of this journal exist to help readers understand and engage in collective action to reinforce the soft infrastructure.

There is a large hole to fill in the confidence and fluidity with which the field addresses social equity. Again, this is where JSEPA comes in. The journal is the resource for scholars and practitioners to rely on to learn how to diagnose causes and effects of equity issues and how to foster meaningful, actionable, and inclusive solutions. It also exists to help instructors teach about social equity. The journal website includes a repository for syllabi so instructors can borrow ideas as they design instructional units that will teach their students how to identify and ameliorate inequity.

### **Bragging Rights**

Since the first issue appeared, the range of topics covered is vast, ranging from racial healing to ableism and invisible disabilities, from Medicaid expansion to school resegregation, from white supremacy to Tribal communities and their equity challenges, from policing to mental health, from gender equity to equity in death, from retirement funds to equitable budgeting, from voting to sustainability, from UN SDGs to critical race theory, and so many more. Subjects covered will continue to expand because there are equity implications to every policy and program. JSEPA exists to bring these to light.

We have striven to turn manuscripts around quickly, providing an editorial decision within weeks rather than months. Our cadre of editorial board members and reviewers have made this possible because of their commitment to the journal and its purposes. JSEPA is also experimenting with formats that are at the cutting edge of scholarly publishing. Reviews capture the essence of not only written material, but also videos and cultural artifacts. Manuscripts are primarily research papers, but JSEPA also welcomes case studies and commentaries about social justice and innovations that contribute to racial healing.

This journal for social equity research and discourse now takes its place among the pantheon of journals that focus on the other three pillars of public administra-

tion: effectiveness, efficiency, and economy. It belongs among them because social equity must be infused in all functions that pursue or affect public purposes. Its focus is on the active commitment to fairness, justice, and equality in public policy, service delivery, and management of public institutions.

### **Social Equity as a Moving Target**

JSEPA is the journal of record for social equity theory, research, and practice. And, because social equity is a moving target, evolving as demographics and norms transform, the content of these pages will always be developing and changing. Topics covered will grow with the times, making it possible for public service professionals, scholars, and students to take note of what works, what fails, and what opportunities are available to advance justice and reduce disparity. JSEPA is also a catalyst to encourage analysis, dialogue, discourse, and action.

National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman delivered a poem at the 2024 Democratic National Convention in which she noted that the American dream is not a dream at all; it is a dare. The same can be said for democracy everywhere. Social inequities and ironies in regimes that pride themselves on fairness make it obvious that Gorman's assessment is correct. The journey toward justice begins with a single step, a single research project, and a single change, building on itself along the way. To the degree that JSEPA takes the dare, public administration is made better, stronger, and more just.

### **Arrivederci**

It takes the efforts of many to produce a journal, starting with journal sponsors, authors, reviewers, the editorial team, and the production team. We applaud the foresight and effort of the founders as they pushed, prodded, and collaborated to create this journal. We thank the funders for their generosity. For all who have already leaned in to get JSEPA underway, thank you. To all those who already have contributed to these pages, thank you. To those of you who will contribute in the future, in advance, thank you. To the many reviewers who ensure the quality of what JSEPA publishes, thank you. The oft-noted proverb is true: many hands make light work. Now we are proud to hand over guardianship to Hillary J. Knepper and Michelle D. Evans. To the incoming editorial team, full speed ahead!

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