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Changes in our Future

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Changes in our Future

Abstract

Letter from the Editors- Updates about the journal

Keywords

journal name

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Changes in our Future...

Thirty one years ago the National Youth-at-Risk Conference began as a way to bring together adults from a variety of fields and disciplines in order to share best practices and to interrogate common practices to improve the lives of youth who face more challenges than most. Conference sessions were framed around the 5H Framework: Head (academics), Heart (social-emotional), Hand (safety), Home (family), and Health (both mental and physical). Over the past three decades, the conference grew from a few hundred participants to nearly 1500 - that number only being limited by space. This success showed us that we needed to provide more to support the adults who choose to “promote the well-being of all youth, especially vulnerable youth in schools, families, and communities” (Rea & Zinskie, 2015, pg. 1). Hence, the inaugural edition of the NYAR Journal in 2015.

Our first editors, Drs. Dan Rea and Cordelia Zinskie stated that “the mission of the NYAR Journal is to help practitioners—who serve *youth placed at risk* (emphasis added) by poverty and other challenging conditions—to close the opportunity gap that prevents our youth from developing their talents and becoming successful adults” (Rea & Zinskie, 2015, pg. 1). Since 2015 we have published 30 articles with topics ranging from interviews with leaders in social justice education practices to research articles about social emotional learning, STEM education, and the role of community in youth empowerment. With thousands of citations by an international audience, this journal has made an impact on the lives of youth and the adults that serve them.

Needless to say, we were proud of our efforts and our work. That is until we reached out to a group of youth in Savannah who, through their work with the DEEP Center, developed a school-to-prison pipeline simulation we thought would make a great session at our annual conference. Simply put, the youth said, “No thank you”. Their refusal was not based on prior

obligations or financial constraints. Their refusal was based on the phrase “youth-at-risk” that is at the cornerstone of our conference and this journal. This group of highly engaged youth, youth who most of us would label at-risk due to their socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, home lives and myriad other factors, rejected the at-risk label - and because of that label, refused to participate in our conference.

We have had many academic discussions about the deficit connotations of the term “at-risk” and the need for an asset-based perspective. In fact, the first issue of the journal featured an article by the founding editors, Dan Rea and Cordelia Zinskie, delineating the history of the phrase “at risk” and unpacking its implied meanings. We provide a reprint of the article in this issue as a way to frame our efforts to rename both the conference and the journal in a way that neither sugarcoats social and structural inequities nor denies the power and agency of the young people we work with and serve.

We invite you to participate in this effort to rename both the conference and the journal. Our goal is to gather ideas from our academic colleagues, the broader NYAR community and youth and use these suggestions to inform the development of a new name.

Please submit your ideas and suggestions before November 1st, 2020 to Michelle Reidel at nyarjournal@georgiasouthern.edu.

We will publish one more issue of the National Youth At Risk Journal prior to the name change. To be considered for publication in this issue, please submit your manuscript by October 1st 2020.

The first issue of the newly named journal will be a themed issue focused on youth leadership. The young people we met at the Deep Center refused to be labeled ‘at-risk’ demanding that we recognize the agency and brilliance they embody despite the economic, social

and personal hardships they face. Let us begin 2021 with a focus on youth as advocates for change and actors in their own lives. Manuscripts for the inaugural issue should be submitted by February 1st, 2021.

Enjoy this issue of the journal!

Sincerely,

Alisa Leckie

Conference Co-Chair

Taylor Norman

Conference Co-Chair

Michelle Riedel

Journal Editor