

EDITORIAL

Remembering the Dead

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In many parts of the world, there is a time between August and November set aside for remembering those who have died. As discussed by Marisa de León in this issue, *Día de los Muertos* is a time at the beginning of November when people in Mexico pay their respects and remember friends and family members who have died. Other cultures have similar traditions. For example, in parts of Guatemala they hold a kite festival on November 1 to honor their ancestors; in Haiti, dancing to drumming is part of their celebration of *Guédé*; in the Philippines, their day of the dead is *Undas* (Tagalog for “respect”); in Korea, *Chuseok* is a day on which people travel to their ancestral hometown and engage in rituals to honor their ancestors; in Cambodia, they celebrate *Pchum Ben* for 15 days in practices that have the aim of atoning ancestral souls; in parts of Nepal the *Gai Jatra* festival is a time to honor friends and family who have died during the prior year; in parts of India during *Pitru Paksha* they offer prayers for the three previous generations in one’s ancestry; in Ireland, they celebrate *Samhain* in honor of their ancestors; in Romania they celebrate *Luminația* to remember not only family and friends, but also the unknown dead by lighting candles in their honor; and in many Commonwealth countries, on November 11 people remember those who died while serving in wars, in a similar manner to those in the US (Mazarrasa, 2023; Sahni, 2022).

Last November, our editorial focused on when we grieve and who we grieve. A year later, the mourning continues for thousands upon thousands who are continuing to be killed in violent conflicts, with no end in sight. The death toll is staggering: in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Armenia-Azerbaijan, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Israel, Lebanon, Russia, Iran. Political tensions are high in many countries and a sense of powerlessness pervades. The world is in turmoil and it seems that we rarely take time to mourn the dead, to pray for their souls, light candles, and honor their lives.

We wonder how we in the music therapy community respond to these losses. How do we make sense of the suffering? How do we respond to such profound loss? What are our collective values when it comes to human suffering? What is our role in relation to these conflicts? How do we grapple with our ineptitude in terms of the larger systems in which we live and work? How do we navigate on a personal level, complex sociopolitical forces that negatively impact basic human rights? How do we act professionally in ways that are

consistent with who we are personally?

This November, as we read about the traditions of *Día de los Muertos*, thoughtfully and beautifully gathered and accounted by Marisa de León, let us pause and remember the dead. Let us honor their lives and humanity, no matter how short their time on earth. Let us dare to say their names, pay them homage, consider their struggles, thank them for their gifts, and especially, consider our own roles in their struggles. Let us take time to acknowledge those who have lost life, wellbeing, or ancestral homeland; those whose fundamental needs as human beings are not being met. And then let us carefully consider, what role do we play in global humanity: as persons, students, professionals, users of music and music therapy, musicians...? How do we expand our understanding of neighbor? How do we remember and grieve, and learn from that grieving? How do we reconcile our personal and professional selves in the midst of such human suffering? How do we raise our gaze from our individual contexts and own communities, and consider how we might enhance wellbeing of those who are suffering in communities beyond our own? Let us use this time then to remember, to grieve, and to reflect.

In This Issue

In this November 2024 issue of *Voices*, Marisa de León provides a reflection on honoring *Día de los Muertos* as a Mexican American music therapist. We also hear the stories of children and young people who were forced to flee from their homelands, in a qualitative study of children's perspectives on participating in music therapy in Norway, by Kaja Elise Enge, Brynjulf Stige, and Dag Øystein Nordanger. In addition, we hear from Norwegian social workers about the significance of music therapy for the young people with refugee background they serve, in a focus group study by Ole Kristian Einarsen, Viggo Krüger, Ingunn M. S. Engebretsen, and Brynjulf Stige.

In a systematic reflection on practice, Andrés Salgado-Vasco, Laura Valentina Ariza-Alfonso, María Paula Ordóñez-Pachón, Rodrigo Enrique Pardo-Pérez, Valeria Barnier-Fiorentino, and Katherine Idilia Zelaya-Zepeda explore how community music therapy builds rapport among communities and strengthens social cohesion among female caregivers in Colombia. Sunny Yat-Cheong Wong reflects on how therapeutic songwriting offers a dyslexic child from Hong Kong increased motivation for reading. And, Xinsu Chen, Hae Sun Kim, and Abbey Dvorak synthesize research and governmental literature to provide a comprehensive guide for international music therapy students seeking education and training in the US.

Three research studies from the US and Ireland round off this issue. Madge Dietrich engages in autoethnography to understand their experience of participating in a gender affirming voicework research group held virtually, and the transformations that arise from such experiences. Undertaking case report research, Shelby Shrader explores how music therapists use sensory stimulation for adults with dementia in the US. From Ireland, Edel Coughlan uses a focus group intervention of Kodály-inspired community music therapy to promote reflection and shifting of perspectives among people who have negative self-beliefs about their musical identity.

Appreciation

As we reflect this November, we in the editorial team would like to thank Tim Honig who cheerfully and efficiently took on assorted lead editor tasks for the March and July issues while Claire was away on leave. We would also like to recognize Maren Metell for serving several months in the new role of Accessibility Editor, helping to create meaningful pairings between submissions and article editors, and guiding the journal to better accessibility.

References

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