

EDITORIAL

A Call to Action, Not Neutrality, in Turbulent Times

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This March finds many in the global community facing political swings towards greater conservatism and nationalism. Pushes for less governmental oversight, trimming of budgets, and tightening international borders pervade. Elements of populism, nativism, isolationism, and protectionism appeal to those who feel threatened by pushes for greater equity and justice for people who have historically been marginalized and minoritized by those in power. There are calls for fundamental “change” and rehauling of systems, and in many cases, a return to policies and practices of the past. The pretext is that such changes are put forth to save “the people” from elitism, overregulation, and economic hardship. But it is not difficult to discern who actually benefits from such change and who is harmed. While there may be short-term benefits for some, there will be long-term negative impacts for the majority of those who believe such policies will benefit them.

We have stated in earlier editorials that there is a belief among some music therapists that politics has no place in our work. To the contrary, we stand behind those who have called for recognition that both the personal and the professional in music therapy are necessarily political (e.g., Baines, 1992; Chagas et al., 2018; Hadley, 2013; Miyake, 2014; Norris, 2020; Thomas & Norris, 2021). We have argued that journals, including ours, are inherently political due to choices and values embedded in their practices (Honig & Hadley, 2024). The current turbulent times invite us again to acknowledge that political neutrality is a myth and to consider how we can act to stand up for causes we believe to be vital for the flourishing of our societies. Current governmental actions in the U.S., for example, are moving to defund the arts, defund and discredit science and scientific research, make affordable education less accessible, reduce funding for healthcare, and ban any programs that promote equity and inclusion. In Argentina, the government has weakened the rights of LGBTQ+ people and women, and closed the ministry for women, gender and diversity (Jaureguy, 2024). In Germany, recent election campaigns were characterized by anti-immigration discourse, and policy changes proposed to help “the people,” are likely to benefit those already advantaged. Such actions serve as an affront to every aspect of music therapy—from training and research to practice and the livelihoods of both music therapists and those with whom we work. De-valuing and defunding are occurring in

societies that have typically acknowledged the value of the arts and culture. For example, in Norway, budget cuts are impacting, among other levels of society, municipal-funded aspects of the cultural sector, including cutting back broad-based cultural offers for school-aged children and funding for artists.

In turbulent times like the present moment, when many of our societies are moving towards populism, nationalism, isolationism, and protectionism; and are abandoning policies that protect those who are subjugated, we are moving further away from inclusive and caring communities. As a journal that promotes social justice, we must speak out and call people to action. It is not a time for political neutrality, if there ever was such a time. Ask yourself: What happens to our societies when we support only the dominant majority and further alienate and disadvantage those who are marginalized by that majority? What happens to our future when we defund the arts and sciences and discredit research? What happens to our justice systems when we become so disappointed in our leaders that we fail to confront injustices? What happens to our humanity when we focus on our own needs and do not consider the needs of our neighbors? And what happens to our collective spirit when we lose all faith in the governmental systems around us?

What Can We Do?

Recent political developments are a direct threat to various groups of people, including disabled people, immigrants, refugees, those experiencing resource insecurity, and others. What can we do to support people who are being further marginalized by current political changes? In response to recent elections, German disability rights activist Raul Krauthausen (2025) calls for moving from reaction to action, including organizing and engaging in local networks and communities. Anchored in *Voices'* mission of inclusiveness and socio-cultural awareness on the path towards social justice, we amplify Krauthausen's calls for action, organization, and engagement. We stand in solidarity with those who are being further othered, marginalized, and dehumanized by recent political changes. We encourage our readers to consider where they can take incremental actions to support the diversity of our communities, the securing of our future societies, and the thriving of our earth. We must find ways to use our individual voices to support the collective good. We must engage with current real-world challenges in ways that promote the health of our societies into the future. If you have not already been engaging in courageous acts of activism, now is the time to speak truth to power.

In This Issue

Several of the articles in the current issue resonate with a call to action, organization, and engagement by bringing important social issues to the fore.

Through a qualitative study of Nordoff and Robbins music therapists in the U.K., Kate Apley identifies how greater integration in interdisciplinary teams and institutions serves as a facilitator of collaborative social justice promotion. In this work, inclusive musicking afforded a chance to express allyship and music therapists used interdisciplinary conversations and dissemination opportunities to promote social justice. Apley reminds us that when considering social justice promotion, music therapists both influence and are influenced by the institutions within which they practice.

Livia Umeda has authored a set of articles examining ethical shortcomings in music therapy educational and clinical training systems in the U.S. By tracing how ableism pervades such structures, Umeda argues for a more systematic and thoughtful integration of disability justice principles in music therapy education and clinical training in the U.S. Included are recommendations for improving access in aspects of music therapy education

and clinical training that are often inaccessible. In her other paper, Umeda considers harms that may be inherent in music therapy education and clinical training, and suggests concrete action steps for preventing such harms.

Promoting equity has a new urgency in the current global political climate. Karen Jones, Victoria Clarke, and Luke Annesley engaged in a qualitative study and reflexive thematic analysis to explore the role of music before, during, and after the coming out process for LGBTQ+ people. Music was central for most participants in realizing and expressing queer identity, coming out to others, and creating a sense of community.

In another article, Julia Fent, Irene Stepniczka, and My Tune Team Members explored the challenges involved in equitably engaging in participatory action research, through all stages of the process. Their project involved the development of a tool for reflecting on the music therapy process from the therapy recipients' perspectives.

Finally, engaging in music experiences to access and strengthen inner resources, Tomoka Howard shares a case study of a music therapy student's journey of personal development through music and imagery experiences; while Angela Boland, Kayla Boileau, Nicola Oddy, Laurie-Ann Welch, Nicole Stanson, Gilles Comeau, and Andra Smith explore the combination of vocal improvisation and mindfulness on increasing the inner resources (increasing attentional and emotional regulation) of young musicians who experience performance anxiety.

Announcements

Voices will commemorate its 25th anniversary in 2026. We look forward to celebrating together with authors, reviewers, the editorial team and everyone who contributes to co-creating *Voices* past, present, and future. Among our plans for commemorating this jubilee, we hope to facilitate a roundtable at the World Congress of Music Therapy in Bologna, Italy in July 2026 and aim to connect with many of you in person there.

One concrete way to put intentions into action is to deepen your engagement with *Voices*. We will soon be announcing a call for additional Article Editors, Copyeditors, Communication Editors and Translators to join our team. Please consider how you might support the mission of this unique and indispensable international forum to promote inclusiveness, socio-cultural awareness and social justice.

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