



DECEMBER Newsletter

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President's Message

Erik Lind



The year 2020 was one that everyone will remember, but perhaps not for the reasons some may wish. It was a year of hardship, adaptability, and for many — loss. That's why when presented with the opportunity to become President of Unity For Equality, I knew I had to do what I can to better the lives of others during this time of hardship.

Unity for Equality has helped communities around the world since 2016, and during these unprecedented times, the organization did not falter in providing aid. This year the organization has donated over 2,500 masks and 1,900 care packages to people in need, and we only want to increase that number.

Currently, Unity For Equality is hosting our annual Holiday Food Drive that provides meals for those struggling during the holiday season. If you want to make an impact this holiday season, please donate or share the fundraiser to your friends and families. All donations are tax-deductible. Thank you for your continued support of our organization, and I will be updating you more about the future of Unity for Equality in the next newsletter. Until then, please stay safe and I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season!

**Sincerely,
Erik Lind**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erik Lind". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Unity For Equality

HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE

Help fight
hunger this
holiday season!
Donate today.

Provide 3 meals for
every individual.



THROUGHOUT DECEMBER 2020

DONATE THROUGH THE UNITY FOR
EQUALITY LINK PROVIDED BELOW

<https://secure.actblue.com/donate/unityforequalityholidayfooddrive>



CELEBRATING THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

Jennifer Brooks

Of all the things that we discuss in our society, disability remains to be the elephant in the room. This makes sense; people with any type of disability, face difficulties in most aspects of their lives. This isn't just in terms of their conditions themselves; it is also because of the barriers and inaccessibility issues they face, as a result of them. As a result of this, many of us don't want to talk about disabilities, unless we, or the people we care about, are affected by them; it is simply too uncomfortable to think about. But the fact is, any one of us could end up in a wheelchair one day, lose our eyesight, or develop a chronic illness. As a result, it is important to inform ourselves as much as possible, because whether we like it or not, it impacts every single one of us. So, to celebrate this year's International Day of People with Disabilities, on December 3rd, let's spend some time doing just that.

First of all, in light of the fact that this year's theme is "not all disabilities are visible," it is important to acknowledge one of the main misconceptions surrounding disability: visibility. It is easy to assume that disability is something that we should be able to see; especially because many disabled people use wheelchairs, wear hearing aids, or have other forms of medical equipment that are obvious to the general public. However, there are also countless other forms of disability that aren't apparent to the naked eye.

For instance, according to the World Health Organisation, it is estimated that 450 million people are living with mental health conditions, such as Depression or Schizophrenia, or neurological conditions, such as Autistic Spectrum Conditions. The WHO also report that two thirds of people living with invisible disabilities, will not seek professional help, due to fear of stigma, discrimination or neglect.

However, whilst it is easy for those of us without hidden disabilities to encourage those who suffer with them to reach out, it isn't always as simple as this, as there are countless barriers that prevent disabled people from doing so. For instance, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, visually impaired people may find it difficult to even enter a doctor's office, if there are no Braille signs informing them that they are at the right place. Similarly, an autistic person might find it difficult to even tell their doctor that they need medical attention if they struggle with verbal communication.

Nonetheless, because of the barriers that they face, many disabled people blame themselves; they may feel like a burden because they need a

level of support that most people don't. This isn't right no one should be made to feel that their mere existence is inconvenient to other people just because they're not getting what they need. However, it

doesn't have to be this way; we can fight back instead. To combat these feelings of inadequacy, disabled activists on Instagram, such as [neuroemergent_insurgent](#), are trying to change the meaning of the word 'disabled' itself, by viewing it as a verb, rather than a noun. In this context, someone isn't necessarily disabled, yet ableism disables them.

If we acknowledge that ableism is to blame, including the way in which current health care systems are established, we can take back control, and try to fix them. Nonetheless, this isn't going to be easy, due to the fact that ableism is so ingrained; the world wasn't built with disabled people in mind, so it is going to be difficult to make it so. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try; if we work together, we can make an inclusive world in which no one is left behind, and we shouldn't stop fighting until we get there.



Human Rights Day: December 10th

Frederica Socal

Human Rights Day celebrates the work of those who have fought and protected human rights, and ponders on what still needs to be achieved. The day is celebrated on December 10th, in honor of the same day in 1948, when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document states the inalienable rights of each human being regardless of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion or country of origin.

This declaration was compiled after the barbarism of World War Two, and aimed to state the essential elements of civilized society, in order to bring peace to humankind. However, after more than 70 years, millions of people still live without fundamental human rights. People suffer from the most severe, systematic violations of human rights in countries such as Syria, Somalia, Turkmenistan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. However, issues also exist in many communities all around us. This includes, but isn't limited to, the eviction of people, by force, from their homes; discrimination at work because of race, gender, and sexual orientation; the failure to provide employees with maternity leave; or the failure to provide sick people with the right treatment.

A lack of basic healthcare, for example, is not just a problem in underdeveloped countries. Instead, millions are affected by the privatization of hospitals, and the inability to provide everyone with the treatment they need, due to the lack of funds. This issue is becoming more relevant, due to COVID-19; doctors are having to choose who to give ventilators to, and in many countries, doctors are having to prioritise COVID-19 patients, over millions of others, because COVID-19 is more of an immediate concern.

Another burning frontier of human rights violations regards LGBTQ+ rights; people around the world are still facing violence, inequality, and sometimes even execution, because of who they love. This is horrifying; at the very least, queer people deserve the right to feel safe enough to marry who they choose, without being subjected to appalling acts of violence. To combat this, in the US, there is talk of abolishing conversion camps, which aim to convert LGBTQ+ people to heterosexuality. But for now, this isn't enough; the fact that these camps still exist, and the fact that their inhuman and degrading treatments amount to torture, directly abuses the human right to love who you choose, and more, much more, needs to be done to tackle this.

But the future of human rights seems bright. The movement has made incredible steps in the last 70 years; from abolishing the death penalty in many countries, to a major change in gender equality and women's rights. When the document was first written, those who were involved in producing it understood the principle of equality, but didn't always know how to turn the statements into reality. The statements of the declaration have always been inclusive in language, but, unfortunately, were mainly reserved to one class of citizen. However, luckily, new groups are being involved in the conversation, and hopefully, this will keep expanding.

We hope that the future responds to the biggest issues facing us today, and delivers equality for all. These may seem like delusive claims, but so were the ones made 70 years ago, which are now part of our daily lives.

Celebrating Hanukkah

Jennifer Brooks

For millions, December is a very special month. This isn't because of Santa Claus, hot chocolate or caroling. It is because, for countless of Jewish people across the globe, it is time to celebrate Hanukkah. The holiday is often overlooked in our society; unlike Christmas, those who celebrate it often struggle get time off school or work to do so. But even though the Jewish community have to fight harder to make their festivities known, this doesn't make Hanukkah any less important, or valid. Due to this, I think it's high time that we try and teach ourselves a bit about the holiday, so that December can be a celebration of every religion, rather than just Christianity.

First of all, let's start by learning a little bit about what Hanukkah actually commemorates. According to a Vox article by Tara Isabella Burton, it marks an incident in which Jerusalem was under the control of a tyrannical Persian king, who pressured his subjects to worship the Greek Pantheon instead of Judaism. Nonetheless, the Jews revolted, and eventually won back control of their temple. After this, they rededicated themselves to their religion by lighting a candle. However, even though they had very little olive oil to burn this candle with, it remained lit for 8 days, which was thought to be miraculous.

The symbol of this candle, as a metaphor for the resilience of the Jewish community, is poignant; in a similar way to how they had to fight for their temple, anti-Semitic hate crimes are still events that thousands of Jews still face.

For instance, Burton also reports that in 2018, 11 were killed by a gunman, at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, when all they were doing was trying to worship in peace. Due to the rise in these incidents, Joanne Seiff, author of the article "Hanukkah a celebration of religious freedom and light in a time when hate, darkness hits home," also states that having additional security measures, in order to worship in peace, has become a normality for the Jewish community.

Seiff also states that even though not all Jews face life-threatening attacks like this, she still faces micro-aggressions on a daily basis, as a result of her religion. For instance, after being invited to put her business in a North American shopping guide, Seiff told the editor that she was both Jewish, and a dual citizen. However, when the listing came out, it said she was an "immigrant, other;" which completely invalidated her identity.

One of the most upsetting facts about the discrimination that Jewish people face this time of year is the fact that if you aren't part of their community, you probably wouldn't even know that it was happening. But it does, and Jews have a right to celebrate Hanukkah, just as we have a right to celebrate Christmas. But they shouldn't have to fight for this right on their own. We can help by educating ourselves, and standing with them, in any way that we can. It may seem small, but if we work together, December can become a much more inclusive month.



CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

ABHEEK SINGH

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN. THANKSGIVING IS OVER, AND WE ARE NOW LOOKING FORWARD TO CHRISTMAS. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST CELEBRATED HOLIDAYS GLOBALLY, BUT HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT CHRISTMAS IS LIKE IN OTHER COUNTRIES? IN THIS ARTICLE, WE ARE GOING TO DIVE INTO THE MANY WAYS PEOPLE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD. KEEP READING TO FIND OUT MORE!

CHRISTMAS IS CELEBRATED DIFFERENTLY EVERYWHERE. HOWEVER, IN MOST CHRISTIAN CULTURES, THE HOLIDAY COMMEMORATES THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST, AND THE JOURNEY THAT THE VIRGIN MARY, AND JOSEPH, HER BETROTHED, TOOK ACROSS BETHLEHEM. NONETHELESS, THE HOLIDAY HAS BECOME MUCH MORE COMMERCIALISED OVER TIME, AND NOW IS MORE HEAVILY ASSOCIATED WITH SANTA; A LEGENDARY CHARACTER, BEST KNOWN FOR GIVING GIFTS TO WELL-BEHAVED CHILDREN. AS A RESULT, MANY WESTERNERS, WHO AREN'T EVEN RELIGIOUS, STILL USE THE HOLIDAY AS AN EXCUSE TO GET TOGETHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AND EXCHANGE PRESENTS.

NONETHELESS, NOT EVERYONE CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAY IN THE SAME WAY, AND THE WEATHER CAN PLAY A BIG PART IN THIS. IN THE UNITED STATES, DURING CHRISTMAS, IT IS WINTER, SO WE USUALLY EMBRACE THE COLD, AND BUNDLE UP TOGETHER WATCHING FILMS ON THE SOFA. NONETHELESS, IN AUSTRALIA, THE HOLIDAY IS OFTEN CELEBRATED ON THE BEACH, WITH A BBQ, AS IT IS THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER OVER THERE.

HOWEVER, OTHER COUNTRIES, LIKE THE UKRAINE, DON'T CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS ON THE 25TH OF DECEMBER LIKE THE MAJORITY OF OTHER CULTURES DO. ACCORDING TO AN INDEPENDENT ARTICLE, BY JOE SOMMERLAD, MANY EASTERN EUROPEANS AND MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS ON THE 7TH OF JANUARY INSTEAD. THIS IS BECAUSE THEY MARK THE DAY USING THE JULIAN CALENDAR, INTRODUCED BY JULIUS CAESAR IN 45 BC, RATHER THAN THE GREGORIAN CALENDAR, THAT THE MAJORITY OF WESTERN CULTURES USE.

OTHER LESSER KNOWN TRADITIONS INCLUDE: THE LATVIAN TRADITION OF A POEM, OR SINGING A SONG, IN EXCHANGE FOR PRESENTS; THE INDIAN TRADITION OF MAKING STAR-SHAPED LANTERNS; AND THE JAPANESE TRADITION OF HAVING KFC CHICKEN ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

NEVERTHELESS, EVEN THOUGH EVERY CULTURE CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAY SLIGHTLY DIFFERENTLY, THEY ALL HAVE THE SAME GOAL; BEING THANKFUL FOR EVERYONE, AND SPENDING TIME WITH LOVED ONES. SO, IF YOU CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS, NO MATTER WHAT COUNTRY YOU'RE IN, BE SURE TO ENJOY IT! I KNOW I WILL.

HOW TO PRIORITIZE EMPATHY

Jennifer Brooks



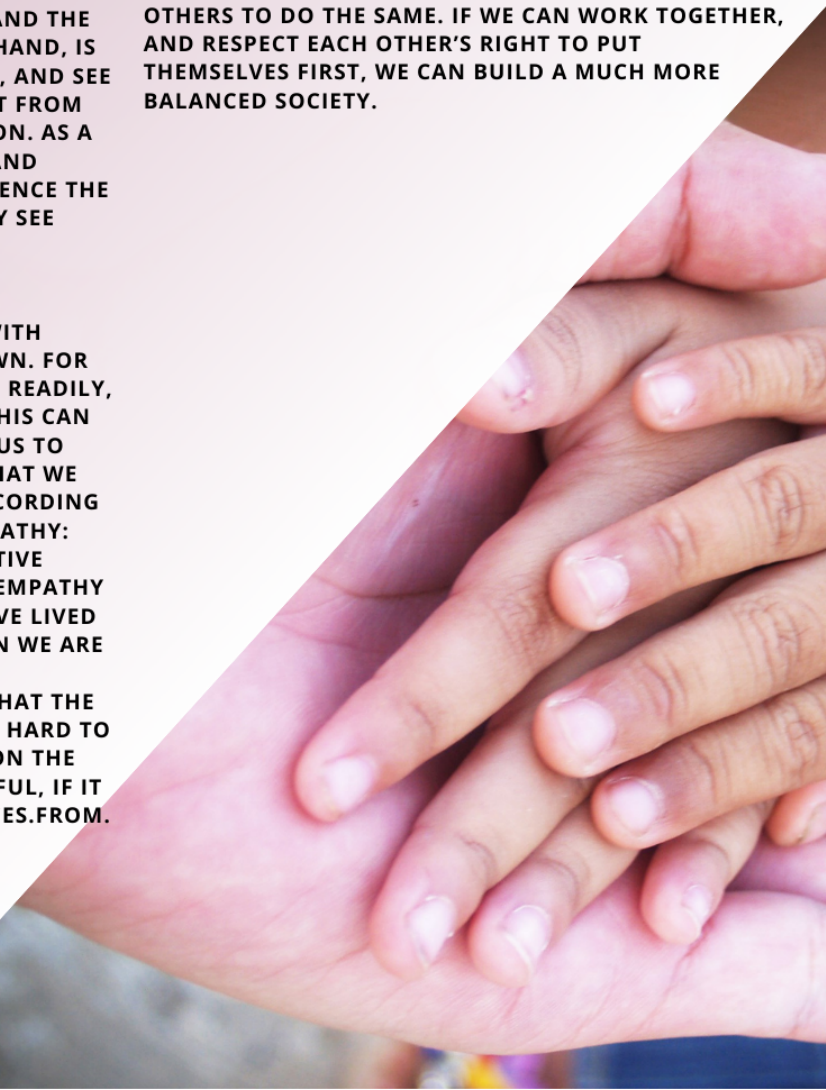
OUT OF ALL THE VIRTUES THAT EXIST IN THE WORLD, EMPATHY IS ARGUABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT. UNLESS WE CAN LOOK AT THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF OTHER PEOPLE, AND IMAGINE WHAT LIFE IS LIKE FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE, WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO GROW. THIS ISN'T JUST IN TERMS OF GETTING ON BETTER WITH OUR FAMILY MEMBERS, FRIENDS, OR CO-WORKERS; EMPATHY ALSO ALLOWS US TO UNDERSTAND OURSELVES. IT ALLOWS US TO DELVE DOWN DEEP, AND REALIZE THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE IN THE WORLD; WE ARE SURROUNDED BY OTHER PEOPLE WHO LIVE EQUALLY COMPLEX LIVES, AND WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER, IN ORDER TO LIVE EMOTIONALLY FULFILLED LIVES, AND TO INSTIGATE REAL CHANGE. NONETHELESS, LEARNING HOW TO BE MORE EMPATHETIC ISN'T ALWAYS SIMPLE, AND CAN BE TRICKY TO NAVIGATE IN A HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE WAY. BUT THIS DOESN'T MEAN WE SHOULDN'T TRY. KEEP READING TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN MAKE EMPATHY YOUR PRIORITY.

FIRST OF ALL, LET'S START BY EXPLORING WHAT EMPATHY ISN'T. ACCORDING TO AN ARTICLE WRITTEN BY NEEL BURTON M.D., EMPATHY IS OFTEN PERCEIVED TO BE SYNONYMOUS WITH BOTH PITY, AND SYMPATHY, BECAUSE ALL THREE OF THESE CONCEPTS INVOLVE BEING MOVED BY SOMEBODY ELSE'S DISTRESS. HOWEVER, IF WE ARE TO PITY SOMEONE, WE MAY BE MOVED BY THEIR PLIGHT, BUT WE MAY ALSO FIND THEIR DISTRESS TOO UNCOMFORTABLE TO DEAL WITH. AS A RESULT, WE MIGHT LEAVE THEM TO DEAL WITH IT ON THEIR OWN, RATHER THAN FEEL EMPOWERED ENOUGH TO HELP. SYMPATHY IS SLIGHTLY MORE ENGAGED; IF WE SYMPATHIZE WITH SOMEONE, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO COMFORT THEM, AND OFFER THEM SOLACE, BUT WE STILL MIGHT NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE PAIN THEY ARE EXPERIENCING. EMPATHY, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS THE ABILITY TO FEEL THE EMOTIONS OF ANOTHER PERSON, AND SEE THE WORLD THROUGH THEIR EYES, EVEN IF IT IS DIFFERENT FROM HOW WE WOULD SEE IT, IF WE WERE IN THE SAME SITUATION. AS A RESULT, IT IS A MUCH MORE ACTIVE CONCEPT THAN PITY AND SYMPATHY; IT INVOLVES HAVING THE COURAGE TO EXPERIENCE THE SAME DISCOMFORT AS SOMEONE ELSE, IN ORDER TO TRULY SEE WHERE THEY ARE COMING.

NONETHELESS, THE SKILL OF BEING ABLE TO EMPATHIZE WITH SOMEONE ELSE ISN'T NECESSARILY PRODUCTIVE ON ITS OWN. FOR INSTANCE, IF WE ABSORB OTHER PEOPLE'S EMOTIONS TOO READILY, IT CAN BE DETRIMENTAL TO OUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH. THIS CAN BE ESPECIALLY TRUE IF THE ACT OF EMPATHIZING CAUSES US TO FEEL SO OVERWHELMED BY ALL THE BAD IN THE WORLD THAT WE CAN'T FIX, WE FEEL TOO UNEMPOWERED TO EVEN TRY. ACCORDING TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY "DIFFERENT FACES OF EMPATHY: FEELINGS OF SIMILARITY DISRUPT RECOGNITION OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS," CONDUCTED BY JACOB ISRAELASHVILI ET AL, EMPATHY CAN ALSO, IRONICALLY, BE MORE CHALLENGING IF WE HAVE LIVED THROUGH SIMILAR NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES TO THE PERSON WE ARE EMPATHIZING WITH. THIS COULD BE BECAUSE WE MIGHT AUTOMATICALLY PROJECT OUR OWN EXPERIENCE ONTO WHAT THE OTHER PERSON IS GOING THROUGH, SO WE MIGHT FIND IT HARD TO IMAGINE THAT THEIR OWN FEELINGS MAY BE DIFFERENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE MIGHT FIND EMPATHY EXTREMELY PAINFUL, IF IT TRIGGERS TRAUMATIC MEMORIES OF OUR OWN EXPERIENCES.FROM.

HOWEVER, THERE ARE WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN EMPATHIZE IN A HEALTHY WAY, AND, IF WE ARE DEALING WITH ADVERSITY OURSELVES, WE CAN START BY EMPATHIZING WITH OURSELVES BEFORE WE EVEN TRY TO EMPATHIZE WITH OTHER PEOPLE. IT MIGHT SEEM INDULGENT, OR EVEN SELFISH, TO PUT OURSELVES FIRST LIKE THIS, BUT WE GENUINELY CAN'T HELP OTHER PEOPLE UNLESS WE ARE SELF-AWARE ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH OUR OWN PROBLEMS, AND WORK OUT WHY WE ARE STILL HAUNTED BY THEM. THEN, AFTER DOING THIS, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE, WHO ARE WALKING THROUGH THE SAME.

BUT, THE IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER HERE IS THAT WE ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO EMPATHIZE WITH ANYONE, OTHER THAN OURSELVES. WE DON'T HAVE A DUTY TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE, AND IF IN SOME WAYS WE FEEL WE DO, WE MIGHT BECOME VERY DRAINED IF WE ARE GIVING OTHERS MORE THAN WE ARE RECEIVING. THEREFORE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO PUT BOUNDARIES IN PLACE, AND REMIND OURSELVES THAT WE DON'T HAVE TO FEEL GUILTY ABOUT SAYING NO TO SOMEONE, IF WE DON'T HAVE THE EMOTIONAL ENERGY TO SPEAK TO THEM. IF WE CAN MAKE EMPATHIZING WITH OURSELVES OUR PRIORITY, WE MIGHT INSPIRE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME. IF WE CAN WORK TOGETHER, AND RESPECT EACH OTHER'S RIGHT TO PUT THEMSELVES FIRST, WE CAN BUILD A MUCH MORE BALANCED SOCIETY.



New Merch!

Check out the new merch we just dropped!



CLOTHING

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M
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S

Every purchase goes towards efforts to address the challenges we face today, from climate change to extreme inequality. When you purchase Unity For Equality's merch, you will turn your action into a real, lasting impact.

If you want to help, check out our merch website at:
www.unityforequality.org/shop

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