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***5 Year Celebration Special Issue, ISSN (online): 2056-2985.***

## ***Editorial***

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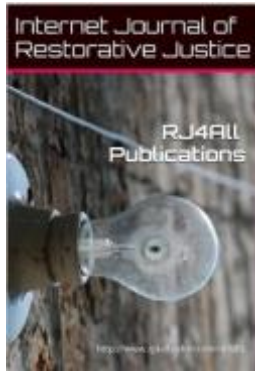
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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first Special Issue of the Internet Journal of Restorative Justice aiming to celebrate five years since its inception. First and foremost, I want to thank the many volunteers who have supported this ground-breaking publication and in particular Ms. Ero Michael, who has acted as its Content Editor since the beginning. Many thanks also go to the Editorial Board and especially its Chair and good friend Professor Vasso Artinopoulou. Without Vasso's passion and the Board's direction, this Journal would not have achieved its objectives, and indeed look into the future with much excitement.

I set up the Journal five years ago with three primary objectives. First, I wanted to give to young people and researchers who at the early stages of their careers to publish alongside big names in the field. Of course, this had to be done according to high standards and by following a double, blind peer review process. Second, I wanted to challenge the idea of having to pay expensive subscriptions for accessing the latest research on restorative justice. That is why, up to date, the Journal remained free. On reflection and following our readers' feedback, we subsequently decided to charge a small fee per paper so that we can support our volunteers' expenses. Thirdly, I wanted to push the boundaries of restorative justice by publishing research that is not limited by institutions and the politics of the movement. The leaders comprising our Editorial Board were fully on board with this ambition, and thus the content of this Journal remains unique and timely.

In particular, The Internet Journal of Restorative Justice aims is to publish scholarly and peer-reviewed articles of the highest standard from many areas of expertise including restorative practices in schools, neighbourhoods, organisations and businesses, family matters and (youth) care, restorative justice in the criminal and juvenile justice system, restorative justice in prison settings and restorative aftercare. All submissions are reviewed anonymously and separately by members of the Editorial Board as well as guest reviewers. RJ4All Publications, the small publisher behind the Journal, is fully committed to ethical publication practice.

The Journal's aims include:

- Inform and influence social justice policy at national and international levels
- Enable those with limited resources to freely access scholarly and peer-reviewed articles on restorative justice including students, practitioners and the public
- Push the barriers of restorative justice and challenge conventional approaches
- Enable junior researchers to publish alongside leading names in restorative justice, and encourage a dialogue between various generations of academics
- Increase awareness of the restorative justice concept and help address misconceptions about its potential and limitations.

For the past 15 years, I have been a restorative justice 'student' and despite my enthusiasm with the prospect of instilling something fresh into a broken criminal justice system, I remained objective. Most of my public speaking and academic articles would start in the same way: "The focus of researchers should not be on the superiority of restorative justice, but on the development of its processes and principles" (Gavrielides 2007; 2008; 2012).

It is true that we have more evidence and writings on restorative justice than any other criminal justice policy, and yet it is far from being used in the way that its proponents hope. Whether this is a good or a bad thing remains to be debated. As one practitioner said to me a few years ago "When restorative justice works, it works really well; but don't expect it to always be appropriate" (Gavrielides, 2007). How can we when one of the fundamental principles of restorative justice is voluntariness meaning that it cannot be imposed on offenders and victims as if it is another form of punishment.

We also have to ask whether restorative justice was ever meant or conceived to be mainstreamed. As a believer of individual empowerment and the founder of a charity that promotes community-led solutions for a better society, my question has always been 'How can restorative justice, as a community born ethos (Daly and Imarrigeon 1998; Gavrielides 2012), enable the individual to have a genuine role in bringing fairness to society'. Following from this, 'What is the role of government, academics and practitioners in facilitating this process'; not for their own ends, but for the individual, let that be the victim, the offender, their family, friends and their community.

Although I no longer consider myself to be a 'junior researcher', I accepted the challenge for this special edition with great pleasure. My brief was to edit papers that can show where restorative justice is heading. That is why I am particularly proud of this Special Issue as it is packed with research papers that are based on original research covering all corners of the world.

I encourage you to submit your work to our Journal and spread the word about its contribution. I hope that you will enjoy this Issue, and indeed see your work published in our future editions.

**Professor Theo Gavrielides**

**September, 2017**

**Editor in Chief**

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