

Special Section: Pushing the Boundaries of
Intergenerational Activism in an Era of Polycrisis,
edited by Kristen Hope, pages 340-384

EDITORIAL

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For those of us who write, it is necessary to scrutinise not only the truth of what we speak, but the truth of that language by which we speak. For others, it is to share and spread those words that are meaningful to us. But primarily for us all, it is necessary to teach by living and speaking those truths which we believe and know beyond understanding. Because in this way alone we can survive, by taking part in a process of life that is creative and continuing, that is growth (Lorde 2017 4-5).

[A] INTRODUCTION

Writing is never a neutral act. As reflected in the words of the visionary Black, lesbian, warrior poet Audre Lorde above, writing is not only an effort to claim space for one's vision of the world, it is also a deeply emotional and relational process that involves connecting with others and building the sense of community that is necessary to undertake shared struggles. Writing is, therefore, profoundly political.

* **Authors' note:** The authors would like to acknowledge the precious contributions of other members of the group who were involved in the earlier stages of co-editing the Special Section but did not contribute to this editorial, namely: Dhruv Bhatt, Jeshis Jamarkatel, Purnima Bhattarai and Samikshya Dahal.

For those of us who have been involved as guest editors for this Special Section of *Amicus Curiae*, coming together as a group of children and young people and more seasoned adult allies has been an attempt at continuing to build our community around the values that we share and our perspectives about the most pressing issues facing children's rights today. In 2024, we explored these as co-authors in a submission to the Special Section of *Amicus Curiae*, "Poetry for Rights! Intergenerational Co-creation for Child Rights Scholarship" (Hope & Ors 2024). Using poetry and collective, reflective analysis, the article unpacked co-authors' feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness and erosion of mental health in the face of the polycrisis, alongside children and young people digging deep to find strength to continue to act towards positive social transformations, even in the face of repression by powerful adults. It also argued that poetry and other arts-based methods enable forms of embodied, emotional and relational expression that should be recognized by adults in the child rights space as legitimate forms of knowledge in their own right; forms of knowledge that are important starting points for beginning to dismantle the colonial, Eurocentric tropes of knowledge that continue to dominate child rights scholarship.

Building on that piece, we were delighted and humbled to be invited to act as co-editors for a new Special Section of *Amicus Curiae*. We were particularly grateful that we were given complete freedom to decide on the theme of the Special Section and decide how we would like to invite contributions. To respond to this task, we convened a series of online meetings in autumn 2024 in order to share ideas about what the topic of the Special Section could be. Together, we landed on the idea of "Pushing the Boundaries of Intergenerational Activism in an Era of Polycrisis", which would focus on the actions that children and young people are taking in the face of the compounding crises facing our world today, including economic, political, social and ecological instability caused by conflict and climate change, and the complexities involved in experiences of intergenerational activism. We encouraged artistic submissions and gave priority to featuring the perspectives of children and young people from minoritized groups or who had faced adversity.

In terms of inviting contributions, we debated the advantages and disadvantages of going with an open call compared to a closed call where we invited specific people to contribute. Given that for most of us, it was the first experience of co-editing a Special Section of an academic journal, we decided that a closed call would be more manageable. We drafted an "everyone-friendly" version of the invitation to contribute and circulated it to children, young people and adults in our respective networks. We

collectively reviewed the abstracts and then later the manuscripts, and also organized online meetings to share our feedback with each other.

This process generated three poignant pieces from contributors. The first piece, “Story” by Rolex Odhiambo, a young person from Kenya, is a poem that eloquently captures the visceral experiences of being a young person taking part in a public demonstration. In doing so, it pays homage to previous generations of civil rights activists across the globe who have engaged in peaceful protest for social justice. The second piece is an article by Ornella de Barros and Claire O’Kane which questions what makes for “successful” intergenerational partnerships in the face of systemic marginalization. By reflecting on work conducted in the scope of a global campaign that aimed to provide working children with a platform to shape policy dialogues, the article examines the challenges that emerge in attempting to sustain intergenerational partnerships over time, particularly as children “age out” of childhood. The final piece consists of an interview between one of the co-editors of this Special Section, Amrit Rijal, and a youth activist from Nepal, Susan Sapkota. Reflecting on his experience working with young people in Nepal to claim their rights, for example in the context of sexual and reproductive health, Susan highlights how multiple forms of stigma and discrimination create significant barriers for change, and emphasizes that building solidarity amongst young people is crucial for positive changes.

Echoing Lorde’s words above, the process of gathering together to create this Special Section and inviting others to contribute to join this journey with us has been an attempt to extend the boundaries of our community. We are deeply appreciative for all the time and energy that contributors have dedicated to the submissions that feature in our Special Section.

In preparing this editorial, each individual co-editor was invited to share how they have felt about working on the Special Section and to highlight key reflections about taking part. The perspectives of the co-editors touch on three topics: firstly, reflections about being a co-editor for the Special Section; second, reflections about the contributions; and third, reflections about the current historical moment in which this Special Section takes shape. They are shared below as direct quotes in order to preserve the authenticity of our voices. These segments viscerally capture the immediacy of what it means to write about intergenerational activism in the context of some of the most pressing social and political issues of our times. As such, they highlight one of the key ideas that has informed the design of this Special Section: that writing intergenerationally entails letting go of the illusion of objectivity and the “view from nowhere”. Instead,

it demands that we locate ourselves in relation to the different struggles that we pursue, and that we engage with the messiness of emotions that influence our positionalities at a given moment in time. In doing so, our intention is to highlight the ways in which intergenerational scholarship takes us out of the comfort of established academic traditions of writing with emotional distance. This, as Lorde urges us to consider throughout her work, is how we come to cultivate mutual care through the process of collective writing.

[B] REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF CO-EDITING

Amrit

Serving as guest editor for this Special Section of *Amicus Curiae* has been both a privilege and a learning journey. The diverse contributions reflect the urgency, creativity, and resilience of youth and intergenerational movements confronting today's intersecting crises.

Januka

As a first-time editor, the process was both challenging and a big learning experience for me. When I first sat to review the article with a pen and a paper, I was not sure about where and how to start. I was unsure of the language, and the structure. I even doubted myself, but my fellow co-editors helped me balance my personal reflections with the academic framing. Sometimes editing and publishing can be as powerful as campaigning, and I am grateful towards the *Amicus Curiae* for this opportunity to contribute as an editor in this Special Section.

Brian

I felt privileged to be an editor, a guest editor of this particular piece, mostly because it reflects not just the current state of the world but my current context. It gave me the opportunity to actually share what my current lived experience is relative to what's going on in the rest of the world. It gave me a voice and it gave me power; it made me feel like I had influence and I could actually, you know, I had some level of power. As for the challenges I faced as an editor: some of the biggest challenges I faced were in navigating the language and style of academic writing, as well as the power dynamics. As a creative writer, I am used to writing what I feel, how I feel, and just letting it come together in its own creative, holistic

kind of way. Now I was supposed to just help curate content in a very structured and formal setting, and it kind of made me doubt my capacity, it gave me imposter syndrome. But then again, I had a very supportive team, people who kept reminding me that, “Hey, you are a young person and you should go about it in your own way.”

Osish

This Special Section of *Amicus Curiae* brings together the urgency, creativity, and resilience of youth and intergenerational movements, especially in contexts like Nepal where traditions, caste, and harmful practices often silence young voices. In amplifying these voices, the section captures both the challenges and the hope of building a more inclusive and equitable future, where young people are recognized as equal partners in shaping society.

Siroun

Being a guest editor was more than being a literature reviewer, rather it was about understanding and internalizing the situation of the youth today. Working on this Special Section allowed me to get real life testimony of what someone from the Global South goes through on a daily basis just to be seen and heard. Apart from learning what it takes to be an editor for *Amicus Curiae*, working on this section has taught me that the world will move on from an issue as soon as the cameras stop flashing a light on them; therefore it is our responsibility to fight for change and see it through. This Special Section creates a framework for the same.

Kristen

While being part of this team of co-editors feels like being part of a community, it would, however, be a mistake to assume that a community is homogeneous, and that everyone always agrees. So, although there was a broad consensus on the topic of the Special Section and ways of inviting contributors, there were moments where we did not always see eye to eye. Our lengthy debates about the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in writing and academic publishing were a case in point. For most of the young co-editors, using generative AI such as ChatGPT and other tools has become second nature, particularly in helping to make writing more concise and punchy, and especially for those of us (the majority) working in English as a second language. For others, and particularly the more seasoned adults, it is crucial to critically evaluate the dangers of everyday use of AI and to reckon with multiple negative

consequences. At the individual level, these include a growing body of research suggesting that casual use of AI can reduce cognitive function and critical thinking (Gerlich 2025). At a broader societal level, these touch on ethical questions around breaches of copyright to train large language models. In the end, given that the current policy of the journal is to not allow AI in its publications, it was decided that the use of generative AI was discouraged and, instead, young co-editors and co-authors were offered personalized support. In this respect, it could be said that the views of seasoned adults in the academic space prevailed over the young people in the group. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that these debates are still open, and in fact we all aspire to write a specific piece on the use of AI in intergenerational academic publishing in the future. This example highlights an important aspect of intergenerational collaboration: staying with disagreements in an honest and transparent way instead of attempting to sweep them under the carpet. This process invites us to remain with the importance of the question instead of seeking a premature answer, and to let the question nurture further collective reflection and creativity.

As Judith Butler reminds us, the act of letting questions remain open is a commitment to a process of radical inclusion: “by letting the question remain open, even enduring, we let the Other live, since life might be understood as precisely that which exceeds any account we may try to give of it” (Butler 2001: 28).

[C] REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE SPECIAL SECTION

Amrit

Each piece offers a unique lens, yet together they form a tapestry of commitment to justice and inclusion. Susan Sapkota’s reflections on intergenerational advocacy illuminate the power of solidarity across age groups in sustaining movements and amplifying marginalized voices. His work reminds us that meaningful change is rarely the product of one generation alone. It is built through shared struggle, mutual respect, and the courage to envision a more just future.

Januka

When reviewing the article by Ornella de Barros and Claire O’Kane, it felt very personal. Their insights echoed my own journey as a child rights advocate which I started at the age of 12.

Osish

Susan Sapkota’s reflections highlight the power of solidarity across generations, showing how meaningful change is rarely the work of one generation alone. Each contribution in this section reflects lived experiences and the courage to act despite limited resources, reminding us that authentic activism grows from empathy, shared struggle, and the commitment to justice.

Prathit

It was an immense pleasure to be a guest editor for this issue of *Amicus Curiae*. As a part of this journey, I had the chance to connect and work with talented and honest young academic voices from around the world. The papers submitted as part of this section are representative of the work being done by and for children and young people, together with adult allies in local and global advocacy for children’s rights. More importantly, in my opinion, it represents efforts towards building intergenerational trust and participation across communities.

Rodoshee

The pieces I reviewed for the Special Section are authentic pieces by some great authors who have the potential to create an impact in their communities. It actually impresses me a lot that they used their very own creativity and ideas to present their words structurally. Firstly, Rolex Odhiambo’s literary piece was one of a kind to me as it presented and included the voice of children and youth in a symphonic manner, besides drawing the attention of the reader to the activism of children and youth, and its history behind the scenes, all that goes on out of sight of the general population. This piece was a solid one, capturing the attention of a wide audience and acknowledging the activism of youth by presenting every occurrence at a glance. Barros and O’Kane’s paper holds great potential as it is one of the very few pieces that managed to highlight the core tension between younger and older generations and pinpoint the solution—through children’s and youth participation in the community. Similarly, the interview with Susan was an immersive one which was

actually able to take us on a journey of the kind of activism that can shake up cultural and generational barriers so as to finally bring some positive changes. Both pieces succeeded in pointing out the importance of children's and youth participation in their community and in decision-making processes which will ultimately be a great asset in creating the foundations for meaningful inclusivity and empowerment.

Siroun

Each submission harbours within it a piece of the writer and to see them weave their emotions, thoughts and experiences into an advocating voice has been an unprecedented experience. In this age of AI-influenced work these pieces are uninfluenced and unfiltered which allows them to have a voice of their own which for me personally evoked a sense of pride. Pride that young people choose to stand up for what they believe in, pride for the unbridled sense of urgency that they create brought on by the lack of solutions and pride that their activism today will allow future generations to live better lives. It is a profound reminder of the resilience, creativity and integrity that continues to define this generation, and of the hope their voices inspire for a more just, inclusive and empathetic world. Their words echo beyond the page, stirring conversations and challenging complacency, while reaffirming that meaningful change begins with empathy and courage. This collective expression of conviction stands as proof that the next generation is not only aware of the challenges facing society, but actively shaping the solutions with passion, vision, and unwavering resolve.

Kristen

I would like to echo the appreciation expressed by the co-editors above for the generous insights conveyed in the three pieces of this Special Section. In parallel to this, I would also like to reflect on what does not appear in the following pages: I would like to draw attention to the silences that shape the contours of this Special Section. What voices are not present here? Why? And what do these absences tell us about the power relations that structure how knowledge comes to take shape around the topic of intergenerational activism? When we shared our invitation with potential contributors, we received significant interest from a range of different authors, including young people with lived experience of the care system in northern Europe and two siblings from Gaza who managed to share a poignant narrative about surviving in the face of genocide and man-made famine. Both groups of young people were supported by adults in their circles to respond to the invitation to contribute. Unfortunately, despite

our best efforts as co-editors, neither piece made it into the final version of the Special Section.

The young co-authors from Europe were deeply involved in a project to contribute to reforming the care system in their country and did not feel able to continue the writing process according to the timelines we had requested. Put simply, their daily activism at that moment in time rendered the process of writing about activism impossible for them.

For the siblings in Gaza, at the time that they submitted their pre-final draft in August, Israel had begun to intensify its targeted assassinations of journalists who were speaking out about the genocide in Gaza, such as Anas Al-Sharif and Mariam Abu Dagga. Following this, the siblings withdrew their consent to have their piece published, even anonymously, for fear of retribution.

This is an extreme example of the climate of fear faced by countless children and young people who live in contexts of systemic violence when they attempt to raise their voices and tell their stories. Therefore, despite two very different contexts and chains of events that led to each piece not being completed, I think that they both draw attention to the ways in which the power dynamics in academic publishing facilitate certain voices to be heard and render others unheard: that the labour of writing invariably takes away from the labour of activism; that struggles to speak out against oppression carry the risk of death. I feel strongly that future scholarship on the topic of intergenerational activism requires giving more attention to these questions and calls for further collective thinking about alternative approaches to create more inclusive and protective spaces for scholar-activism.

[D] REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE HISTORICAL MOMENT IN WHICH WE WRITE

Januka

I also want my voice to echo the human rights violations that happened on 8 September 2025 in Nepal. During the peaceful protest by Generation Z against corruption and failing governance, there were serious breaches of international human rights law, specifically under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (such as Articles 6, 19 and 37) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (such as Articles 6 and 24). At least 19 (8 September) people, including students wearing school uniforms, were shot to death when security forces executed the use of lethal force. It

was really horrible to witness people losing their lives when the only thing they were doing was raising their voices against the wrongs. The peaceful protest then turned destructive and deadly. As a young person from the same community, I closely felt the impact of it when lives, rights, and the dignity of children and young people were at grave risk.

I have been advocating for child rights for over 10 years, and I can strongly voice my concerns, but I still felt speechless. Because of the nationwide chaos and the crimes and destruction that happened during the protest, I felt helpless. I felt unsafe and mentally disturbed. I could not sleep. Though I have space and a network to seek support, the fear and mental trauma I carried could not be expressed in words. What about those with no support system? My experience is only a representation of how young people may feel during times of war or crisis. Even when they are given platforms to speak, they may end up being unable to voice their problems. It is not enough just to provide spaces or empower young people: their mental health and wellbeing must also be protected and supported.

Brian

As a Kenyan youth watching what happened in Nepal in September 2025, it is devastating, but also inspiring. I do not condone the loss of life or the violence being enacted on the young people. I do not pretend to understand the full context of the circumstances, but as a young person who is also from a country that was in conflict with its Government, I believe that if a government does not serve its people, then it ceases to be a government. It loses its power and becomes oppressive and unlawful. If the institutions that are meant to protect and solve problems do not do so, then they should not benefit from the privileges the people have bestowed upon them. The people, at all times, reserve the right to reclaim, retake, and redistribute power because, ultimately, it is theirs. “We the people” is the foundation of every democratic constitution in the world. When a government stops being democratic, it becomes a criminal organization. It is no longer a government. I keep saying that elected presidents are not leaders; they are representatives. It is not their job to make decisions for the people. It is their job to simply amplify the decisions of the people.

Prathit

Recent political movements led by young people in countries including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Indonesia represent the eroding intergenerational trust in electoral democracies in Asia, where young people are frustrated with a generation of political order driven by

corruption, lack of economic opportunities, and inequality (Singh 2025). This is evident in the recent political events led largely by young people in Bangladesh and Nepal. While we are in the process of editing this section of the journal, young people continue to take to the streets of Indonesia, expressing their dissent towards the Government's lack of responsiveness to inequalities and economic opportunities for young people. At such a moment when millions of young people, particularly in South and Southeast Asia, continue to take to the streets, building intergenerational trust becomes important not only to rebuild trust in democracies but also to ensure that accountability is ensured in granting children and young people their rights.

[E] CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, we warmly invite readers to discover this Special Section, and we hope that it nurtures new ideas, invigorates old debates and catalyses further efforts to cultivate intergenerational scholarship.

About the authors

Kristen Hope is a PhD candidate at the University of Bath. Her research is shaped by her childhood in a white settler colonial Caribbean community, studies in Arabic and 15 years working in the international development and humanitarian child protection sector, particularly in South West Asia and North Africa. As a “seasoned adult”, she has used participatory, action-oriented approaches in her work with children and young people affected by displacement and violence, alongside passionate young activists, to support their efforts to claim their rights and drive positive changes in their communities. Her doctoral research adopts feminist and decolonial perspectives to explore child protection in humanitarian contexts.

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Amrit Rijal is a Young Child Rights Activist from Nepal engaged in the field since 2015. He is a medical student at Kathmandu University, a research enthusiast, and a Climate-Health Advocate working to emphasize the interconnectedness of a healthy planet and healthy people. He has been passionately promoting intergenerational partnership, health and child rights-based research and advocacy in response to global challenges and compounding crises.

Prathit Singh is a child and youth participation consultant, working for the past four years with universities, United Nations Agencies, and international non-governmental organizations in areas of violence against

children, climate change, child protection, meaningful child participation, and justice. He finished his Master's in International and Development Studies at the Geneva Graduate Institute, specializing in Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Climate Change. He has been passionately promoting meaningful child and youth participation in decisions concerning children's wellbeing and intergenerational partnerships between children, young people, and adults. Prathit is passionate about working to uphold children's rights and to ensure that every child around the world gets the future they deserve.

Januka Jamarkatel, 22, is a child rights activist from Nepal, advocating for children's rights since the age of 12. She served two years as President of the Municipal Child Club Network of Itahari Sub-Metropolitan, ensuring children's voices were heard in local government decisions, and has worked to prevent child marriage and support other child protection initiatives. She has also contributed to global advocacy as a Peer Mentor for the #CovidUnder19 led by Terre des hommes and currently serves on the executive board of Lakshyadeep, a youth-led network driving climate action and sustainable development goals-focused initiatives.

Brian King Wangari is a child rights advocate, storyteller and emerging systems leader passionate about advancing justice, equity and youth empowerment. He is the Founder and Director of Mtoto Na Sheria, a community-based initiative equipping children and vulnerable groups with legal awareness and advocacy tools. Brian also leads the Watoto Innovations and Solutions Hub (WISH), an ideation lab where children co-create solutions to challenges they face. He has served as Chairperson of the Africa Children Summit and advises child-led platforms globally. His work bridges legal awareness, civic education, and climate justice with creativity and innovation.

Siroun Thacker is a dedicated advocate for children's rights and social justice with extensive experience in international relations, leadership and community engagement. She has led international youth conferences, chaired global forums, and built cross-cultural partnerships advancing dialogue on critical issues. Beyond her leadership roles, she has volunteered widely in education, child-focused initiatives, and grassroots programmes, offering mentorship, support, and creative content to amplify underrepresented voices. With a background spanning legal, editorial and community service work, Siroun blends professionalism and empathy, transforming complex challenges into practical solutions that strengthen communities and ensure inclusive participation on a global stage.

Rodoshee Sarder is a senior high-school student from Bangladesh who has been actively working as a determined Child Rights Activist since 2020, mainly focusing on creating a better future by interconnecting human rights, science and rationality. She has been actively studying societal and humanitarian crises by conducting thorough research in her community and working with the organizations to mitigate the crisis through authorized data and policy briefing with the local organizations, ministries and the UN; thus, promoting healthy intergenerational partnerships and preventing child abuse and misogyny besides mitigating generational and communal violence crises. For her sheer passion towards science and technology, she is researching biodiversity and environment and developing her app-based solution to create a green and healthy economy that ensures every child's environmental rights as a part of her goals to tackle global crises.

Osish Niraula, 17, is a child rights and human rights activist from Nepal who has been passionately advocating for children's voices for more than seven years. Having just completed high school, he envisions blending technology with advocacy to create opportunities for young people like himself to access global platforms. As a co-founder of Learn2Lead, he has mentored over 1,500 students, helping many secure placements in good high schools with scholarships, and continues to work toward a future where education and empowerment go hand in hand.

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Legislation, Regulations and Rules

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