

Social Action Committee Report, 2007

Members:

Gordana Rabrenovic (Chair-Elect), Margaret Andersen, Adriana Bohm, Stephen Couch, Jean Elson, Arthur L. Greil, Michele Paludi,

All members participated via email in two rounds of discussion and voting, first on all of the nominated organizations and then on two finalists. The chair did not vote, but acted as facilitator and synthesizer of the assessments.

Nominations:

We received 17 nominations, but eliminated three of those, which came from parts of the country other than the New York City area. Of the 14 remaining, several were national organizations headquartered in New York; although we looked at those nominations, we gave priority, following SSSP's tradition, to the local grassroots organizations among the nominees. There were a number of very strong contenders for the award, and we are grateful to all members who submitted nominations.

The committee's initial rankings and comments on the organizations led us to consideration of two finalists. A second round of discussion resulted in our decision to make the award to CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities, and to recognize The After Hours Project, Inc. as a runner-up.

2007 Award winner and runner-up:

CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities is a social justice and movement building organization based in New York City's poor, low-income, immigrant and refugee Asian communities. It formed in 1986 as the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, and has broadened its focus as it recognized the increasing exploitation and poverty of these communities. The organization is currently engaged in three community-based programs. Its intergenerational Youth Leadership Program is designed to engage Southeast Asian youth in the Bronx in community action projects that address the circumstances of poverty and also develop civic engagement and leadership skills; its Women Workers' Project organizes and provides services for Asian immigrant women working in informal service sectors, especially domestic work; and its Chinatown Justice Project focuses on issues of housing and safety in Manhattan's Chinatown, and the variety of issues arising from increasing gentrification throughout the city. Our committee was especially impressed with the comprehensiveness of this group's efforts, their work across generations and in partnerships with other marginalized groups, and their emphasis on community empowerment.

We wish also to recognize as runner-up for the award The After Hours Project, Inc., a community-based harm reduction program that addresses the spread of HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in several low-income

communities of color, including Bushwick, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York and Brownsville, Brooklyn; and Ridgewood, in Queens. This organization provides participants, who generally have little or no regular contact with health care providers, with a variety of health and social services, including syringe access, case management and HIV counseling and testing. The organization uses a street-based mobile and storefront approach, and provides services at night, when clients are most likely to be available and responsive. We were very impressed with this group's innovative strategies for reaching people at the highest risk for HIV/AIDS.

Other nominated organizations:

The other nominated organizations (excluding those not based in New York City) were:

- Center for Anti-Violence Education
- Class Size Matters
- College Connections
- Dominicano-American Society of Queens
- Girls Educational and Mentoring Services
- Green Map Systems
- National Advocates for Pregnant Women
- National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs
- National Conference for Community and Justice
- The Osborne Association
- The Partnership for the Homeless, Inc.
- Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls

Comments and suggestions:

The nomination process went smoothly this year, and we had more nominations than usual, no doubt in part because of the rich urban environment of our host city, New York. In order to encourage nominations, I asked Michele Koontz to email a reminder to all SSSP members, about one month before nominations were due; that seemed to be an effective strategy, as I received a number of nominations shortly after that reminder went out.

The committee generally has its work completed by the Annual Meeting and has no need for a full committee meeting at that time. However, it does seem useful for the outgoing and incoming chairs to meet informally, as I did last year with Susan Will, in order to pass on information about the committee's procedures.

Submitted by:

Marjorie DeVault, Chair
2007 Social Action Committee