

## 2008 SSSP Joseph B. Gittler Award Report

TO: Nancy Naples, SSSP President  
Michele Koontz, SSSP Administrative Officer  
Thomas Hood, SSSP Executive Officer

FROM: Leonard Gordon, Chair  
SSSP Joseph B. Gittler Award Committee

CC: Committee Members: Peter Conrad, John Galliher, Judith Lorber,  
Paul Luken, and Wornie Reed

Dear Nancy, Michele, and Tom,

This is the SSSP Joseph B. Gittler Award Report. The Committee, and I as chair, is particularly pleased that former SSSP President Valerie Jenness of the University of California at Irvine is the initial recipient of the Award. Professor Jenness epitomizes this Award "in recognition of the significant scholarly achievement that a SSSP member has made in contributing to the ethical resolution of social problems."

For an Award Committee to have the extensive, substantive basis for conferring such an award, knowledgeable and detailed communication needs to occur. For our committee this complex of communications was provided particularly by SSSP member Shirley Jackson whom I want to acknowledge in assembling a vast array of material of and about Professor Jenness's remarkable career academic work. A review of the material makes it clear how extensive have been Professor Jenness's contributions to advancing understanding and enlightened policies in the justice system. This has been to the great benefit of both the academic community and the larger public.

An exemplar of Professor Jenness's work is in her recent *Social Problems* (2008, 55: 1-22) article on "Pluto, Prisons, and Plaintiffs." As in many of her other published and articulated works, including congressional testimony, she demonstrated her ability to provide the driving field research insights on the entire array of university student, faculty, staff, and prisoner "stakeholders" in a prison context where more than two million are incarcerated in our society. Her work in multiple areas of deviance and social control have both addressed and positively influenced public policy.

Professor Jenness's work addresses all stakeholders, which is everyone, as she advances her research insights on an interdisciplinary basis. Her work encompasses quantitative and qualitative research methods and she engages multiple disciplinary perspectives including history, political science, theories of law, and her discipline of sociology. The wide usage of her work is indicated by a letter from the California Governor sent to

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Professor Jenness in which the Governor notes: "We are using your guidance in establishing a continuum of programs that addresses the need of inmates and parolees and helps them return to their communities as productive, positive citizens" (February 22, 2008). The Governor went on to note that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation will "follow your specific recommendations in retraining staff to focus on rehabilitation rather than warehousing offenders." This is indicative of the wider citation of Professor Jenness's work and its broader influence in our society.

A further example of Professor Jenness's work in influencing the ethical resolution of social problems is her work on the American Sociological Association Task Force on Hate and Bias Acts on College and University Campuses. As chair of the ASA task force, I can relate that the ASA Task Force Report was informed throughout by her research knowledge and implementing insights. In the ASA Report she provided many of the driving policy concepts that applied to the entire array of university student, faculty, and staff stakeholders. The zero sum perspective of many traditional white male college and university participants was seen as a needed perspective to confront as more diverse racial, ethnic, and gender stakeholders have come onto our campuses. Professor Jenness played a key role in advancing the policy and programmatic approaches on our campuses which can increasingly result in moving from zero sum to plus sum perspectives of benefit to all.

The national impact of Professor Jenness's work is evident in many ways. Highlighting that is her co-authored book on *Hate Crimes in America: What Do We Know?* The content of that analysis related to her testimony to a United States Congressional Briefing on "Hate Crime in America." In her testimony she drew on her extensive research in California, including her research into the prison system, noted above. Her basic and applied research insights have affected legislation and practice increasingly in her state locale of California and nationally. In recognition of her work, Professor Jenness was a recent recipient of the Pacific Sociological Association's Distinguished Practice Award.

There could be no more worthy recipient than Valerie Jenness of the first Society for the Study of Social Problems Joseph B. Gittler Award.

Len Gordon, Chair

Joseph B. Gittler Award Committee

On behalf of the Committee: Peter Conrad, John Galliher, Judith Lorber, Paul Luken, and Wornie Reed