

To: SSSP Board of Directors

From: A. Antonio González-Prendes, Chair  
2013 C. Wright Mills Award Committee

RE: Final Report

Date: July 11, 2014

First I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the members of the 2013 C. Wright Mills Award Committee for their hard work, service and commitment to this challenging project of selecting the 2013 award winning book. The members of the committee are: Kathleen A. Asbury, Rose M. Brewer, C. André Christie Mizell, David G. Embrick, Mary Erdmans, Shirley A. Jackson and Frances G. Pestello. In addition, I would like to thank Michele Koontz for her support and guidance throughout this process.

This year the committee received seventy-seven nominations for the C. Wright Mills Award. Preparations for the committee's work began in September 2013 ensuring that contact information and mailing addresses for all committee members were up to date. The next step was to develop and agree upon the process of evaluating each nominated book in a way that would allow the committee to meet the established deadlines for the selection of the semifinalists, finalists and the eventual winner. We agreed on a 3-round process where each book was reviewed against the six criteria established by SSSP. Specifically that each book: critically addresses an issue of contemporary public importance; brings to the topic a fresh, imaginative perspective; advances social scientific understanding of the topic; displays a theoretically informed view and empirical orientation; evinces quality in style of writing; and explicitly or implicitly contains implications for courses of action. Based on these criteria each book was rated on a **1-5 scale (5 = most likely and 1 = least likely)**.

For the first round in the review process each book was reviewed by three committee members. At the start of the selection process committee members were asked to identify their top 20 preferences according to their areas of interest. The books that were not selected were then randomly assigned by the chair of the committee. The result was that in the first round each committee member reviewed 29 books. The goal at this point was to select a group of 10-15 semifinalists by March 15, 2014. However, due to some unexpected circumstances the first round of readings was not completed until March 30<sup>th</sup>. At the end of the first round 13 books were selected as the semi-finalists.

In the second round of readings all committee members reviewed the 13 semifinalists. Each committee member rated each book again using the aforementioned 1-5 scale. In addition, each committee member was asked to provide an ordinal ranking of the books (1 = top preference and 13 = lowest preference). We felt that this would allow us to differentiate on those occasions where a committee member had more than one book with the same score (e.g., 2 books with score of 5, etc.). Our goal was to select 5 finalists by April 25<sup>th</sup>. However, due to unforeseen delays the selection of the finalists was completed by May 7<sup>th</sup>. The five finalists were:

- *The American Non-dilemma: Racial Inequality without Racism* - Nancy DiTomaso - Russell Sage Foundation.
- *The Stickup Kids: Race, Drugs, Violence, and the American Dream* - Randol Contreras - University of California Press.
- *Black Citymakers: How The Philadelphia Negro Changed Urban America* - Marcus Anthony Hunter-Oxford University Press.
- *Markets of Sorrow, Labors of Faith: New Orleans in the Wake of Katrina* - Vincanne Adams - Duke University Press.
- *Breaking Women: Gender, Race, and the New Politics of Imprisonment* - Jill A. McCorkel - NYU Press.

The third round was the selection of the award winning book. At this point Nancy DiTomaso's *The American Non-dilemma: Racial Inequality without Racism* emerged as the frontrunner based on having received the highest average score as well as the highest ordinal ranking from committee members. Consequently, the committee agreed to name *The American Non-dilemma: Racial Inequality without Racism* as the 2013 C. Wright Mills Award winner. This was a challenging project because of two main factors: the number of nominations received and the strong quality of the books. We received 77 strong candidates. In particular, each of the five finalists exemplified excellent scholarship and also captured the spirit of the C. Wright Mills Award. The entire selection process was conducted online and I thought that in general the process worked well.

One significant challenge that the C. Wright Mills Award Committee may face going forward is the steady increase in the number of nominations received. This speaks well to the prestige of and interest generated by this award. In 2012 when I served as a committee member we received 66 nominations and in 2013 we received 77 (a 16.6% increase). If this trend continues I believe that it will pose a significant challenge for future committees to review the books and render an opinion within the established deadlines. The deadline for publishers and authors to nominate books is December 15<sup>th</sup>. After all the books are received and each member receives her or his final reading assignments the actual review does not start until mid-January with a deadline of May 1<sup>st</sup> to submit the list of finalists. So in essence this committee had 3 ½ months to review 77 books. So far it has worked despite the fact that committee members are often attending to their own academic obligations during this period of time. However, if this trend continues, the Board of Directors may want to consider starting the process earlier in the fall to allow for more time for the review process, or perhaps expanding the number of members in the committee in order to reduce the workload of each committee member.

Finally, committee members also suggested that the Board may want to consider acknowledging the non-winner finalists with a certificate of recognition for being a finalist. This suggestion grew out of the appreciation for the excellence in the quality of the books listed as finalists and the desired of the committee to provide a more formal and lasting form of acknowledgement to the authors.