

## **Report of the Executive Officer of the Society for the Study of Social Problems August 2014 – San Francisco, CA**

I would like to begin my report by thanking the Board and the membership, once again, for the privilege of serving as the Executive Officer of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) and the opportunity of working closely with a wonderful, dedicated, and extremely competent staff, beginning, of course, with Michele Koontz. She continues to amaze me. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Graduate Research Associate & Webmaster (GRA), Lisa East, who is leaving her position as the SSSP's GRA, for her work on behalf of the SSSP. Her dedication and web expertise have been invaluable to the Society. As we say good-bye to Lisa, and wish her well as she completes her dissertation, let us welcome our new GRA, Douglas Oeser. Douglas is a Master's candidate in UTK's sociology department, with plans to pursue a Ph.D. in sociology after he obtains his Master's. Prior to his arrival at UTK, Douglas served as a team supervisor and intelligence analyst in the U.S. Army. As a student at UTK, he has served as President of Veterans-UTK, a veteran student organization. He maintained the organization's website and has served as the sociology department's information technology specialist. We are very happy to have Douglas join us and believe that he brings a wealth of experience and expertise that will be invaluable to the Society as well.

A lot of changes have taken place in the past year, some of which I addressed in my last report. Still, I would like to note in this report my happiness with the Board's selection of Oxford University Press (OUP) as the new publisher for *Social Problems* and Dr. Pamela Quiroz and Dr. Nilda Flores-Gonzalez as the new editors of the journal. The journal is not only a major source of revenue for the Society, it is also one of the most important journals in the discipline. In the hands of Pamela/Nilda and OUP, I believe that it will reach new heights, as it did under the superb editorship of Dr. Becky Pettit. I would like to thank Becky for her contributions to the journal and the Society, including her work on the transition to a new editorial office at the University of Illinois, Chicago. Both OUP and our new editors are committed to making *Social Problems* a more international journal and I, personally, am very excited about that. I also want to note that Pamela and Nilda have assembled one of the most diverse editorial teams the journal has ever had, consistent with the Society's values and mission.

### **Annual Meeting – San Francisco**

I would like to commend President Anna Maria Santiago and her Program Committee, chaired by Kelly Patterson and Robert Silverman, for an excellent program. The theme of the meeting, *Fifty Years Later: From a War on Poverty to a War on the Poor*, focuses on an issue that we continue to ignore much too much as a society. In the presidential debates in 2012, for example, and in candidates' campaign stump speeches, the topic was rarely addressed by either candidate, despite the fact that tens of millions of people in this country live in or near poverty. We are very pleased to give it the attention that it deserves. Attendance at the meeting promises to be

excellent. We filled our room block quickly and had to add rooms, unfortunately at a higher rate, but still well below the ASA rate. Members are reminded to make their hotel reservation as early as possible in the future.

Next year's meeting will be in Chicago, under the leadership of President-elect Marlese Durr and her Program Committee, chaired by David Embrick and Bandana Purkayastha. The theme of the meeting, *Removing the Mask, Lifting the Veil: Race, Class, and Gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, is a timely and important one as well. The site of the meeting is one we believe members will enjoy immensely. Following Chicago, we will be in Seattle, Montreal, and Philadelphia, respectively.

### **Social Problems - New Cover Design and Relationship**

As you know, OUP is our new publisher. We hope, and feel very confident, that it will mean more revenue and international exposure. But it also means a new cover design (attached) which we hope that our members will like. The first issue sporting the new design will be in February of 2015. Working with OUP on the design, and on the transition with them and the University of California Press, has been a pleasure and we have every reason to believe that this excellent working relationship will continue for the next five years. Along these lines, I want to thank Allison Ferguson, OUP's Assistant Marketing Manager for Oxford Journals, for her easy willingness to work with a Social Media Committee, chaired by Kasey Henricks and established by the new editors, to market the journal. The committee, made up principally of students, will use social media to promote the journal. This will include dissemination of information to the journal publisher, colleagues, and other outreach. It will also include reaching out to the public via press releases. Allison sees it as another resource and noted that the majority of OUP's societies/journals have social media committees with which they coordinate their efforts.

### **Annual Awards Banquet and Ceremony**

Every year a new President and Program Committee, working closely with the Administrative Office, cobbles together the program for the annual meeting. As long as they abide by the By-laws and Operations Manual, they have considerable leeway putting the program together. Sometimes presidents and program chairs believe that the rules are too constraining, and in those instances we advise them to petition the Board for a temporary reprieve or to recommend changes in the By-Laws or Operations Manual. One of the issues that has arisen in the past, including the recent past, is the awards banquet, i.e., when and where to hold it and how to structure it. In this report I would like to recommend that the decision on what to do with the banquet be entirely that of the Board, and not the President and the Program Committee. The banquet is, and has been, the Society's vehicle to recognize the work of its members, and especially graduate students, who make up an integral part of the SSSP, and as such, I believe that the Board should determine the format, time, and place (although the Board decided in 2003 that the banquet should always be held in the meeting hotel).

## Membership Survey Update

One of our members, Dr. Keith Johnson, Oakton Community College, has been helping us to develop a membership survey that we had planned to distribute prior to the 2014 annual meeting, but have decided, for a variety of reasons, to delay until the early fall. The principal reason for the survey is to ascertain how well the SSSP is meeting members' needs. We hope and trust that when the time comes, members will complete the survey. I want to recognize, in addition to Keith's contribution, the work contributed on the survey by our IT Specialist, Sharon Shumaker. We have relied heavily on her IT skills, but Sharon has also made important contributions in the design of the survey instrument itself, including questions and the wording of questions. We would like to thank, as well, members who participated in a pre-test for their feedback.

## Letter to the President of the University of Southern Maine on behalf of the SSSP

On April 2, 2014, I wrote a letter to Dr. Theodora Kalikow, the President of the University of Southern Maine (USM), upon the request of colleagues at USM and the approval of the Board, requesting that she reverse her decision to cut faculty in the liberal arts, as a response to budget cuts by the state's legislature. The letter read in part,

*We recognize that your university is experiencing, as many universities are, difficult financial times, but at the same time we do not understand why you are choosing to solve the problem on the backs of the faculty and, even worse, students. Surely, there are other avenues open to you or avenues you can create to avert these drastic measures. Not only will these cuts undermine your efforts to recruit students and to provide them with a quality liberal arts education, but it will make it extremely difficult for you to hire quality faculty in the future. We are especially concerned with the impact of business models on public institutions of higher education and the critical social and educational mission that they have performed for the country and world, so well and for so long. If this trend continues, only students with the means to attend private institutions will have access to a quality liberal arts education. That would be tragic for the citizens of your state and the country.*

The President did reverse her decision (and I hope that our letter, in conjunction with others', played a role), for the time being at least, and I sent a second letter thanking and commending her. This issue, however, is not one that will go away. The Society, I believe, needs to discuss ways in which it can play a more active role in fighting against the *corporatization* of higher education, instead of continually reacting to incidents such as this one and last year in CUNY. In 1975, nearly 60% of faculty were tenured or tenure-track, while today the figure hovers around 30%, and faculty participate less and less in the governance of universities, even in curricular matters. This should concern us and move us to act as an organization.

## Concluding Remarks

Last year we conducted simultaneous searches for a new publisher for and editors of *Social Problems*, and I believe that in both instances the results were superb. Concerns about the process, however, have been raised and need to be addressed before the next searches. The search for the next editor or editors, in fact, begins almost as soon as the new editors begin their stint. The Editorial and Publication Committee (E&P), the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee (BFA), and the Administrative Office will be weighing in on the issue and making recommendations to the Board, in order to ensure that the next searches are efficient and that procedures established by the Board are followed. I am looking forward to that conversation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Delgado', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.  
Executive Officer, SSSP