

Report of the Executive Officer of the Society for the Study of Social Problems August 2015–Chicago, IL

As I normally do, I wish 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 to work with a wonderful, dedicated, and extremely competent staff, beginning, of course, with Michele Koontz. This past year was a busy and at times a very complicated one, as you will see shortly in this report, and Michele, as always, stepped up and made the tasks much simpler and efficient. We are equally fortunate to have Sharon Shumaker as our IT specialist, although she has many other talents that we tap time and time again. Marisa Stone continues to serve the SSSP admirably as its Administrative Assistant and for that we are very grateful. In the past we have been very fortunate to have excellent Graduate Research Associates and Webmasters, and Douglas Oeser is not an exception.

Annual Meeting–Chicago

I would like to commend President Marlese Durr and her Program Committee, chaired by David G. Embrick and Bandana Purkayastha, for an excellent program. The theme of the meeting is *Removing the Mask, Lifting the Veil: Race, Class, and Gender in the 21st Century*, a timely and important one, especially in light of the events of the past year, which included the shooting death of numerous unarmed black men and boys by the police and the death of Eric Garner as a consequence of a choke hold by a police officer. In fact, on behalf of the SSSP, President Marlese Durr, Vice-President Nancy Mezey, and I wrote a letter to the Attorney General at the time, Eric Holder, calling on the federal government to investigate these cases. In part, the letter read,

In 1900, W.E.B. Du Bois asked in a lecture that he delivered at the third annual meeting of the American Negro Academy, “what part is the color line destined to play in the 20th century?” This is a question that we find ourselves asking about the 21st century, especially in light of these recent events, the race-baiting to which the first black president has been subjected, the gutting of the Voting Rights Act by the Supreme Court, and voter suppression laws in state after state, to reference but a few causes for concern. As the country becomes more and more diverse racially and ethnically, the need to construct a society free of racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination and the need to increase the trust between minority communities and the people sworn to protect them has never been greater. Yet, what we’ve seen in the past few months has been the exact opposite – and it is for this reason that we believe that it is imperative for the federal government to recognize that it still has a critical role to play in fashioning a society in which a person’s color or ethnicity is not a factor in whether he or she

lives or dies. If states and municipalities cannot protect the civil and legal rights of their citizens regardless of race or ethnicity, then the federal government must step in as it has in the past to protect these rights.

Another, more recent, event that underscores the timeliness of the theme, was the murder of Ms. Depayne Middleton Doctor, Ms. Cynthia Hurd, Ms. Susie Jackson, Ms. Ethel Lance, The Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Mr. Tywanza Sanders, The Rev. Dr. Daniel Simmons Sr., Ms. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, and Ms. Myra Thompson in the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC by a white supremacist who sat with them for an hour before opening fire. These murders were a stark reminder that racism did not disappear with the election of President Barack Obama and moved people, politicians among them, to take down the Confederate Flag flying over the Capitol in Charleston. We sent a letter to the governors and legislative leaders in states where the “Stars and Bars” still flies urging them to take the flag down in their states and to relegate it to a museum, where it belongs.

I am looking forward to our Seattle meeting as well, and David Smith’s tenure as President. It is a perfect time for the SSSP to have as President someone with David’s commitment to and expertise in globalization and international issues and problems.

Social Problems–The Journal

We began the year with Pamela Anne Quiroz and Nilda Flores-González as co-editors of *Social Problems*. But there have been some significant changes. Pamela has accepted a new position at the University of Houston (UH) and the journal will move with her, with the exception of a managing editor, who will remain at the University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC). Nilda has decided to step down as co-editor, so Pamela will be the sole editor, assisted by a new Deputy Editor at the University of Houston. Many hours went into making this a smooth transition—and Deans and others at both universities helped tremendously. We are especially grateful to Interim Dean Steven Craig at the University of Houston and his efforts in making all of this work without any interruption to the journal. I want to extend special thanks to Mary Bernstein, the Chair of the Editorial and Publications Committee; Miriam Lopez, a former attorney and now consultant, for her advice on amending the UIC agreement and drafting a new agreement with UH on very short notice; Susan Carlson, Treasurer, and Claire Renzetti, the Chair of the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee, for their advice; Pamela for continuing the work of the journal during a difficult period of transition; and Michele Koontz, who was on vacation for part of the time, and jumped right in seamlessly when she returned to help make the process a smooth and efficient one. I would also like to thank Nilda Flores-González for her year as co-editor and wish her well.

With regard to the journal, I would like you to pay special attention to Pamela’s report, and Kasey Henrick’s report on social media. It is a very exciting time for the journal in many ways, and Oxford University Press has been a great partner with whom to work.

Social Problems–Impact Factor

I am happy to report that in 2014 the “Impact Factor” for *Social Problems* rose significantly and our journal is now 15th out of 142 journals in sociology, and very close to breaking into the top ten. The “Impact Factor” increased to 1.729 in 2014 from 1.360 in 2013. While the “Impact Factor” of a journal does not tell us everything about a journal, it is an indicator, in some measure, of the importance of the journal in our field and the quality of the articles published in it.

Editor Search

This coming year we will be conducting a search for a new editor for *Social Problems*, and we have taken steps that we hope will increase the number of applicants and improve the efficiency and fairness of the process. You will be hearing more about the search soon and we urge you to consider taking on the task or to urge others to apply. The journal is a vitally important one in the field and generates a substantial amount of revenue for the SSSP – both reasons to join us in ensuring its future health.

Transition from UCP to OUP

The transition from the University of California Press (UCP) to Oxford University Press (OUP) as our publisher was seamless, and we have both publishers to thank for that. We chose OUP because of its reputation as one of the foremost publishers of scholarly journals, in the world, because of its international presence and reach (which we want to increase for the journal and organization), because it is a university not-for-profit publisher, and because of the people we would be working with were (and have proven to be) exceptionally competent and professional – and they are a delight to work with on a personal level. My hope is that this relationship will last for a very long time.

Membership Survey Update

I would like to thank Sharon Shumaker, Michele Koontz, and especially Keith Johnson, Oakton Community College, for the work on the membership survey. We received 365 responses, in an effort to ascertain how well the SSSP is meeting members’ needs. The deadline for this report arrived before we had completed the analysis of the data, but Keith Johnson will be reporting on the survey to the Board on August 21 and I will reference it as well in my report at the Business Meeting in Chicago.

Contract with University of Tennessee – Knoxville (UTK)

Our contract with UTK will end on December 31, 2016. According to the Operations Manual, “A subcommittee (Chair, one committee member, and the Treasurer) will perform a site visit of the Administrative Office the same year that the Society’s contract is to be renewed. The visit

should take place in the spring and be routinely initiated by the Administrative Officer. The meeting should be organized jointly by the Chair of the Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee and the Administrative Officer. Care should be taken to identify and agree upon a convenient time for all involved parties. The purpose of the visit is to discuss a range of operational issues of current concern, to review the Society's web site for content, design, and links to relevant organizations, to plan new goals, and identify future development issues. The Chair will prepare a report summarizing the meeting. The Administrative Officer will distribute the report to the Board of Directors and the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee. A budget item for committee expenses is included in the Society's budget."

Luis Fernandez, the Chair-Elect of the committee, is aware of and planning has started for the site visit.

Concluding Remarks

I am very pleased with where the organization is at this juncture and where it is headed, and we have so many people to thank for that - not the least of which are the members of the Board, both current and past. I've never seen more committed Boards, year after year. It is indeed an honor to work with the Board, the organization's committees, and the administrative team that does the day-today work of the organization.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hector L. Delgado', written in a cursive style.

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