

## **Report of the 2014-2015 Local Arrangements Committee, Chicago IL**

July 11, 2015

Chair: Nancy Michaels, Roosevelt University

Committee Members: Julie Hilvers, Roosevelt University, Kasey Hendricks, Loyola University

**Annual Meeting Site:** Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel, 221 N Columbus Dr, Chicago, IL

**Final Site Visit:** Marlese Durr joined Michele Koontz, Nancy Michaels for dinner at the Park Grill on Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup>. We discussed how the theme of this year's meeting: Removing the Mask, Lifting the Veil: Race, Class and Gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, aligns with powerful scholarship and organizing going on in Chicago. In fact, on the evening we met, there was a youth led, "Black Lives Matter" activist march going on in the Chicago Loop. We talked about unique tour ideas in Chicago to fit the target audience of conference attendees. Out of the tour suggestions Nancy had previously researched and sent to Michele, Marlese chose the following: The Jane Adams Hull House Museum, the National Museum of Mexican Art and Public Mural Tour in the Pilsen Neighborhood and the Bronzeville Historical Tour: The Underground Railroad Trolley Tour. Marlese suggested partnering with ASA on the tours and offered to connect with their tour organizers about this possibility. She followed up with ASA and they agreed that to join together in the tour offerings.

On Friday, December 5<sup>th</sup> Kasey Henricks and Julie Hilvers joined Michele, Marlese and Nancy for lunch at the conference site, The Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel. We discussed the tour ideas, thoughts on social media and SSSP website. The remainder of the discussion focused on the possibility of the Local Arrangements Committee designing a session on the powerful youth organizing going on in Chicago. The idea was that would complement the conference theme and increase the local flavor of the conference by featuring activism in Chicago. Marlese agreed to try to secure funding for such a session.

**Program:** Kasey Henricks, **Law and Social Science Fellow, American Bar Foundation**

**PhD Candidate, Loyola University Chicago,** wrote the graduate student version of the "Welcome to City Guide" and titled it, "Welcome to Chicago, the City of Big Shoulders: A Guide for Graduate Students and Others of Modest Means." The guide which included public transportation tips, dining and "touristy" things to do on a budget, was posted on the meeting website.

The "Welcome to the City Guide" written by the Local Arrangements Committee Chair, Nancy Michaels had a "counter tourist" edge to it with a focus on the "real Chicago" made up of the history, culture and neighborhoods

that is the true essence Chicago's uniqueness. The letter also included a listing of things to do in Chicago complete with links to activity and festival calendars.

**Conference Materials:** The LAC along with the Mansfield Institute's AmeriCorps VISTA, Tim Crawford, developed a diverse restaurant guide that again, featured the neighborhoods in Chicago where in many cases; the dining connects directly with the culture of the community. We worked on ideas to ensure the guide was not generic and included choices that potentially, were targeted to the SSSP attendees. Since this was not a scientific process; knowing what restaurants sociologists would be attracted to, we included a variety of choices but supplemented our listings with links to published local dining guides. The committee agreed that when we traveled, we preferred restaurant suggestions from local's so were cognizant of staying away from non-local dining guides such as TripAdvisor and Zagat which are typically written by non-Chicagoans. Other sections we included in an efforts to make the guide special were historical Chicago restaurants, outdoor dining spots, favorite "watering holes" and the, "3 favorites" of each committee member.

Nancy Michaels wrote the abridged version of the Press Release and is working with the Roosevelt University Public Relations Director on the extended version which will be completed by August 1.

**Meeting Promotion:**

The LAC researched a wide range of academics in the Chicagoland area that would be a good fit for conference attendance. A list of 97 Academics was submitted to Michele Koontz who followed up with a mailing of promotional material to all on the list.

**Action items and suggestions:** The local Arrangements Committee members could be excellent resource for bringing local flavor and integrate the local community and conference organizers where it may enhance the conference focus. Suggestions would include expanding LA committee responsibilities to include connecting with local community organizers, activists, policy makers, scholar activists, political and community leaders. They may be able to facilitate meetings with these groups, outline what they are working on that could be of interest to the conference attendees and find ways to engage them and participate in the conference schedule. It might also add interest to include a list of community activist "actions" in the 2016 conference program and invite conference attendees to attend actions that connect to their interests and their scholarship.

Ways the LAC tried to increase community/conference engagement:  
The LAC developed and is sponsoring a session by local youth organizers. The description of the session is: Black lives matter: youth led activism in Chicago

and the ways in which young people are messaging about social justice issues: race, police violence, and justice in Chicago.

In addition, the LAC helped arrange a performance by youth leaders in the Chicago social justice community at the Welcome Reception. This is an area that could be developed further. Lastly, the LAC Chair, Nancy, was on the Thomas Hood Social Action Award Committee and helped nominate local organizations.

One final note and item that we recommend reviewing is the press release. The condensed press release should be sufficient to announce and promote the conference to the press. The expanded version is unnecessarily lengthy and redundant. Perhaps a version that falls in-between the two would be sufficient.