

July 24th, 2015

To: SSSP Board of Directors

From: Bandana Purkayastha and David G. Embrick, Co-Chairpersons

SSSP 2015 Annual Meeting Program Committee

RE: SSSP Program Committee Report 2015

Theme: Removing the Mask, Lifting the Veil: Race, Class, and Gender in the 21st Century.

We were honoured that President Marlese Durr asked us to serve as her Co-Chairs of the SSSP Program Committee for the 2015 annual meetings in Chicago. The theme, “Removing the Mask, Lifting the Veil: Race, Class, and Gender in the 21st Century” instilled in us a mixed-bag of emotions as the topic is one that is near and dear to our hearts, yet, unfortunately, the timing could not have been more perfect. The murders of numerous brown and black bodies, the disregard for human life and acts of brutality from police officers and other law enforcement officials, and the sheer and overt hostilities toward minorities from many in the public sphere was made strikingly visible in current events such as Ferguson, Baltimore, Cleveland, the Charleston 9, and more recently the death of Sandra Bland who died while in police custody in Waller County, TX. Clearly, we have much work to do. And yet, here and there shine small glimmers of hope—for example, the Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage. Even then, we have much more work to do.

Although we have had past experiences as Program Chair and other leadership positions in other organizations, our work with SSSP has taught us one thing for certain: organizations vary and they can vary tremendously. Thus, we would like to profusely thank Michele Koontz for all of her help and more importantly, her patience, working with us to ensure that everything ran the way it should. For all of Michele’s help and for the help of the other SSSP team members (Sharon Shumaker, IT Specialist; Marisa Stone, Administrative Assistant; and Douglas Oeser, Graduate Research Associate and Webmaster), we are immensely grateful.

Our Program Committee deserves a special round of thanks for their contributions to the 2015 SSSP program. It is because of them that we are able to see President Durr’s vision come to life. Thus, many thanks to: France Winddance Twine (UC Santa Barbara), David L. Brunsmma (Virginia Tech), Rogelio Saenz (University of Texas at San Antonio), Mary G. Hovsepian (Duke University), Opolot Okia (Wright State University), and Nancy J. Mezey (Monmouth University)! We want to give many thanks to Justin Lini, Program Coordinator for the American Sociological Association, for his cover design to this year’s SSSP theme. We also want to extend our utmost gratitude to Professor Tukufu Zuberi for his extremely generous gift in allowing us to showcase, and agreeing to host, his important documentary: *African Independence*. The film will be showcased on Friday, August 21 from 4:15pm – 6:30pm.

Michele Koontz was kind enough to help us gather the necessary information for this year’s SSSP program. Based on the Online Session Management System, there were

originally 767 papers submitted on February 1, 2015, a day after the January 31st deadline. As of July 15, 2015, there were a total of 678 papers submitted using the on-line submission process and 81 papers added by session organizers for a total of 759 conference papers. As of early July, there were 887 registrants for this year's conference. Of the 887 registrants, 21 were granted an annual meeting exemption. At this time, there were 764 papers on the program. As of July 17, 2015, there were 24 program participants who had not registered for the conference despite multiple attempts to remind them. All 24 were removed from the program. There are 179 total sessions this year. Of the 179 sessions, three sessions (#57, 128, and 179) have been cancelled. In total, there were 2 plenary sessions, 42 thematic sessions, and 7 special sessions. There were 69 sessions that were co-sponsored.

Each of the program committee members were asked to organize a thematic session for this conference. The notable and highly current titles include: "Race, Class, and Reproductive Justice" (France Winddance Twine); "Removing the Mask, Lifting the Veil, and Looking in the Mirror: How Race, Gender, Class, Sexuality, and Ability Underwrite the Process of Knowledge Production in Sociology" (David L. Brunσμα); "Latina/os and a Shifting U.S. Race Paradigm" (Rogelio Saenz); "Racialized Population Control Under Global Capitalism" (Mary G. Hovsepian); "Hidden Voices in Historical Narratives" (Opolot Okia); "Removing the Mask and Lifting the Veil Across the Life Course: Race, Class, Gender, and Aging" (Nancy J. Mezey); "Racism in Sociology and the Social Sciences: The Known Pain that Never Ends" (David G. Embrick); and "Human Rights, Human Dignity: Conversations on Claiming Human Rights" (Bandana Purkayastha).

Other notable special sessions include: a special session titled "Connor Sparrowhawk: Reflections on the Rights of Disabled Individuals in Institutions" was joint organized by Bandana Purkayastha, Nancy J. Mezey, and Mark Sherry; a session on "The Academic Job Market" organized by David G. Embrick; and a session organized by President Durr titled "Feminist Issues in the 21st Century: Change and Innovation." This year, President Durr decided to partner with the American Sociological Association (ASA) to offer four co-sponsored tours (National Museum of Mexican Art and Public Mural Tour in the Pilsen Neighborhood, The Hull House Museum, Urban Gorillas: A Tour of the Regenstein Center for African Apes at Lincoln Park Zoo, and The Bronzeville Historical Tour: The Underground Railroad Trolley Tour).

There are two workshops scheduled this year: a one-day conference titled "Sexual Harassment: International and Domestic Legislation, Training, and Advocacy"; and a one-day workshop titled "Institutional Ethnography." The one-day workshop titled "Lifting the Veil" has been cancelled. We note with enthusiasm that the brunt of the work done in putting together this great conference was born on the shoulders of the division chairs. Their dedication and thoughtfulness to putting together sessions that meshed with the theme of this year's conference was timely and we could not have put together such a great program without their help. We look forward to the many conversations that will take place in the afterglow of the conference.

This year there were no notable issues in creating the program other than our own growing pains. Once again, we would like to mention our gratitude to Michele Koontz for her ability to anticipate our shortcomings and to help us work out the myriad of issues that came up regarding session creation and registration. We have a few thoughts on our year as program co-chairs:

- First, there continues to be misperceptions that critical dialogues are second rate sessions—similar to what the previous program chairs mentioned in their 2014 report. We have been asked on a few occasions to speak more about what it means to be a critical dialogue panelist/presenter; there continues to be some confusion as to the point of these sessions. A few session organizers have expressed frustration with their sessions—mostly to those presenters who give full 20 minute presentations of their paper and refuse to limit their time at the podium. Understandably this is still a relatively new concept to SSSP. However, we are wondering if more can be done to advertise and emphasize the overall point of these sessions.
- As we mentioned earlier in this report, we mistakenly approached our positions as program co-chairs with presumptions about how programs are created and run. Because our experiences being program chairs in other organizations required us to deal with the total creation and placement of conference sessions, etc., we lost some minor time thinking too much about things we did not have to think about; we did not realize that Michele did the actual layout of the program (including placement of sessions) until the three of us had our first phone conference.

We have a few recommendations to the board:

- First, we recommend to the board a review of the current SSSP practice for site visits. We understand completely the complications that come with making decisions on hotel space, place, and time; both of us have been involved in some of those decisions in other organizations. It is apparent that SSSP is growing and there is no indication that the next few years will see membership participation drop or attendance at annual meetings drop from the numbers in the past 3 years. Our concern is specifically to the issue of making sure that we have enough space to accommodate this growth.
- Second, we recommend to the board that there be some vetting process for memorial sessions—perhaps inclusion in the bylaws. These sessions, while necessary, need to be limited to only one or two per year as they take away precious session and hotel space and time.
- Third, we highly recommend to the board the creation of a dedicated workshop (or meeting for lack of a better term) for new program chairs to meet with the SSSP Administrative Officer (and other SSSP personnel) prior to them taking on their program chair duties. Although there is already in place a scheduled lunch meeting between the SSSP Administrative Officer and current and past program chairs, we find this meeting to be inadequate in terms of learning the technical ropes of what it means to be a program chair for SSSP. A dedicated workshop would allow new program chairs to learn the essentials of the SSSP software

program, the specific duties of the program chair(s) vis a vis the duties of the Administrative Officer. The Southwestern Sociological Association, for example, has such as workshop for new program chairs at the end of their annual conferences. The workshop is devoted to helping new program chairs understand how to navigate the software used to create the program; learn their specific obligations as program chairs; and answers any questions that new program chairs might have about their duties, or SSSP in general. ASA puts on a similar workshop for folks in leadership positions with their organization; there is no reason why SSSP could not do the same. We imagine this would save time and minimize potential headaches on all parties.