



July 17, 2017

Dear SSSP Board of Directors:

This year's C. Wright Mills Book Award committee members were Robert Benford, Kendal Broad, Nancy DiTomaso, David G. Embrick, George Lipsitz, Laurence Ralph, and Hephzibah V. Strmic-Pawl. We had a great committee this year and it was a pleasure working with all the members to select the finalists and award recipient for this year's award. This year we had a total 95 eligible books for the award, 1 more book than last year's nomination of 94.

With the excellent assistance of Michele Koontz and her staff at the SSSP office, the names and addresses of committee members were confirmed and all agreed to participate on this year's committee. The committee chair followed the procedure set by SSSP and the previous chair of this award. These dates were:

- Deadline for submissions of nominated books: December 15, 2016
- Books assigned to committee members for reading: January 15, 2017
- The Chair must submit a list of finalists to SSSP office by: May 1, 2017
- The Chair must notify SSSP of the award winner by: July 1, 2017

Committee members received copies of the nominated books. Once all books were received and the nomination closed (12/15/16), the chair organized a list of all the books and submitted it to each committee member to ensure that everyone had a copy of each book. The chair then assigned readings to each committee member at random whereas each member ended up reading (as close to) the same number of books. This process¹ is outlined below:

1. First wave of reviews—complete by March 13, 2017
 - a. Each book is to be read by 3 committee members
 - i. The Chair may randomly assign the readings to each committee member.

¹ ***Special thanks to previous chairs—Héctor L. Delgado, Shirley Jackson and Victor Rios—for providing guidance on this selection process outline.

- ii. Each member ranks each book on a 1-5 scale (5 = excellent candidate; 4 = strong candidate; 3 = good candidate; 2 = marginal candidate; 1 = unlikely candidate).
 - iii. **VERY IMPORTANT**—Each book should be read and rated according to how it fits the 6 criteria for the award:
 - 1. Critically addresses an issue of contemporary public importance,
 - 2. Brings to the topic a fresh, imaginative perspective,
 - 3. Advances solid scientific understanding of the topic,
 - 4. Displays a theoretically informed view and empirical orientation,
 - 5. Evinces quality in style of writing,
 - 6. Explicitly or implicitly contains implications for courses of action.
 - b. Each member submits a list of the books read with the numerical ranking to the committee Chair by March 13, 2017.
 - c. The Chair will then compile a list of the rankings in hierarchical order from highest to lowest ranked.
 - d. The top ten ranked books will move to the next round.
- 2. Second wave of reviews—complete by April 24, 2017
 - a. The top ten books will be read by the full committee. Since these books will likely include some books that each of us would have already read, the actual number of readings for most committee members should be less than ten.
 - b. These books will be ranked using the same 1-5 scale previously used in the first wave of reviews. The rankings should be submitted to the Chair by April 24, 2017. The top five entries will be considered the “finalists.”
 - c. At this point, if one of the books emerges as the clear favorite, we have the option to select that book as the “winner” among the top five rated books.
- 3. Third wave of reviews—complete by June 15, 2017
 - a. If no clear winner emerges at this point, we need to have one or more discussions to select the winner from the top five finalists. These discussions could take place via conference call and/or by email.
 - b. The winner is selected and the name is submitted to SSSP no later than July 1, 2017.
 - c. A unanimous vote is preferred. However, if needed, a majority vote will be used to determine the winner.

Consistent with last year's process, the books were rated on a Likert scale of 1-5 where 5 = most likely and 1 = least likely. The committee settled on five finalists for the award:

1. Dr. Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*.
2. Dr. Roberto G. Gonzales, *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America*.
3. Dr. Faranak Miratab, *Global Heartland: Displaced Labor, Transnational Lives, and Local Placemaking*.
4. Dr. Nicole Gonzales Van Cleve, *Crook County: Racism and Injustice in America's Largest Criminal Court*.
5. Dr. Robert Vargas, *Wounded City: Violent Turf Wars in a Chicago Barrio*.

The committee reviewed these books and ranked them. In the last round of scores, the book receiving the overwhelmingly highest rankings was Dr. Roberto G. Gonzales' book, *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America*. The committee agreed on making this book the winner.

Recommendation Moving Forward:

The task of the SSSP C. Wright Mills Book Award Committee is daunting. I agree with Victor Rios, previous chair of this committee that while fulfilling, the service obligations for this particular committee are extraordinary. While the number of eligible book nominations may fluctuate from year to year, in the past few years that number has held steady at above 60 books—the past two years have been above 90. Further, having 7 committee members (total, including the chair) does not alleviate the workload given each of the eligible nominated books must be read by 3 members. One may argue that such a large committee is often more work when one considers scheduling, deadlines, compiling/organizing lists, etc. Regardless, I am not suggesting there may be a better way to organize this committee. In fact, the system we used (outlined above) works well. Given the workload and level of service commitment demanded by this committee, I would like to suggest that SSSP consider sending a formal recognition (or thank you) letter to members who serve (and complete) on the C. Wright Mills Book Award Committee, cc'ing their appropriate administrators (e.g., department chair, Dean, Provost, etc.). Such a recognition would cost SSSP very little, but would be a valuable practice in symbolic and maybe even material ways.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Embrick', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David G. Embrick, Chair, 2016-2017 SSSP C. Wright Mills Award Committee

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