

**Executive Officer Report
Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP)
Annual Meeting - 2017**

**Bonaventure Montreal Hotel
Montreal, QC, Canada
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Submitted by Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D., Executive Officer, SSSP

I would like to begin as I usually do thanking the many people who make this organization work as well as it does. These individuals include officers, board members, division chairs, committee chairs and members, mentors, volunteers at the annual meeting registration desk, and attendees at our annual meeting. I especially wish to thank the President of the Board, Donileen R. Loseke, for all of her work this past year, and both she and Amir B. Marvasti, the Chair of the Program Committee, and the other program committee members, for a wonderful program. This is one of the best attended meetings the Society has ever had, a testament to their hard work and the extraordinary city in which the meeting is taking place. It has been an absolute pleasure working with them. I want to thank Pamela Anne Quiroz, the Editor of *Social Problems*, and her colleagues on the journal, including the editorial board, for continuing to produce a quality journal. I especially want to highlight and express my appreciation for the diversity of the articles we have seen over the past three years and the creative use of social media to market the journal. Most of the credit for the new social media initiatives goes to Kasey Henricks, the Chair of the Social Media Committee, and to the other members of the committee, for their creativity and hard work, and collaboration with Oxford University Press (OUP) to get as many people as possible to read the many cutting-edge articles published in the journal. Pamela will be reporting on the journal, so I will not steal any of her thunder, other than to call your attention to "The Authors' Attic." In addition to their collaboration with the Social Media Committee, we want to thank OUP for their overall work on the journal, including their quick response to problems as they arise.

I wish to thank as well my fellow staff members, beginning with Marisa Stone, our administrative assistant. The organization would not be able to function nearly as smoothly as it does without her day-to-day work. I would like to thank as well, and to introduce her to many of you, our new Information Technology (IT) Specialist, Rachel Cogburn. When Sharon Shumaker left we worried that we would not be able to fill her shoes, but, luckily, the shoes fit Rachel perfectly. We are indeed fortunate to have her as our IT Specialist. We want to thank our Graduate Research Associate and Webmaster, Bethany Nelson, for her work this past year, and to wish her our best in her future endeavors. Replacing Bethany will be Caitlin Mize. Caitlin impressed us in the interview with her technological and interpersonal skills, and we are looking forward to working with her. I also want to thank Jon Shefner, the Head of the Department of Sociology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, for all of his support this past year and previous years.

Finally, there is our Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager, Michele Koontz. It is difficult to think of the SSSP without thinking of Michele. Most of the people in this room know Michele; certainly know who she is and at one time or another have had her help them in some way (or have had her remind them of a deadline in the nicest way possible). Michele's extraordinary skills are almost legendary. There is nothing that she does for the Society that she does not do extraordinarily well; from managing the budget to a kind word or lending hand when one needs it most. This year is Michele's 25th with the SSSP. So I want to take this opportunity to thank her not only for this past year, but for the eight years since I have been EO, and for the twenty-five that she has given the Society.

501(H) Election

In light of the changing political climate in the country, I asked the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee (BFA) and the Board of Directors (BOD) to reconsider filing the 501(H) election for tax purposes. As a 501(c)(3) organization we can lobby, as long as it is not a "substantial" part of what we do and as long as it is non-partisan. The problem is that the IRS does not stipulate what constitutes a substantial or insubstantial amount of lobbying activity. If the IRS were to assess our lobbying activities, they would be using a subjective test, thereby exposing the organization unnecessarily to potential harm by politicians or government agencies who do not share our social justice goals and values. By filing IRS Form 5768 or "filing the 501(h) election" we would have the protection of a much more objective "expenditure test," since this type of filing uses a monetary measure to assess lobbying activities. We do not spend and never will spend an amount even remotely close to the amount allowed by this type of filing. Furthermore, definitions of what constitutes lobbying activities are much clearer with this election. The process of electing to have our lobbying activities measured under this test is relatively simple and straightforward, and we remain a 501(c)(3) organization, with the added benefits of the "H" election. We researched this thoroughly and discussed the option with our auditors. Their understanding of the option is the same as ours. The BFA discussed the issue in its June meeting in Knoxville and voted to recommend filing the 501 (H) election for tax purposes. This recommendation will be discussed by the BOD in Montreal.

Social Action

The Society engages in a variety of social justice actions, in addition to the research produced by its members and published in our journal, that address a wide range of social problems. One example of this is the Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award, given to a social justice organization in the city in which the city is held. This year's recipient is Montréal-Nord République, a grassroots organization in Montreal-North that works on behalf of impoverished communities and people of color, and promotes and celebrates ethnic and other forms of diversity in Montreal. Another example is the publication of *The Agenda for Social Justice: Solutions 2016*. This publication provides highly accessible insights into some of the most pressing social problems in the United States and recommends to elected officials, policy makers, and the general public, public policy responses to those problems.

This past year we sent letters to university and government officials regarding a number of issues of concern to the SSSP. Most recently we sent a letter to the President of Trinity College

in Connecticut regarding the academic freedom and due process rights of a faculty member at that institution. The President responded to the letter assuring us that the professor in question was being given his due process rights. We thanked the President for the response, but pointed out that he had been placed on leave before the review had been conducted, which in effect was a form of punishment without due process, and urged her to reinstate him while the review was being conducted. This case also prompted a resolution and a proposal for an official statement by the Society on academic freedom, free speech, and due process. The resolution will be voted on in Montreal. The following statement was approved by the Board and will appear on our website and be added to the Operations Manual.

SSSP Statement on Academic Freedom, Freedom of Speech, and Due Process

Whenever the SSSP is asked to comment on or in other ways to intervene in cases in which there is reason to believe that an individual's academic freedom or due process is being denied, the Society reaffirms its strong commitment to academic freedom, freedom of speech, and due process. While academic freedom is not a license to disseminate knowingly inaccurate information or to disrespect the opinions of others, the Society believes that faculty members must have wide latitude on what they teach, how they teach it, what they research, and how they conduct their research. Faculty must be able to engage in intellectual debates of all types without fear of censorship or retaliation. Toward this end, institutions must resist all attempts by individuals and groups, both within and outside of academia, to intimidate or attempt to intimidate individuals expressing ideas contrary to their own, in an attempt to silence them. The academic enterprise cannot survive without these assurances and if it cannot survive, the public good is not served.

We refer readers to the AAUP's 1940 statement on academic freedom and tenure, and a 2014 statement on academic freedom and electronic communications, both of which the Society endorses.

1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure

<https://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure>

Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications

<https://www.aaup.org/report/academic-freedom-and-electronic-communications-2014>

Other letters included a letter to the White House and leaders in Congress, regarding an Executive Order, that in our estimation and that of many others, including several judges, constituted a Muslim ban. Congressman Dick Durbin responded favorably to our letter. This year the membership will vote on an immigration resolution designed to reaffirm the Society's commitment to immigration policies that are carefully reasoned and fair. Another letter was sent to the Commissioner of Baseball, Robert D. Manfred Jr., regarding Major League Baseball's Cleveland franchise's use of a logo and nickname offensive to many Native Americans. We did not receive a response, but pressure on professional teams to divest themselves of offensive nicknames and logos continues nationwide; most notably the Washington Redskins. Another letter, sent to the Provost of the University of Massachusetts on September 13, 2016, urged the university to restore funding to their Labor Center, especially funds for graduate students and part-time faculty. We did not receive a response from the Provost, but learned recently that

pressure, both within and outside of UMass, yielded some very positive results. UMass's chancellor allocated some of his own funds to support six students a year for the next three years and arranged for the hiring of interns. Up to a dozen of these interns will have their tuition and fees paid by the university. The program will have fifteen students coming this fall, all with full support. Finally, letters were sent to government officials in Washington, D.C. and several states, and a number of organizations, regarding the transphobic backlash witnessed in some states. In the letter, the Society affirmed its support for the legal and other forms of protection for trans and/or gender-nonconforming people. In particular, the letter called attention and expressed strong opposition to "bathroom bills." We received a response from the Governor of West Virginia, informing us that our concern would be directed to the appropriate office. We did not hear from them again, but these types of struggles, most of us know, require persistence and enough patience not to become disheartened, especially in the political climate in which we find ourselves. If anything, this climate will require even greater vigilance and persistence on this and a myriad of other fronts.

Science and Human Rights Coalition of the AAAS

At the 2016 annual meeting in Seattle, the Board approved membership for one year in the Science and Human Rights Coalition of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and asked John Dale and me, as Executive Officer, to attend the meetings of the coalition in Washington, D.C. in January and July of 2017, and to report, and make a recommendation, to the Board regarding our continued membership in the organization. The theme of the January meeting was *The Human Right to Water* and in July it was *The Right to Science*. Founded in 1848, the AAAS has the following broad goals.

- Enhance communication among scientists, engineers, and the public;
- Promote and defend the integrity of science and its use;
- Strengthen support for the science and technology enterprise;
- Provide a voice for science on societal issues;
- Promote the responsible use of science in public policy;
- Strengthen and diversify the science and technology workforce;
- Foster education in science and technology for everyone;
- Increase public engagement with science and technology; and
- Advance international cooperation in science.

John and I found the meetings informative, and clearly relevant to the Society's own goals and values. I was concerned that the "hard" sciences might look down at the "soft" sciences, but that turned out not to be the case. There was a clear recognition that every discipline brings something unique and needed to the table, and that working with grassroots and other organizations on the ground is an essential component of the human rights struggle. In a world, or at least country, where facts do not seem to matter as much as they once did, scholars have to insist that they *do* matter and the best way to do that is collectively. We were impressed as well by the organizational, intellectual, and interpersonal skills of the staff, beginning with Jessica Wyndham, the Interim Director of the Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program.

***Social Problems* Editor Search**

The Administrative Office and I have worked with the Editorial and Publication Committee, and especially its Chair, Corey Dolgon, to find the next editor of *Social Problems*. The bulk of the work, of course, has been done by the committee. We have provided assistance when and where needed. Corey will present a report and recommendation to the Board on behalf of the committee, but it appears that we are poised to add another excellent editor to a long list of distinguished editors, including our outgoing editor, Pamela Anne Quiroz, to whom we are indebted for continuing to produce a high-quality journal.

Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee Meeting

In June of every year, the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee meets, usually in Knoxville, to discuss the finances of the organization and to meet with our auditors. Stephani Williams, Chair of the committee, will present a report on the meeting, but I am pleased to say that the organization is in a good place financially. The committee discussed the budgets submitted by the applicants for the Editor's position, the Election "H" option (which it supports), and other budgetary matters, including our projections for 2018. We are indebted to this committee, our investment advisor, Susan Carlson, our treasurer, Pat Donnelly, and Michele Koontz for performing admirably the sometimes thankless task of ensuring that the organization remains financially sound.

Administrative Office

Michele Koontz and I are in contact with one another almost every day, either via e-mail or by phone, discussing a wide range of issues, solving problems, planning, reviewing materials before they are disseminated, and attending to a myriad of other tasks. While we have excellent staff, there is no question that we, especially Michele, needs more help. The organization has grown and is involved in more activities than ever before, and this translates into more work, especially as we approach the annual meeting. During the five months before the meeting, the demands on the administrative office increase exponentially, as does the speed at which the work has to be completed. I'm reminded of the guy who notices that the longer he stares at a ball, the bigger it gets, and then it hits him. We have to address this issue again.

Final Remarks

I have served as the organization's Executive Officer (EO) for eight years and with minor exceptions, have enjoyed it immensely. It continues to be an honor serving as your EO and I want to thank you all for the opportunity.