

# **Report of the 2017-2018 Local Arrangements Committee (LAC)**

Conference Location: Philadelphia, PA, USA

Conference Site: Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Hotel, August 10-12, 2018

July 2, 2018

Chair: Adriana Leela Bohm, Delaware County Community College

Committee Members: Raquel Kennedy Bergen, William Cabin, CiAuna Heard

## **Preliminary Meetings**

On Thursday, October 12, 2017, Michele Koontz, Luis A. Fernandez and Adriana Leela Bohm met for dinner at Amada, a restaurant in Philadelphia, to discuss the upcoming 2018 SSSP conference. Michele and Luis were in town for the final site visit so we met to talk about the expectations and deadlines associated with the Local Area Arrangements Committee (LAC). I had already started to research tours for the conference so we also spent time discussing tours and accessibility issues. Finally, we discussed the restaurant guide, the press release, walking directions from the hotel to the ASA Conference, the Reading Terminal, local attractions and restaurants (based, in part, on the tremendous amount of ongoing construction in downtown Philadelphia). As we discussed the restaurant guide, we noted that with smart phone accessibility conference participants have quick and easy access to restaurant information, including reviews, locations, walking directions, open table and reservations, and cost.

After our preliminary meeting, Michele, Luis, and I spent a lot of time over the next few months discussing tours. Finding tours which were wheel chair accessible was difficult because although a number of tours indicated that the tours *were* wheel chair accessible, the transportation the tour companies offered was often *not* wheel chair accessible, or they did not offer transportation at all. We thought that that offering wheel chair accessible tours was important, so I actually researched, reached out to, and investigated a number of tours which we ultimately decided not to use or book. In the

end, we decided on two tours which would be led by tour guide Bob Skiba. Mr. Skiba served as the President of the Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides for the past 5 years and now chairs the education committee, training and certifying city tour guides. He is also the Curator of Collections at the John J. Wilcox Jr. LGBT Archives at the William Way Community Center. Mr. Skiba agreed to be our guide for two tours (*Ghetto to Gayborhood* and *Raising the Glass to Prohibition*), and will come to the hotel to pick us up. Both tours will be managed without transportation; as such, both tours are wheel chair accessible.

### **Program/Conference Materials**

CiAuna Heard from Temple University wrote the graduate student “Welcome to the City – The Student Edition” letter and Adriana Leela Bohm wrote the “Welcome to the City” letter for the conference. The “Welcome to the City” letter welcomed participants to Philadelphia, highlighted historical social justice work done in the city, and then focused on contemporary resistance and movement building that people in Philadelphia are engaged in currently, including the Black Lives Matter Movement and opposition to police brutality. Both Welcome Letters provided numerous suggestions for activities outside of the meeting, places to eat and shop, and museums and theatres to visit. The student edition letter specifically highlighted events, activities and restaurants that might accommodate a tighter budget.

Adriana Leela Bohm wrote the walking directions from the conference site to Reading Terminal and the ASA conference (Philadelphia Marriott Downtown and PA Convention Center) and the main Restaurant Guide. The Restaurant Guide included the name of the restaurant, the dollar signs indicating cost, a brief description of the restaurant, and the website. The Restaurant Guide also included a link created by the Philadelphia Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (PCVB) which provides an exhaustive list of restaurants by neighborhood. Adriana also wrote an entirely separate “Welcome to Philly” piece to be used for the Press Release.

### **Meeting Promotion**

Philadelphia is quite close to New Jersey and Delaware, so, in the attempt to encourage participation at the SSSP conference, Adriana researched a number of colleges and universities – including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the local three state area to identify a diverse number of schools which might be interested in participating in the conference. A comprehensive list was provided to Michele, who sent promotional information to all on the list. Additionally, the Welcome Letters and the Restaurant Guide were made available on the SSSP Website.

### **Action Items and Suggestions**

Due to technology I am not convinced that a Restaurant Guide is necessary. Perhaps on the survey administered at the end of the conference we can ask participants if they utilize the Restaurant Guide, and if they think it is necessary or helpful. Today there are a plethora of apps one can utilize on one's phone to access specific types of restaurants/food that creating a Restaurant Guide may not be necessary. In lieu of a Restaurant Guide perhaps the LAC can spend time researching something else – like social activist events or art shows that occur during the conference.