

To: The Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP)

From: Saher Selod, Chair, 2019 Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Fellowship Committee

RE: 2018-2019 SSSP Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Fellowship Committee Report

Date: July 10, 2019

The 2018-19 SSSP Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Fellowship Committee is pleased to present its annual report. In the sections that follow, we discuss the committee's activities, the award recipients, and three action items for the board to take up at its annual meeting.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: The Committee members included: Saher Selod, Simmons University (Chair); Francis Winddance-Twine, University of California-Santa Barbara (Chair-Elect); Bradley Zopf, Carthage College; Melanie Bush, Adelphi University; Flora Woratschek, College of Southern Nevada; Janelle Pham, Ogelthorpe University; Anima Adjepong, Simmons University.

APPLICANT POOL: The SSSP Administrative Office received thirty-nine (39) complete applications by the due date. Eighteen (18) of the applicants identified as Black or African American; ten (10) applicants identified as Hispanic or Latino; five (5) applicants identified as Asian or Asian American; one (1) applicant identified as American Indian or Alaska Native; one (1) applicant identified as Black or African American/Hispanic or Latino; two (2) applicants identified as Black or African American/American Indian or Alaska Native; and two (2) applicants identified as Middle Eastern or North African. Twenty-six (26) applicants identified as Female; twelve (12) applicants identified as Male; and one (1) applicant identified as gender non-binary.

ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE: As in prior years, this committee relied on the invaluable support of Michele Koontz. This year SSSP IT specialist, Rachel Cogburn, was also very involved in the process. The administrative office conducted a call with the chair on January 23, 2019 to discuss logistics, timeline and the new platform, SlideRoom, to be used for the Fellowship. This was the first year SSSP used an online application form for this fellowship. I believe this platform was a huge success and helped to increase the application pool. The online format allowed for reviewers to see each applicant's materials online and score them in SlideRoom. Rachel Cogburn assigned each reviewer approximately half of the applicants to review and score. The chair reviewed and scored all of the applications. The online format, compared to the paper applications, was a huge improvement and made the process go much smoother for both the applicants and reviewers. Michele Koontz and Rachel Cogburn's assistance with SlideRoom was invaluable to both the chair and the committee members.

SELECTION PROCESS: The chair emailed all committee members a draft of the evaluation criteria; a timeline for the selection process; and links to the Fellowship announcement and

application in January 2019. There were no recommendations by the committee regarding the criteria for evaluating applicants. Due to difficulties accommodating all committee members' schedules, the chair communicated with members via email. The chair asked committee members to return evaluations by April 15, 2019, but this deadline was ultimately extended until the end of April. After reviewing the applications, the committee decided to award scholarships to Stephanie Pullés, University of California Irvine (Sociology) and Chantal Hailey, New York University (Sociology). Unfortunately, because Chantal Hailey was awarded the Ford Dissertation Grant, she was unable to accept the Racial and Ethnic Minority Fellowship. We were able to give the second fellowship to the third highest ranked applicant, Thelma Velez, Ohio State University (School of Environment and Natural Resources) who was able to accept the fellowship.

Both awardees overcame substantial financial and social challenges to pursue their education. Furthermore, both awardees demonstrated excellence in scholarship, promising dissertating projects, and a strong commitment to social justice activism. Stephanie Pullés' work improves scholarly understanding of the role of entrepreneurs in ethnic enclaves. Her research addresses whether broader changes in the U.S. economy over time, such as the emergence of nonstandard work arrangements, impacts the types of self-employment and business ownership that arise, especially among Latinos. Because Stephanie had to work several jobs to put herself through school, she has dedicated herself to mentoring underprivileged students struggling to get through school. Thelma Velez's dissertation explores the motivations that fuel Puerto Rican activists across a variety of alternative food justice movements. She shows how the roots of the climate justice/food sovereignty movements in Puerto Rico are due to their long-history of resistance to U.S. colonialism. In addition to mentoring women of color in grad school and her activism around climate change while an undergraduate student, Thelma helped to secure funding for a project that is helping to create a worker-owned food hub to be owned and operated by formerly incarcerated individuals in a community in Columbus, Ohio with the goal of creating economic wealth to be retained by the community.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE: The committee proposes the following action items:

1. SSSP should consider removing the social security number question on the application. This is for security reasons for the applicants. One applicant asked if they could leave this blank to protect their security.
2. The committee recommends the board clarify the disciplines that applicants must come from for eligibility of the fellowship. New disciplines are being created in a shifting economy that are interdisciplinary. Currently the language regarding eligibility is the following.

A person identified as either American Indian or Alaska Native, Arab/Middle Eastern/North African, Asian/Asian-American, Black/African American, Hispanic/ Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) from one of the aforementioned groups, **accepted into an accredited doctoral program in any one of the social**

and/or behavioral sciences so as to expand their perspectives in the pursuit and investigations into social problems

We feel this requires a little more clarification.

3. The board should consider whether or not involvement in SSSP should be a criterion for evaluating applications. To participate in SSSP requires funds that many of the applicants may not have, such as travel money, registration fees, etc. In some ways using this as a criterion is counterintuitive to providing financial assistance to populations that are underrepresented in the academy, sometimes due to financial barriers. After reviewing all of the applications, this question could significantly lower qualified candidates overall scores, many who were in need of financial assistance and otherwise excellent candidates.