

Amended Report Presented to the Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Social Problems:

Submitted by

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Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award: History and Description

Since 1991, the Society for the Study of Social Problems has recognized a local not-for-profit organization that has a history of challenging social inequalities, promoting social change, and/or working toward the empowerment of marginalized peoples in the area hosting our Society's annual meeting. In 2009, the award was named in honor of Thomas C. Hood, who retired as Executive Officer in 2009 after serving the Society in that capacity for 19 years. Past winners have included Atlanta's Youth Speak Truth, the Coalition for Human Immigration Rights of Los Angeles, and most recently, the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program (2018).

2018-2019 Hood Award Committee

Johanna Foster, Chair
Monmouth University

Vince Montes, Chair-Elect
San Jose State University

William D. Cabin
Temple University

Jean Elson
University of New Hampshire

Gregory M. Hall
University at Buffalo, SUNY

Peter Ibarra
University of Illinois at Chicago

Daniela Pila
University at Albany, SUNY

2019 Thomas C. Hood Social Action Winner

This year, the committee has selected the social action organization, Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson (NBLMH), based in Poughkeepsie, New York, as our Hood Award winner. NBLMH works to bring together people most directly impacted by issues of injustice in the Hudson Valley community, particularly around the issues of foreclosures and evictions, energy insecurity, and immigrant rights. The committee especially appreciated the organization's work to bring people together in ways that challenge the systems at the root of the problems. We were also inspired by the fact that the founders included members who were formally trained in the discipline of Sociology.

A special session is planned for Saturday, August 10, from 2:30pm-4:10pm, at which NBLMH Executive Director, Mr. Jonathan Bix, will share the social action mission and crucial work of Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson. The Hood Award committee chair will also be present at the Awards Ceremony from 6:45pm-7:45pm to present a check in the amount of \$5,000 for NBLMH's efforts.

Selection Process Details

This year, the Hood Award Committee received 9 nominations. The committee chair instructed committee members to rank the 9 organizations using the criteria established in the award description as stated in the SSSP call for nominations and posted on the SSSP website. In doing so, the results were as follows:

NBLMH was ranked in the top 3 for 4 of the 6 committee members that initially submitted their ranking. The organization, Masa, serving Latinx youth in the South Bronx, was ranked in the top 3 of 3 of the 6 committee members that initially submitted their ranking. Exalt Youth, serving justice-involved youth throughout NYC, was also ranked in the top 3 of 3 of 6 committee members that initially submitted their ranking. In the run-off for the tie for second place in top 3 rankings, the vote of the 6 initially active members was unanimous for Masa.

As there was some question about whether NBLMH was too far out of the geographical range given the award criteria (see further discussion below), the committee chair, held an additional vote between first place NBLMH and second place Masa, which ended in a tie among the six members voting. The tie was broken in favor of NBLMH (4-3) with the vote of the 7th committee member joining us in a final run-off.

Committee Suggestions for Amended Criteria Language

Over the past two years, a decent number of the organizations nominated have largely been engaged in service delivery work, and among those also doing systems-change work, their status as local chapters of national or regional organizations made them ineligible for the Hood Award. While there was no explicit or robust discussion of the seemingly over-representation of direct service organizations in the nomination pool among the committees this year or last, there were one-on-one exchanges that suggested the importance of supporting, or prioritizing, organizations that do systems-change work. In a unanimous vote of 6 of the 7 committee members who responded, the committee recommends that the board consider the amended language below that explicitly prioritizes organizations that engage in systems-change work and not solely direct-service work for the Hood Award.

Similarly, 6 of the 7 committee members who responded voted unanimously for the Board to consider a clarification of the geographical boundaries for eligible recipients. A concrete suggestion to use the SMSA, as defined by the U.S. census, in which the meetings are being held was offered. We welcome the Board's leadership on other possible clarifications.

Finally, the Chair also asked committee members to weigh in on the possibility of whether the Board might want to revise the criteria for the award to include a preference for organizations that prioritize the leadership of directly impacted people and communities. Three of the 6 members participating in the vote agreed that this was an important change to consider, and 3 were unclear what such a preference might concretely entail.

Should it be helpful, below is a draft of a possible revised award description for the Board to consider:

Proposed amended Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award description:

The Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award will recognize a local grassroots social justice organization in the SMSA (as defined by the US Census) in which the annual meetings are located each year. The recipient will be an organization that may engage in direct service work, but preferred recipients for the Social Action Award will be for organizations that also work at the level of systems change. The organization may not be a local or regional chapter of a national or international organization, and is one that would benefit significantly from the financial award that comes with SSSP recognition. [THE FOLLOWING NOT UNIVERSALLY ENDORSED] The nomination of organizations that include directly impacted people and communities in leadership positions and decisions are also encouraged.

Note of Thanks

It has been a pleasure to serve the Society as the Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award Chair (2019) and Chair-Elect (2018), and to learn more about the inspiring efforts of our colleagues in the field. Thank you for the opportunity to help raise up sociologically-informed social change work more generally, and more specifically, to recognize the great work of Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson as this year's Hood Award winner.