

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEETING MANAGER

Michele Koontz

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I. 2020 ANNUAL MEETING CANCELLATION

Prior to the cancellation of the annual meeting in San Francisco on April 28th due to the COVID-19 pandemic, out of our concern for the health and safety of our members, we were gearing up for the 70th Annual Meeting under the leadership of Dr. Heather M. Dalmage and Program Co-Chairs Tsedale M. Melaku and Barbara Katz Rothman. There were 154 sessions scheduled with 752 papers, 50 panelists, 11 critics, 3 workshop facilitators, and 1 plenary speaker.

Prior to making this difficult decision, the Board of Directors met via Zoom on March 28, April 4, April 25, May 9, May 23, and May 30. Our conversations included:

1) Whether the SSSP meeting should move forward as planned. 2) The ramifications for the SSSP, if the meeting was rescheduled or cancelled. 3) Whether the SSSP meeting would migrate to an online format for 2020. 4) What the effect of various decisions would be for 2020 meeting participation and for the long-term viability of the SSSP. 5) Was the Society willing to invest in the capacity for virtual meetings and other activities? 6) How was membership (including numbers) related to member engagement and the relevance of accessibility by virtual offerings? 7) Could the Society hold a very stripped-down virtual meeting in 2020, with only those agenda items that had the highest priority? 8) Was it time to offer a virtual/in-person hybrid arm for the 2021 Annual Meeting? 9) Ways to preserve the SSSP, while building for the future. 10) Whether adding a virtual component of the meeting was in the long-term interest of the SSSP, by hedging against future meeting cancellations such as the one experienced for 2020.

While our hotel contract included a strong Force Majeure clause, we were able to cancel the contract without penalty due to our Performance clause. This clause stated that if the American Sociological Association (ASA) cancelled their annual meeting, SSSP could terminate the contract without penalty and all deposits would be returned. To date, we haven't received the \$9,500 deposit, but are working to correct this.

II. REGISTRATION REFUNDS AND MEMBERSHIP DECLINE

Once the 2020 Annual Meeting was cancelled, the Administrative Office worked with those who had registered for the conference. Annual Meeting refunds totaled \$12,630 and twenty registrants donated their full or a portion of their registration to the SSSP General Fund, totaling \$2,625. Three student members requested a membership dues refund, totaling \$99. Compared to this time last year, SSSP membership is 44% lower, as there are currently 1,084 members.

III. 2020 ½-DAY VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING

The ½-day virtual annual meeting will be held on Friday, August 7 from 12:00pm–5:00pm (EDT). The schedule of events will include:

SSSP Business Meeting	12:00pm-1:00pm
Presidential Address	1:15pm-2:15pm
Awards Recognition	2:30pm-3:15pm
Plenary Pandemic Focused Session	3:30pm-5:00pm

Per the recommendation of the Accessibility Committee, we will be offering closed and live captioning for this event. Given the ½-day format, closed captioning will be offered for all four sessions at a cost of \$1,080. For a larger program, we would need to determine which sessions or events would require this service in advance due to costs. The virtual program is a complimentary benefit to current SSSP members. 2020+ members will gain access by logging in with their e-mail address and password to obtain a Zoom link for each program section.

IV. AWARDS RECOGNITION

Due to time constraints, this year's Award Recognition will look a little different. We will be recognizing the following award winners: C. Wright Mills Award, Indigenous Peoples' Social Justice Award, Lee Founders Award, and the Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award.

We will acknowledge the exceptional work of our other major award winners and student paper competition winners in a slideshow presentation on our website. In addition, an abstract of each student's winning paper will be posted on our website along with their contact information.

The Administrative Office will mail a plaque to all major award winners and honorable mentions, and all Mills' finalists, once they have been identified by their respective committees.

In addition, we will mail a plaque to each student winner in recognition of their winning paper. Each winner has received complimentary student membership (courtesy of SSSP) and a monetary stipend (courtesy of their division). It is the Division Chair's responsibility to recognize their winners, honorable mentions, and outstanding scholarship award winners at their virtual divisional business meeting, in their division newsletter, and on their division's social media accounts. Division Chairs are responsible for obtaining plaques for their honorable mentions or outstanding scholarship award winners, if desired.

V. DONATIONS

A special thanks to the Mansfield Institute for Social Justice at Roosevelt University and the Oxford University Press for their financial contributions to our virtual program activities.

VI. VIRTUAL MEETING MENTOR PROGRAM

In lieu of cancelling the Meeting Mentor Program, the Board of Directors decided to offer a virtual mentoring experience. hephzibah v. strmic-pawl, Lee Student Support Fund Committee Chair, coordinated the program. Thirty-four mentees were assigned a meeting mentor.

Many thanks to our twenty-three meeting mentors: Kathleen A. Asbury, Vilna Bashi Treitler, Sarah Jane Brubaker, David L. Brunsma, Afolabi Comfort Yemisi, David G. Embrick, Judith R. Halasz, Daina Cheyenne Harvey, Ferzana D. Havewala, Michael O. Johnston, David C. Lane, Annulla Linders, Glenn W. Muschert, Jean-Pierre Reed, Jeffrey Sacha, Caroline M. Schöpf, Bhoomi Thakore, Kyla Walters, Chris Wellin, Eli R. Wilson, Elroi J. Windsor, Jacqueline M. Zalewski, and Cynthia Baiqing Zhang.

VII. VIRTUAL COMPONENT TO THE 2021 ANNUAL MEETING

The Board of Directors approved a virtual component for next year's meeting. Each Division can sponsor one virtual session and the Program Committee can sponsor up to five virtual sessions. Virtual sessions are specifically targeted to increase the participation of international members, graduate students and young scholars who cannot attend the in-person meeting for various reasons. Virtual sessions may be of any type (although roundtables may be prohibited for technological reasons) but we do want to encourage critical dialogues that may include more participants. Please note that session organizers and presiders can participate in both in-person and virtual sessions. However, participants giving virtual presentations (paper authors, critics, panelists and discussants) are limited to virtual sessions only. The intent is to limit virtual presentations to those participants that cannot attend the in-person meeting.

VIII. FUTURE HOTEL CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, hotel contracts have been negotiated at least two and half years in advance of the Annual Meeting. Last fall, Héctor and I, along with Marisa Crame of HelmsBriscoe, conducted a site visit for the 2023 Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, PA. We toured three downtown properties:

- DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Philadelphia Center City (**non-union**)
- W Philadelphia/Element Philadelphia (**non-union**)
- Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Hotel (formerly Philadelphia 201) (**union**)

The reduction in the number of hotels for us to consider is due to our low budget, not having enough meeting space to accommodate our program, and/or our sleeping rooms to meeting space ratio. We decided not to pursue the DoubleTree property due to a higher room rate, meeting space spread over five floors, and slow elevators to guest rooms and meeting space during our visit.

The following factors must be considered when selecting a hotel

- Low hotel room cost for attendees
- Unionization of hotel employees (preferred but not required, per Board of Directors)
- Close proximity (non-airport hotels) to the American Sociological Association's (ASA) conference hotel(s). Try to avoid transporting members between SSSP and ASA. If transportation is required, the hotel must incur costs.
- Conformity to the Americans with Disabilities Act: reserve 5 accessible guest rooms (3 rooms with 2 beds and 2 rooms with a king bed). Three rooms must have a roll-in shower (2 rooms with 2 beds and 1 room with a king bed).
- Nondiscriminatory with regard to race, ethnicity, sex, sexual preference, religion, national origin, or physical disability

The majority board vote was for the Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Hotel and the contract was signed on December 31, 2019. It should be noted that the hotel currently remains on Unite Here's "Boycotts & Labor Disputes" list.

During 2018, a board member suggested that the board have a conversation of having only union-hotels as tenable options in the future. He noted that this "would entail some compromises in other areas (price, distance from ASA, etc.), but given the mission of SSSP, it seems to me appropriate." The Executive Officer responded that, we, "in effect, have a policy to go with a union property, unless there is a compelling reason (including a compelling financial reason) not to. For the most part we have succeeded in holding our meetings at a unionized hotel. I should add that we also do not always have an option, for a variety of reasons, including the fact that the ASA schedules their meetings before we do and they too prefer union properties - which in turn limits our options. Also, keep in mind that we have very specific needs for meetings (e.g. number of meeting rooms) and this has limited our choices as well." He then added in a subsequent e-mail, that between 1993 and 2022 (counting the Omni), 22 of 30 of our annual meeting hotels were or will be union properties. I brought this matter to the Board's attention in New York. Following discussion, "the Board reaffirmed the current Society practice to prefer (not require) union properties for sites for annual meetings."

During the voting period on the Philadelphia properties, it was brought up again that SSSP should not consider staying at a non-union hotel. At the July 24th virtual Board meeting, the Board will be discussing the factors when selecting a conference hotel.

Furthermore, it was decided that Héctor and I would not conduct the 2024 site visit this fall due to COVID-19 and the unknowns associated with the pandemic.

IX. CLOSING COMMENTS

I was very fortunate to work with President Heather M. Dalmage; Program Co-Chairs Tsedale M. Melaku and Barbara Katz Rothman; Local Arrangements Committee Chair Valerie Francisco-Menchavez; Executive Officer Héctor L. Delgado; Assistant to the Administrative Officer Kelsey Whitaker; Information Technology Specialist Rachel Cogburn; and Graduate Research Associate and Webmaster Zaina Shams. I am grateful for their invaluable contributions, as we transitioned from the in-person meeting to the virtual program. I can't say enough about their hard work and dedication to the Society.

Finally, I would like to thank you, the Board of Directors, for giving me another opportunity to serve as meeting manager. It has been a privilege to work alongside you this year during these unprecedented times. On October 19, I will celebrate my twenty-eighth anniversary with SSSP. I have been blessed to serve the organization under the guidance of many outstanding leaders.