



July 14, 2021

Dear SSSP Board of Directors:

Thank you for this amazing honor of serving as chair of this year's SSSP C. Wright Mills Book Award Committee. We closed the nominations portal with 114 submissions in December 2020. Once we eliminated duplicate submissions and removed nominations that did not have an online nomination form, the total number of books to consider was reduced to 101. We then removed 3 books because one was released in 2021 and two were edited volumes, which are ineligible for this award. In total, we reviewed 98 books for the award this year. This number is higher than the 2020 award process that had 85 eligible nominees.

The names and addresses of committee members were confirmed in Fall 2020 with the extraordinary assistance of Michele Koontz and her staff and were as follows:

Melissa F. Weiner, *Chair*, College of the Holy Cross

Maryann Erigha, University of Georgia

Myra Marx Ferec, University of Wisconsin - Madison

Daina Cheyenne Harvey, College of the Holy Cross

Jerome Krase, Brooklyn College

Tsedale M. Melaku, City University of New York

Amaka Okechukwu, George Mason University

Ranita Ray, University of Nevada - Las Vegas

Mary Scherer, Smith College

The committee members, representing an array of specialties, institutions and ranks, were responsive to all deadlines, managed potential conflicts of interests, and worked amicably throughout the process. None of this would have happened without the amazing efficiency of Michele Koontz and the staff at SSSP.

These were the Key Dates/Outcomes for our process:

- Deadline for submissions of nominated books: December 15, 2020
- First-round books assigned to committee members for reading: January 15, 2021
- Chair submission of finalists to SSSP office: April 30, 2021
- Chair notification of the award winner: June 16, 2021

Committee members received copies of the nominated books. Once all books have been received and the nomination portal was closed (12/15/20), the Chair organized a list of all the books, which also contained pdfs of nomination letters, with the help of Michele Koontz's staff, and sent it to each committee member. The Chair then assigned readings to each committee member at random where each of us ended up reading (close to) the same number of books. This process is outlined in further detail below:

First round of reviews—completed on April 9, 2021

1. Each book was read by 3 committee members in the first round.

a. The Chair used an Excel spreadsheet to randomly assign the readings to each committee member, and then corrected for recusals due to conflicts of interest.

b. Each committee member read 33 or 34 books during this first round.

2. Chair instructed all committee members to read and rank each book on a 1-5 scale (5 = excellent candidate; 4 = strong candidate; 3 = good candidate; 2 = marginal candidate; 1 = unlikely candidate) according to how it fits the 6 criteria for the award:

- a. **Critically addresses an issue of contemporary public importance,**
- b. **Brings to the topic a fresh, imaginative perspective,**
- c. **Advances solid scientific understanding of the topic,**
- d. **Displays a theoretically informed view and empirical orientation,**
- e. **Evinces quality in style of writing,**
- f. **Explicitly or implicitly contains implications for courses of action.**

3. Each member submitted a list of the books read with the numerical ranking to the committee Chair by April 9, 2021.

Second round of reviews - completed on April 29, 2021

4. The Chair then compiled a list of the rankings in hierarchical order from highest to lowest ranked and submitted them for a new evaluation on April 29, 2021. The top twelve (due to a number of ties) ranked books moved to the next round.

b. We received a top seven list on April 29. We identified those as our seven finalists.

Liat Ben-Moshe, *Decarcerating Disability: Deinstitutionalization & Prison Abolition*, University of Minnesota Press.

Trenita Brookshire Childers, *In Someone Else's Country: Anti-Haitian Racism & Citizenship in the Dominican Republic*, Rowman & Littlefield.

Matthew Clair, *Privilege and Punishment: How Race & Class Matter in Criminal Court*, Princeton University Press.

Emine Fidan Elcioglu, *Divided By the Wall: Progressive and Conservative Immigration Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border*, University of California Press.

Kevin Escudero, *Organizing While Undocumented: Immigrant Youth's Political Activism Under the Law*, New York University Press.

Jovan Lewis Scott, *Scammer's Yard: The Crimes of Black Report in Jamaica*, University of Minnesota Press.

Danielle Raudenbush, *Health Care Off the Books: Poverty, Illness, & Strategies for Survival in Urban America*, University of California Press.

Third/Final round of reviews - completed on April 30, 2021

5. The chair then notified the committee of the seven finalists on April 30, 2021.

a. After online deliberations, the finalist was chosen from that list of five finalists. The winner had the highest rankings of the five finalists. The committee agreed to designate the book below as the winner.

Winner: Danielle Raudenbush, *Health Care Off the Books: Poverty, Illness, & Strategies for Survival in Urban America*, University of California Press.

Recommendations

I would suggest that the committee chair for 2022 be given a list of ten to twelve persons who are interested in serving on this award, and then confirming the final seven members after making sure the committee is demographically, geographically, and institutionally diverse. This really does make a difference in the ratings of the range of books that are nominated for this very important award. This procedure appeared to work well as all of our finalists this year were authored by underrepresented communities in academia.

We also need publishers to be more responsive to the deadlines to send all books to committee members prior to the submission deadline in mid-December.

This is an attractive committee on which to serve due to receiving excellent books and to having a stake in the selection of one of the most prestigious awards in our discipline of sociology. I am grateful to the board and SSSP leadership for allowing me this opportunity to serve. I look forward to working with you again.

Sincerely,
Melissa F. Weiner
Associate Professor of Sociology
College of the Holy Cross