

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

FROM: Anthony Peguero, Chair,
2021 Racial/Ethnic Graduate Fellowship Committee

RE: 2020-21 SSSP Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Fellowship Committee Report

DATE: July 2, 2021

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

The Committee members included: Anthony Peguero, Arizona State University (Chair); Teresa Irene Gonzales, Chair-Elect, University of Massachusetts Lowell; Janet Garcia-Hallett, University of Missouri-Kansas City; Kasey Henricks, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Victor Ray, University of Iowa; Juliette Kathryn Roddy, Northern Arizona University; and, Rita Shah, Eastern Michigan University.

APPLICANT POOL:

The SSSP Administrative Office received 33 complete applications by the final due date. Thirteen (13) of the applicants identified as Hispanic/Latino; Eleven (11) of the applicants identified as Black or African American; Seven (7) applicant identified as Asian or Asian-American; One (1) applicant identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native and Hispanic; One (1) applicant identified as American Indian or Alaska Native/Hispanic or Latino. Eleven (11) applicants identified as female; Six (6) applicants identified as Female/Woman/Cisgender (i.e., not transgender); Five (5) applicants identified as Female/Woman; Three (3) applicants identified as Male/Man/Cisgender (i.e., not transgender); Two (2) applicants identified as Male; Two (2) applicants identified as Male/Man; Two (2) applicants identified as Woman/Cisgender (i.e., not transgender); One (1) applicant identified as Woman; One (1) applicants identified as Male/Cisgender (i.e., not transgender).

ROLE OF ADMINSTRATIVE OFFICE: As in prior years, this committee relied heavily on the invaluable support of Michelle Koontz and IT specialist Rachel Cogburn who was VERY actively involved in the process. The administrative staff conducted a call with the chair on January 2021 to discuss the logistics, timeline and platform Slideroom. This was the third year that SSSP used this online application form for this fellowship. It was a great success. The application pool was more than double to the prior year.

SELECTION PROCESS:

The chair emailed all committee members the evaluation criteria, a timeline for the selection process; and links to the Fellowship announcement and application on February 6, 2021. The chair asked the committee members to return evaluations by April 19, 2021. Because of demanding pressures on all of our schedules, we extended to the deadline to review all applicants by May 3, 2021. After reviewing the applications, the committee decided to award the scholarships to Popy Begum, Rutgers University (School of Criminal Justice) and Josefina Flores Morales, University of California, Los Angeles, (Sociology). Both awardees are from disadvantaged backgrounds who had to overcome substantial financial and social challenges to pursue their education. Both awardees demonstrated excellence in scholarship, have publications, were actively involved in SSSP as student editors, and a commitment to social justice activism.

Popy Begum is currently in the fourth year in the doctoral program at the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University-Newark. Popy Begum is a Bangladeshi-American woman, whose personal and academic experiences have collectively nurtured her criminological imagination and sociological interests, as well as her long-term career and community-activism goals. Popy Begum aspires to effect social change by bridging the gap between policy, practice, and research as a community-engaged researcher and educator. Her goals are to combine innovative research with activism and methods of intervention and program development to improve the quality of life and social mobility for justice-involved and marginalized populations locally and internationally, including incarcerated people, sex workers, and individuals who suffer from injustice and social inequities.

Josefina Flores Morales is a doctoral student in sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is a sociologist with a commitment to advancing critical scholarship in race/ethnicity, immigration, and social demography. Josefina Flores Morales wants to better understand and document how the life course of undocumented immigrants differs from the life course of documented individuals. Her long-term goal is to become a university professor in sociology who engages the public, practitioners, and policymakers with my scholarship. Josefina Flores Morales' research agenda is intertwined with her own, her family's, and her community's experience with immigration status inequalities, racialization, and structural poverty. Josefina Flores Morales dissertation will examine one way in which legal violence manifests—by examining the association between immigration status and health at different stages of the life course (childhood, adulthood, and older adulthood). Given the historical and contemporary exclusion of immigrants of color in the United States, her scholarship contributes to national and global discussions about how high income countries treat persons of color as disposable labor and what the consequences of this are in the long-run.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE: There are two things we would like to recommend in terms of changes for the future. First, there was some discussion among the committee members if there are ways to provide feedback to applicants and/or provide additional information to submit competitive proposals, such as examples of successful proposals. Second, there was also some discussion about letters of recommendations (LORs) having their own separate category to be rated. The LORs are good for additional information and to confirm evidence of the other categories being rated, but considering the sheer range of quality in the letters (some clearly could not keep straight which application they are writing letters for and some where as basic as possible) the letters reflect more on the letter writer than the applicant. It doesn't seem fair (or equitable considering what we know about the gendered nature of letters of recs) to ding a student because their writers can't or won't write a good letter.