

2021 Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award Committee Report
Presented to the Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Social Problems

Submitted by Jennifer E. Cossyleon , PhD
Chair, 2020-2021 Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award Committee
Mellon/ACLS Public Fellow at Community Change
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Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award: History and Description

The Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award, established in 1991, is awarded to a local grassroots social justice organization in the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Census) in which the annual meeting is held that year. While the recipient can be an organization that engages in direct service work, preferred recipients for the Social Action Award will be organizations in San Francisco, CA 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 must be one that will benefit significantly from the award. The nomination of organizations that include directly impacted people and communities in leadership positions and decisions are also encouraged. The award carries a stipend of \$5,000.

For award details visit: https://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/262/Thomas_C_Hood_Action_Award/

Nominations can be made via our website: <https://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageid/51>

Past winners have included the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program (2018) and Nobody Leaves MidHudson, based in Poughkeepsie, NY (2019) and The Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco CA (2020).

2020-2021 Hood Award Committee

Jennifer E. Cossyleon, Chair (2020-2021) jennifercossyleon@gmail.com

1. Rafia Mallick rafia.j.mallick@ou.edu
2. Emily McDonald emilykmcdonald918@gmail.com
3. Angus Nurse A.Nurse@mdx.ac.uk
4. Edith Kinney edith.kinney@sjsu.edu
5. Jessica Hoffman jeheyn@buffalo.edu
6. Leslie Grover lgrover@assisihouseinc.org
7. Beth Williford Beth.Williford@mville.edu

2021 Thomas C. Hood Social Action Winner
Community Organizing and Family Issues

COFI is a community organizing institution working on economic, racial, and social justice systems change. COFI helps to organize low-income African American and immigrant Latino parents, to become involved in policy making that affects their families. Many COFI organizers were formerly trained as parents through their Family Focused Leadership Development Program. Through this program, COFI invests in parents who would likely not be involved in policy-making. The organization has a deep and responsive understanding of the support parents need in order to participate in systems change. For

instance they sponsor 18 months of free leadership development and political education in English and Spanish (with free food and free childcare), which includes time for parents to work on personal, family and team goals, time and guidance for parents to connect with neighbors in their communities on issues important for them (i.e., poverty reduction, policing practices, health disparities, early learning), and the opportunity for parents to connect with other parents outside of their communities to work on city and state level policies (with free travel and educational opportunities). Parents who participate in leadership development often become involved in a parent-led group called POWER-PAC (Parents Organized to Win Educate and Renew Policy Action Council), which includes over 700 parents and is a project of COFI.

COFI and POWERPAC, have been at the center of policy change in Chicago and statewide in Illinois. COFI has trained nearly 5,000 parents to engage in policy change over the past 25 years (trainings are co-led by parents). They have helped to create walking school buses to help kids get to school, they have created peace centers in Chicago Public Schools, which have lowered suspensions and expulsions that often disproportionately affect Black and Brown students. COFI has helped to train nearly 1,000 parents to run Peace Hubs with restorative justice practices. COFI and POWER PAC have helped to create children's savings accounts to help combat racial wealth gaps that deeply affect families. They have helped to de-criminalize punishment in Chicago Public Schools and continuously fight for ending the school to prison pipeline. Beyond the policy change, COFI and POWER-PAC are helping families strengthen relationships with one another, given that tools learned in organizing spaces are used to contest generations of trauma and to incorporate healing within families. They also bring people together across communities to work on policy change that affects their families, people from different racial groups, ages, who speak different languages, and who have kids and grandkids of different ages, who would likely not interact where it not for COFI and POWERPAC supporting their organizing work. See cofionline.org

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 SSSP Annual Meeting in Chicago will be virtual. COFI has been invited to present a brief presentation at the virtual Awards Recognition Ceremony, which will be held on Thursday August 5th from 3:45-5pm CT.

***NEW* Nominee Video**

The committee Chair Jennifer E. Cossyleon and Beth Williford spearheaded an effort to recruit and produce a video of all award nominee organizations. In total, 7 organizations created a short video, all of which were then compiled by Charles Hawkins. The nominee video will be aired during the virtual 2021 SSSP Awards Recognition meeting. All committee members were invited but were unable to participate in this effort. We are grateful for the support of SSSP President Corey Dolgon and his office for helping to fund the payment to Mr. Hawkins.

Selection Process Details

This year, nine organizations were nominated for the Hood Social Action Award. The committee received 4 votes out of 8. The committee chair instructed committee members to rank the 9 organizations using the criteria established in the award description and gave committee members access to the spreadsheet with all of the organizations nominations, including nominee information. Committee members also had access to recorded videos the organizations created by seven organizations. During the committee chair's review of the recorded videos, after the vote, the committee chair realized one of the nominee organizations was a local chapter of a local organization (Sex Worker Outreach Project- Chicago). SWOP was removed from the results, due to disqualification

listed in the nomination form.

Votes were as follows: COFI (1 first place vote; 2 second place vote); Chicago Abortion Fund (1 second place vote); RAGE (2 third place votes); Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (1 second place vote; 1 third place vote); Empowered Fefes (1 first place vote; 1 third place vote); Lighthouse foundation (no votes); Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership (CSPL) (no votes); NonviolenceWorks (no votes).

Note: The committee chair nominated COFI for the Hood Social Action Award and was listed as nominator on the spreadsheet shared with the committee. The committee chair previously had a working relationship with this organization through her dissertation research.

Thank You

As Chair, I want to thank the other members for serving on the Committee, especially Beth for helping with the nomination video project. As a committee, we thank Corey Dolgon, Michele Koontz, Héctor Delgado, the entire board and the SSSP for the opportunity for serving on the Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award Committee.