

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

FROM: Teresa Irene Gonzales, Chair
2022 Racial/Ethnic Graduate Fellowship Committee

RE: 2021-2022 SSSP Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Fellowship Committee Report

DATE: June 13, 2022

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

The Committee members included: Teresa Irene Gonzales, (Chair), University of Massachusetts Lowell; Felicia Arriaga, Chair-elect, Appalachian State University; Nikhil Deb, Murray State University; Joya Misra, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Eli R. Wilson, University of New Mexico.

APPLICANT POOL:

The SSSP Administrative Office received 35 complete applications by the final due date. Sixteen (16) of the applicants identified as Black or African American; Eight (8) of the applicants identified as Hispanic or Latina/o/x; One (1) applicant identified as Hispanic or Latina/o/x and Indigenous; One (1) applicant identified as Hispanic or Latina/o/x and Mixed Race; Six (6) applicants identified as Asian or Asian American; One (1) applicant identified as Asian or Asian American and White; Two (2) applicants identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Eleven (11) applicants identified as female; Seven (7) applicants identified as Female/Woman/Cisgender (i.e., not transgender); Five (5) applicants identified as Male; Three (3) applicants identified as Female/Woman; Two (2) applicants identified as Female/Cisgender (i.e., not transgender); Two (2) applicants identified as Woman; One (1) applicant identified as Cisgender (i.e., not transgender); One (1) applicant identified as Woman/Cisgender (i.e., not transgender); One (1) applicant identified as Male/Man; One (1) applicant identified as Male/Man/Cisgender (i.e., not transgender); One (1) applicant identified as Man/Cisgender (i.e., not transgender).

ROLE OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE: As in prior years, this committee relied heavily on the invaluable support of Michele Koontz and IT specialist Rachel Cogburn who were actively involved in the process and *went above and beyond* in their support of the committee. The administrative staff conducted a Zoom meeting with the chair on January 20th, 2022 to discuss the logistics, timeline and SlideRoom platform. This was the fourth year that SSSP used this online application form for this fellowship. It was a great success. The application pool was slightly above last year's total of 33 applicants.

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 7th, 2022. The chair asked the committee members to return evaluations by April 18th, 2022. Because of demanding pressures on all of our schedules, we extended to the deadline to review all applicants by May 2nd, 2022. After reviewing the applications, the committee decided to award the scholarships to Katherine Maldonado (Department of Sociology, University of California Santa Barbara) and Korey Tillman (Department of Sociology, University of New Mexico). 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 through a variety of avenues, and have a deep commitment to social justice activism.

Katherine Maldonado transferred in her fourth year from the doctoral program in sociology at the University of California Riverside. She is currently in her second year in the doctoral program in the department of sociology at the University of California Santa Barbara. Given her transfer credits, she is considered a sixth year PhD student and plans to finish her PhD in the summer of 2023. Katherine Maldonado is a Chicana, whose personal and academic experiences have collectively nurtured her sociological interests, as well as her long-term career and community-activism goals. As she articulates in her personal statement: “[Katherine] learned that activism means to be of service to the most marginalized people, to love, care, and support (materially and emotionally), without judgment of trauma. This type of lifestyle requires daily, short- and long-term actions to respond to larger social problems that cannot be tackled unless we work collectively.” Maldonado 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 and timely research with activism and methods of intervention and program development to advocate for criminalized young mothers fighting to regain child custody in the criminal justice system, young children whose family members are unable to care for them, young mothers with a gang affiliation, and criminalized undocumented individuals. Katherine Maldonado’s extensive expertise on the criminalization of mothers led to her invitation to speak to the United Nations about gang-affiliated women’s lives and to contribute to the organized crime and gender modules included in the UN Education for Justice university module series.

Korey Tillman is a doctoral student in sociology at the University of New Mexico. Similar to Katherine, he transferred in his fourth year from the doctoral program in sociology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Korey Tillman is committed to advancing critical scholarship that is housed in abolitionist and anti-racist frameworks and focuses on the various ways that racialized bodies are policed within public space. This includes the treatment of unhoused populations, criminalized mothers, incarcerated individuals, and individuals during traffic stops. Korey Tillman’s research agenda is intertwined with his own, his family’s, and his community’s experiences with racialization, structural poverty, and the criminal justice system. This integral link informs not only his scholarship, but also his approach to community engagement and activism. As he states: “I define scholar activism as building community to address the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups. As a Black working-class and first-generation PhD student, my goal is to embody this definition.” Korey Tillman has accomplished this through building spaces of communion and peer support for graduate students of color, collaborating with two women academics to create the Twitter hashtag #SocAF so that scholars had a space to “share resources, amplify other’s successes, and challenge imposter syndrome,” and working with activists to engage and empower community members in a variety of ways that include: creating a bail fund, and conducting listening sessions, among others. Korey Tillman’s dissertation grew out of his community engaged work to analyze the various ways that police “stops” within the United States and South Africa are inherently linked to antiblack and colonial practices.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE: There are five 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 create a more equitable review process. This can occur by limiting the dissertation proposals to 10 single-spaced pages, to align with the ASA MFP and DDRIG, and other fellowships. Given that the scholarship is open to students from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, the norms for dissertation proposals may vary from department to department. Limiting the pages can ensure that each proposal is given the same level of attention and that everyone has the same amount of space to effectively articulate their ideas,

frameworks, and methods. We also recommend that personal statements be limited to 3 double-spaced pages, since these have also varied in length. Relatedly, requiring a table of contents would also ensure that reviewers could adequately bookmark sections to review again if necessary. Second, we recommend a two-staged review process. The first to focus on appropriateness and fit of each candidate's application and then a second review that allows for a deep dive into relevant applications. After the second-reviews are completed, we recommend that reviewers meet to discuss the top-five candidates. Third, and somewhat related to the first two points, we lost three reviewers this cycle bringing the reviewer pool down to five (5). Limiting the page numbers and doing an initial cursory review could also reduce the load on reviewers and, *hopefully*, positively impact participation. Fourth, the language on the application website indicates that an "Official Academic Transcript from Doctoral Program" is required for application. Yet, given the bureaucratic difficulty and financial hardship this may cause students, we have often accepted unofficial transcripts. We ask that the language be formally changed to reflect this reality and indicate "Unofficial Academic Transcript from Doctoral Program" is required for application. Fifth, given the limited funds available to graduate students nationally, we recommend adding language to the selection criteria that indicates: "Awardees who receive the SSSP Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Fellowship cannot accept any other national fellowships for the year awarded."