



POVERTY, CLASS AND INEQUALITY NEWSLETTER

Theme: Impact of Poverty, Class and Inequality at the Community Level

Shawn A. Cassiman

Hello to all PCI members. I hope this missive finds you well. This newsletter contains news shared by our members, a section with calls for papers of relevance to members, and a discussion of the Chicago conference theme. It is a pleasure to learn about what our colleagues are involved in and to share in their support of knowledge building in service to those whose daily lives are shaped by their experience of poverty and marginalization. This newsletter is also a call to members to reflect upon our theme for the Chicago conference: Service Sociology. How do we as individuals and as a division, conceptualize service? How is this shaped, or not, by our division's statement?

As we 'speak', the national and global news continues to be dominated by issues of significance to our members. The recently released statistics on U.S. poverty and inequality illuminate a disturbing trend, the UK's planned welfare reform, the rise of the Tea Party in the United States, news of U.S. sanctioned medical experiments in Guatemala, Swedish elections, and so much more.

Let me apologize in advance for my current U.S.-centric focus on poverty and inequality. I am aware of the global nature of this particular economic crisis, the historical roots of the problem, the global reach of United States policies, and the global nature of the suffering. However, today, my view out of the

window of the home from which I write this newsletter necessarily begs a particular focus, a way of being of service. For our next newsletter, I invite members to share the situations in their own communities and/or countries, and hope that we can build a dialogue around issues of poverty class and inequality, both particular and universal, in future issues of the newsletter.

I live in the rust belt city of Dayton, Ohio. In many ways Dayton could be the poster child of the forgotten, postindustrial city. In conversations, Dayton is often compared to either Detroit, if the speaker is particularly pessimistic, or Milwaukee, if they are more optimistic about the city's potential for 'recovery'. Our city's official unemployment statistics suggest that unemployment levels hover at about 14%. Foreclosure levels remain at an all time high. Homeless shelters are seeing record numbers of people in need of services; increases are greatest among families. City schools are woefully underfunded and the rise of charter schools suggests that the privatization of education is making steady inroads (Waiting for Superman, anyone?). Many of our city intersections and highway off-ramps are increasingly populated by people holding signs that document their need, begging for assistance. Arson is a rising problem, sometimes in an effort to make scavenging easier. Scavengers, as in other cities, have taken to removing

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Member News

Yvonne Lincoln presented at St. Ambrose University in Davenport, IA on October 26, 2010. Her presentation was titled “Becoming a Welfare Mother.” She discussed the process that single mothers undergo as they shift from a non-stigmatized identity of being self-sufficient or at least without public assistance to a highly-stigmatized identity of welfare mother. She also talked about the various resistance strategies the mothers use once they take on a welfare identity. This presentation was part of the Ambrose Women for Social Justice Event that is a central part of the College of Arts and Sciences academic theme “The Ubiquity of Work.”

Shannon M. Monnat, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas was interviewed on KXNT News Radio on September 29 about the Census Bureau’s new poverty report and the economic well-being of Nevada residents. She may be reached at, Department of Sociology, University of Nevada Las Vegas, 4505 S. Maryland Parkway Box 455033, Las Vegas, NV 89154 702-895-5807

Dr. Peggy Wireman presented at the Wisconsin Book Festival this October. “What do Sarah Palin, the Tea Party and Barack Obama have in Common and What does it say about the Body Politic?” Tip: the media creates and focuses on myths rather than what most working moms need, the fact that the tea party is primarily people with over \$50,000 in income and is financed by corporations, and millions of workers cannot emulate Obama’s Horatio Alger success but must continue to help the nation by working in necessary but lowly paid jobs. Based on her book *Connecting the Dots: Government, Community and Family* published by Transaction Publishers. See also her website <http://connectingdots.us/> and join my facebook “Let’s Connect the Dots” which provides short factual statements about issues in this election.

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aluminum siding from (usually) vacant houses in addition to copper plumbing and anything else of value. The alley behind my house sees a steady stream of folks searching for aluminum cans in trash and recycling bins, of value in their struggle for survival. They are growing more visible by the day. The elections may bring additional trouble for these folks. We’re already reading politicians calls for privatizing social security, teaching Iran “a lesson” and Texan’s suggestions allowing the

option of withdrawing from Social Security and Medicaid.

However, the news is not all bleak, as we are seeing the effects of citizen action in mobilization in the response to European (France) citizens to calls for austerity, UK students in revolt over tuition increases, and organizations that provide a counter point to the Tea Party Movement. It is my hope that when we ‘talk’ next, we will have better news to discuss, informed by our work and our service.

Call for Papers: Chapter Proposals

In 2004 and 2008, the SSSP and the Justice 21 Committee published the first two volumes of the **Agenda for Social Justice**. Those reports contained chapters on a variety of social problems, among them poverty, educational inequality, unemployment, environmental health risks, global economic change, capital punishment, post-Katrina disaster response, gender inequality in the criminal justice system, the vulnerability of ESL students in public schools, surveillance technologies, civil unions, domestic violence.

We are now beginning our work on the third publication – **Agenda for Social Justice, 2012**. This publication is designed to inform the public-at-large about the nation’s most pressing social problems and to propose a public policy response to those problems. This project affirms the commitment of SSSP to social justice, and enables the members of the association to speak on public issues with the sponsorship of the corporate body. This report will be an “agenda for social justice,” in that it will contain recommendations for action by elected officials, policy makers, and the public at large. The report will be distributed as widely as possible to policy makers, those in progressive media, and academics.

The quadrennial report will be a product of the most valid and reliable knowledge we have about social problems and it will be a joint effort of the members and Divisions of SSSP. We invite you to consider preparing a chapter for the 2012 publication. We

ask you, individually or with colleagues, to consider submitting a brief proposal (1-2 pp) identifying a social problem of concern to members of SSSP, and respond to the questions:

- *What do we know?*
- *How do we know it?*
- *What is to be done?*

As the coordinating committee for **Justice 21**, we invite members to prepare a draft statement for a proposed contribution to the 2012 publication, tentatively to be produced and distributed by the Edwin Mellen Press (<http://www.mellenpress.com/>). For the 2012 edition, confirmed contributors include the following well-known sociologists: Frances Fox Piven, Alejandro Portes, and Amatai Etzioni. Please submit a copy of your 1-2 page proposals to each of the committee members listed below by March 1, 2011, and contact us if you have questions or would like additional information. Final manuscripts will be due near the end of 2011, and will appear in print prior to the 2012 SSSP annual meetings in August 2012.

For an expanded discussion of **Justice 21**, see the May 2001 issue of *Social Problems* (“Inventing Social Justice”). To see the 2004 and 2008 publications, see the SSSP website at the following address:

<http://sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/323>

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Call for Papers: New Book Series, *Solving Social Problems*

Series Editor: Bonnie Berry, Director of the Social Problems Research Group, USA

Solving Social Problems provides a forum for the description and measurement of social problems, with a keen focus on the concrete remedies proposed for their solution. The series takes an international perspective, exploring social problems in various parts of the world, with the central concern being always their possible remedy. Work is welcomed on subjects as diverse as environmental damage, terrorism, economic disparities and economic devastation, poverty, inequalities, domestic assaults and sexual abuse, health care, natural disasters, labor inequality, animal abuse, crime, and mental illness and its treatment. In addition to recommending solutions to social problems,

the books in this series are theoretically sophisticated, exploring previous discussions of the issues in question, examining other attempts to resolve them, and adopting and discussing methodologies that are commonly used to measure social problems. Proposed solutions may be framed as changes in policy or practice, or more broadly as social change and social movement. Solutions may be reflective of ideology, but are always pragmatic and detailed, explaining the means by which the suggested solutions might be achieved.

To submit a proposal for this series, email the Series Editor, Bonnie Berry at solving@socialproblems.org or the Commissioning Editor, Neil Jordan at njordan@ashgatepublishing.com.



Chicago Conference

The call for papers and student paper competitions are now online at the SSSP website.

For further information:

<http://www.sssp1.org/>

Look for more information on the Chicago conference in the next newsletter.

Hope to see you there!