

Social Action Committee (SAC) Meeting 2015 MSS – Kansas City, Missouri

Report written by:

Andrea Nichols, (Out-going Chair)
MSS Social Action Committee
Sociology Professor
St. Louis Community College

Present:

Committee Members: Andrea Nichols (out-going chair, effective September 2015), Kelly Dagan, Andrew Smolski (proposed in-coming chair), Kelly Dagan, Deniz Yucel, Stephan Hagan, Hal Marchand, Rochelle Rowley. Guests: Ehren Wright, Committee Chair Sociological Practice Committee, Deb White, MSS Program Chair, President-Elect.

On March 27, 2015, the social action committee (SAC) met to discuss several issues pertaining to the committee's strategic goals.

I. We were pleased to welcome new members Hal and Rochelle to the committee. We all introduced ourselves to one another.

II. To facilitate the contextualization of the work that the committee undertakes, the chair discussed briefly the highlights of the 2014 SAC report (and pointed out to the rest of the members of the committee that a copy of the 2014 report is available on the MSS website).

III. Deb White informed the committee of the new session proposal procedures for 2016. The SAC committee proposed adding a teaching session, a panel Teaching Social Action to Deb's list. We also would like to co-sponsor with the Sociological Practice Committee, a panel on Sociological Practice, that is intended to be practitioner based. The intention is to attract practitioners and students. For students, it is important that they know what you can do with a soc degree, from the perspective of those working in the field. This should also increase the visibility of sociology, coinciding with the Strategic plan/ Charge of the SAC.

The SAC would also propose co-writing a letter/brochure inviting Chicago area practitioners to attend the annual meeting. We would like to consider ways in which to provide continuing ed credits to practitioners. We propose the practice sessions occur on a Saturday or Sunday, so practitioners would not need to likely take a day off work. Ehren Wright will propose and organize the sessions.

IV. Charge and Action Items from Strategic Plan

We reviewed the committee charge, and review of the strategic plan, and delegated action items to SAC members. We talked about how delegating responsibilities increased SAC member participation and engagement in the committee.

Charge 1: *Support MSS members' efforts to use sociological knowledge to inform public dialogue. (Priority F on Strategic Plan)*

Action Items:

Action Item 1: Include sessions that address teaching social action in the 2016 meeting. Deniz Yucel agreed to organize one (or potentially two) panels entitled “Teaching Social Action Panel 1” and Teaching Social Action Panel 2.” Hal, Stephen, Andy, Rochelle, Deniz and Kelly tentatively agreed to participate as panelists. If schedules conflict, then one session will be offered. This year’s panel was successful, with nearly 15 attendees at an 8:30 session, so we would like to continue this practice.

Action Item 2: Make effective use of social media, announcing events, panels, actions, research, non-profits, and other issues. Rochelle agreed to do this, beginning in June.

Action Item 3: Write an op-ed piece for submission to the Chronicle of Higher Education re: usefulness of sociology in the public discourse and in the workplace. Andy Smolski agreed to do this, collaborating with Rochelle.

Action Item 4: Utilize local media during annual meetings (press releases for SAC Award Winners). This year, we did a press release for our SAC winners in the Kansas City Star. The proposed incoming chair, Andy Smolski, will do this in Chicago next year.

Charge 2: *Greater visibility and continued engagement with NGO’s awarded the MSS Social Action Award*

Action Item 1: This year, we set up a booth for our social action award winners in the exhibit hall. We believe this has continued potential to be successful, however, we recommend the chair of the SAC get materials mailed ahead of time from the organizations, to increase visibility, as social action awardees may not arrive as early as expected. This way the materials will be available for individuals to review.

Action Item 2: We propose to the Board an honorable mention category for the SAC Award. This would have no money attached to it, but would benefit the organization and recognize another group for their grassroots efforts.

Action Item 3: We ran a half page ad in the program guide this year, and would like to continue to do so, indicating the booth for SAC Award winners in the commons.

Action Item 4: We would like to continue to announce the winners at the Presidential Address.

Action Item 5: We will alter our voting process for the Social Action Award slightly, Stephen Hagan will create a Google Doc to streamline the voting process, and create a discussion board to talk about the nominees.

V. We reviewed expectations of the SAC members—to attend meetings, to put forth at least two SAC Award nominations, and to follow through with the delegated actions listed above.

VI. Andrea Nichols announced the need to step down as chair earlier than expected for personal reasons. She will propose that the board approve Andrew Smolski as chair, effective September 2015, following the September board meeting. Andrea will write the 2015 report, complete the budget proposal, and will provide step by step instructions for the chair position. Andrew and the SAC committee agree that Andrew should be the replacement.

VII. The MSS 2015 Social Action Award winners were two outstanding grass-roots groups working for social change:

- **The Organization for Black Struggle** was founded in 1980 by volunteer activists, students, union organizers and other community members. The group continues to strive for a society free of all forms of exploitation and oppression, and particularly those that impact Black communities. The OBS sponsors a coming of age mentoring program in the St. Louis area, informing youth about social action and how it betters communities. The Midwest Sociological Society's Social Action Award will be used for leadership development programs for youth and young adults that will engage them in both service and social action in their communities. Accepting the Award on behalf of the Organization for Black Struggle is well-known activist, author, and community leader Jamala Rogers, and activist and community leader Jonathan Long.
- **Veronica's Voice** is a local Kansas-City based organization dedicated to helping women and girls involved in commercial sexual exploitation. Through grassroots activism, Kristy Childs founded Veronica's Voice. It is one of relatively few organizations across the nation that explicitly provides assistance and services to commercially sexual exploited people. The Midwest Sociological Society's Social Action Award will be used to fund existing programs. The group provides direct services to survivors, community education and awareness, outreach to at risk populations, runs a 24 hour crisis line, and offers court/legal services to survivors. Kristy Childs, Founder, Survivor, and Executive Director will receive the Award on behalf of Veronica's Voice.

VII. What We Need from the Board:

- Approve Andrew Smolski as chair
- Approve Honorable Mention Category
- Continue inclusion of the social action award given at the Presidential Address.
- Approve a discounted conference fee for practitioners to draw in more conference-goers. You will see this in Ehren Wright's (Sociological Practice) report.