

To: Board of Directors, The Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP)
From: Yvonne A. Braun
Re: 2021 Joseph B. Gittler Award Committee Report

July 15, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

This is a summary of activities for the 2021 Joseph B. Gittler Award Committee. This award was established in 2007 through a bequest by Joseph B. Gittler in recognition of a SSSP member for significant scholarly achievements on the ethical resolution of social problems. Nominations were due on April 15, 2021. The committee received nominations for two individuals, Dr. Johnny Eric Williams and Dr. Katrinell M. Davis. “According to the guidelines, all nominees must have been an active member of the Society for the Study of Social Problems for at least three years prior to receiving the award.” Both nominees met this criterion.

Dr. Williams was nominated by Dr. David G. Embrick, with supporting letters from Dr. Melissa Weiner, Dr. Bhoomi K. Thakore, Dr. Saher Selod, and Dr. Walda Katz-Fishman included with the initial nomination. Dr. Davis submitted a self-nomination, and listed Dr. Alice Fothergill, Dr. Libby Lewis, and Dr. Kathryn Tillman as able to provide supporting letters, which is consistent with the nomination process. I reached out to all three colleagues and received a letter from each of them by the deadline I provided (May 12). These were then circulated to the committee for consideration alongside the nomination materials for Dr. Williams and the self-nomination letter from Dr. Davis. The committee met by Zoom to discuss and deliberate on May 19.

The committee found both candidates to be exceptional scholars and active in public sociology, doing important and timely work to bring ethical solutions to pressing social problems to which they have been committed scholar-activists. The committee unanimously selected Dr. Williams, in part, due to the longevity of his career and his ongoing, outstanding contributions to sociology, to SSSP, to scholar activism, and to the ethical resolution of social issues. We noted his commitment to raise important questions and to bring critical sociological perspectives to pressing social issues – such as understanding race and addressing racism, garnering support for Palestine and Palestinians, and addressing issues of academic freedom – also represented acts of courage to raise awareness and bring about social change. The award letter sent to Dr. Williams also stated: “All of these things, plus your many publications and academic honors, your significant mentoring work with graduate students and junior colleagues, and your efforts to bring students, faculty, and independent scholars to SSSP’s doors, where you offered them your networks as if they were your family, lead us to the conclusion that you are our overwhelming choice for the 2021 award.”

The committee wanted to note we were extremely impressed with Dr. Davis’ work as well, and we imagine she will continue to be a worthy candidate for this award. We worked with the SSSP office to send a decision letter to Dr. Davis that strongly encourages her to consider a nomination in future cycles.

I would like to thank the members of the committee for their service:

Nicholas Baxter
Indiana University Kokomo

Jennifer Roebuck Bulanda
Miami University

Michael O. Johnston
William Penn University

Emily Schneider
Northern Arizona University

Sincerely,

Yvonne A. Braun, University of Oregon

Chair, 2021 Joseph B. Gittler Award Committee