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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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July 5, 2024

Dear SSSP Board of Directors:

It was my honor and privilege to serve as *Chair* of the 2023-2024 C. Wright Mills Book Award Committee. We closed the nominations portal with 123 online nominations on 12/15/2023 at 11:59pm ET. After eliminating books with multiple nominations and those ineligible due to copyright year outside of the eligibility window, the number was reduced to 108 books for this award year. The number of reviewed books this year (108) was substantially higher than in previous years. Last year, the committee reviewed 99 books, and the year before that, the committee reviewed 76 books. See my recommendations on managing such a large volume of books moving forward.

The names and addresses of committee members were confirmed in Fall 2023, many of whom were previous finalists or winners of the C. Wright Mills Book Award. The committee members, representing an array of specialties, institutions, and ranks, were responsive to all deadlines, managed potential conflicts of interest, and worked amicably throughout the process. I want to stress that I could not have managed or succeeded without the extraordinary assistance of Michele Koontz, Kelsey Whitaker, and the staff at SSSP. The Committee members were as follows:

**Waverly Duck**, *Chair*, University of California, Santa Barbara  
**Teresa Córdova**, *Chair-Elect*, University of Illinois at Chicago  
**Matthew Clair**, Stanford University  
**Christopher Contreras**, University of Massachusetts, Boston  
**Joseph C. Ewoodzie**, Davidson College  
**Tey Meadow**, Columbia University  
**Miranda R. Waggoner**, Rice University

This committee was an utter delight to work with throughout the process. Given the volume of books, each member was thoughtful, timely, and supportive.

In collaboration with Michele Koontz and the staff at SSSP, we provided each committee member with the guidelines and key dates/outcomes to ensure a seamless and efficient selection process. These were the Key Dates/Outcomes for our process:

- Deadline for submissions of nominated books: December 15, 2024
- Notify the Chair of Missing Books: January 11, 2024
- Books assigned to committee members for reading: January 18, 2024

- First Wave of Reviews Completed March 25, 2024
- Second Wave of Reviews Completed April 23, 2024
- Third Wave of Reviews Completed June 12, 2024
- Winner Submitted on June 25, 2024

This year, we also accepted PDF submissions of nominated books, noting on the nomination submission page that while hard copies of the nominated book are preferred if such is cost-prohibitive or if the title is missing, we would accept a confidential/not-for-circulation *PDF of the book instead*. Of the 108 books reviewed, five were submitted electronically.

Once all books have been received and the nomination portal was closed (12/15/23), the *Chair* organized a list of all the books, which also contained pdfs of nomination letters, with the help of Michele Koontz's staff, and sent it to each committee member. The *Chair* then assigned readings to each committee member at random, where each of us ended up reading (close to) the same number of books (47). This process is outlined in further detail below:

**1. The first round of reviews was completed on March 25, 2024. This includes a four-week extension I granted all committee members, given the volume of books.**

- a. Each book was read by 3 committee members in the first round.
- b. The *Chair* used an Excel spreadsheet to randomly assign the readings to each committee member and then corrected them for recusals due to conflicts of interest.
- c. Each committee member read 47 books during this first round.
- d. Consistent with the process from previous years, the *Chair* instructed all committee members to read and rank each book on a 1-5 scale (5 = excellent candidate; 4 = strong candidate; 3 = good candidate; 2 = marginal candidate; 1 = unlikely candidate) according to how it fits the 6 criteria for the award:
  - Critically addresses an issue of contemporary public importance
  - Brings to the topic a fresh, imaginative perspective
  - Advances social scientific understanding of the topic
  - Displays a theoretically informed view and empirical orientation
  - Evinces quality in style of writing
  - Explicitly or implicitly contains implications for courses of action
- e. Each member submitted a list of the books read with the numerical ranking to the committee *Chair* on March 25, 2024.

**2. The second round of reviews was completed on April 23, 2024**

- a. The *Chair* tabulated all of the rankings and determined which books would advance to the next round of review.

- b. The second round of review ended up including seven book scores that stood out from the other 101 books. As a committee, based on numerical scores, we decided to have seven finalists, given the volume and high scores of the seven manuscripts.
- c. All seven committee members, including the *Chair*, were to review all 7 books that advanced to round 3. However, one committee member recused themselves from one book in round 2 due to a conflict of interest. It should be noted that this committee member also recused themselves from reviewing this book in rounds 1 and 3. Thus, this book was reassigned to a different reviewer.
- d. The *Chair* received all round 2 rankings on or around June 11, 2024. Given one book was missing a reviewer score, given the recusal noted in 2c, the Chair contacted the Executive Officer concerning how the previous conflicts of interest were handled. I imputed an average score from all other reviewers for this missing value which all committee members approved.
- e. On June 11, 2024, after the *Chair* had tabulated the rankings from round 2, I notified the entire committee of the ranking of the seven books.
- f. The *Chair* asked all committee members to favor or oppose the results, and if they opposed to state why so that we could proceed with a discussion. The committee members unanimously approved the results.

**On June 25, 2024, the *Chair* notified Michele Koontz and Kelsey Whitaker that our committee had reached a decision.**

**The seven finalists, in alphabetical order by last name, are as follows:**

**Andrews, Abigail Leslie.** *Banished Men: How Migrants Endure the Violence of Deportation.* University of California Press, 2023

**Asad, Asad L.** *Engage and Evade: How Latino Immigrant Families Manage Surveillance in Everyday Life.* Princeton University Press, 2023

**Jensen, Katherine.** *The Color of Asylum: The Racial Politics of Safe Haven in Brazil.* The University of Chicago Press, 2023

**Miles, Corey J.** *Vibe: The Sound and Feeling of Black Life in the American South.* University Press of Mississippi, 2023

**Rodriguez, Cassandra.** *Contested Americans: Mixed-Status Families in Anti-Immigrant Times.* NYU Press, 2023

**Stewart, Mahala Dyer.** *The Color of Homeschooling: How Inequality Shapes School Choice.* New York University Press, 2023

**Wallace, Derron.** *The Culture Trap: Ethnic Expectations and Unequal Schooling for Black Youth.* Oxford University Press, 2023

**The winner of the 2023 C. Wright Mills Award is:**

**Asad, Asad L.** *Engage and Evade: How Latino Immigrant Families Manage Surveillance in Everyday Life.* Princeton University Press, 2023

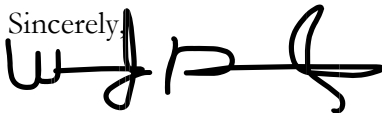
## **ACTION ITEMS**

I really enjoyed chairing this committee. Working alongside colleagues to ensure that every nomination was carefully read, reviewed, and ranked promptly was my honor. Below, I list a few recommendations to improve the C. Wright Mills Award process:

- **Expand the Number of Committee Members:** Reviewing 108 books is difficult for just seven people. I suggest increasing the number of committee members and considering awarding more than one winner when this many books are submitted.
- **Accept Books from SSSP Members Only:** To streamline the process, books should only be accepted from members of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP).
- **Continue Accepting PDF Copies of Nominated Books:** I encourage the Society to continue accepting PDF copies of nominated books, with a note that while hard copies are preferred, the committee will accept PDFs. This policy reduces nomination barriers, given that not all authors or their presses are able (or willing) to send complimentary copies.

While serving on this committee during a challenging academic year, I was honored to read many profoundly beautiful pieces of work. This was one of the toughest committees I've ever served on, but also one of the most rewarding. Each finalist taught me something new and reaffirmed that many scholars are doing brilliant and amazing work.

Sincerely,



**Waverly Duck, Ph.D.**

North Hall Chair Endowed Professor of Sociology  
Associate Director of Black Studies Research  
University of California-Santa Barbara