A Message from the Chair

Chair’s Column

Human rights are front and center in new and ongoing debates taking place across the world. From hostility to refugees and migrants, to armed conflict and violence, to deprivation and starvation, to growing disparities in health and access to health care, to government failure and corruption, the scholarship of sociologists who work on human rights is making differences. Students intensely desire to learn from sociologists about the meanings, utilities, and frameworks of human rights. Do human rights matter? Do they matter on university campuses? Do they matter where we work and live? Sociology of human rights demonstrates we can learn from the past as we contribute tackling questions about speech, beliefs, institutions, and inequalities. Sociologists are raising crucial questions for human rights concepts and practices.

Members of this Human Rights Section are at the forefront of this scholarship. The foundational work of Du Bois, Addams, and others reveals that human rights are at the root of Sociology. The Section is taking the lead in supporting sociologists who are studying and teaching human rights. Many of our members are performing services that advance the scholarship of human rights. While we celebrate accomplishments, I hope the Section can continue to foster sociology of human rights for members, the ASA, and for sociologists and students across the world.

Over this academic year and leading up to the 2019 annual meeting of the ASA, the Human Rights Section will work intently to build membership as it continues to identify and meet the needs and goals of the Section and its members. If you have suggestions or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Onward,
Brian Gran
Chair
Brian.Gran@Case.Edu
Thank you

On behalf of the Human Rights Section, I want to thank the officers who completed their terms during the 2018 annual ASA meeting. Thank you to Kiyo Tsutsui for his leadership as Chair. Kiyo advanced the Section’s interests in many ways, including financially and its relationship with other Sections. We are grateful to Vivian Shaw for her contributions as Student Representative to the Section. The Section thanks David Embrick, Elizabeth (Liz) Heger Boyle, and Lindsey Peterson for their service to the Section as Council members. As you know, Liz is the Section’s Chair Elect.

During the 2018 annual meeting, the Section welcomed Tianna Paschel and Hollie Nyseth Brehm as new Council members and Jeff Swindle as new Student Representative. Thank you for their commitment to the Section. We are grateful for their leadership.

I especially want to thank Annie Isabel Fukushima for her continuing service and leadership as the Section’s Secretary-Treasurer. This office is crucial to the Section’s health and future, and Annie has consistently exceeded the position’s responsibilities. Her service is a major reason for the Section’s vitality and growth. The Section owes a great deal to Annie.

The Section’s Newsletter

I want to thank Annie and Hollie for their dedication and significant contributions as the Section’s Newsletter Editors. The Section’s Newsletter is terrific! I am sure everyone would agree it is the best of all the ASA Sections’ newsletters. I also want to express gratitude to Annie for her work as the Section’s website Editor. The Section is very fortunate to enjoy the significant commitment and contributions of so many hard-working and brilliant sociologists.

The Human Rights Section welcomes Tianna Paschel and Tim Gill as the next Newsletter Editors. Tianna and Tim will start as Newsletter Editors with the next Newsletter. Please make sure to read their contribution to this Newsletter!

2018-2019 Committees

Several Section members have agreed to contribute to the Human Rights Sections as members of committees. These committees do a great deal of work over the year leading up to the 2019 annual ASA meeting. The Section is grateful for their service and leadership.

Nominations: Kiyo Tsutsui will chair this committee. Joachim Savelsberg will serve on the committee, as well as an additional Section member.

Membership: Claudia Lopez will chair this committee. Liz Boyle and I plus six other Section members will serve on this committee.
**Book award:** Christopher Roberts will chair this committee, with two other Section members joining him.

**Article award:** Robin Stryker will chair this committee, with two other Section members joining her.

**Student paper award:** James Mahoney of Northwestern University will chair this committee. David Frank and Tianna Paschel will serve on this committee.

**Program committee:** Liz Boyle, as Chair-Elect, and I will serve on this committee.

**Mentoring committee:** The Section has established a Mentoring Committee, which Brooke Chambers and Jeffrey Swindle are co-chairing.

---

**2019 annual ASA meeting**

The Human Rights Section will host two sessions during the 2019 annual ASA meeting. The Human Rights Section will hold the session, "Innovations in Sociology of Human Rights: New Challenges and New Questions." Jamie Small is organizer. The Section will hold a joint session with Comparative-Historical Section: “Comparative Historical Sociology and Human Rights.” Matthias Koenig is the organizer. These sessions will probably take place on Saturday, August 10.

The Human Rights Section will probably hold its Council and Business meetings on Saturday, August 10. In addition, the Section will hold a reception with the Comparative-Historical and Political Sociology Sections on Saturday, August 10.

Across the 2019 annual meeting, several sessions will concentrate on human rights, including Special Sessions, Thematic Sessions, and Presidential Sessions.

**UN Observer Status**

During the 2018 Business Meeting of the Human Rights Section, the possibility of establishing UN Observer Status for the Section was discussed. I contacted ASA leadership and learned that the ASA will not allow the Section to set up this status on its own. Instead, the Human Rights Section is working with ASA leadership to establish UN Observer Status for the entire ASA and its members. Liz Boyle and I are working with the ASA to establish this status.

**Sociology Action Network**

The Section is working with ASA leadership on the Sociology Action Network (SAN). Information about SAN can be found here: www.asanet.org/asacomunities/sociology-action-network.

Briefly, the idea of SAN is to use expertise of sociologists to advance goals of civil society organizations that can bring about meaningful change. SAN will connect sociologists who want to volunteer their expertise to civil society organizations that will benefit from that expertise. The ASA will play a facilitator
role of establishing partnerships. For more information, please visit the ASA website. It is hoped and expected that members of the Human Rights Section can provide useful support to SAN.

On posting to the Human Rights Section’s Listserv

To post to the Human Rights Section’s ASA listserv, please contact Annie Isabel Fukushima at a.fukushima@utah.edu or Brian Gran at Brian.Gran@Case.Edu.

Message from Editors of the Spring 2019 ASA Section on Human Rights Newsletter

Introducing Tim Gill and Tianna Paschel
Newsletter Editors starting 2019 Spring

We are both very excited to begin our work on the section’s newsletter. Tim Gill is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina - Wilmington, and his research has primarily focused on U.S. democracy promotion in contemporary Venezuela and the Venezuelan government’s response to these efforts. He is the author of a forthcoming edited volume looking at U.S. foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere under Trump, titled The Future of U.S. Empire in the Americas: The Trump Administration and Beyond. Tianna S. Paschel is associate professor of sociology and African American studies at the University of California -Berkeley. Her research explores the relationship between racial ideology, politics, and globalization in Latin America. She is the author of the book, Becoming Black Political Subjects, which draws on ethnographic and archival methods to explore the shift in the 1990s from ideas of unmarked universal citizenship to multicultural citizenship regimes and the recognition of specific rights for black populations by Latin American states. We plan to continue providing you with excellent and relevant content in much the same way that Annie and Hollie have. We have many ideas for timely discussions to feature in our upcoming newsletters, and we hope that you might consider contributing.

For the spring newsletter, “Fragile Democracies,” we invite contributions that look at human rights in the era of right-wing populism, and the politicization of the judiciary in countries around the world. We hope that submissions will examine the impact of this swing to the right on legal protections for citizens and those living within and between national borders. We also would like pieces that critically reflect on human rights mobilization in this critical political moment, as well as historical pieces that give us insights into the present. Ultimately, we hope these contributions will move beyond a focus on the state of political discourse and move toward an examination of the actual policies implemented by right-wing governments, as well as the social movements that have challenged them. We encourage contributions on cases from around the world, and we also hope
that this newsletter will generate a productive cross-national dialogue that includes reflections on the United States.

The deadline for submissions is March 1. Please send them to both Tianna (tpaschel@berkeley.edu) and Tim (gillt@uncw.edu).

Tim Gill
Tianna Paschel

FEATURES

2018 The Gordon Hirabayashi Human Rights Book Award

by David Cunningham

The Gordon Hirabayashi Human Rights Book Award committee was pleased to consider a strong slate of eleven nominees for this year's award. While a number of those books merit recognition, the committee unanimously selected Ya-Wen Lei as the 2018 award recipient, for her book The Contentious Public Sphere: Law, Media, & Authoritarian Rule in China (Princeton University Press, 2018). Lei's book is concerned with a critical puzzle: how, in the face of ongoing state censorship and repression, a vibrant civil sphere has developed over the past decade to effectively challenge the Chinese state. Marshaling an ambitious range of data (encompassing multiple national surveys, decades of newspaper accounts, reams of extracted online text, and 160 in-depth interviews), Lei's historical analysis locates the rise of China's contentious public sphere as an unintended effect of the authoritarian state's modernization project initiated in the mid-2000s. Identifying and linking processes in the media and legal fields, Lei is attentive to the actions and collaborations of diverse constituencies -- from state officials to activists, media professionals, peasants, students and other "netizens." Her analysis offers an elegant and sophisticated roadmap to understand China's ongoing political, cultural, and social transformations, as well as a powerful framework to predict the future of its unruly public sphere.

The committee also was highly impressed with Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick's What Slaveholders Think: How Contemporary Perpetrators Rationalize What They Do (Columbia University Press, 2017), and is pleased to recognize this work with an honorable mention. Choi-Fitzpatrick's engaging study operates at the intersection of social movements and human rights scholarship, developing a compelling portrait of the paternalistic perspectives of contemporary slaveholders, who, he finds, often "are respected members of their community, violating human rights but not social norms." Drawing on 300 individual and focus-group interviews with slaveholders, laborers, community leaders, and activists in rural India, Choi-
Fitzpatrick deftly elucidates the worldviews that legitimize slaveholders' own efforts, as well as the ways in which they respond to challenges to their actions. Such concerns reside at the heart of human rights scholarship and action, offering a close look at the forces that perpetuate subjugation.

Please join us in congratulating Ya-Wen and Austin for their outstanding work, which exemplifies the high quality of the scholarship that continues to emerge out of the section.

2018 Best Scholarly Article Award

by James Mahoney

We are pleased to announce the recipient of the 2018 ASA Human Rights Section Best Article Award:


Pedriana and Stryker focus on a major puzzle in the field of civil rights: Why was 1960s civil rights legislation in the United States most effective at securing voting rights; least effective at securing housing rights; and only partially effective at securing employment rights? The authors illustrate the shortcomings of frameworks emphasizing enforcement power, policy entrepreneurs, bureaucratic capabilities, and white resentment.

To explain the variation, Pedriana and Stryker build a new general theory that they call the “group-centered effects (GCE) framework.” They begin by recognizing that the legal system is stacked against subordinate groups that seek to achieve human rights gains. In this context, the easiest way to demonstrate discrimination is by calling attention to substantive group results. That is, GCE establishes discrimination by pointing to disparities in outcomes rather than the discriminatory processes themselves. From this perspective, voting rights legislation was more effective than employment and especially housing legislation because it focused on the equalizing results of rule changes (e.g., abolishing literacy tests) rather becoming bogged down in legal questions about whether the prior rules were inherently discriminatory in particular cases.

The committee was impressed by the originality of the theoretical framework and its ability to make sense of significant historical facts and help solve an important empirical puzzle in the field of human rights. The committee also noted that the theoretical framework has important implications for civil rights and anti-discrimination policy going forward. It suggests that civil rights advocates would
do well to consider how GCE principles can be leveraged to make policy implementation more effective in the future. Rather than focus on the question of whether a process is discriminatory at the individual level, advocates might instead focus on whether changing a process will generate positive results at the group level.

This year’s prize committee was Gregory Hooks, McMaster University; James Mahoney, Northwestern University (chair); and Tianna Paschel, University of California, Berkeley.

2018 Graduate Student Paper Award

by Claudia Maria Lopez

Good morning, I would like to begin by acknowledging and thanking LaDawn Haglund and Yan Long for their work on the award committee. It is my distinct pleasure to award the 2018 ASA Human Rights Section Best Graduate Student Paper Award to Saskia Dunkell for her paper, "Decoupling Transitional Justice: Selective Approaches for Addressing Human Rights Abuses in Colombia.” This paper examine the historical context, politics, and power struggles within a country that shift and facilitate transitional justice mechanisms. Dunkell discusses how transitional justice mechanisms are framed as an acceptable and "taken for granted" approach for addressing mass violence and argues that countries adopt these mechanisms in different uneven ways. The paper uses the concept of selective coupling to “better explain how states adopt some components of a policy that signals a commitment to a global standard, while rejecting or altering other aspects in response to national pressures.” Based on 16 months of fieldwork in Colombia, Dunkell highlights two transitional justice approaches—a justice-focused approach for paramilitaries in 2005 and an acknowledgment-focused approach for guerrillas in 2016. By highlighting these two approaches, the author is able to analyze how the state tweaks, challenges, and changes particular aspects of transitional justice mechanisms at different historical moments. Most interestingly, the paper shows how selective coupling happens not solely between countries but also within one country.

The committee selected this paper due to is significant contribution to the sociology of human rights. Methodologically, the fieldwork is impressive and the qualitative study adds depth to research on the decoupling of international human rights commitments. Theoretically, we found Dunkell’s selective coupling framework innovative and applicable in broader contexts. The paper adds to sociological theories of globalization by disputing previous research that suggests that the globalization of human rights as “a cohesive, universal, and irreversible trend.” Please join me in congratulating Saskia Dunkell.
FEATURE ARTICLE

Academic Lessons from Outreach

by Brooke Chambers

The word “outreach” inherently implies a one-way relationship. In practice, educational outreach is often presented as the chance to share academic knowledge outside of a scholarly context. It is, however, far less common to see outreach as a chance for academics themselves to learn new lessons or to reflect on their work. This has been my experience since beginning graduate school, where I have found that outreach has the potential to enrich my own research.

The idea of outreach as scholarly education began to ring true the more I became involved with the University of Minnesota’s Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, which hosts the Genocide Education Outreach (GEO) program. GEO brings graduate students into the community to present their work in non-university settings, like high schools or public libraries. This does, of course, provide a valuable service to many different community groups in the traditional sense of outreach. However, since I began coordinating the program, I have had the opportunity to reflect with other GEO presenters on the potential of outreach to impact our own research. Here, I have selected a few regular questions we have received from GEO participants and my thoughts as to how such engagement can enrich academic knowledge.

“Why do you do this work?”

Academic institutions provide a space in which to explore the theoretical and methodological “why’s” which draw scholars to their research. Why use collective memory to study memorialization? Why use post-colonial theory to understand statehood? However, outreach events focus upon a different “why”. Why do people kill their neighbors? Why did no one stop them? Participants who ask these questions are generally not looking to hear explicitly about the scholarly foundations which drive our work. They are asking for commentary about the very human nature of what we have chosen to study.

This question allows for expansion about the interpersonal moments which make the social sciences so rich, but those which may not always make it into the journal article. I treasure the chance to bring Rwanda to life for those who may only know it in the context of tragedy. Outreach allows me to highlight, for example, the human interaction behind interviews with memorial site staff or university students. I can share not only research findings, but stories I was told of family life, academic dreams, and participants’ hopes for the future of Rwanda. This allows the opportunity to dive deeply into the human experiences upon which scholarly work is grounded. Sharing these stories alongside the academic findings has helped me remember the humanness of my work and guided me in emphasizing this within my academic writing.
“Why should I care about this?”
This question arises in a variety of iterations. Some individuals wonder why they should care about global suffering while those in their own country have problems. Others may have preconceived notions of victimhood, and those we present may not fit that definition. Though sometimes this question is tinged with distrust or skepticism, it is often posed with genuine interest, or an assumption that an individual can only worry about so much at once. Outreach has asked me to defend the worthiness of my work in a moralistic sense, to advocate for the value of humans who may often be ignored or demonized. Though clearly challenging, there can be value in respectfully engaging with fundamental critics who may dismiss the value of human rights concerns. In arguing for the ethics behind the quest for knowledge of social behavior, I have developed answers to questions I had not encountered within an academic setting, adding enrichment and foundation to my scholarly arguments.

“What can I do?”
Outreach events can bring forward a range of emotions for participants. They may feel motivated to encourage change, or they may be frustrated that human rights violations occur so frequently within the US and globally. Outreach often showcases a political desire to seek reform and address issues of human suffering. This reaffirms that academic knowledge is desired by those outside of universities, but it also highlights that barriers exist to broader public engagement within academic knowledge. Public engagement requires a distinct argumentative approach and a different language than that which is often used within academic spaces. But outreach also reinforces the worthiness of partnership and information-sharing outside of academic institutions. Perhaps most simply, GEO events remind me that much of the public cares about the questions that human rights scholars are asking.

These questions are just some among many which GEO presenters have discussed with each other following our events. Each time, new thoughts and reactions come forward. While providing valuable opportunities to spread scholarly knowledge, GEO events can also inspire presenters to further reflect on the humanness of their work. More broadly, outreach can spur forward academic thought, and through this, it can help to enrich research.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Publications

Berry, Marie E. War, women, and power: From violence to mobilization in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Beresford, Alexander, Marie E. Berry, and Laura Mann. "Liberation movements and stalled democratic transitions: reproducing power in Rwanda and South


**Positions**


Newsletter Submission Information

**Feature Articles:** Articles that highlight research, teaching, or engagement relevant to human rights.

**Research Notes:** Brief reflections on research studies related to human rights. Notes could focus on the methodology, the findings, the dissemination of findings, etc.

**Teaching Notes:** Brief reflections on teaching about human rights in undergraduate or graduate classrooms. Tips and classroom activities are especially welcome.

**Grassroots Notes:** Reflections, stories, and advice pertaining to engagement with local organizations, policymakers, and/or grassroots activists.

**Publications and Announcements:** Recently published a book, article, or paper that the human rights section members should read? Have news or an opportunity that you would like to share with the human rights community? Please send it our way!

The deadline for submissions is March 1. Please send them to both Tianna (tpaschel@berkeley.edu) and Tim (gillt@uncw.edu).