



# Semaphore

The official Newsletter of the Georgia Sociological  
Association

February 2018

# From the President

Dear GSA Community,

I hope that 2018 is off to a good start for everyone!

The Executive Board met in January and planning is well under way for our fall meeting. I am visiting a number of potential locations throughout February and will finalize details in March. Stay tuned!

The theme of this year's meeting is "Sociologists on the Frontage: Making Sociology Visible." I want us to continue to think about engaged sociology, but also take a critical look at the shifting landscape in which we "do" sociology. Distrust of higher education continues and our institutions face increased corporatization and decreased funding. At the same time, the ability to engage in civil discourse has eroded. And yet, even in the face of these challenges, this moment feels hopeful. The last few years, and the last year in particular, have witnessed many important challenges to racism and other forms of exclusion and inequality. The explanatory power of sociology can not only help us to understand this moment but help find the path forward through, in the words of past ASA President, Michele Lamont, proposing "narrative[s] that feed into hope."<sup>1</sup>

We are also anticipating some changes to this year's program. Last year we outgrew our traditional schedule; therefore, we are making room for more sessions on Thursday, should the numbers indicate a need. I am also bringing back the President's Reception, which will take place on Thursday night. On Friday night we will have Trivia, hosted by our very own Michellene McDnaiel.

I look forward to celebrating all of the work we do—from work directly engaged with the above issues to work that simply seeks to better understand some other aspect of the social world—at our next conference. I hope that you will join us! I also urge you to encourage your students to participate through presenting a paper and/or submitting work for our student paper competition. The GSA prides itself on being student friendly and works to provide a supportive and encouraging environment for students at all levels.

Sincerely,

Sara F. Mason

President

---

<sup>1</sup> Trump's Triumph and Social Science Adrift...What is to be Done? Michele Lamont

<http://www.asanet.org/trumps-triumph-and-social-science-adrift-what-be-done>

# Letter From Your Past President

A note from the Past President...

It was fabulous seeing so many of you last November at the annual conference! Lake Blackshear proved to be a scenic and relaxing location. As usual, the program was filled with presentations on thought-provoking topics and innovative research. I especially enjoyed the reception at the Habitat for Humanity Global Village. The tour was educational and eye-opening, and the dinner provided us with a great opportunity to catch up with friends from across the state.

I certainly enjoyed my tenure as President of the Georgia Sociological Association. In the past year, we had a successful conference, updated our website, and introduced GSA t-shirts! I've said it before, but it bears repeating – the GSA is a special organization. Few groups are as collegial and welcoming as ours. I look forward to continuing to be a part of the GSA executive board this upcoming year.

Here's to 2018!

Sincerely,

Alison Hatch  
Past President, Georgia Sociological Association  
Georgia Southern University – Armstrong Campus

# **2017-8 Executive Board Election Results**

President – Sara Mason

President Elect – Carly Redding

Vice President - Darina Lepadatu

Secretary/Treasurer – Christy Flatt

Semaphore Editor – Diogo Pinheiro

Parliamentarian - Sherry Smith

Members at Large

Christina Wolfe

Anne Borden

Michallene McDaniel

# Call for Papers

## Call for Papers

“Ripped from the Headlines: Analyzing the Social Implications of the News”

*The Journal of Public and Professional Sociology*

Society moves. We are always confronted with the unexpected. As it happens, sociology is uniquely situated to analyze these incidents. Whether they take place in politics, crime, race relations, education, or the family, sociologists can shed light on why things are happening as they are. Moreover, sociologists can often predict what is likely to transpire in the future. *The Journal of Public and Professional Sociology* will therefore be putting together a Special Issue dedicated to current events. Entitled “Ripped from the Headlines: Analyzing the Social Implications of the News,” it welcomes articles focused on episodes of social interest. These can discuss research, theory, or any combination thereof. They can also be reviews of the literature or ethnographic accounts. What counts is that they utilize sociological insights to provide social perspective. Inquiries can be forwarded to [ltreiber@kennesaw.edu](mailto:ltreiber@kennesaw.edu) or [mfein@kennesaw.edu](mailto:mfein@kennesaw.edu). Finished pieces should be submitted to the JPPS through the online submission system at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/jpps/>

The closing submission date is May 31, 2018.

# New Nonprofit Announced

## **The Social Individualism Foundation**

Sociologists have long sought to be relevant. Most of us enter the discipline hoping to contribute to social improvements. When we study the way societies operate, it is frequently with an eye to learning how to fix what seems to be broken. Although we frequently differ in our assessments of what is happening or how it might be remedied, we share an underlying desire to facilitate reforms. This yearning has been seriously tested in recent years. As our nation has been riven by the culture wars, there has been a tendency to choose sides. We then gird our loins and enter the fray. Too often we neglect to stand back and analyze our commitments.

The *Social Individual Foundation* has been created in order to provide a sociologically informed alternative to our current ideological stalemate. It is grounded in the belief that the liberal, religious conservative, and libertarian traditions that currently dominate the political arena are out of date. Because each of these was created under conditions very different from our own, they do not provide adequate answers to contemporary conundrums. A new way of looking at things is therefore needed. Our mass techno-commercial society is becoming increasingly middle class. Many more of us are consequently required to make competent decisions within an environment of growing uncertainty and complexity. We must thus become more self-directed, that is, socially informed individualists. As self-motivated experts in what we do, we manifestly need the personal strength and social wisdom to choose wisely.

This new non-profit is dedicated to disseminating knowledge about what is actually occurring around us. It aims to use a variety of modalities to spread this information. Books, newspaper columns, podcasts, public talks, and a variety of social media will be employed to focus attention on underappreciated developments. Special emphasis will be placed on transformations taking place in the family, education, and journalism. The idea is to make it plain that there are alternatives to the current gridlock. Accordingly, we will be shortly be constructing our home page. We have already obtained tax-free status and are in the process of outlining a number of programs. One of these is an *e pluribus unum* initiative that aims to promote a set of core principles, namely: honesty, personal responsibility, fairness (in terms of universality), liberty, and family values. These are intended to reflect standards that all sides of the political spectrum can support. We also intend to tackle the voluntary intimacy crisis that has undermined the underpinnings of contemporary marriages. If we are to survive as a nation, more of our children must grow up in stable and loving homes.

This, to be sure, is an ambitious agenda. It will take many hands—and heads—for us to make progress. Nothing in life is guaranteed, but we hope to give it our best shot. If you are interested in helping, please contact [mfein@kennesaw.edu](mailto:mfein@kennesaw.edu).

Mel Fein

# News

## **Philip Thomas Retires**

Philip Thomas has retired. He will no longer be teaching at Paine College. After decades of serving as a professor, Coordinator of the Sociology Department and Chair of the Social Sciences Division, he is stepping down. We can be sure that his students will miss his calm and reasoned approach to teaching. Philip is never strident or intimidating. He always listens and always seeks to explain. Because he wanted the best for those he taught, he sought to guide them in developing their own knowledge and abilities.

We, too, at the Georgia Sociological Association came to appreciate Philip's integrity and organizational skills. As our long-term secretary and treasurer, he kept the organizational trains running on time. Those of us, who dealt with him, knew he could be trusted. When there was a job to be done, he got it done. When there was a fiduciary responsibility to be shouldered, he would shoulder it. Then, when it came time for Philip to be our president, he continued this tradition. He organized a splendid program and presided over it with grace and dexterity. His goal was to bring out the best in us—which he achieved. In short, he proved to be a facilitator extraordinaire.

Philip was born and raised in Kerala, India and remained proud of his origins. He never forgot his roots and the rich commercial and intellectual traditions of his homeland. Although he and his physician wife raised their family in the United State, he never lost touch with his past. Initially educated in biology at the University of Kerala, he obtained a Masters in sociology from Atlanta University in 1973. He then went on to acquire a Doctorate in sociology from Emory University. Having originally concentrated in social services and labor relations, he eventually focused on race relations. Given his ability to see things from multiple perspectives, he was able to furnish a bridge between dissimilar cultures.

Nor must we forget Philip's kindness. He cares for people and is sensitive to their needs. Throughout his many years of dealing with a myriad of problems, he has almost always kept a smile on his face. Others may get truculent—and even insulting—when things go wrong, but not him. He can be counted on to see the bright side. Philip's leadership will therefore be missed. His stabilizing influence will be absent from our Board meetings. Nonetheless, his legacy—and hopefully presence—will continue at the GSA. He may retire from teaching, but not from our hearts.

Mel Fein

## Kennesaw State University News

### ASA Grant

KSU faculty received funding from the American Sociological Association to study impact of laws permitting concealed weapons on college campuses.

Jennifer McMahon-Howard, Heidi L. Scherer, and James T. McCafferty, Kennesaw State University, with the project titled "Examining the Effects of Passing a Campus Carry Law: Comparing Perceptions of Safety, Campus Activities, and Crime Before and After Georgia's New Campus Carry Law."

This project examines a campus carry law's impact on perceptions of safety (feeling safe on campus, fear of crime, confidence in campus police), campus life activities (controversial class discussions, pursuing academic misconduct charges), and crime on campus (self-reported victimization, crimes reported to police) over the course of the first year of the law's implementation. The investigators surveyed faculty, staff, and students at Kennesaw State University immediately before Georgia passed its campus carry law and will use these data for comparison.

### GSA Award

Linda Treiber received the Meritorious Service Award at the 2017 GSA meeting:



## **GSA Award Recipient**

Jennifer McDonnell, a Kennesaw State graduate and recipient of the First Place Award in the Undergraduate Paper Competition at Georgia Sociological Association annual conference, Nov. 2-4, 2017 at Lake Blackshear GA had been accepted in the PhD Program in Sociology at Emory University. We would like to encourage all the students to present and submit their papers at GSA, a very friendly conference for undergraduate and graduate students!

## **University of North Georgia**

### **Student Awards**

Three of our sociology majors were awarded the Benjamin A. Gilman International al Scholarship for summer semester. This grant program enables students of limited financial means to study or intern abroad and gain skills critical to national security and economic competitiveness.

### **Tenure**

Dr. Carly Redding was awarded tenure and promote to Associate Professor. Lecturer Anthony Healy was promoted to Senior Lecturer.