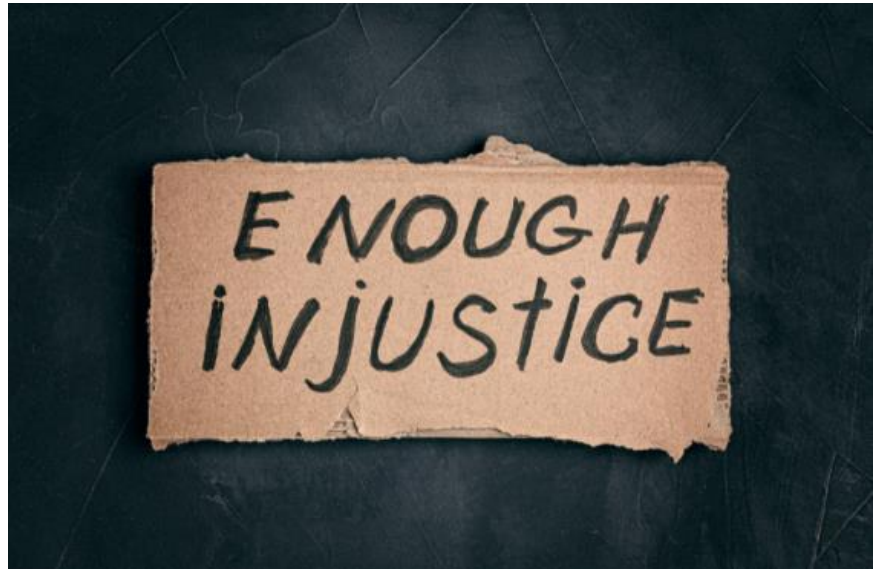


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Message from the Chair

Sean McCandless, PhD

Dear colleagues:

It was with some shock that I realized recently that this is my penultimate chair's letter before my term as chair of ASPA's Section on Democracy and Social Justice (SDSJ) ends at 11:59pm (Eastern Time) on December 31, 2021. On January 1, 2022, the wonder Vanessa Lopez-Littleton will take over as chair and will serve for two years. As I write this, I have served on the SDSJ board for nearly five years (special thanks to Richard Greggory Johnson III for recruiting me to the Board when he was the chair), and I am filled with gratitude for the work we have done in that time. I am excited for the work we will continue to do, especially with Vanessa as chair.

As I open my news feed, I and many SDSJ members see even more engineered campaigns and efforts targeted against the much-needed social equity and social justice initiatives across the world. We see it all manifesting in a lack of understanding as well as movements against principles of anti-racism, critical race theory, social equity and justice, and more. These latest developments remind me of promises SDSJ made last year. More specifically, from March 2020 onward in particular, we in SDSJ offered programming to address inequities and injustices concerning COVID-19, racism, and more.



Message from the Chair

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We offered numerous webinars, among them the Dismantling White Supremacy series ([see our YouTube channel here](#)), and numerous SDSJ members authored [a statement on racism and a JPAE editorial](#). In the webinars in particular, we noted [many themes](#), but two seem especially important: 1) the energy for social justice and social equity during 2020 appeared to be extensive than at other times in the past (prompting many to ask, «What is it about the present moment?»; and 2) we must all be wary of becoming complacent and, indeed, should ensure that progress made in equity and justice was not lost. In fact, in discussing these matters behind the scenes, several SDSJ members have noted in some form that this current backlash follows a well-known pattern. Progress is again in jeopardy.

As we see time and time again, due to numerous factors—especially institutional racism, discrimination, and prejudice at all levels (especially within and by institutions)—historically marginalized populations bear the brunt of issues like pandemics, global climate change, inequitable and unjust interactions with government(s), and so much more.

Let's think about this in terms of vaccine equity, to name a prominent example. For one, [the Kaiser Family Foundation notes that inequities persist in COVID-19 vaccinations](#) and that governments at all levels « have implemented a range of strategies to address these disparities by making the vaccines more accessible and providing outreach and education to address questions and concerns about the vaccines. These data highlight the continued importance of efforts to prioritize equity and address gaps in vaccination both geographically and across racial/ethnic groups. » What we see working to promote equity are plans like community vaccination centers and information and outreach campaigns that acknowledge, center, and value the lives, experiences, and needs of historically marginalized populations, [especially concerning fostering racial equity](#). We see several encouraging examples of big lessons from social equity and social justice working. We need to center such priorities, principles, and actions even more.

That is why we in SDSJ are going to continue a promise we laid out in our statement last year, especially to provide programming and materials to promote awareness of and action on social justice and equity. I would like to highlight four big elements.

First, with our friends in ASPA's Section on Public Administration Education (SPAЕ) and NASPAA's Diversity and Equity Committee, our series on social justice pedagogy is going well. We have held three events in the series, and you can view the recording of the first event, titled Student Perspectives Panel: Part 1 of a SDSJ-SPAЕ-NASPAA DEI Pedagogy Series, [here](#). We opted not to record Part 2. However, we are offering a two-part reflection on this

Message from the Chair

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second webinar in our ongoing PA Times series, and you can read Part 1 (with reflections from Lori Brainard and Vanessa Lopez-Littleton) [here](#). Part 2 (which will be released later this year) will feature reflections from fellow panelists Maria D'Agostino and Roseanne Mirabella.

SDSJ: What's happening now and what's coming soon!

- Social justice pedagogy series
 - SDSJ Elections upcoming!
 - SDSJ Section awards process coming soon
 - JSEPA launching soon
-

Second, it is almost time for this year's SDSJ elections! Three board members' terms will be ending. In addition to my own term ending, the terms of Brandi Blessett and RaJade Berry-James will be ending. Thanks to both of you for your service! As per our bylaws and election schedule, we will be holding elections for three positions, namely a secretary and two board members. If you are interested in helping out with the elections committee, please write to us at: democracysocialjusticeASPA@gmail.com. We will announce more details on the election at a later date.

Third, our section's awards process will soon get underway. Our awards include the Article of the Year Award, Book of the Year Award, and Dissertation of the Year Award. We also have been hoping to start a few other awards. Please check your email in the coming months for more on nominating yourself and/or someone else for these awards.

Fourth, as hopefully everyone reading this knows, SDSJ is in the process of launching a new peer reviewed journal, the Journal of Social Equity and Public Administration (JSEPA). In December 2020, SDSJ received unanimous approval from ASPA's National Council to proceed. I have to be a bit vague here, but we hope to have some major (and exciting!) announcements on JSEPA within the next few weeks. Special thanks go to the following Deans and their schools without whom JSEPA would not soon be a reality: John Bartle (School of Public Administration at the University of Nebraska Omaha); Laura Bloomberg (Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota); and Susan Gooden (L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs of Virginia Commonwealth University). In my final newsletter chair's letter at the end of this year, I will provide more details on next steps with JSEPA and will also give further details on the excellent work of numerous ASPA members, both inside and outside of SDSJ, during this process, especially the JSEPA administrative committee that is completing the process of selecting the inaugural editorial team. For now, I just have to keep quiet and smile. :-)

As always, if you have ideas for programming, and/or would like to write a piece for our newsletter or our PA Times series, and/or if you have any other ideas, please do not hesitate to write to us at: democracysocialjusticeASPA@gmail.com.

I want to give a major shout-out to Parisa Vinzant and Sara Kuehlhorn Friedman. Parisa has served as the section's Digital Engagement Coordinator

Message from the Chair

Continued

since early 2020. Her work has been so transformative that we on the Board had to create a new position just to encapsulate her amazing work! Sara is serving as co-editor of the section's newsletter, and Sara is doing outreach, design, communications, and more for the section, and doing all of it wonderfully! Thank you both so much.

We need diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and liberation more than ever.

Let's always remember to keep the work of everyone in governance focused on providing fairness to all, especially to, in the wonderful words of Susan Gooden, [to name, blame, and claim inequities and injustices](#).

Together, we can do this.



Attention Graduate and Doctoral Students!

2021 Social Justice Book Club

Sponsored by **ASPA's DSJ & UC's MPA SJ**

For graduate & doctoral students

Do you have a passion for learning about and/or advancing social justice? If yes, join our book club! Our next conversation is tentatively scheduled for early November 2021. Join now so you get the chance to give your ideas on what book to discuss!

Contact Victoria Bloechl to join our inaugural cohort by filling out the Google Form



Interested? Simply fill out [this form](#).

Member Spotlight

We're featuring the latest publications and celebrating achievements of our SDSJ members, so please be sure to share your news with us!

Share *your* news and achievements [at this link](#) anytime!

Seth J. Meyer, Assistant Professor, Bridgewater State University

SDSJ member Seth J. Meyer published an article co-authored with Elizabeth J. Dale and Kareem K.M. Willis. The article was published in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* and is titled 'Where My Gays At?' The Status of LGBTQ People and Queer Theory in Nonprofit Research.' The article critically examines academic scholarship in the field of nonprofit studies and provides a research agenda for how queer theory can be applied to the nonprofit sector. [Article linked here.](#)

Pooja Paswan, Assistant Professor, Jamia Millia Islamia University

SDSJ member Pooja Paswan has accepted the position of Associate Director (Academic) at Tillotoma Foundation, India.

Congratulations on work well done!



SDSJ Member Interview

Meet Dr. Prentiss Dantzler



1) What is your professional position?

I am currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto. I am also an affiliate faculty member of the School of Cities at the University of Toronto and the Urban Studies Institute at Georgia State University.

2) How long have you been a member of SDSJ?

I have been a member of SDSJ for 4 to 5 years now.

3) Why did you join SDSJ?

I typically go to ASPA every other year. As a housing and urban policy scholar, I rarely see a large contingency of people who engage in such research. However, since my work is largely focused on housing justice, SDSJ became a home for me to go beyond merely asking questions about why things happen to consider how we can change those same dynamics in a broader effort to push for social justice. Most importantly, I owe my membership to other colleagues who led me to SDSJ, specifically Brandi Blessett (University of Cincinnati), Tia Sherèe Gaynor (University of Cincinnati), and Ashley Nickels (Kent State University).

4) How did you first become interested in issues of democracy and/or social justice?

Issues of democracy became familiar at an early age. Whether it was participating in student council in elementary school or joining local community organizations, questions of democratic governance have always been formalized within the organizations and institutions of which I was a member. I would say I intimately became familiar with democracy through my work on housing policy and neighborhoods. It is here where I learned that every individual and family does not have the same *rights* to remake their

Meet Dr. Prentiss Dantzler, Continued

neighborhoods. Nor do people have access to the same institutions and resources or the ability to just exist within their own communities. While I tend to think about democracy as a governing structure, social justice serves as an ideal, an inherent goal to which we should all work. It is a way for us to imagine a drastically different way of living – one that is predicated upon fairness and equity for all, one that provides us all the agency to live out our full lives.

5) In your opinion, why is it important to promote democracy and/or social justice in public administration and public policy?

If we look at the historical roots of social inequality in all of its iterations, many of these issues have been created, facilitated and sanctioned by public organizations. Whether we are talking about the role of the government in promoting residential segregation to the ways in which nonprofit actors silence community members for their own institutional goals, these ideas are central if we want to disrupt our history of dispossession and exploitation. Public administrators have the ability to reshape the values of their organizations by promoting democracy and social justice across bureaucratic structures. This allows us all to think and address how administrations and policies differentially impact people and places.

Dr. Prentiss Dantzler and **Dr. Kathleen Yang-Clayton** joined SDSJ to kick off the *Dismantling White Supremacy* series in July 2020. Watch the video (and other videos in the series) [here!](#)

6) What is an issue involving social justice and/or democracy that you particularly care about?

My main focus right now is promoting racial justice within public administration and public policy. While social equity gets us to rethink how organizations and policies impact people and places differently, honing in on racial justice allows us to tease out the distinct tools, mechanisms, and processes by which we see and experience social inequality. SDSJ has been the space in which I find these conversations and debates to be more critical. However, I would like to see more intentional engagement with race, racism, and racialization processes across disciplines and public service actors and actions. I am currently working with Kathleen Yang-Clayton (University of Illinois – Chicago) to frame what this looks like in the context of public affairs education and practice.

7) What work have you done and/or are you currently doing involving democracy and/or social justice?

You can't understand American history without understanding housing policy. You can't understand power dynamics without understanding property ownership. And you can't "fix the system" without intentionally engaging discussions around race. My work has largely focused on how and why neighborhoods change and how policymakers and communities create and react to those changes. I mainly do work around policy design, implementation and evaluation to understand how different policies disproportionately affect already marginalized people and places. For example, my colleague Jason Rivera (SUNY Buffalo State) and I recently [published a paper looking at how policymakers construct opposing narratives of deservedness for different social groups](#) including veterans, farmers, and low-income communities of color. In this paper, we argue that the efficacy and efficiency of social welfare policies are typically based upon *who* they designed for and not their actual outcomes. This work fits into my larger push to illustrate how policies and practices have historically, and



Meet Dr. Prentiss Dantzler, Continued

contemporarily, exploited communities while also arguing for more equitable changes.

8) What would you most like fellow SDSJ members to know about you and your interests in democracy and/or social justice?

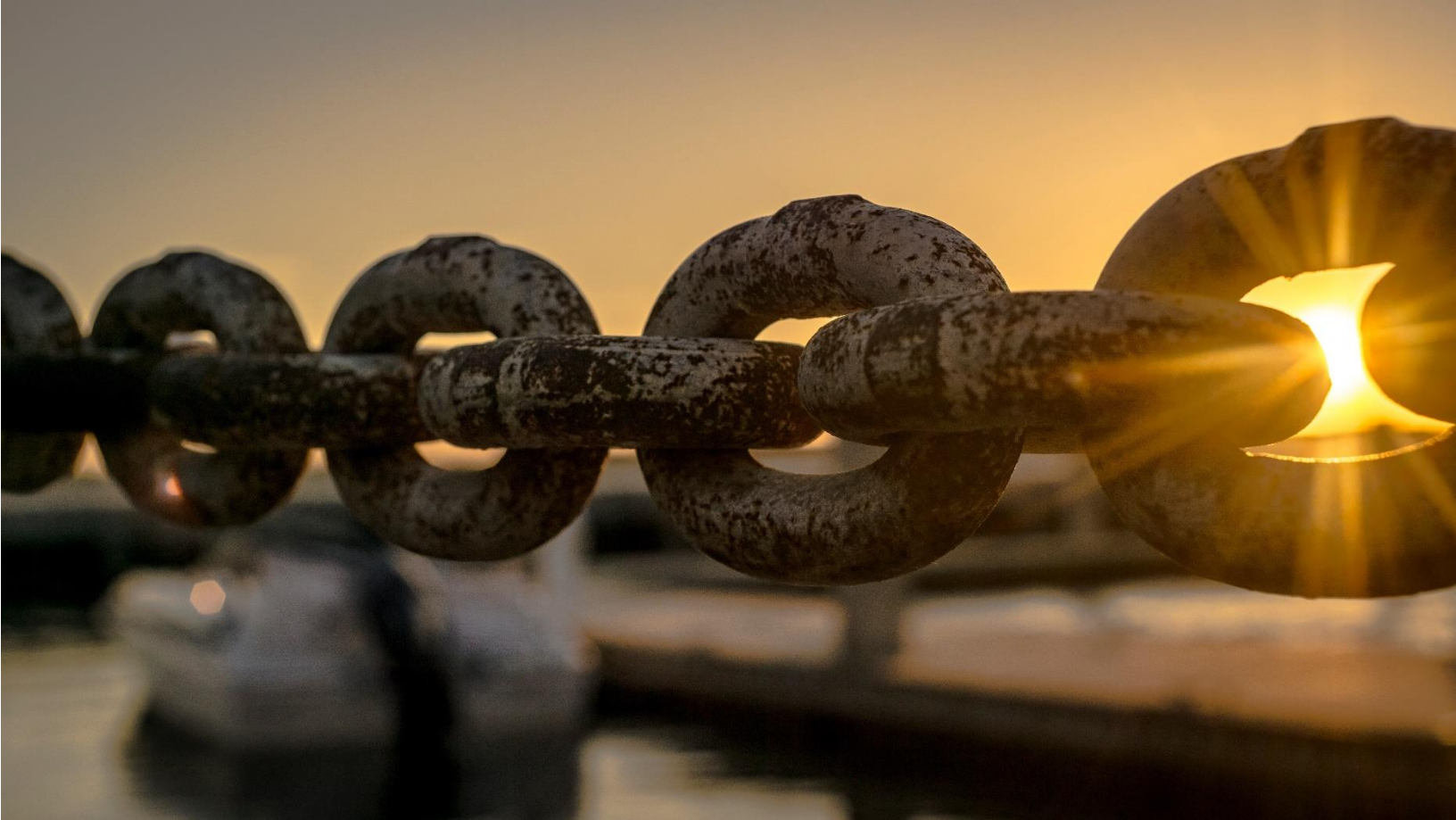
As an interdisciplinary scholar focused on policy, I have found myself engaging with several groups in order to push for change. This includes government officials, nonprofit actors, community organizations and members, as well as the most apparent group as a faculty member - students. By building coalitions across different frames of reference, I hope democracy and social justice are not treated just as consensual values but ideals which become realized through policies and practices. While it may be cliché to think about “changing the world” here, I would argue that change is incremental, iterative and relational. It builds upon the strides of the past, it is constantly in flux, and it forces us to think about how we are all connected.

9) What would you most like to see SDSJ do in the future?

This is not an issue just within SDSJ, but across academic spaces. I would like SDSJ to consider other voices in its efforts to promote democracy and social justice. This includes not just relying upon academics or administrators, but also the people we/they serve. For instance, what if the focus of an event was to examine how youth experience policies and practices? Instead of just relying on researchers and administrators who engage youth in their work, we should create the spaces for youth to co-produce with us. We should treat them as their own experts. And we should value their experiences as unique manifestations of their everyday lives. Justice forces us not just to think about who isn't at the table but how can we create and provide the structures for people to willingly participate in meaningful ways.

10) Is there anything else you'd like to share or amplify?

Years ago, my dear friend, Zachary Wood (Seattle University), and I discussed how we would not let institutional dynamics influence the work we want to do. As a faculty member, I quickly realized that the academy requires and values a certain level of productivity conditioning many scholars to only focus on the research, at least within their early years. As a first-generation college student from a single-parent household in a poor neighborhood (in addition to several other identities), I never saw myself in the academy. And while I am deeply grateful for the opportunity and the privilege to have worked at a number of institutions, I have stayed committed to promoting housing justice for all regardless of the space I occupy. I hope my fellow colleagues are advocating for their respective issues and communities. I hope we push for institutional structures that value and prioritize advocacy. And I hope we push each other to be more critical in our work so that we can co-create and produce an imaginary about a more democratic, just future.



Be Our Missing Link: Join the Digital Engagement Team!

ASPA's Section on Democracy and Social Justice

As the backlash grows against the teaching of and action on social/racial equity & justice, critical race theory, and anti-racism, we need you and your talents to join SDSJ's digital engagement team to create a real movement and momentum for a re-making of our governing and teaching bodies with the principles of racial/social equity & justice and ethics at the core.

Do you have a passion for social media, new programming ideas, interest in facilitating digital webinars and experiences, and more?! We are seeking students (MPA, MPP, MPH, doctoral, PhD), instructors & practitioners to join us in doing this necessary work!

Very flexible time commitment (e.g., 4 hours on a monthly or quarterly basis). You can join us in this work even if you're not a SDSJ member. Email Parisa at DemocracySocialJusticeASPA@gmail.com for more info! Thank you.

We have a lot on our minds:

- The COVID-19 pandemic continues
- Active campaigns against principles of anti-racism, critical race theory, social equity and justice threaten momentum gained in the past year
- The impact of climate disasters, including excessive heat, wildfires, and flooding, is growing more intense and more frequent
- And we each have a life to boot!

It can feel chaotic,
but from chaos can
come change!

Stay connected to SDSJ
See links at right!



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**SDSJ Social Justice
Bulletin Newsletter
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