

TO: Mary MacDonald, NASSS President
 And NASSS Board
 FROM: Racial & Ethnic Diversity and Climate Committee of NASSS,
 Laurel Davis-Delano, Chair
 DATE: May 13, 2005
 REGARDING: Comments on board's response to our report

We would like to thank the NASSS Board for their response to our report, and for already initiating some of our suggestions. Twice, I requested feedback from my committee to obtain comments from them about your response. Very few sent comments to me. Thus, the comments below reflect the views of 4 REDC members: Laurel Davis-Delano, Delia Douglas, Yuka Nakamura, and Fritz Polite.

COMMENTS:

Overall, we are pleased with the Board's response and plans.

We were especially pleased with several responses/plans, including: (a) commitment to hire a racial/ethnic diversity consultant (and the Board's comments on how to approach this strategy); (b) the comments and plans related to Short-Term Strategy #4; (c) the comments and plans related to Short-Term Strategy #5; (d) the plans for the NASSS Food Network (sponsored by REDC & NASSS Board); (e) the plans related to Short-Term Strategy #11; (f) the plans related to Short-Term Strategy #12; (g) the plans to identify and recruit members from Mexico; and (h) the comments and plans related to Long-Term Strategy #1.

Here are some more specific comments:

- (1) Hauro Nogawa should be spelled Haruo.
- (2) What is the racial/ethnic composition of NASSS? How about obtaining the answer to this question, so that we have some "base" information to start with?
- (3) Diversity Issues – We affirm the Board for recognizing components of diversity other than race/ethnicity, and the intersection of these other components of diversity with race/ethnicity. We also appreciate that the Board is willing to turn the spotlight on race at this time. At the same time, we want to make two points related to this discussion. First, white people have a race/ethnicity. So, we must mark and study whiteness as well as racial/ethnic minorities. Second, we need to take special care to avoid losing touch with the issue of exclusion/discrimination/power. Sometimes diversity talk/plans/etc. end up ignoring or downplaying inequality.
- (4) Hiring a Consultant (i.e., Short-Term Strategy #1) – We think this strategy is especially important given that NASSS only meets one time a year, rather than on a regular basis. Dialog with other similar (but more successful) organizations would be helpful here. (Note: One of your members wrote that "appointments of (usually one) high ranking official to oversee diversity" was "ineffectual." To the contrary, Laurel's research, published in "Journal of Applied Behavioral Science," shows that this approach IS often very effective, although the degree of effectiveness of this approach depends on who is hired in this position and whether this position has structural power.)
- (5) Diversity Workshops – One of our members thinks that all NASSS members should have the opportunity to be part of some official workshop. We should not assume that our leadership or members are well versed on all the issues.
- (6) An Open Forum to Discuss NASSS Issues (i.e., Short-Term Strategy #2) – The Board seems to be a bit confused. This (#2) strategy recommends a forum to discuss **NASSS itself - not scholarship** (which is covered in Short-Term Strategy #3). This is why this particular (#2) strategy mentions discussion of NASSS practices, structures, and networks, and the need for support. Discussion of the NASSS organization itself cannot be addressed (only) by (as you

put it) "incorporation into the new research network sessions" (since only some NASSS climate issues are related to research).

(7) NASSS Forums – Regarding the topic(s) for the forums, we could ask for submissions of themes, and if there are recurring theme(s) choose that one.

(8) Having Specific "Race" Sessions – We think that having sessions that **purposefully** center on race (as critical race theorists do) remains a good idea. This does not mean that other axes of difference will not be addressed. Centering race, as a theoretical and methodological tool, can be productive. When "race sessions" are organized, the session description can be explicit about how race interlocks with other forms of oppression, the session organizer can be vigilant about paper acceptance, and the session organizer/discussant can pose discussion questions that engage with other forms of oppression.

(9) New NASSS Members (Short-Term Strategy #7) – One of us likes the idea of reading the names of new NASSS members. But, two of us think that this is too impersonal. It would not take long for each new member to (introduce themselves) by stating her/his name and institutional affiliation (and perhaps, main area of study). Some of us like the idea of nametags listing years of membership, while others do not. One member said that the purpose of this strategy is to highlight the new members, not the old members. He also added that first impressions really matter.

(10) Suggestions About Sites for Future NASSS Conferences – One of us does not think that suburbs (or areas) outside the suggested cities is a good idea. Many of these suburbs/areas lack racial diversity, so this defeats the purpose of selecting these cities. Also, Fritz Polite said: "I have access to great rates at Disney. I need an estimate on attendance/room nights. Corrado Springs or Contemporary are both possibilities. HBCU/FAMU is close. Latin/Hispanic Chamber of Commerce others..."

(11) Idea for New Vice-President or Member-at-Large – Regarding this new position, Laurel recommends that the election materials for the position specify the diversity duties associated with the position. Why? It is important for NASSS voters to think about the abilities & commitment of the candidates to address these diversity tasks.

(12) #1 Listed Duty of Future REDC Committee – Sure, REDC could suggest topics for an annual race/ethnicity forum! Also, Laurel thinks it would be fine to tie the forum to the conference theme and/or race/ethnicity sessions at the conference. Another member suggests that the forum could be organized around methodology, a particular body of theory, or a particular theorist (e.g., Stuart Hall, bell hooks, Goldberg).

(13) Free Membership (discussed under "NASSS Constitution and By-Law Changes") – Almost everyone considers finances when deciding how many, and which, academic organizations to join. This suggestion is designed to provide an incentive for a new racial/ethnic minority scholar to "get a taste" of NASSS. Sometimes this would result in long-term membership. Isn't this the goal? We remain very committed to this idea of one free membership per year! One of REDC member said, "It would be odd, I think, to invite scholars to attend and not make the offer attractive, particularly since there are many potential conferences, all with their own fees." We recommend that the NASSS President/Board discuss this matter with us further if they still do not understand the importance of this strategy.

(14) SSJ Guidelines (Long-Term Strategy #2) – One of the REDC members wonders whether "race" is being used here to refer to People of Color rather than attending to how we should mark/study the race of all people (including whites).

(15) Harassment Policy – If someone has a concern/complaint about racial harassment/discrimination or discomfort about NASSS related events, who can they talk to?

(16) Obtaining Information about Climate – In addition to asking individuals who do not renew their membership (which we think is a good idea), why not ask all members about NASSS climate? Obtaining this information now, or in the near future (rather than waiting), might be helpful in hiring a consultant.

(17) Why not update the list of individuals and organizations to contact in a continual manner, rather than just once a year? Here are 2 additional names to add to the list of "individual racial/ethnic minority scholars who (are not members of NASSS but) study social aspects of sport and/or physical activity (and could be invited to join NASSS)."

- Martha Saavedra
- Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu, Dept. of History, Michigan State University