

Section on Marxist Sociology, American Sociological Association

Marxist Section Membership Has Dropped:

- LEFTIST VOICES NEEDED AT ASA!
- HELP INCREASE SECTION MEMBERSHIP TO AT LEAST 300!
- RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY.
- RECRUIT A COLLEAGUE OR STUDENT

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Left Forum: March 18-20th

Cornell West and Barbara Ehrenreich Highlight Opening Panel

The Left Forum (formerly the Socialist Scholars Conference) will hold its 30th annual meeting in New York City at Pace University, March 18th to 20th. This is one of the largest regular gatherings in the world of leftist activists, scholars, workers, students and artists. Over 3000 people from around the world are expected to attend this three-day event, run workshops, exchange

information, develop long-term and short-term political strategies, and present creative and dramatic works. This year the opening plenary speakers will include Barbara Ehrenreich, Cornell West, Paul Mason and Laura Flanders who will discuss: "Toward a Politics of Solidarity," the theme of the conference. Topics like globalization, human rights, poverty, the environment, race, class

conflict, organizing and feminism are all on the agenda. And the attendees constitute a virtual *Who's Who* on the left, including a large contingent from the Marxist Section of the ASA.

For more information about attending go to:
leftforum@leftforum.org

NAMES ARE IN FOR SECTION POSTS

The Nominations Committee has submitted to ASA names of our candidates for Chair, Secretary-Treasurer, and Council seats.

The following section members have agreed to seek the following positions.

Section Chair:

Art Jipson and Rod Bush;

Secretary-Treasurer:

Graham Cassano and Brett Clark.

Council nominees include:

Sal Babones, Wai Kit Choi, Sandra Comstock and Lauren Langman.

Read their statements on pages 2-3

The Nominees

Statements from the Nominees of Section Posts

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Section Chair



Art Jipson (Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of Criminal Justice Studies, University of Dayton):

As an ASA member, I would be honored to serve our community as the Marxist Sociology section as Chair where I can contribute to a vibrant partnership. My enthusiasm for the Marxist Sociology section is apparent when I discuss my energizing experiences at past roundtables, research sessions, and overall conference experiences with colleagues, students, and activists. The Marxist Sociology section is more than a mere gathering of academics presenting papers divorced from the “real world” – it is a community of committed public scholars/students/activists who come together with an interest in critically studying and ameliorating the problems in contemporary society, inequality, and capitalism. I am an Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the Criminal Justice Studies Program at the University of Dayton. My work focuses on the intersection of social change, perception of difference, deviance, and criminality and how these social constructions limit or create the possibility for social agency. I have studied organized crime in the Teamsters union, white collar crime and fraud, white racial extremists, hate crime, and Internet crime. I am also interested in roadside memorials and related public commemorations (which are designated as illegal in twenty-two states) and popular culture and the perception of crime and policing. Most recently I have started to work on criminological pedagogy and the use of social media by social activists. I am both humbled and honored to be nominated for the position of Chair. I would like to contribute to keeping the Marxist Sociology section innovative in action, research, and social theory by encouraging the exploration of social media, interactive activities at and away from the annual conference, and critical engagement with policy makers, community activists, and scholars and students.

Rod Bush (Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, St. John's University):

I don't really have a vision for the section except for my general sense that Marxist and progressive scholars need to be in dialogue with movements, which is not new. I was very active in the ASA for a while, till the big blow-up over the editorship of ASR. But I do feel something of an obligation to the Marxist section. When I came into the ASA as an academic in the early 1990s it was people in the Marxist section who took me under wing and schooled me on some of the realities of working in academia. But they were also in SREM, which is where I mainly worked during that period. So giving back is an important principle for me, even if the flesh is not so strong as it used to be. Much of my energy goes into mentoring students at St. John's, who are mostly working class students of color. I am very straight forward with my politics there, and they are mostly receptive. Since I am a board member of Left Forum, I have been working to represent the interests of the Black Left Unity Network there. A common central challenge is how to bring youth fully into the ranks of the movement. I do feel a little funny running against Art, so the organizational logic of needing two candidates is primary here for me. I don't know if I have much to offer the section in terms of who I am, though what I represent is important.

Statements from the Nominees of Section Posts

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Secretary-Treasurer

Graham Cassano (Assistant Professor of Sociology, Oakland University):

Graham Cassano is tired of American sociology. Since the waning days of 2007, American sociologists have bemoaned our economic conditions and promised, implicitly and explicitly, to turn their scientific energies to our long-term economic crisis and its solutions. In 2010, what I find instead is the vast majority of American sociologists turning away from anything like a public sociology and instead taking comfort in the specificity of their data sets, their formulae and their endless and tiresome deterministic predictions about our common destiny. I am a social theorist, but more than that, I am a public sociologist; and I think the time has come for sociology to become meaningful again as a method for framing the large problems of our postmodern age. The Marxist Section of the American Sociological Association can and should lead the way for a new American sociology. As a candidate for Secretary Treasurer, I hope to work with other energetic Marxist sociologists to expand our sections membership, its importance, and thereby help sustain the hope for a more public and relevant sociology than that offered by our mainstream colleagues. In the past I have been on the editorial board of *Rethinking Marxism*, the steering committee of the *Union for Radical Political Economy*, and I am currently the culture and media editor for *Critical Sociology*.

Brett Clark (Assistant Professor of Sociology, North Carolina State):

I am pleased to run for the secretary-treasure position for the Marxist Sociology section. I feel that this section serves a vital role within the ASA, studying many of the most pressing questions of our time. The section must remain vibrant and work to attract new scholars to carry forward this tradition. I will work to continue to build our connections to increase our membership and our connections to other sections.

Council Seats

Sal Babones (Senior Lecturer of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Sydney):

Salvatore Babones is a Marxist sociologist in the world-systems tradition. He lectures in sociology and social policy at The University of Sydney. His work has focused mostly on quantitative methods and the study of income inequality within and between countries. He is motivated to run for Council by a desire to serve the discipline.

Wai Kit Choi (Assistant Professor of Sociology, California State University, L.A.):

I will be very happy to serve in the ASA Marxist Sociology Section Council. Building on the achievements of previous Executives and Council Members, I will work to promote a better public understanding of the Marxist sociological analyses in my capacity as a Council Member.

Sandra Curtis Comstock (Warren Fellow Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University):

Dr. Comstock received her Ph.D. in Development Sociology from Cornell University in 2008. She has received several grants and fellowships for her work, including a Social Science Research Council Dissertation Research Fellowship and a Fulbright Dissertation Fellowship. Her areas of expertise are 20th century political economy and culture in Mexico and the United States and historical sociological methods and theory. She is currently working on a book manuscript entitled: *The Rise and Demise of an American Icon & Industry: Blue Jeans and American Clothing Politics across the 20th Century*. Based on her doctoral research, this book focuses on how U.S., Mexican, and East Asian clothing politics shaped one from the 1930s through the 1990s.

Lauren Langman (Professor of Sociology, Loyola University, Chicago):

I have a very long history w/Marxist sociology, having been on board, secretary, treasurer, newsletter editor and chair. I have held similar positions in the Alienation research committee of the International Sociological Association. When I was asked to return, I was honored. When I joined the section, the primary problem for many of us was the imperialist wars of the US and ant-colonial struggle. Today we are in many ways at a more serious juncture as US capitalism and in turn its hegemony is waning--as can be seen in such thing as the assertion of Arab peoples against American supported dictators, the rise of the BRICS etc. I think that Marxist sociology must be at the forefront of praxis based critique and the moral vantage point in a field that prides itself on "objectivity" and a "wertfrie" social research. I would like to not only encourage our basic agenda, but attract new cadres of sociologists to join with us in struggle.



Photograph taken by Judith Friedman

John Leggett receives the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Marx Section

Sam Friedman

John Leggett received the Lifetime Achievement Award for 2011 on January 8. I presented the award to him in behalf of the Section early because his health has been poor. I am pleased to be able to tell you all that his health has been improving, and that he had walked the block from his house to mine in the snow. He now hopes to attend the ASA meetings in Las Vegas.

John did not know why his daughter had asked him to drop by my house, so his surprise was complete. His smile upon achieving the award was a magnificent sight!

John has been a prolific and effective scholar, teacher, and activist for many decades. His research has resulted in important studies on key issues for Marxist sociology such as working class consciousness, the state, racism, and taking state power. He has also engaged in a wide range of practical studies such as of unemployment in the New Brunswick area and occupational health issues in Central New Jersey. These have been useful to a wide range of local radical activists.

I have observed the results of John's teaching through interacting with many of his students. In labor-related, antiwar and socialist projects in New Jersey over the last 36 years, I have encountered many activists who have been his students—and they knew a lot, had good activist skills, and in many cases said that John had been important to their understanding and ability to function in radical activism and analysis.

John has long been active in radical and socialist sociology meetings and activities. His contributions to efforts around the Radical Caucus, Insurgent Sociologist and other activities since have been dedicated and useful. He and I would often disagree about issues of action, organization, or analysis—but he always related to such disagreement in a respectful and useful way.

His contributions have been immense. It was far past time for him to receive this award.

Teaching Assistants' Association (TAA) from University of Wisconsin—Madison Playing a Role in Occupation of the Capital

In protest over Governor Scott Walker's proposal to drastically cut funding for higher education, over one hundred of members of the University of Wisconsin community descended on the state capitol to delivered thousands of valentines that read,

"We <3 UW : Governor Walker, Don't Break Our <3's"

Joining them were thousands of other protestors, taking issue with Walker's proposal to severely curtail public union's collective bargaining power.

Since that time, members of the TAA and others have been occupying the state Capitol.



Section in Need of Infusion!

Sad to report that the Marxist Section is in need of an infusion. As of this writing, we are ritically low on our membership count. If you haven't renewed, please do so immediately. And while you are at it, please ask your friends in ASA, your colleagues at work, and your students to become part of a renewed dedication to left principles and to support an important outlet of Marxist thought and scholarship.

Fortunately, an impressive array of candidates have stepped forward in an effort to help examine and address some of current challenges confronting us this year and in the years ahead. They are running for section office. Our ballot is indeed impressive this year, and I am grateful for those young scholars and activists who are willing to continue in our struggle for change.

Equally important, however, is the sense of continuity and history that the "old guard" and veterans of both past and current struggles share.

Isabel Araiza, an Associate Professor of Sociology at Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, has assumed the editorship of our section newsletter, which has a new look and will become a vital mechanism for reaching-out to our members. There is a note from her in this issue asking for your help. So please, do what you can.

Las Vegas will become the scene of a very important business meeting this year, and a number of amendments to our by-laws will be put forward in an effort to bring in new members. So please make an effort to be there. Having assumed the position of chair with no obligation to organize

panels this year (usually a perk of the post) it has given me an opportunity to survey the organizational landscape. I really think we should all be quite proud of what we bring to ASA. My sense is that with some modest structural changes we will not only meet the challenges ahead but also institute reforms that can bring renewed health to a critically important component of ASA. Those interested in working with me on some of these proposals are not merely welcome to join me, but urgently needed to make this effort successful. So please write to me with your ideas. We need to keep moving.

Avanti!!!

Roger
Roger Salerno, Chair
Marxist Section
Professor of Sociology,
Pace University
rsalerno@pace.edu



We need numbers so we can have a voice!

Please don't let our voice be silenced.

To renew your membership now, go to:

<https://www.e-noah.net/ASA/login.asp>

Walda Katz-Fishman Returns from 10th World Social Forum (WSF) in Dakar



WSF 2011, which took place in Dakar, Senegal from February 6th-11th, was a powerful and inspiring convergence of peoples, struggles, and social movements from below and across the globe. About 75,000 participants (estimates range from 60,000 to 100,000) gathered from all corners of Africa and the world.

The popular uprising that forced Mubarak out was happening during the social forum. When the Egyptian and Tunisian comrades spoke to the Social Movements Assembly to share their struggles and successes, the assembly was euphoric and broke out into songs and chants.

The *Declaration of the Social Movements Assembly* ends with these words:

Social movements of the world, let us advance towards a global unity to shatter the capitalist system! We shall prevail!

Marxist Section

From The Left

If It's News to You, It's News to Us!

Psi Chapter of AKD at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi

On, February 12th, Psi Chapter of AKD hosted the third biannual Coastal Bend Social Forum, "Civic Rights and Responsibilities." The community organization, The Center for Progressive Studies and Culture, sponsored the event. The forum had two key note speakers: Suzie Canales, a local environmental activist, founder of the Citizens for Environmental Justice, and attendee of White House's first forum on Environmental Justice and John Valadez, a documentarian whose work has aired nationally on PBS. The forum held concurrent sessions on twenty topics including Texas' state board of education's recent modifications to social science curriculum, immigration, being Muslim in post-9/11 U.S., environmental justice, labor rights, corporate personhood, reproductive rights, prison reform, the death penalty, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and building the Left. Nearly 150 people (students, faculty, and community members) were in attendance.

Associate Professor of Sociology, Isabel Araiza, chaired planning committee, working closely with professors from Del Mar College and community activists.

The committee is currently seeking guidance regarding how to publicize such an event. We have virtually no budget, and local media did not respond to news releases. Any advice would be greatly appreciated (Isabel.araiza@tamucc.edu)

We'd like to dedicate the back page of our newsletter to section members' activities. If you are doing something interesting at your school or in your community, share that information with the rest of us!

All announcements are welcome!

Send your news to Isabel Araiza at Isabel.araiza@tamucc.edu

MARXIST SECTION
OF THE
AMERICAN
SOCIOLOGICAL
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