

**Society for Socialist Studies**

**General Assembly Membership Meeting**

**June 4, 2021 – by Zoom**

**2-3:30 pm Mountain Time**

**(1-2:30 pm Pacific; 3-4:30 pm Central; 4-5:30 pm Eastern; 5-6:30 pm Atlantic; 6-7:30 Newfoundland)**

**Draft Agenda**

1. Presidential Welcome (Radhika Desai, President)
  - a. Welcomed; second year of irregular meeting
2. Approval of Agenda (Jamie Lawson, Secretary) (approved)
3. Call to order and Technical Orientation (Megan Aiken, Membership Secretary)
  - a.
4. Errol Sharpe Book Prize announcement (Meg Luxton, Chair, Book Prize Committee)
  - a. *This year's winner (2019) Julie Guard, for Radical Housewives Price Wars and Food Politics in Mid-Twentieth Century Canada* (Toronto, ON: UT Press, 2019)
  - b. Julie Guard spoke in thanks for this honour, especially since it is named for Errol Sharpe, and summarized her work's findings. Women organizing over food prices was not just about lower prices, but also to change the world
5. In memoriam: Jesse Vorst (Julie Guard), Mel Watkins (Ken Collier), Aziz Choudry, the 215 children of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc
6. Approval of the Draft General Assembly Minutes, 2020 (Jamie Lawson, Secretary) (approved)
  - a. Note: CEO of Federation, not just of the Congress – Gabriel
7. Executive Reports
  - a. President's Report (Radhika Desai – see attached text)

Questions:

Frank spoke in favour of continued emphasis on the link to the Federation's Congress. That the current situation has come to the point it has is terrible and self-inflicted. Voice is the way to go with Congress, not exit – it is the only time when scholars all over the country come together; its existence is threatened by pull outs, and it is invaluable to Socialist Studies. When we got accredited, it opened doors, added credibility. We need to pressure it to get its act together; but also to defend and support the organization. The Federation has two distinct organizations – disciplinary; interdisciplinary/specialty/cause-based. By pulling out, organizations often leave their left wing behind.

- b. Treasurer's Report and Budget (Cheryl Hewitt – see report and proposed budget at <https://socialiststudies.ca/2021-sss-meetings/>)

**Cheryl moves financial statements approval/passed**

**Cheryl moves budget approval/passed**

c. Programme Chair Report (Radhika reported for Elaine Coburn)

Elaine cannot be programme chair for next year; programme committee volunteers (Spencer Rochie; Megan Aiken; Ian Liuja Tian)

Comments:

Cheryl happy to help generate Congress budget

Jamie L. notes that programme committee will meet and form with support from committee to find programme chair; lacking local rep, not known where the next Congress will be.

d. Journal Report (Sandra Rein – see “2021 Annual Report” at <https://socialiststudies.ca/2021-sss-meetings/>)

e. Membership Committee (Megan Aiken – see “Membership Secretary Report” at <https://socialiststudies.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Membership-Secretary-Report.pdf>)

Bill asked about Eventbrite ticket – do we need Eventbrite interface?

Also, with affiliates and chapters, we should ask ourselves how they connect in; perhaps create a council to discuss together

Megan answered she is getting used to MMS; needs to be in touch with Federation about ticketing through it; if we started to charge for events, Eventbrite would take 50%

On formalizing chapters and affiliates – this is key to SSS broadening beyond academic alone

Radhika suggested a target of 15-20 affiliates to achieve a critical mass, drawing others to join.

Programming ideas: filling a gap in the Canadian left; Frank’s suggestions include a direct link on the webpage to the affiliate form.

Megan is interested in building a membership committee: email in chat if you are interested

Radhika: Thanks to Megan

## 8. Review and Discussion of Relationship with Congress (Radhika Desai, Elaine Coburn, Jamie Magnusson)

The year 2021 marks the second year when pandemic and anti-racist, decolonizing politics have led to a cancellation of our normal conference with Congress. Radhika, Elaine, and Jamie reviewed the course of events that led to cancellation under Congress and the turn to alternate online programming.

*Jamie Magnusson:* This is initially a Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA) matter

Some horrible relations erupted between BCSA and Congress this year  
There had been underlying tension for some time before  
During conference planning, BCSA pulled out of Congress; continued meetings had failed to resolve matters; left-leaning societies followed suit  
We are not good at this so far; several other organizations decided to pull-out  
Elaine Coburn undertook a long conversation, and consulted extensively with executive.  
Consensus: solidarity important - what would happen if we did meet at Congress if Black Canadian scholars and their allies pulled out? It would put us and key participants in a terrible position. It would have implications for the socialist futures we would be pursuing  
Executive supported Elaine's proposal; it hit us financially, but it will build relationships: we withdrew from Congress this year

The background: During Vancouver/UBC Congress 2019, a graduate student was invited to BCSA; showed up at Congress; arrested on false accusation of stealing a laptop. BCSA made demands of Congress and reparations; asked for core theme of Anti-Black racism and colonialism at a future Congress.

That Congress was to happen at Western in 2020; but most cancelled because of the pandemic  
One would have thought the theme would carry over to Edmonton 2021.  
But Congress rejected this: Edmonton hosts had negotiated locally to focus on North instead.  
BCSA frustration leads to pull-out without recommendation to others.

Several associations pulled out in solidarity, including Sexual Studies  
Jamie M. was a coordinator that year, and a beautiful conference was shaping up  
Necessary to think about creating exciting spaces for exciting scholarship

### *Errol Sharpe*

Society did the right thing; what do we do next?  
Continuing activities all the ways through  
Discussion of making our theme about Congress: could we organize a counter-Congress on that basis? BCSA; Fernwood also withdrew.  
We could hold online sessions deal with some of these issues; involve scholars and activists not in academe.  
Key for us to learn from activists, do follow-up, perhaps in themed sessions.  
Perhaps Errol could help convene these.  
In July, plans for an International Manifesto group – Black American, Indigenous solidarities with Palestine cause. Suzanne Weiss suggested this.

*Cheryl Hewitt:* We might see this not so much about Congress but about Anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism. A continued relationship with the Federation has advantages. Congress is a highlight for my year; important that we are not alone in the struggles.  
Our job is to do internal work; and also to decide about requests in meetings with Congress – we need to return to Congress, but also to express what we want in solidarity with BCSA.  
Discussion with the other societies also.

*Bill Carroll:* we have a presence as a watering hole for left at Congress.  
Report from Federation – Miriam Smith: there is basis for pressure from within Congress.  
Including this in the Conference theme could be a route forward.

*Ian Tian:* let Black Canadian Studies lead us. The Sexuality Studies Association has had similar discussions. One strategy would be to use withdrawal to hold them to account. It will be important to look at follow-through on the Smith report to the Federation on the issues raised over the confrontation.  
Another way to do this: a counter-Congress with smaller associations. This would need a lot of organizing, and more discussion.

*Radhika Desai* recommends a committee on this matter; to organize events

*Errol Sharpe:* It is not for us who are white to lead. The system has ways to cover it up.

*Radhika Desai:* She is a little more optimistic; more support can help in undermining elites.  
Going forward: we could hold a September event on this matter, perhaps reach out to BCSA  
Please send suggestions.

*Toby:* is building up a journal at Carleton – *Nikoko Journal of African Studies*  
Call for papers: militarization on African continent; hopes journal will open this academic year.  
Could Nikoko do a panel or two at Socialist Studies? African Marxism, Marxists at present.  
Undergraduate students thirst for this material  
These scholars are among the least likely to get to a conference in Canada: critically minded Black Canadians and African scholars.  
Nikoko adopts a progressive Pan-Africanist positionality: see Carleton webpage  
Would be happy to participate to make the event happen.

9. Election of Society Secretary (Radhika Desai)
  - a. **James (Jamie) Lawson** has presented his name for re-election to the position.
  - b. Nominations from the floor for the role of secretary
  - c. **Acclaimed**
10. Adjournment 3:32 pm
11. Notions and Noshes (an unstructured post-meeting chat on Zoom)