2021 Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Award Winners Announced

Jesse Kolber is the 2021 Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Award Recipient

Jessica Yorks is the 2021 Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Honorable Mention Awardee

The Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Award was established in 2005 to support first generation college students who began their academic careers in a community college, have faced significant obstacles, are committed to teaching, and mentoring other less privileged students, and exemplify Beth’s commitment to professional service and social justice work through activism. Beth B. Hess was a President of SWS and one of our mentoring award winners; she was also the President of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) and Secretary Treasurer of the American Sociological Association (ASA). These organizations join SWS in supporting the Beth B. Hess Scholar each year. Advanced graduate students in sociology at the dissertation writing stage are invited to apply. In 2021, the subcommittee (Sarah Bruch, Chair; Toni Calasanti, Myra Marx Ferree, Gul Marshall, Elizabeth Seton Mignacca, and Nancy Naples) faced the challenge of selecting the winner. When there is more than one exceptionally strong candidate, an Honorable Mention Awardee is also selected.

The scholarship carries a stipend of $18,000 from SWS with travel assistance, $500 from SWS and $300 from SSSP, to be used to support future academic meeting travel, as well as one-year memberships in SWS and SSSP. SSSP will celebrate the awardee at their Annual Meeting. Recognizing Beth B. Hess’s significant contributions to the ASA, ASA joins SWS and SSSP in supporting and celebrating the awardee. ASA provides an annual membership, complimentary meeting registration and a $500 travel award to off-set the cost of the next in-person ASA Annual Meeting.
The subcommittee is thrilled to announce that the 2021 Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Award winner is Jesse Kolber. Jesse is a doctoral student advanced to candidacy at the University of California, Davis. Jesse is a transgender researcher who studies identity, perception, categorization, and boundaries. He found purpose and a path to his desired future through three years in community college before transferring to San Francisco State University where he earned his B.A. with honors in Psychology. Jesse’s graduate education was first in sexuality studies at San Francisco State University; then for his doctorate, he chose sociology at the University of California, Davis. In his application letter, Jesse explained the disciplinary transition as follows: “My shift from psychology to sexuality studies to sociology was a necessary trajectory, as my studies in identity, prejudice, and discrimination ultimately led me to inquire about large-scale social processes and structures.” Having collected and transcribed 75 in-depth interviews, Jesse is currently at the writing stage of his dissertation. His research focuses on the “construction and policing of gender categories and statuses in everyday interaction.” Building on the doing gender literature, it explores “social boundary-making between transgender and cisgender individuals” to find out the “underlying mechanisms of what it is to ‘know’ gender.”

In line with his research, Jesse is committed to teaching and social justice activism and has taught and mentored students at a community college. Jesse describes “engaging racial-, gender-, sexuality-based inequalities” through teaching and supporting community college students as one of his career goals. His trans and non-binary advocacy has made an impact at the City College of San Francisco, a community college, where he continues to teach. Jesse has received awards from Harvey Milk Democratic Club and the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

The subcommittee strongly believes that Jesse’s research, activism, teaching, and mentoring capture what the Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship stands for. We are pleased to give this
award to Jesse and look forward to his continuing commitment to social justice and dedication to making an impact with his work within and outside of the academy.

The selection committee recognizes Jessica Yorks with the 2021 Honorable Mention. Jessica’s early life experience was shaped by growing up in Appalachia with a single mom facing significant economic hardship and in a place scholars refer to as an “educational desert” -- a geographic area with no institutions of higher education within sixty miles. A first-generation student, Jessica earned her A.A. Degree while working full time and driving an hour each way back and forth to Harrisburg Area Community College. The experience provided a difficult, but necessary, foundation for her to transfer to Millersville University in Pennsylvania. There, Jessica found a “refuge” in sociology that also helped her to “connect my experiences to larger forces in a meaningful way.” Her writing engages the gender dimensions of social mobility and aspirations for financial stability in a time of extreme precarity. Her connection to her family remains strong and losing her grandmother to COVID this year has meant both a loss of emotional encouragement and a need for her economic contributions to handle funeral costs. Jessica is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Connecticut completing a dissertation that takes a life history approach to examine the transition to adulthood and the pursuit of economic stability for other residents of education deserts. She has completed her interviews and her advisor expects her to complete her writing in the coming year. Independently, she has already taught 13 courses, consistently winning awards for her exceptional teaching. She not only mentors first-gen students directly but blogs on the issues facing those who want education but are far removed from the means of accessing it. Her significant scholarship, teaching, service, and mentorship demonstrate a commitment to social justice and represent the “pay-it-forward” spirit of the Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Award.
SWS will honor Jesse Kolber and Jessica Yorks and all our 2021 Summer Award recipients via a Virtual Awards Presentation. Our Awards Reception is scheduled to take place on Friday, July 9, 2021 between 6:00 pm EDT - 8:30 pm EDT and more information will be shared via the SWS Virtual Meeting Platform.

We will also have a separate celebration on **Thursday, June 24 from 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm EDT** where we will specifically celebrate with Jesse and Jessica, their advisors, friends, family, colleagues, and past Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship awardees.

The [Zoom Link](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0pduygqTMqHdc3A9YLo35fn3ZAnIqbWtom) to register for the June 24 event follows:

SSSP will honor Jesse Kolber and Jessica Yorks at the upcoming SSSP Virtual Annual Meeting. The Virtual Awards Ceremony is scheduled for **August 5 from 4:45 pm – 6:00 pm EDT**. Details will be shared with those who register for the 2021 SSSP Virtual Annual Meeting.

If you are interested in making a gift to support the Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship, please contact Barret Katuna, Executive Officer, at swseo.barretkatuna@outlook.com, or make a gift via [this form](https://sws.memberclicks.net/donation-form).