Nominees for SDS Board of Directors Election, May 2017

**2017 SDS Board election: voting is open**

It’s time for annual elections to the SDS Board of Directors! Three positions will be elected for terms that begin in July 2017. We have eight wonderful nominees for positions on the Board. Your participation in the voting process is vital.

**Instructions:**

* Current members of SDS are eligible to vote.
* Review the statements of individual candidates by [NEED INSTRUCTIONS for the platform we’re using – or link to the statements on our website?]
* Please vote for **three** candidates. The minimum number of candidates you may vote for is one.
* Please bear in mind that SDS has great need at this time for Board members who have fundraising and development experience, strong leadership qualifications or experiences, and creative ideas for the future of SDS.
* Each candidate’s email address is provided. You are encouraged to use the SDS listserv for further discussion of our shared future as an organization.
* Voting will close on **June 2, 2017**.

# Nominees

# Mark Bookman

## Email:

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## Statement:

From the time of my birth, I have moved through a continuum of temporary (dis)ability due to a hereditary neuromuscular condition. By traveling to such diverse locales as London and Tokyo, I tempered my understanding of bodies and borders across the globe. Each time I returned to a familiar space with a different body, I recognized with increasing clarity the individual, social, and cultural aspects of disablement. This was certainly the case when I encountered physical and psychological barriers previously unknown to me during my third visit to Japan. As the country’s first “disabled” Fulbright scholar, I ran into walls (sometimes literally) and began to think of disability less as a medical problem and more as a prism through which to explore various imaginations of the profound and the profane. I took it upon myself to uncover the discursive origins of disability in East Asia by exploring the intersection of religious, legal, and popular identities.

To further my research, I enrolled shortly thereafter in the interdisciplinary PhD program in East Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania. Since joining Penn two years ago, I have not only pursued coursework related to disability, public health, gender, religion, and law but also presented ten papers concerned with processes of disablement in East Asia. These presentations have afforded me numerous opportunities to transcend the boundaries of academia and pursue activism by other means. At times, their political import has been readily apparent. For instance, when I spoke to the United States Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) alongside then Special Advisor to the President on International Disability Rights Judy Heumann. At other times, their political import has been more subtle. Such was the case when I organized the first panel to explicitly address the topic of disability in Japan at the Association for Asian Studies Conference in 2017. These efforts, building off of prior research projects conducted at Villanova University and Franklin and Marshall College, collectively illustrate the ethos of accessibility and drive for community formation which sit at the heart of my outreach activities.

As of late, I have become heavily involved in organizing conferences concerned with topics related to disability and coordinating fundraising efforts for such events. While my role in putting together “Disability Studies: A History of the Field” this past April is indicative of the former, the myriad successful grant applications I wrote for “Structure and Subordination: Law, Science, and Religion in East Asia” are illustrative of the latter. By joining the Board of Directors for the Society of Disability Studies, I hope to expand my current endeavors and bring a broader audience into communication about the nature and meaning of disability in both local and global contexts. As I share my knowledge and expertise regarding the experience of disability abroad, I intend to foster insightful dialogues that will showcase the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary resources that Society for Disability Studies has to offer. Above all, I will endeavor to redefine SDS as a wellspring of knowledge.

# Elizabeth Lewis

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## Statement:

I am an anthropologist specializing in disability in the United States, and I have benefitted throughout my academic career from the resources and knowledge of the Society for Disability Studies community. I received my PhD from the University of Texas at Austin this spring. My dissertation analyzed the shifting terrain of undiagnosed and rare disabilities in the contemporary U.S., and drew on cultural and medical anthropology, disability studies, science and technology studies, and history. It built, too, on my personal experiences with a sister who has a rare genetic syndrome and is deafblind. In March, I took on a new role managing an innovative project on health and disability at the Texas Center for Disability Studies. This position merges my commitment to social justice and health equity with my training in applied anthropology and disability studies. I am very proud to have published an article last year in *Disability Studies Quarterly*, and I write regularly on disability themes for a variety of online venues.

I have held multiple leadership roles in disability initiatives in both academic and applied settings. I served for two years on the Steering Committee of the Society for Medical Anthropology’s Disability Research Interest Group (DRIG), which is the primary organization for U.S.-based anthropologists specializing in disability. In that role, I developed and launched an annual award for emerging disability anthropology scholars. Previously, I was a member of the Disability Accessibility Working Group, which sought to identify gaps in accessibility within the American Anthropological Association. I am in my third year on the Board of Directors for Texas Parent to Parent, the largest family-led disability advocacy organization in Texas, and have been active in their fundraising efforts. I have assisted with multiple online giving campaigns for this nonprofit, as well as planning its annual fundraiser.

In addition to my leadership and fundraising background, I honed my digital media and marketing skills during my two-year position as the Digital Communications Manager of the Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA). I developed and implemented a comprehensive social media plan for the Society, which included redesigning and managing all aspects of its quarterly newsletter. I also tripled the SMA’s Facebook presence and expanded its Twitter network continuously over two years, increasing the possible number of people reached via Twitter to nearly 23,000 by the end of my term. As a Board member of the Society for Disability Studies, I would be eager to use these skills to build the organization’s online presence in general and to assist with any fundraising initiatives.

I am deeply committed to producing disability studies scholarship that is of both theoretical and applied significance. I am also an outspoken advocate of scholarship that is publicly accessible and can reach multiple audiences. As a Board member, I would combine this vision with my experience in digital media and fundraising to build community within the Society and also expand its reach.

# Ray Parker

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## Statement:

I believe that it is a crucial time for SDS to work together with corporations and other nonprofits to promote change and education to the world. If elected to the board, I will help to facilitate this action. As an individual with a disability, I have held many leadership positions and been involved with many activities within the disability community.

I have been involved with the United States Business Leaders Network (USBLN) for two years. During my time at the USBLN, I was part of the Career Link Mentoring Program (mentorship program for students with disabilities) and am currently on the Student Advisory Council (SAC) as a vice chair. The Student Advisory Council assists the Board of Directors with various disability employment projects, incorporating strategy programs and advising important decision from a student’s point of view. As the position of vice chair, my responsibility is to lead projects with various members of the student board and to coordinate efforts with the Corporate Advisory Board (CAB). I sit on the board of Disability Rights Washington as well.

NextBillion.org is a startup that is focused on providing resources to individuals with disabilities. Being the fifth employee, I have helped to curate partnerships with many different organizations, including Uber, Yelp, Diversability, and many more. Leading all the partnerships has allowed me to interact and network with many different individuals within the diversity and disability area. In addition to NextBillion.org, I am a mentor for the AccessSTEM and the DO-IT program through University of Washington. I am also affiliated as a Fellow of Lime Connect and I do a lot of community service on my university campus with a co-ed community service fraternity. I have been involved with many fundraising efforts during my time at NextBillion.org as a startup seeking funding, as well as a venture capitalist analyst at RainmakeMe. For a year now, I’ve been working as venture capital and asset management company called RainmakeMe, where I’ve developed more than five high-end investments that incorporated client requests, user needs, and team capabilities with deadline and budget demands. Balancing so many needs was often challenging, and I learned how to find the solution that satisfied the maximum number of stakeholders that invested. In junction with my past management consulting internship at Booz Allen Hamilton, I believe I have the capacity to add value to SDS. I have also worked on projects where I have written grants to acquire $30k+ in funding.

I believe my experience with the USBLN and Disability Rights Washington will help me to become an invaluable asset for the Society of Disability Studies by providing strategic goal planning, vision, and ability to communicate with other organizations with similar interests as the SDS. We will be able to partner with corporations that have interests in disability studies and impact reports. With my positions and familiarity with other disability advocacy organizations, I will be able to help guide SDS into the future with a new direction.

# Ryan C. Parrey

## Email:

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## Statement:

I am writing to join the SDS board of directors. I have a PhD in Disability Studies from the University of Illinois at Chicago and teach Disability Studies at Eastern Washington University where I helped develop the DS minor. Since joining SDS in 2006, I have organized academic and professional-development panels, co-founded the student mentoring program and was the 2015 SDS affiliate scholar. Currently, I am helping coordinate the “SDS strand” at the Canadian Disability Studies Conference in May.

As an extension of the student mentoring program I co-founded, I would continue to focus on coalition building. First, I would set up a network for members participating in other organizations. This network would serve as an information and strategy resource as well as a space for collective organization as we work together to build the future of disability studies. Second, I would create a space for members who have experience with academic program development to communicate about their successes and challenges. Rather than just another listserv, this network would operate like a working-group. For example, the process of developing the DS minor at Eastern was difficult due to the usual administrative hurdles but also because we had to demonstrate need and profitability. This academic/activist network would remove having to re-invent the wheel. Second, I would initiate a network of disability-caucus members to give disability studies a collective voice within other organizations. Here, members of NWSA and ASA, for example, could share strategies for organizing events, workshops, or panels to learn from one another’s accomplishments. In effect, these networks would serve as spaces of formal, and informal, strategic planning.

Building on the success of the 2016 end-of-year “membership drive”, I would work with other board members to organize quarterly fund-raising opportunities. For instance, an annual virtual silent auction could be used for debt relief. Also, I would like to work with authors and publishers who previously offered discount rates at SDS to hold a virtual book fair where a portion of the proceeds would go to SDS. These efforts would not only promote the financial stability of SDS but also help replicate its sense of community.

# Holly Pearson

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## Statement:

My name is Holly Pearson, and I recently completed my doctorate work in Education with an emphasis in DS at Chapman University. Since stumbling upon the field in 2008, I continue to weave in disability studies and my own experiences with hearing loss in writing, teaching, and research. Attending the 2015 SDS conference solidified my interest in being involved with the organization due to its interdisciplinary and accessible orientation. While SDS does a beautiful job in its efforts in ensuring accessibility for a wide array of disabilities, what I mean by accessible is how SDS structures space(s) where individuals from all walks of life (e.g., minorities, scholars, artists, and/or activists) have the opportunity to engage with one another. As a potential team member, this is the aspect of SDS I greatly appreciate and wish to continue to uphold.

In the past several years, I have collaborated with different teams in hosting workshops (e.g., Nvivo workshop and Foucault workshop), events (e.g., Visual Methodology and Social Justice Symposium), fundraising (e.g., Silent Auction), representing students’ voices (e.g., CES PhD Representative and Co-chair of the Physical Space Task Force), and social events (e.g., Fall and Spring Picnic). As a result, one of my assets that I have to offer to SDS is my event and organizational skills in structuring a broad array of opportunities for the members as I am heavily invested in the current and future members of SDS. While it is vital to ensure that the field of DS continues to retain its interdisciplinary nature, there is also a need to consider what the current and future members need to partake in ensuring that the field does not stagnate. This could include conference collaboration between DS and DSE, and workshops (e.g., navigating the job market with a DS background, introduction to alterative non-academic routes, or writing/collaborative groups). Currently, at the DSE 2017 Conference, a colleague and I are structuring a space for discussion about the current job market, and how to navigate future opportunities whether one is currently a graduate student, postdoc, tenured faculty, staff, and etc.

# Joel Michael Reynolds

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## Statement:

At the behest of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson upon taking a course in Critical Disability Studies at Emory University, I submitted a paper to and attended my first SDS in 2014. It was, in short, a life-changing experience. I there found what I now consider my “home” community—a remarkable group of scholars, activists, and artists who share a passion for learning about and effecting social change for people with disabilities. Insofar as “disability is everywhere, once you know how to look for it,” I am now an active proselytizer, telling *everyone* who will listen that they should attend and be a part of SDS. Disability studies is today a core part of everything that I do, from my upcoming research at The Hastings Center to my 2014 Tedx Talk about my brother to my administrative work and dissertation project while at Emory University. I would be overjoyed to be a part of SDS’s Board of Directors, helping especially to avoid the insolvency issues that arose in 2015 and instead find avenues that make the organization fully sustainable (however it might be reimagined) long into the future. I believe my specific background and experiences would be of assistance in this endeavor.

For example, from June 2014 to August 2015, I acted as the program coordinator for the Emory Disability Studies Initiative, whose co-directors were Rosemarie Garland-Thomson and Benjamin Reiss. This position came along with being named the Laney Graduate School’s first Disability Studies Fellow. In this role, I became head of both budget management and revenue acquisition through co-sponsorships and executive funds; lead administration for all DSI activity, including planning, organization, and execution of logistics for events; and chief of communications and developer of all marketing and publicity, including social media. At the end of my term, the program had grown considerably across the Emory College, Laney Graduate School, School of Medicine, and greater Atlanta metro area, including building a strong social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. Along the way, the DSI also provided a model of best accessibility practices (from the use of CART to live-Tweeting) for other programs at Emory.

Based upon my past administrative work (and work in sales and finance in the private sector between 2009-2011), I imagine a future in which a combination of private and public sector revenue streams would allow SDS to maintain solvency, ideally with (liquid) cash on reserve. This may mean changing the non-profit status of SDS, and it may mean rethinking the single, yearly, large conference model that has been used in the past. I am excited at the prospect of working with the current board to brainstorm a future in which SDS can continue both sustainably and also innovatively (perhaps having regional conferences, instead of or in addition to a national one; perhaps forging greater international connections; etc.) I find SDS to be an invaluable asset to multiple disability communities, and I would be honored to assist in building and sustaining its presence in any and every way possible.

# Someshwar Sati

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## Statement:

My acquaintance with Society for Disability Studies (SDS) is peripheral, mainly through its intellectually stimulating journal *Disability Studies Quarterly* and through friends in academia who have been associated with this esteemed scholarly organization. From them I have come to know about the invaluable contribution that SDS makes to promoting disability studies across the globe and it would be my proud privilege to be associated with this academic movement and make a sustained and substantive contribution to the cause.

In the coming years, I see SDS becoming a truly global organization with various national/regional chapters, committed to encouraging academic research and the wide dissemination of knowledge on disability throughout the world. In the realization of this vision, I can play an important role in helping the association strike deep roots in Indian academia, particularly in the Departments of Humanities across the country. My experience in organizing conferences and workshops on disability related issues would come in handy in achieving the said goal. In September of 2016 I organized a workshop titled ‘Translating Disability Across Culture: A Translation of Indian Disability Short Studies’ in collaboration with the International Association for Translation and Inter-Cultural Studies (IATIS) and Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Advanced Studies (JNIAS) sponsored by Routledge. Earlier, I had co-convened a workshop titled ‘After Employment What: Challenges faced, Negotiations made and policies required for Differently Abled Teachers in Institutions of Higher Learning’in association with the Equal Opportunity Cell of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Both these events gave me ample experience of fund raising for academic events.

Invitations to speak at two conferences in different cities in India in 2017 have made me realize that disability studies in the Humanities is here to stay. Two conferences were organized between January and March by scholars who had attended my workshop in September 2016. One look at the titles of these subsequent conferences shows that a great amount of work remains to be done on disability and translation considering that India is home to at least 122 major languages and over a thousand other languages. The conferences were titled and ‘The Role of Translation in a Multi-Lingual Democracy’, in Osmania University, Hyderabad. Being a board member of SDS would give me the opportunity to bring Indian disability studies scholarship to the international context so that disability studies may become informed by research and scholarship that is in praxis in different non-Western contexts.

At Delhi University, I have served as an anti-discrimination officer in one of its undergraduate colleges. This as well as my tenure as a convener of the Enabling Unit of Kirorimal College have helped me learn of the concerns that higher education in India faces as it attempts to accommodate and accept disabled students and teachers like me. Enabling Indian academia to think about disability and related issues through the promotion of disability studies across the Indian academic context is a task I am committed to dearly. I strongly believe that I would be able to contribute to SDS in making disability studies sustainably transnational.

# Sandy Sufian

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## Statement:

I would like to serve on SDS’s Board of Directors. This is an organization I have been part of for several years as a scholar in disability history/disability studies. I am an associate professor in Disability Studies in the Department of Disability and Health Development at University of Illinois-Chicago as well as an Associate Professor of Health Humanities and History in UIC’s College of Medicine. I have been teaching disability studies courses for fifteen years to medical students and for nine years to graduate students. I am currently working on a manuscript on the history of the adoption of children with disabilities in the twentieth century. I have also published several articles on disability history (on US adoption and my previous work on Zionism/Mandate Palestine) in my academic career. I serve as section editor for *Disability in American Life: An Encyclopedia of Policies, Concepts, and Controversies*, which is forthcoming.

As chair of the Disability History Association for the past three years, and especially with our SDS institutional membership in 2015, I supported establishing planned closer ties with SDS. I led an overhaul of our website, established a facebook page and facebook membership group, oversaw various award programs, started an internship program, and planned disability history (DHA sponsored) panels at SDS and the American Historical Association (AHA) meetings, among other things. I also served as an advisor/liaison on disability issues (conference accessibility, promoting disability history in history writ large) with the AHA. I cofounded a national disability history mentorship program that has now successfully run for three years. Its graduate student exchange enables students to virtually share and discuss their work. I also serve on the editorial board of *Disability Studies Quarte*r*ly*.

Now that my DHA term is ending, I would like to use my experience to help shape SDS’s future. I believe that my leadership contributions to the DHA (treasurer, chair, board member), my ability to work collaboratively, my success at establishing inventive programs, and my commitment to this field uniquely positions me to take on this SDS role. I imagine using my interdisciplinary background-- where I straddle several fields and three university colleges—to think about how to more productively expand the reach of disability studies perspectives to scholars and students in professional schools (and ultimately SDS membership). I would also support continuing to nurture global/transnational perspectives. I can see SDS initiating smaller thematic working groups to promote interdisciplinary scholarship on emerging disability issues and to explore how the field is continuing to develop. I think establishing a webinar series (on disability culture, on disability memoir, etc.) and/or video interviews with major disability scholars about their careers could increase educational outreach efforts. Perhaps a foundation would be interested in funding such an idea. Ultimately, I would like to see the SDS conference return, as it is a key forum for building community, showcasing our work, and supporting emerging scholars.