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Subject: Spirit of 1848: Reportback from 1995 APHA meeting

To: Spirit of 1848 bulletin board readers ...

The Spirit of 1848 organized two successful sessions and had a very productive business meeting at the recent 1995 meeting of the American Public Health Association (123rd annual meeting, Oct 29-Nov 2, 1995, San Diego, CA). We've gathered another 200 or so names for our mailing list, and many people said they were interested in subscribing to our bulletin board. Our sense is that we will be able to establish ongoing projects in our different committees over the coming year, as well as organize some sessions for the 1996 APHA meeting in New York City (Nov 12-17).

And as for some specifics. One session, co-organized by Cecilia Zapata and Elizabeth Barnett, co-chairs of the Networking Committee, focused on "Mentoring Health Professionals for the 21st Century." Approximately 50 people attended. Speakers discussed concepts of mentoring, and then drew on personal experience to speak about how they themselves had been mentored and how they mentored others. All emphasized that mentoring is an exchange, of benefit to both the person who is mentoring and the one who is being mentored. For more details on the session, contact either Cecilia Zapata or Beth Barnett.

The second session, co-organized by Nancy Krieger and Oliver Fein, out of the Data Committee, was about "The Politics of Naming: Implications of Proposed Changes in Federal Classification of 'Race' and 'Ethnicity'". Approximately 250 people attended the first half, in which presentations focused on conceptual and empirical issues involved in classifying race/ethnicity. The second half included comments from the different APHA caucuses of color (American Indian and Alaskan Native Caucus, Asian Caucus, Black Caucus, and Latino Caucus) and three sections (Epidemiology, Statistics, and Medical Care). We got a lot of good feedback about the session, in terms of people learning lots about the issues, in ways useful for both policy and research. And, perhaps most importantly, the session provided a way for the Caucuses, Sections, and individual APHA members to express their views and concerns directly to the representative from Office of Management and Budget, Suzann Evinger, and she invited all interested persons to send in their comments to her as soon as possible (thereby extending the official Sept. 30 deadline).

The next day, about 40 people came to the business meeting. We briefly reviewed the purpose and short history of the Spirit of 1848, and then divided up into our four committees: Data, Curriculum, Outreach (previously called Networking), and History. Reports of each group are as follows:

1) Data (chaired by Nancy Krieger) People attending: Nancy Krieger, Cheryl Merzel, Cathy Tashiro, Meg Wise, Rachel Goldman, Mary Lou Finley, P Ellen Parsons, Oliver Fein, Michelle Davis, and Michele Casper

Project planned: Survey of all states re what socioeconomic data are collected, coded, and analyzed for birth & death certificates. Rachel Goldman has volunteered to coordinate this project, with guidance from Nancy Krieger, and drawing on the knowledge of CDC, NCHS, NIH, etc. of P Ellen Parsons, Michelle Davis, and Michele Casper. Others wanting to help out include: Cheryl Merzel and Meg Wise.

PHA sessions/activities planned: two sessions on measures of social class for public health research & programs & advocacy/activist work; one would be on theoretical/conceptual issues, and the other would be on empirical work about what we can learn and do with these different measures. Oliver Fein has volunteered to help organize these sessions, working with Nancy Krieger. Others wanting to help out include: Cathy Tashiro and Mary Lou Finley.

2) Curriculum (chaired by Michelle Murrain) Persons attending: Jaqueline Bartelt, Arthur Himmelman, Karyn Pomerantz, Ramon Castellblanch, Carles Muntaner, Barbara Gottlieb, Joel Swartz, Bonnie Duran, Arlene Eisen, Jean Forster, Naomi Kistin

Project(s) planned: We plan to begin to design a questionnaire about curricular issues, either to be sent to schools of public health, or to individuals at the next APHA meeting. As well, we plan to begin to accumulate syllabi of courses.

PHA sessions/activities planned: We plan to have one session at the next meeting to present issues around teaching courses in public health schools or in other settings such as undergraduate institutions, which incorporate content in social inequalities in health. Michelle Murrain, Barbara Gottlieb and Ramon Castellblanch will work on organizing this session.

3) Outreach (chaired by Beth Barnett) Persons attending: Beth Barnett, Richard David, Daniel Neuspiel, and two others (names not recorded); Co-chair Cecilia Zapata was unable to attend the meeting.)

Project planned: We discussed changing the name of the committee, because those in attendance felt "networking" was misleading and "outreach" should really be our mission. Our discussion focused on the need for additional means of communication among progressive public health workers (besides the computer bulletin board). One suggestion was to have regular mailings to 1848 members throughout the year, perhaps leading to a newsletter. One participant brought up the issue of moral courage, and we discussed the need to provide public health workers, especially those who may be isolated in rural areas, with success stories and encouragement for their own efforts.

Despite discussion of some good ideas, the people in attendance were feeling overcommitted, and we were unable to definitely plan projects for the coming year. However, this is an important area and the co-chairs (Cecilia Zapata and Beth Barnett) invite anyone interested in working on projects during the coming year to contact us.

APHA sessions/activities planned: none, yet ...

4) History (chaired by Anne-Emmanuelle Birn) The history committee will continue to serve as a liaison body with the Sigerist Circle.

The timeline for the APHA sessions is that they have to be planned by early February, so this means much of the work organizing them has to occur between now and the end of January. The other work will be on-going, and we plan to have monthly progress reports posted on the bulletin boards. Here, please note that Michelle Murrain has volunteered to send an email note to all persons who signed up at one of our sessions at APHA and provided an email address, to let them know how they can get on the bulletin board. And, in terms of accountability, we are continuing with our policy of having all projects approved by the Spirit of 1848 Coordinating Committee before anything is done in the name of our group as a whole.

Lastly, we want to encourage everyone on the bulletin board to use this avenue of communication to keep people posted about important events, advocacy/activist work, questions and ideas about studying and eliminating social inequalities in health, and the like. Join in!