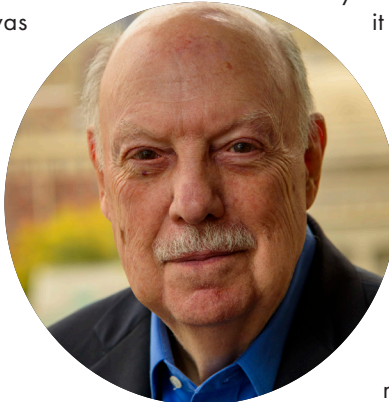


MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

DICK SIMPSON

How did you learn about APSA? When did you become a member of APSA, and what prompted you to join?

I learned about APSA while I was still in graduate school in the early 1960s, and I have been a member for more than 55 years now. I was originally an Africanist, or scholar of Sierra Leone, West Africa, but—particularly when I began teaching in 1967 at the UIC—I was tasked with teaching American Politics and Government, as were most political scientists in those days. I was anxious to meet other political scientists from around the country in all the various subfields and to learn from their research. In those early years APSA provided many fewer resources for teaching itself. That came later in APSA history.



How have APSA membership and services been valuable to you at different stages of your career?

APSA has been valuable for me over all five decades of my career. In the early years, it was a chance to meet other political scientists and to learn from their research. My first book publications were about the study of politics for my American government class and about electoral politics. As I was elected a Chicago Alderman, I became much more interested in urban politics as a practical as well as professional matter and became active in the Urban Politics section. I attended urban politics panels at APSA meetings and read the *Urban Affairs Review* which has since become an APSA journal. By the 1990s or early 2000s, I had my university become involved in the Preparing Future Faculty program and obtain a \$20,000 grant to support our efforts to modernize and improve our PhD program. This was an important initiative of

APSA and sister institutions and foundations. Finally, in the last two decades of my career, I became very interested in teaching and worked with APSA in its Teaching and Learning Conferences and in the publication of its three “Teaching Civic Engagement” books (along with its book on Internships). I served on sev-

eral APSA committees that foster civic engagement and the teaching of civic engagement and have helped coordinate the linkages between APSA and other national organizations concerned with teaching civic engagement. Collectively we have made great progress on that front, and it has probably been the most rewarding of all my APSA efforts.

Can you tell us about your professional background and your research?

I grew up in Texas and joined the civil rights movement and successful civil rights demonstrations at the University of Texas. While an undergraduate, I majored in “Government” as the UT Department was named back then but also went to Africa on a Student YMCA project in Liberia. All of this caused me to attend graduate school at Indiana University with a focus on Africa. My dissertation was on the political development of two provincial capitals of Sierra Leone, West Africa.

While I was in Africa in 1966 working on my dissertation, American cities were going up in flames and there were urban riots. So, I wrote my PhD advisor with a list of ten major cities and asked him to get me a job in one of them. When I returned to the United States, I finished writing my dissertation and did one job interview at the University of Illinois Chicago, took the offered job (to teach African politics there as they had no Africanist or even a Comparative Politics Scholar), and I spent the next 55 years there although I ventured forth to successfully run for Alderman, lead the opposition bloc in the Chicago City Council against Mayor Richard J. Daley, run for alderman unsuccessfully, attend seminary, and become an ordained minister.

After the first few years, I didn’t publish research again on Africa until forty years later after my return to Sierra Leone and a conference we held at UIC on building democracy after the African civil wars. Instead, I turned my research and publications to the study of elections in the United States and urban politics, especially Chicago politics. At an APSA conference, I met one of the coordinators of the study of effective teaching for democracy and had my course in urban politics to be studied as part of the Political Engagement Project where I also met future collaborators on both research and practical projects to foster student engagement. I have been involved in promotion civic engagement and teaching civic

**APSA
member
since 1964**

engagement for decades.

I am pleased to have received The Lifetime Achievement Award from the Political Science Education Section and the national Distinguished Teaching Award this year from APSA itself. I finished my career with my most important book, *Democracy's Rebirth: The View from Chicago*, although I have two final books on Chicago which will be published in 2022 and 2023.

Which APSA programs or events would you recommend to people who are not members of the association, and why?

The APSA programs and publications that promote civic engagement are among the most important for non-APSA members. APSA had endorsed the Civics Secure Democracy Act pending in Congress which would make Civic Educa-

tion a priority like STEM education has become. We have published three major books (which are available for free to non-APSA members) on Teaching Civic Engagement in political science, across disciplines, and around the world. We have an APSA Educate website with important resources constantly updated on teaching the important topics of the day.

Is there anything else you'd like people to know about you or the work that you do?

Our American Democracy is in crisis. My book, *Democracy's Rebirth*, and the materials on the APSA Educate website provide a summary of the knowledge political scientists bring to the solutions for our challenges. I hope I can help start a full conversation and eventually a consensus on what is to be done to save (and improve) our democracy. ■

BOOKS BY OUR MEMBERS

***Policing and Politics in Latin America:
When Law Enforcement Breaks the Law***

Diego Esparza

Lynne Rienner Publishers

***The Gun Dilemma: How History is Against Expanded
Gun Rights***

Michael Genovese

Oxford University Press

***Solidarity in a Secular Age: From Political
Theology to Jewish Philosophy***

Charles H.T. Lesch

Oxford University Press

***Democracy's Rebirth:
The View from Chicago***

Dick Simpson

University of Illinois Press

