

## Lawrence R. Frey Award for Distinguished Communication and Social Justice Activism Research

Proposal submitted to the Executive Committee of NCA  
by Amy Aldridge Sanford and Billie Murray  
July 1, 2024

### Rationale

The proposed Lawrence R. Frey Award for Distinguished Communication and Social Justice Research award will recognize a member of the National Communication Association (NCA) whose body of published and/or creative research has (1) contributed significantly to the study of communication and social justice activism, and that (2) intervenes in unjust discourses and material conditions to make them more just. Examples of that research include (a) conceptual explications of communication and social justice activism; (b) studies employing communication knowledge (e.g., theories, methods, and applied practices) to work with, for, and on behalf of oppressed, marginalized, and underresourced groups, communities, and populations, and/or with activist groups, organizations, and social movements; and/or (c) analyses of communication engaged in by activist individuals or groups that promote social justice.

Although there are NCA-wide awards that recognize communication scholarship that is community-based (i.e., Everett Hughes Holle Award); applied (i.e., Gerald Phillips Award); and/or focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion (i.e., IDEA Scholarship & Engagement Awards), this award will be the first that explicitly focuses on communication and social justice activism research.

This proposed award will be named in honor of NCA Distinguished Scholar (2019) Lawrence R. Frey, PhD, a founding member and the first chair of NCA's Activism and Social Justice (ASJ) Division. Dr. Frey's 1996 coauthored article is often cited as the first to establish a relationship between conducting communication research and promoting social justice<sup>1</sup>; and his subsequent scholarship (including numerous journal articles, book chapters, four co-edited volumes<sup>2</sup>, and co-edited Social Justice Communication Activism book series with Routledge) advanced an activist approach to communication research and pedagogy. Dr. Frey's scholarship has contributed substantially to making the study of

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence R. Frey et al., "Looking for Justice in All the Wrong Places: On a Communication Approach to Social Justice," *Communication Studies* 47, no. 1-2 (1996): 110-27.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence R. Frey and Kevin M. Carragee, eds., *Communication Activism: Communication for Social Change*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2007); Lawrence R. Frey and Kevin M. Carragee, eds., *Communication Activism: Media and Performance Activism*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2007); Lawrence R. Frey and Kevin M. Carragee, eds., *Communication Activism: Struggling for Social Justice Amidst Difference*, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2012); Lawrence R. Frey and David Palmer, *Teaching Communication Activism: Communication Education for Social Justice* (New York, NY: Hampton Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2016.1141021>.

communication and social justice, and scholars engaging in communication activism research and pedagogy, focusing on viable and well-respected communication scholarship. He is also well respected within the ASJ Division as a generous mentor to many other established and emerging scholars.

### **Description of Evaluation Procedures**

*Nominations* will be solicited via an annual awards call (sample attached below) submitted to COMMNotes, other applicable NCA division listservs, and the NCA website and calls for awards. Self-nominations will be considered.

The *Selection Committee* for this award in its first two years (2025–2026) will be comprised of three members of the current and/or past leadership from the ASJ Division, including Amy Aldridge Sanford, Billie Murray, and a third member TBD. Following this initial period of the new award, the selection committee will be constituted from a combination of the ASJ Division’s leadership and membership.

All nominations for this award will be submitted through the NCA website. The *Criteria for Evaluation* of nominees will include the following:

- 1–2 page nomination letter explaining the significant contributions of the nominee’s body of communication and social justice activism research, as outlined in the rationale above and call below.
- Nominee’s curriculum vitae.
- Three letters of recommendation (1–2 pages) from people familiar with the nominee’s qualifications. Letters must be submitted separately by the recommenders through the nomination portal.
- Up to three examples of research.

To be *eligible* for the award:

- Nominees must be an NCA member.
- Undergraduate and graduate students are not eligible for the award.
- This award can only be won once by a nominee, but nominees not selected are eligible to reapply for the award.
- Self-nominations are encouraged. Nominations made by others must be well acquainted with the nominee’s qualifications.

### **Source of funds**

Through a generous donation made by Dr. Frey, this award is already fully funded at the \$25,000 level that NCA requires. If NCA approves this award, beginning in 2025, the award recipient will be recognized at the awards ceremony during the NCA Annual Convention and will receive a plaque and a monetary award of \$675.

## **Lawrence R. Frey Award for Distinguished Communication and Social Justice Activism Research Call for 2025 Nominations *(Sample)***

**Description of Award:** This award recognizes a member of the National Communication Association (NCA) whose body of published and/or creative research has (1) contributed significantly to the study of communication and social justice activism, and that (2) intervenes in unjust discourses and material conditions to make them more just. Examples of that research can include: (a) conceptual explications of communication and social justice activism; (b) studies employing communication knowledge (e.g., theories, methods, and applied practices) to work with, for, and on behalf of oppressed, marginalized, and underresourced groups, communities, and populations, and/or with activist groups, organizations, and social movements; and/or (c) analyses of communication enacted by activist individuals or groups who promote social justice.

This award is named in honor of NCA Distinguished Scholar (2019) Lawrence R. Frey, PhD, a founding member and the first chair of the Activism & Social Justice Division of NCA. In collaboration with his colleagues, Dr. Frey is credited with advancing communication activism research and scholar-activism as viable and well-respected areas of our field.

**Eligibility:** To be eligible for this award, nominees must be a member of NCA. Both self-nominations and nominations of others are encouraged. Nominations must be sent by someone well acquainted with the nominee's qualifications. Activism & Social Justice Division officers are not eligible for awards while in service to the Division. Undergraduate and graduate students are not eligible for the award. The award can only be won once by a nominee, but nominees for the award can be eligible to re-apply for the award. *Re-nominations from previous years are strongly encouraged!*

**Submission Guidelines:** All nominations for this award must be submitted through the NCA website. Nomination materials for the award are due by May 15. The Frey Award Committee will complete their reviews by early August, and the awardee will be contacted in early September. The recipient of the award will be recognized at the awards ceremony during the NCA Annual Convention and will receive a plaque and monetary award of \$675.

All nominations for this award will be submitted through the NCA website. The *Criteria for Evaluation* of nominees will include the following:

- 1–2 page nomination letter explaining the significant contributions of the nominee's body of communication and social justice activism research, as outlined in the rationale above and call below.
- Nominee's curriculum vitae.
- Three letters of recommendation (1–2 pages) from people familiar with the nominee's qualifications. Letters must be submitted separately by the recommenders through the nomination portal.
- Up to three examples of research.

Please follow the specific guidelines listed here and email any questions or concerns to the National Office at [nomination@natcom.org](mailto:nomination@natcom.org).