

A. D. Coleman

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September 5, 2006

Michael Brintnall, Executive Director
American Political Science Association (APSA)
1527 New Hampshire Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036-1206

Dear Mr. Brintnall:

I'm in receipt of your email to me of June 23 regarding the errors in the citation for Richard H. Solomon as recipient of the 2005 Hubert H. Humphrey Award from the APSA. Your response reads, in full:

Mr. Coleman,

It occurred to me that I wasn't sure if we had fully closed the loop with you on this issue. APSA did make a full inquiry into this, and we have appended the following note to the citation on our web site.

Note: In January, 2006, it came to the attention of the APSA that the above citation read imprecisely in one respect. While Richard Solomon is indeed a crack photographer, the photographs in "A Revolution is Not a Dinner Party" were by other photographers, that he cited in the publication, and not by himself. Solomon, with the collaboration of Talbott W. Huey, combined those photographs with his own text.

Thanks for bringing the imprecision of our citation to our attention.

Sincerely,

Michael Brintnall

You're quite right in noting that we hadn't "fully closed the loop" on the questions I raised. So I appreciate your following through on this matter, even at the remove of six months.

You're certainly welcome for my "bringing the imprecision of [y]our citation to [y]our attention." We all have to do our share in keeping the record straight, don't we? I'm sure we agree that neither political scientists nor photographers should claim credit (or have it claimed for them,

or receive it) for work not their own.

I see that at your website (http://www.apsanet.org/content_20645.cfm) you have left intact the original citation of the award presented to Mr. Solomon, with its false claim of Mr. Solomon's authorship of the photographs in his 1975 book *A Revolution Is Not A Dinner Party*, merely appending a footnote to the document indicating the inaccuracy of this assertion. I find this a less than satisfactory solution, as the reader may not get to the footnote -- especially since you haven't indicated its existence next to the offending passage in any of conventional ways. (With an asterisk or other footnote indicator, for example.).

Be that as it may, can I assume that this correction to your flawed citation will get sent out to the APSA members and the press -- that is, to whomever received notice of the award in the first place? And that the correction will appear in whatever APSA journals published the original, inaccurate citation?

Unfortunately, even that still leaves us with what -- absent anything aside from the APSA's unsupported assertion of it -- I have to take as your organization's insistence that Mr. Solomon deserves to be called a "crack photographer." You reiterate that testimonial in the same footnote in which you withdraw the previous claim that he created the photos in that book (heretofore the entirety of the evidence adduced to justify describing him as a photographer). Which leaves me totally perplexed, as I suspect any reader of the footnoted citation would feel.

The term "crack photographer" is of course a bit vague and imprecise, just like the term "crack political scientist." Indeed, it's an odd term to find in a formal citation such as the one your organization gave to Mr. Solomon. Certainly, however, "crack photographer" implies not only a professional level of skill but professional accomplishment, as does the term "crack political scientist." Presumably we wouldn't apply such terms to an amateur in either field, no matter how earnest his or her efforts.

In short, photography is a serious discipline, no less serious than political science, with widely recognized standards of professional performance and achievement. Those people whose photographic accomplishments merit citation and commendation have generally created a recognized body of substantial work acknowledged as such by their peers in the field, and have earned the respect of their colleagues through exhibition and publication of that work. I'll bet it's the same in political science.

So, frankly, I'm at a loss here. I know personally, or at least know of, most of the "crack photographers" of Mr. Solomon's generation. As a critic and historian of photography with almost

forty years in the field, I've never heard of Mr. Solomon or his photography, nor have I ever seen a single image by him. Same goes for everyone in the field I've asked about him. I can find no trace of his work or his name in any of the reference works on twentieth-century photography. Even a Google search brings up no reference to any photographic work he has ever done.

Given that, I have absolutely no idea on what grounds the APSA insists -- no less than twice, now that you've annotated the citation as you have -- that Mr. Solomon is a "crack photographer." (Did he perhaps pursue his photographic career under a nom de plume?) Nor can I determine the qualifications of yourself, your jury, and your colleagues in the APSA to make that assessment.

I'm sure you'd respond with similar skepticism if I and my colleagues in our field went around formally and publicly anointing people you'd never heard of as "crack political scientists." So -- as one scholar to another -- I expect you'll forgive me for not considering this "loop" fully closed until we've verified your repeated claim as to Mr. Solomon's "crack photographer" stature, which at present rests on no evidence at all. As a researcher myself, and a sometime journalist, I find that insufficient, and therefore unacceptable.

Thus I await eagerly your submission of the documentation that validates this praise from the APSA on Mr. Solomon's behalf. Absent such supporting evidence, I'll have to consider it an inappropriate, misleading, and extremely unprofessional claim with no factual basis, intended purely to flatter your award's prestigious recipient -- who strikes me as accomplished enough in his own area of expertise that neither he nor the APSA should have needed such exaggeration in regard to what, if anything, he's done in a field other than his primary one.

And I'll then feel obligated to report on this in some of the public forums and publications to which I have access.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "A. D. Coleman". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

A. D. Coleman

cc: Karpowicz, Polly, Director, Web and Publications