

**Lee Ann Fujii Award for Innovation in the Interpretive Study of Political Violence**  
Sponsored by Routledge and the Interpretive Methodologies and Methods Related Group of the  
American Political Science Association

*This award is presented biannually to a book, journal article, or book chapter that utilizes interpretive methods to illuminate political violence. The award recognizes Lee Ann Fujii's creative contributions to interpretive research methods and methodologies and the study of political violence.*

2021 Honorable Mention: Susan Thomson, Colgate University for “Engaged Silences as Political Agency in Post-Genocide Rwanda: Jeanne's Story,” in *Rethinking Silence, Voice and Agency in Contested Terrain* edited by Jane L. Parpart and Swati Parashar (Routledge, 2019)

“Engaged Silences” illuminates how marginalized people exercise strategic agency in oppressive contexts. The chapter presents, more concretely, a close examination of how the poor widow of a Hutu participant in the Rwandan genocide navigates life post-genocide. After performing loyalty to the ruling government in the late 1980s and focusing on subsistence farming during the genocide and thereafter, Jeanne (pseudonym) comes to deploy a range of tactics to keep herself and her sons safe. Building upon Christine Keating’s framework, Thomson details how Jeanne has avoided reeducation through “deliberative silence” and “silent witness” even as she “silently refuses” to affirm the official narrative of Tutsi victims and Hutu perpetrators. The chapter shows that Jeanne has chosen silence despite discontent: “You see in Rwanda, speaking up is risky. I see it under Habyarima and I see it today [under Kagame]. We [rural poor] choose silence to avoid extra hardships.” (114)

Methodologically and conceptually, Thomson’s recognition of multiple forms of past and present violence (including class, gender, ethnic and structural) is exemplary, and her consideration of her positionality as well as her reflexive stance is admirable. Its demonstration of the meanings of silence as both a significant form of agency and a result of past violence represents an innovative contribution to the study of political violence.

Award committee: Cecelia Lynch, chair (University of California-Irvine), Robin Turner (Butler University), Frederic Schaffer (University of Massachusetts Amherst)