

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Valeria Sinclair-Chapman

Valeria Sinclair-Chapman, APSA member since 1991, is a professor of political science at Purdue University, director of the Center for Research on Diversity and Inclusion, and co-editor of the *American Political Science Review*.

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

Before APSA, I was first introduced to the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS) by one of my undergraduate professors at UNC Asheville. NCOBPS convened in Washington, DC and this experience is likely what turned me into a political scientist. At that conference, I learned what it was like to be around brilliant scholars and leaders, political scientists who looked like me. I later went to graduate school and that was where I learned about APSA. By my third year in graduate school, I was presenting papers at the annual meeting and, as a stand-in for one of my committee members, even served as chair of a panel. The opportunity to present a paper and serve as chair, as well as to be in conversation with people about issues that were important to me is what prompted me to join and remain a member of APSA.

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

Early on in my career as a graduate student, the section business meetings at the annual meeting, as well as the receptions (particularly the reception honoring women of color) were very important to me as they provided an opportunity for networking, building connections, and gaining insight into the work that sections do. Once I became a faculty member, I was called to serve on award committees and the Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession. I also served as the co-president of the *Race, Ethnicity and Politics* Section. Because of my APSA membership, I have had a wide range of interactions with scholars from around the globe. I have had many opportunities for leadership with the association and making connections, as well as to learn from some amazing people who have given me the chance to learn and grow.

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

In 1992, I won a fellowship from the Women's Research and Education Institute where I was assigned to work in Representative Maxine Waters' (D-CA) office. Having the experience of

working for a titan for the Congressional Black Caucus really shaped the kind of research that I now focus on, such as legislative politics, minority representation in congress, and political participation. I also currently work on Social Movements which is driven by engagement in real world experiences that I am trying to understand. These are real world experiences that are meaningful to marginalized communities especially Black communities.



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

The presidential address at the annual meeting is something that I recommend to both members and nonmembers alike. The APSA presidents come in with a specific platform and this is the chance to hear about what they are hoping to do with their time as an organizational leader. The address is remarkable to hear and discuss, and later to read once it is published. For current members, I recommend going to section business meetings and receptions at the annual meeting in order to learn more about their work as well as make connections. I have been involved with *Legislative Studies* and *Race, Ethnicity and Politics*, among others, and find the business meetings are a great way to learn about the agendas of various groups.

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

I am currently a co-editor for the *American Political Science Review* and a part of the first all-women editorial board for the APSR. I didn't grow up wanting to be a political scientist but I wouldn't want to be doing anything other than what I am doing right now. The discipline has not always felt like a welcoming place but working together we can create space for all of us to contribute in meaningful ways. We can do both basic research as well as research that has substantive meaning for the lives of Americans and even more broadly across the globe. ■