

Pamela Oliver Biographical Statement
February 2024

Here are long and short biographical statements about Pamela Oliver. If you have invited me to speak, you have permission to edit these bios to shorten them to your appropriate word limits or to pick out the information that is most relevant to your group.

LONG BIO (combines social movements and criminal justice)

Pamela Oliver received her PhD in sociology from the University of North Carolina in 1977. She was an assistant professor at the University of Louisville from 1976-1980 and has been at the University of Wisconsin since 1980. She became a full professor in 1990 and a Conway-Bascom Professor in 2004 and served two terms as department chair. She became Professor Emerita in May 2019. She has received multiple National Science Foundation grants and has served on the National Science Foundation's Sociology Advisory Committee. She has been elected to terms as chair of the American Sociological Association sections on "Collective Behavior and Social Movements," "Political Sociology," and "Rational Choice." She is well-known for her work on collective action and social movements and has published influential articles in the *American Sociological Review*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, the premier social movements journal *Mobilization*, and other sociological journals. She is the author, with Gerald Marwell, of a series of widely-cited articles and a book on the Critical Mass in Collective Action. Other widely-cited published works include studies of news coverage of protests, and a commentary (with Hank Johnston) on the use of concepts of frames and ideology in the study of social movements.

Beginning in 1999, Oliver became active in advocacy around racial disparities in incarceration, especially in Wisconsin. She has conducted detailed analyses of racial disparities in imprisonment and arrest in Wisconsin, put information on her website, and made over a hundred presentations to public officials and general audiences as well as given numerous interviews to various news media about patterns of racial disparity in imprisonment. She has served on the boards of several non-profit organizations concerned with criminal justice issues. Because of her leadership in this area, she was asked to serve on the Governor's special Commission to Reduce Racial Disparities in the Wisconsin Justice System, which met April 2007 – January 2008 and issued its report in February 2008; she played a major role in helping to draft this report and authored several appendices. Subsequently, she served on Dane County's task force on racial disparities. She remains an active participant in community advocacy groups around these issues and recently published an article assessing the importance of various factors in maintaining or reducing mass incarceration.

Oliver's most recent works in social movements have drawn on her advocacy work and have called for attention to concerns about racial injustice, including arguments about the repressive consequences of mass incarceration and the "ethnic dimensions" in social movements. Her current NSF-funded social movement project uses mainstream and Black newspaper news sources to describe Black protests between the Civil Rights and Black Lives Matter eras. This project has resulted in two published articles so far and she has been circulating drafts of others.

For over thirty years, Oliver taught a popular sociology class, "Ethnic Movements in the US" that compared American Indian, African American, Mexican American, and Asian American movements and politics. She was a member of the Asian American Studies Faculty Advisory Committee for many years. She sometimes gives public versions of lectures about the racial history of the United States that draw on those course lectures.

She has an active “public sociology” presence through her academic blog Race, Politics, Justice <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/soc/racepoliticsjustice/> where she has posted articles on both social movements and imprisonment patterns.

SHORT VERSION (combines social movements and criminal justice)

Pamela Oliver is professor emerita of sociology at the University of Wisconsin. She served as the chair of the Department of Sociology twice and was a member of the Asian American Studies Faculty Advisory Committee for many years. She has published many articles and a book on collective action and social movements, including her influential work on the "critical mass" with Gerald Marwell, studies of news coverage of protests, and theoretical work on the coevolution of movements, protest and news coverage. Her current NSF-funded project tracks news coverage of Black protests between 1990 and 2010. Between 1999 and 2015, she devoted much of her time to analyzing and speaking about statistical patterns of racial disparity in criminal justice in Wisconsin and the nation. She made over 100 public presentations on these issues and served on the Governor's Commission to Reduce Racial Disparities in Criminal Justice in 2007-8 and the Dane County Task on Racial Disparities 2008-9. The social movements and criminal justice work come together in integrated theories of ethnic conflict, social movements, social control, and repression. For over thirty years, she taught "Ethnic Movements in the US" which compared American Indian, African American, Mexican American, and Asian American movements and politics. She has an active “public sociology” presence through her academic blog Race, Politics, Justice <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/soc/racepoliticsjustice/> where she has posted articles on both social movements and imprisonment patterns.