



Annual Conference  
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# ARNOVA

Presents the

## **The 2021 Peter Dobkin Hall History of Philanthropy Book Prize**

to

**Elisabeth Clemens**

for

*Civic Gifts: Voluntarism and the Making of the American Nation-  
State*

The committee applauds Elisabeth Clemens' ambitious, masterful work analyzing the relationship of voluntarism with state formation in the United States. She explains how voluntarism and the organization of civic benevolence worked to "cement the union," not merely providing for the common good but also building national solidarity and functioning as a form of governance. Clemens shows how voluntary associations are not opposed to state formation but can be -- and have always been -- an instrument of governance, an "expansible state." This strikes us as one of the most important recent turns in thinking about nonprofits and the state, that is, elucidating their relationship rather than seeing them as entirely distinct spheres. In a highly politicized time, Clemens shows how the voluntary sector has long been part of politics writ large. On this 50th anniversary of ARNOVA, we appreciated that this important theoretical work revisits some of the same ground that has fostered fertile debates in the organization over many of its years. At the same time, *Civic Gifts* supplies us with a fresh approach. The committee was impressed by the breadth of the work, the clarity of the argument, and the solid documentation, and sees this book as very much within the tradition of Peter Dobkin Hall's many contributions to the foundational questions of scholarship in the history of nonprofit activity.