

DC LERA chapter proposal

Constructing and Deconstructing Racism: Tales of Work and Life in Virginia, Europe, South Africa, South America, and the U.S.

ILERA 20th World Congress, New York, New York, June 27-30,2024

Full description:

Sponsored by the DC LERA chapter and the NCAC, this distinguished panel of academics and practitioners from around the globe will discuss the construction and deconstruction of racism at work and in society through time and space, beginning in colonial Virginia and moving through modern Europe, South Africa, South America, and the U.S. – including how historical segregation and exclusion are reconstituted in modern times, what challenges remain, and what kinds of efforts are being made to eliminate and remediate racism.

Moderated by Pamhidzai Bamu, the current President of the African Labour Law Society, this panel will take the audience on a journey that starts in the colonial United States and winds up in present day New York, Brussels, Johannesburg, Mississippi, and Lima. Professor Randolph McLaughlin will use his careful legal and historical research to show how racial segregation was invented over several decades in the colony and state of Virginia. Dr. Sunnie Rucker-Chang of Ohio State University will then take the baton, speaking on her research comparing racism in the U.S. and Eastern Europe - and how Roma have been inspired by the U.S. Civil Rights Movement to advocate for their own civil and human rights in the European Union. Professor Kgomotso Mufamadi of the University of Johannesburg will take us to post-Apartheid South Africa to discuss how difficult it has been to dismantle and deconstruct racist institutions and workplaces even after the formal dismantling of apartheid. Rebecca Dixon of the National Employment Law Project will talk about how the workplace and employee relations in the United States have their roots in slavery - and how this affects today's workers of color, keeping them in poverty. Finally, Professor Mariela Noles Cotito of Universidad del Pacifico in Lima will take us to South America, talking about how racism and racial segregation affect minorities in South America, including Afro-Latinos.

The themes running through all of the speakers' interventions are: Racism and racial segregation were constructed in law and societal institutions over time; these institutions are extremely difficult to deconstruct and continue to affect workers and people of color to this day; while difficult, it is not impossible to deconstruct the institutions of racism and segregation; there are a number of creative policy and advocacy mechanisms to deconstruct racism - and much work remains to be done.

Brief Description

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Speakers:

- [Randolph McLaughlin](#): Legal advocacy and historical research and insights in his 2019 article *The Birth of a Nation A Study of Slavery in 17th Century Virginia* (Hastings Race & Poverty Law Journal)
- [Dr. Sunnie Rucker-Chang](#): Comparative racial discrimination in the US and EU, including insights from her 2018 article *Challenging Americanism and Europeanism in the American South and the European Union* (Journal of Transatlantic Studies)
- [Prof. Kgomo Mufamadi](#): Continuing discrimination based on race in post-apartheid South African workplaces, including insights from her 2020 article *The Subtleties of Racism in the South African Workplace* (International Journal of Critical Diversity)
- [Rebecca Dixon](#): Insights from her 2022 article *Reversing Labor Laws Rooted in Slavery*, not to mention from decades of experience as a worker rights advocate and expert on occupational segregation years of policy and legal advocacy on behalf of low wage workers in the U.S.
- [Mariela Noles Cotito](#): The state of the issue of racism and discrimination in the workforce in South America, including discrimination against Afro-Latinos.

Moderator: [Pamhidzai Bamu](#), WIEGO and President, ALLS

Other comments and notes

This panel was a huge hit when the speakers appeared to discuss this topic in a virtual labor law forum hosted by DC LERA in 2022. Each of the speakers is formidable on his or her own - either through cutting edge academic research or sustained and creative advocacy - or both. Together, they are on fire. Not only did all of the original speakers agree to reappear in New York to discuss this topic, we have since added a new speaker from Peru to discuss discrimination against Afro-Latinos and other racial minorities in South America. This panel deserves extra time to accommodate all of the speakers and their insights. It also deserves top billing during the conference. Such a gathering of such eminent academics and advocates on such an important topic is truly a historic occasion. Note that Mariela Noles Cotito may submit a paper.