

2027 LAWCHA CONFERENCE

Working Across Divisions

June 24–26 • UMass Boston

“WORKING ACROSS DIVISIONS” asks us to think critically about the dichotomies that structure both the world of labor and our analyses of it, and then to trouble those boundaries. Scholars often define one form of labor against another: wage vs. unwaged labor; public vs. private; domestic vs. marketplace; free vs. bound; productive vs. unproductive; skilled vs. unskilled. These categories have shaped law, organizing, policy, and scholarship. Yet they have also obscured the ways that working people consistently cross, blur, and unsettle such divisions, laboring across boundaries of race, age, gender, citizenship, empire, and nation. They have confronted fractures within the working class itself, including divisions rooted in racism, sexism, xenophobia, ableism, and anti-Blackness, while also forging solidarities that transcend them. How have such divisions been constructed, maintained, resisted, or reimaged? Under what conditions have workers built alliances across lines of craft, sector, immigration status, or political ideology? When have those efforts faltered, and why?

At a moment when new technologies, global supply chains, environmental crises, and resurgent authoritarianisms reshape the terrain of work, we ask how we might expand the boundaries of what counts as “work” and who counts as a “worker.” How do carceral labor, reproductive labor, care work, and climate-related labor struggles challenge inherited analytical frameworks? How might histories of colonialism, racial capitalism, and imperialism help us rethink divisions between metropole and periphery, North and South, formal and informal economies? What can labor history contribute to contemporary debates about AI, automation, border regimes, and the future of organizing? “Working Across Divisions” ultimately calls on us to examine not only how labor has been divided, but also how working people have imagined and enacted unity across differences. By historicizing division and foregrounding efforts to overcome it, we hope to foster conversations that illuminate both the fractures and the possibilities within working-class life, past and present.



We welcome papers that explore labor and working-class history across all time periods and geographic regions. We especially encourage comparative, transnational, and global approaches; scholarship that bridges academic and activist communities; and work that connects theory and praxis. Topics may include, but are not limited to, migration and mobility; coercion and unfreedom; care work and social reproduction; labor and the environment; disability and work; religion and labor; labor and incarceration; higher education and academic labor; public history and pedagogy; and intersections of labor with race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and citizenship.

We will consider traditional panels with 3 papers; roundtables; performance-oriented and artistic sessions, including films; proposals for a poster session; and moderated conversations between activists or artists and historians. We welcome proposals from scholars and activists in all fields, and especially urge submissions from contingent faculty, community college faculty, K–12 teachers, and independent scholars.

We encourage the submission of complete panels rather than individual papers. Single paper authors are encouraged to seek out others prior to submission. We ask that organizers aim for diversity in the gender identity, race, ethnicity, and/or employment status of presenters when pulling together submissions. To assist, the conference has created a collaboration form where individuals can post ideas and seek others to create panels.

Proposals should be submitted by November 1. The conference will take place June 24–26 at the University of Massachusetts – Boston.
Conference email: LAWCHA2027@gmail.com

LAWCHA 2027 Program Co-Chairs

Alexandra Finley, University of Pittsburgh
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