

## 2015 Conference Request for Proposals



### **WORK IN THE SOUTH:**

#### **Dixie Cotton, American Steel and a Hurricane Named Katrina - A Reinvention of Bondage**

The Workplace Justice Project in cooperation with the Gillis Long Poverty Law Center and the Loyola Journal of Public Interest Law invites you to submit a proposal for the 2015 Conference: **WORK IN THE SOUTH: Dixie Cotton, American Steel and a Hurricane Named Katrina - A Reinvention of Bondage** which will be held on March 6 -7 in New Orleans, Louisiana at the Loyola College of Law. Accepted applicants will have their proposals published in the Loyola Journal of Public Interest Law and may be offered the opportunity to present their work in one of three conference panels on March 6, 2015.

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the conference is to examine the current economic, legal and political terrain for low wage workers in the South as well as for the advocates and the organizers who work with and for them, with a special focus on what makes this region of the country particularly challenging for the development and realization of workers' rights.

#### **CONFERENCE STRUCTURE**

Pulitzer Prize Journalist, Douglas Blackmon, author of *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to WWII*, will give the keynote address setting the historical context for the conference as to why workers in the South are more vulnerable than workers in other regions. Southern states have lower densities of unionized workers, provide lower (or no) minimum wage standards, and have resisted regulations on employers. It is not coincidental that the most vulnerable workers in the southern states are predominantly African-American or from immigrant communities, nor that, among white low-

wage workers, there is less affinity and affiliation by class than by race, a division that is exploited by the legislature, employers and the owning class.

The first day of the conference will consist of a keynote address, with a question and answer period, and three panels which will address whether and how the political landscape for low wage workers has changed between the post-reconstruction era and the present day, map the current landscape, identify who are the workers and what factors make them vulnerable, and discuss solutions to the most significant challenges that keep workers in low-wage, exploitative conditions.

The second day of the conference will consist of workshops that include strategies for making systemic changes in the region, including litigation, the usefulness of workers' centers, and the need for policy changes.

### **PANEL FORMAT**

Panels will consist of three speakers and one moderator. Each panel will present on a topic for one hour; an additional fifteen minutes will be allotted for audience interaction and discussion.

**“Where are we now and why?”** This panel will frame the current landscape for workers in the South. The panel will examine the historical and political history of low wage workers in the South from the end of World War II to present. Possible topics include current statistics, organizing and the challenges faced by unions, work economics, and lack of state or federal protections and enforcement.

**“Who are low wage workers?”** This panel will examine the demographics of the South's low wage worker population. Drawing the connection between demographics and economic and political status, topics will touch on race, immigration, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification, family demographics, the formerly incarcerated, education and how those factors affect the nature of low wage work. To place the demographic picture in context, the panel may examine national versus local employers, service and temporary workers and the challenges arising from a predominance of part time work and the misclassification of employees as independent contractors.

**“What's next for Southern Workers?”** This panel will set out how challenges faced by low wage workers are exaggerated in the South and explore possible solutions. Panelists may address legislative and policy solutions, organizing and concrete responses including workers' bill of rights, workers' centers and accountable economic development.

## **WORKSHOPS**

Workshops will be held on the second day of the conference. Proposals for workshops however are closed to this RFP application. Inquiries regarding the conference workshops may be directed to the contact person listed in this application.

## **BREADTH AND RANGE OF TOPICS SOUGHT**

- Demographics of low wage workers of the South: exploring issues of race, immigration, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification, family demographics, the formerly incarcerated, education, national versus local employers, service and temporary workers, the challenges arising from a predominance of part time work and the misclassification of employees as independent contractors
- Laying the landscape for workers in the South: issues concerning current statistics, organizing and the challenges faced by unions, work economics and the lack of federal and state protections and enforcement
- Adequacy and effectiveness of State Wage Payment and Wage Theft Laws
- Legislative & advocacy issues as to the protection of workers
- Organizing campaigns and Workers' Centers, worker education and outreach, community benefits agreements and economic development issues
- Workers' Bill of Rights

## **TRAVEL EXPENSES**

A limited amount of funding is available if accepted applicants cannot secure funding from their home institutions or organizations.

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

**January 12, 2015** – Conference Proposals Due

**January 22, 2015** – All applicants will be notified about the status of their proposals by email.

**March 6 -7, 2015** – Conference at the Loyola College of Law, New Orleans, Louisiana

## **RFP PROPOSALS & SUBMISSION**

We invite proposals from individuals or collaborations for all categories of presentation at the conference for consideration of publication in the Loyola Journal of Public Interest Law.

To submit a proposal, send your proposal in PDF format by email to Andrea M. Agee at [amagee@loyno.edu](mailto:amagee@loyno.edu) by **January 12, 2015**. Proposals should include a cover page with the applicant's contact information and a brief description of the proposal.

## **RFP CONTACT PERSONS**

Questions concerning this RFP should be directed to Andrea M. Agee, Workplace Justice Project Staff Attorney at [amagee@loyno.edu](mailto:amagee@loyno.edu).

## **CONFERENCE REGISTRATION**

Registration for **WORK IN THE SOUTH: Dixie Cotton, American Steel and a Hurricane Named Katrina - A Reinvention of Bondage Conference** will open on **December 1, 2014** on the Workplace Justice Project website, [www.wjpnola.org](http://www.wjpnola.org)

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

For more information on the Workplace Justice Project, please visit us at [www.wjpnola.org](http://www.wjpnola.org)

For more information on the Gillis Long Poverty Law Center or the Stuart H. Smith Law Clinic and Center for Social Justice, please visit <http://www.loyno.edu/gillislong/>

For more information on Douglas Blackmon and *Slavery By Another Name*, please visit <http://www.slaverybyanothername.com/>