



XV Global Labour University Conference
Building a Post-Pandemic World of Work with Social Justice

Penn State University and AFL-CIO
Washington D.C.
March 30 – April 1, 2022

Call for papers and presentations

The Covid-19 pandemic, right-wing populism, and rising authoritarianism have changed the world of work. Millions are unemployed. Many face malnutrition. Women, migrants, people of colour, and youth have all been disproportionately affected. Some signs of change are emerging. Covid vaccines have been developed and are being distributed, albeit very unevenly. And four years of right-wing populism's grip on the US government has come to an end. Yet, deeper social transformation will require organizing and mobilizing. And it remains to be seen whether other right-wing populist regimes will change.

The question going forward is how we build anew our workplaces and societies based on social justice. What should a new social contract entail? How do we end gender-based violence and racism at work? What is needed to ensure worker organizing for a just transition? How do we organize workers within and across the platform economy? How might we build a more just global economy for supply chain and migrant workers? Finally, how can academics and trade unionists work more effectively together through research and campaigns? To help answer these questions, we call on paper and presentation proposals in seven themes. For all these topics, we consider informality, precarious work, migration, and Covid-19 as cross cutting issues.

1. ***More Inclusive Social Protection, and Sustainable Development.*** The Covid-19 pandemic has made abundantly clear the failure of social protection schemes across the globe, as fired workers receive inadequate income security and families face growing food insecurity. In a post-pandemic world, there is a need to establish a new social contract from paid leave to health care to create a just and sustainable future. What policies and strategies are most needed to achieve this goal? How can they best be designed to address the needs of the most vulnerable workers (youth, women, migrants, informal sector workers, etc.)?
2. ***Ending Gender-Based Violence and Racism in the Workplace.*** In October 2017, a global #metoo movement emerged in which women spoke out against sexual harassment and abuse. In 2019, the International Labour Organization centred this issue in the world of work when it adopted Convention 190 against violence and harassment. And in 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement grew exponentially in the US and soon spread across the globe following the police killing of George Floyd. How do we build a movement and develop policies to end gender-based violence and racism in the workplace?
3. ***Just Transition and Worker Organizing.*** The climate crisis is a global crisis that exacerbates inequalities across countries and within societies across social classes, gender, and race. A failure to address the climate crisis will impact food security, water supply, and the livelihoods of millions of vulnerable workers. The climate crisis is thus a social justice issue and a worker organizing issue. To build worker activism on climate justice, we need more examples of pathways to a just transition in different industries and different sectors. We also need more examples of how we can connect struggles in particular workplaces and with broader demands for system change at national and global levels. Finally, we need examples of how workers can build activism in their trade unions, and also build alliances with other social movements and civil society groups.

4. **Organizing Across the Platform: Innovative Strategies for Building Worker Power.** The rise of the platform is transforming the organisation of work and the employment relationships. Work and employment relations are increasingly controlled by digital technology and organised through digital platforms. The platform economy raises new question on how workers organise, what strategies they adopt to reach their potential numbers, who they target, and what they demand. This track will explore some of the challenges relating to organising workers in the platform economy. How are diverse workforce demographics and patterns of informality impacted by this form of work? What are some of the examples of successful or innovative organizing strategies across platforms? How can digital technologies used by platforms be mobilised to organise workers and improve their working conditions?

5. **Migrant Labour:** Labour migration, both internal and external, has been a feature of the development of capitalist economies for several centuries. Yet, legal regimes and employer practices have made migrant workers vulnerable. Trade unions have played a key part in protecting these workers (while not always immune to anti-migrant sentiments). Building on discussions that began with the March 2021 GLU workshop on trade unions and migrant labour, we want to explore issues such as: What are the challenges facing migrants, trade unions and activists? What are positive and innovative examples of migrant workers organizing and trade union renewal within and across countries?

6. **Workers' rights and organizing under authoritarianism:** Recent years have seen dramatic reversals of democratization process and/or a consolidation of authoritarian rule in countries such as Myanmar, Belarus, Brazil, and China. More than 40% of countries in the world lack full democracy and face substantial economic and political injustice. They are denied the freedom of association, notably the right to organizing and collective bargaining. What are examples of workers fighting for economic justice in an authoritarian setting? How can we build transnational solidarity with them? What political, social, and labour institutions can ensure democratic consolidation? What lessons can be learned from historic struggles against despotic rule in former authoritarian countries?

7. **Global Supply Chains and Industrial Policy; and Embedded Research.** The Covid-19 pandemic illustrates the importance of joining action-oriented research and advocacy work on Global Supply Chain and industrial policy. What are some of the challenges facing workers (including women, informal, migrant, and other vulnerable workers) in Global Supply Chains and how have they been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic? What role do e-commerce (e.g., Amazon) and finance play in shaping the dynamics of production and distribution, and what industrial policies are needed to ensure decent work? How might we increase and improve the labour-academic collaborations to contribute to better conditions of work and stronger worker organizations more effectively? How might we also include workers and their organizations in the design and implementation of our research projects through 'embedded research'?

We welcome submissions for papers and presentations on any of these themes. While we encourage submissions that broadly fit into the themes, we will also consider proposals that do not fit directly into one of the themes if they address the broad focus of the conference. Please indicate which theme your presentation or paper addresses with your abstract submission. The GLU encourages policy-orientated research and therefore welcomes submissions that not only analyse problems, but also offer some policy initiatives and solutions for debate. We are particularly interested in panel, plenary and/or roundtable proposals that bring together labour and scholars. One plenary we would like to organize is on whether Covid 19 is triggering ways in how capitalism is organized. This might be followed by a publication on this topic. For academic abstracts, please include your methodological approach. Please send a one-page paper, presentation or panel proposals by September 1, 2021 to Abigail Cluster at <amk5977@psu.edu>.