

ASLH Individual Panel Paper:  
Joel E. Black

Abstract

“Economic Rights and Community Membership in Black Industrial Chicago, 1890-1930”

This paper examines the construction of racial dependency through the exclusion of Black workers from free and contracted labor and then considers the strategies Black workers and leaders used to secure and economic and social place in industrial Chicago. Narratives involving the Great Migration, which place mobility in economic and constitutional terms, and the 1919 Chicago Race Riot, which developed from frustrations with obstacles to economic opportunity, tend to obscure the ways Black workers predicated their efforts to secure steady work on a language of rights. Rights presented some industrial migrants the tools to contest their exclusion from steady labor, but they also had their limits. When he asserted the individual’s “moral, mental and physical fitness to associate with one’s fellowman,” WEB Dubois advertised frustration with a constitutional scheme in which Black rights were contingent on the choices of others. Both social and economic rights suffered from this pitfall. Ultimately, efforts to secure community membership, had to avoid these contingencies. Drawing on Progressive Era social rights discourse and case law, this paper positions industrial work as a critical site in the struggle over community membership and industrial belonging. Constitutive of social organization, free labor premised Black exclusion and the dependency of Black industrial migrants. Strikebreaking provided one strategy to secure jobs that were not otherwise available. But it also had its limits, as it reinforced racial antipathies, and lost its effectiveness with the decline of the union movement in the early 1920s. Subsequent strategies directed at unhinging Black industrial rights from the consent of others emerged in business unions, labor unions and political organizations such as the Community Party. For many industrial workers, free labor was not generative, but restrictive, and gave rise to critical discourse of social and economic rights in the era before the NAACP committed strategically to civil rights and the Federal Government launched the New Deal.

## Curriculum Vitae

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**Joel Black**  
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### EDUCATION

University of Florida, PhD Student  
Qualifying Exams: Passed, Fall 2006  
Qualifying Fields -Major: United States History  
-Minor: Legal History  
-Outside: "Law and Literature"  
Law School Minor, Coursework: Property Law,  
Constitutional Law, Labor Law  
Dissertation Title: *Free Market Dependents: Rights,  
Wage Work and Citizenship in Industrial  
Chicago, 1870-1930*  
Dissertation Director: Dr. Elizabeth Dale  
M.A. Concordia University (Montreal, CA), June, 2003  
B.A. Hons. University of Victoria (British Columbia, CA), June, 2000

### RESEARCH

#### Paper Presentations

- Social Science  
History Association** "It Beat the Hell Out of the Department Store Game!:  
Reconstituting Women's Wage Work in Chicago, 1890-1920."  
November, 2008.
- Social Science  
History Association** "The Tramp Menace: Law, Labor and the Construction of  
Order in Early Twentieth Century Chicago." November, 2007
- Social Science  
History Association** "'Arrested For Selling Poetry!' or 'You Wouldn't Want Your  
Children Reading This': The Historical Significance of the 'Howl'  
Obscenity Trial." November, 2005
- Underhill  
Conference** An earlier version of "'Arrested for Selling Poetry'" was presented  
at Carleton University, March 2003
- Qualicum History  
Conference** "Black Power and the James Meredith March Against Fear,"  
February 2000

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Articles**

“The Kids Are Dangerous: Ginsberg’s Howl and Juvenile Delinquency,” under review by *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*

### **Books**

#### **Reviewed**

*A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Cold War America* by Lizabeth Cohen, *Alpata* 6 (2006): 118.

## **AWARDS**

### **AND**

### **HONORS**

Wyatt-Brown Dissertation Research Award, University of Florida, 2008 (\$500)  
Milbauer In-Aid Research Grant, University of Florida, 2007-2008 (\$250)  
Department Travel Grant, University of Florida, 2007, 2008 (\$250)  
CLAS Travel Grant, University of Florida, 2007 (\$250)  
UF, Graduate Student Council Travel Grant, University of Florida, 2005, 2007, 2008 (\$250)  
Milbauer Chair Travel Grant, University of Florida, 2005 (\$200)  
Outstanding International Student Certificate 2005, 2006, 2007  
Grinter Fellowship, University of Florida, 2004-2005 (\$1000)

## **TEACHING**

### **University of Florida**

Teaching Associate, 2007-2008, 2009 (Spring)  
Courses: United States Since 1877  
United States to 1877  
Work, Rights and Citizenship in American Legal History  
Teaching Assistant, 2004-2007, 2008 (Fall)  
Courses: American Legal History  
United States in the Gilded Age  
Crime and Punishment in America History  
Native American History II  
United States Since 1877  
United States to 1877

### **Concordia University**

Teaching Assistant/Grader, 2001-2003  
Courses: History in Film, I and II  
United States Since 1877  
History of Africa

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

Social Science History Association, 2005, 2007-2009  
American Historical Association, 2006-2007

**LANGUAGE SKILLS**

French (Reading, Speaking, Writing)

**SERVICE**

Coordinated Graduate Lunch for Spousal Hire, Spring 2008