**12th Equality, Diversity and Inclusion International Conference**

22 – 24 July 2019, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, Netherlands

***Conference Theme: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in 2019: Resistance***

**Panel workshop**

**Title of Paper/Panel/Workshop:**

Entrenched Systems – Doubling Down on Inequity

*Reversing The Tide: How inclusive voices can build equitable employment strategies*

**Keywords:**

diversity, inclusion, power, culture, non-profit, for profit, talent management, re-entry, criminal justice, organizational development, social justice, poverty, mass incarceration, automation, artificial intelligence, machine learning.

**Topic Framework – Purpose:**

The goal of this workshop is an exploration of how resistance is accelerating structural barriers to people with records and other marginalized communities and to generate actionable strategies to interrupt/eradicate/minimize this implicit and explicit bias and create more equitable systems and ultimately more equitable economic mobility outcomes.

**Presentation Format:**

The panel will serve as a catalyst for conversation and action planning. The moderator will ask each panel member to speak to offer their perspectives on one or two of the key issues of the workshop theme. Following a brief discussion among panel members, participants will be asked to break into table groups to select and examine a question regarding one of the suggested research topics. Each table will develop a policy solution or action item that they would like to see advanced. Two tables will then exchange and discuss each other’s policy action step in accordance with a structured format. The two tables will then share their observations, clarify understanding, and offer suggestions for consideration in furtherance of the proposed solution(s). As a wrap-up, the combined table groups will then share outcomes and recommendations with the entire group. Panel members will then offer closing remarks.

**Participant Interaction:**

The panel/workshop discussion is designed to illustrate how political and organizational systems and policies, and increasingly the use of algorithms and artificial intelligence, serve to keep organizations from tapping into the full potential of the labor force and to advance solutions to rooting out exclusionary practices and marginalization. The workshop panelists will share data and information that will facilitate discourse on questions such as:

Potential research topics may include (but are not limited to):

* Social and organizational policies necessary to address the “triple agenda”: protecting the dignity of work, sustaining organizational effectiveness, and advancing equity. For example, in light of rapid automation and artificial intelligence changing the labor market landscape, what are best practices for leveraging innovation while also advancing equity in the labor market? How can we enact a shift in focus from the responsibility of the individual to maintain collegial, fair and inclusive interactions in the workplace, to the responsibility of the organization? How can we challenge the negative perceptions creating implicit (or explicit) bias to employment and career advancement that face workers with arrest and conviction records, disabilities and others?
* How can organizations drive inclusion beyond the “usual dimensions of diversity” and create sustainable business practices that welcome people with records, people with disabilities and other marginalized communities?
* How can inclusive organizational cultures drive community engagement and collaboration, including engagement and collaboration among workers facing barriers to employment, across social, economic, cultural and other differences?
* What roles must political, corporate and local leadership play in the authentic practice of building inclusive work places? Given the accelerated pace of technology, how can leaders ensure that the use of artificial intelligence in hiring and management does not exacerbate exclusionary practices and bias against workers based on conviction status, race or gender? How can organizational cultures influence society at large?
* Share real-world examples of how inclusive leadership becomes embedded into organizational core values and practices in the private, public and non-profit sectors. Share real-world strategies for introducing inclusive principles into the emerging artificial intelligence technologies used in and by organizations, employers, and public agencies?

**Background**

Society can best be served when those who return from prison and those with arrest and conviction records can become fully engaged in civic life and not further burdened from the debts they have already repaid to society.

Gunnar Myrdal’s, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (Myrdal 1944) became a seminal study describing the conflict between America’s Creed - that individualism, civil liberty and equal opportunity are available to all and each person can achieve economic success based upon hard work and ambition – and the reality that many Americans are trapped and unable to ascend beyond their present economic and societal circumstances due to systemic structures and barriers.

***Mass Incarceration***

Emsellem & Ziedenberg (2015) find that approximately 70 million adults (about 1 in 3) have a felony or serious misdemeanour arrest or conviction record that can be found in a background check or otherwise be a barrier to employment.[[1]](#endnote-1) According to *Women’s Mass Incarceration* (2018), incarceration rates for women have grown at twice the rate of men over the last few decades. There are over 200,000 women are in jail or prison and 60% are under local control without conviction and awaiting control. Eighty percent of women in jail are mothers and the primary care giver for their children.[[2]](#endnote-2) On average states have 123 mandatory bans and restrictions for would be workers with felony convictions from employment in occupations and industries that require occupational licensing. Moreover, other related collateral consequences of having a conviction record include restrictions on access to government subsidized housing, food stamps, and other assistance programs. Frederickson & Omli (February 2016) highlight how these constraints along with the resurgence of the criminalization of poverty serve to reinforce and continue the existing racial wealth gap.[[3]](#endnote-3)

In the throes of mass incarceration and mass criminalization, a self-imposed trade-off between public safety and economic opportunity (created or attained) has emerged. According to a July 2016 report by the U.S. Department of Education, spending on prisons and jails has increased at triple the rate of funding for public education for preschool through grade 12 in the last three decades. Since 1990, spending on higher education has been largely flat while spending on corrections has increased 89%.[[4]](#endnote-4)

*Out of Prison & Out of Work* (July 2018) finds that “formerly incarcerated people are unemployed at a rate of over 27% [which is] – higher than the total U.S. unemployment rate during any historical period including the Great Depression nearly 5 times higher than the general U.S. population” for Black women and Black men ages 35 – 44 the unemployment rates within the first two years of release are 10 times and 8 times, respectively of the unemployment rates of white men in the same age group. Their study concludes “exclusionary policies and practices – not individual failings of criminalized people – are responsible for the labor market inequities.” This is in contradiction to evidence that in work settings including the military, people with records have lower turnover rates, better retention, and more promotions while attrition due to poor performance is no worse than other employees. [[5]](#endnote-5)

***Cost of the Carceral State***

*Collateral Costs: Incarceration’s Effect on Economic Mobility* (Pew Charitable Trust 2010) finds that incarceration exacerbates these problems by its enduring negative impact upon the ability of ex-offenders to find, retain, and advance in employment which in turn stunts the economic mobility of those with felony records. Incarceration lowers the absolute economic mobility of the formerly incarcerated. A twenty year review those men in the bottom fifth earnings distribution found that two-thirds remain at the bottom of the earnings ladder compared to one-third of men not incarcerated. One conclusion of the report is that “children of incarcerated parents, who are more likely to begin in the bottom rung of the ladder and more likely to struggle in school and experience turmoil in their families, will find themselves in similar economic position as adults.” (p. 26)[[6]](#endnote-6)

Results from *Equality of Opportunity Project* ([www.equality-of-opportunity.org](http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org) March 2018) show that the black-white gap in upward mobility is driven by environmental factors that can be changed, however many of the proposed solutions such as those that focus on improving economic outcomes in a single generation, will be insufficient to narrow racial disparities in the long run. The more promising solutions must engage efforts that cross neighborhoods and class distinctions. Examples of such interventions are: to reduce discrimination in criminal justice, efforts to reduce racial bias among whites, mentoring black boys and efforts to facilitate greater interaction across racial groups.[[7]](#endnote-7)

Economic marginalization is augmented by justice involvement and this can harm the economy. In 2014, job loss and unemployment penalties borne by former prisoners and people with felony convictions were estimated to have caused a loss of $78 billion to $87 billion in annual GDP.[[8]](#endnote-8) Mass incarceration and criminalization weaken communities and the economy by perpetuating low labor-force participation as well as generational and concentrated poverty. As the returns on mass incarceration diminish, it is time to invest in alternatives for formerly incarcerated youths and adults.

***Pathways Forward***

Everyone suffers as a result of justice involvement, including those directly impacted and their families, as well as their communities, and taxpayers. U.S. taxpayers spend more annually to incarcerate than the federal government spends on education.[[9]](#endnote-9)

The money spent on incarceration would be better spent on training or education, critical infrastructure projects, or alternatives to incarceration that could help lower the rate of recidivism, improve public health, narrow the skills gap, mitigate violence and build economic mobility. Mass incarceration also contributes to the destruction of families. Far too many kids are losing their parents, resulting in extensive social and economic consequences. From a public safety perspective, law enforcement spends too much time and effort policing people who cannot re-integrate successfully without the proper assistance. In the State of Illinois and throughout the United States, we disproportionately punish those who are poor, black and brown, and we underserve people with arrest and conviction records (people with records), their families and their communities. Instead of relying on failed incarceration policies and practices, we should turn to programs with track records of success and policies that remove barriers to opportunity for those with records. Several studies confirm the efficacy of community-based employment training and job assistance programs for people with records. According to the Illinois Sentencing and Policy Advisory Council’s Cost-Benefit Analysis, employment training/job assistance in the community yields the highest benefit to cost ratio of $20.26 to $1.[[10]](#endnote-10)

Jeffrey Korzenik (2018), Chief Investment Strategist, Fifth Third Bank, states that our accelerating U.S. growth cannot be sustained because we are running into a major roadblock – we are running out of workers. We need to find an additional one million to two million workers to keep our expansion on track. He recommends turning to one of our most underappreciated resources: “second-chancers”. To do so, he recommends critical steps: identifying and preparing job ready candidates, removing barriers to employment, and ongoing support during employment.[[11]](#endnote-11)

***Resistance in the age of Artificial Intelligence***

*A Future That Works: AI, Automation, Employment, and Productivity* (2017) a report of the McKinsey Global Institute is based upon a two year study of automation technologies and their effects. The study emphasizes the benefits of machine learning and the broad potential it holds across all industries. Over the long run, it is projected to be good for business (innovation, transformation, productivity, etc.) and good for the economy (growth in GDP) but there are some areas of social and economic challenges (jobs, wages, skills, training, dislocation, transition, distributional issues and acceptance) and other issues of concern (transparency, openness, safety, cyber-security, and ethics).[[12]](#endnote-12) A consideration for the field of artificial intelligence and machine learning that appears to get less attention than development is safety – safety looks at the potential impacts in machine learning systems i.e. the unintended and harmful behaviors that emerge from poor design of real-world AI systems.

Emerging research reveals the consequences of this poor design are further entrenching the inequities of policing policy[[13]](#endnote-13) and employment discrimination through the use of algorithms.[[14]](#endnote-14) In *Weapons of Math Destruction: How big data increases in equality and threatens democracy (2016),* Cathy O’Neil reveals the ubiquitous but obscured use of algorithms in ever sphere of civic life. Engineers develop algorithms that employers use to sort resumes and evaluate workers in ways that sort out people with “black names.” However, these algorithms have been shown to “learn” the biases in ways the reinforce privilege for white males and exclusion for women[[15]](#endnote-15) and African American applicants.[[16]](#endnote-16) More directly, Safiya Umoja Noble recent research in *Algorithms Oppression: How search engines reinforce racism[[17]](#endnote-17),* examines how the use of data – given its dependence on data with embedded bias – replicates the racism and exclusion that policies and cultural cues have perpetuated against African Americans, to the particular disadvantage of African American women. These new technologies are “learning” race and status discrimination in ways that can entrench exclusion and inequity.

The use of artificial intelligence and applicant tracking software should not be used as a replacement of human expertise. In concert with these technology tools, we have to be alert to the possible biases that are embedded in pre-hire assessments such as job simulations and culture fit assessment. Best practices in hiring people with records include:

* Creating datasets that have been built from the ground up with a focus on inclusion, diversity and representation.
* Removing inappropriate filters and screening procedures, such as asking the dates of last or current employment that automatically eliminate unemployed and long-term unemployed applications.
* Monitoring online application processes to identify bias reinforcing “knock out” questions that only allow an applicant to be considered if they answer a certain way (e.g. filtering by “employment status, dates of current employment, if dates of previous employment are more than six months old, asking a mandatory question on current job details, failure to affirm may contact current employer, lack of valid driver's license when driving is not a part of the position description, credit inquiries).

In its present application the trend line of artificial intelligence is skewed towards the status quo. Those with the power of design and development do not reflect the marginalized populations, and the application of the technology disadvantages the populations that are currently stigmatized or marginalized. But the technology is new and not beyond intervention. Experts[[18]](#endnote-18) agree that artificial intelligence can be used to promote diversity inclusion: by creating more diversity among the engineers and developers who create the algorithms and by minimizing the data that is the basis for machine learning.[[19]](#endnote-19) How might organizations that have pursued inclusion in employment practices direct their attention to efforts to imbue artificial intelligence with learning that promotes diversity? In this way, artificial intelligence could become a tool for resisting inequality.

**Workshop Participants/Roles (***Panelists/Facilitators)*

Safer Foundation

* Victor B. Dickson, CEO/President
* Harry Alston, Jr. PhD. Vice President, Strategic Planning & Development
* Sodiqa Williams, ESQ., General Counsel & Vice President External Affairs

Founded in 1972 and serving almost 5200 clients in 2018, of which over 2800 found employment, **Safer Foundation (Safer)** is a Chicago based social impact organization and 501(c)3 operating in the community reentry space, providing services exclusively for people with arrest and conviction records. Safer’s integrated service delivery model is a result of over 46 years of experience, informed by recognized best practices in reentry and workforce development studies, conducted by scholars such as Edward Latessa (2011), Harry Holzer (2009), and Shawn Bauldry (2009) and organizations such as Public/Private Ventures, The Urban Institute, Pew Charitable Trust, and Vera Institute. Safer’s model includes employment preparation and placement, case management, support services, vocational training, education services, financial services, criminal justice policy and advocacy leadership and hiring best practice technical assistance. Safer invests in economic mobility and human capital by helping reentering citizens overcome barriers to securing and maintaining employment.

Safer’s mission is: *To support, through a full spectrum of services, the efforts of people with arrest and conviction records to become employed, law-abiding members of the community, and as a result, reduce recidivism*. Safer’s overarching goals are: *To grow our purpose, presence and people*.

Our work ultimately seeks to break the cycle of recidivism and poverty for individuals living in low-income, limited opportunity communities. Incarceration has enduring negative impact upon the ability of people with criminal records to find, retain and advance in employment, thus stunting the economic mobility of those with felony records. We focus on helping our clients secure and maintain jobs because we understand that employment offers the best chance at successful re-entry.

JFF – Jobs For the Future

* Lucretia Murphy, JD., PhD., Senior Director

[JFF](https://www.jff.org/) drives change in the American workforce and education systems to promote economic advancement for all, through strategy, research, scale and influence. We work at the national, state, and local levels to bridge education, workforce, and policy within regions of all sizes. We bring together stakeholders that share the goal of expanding economic opportunity and help them collaborate effectively.

* Strategy: We provide expert consulting to shape ideas into action to transform workforce and education systems.
* Research: We analyze labor market information with cutting-edge techniques to build the most effective approach for each state and region.
* Scale: We create, implement, and scale innovative solutions through national networks that expand access to economic advancement.
* Influence: We shape policy that strengthens the labor market at the federal, state, and local levels. We drive the conversation for education, workforce, and industry leadership nationwide.

Putting “people over systems” JFF works at the intersection of policy and practice, research and reform to bring traditional and disruptive (technology or new economy) strategies to bear on long-standing challenges of equity and access that marginalize young people and adults because of race, class, immigrant status, and gender and populations stigmatized by disability, conviction status.

**Brief Bios of Panel Members**

**Harry Alston, Jr., Ph.D.** **Vice President** **Strategic Planning & Development – Safer Foundation**, excels in working as part of inter-disciplinary teams where he can contribute the full breadth of his experience as consultant, professor of higher education, scholar practitioner, and creative problem solver in service to building group-centered leadership solutions to issues of social & economic justice. During his career, he has established a track record for programs and initiatives that increase business capacity develop organizational infrastructures and strengthen human resource capability. His areas of expertise are strategic planning, program development, project management, process improvement, and capacity building in community-based organizations. Dr. Alston completed his Ph.D. in Leadership and Change at Antioch University where his emphasis was on leadership and community development. He earned a Bachelor of Industrial Administration degree from General Motors Institute of Technology and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from Indiana University He is Level II Certified in the TMZ/Berlitz Cross Cultural Orientations Approach.

**Victor B. Dickson is the President /CEO of Safer Foundation in Chicago IL**. The Safer Foundation is a national leader in the fields of community corrections, reentry, workforce development and criminal justice reform policy & advocacy. Through a comprehensive suite of programs and services, Safer Foundation assists people facing barriers to employment, including those with arrest & conviction records. The core of Safer’s mission is job preparation and placement, providing “a road back” for individuals to become employed, productive, contributing members of society. Mr. Dickson brings a unique blend of leadership experience to the Safer Foundation. His experience includes more than 20 years in the corporate sector with AT&T and Sprint where he was National Vice President Sales Support & Infrastructure Services. In this role Victor led a team of more than 3500 network & systems engineers, software developers and technical account consultants, supporting national and multi-national business clients. His team was responsible for maintaining an $11B revenue stream.

Victor is a member of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Advisory Council, the Illinois Human Services Commission, the Illinois Workforce Investment Opportunity Board and the Cook County Commission on Social Innovation. Mr. Dickson is also a board member of the Chicago Social Enterprise Alliance, Manufacturing Renaissance and served as a member of the City of Chicago Police Accountability Task Force.

Mr. Dickson is a graduate of Roosevelt University in Chicago.

Victor and his wife Talese have four children and reside in Chicago.

**Lucretia Murphy, J.D., Ph.D. is a Senior Director at JFF**, helping low-skilled adults advance to family-supporting careers while enabling employers to build and sustain a productive workforce. Lucretia's work focuses on place-based initiatives, developing integrated education and workforce development pathways that enable young people and adults to earn credentials that are in high demand in their local economy. This work also includes addressing structural barriers to success for individuals of low-income and of color.

Prior to working for JFF, Lucretia was the executive director of the See Forever Foundation and Maya Angelou Schools. As executive director, she oversaw the operations of three schools—a middle school, high school, and school for young adults aged 16–24—that served young people either at risk of dropping out or who have already dropped out of school. In this role, Lucretia also served on policy and program committees with district agencies to develop policies to support the success of opportunity youth in Washington, DC. Prior to serving as executive director, Lucretia worked for JFF, advancing community efforts to improve outcomes for opportunity youth. She also did research and programming for the Kellogg Forum for Higher Education for the Public Good at the University of Michigan.

**Sodiqa Williams is Vice President for External Affairs at the Safer Foundation,** where she also serves as General Counsel. Ms. Willams’ focus for more a decade has been on government relations, public advocacy and constituent services. She has advocated locally and nationally to advance a progressive agenda for people with arrest or conviction records, including promoting policies and practices that reduce recidivism, eliminating barriers to reentry, creating opportunities in high skill and high wage jobs and educating employers. Previously, she served as the Senior Presidential Advisor at the American Bar Association, and had been a project manager at Conlon & Dunn Public Strategies, a public relations and government affairs firm. She also worked for 8th Ward Alderwoman Michelle Harris and then-Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn. Ms. Williams earned her undergraduate degree In Politics from Princeton University and her JD from Chicago-Kent College of Law with a specialization in energy/environmental law. She was sworn into the Illinois bar on November 10, 2011 and is a member in good standing in the State Bar of Illinois. Sodiqa serves on the boards of Smart Policy Works and Faith in Place.

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