

# Reimagining Workplace Protections: A Policy Agenda to Meet the Needs of Independent and Temporary Workers

## Speaker Biographies

**Vanessa Bain** is a former educator from Silicon Valley that began working full-time as an Instacart Shopper in 2016. She has been grassroots organizing Instacart Shoppers for over four years and has organized several national walkouts, boycotts, and direct actions over labor grievances and workplace safety in the grocery gig economy. Organizing successes include securing PPE for hundreds of thousands of essential gig workers, the repayment of millions of dollars of misappropriated tips, and the reinstatement of in-app tipping. In January, Bain cofounded Gig Workers' Collective, a worker collective that fosters worker-led worker organizing and advocacy in the gig economy. In the past year, Bain and Gig Workers' Collective have partnered with organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Public Rights Project, and Coworker on generative worker-centric research and data about the gig economy. Bain is passionate about building worker power, policy, intersectional organizing, social and economic justice. This year, Bain has been featured as a speaker at the Future of Workers Summit, Public Rights Project's AB5 Convening, Worker Institute at Cornell's plenary panel, and Human Rights Watch's US Elections Forum. In October she was a featured presenter at the American Institute for Public Health's Annual Meeting on the topic of Organizing the Gig Economy for Social Justice. She has recorded segments with Working People, The Run-Up, Socialist Alternative, Human Rights Watch, TechCrunch Mixtape, Pivot Schooled, Good Morning America, NPR, Al Jazeera English, NBC, CNN, PBS, ABC, and KQED among others.

**Dave DeSario** is the Director of Temp Worker Justice, the national non-profit organization for temporary workers. He has been a temporary worker many times over, in both blue- and white-collar work, and his experiences led him to become an advocate for others. Dave is a volunteer member of the NORA Services Sector Committee with the National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health, advising on government research priorities related to safety in staffing. While working as a temp in 2009 he created the leading website for information on temp staffing issues (formerly TemporaryEmployees.org), connecting with hundreds of temps across the country to provide resources and referrals. In 2015, he produced the award-winning documentary about temp work, *A Day's Work*. The film has been used in education, training, and outreach with more than 150 national and local organizations, building capacity for collective action on temp staffing issues.

**Rafael Espinal** is the new Executive Director of Freelancers Union. Before taking on the new role, Rafael Espinal became New York's youngest elected official when he joined the State Assembly at age 26 and served in the City Council from 2014 - 2020. The son of Dominican immigrants who were traditional union members as well as freelancers, Rafael naturally became a leader fighting on behalf of workers, small businesses, artists, and low-income communities. Rafael has been a steadfast advocate for freelancer rights throughout his career. On the City Council, he was an early supporter and a co-sponsor of the first-of-its-kind Freelance Isn't Free legislation that passed in New York City in 2016, giving freelancers unprecedented protection from nonpayment and late payment. He co-sponsored a bill passed in 2019 to extend protections against harassment and discrimination to independent workers under the City's Human Rights Law. Rafael's other legislative accomplishments on the City Council include leading the repeal of New York's notorious "no dancing" Cabaret Law—which had been used to target black-owned clubs, gay bars, and underground creative venues since the Prohibition Era—and the establishment of the city's new Office of Nightlife. As only the third leader of Freelancers Union since its

founding in 1995, Rafael is committed to engaging with freelancers across the country, listening to their concerns, amplifying their voices in important policy debates, and continuing to strengthen and expand a movement that serves a broad spectrum of independent workers and helps them thrive in a fast-changing economy.

**Jaribu Hill** is a Civil and Human Rights Attorney and community organizer. She is Founder and Executive Director of the Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights. Hill is an author and an international spokesperson on Civil and Human Rights topics. A former safety and health specialist with NYCOSH, Hill advocates for safe workplaces and humane treatment of workers in Mississippi. Through her organization, Attorney Hill has provided legal representation and advocacy for hundreds of workers in the state. Hill and the Center have successfully joined with Mississippi workers to improve workplace conditions and force employers to adopt and enforce policies against racial harassment and all forms of discrimination. Joining workers in their fight against workplace human rights abuses is at the very core of the work! To date, the Center has successfully represented victims of workplace sexual and race harassment and retaliated and joined with workers to provide trainings and listening sessions. Jaribu is a former Skadden Fellow and a 2020 recipient of the American Public Health Association's OHS Section Tony Mazzocchi Award.

**Shelly Steward** is an economic sociologist and applied scholar who studies the changing nature of work. She serves as Associate Director of Research at the Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative, where she leads work identifying the challenges faced by workers today and developing policy-based solutions to address those challenges and build a more equitable economy, and is a postdoctoral research fellow with the Fairwork Foundation, based at the Oxford Internet Institute. She is an expert on nonstandard work arrangements and the gig economy, and is lead author of the Gig Economy Data Hub in collaboration with Cornell University's ILR School. She also teaches courses on technology and tech policy for the University of California's Washington Program. Shelly received her PhD in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, where she was a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellow. She holds an AB with highest honors in sociology from Harvard. Prior to graduate school, she was a middle school science teacher in South Dakota through Teach for America.

**Molly Weston Williamson** is Director of Paid Leave and Future of Work and Senior Staff Attorney at A Better Balance. Her work has appeared in the Yale Law Journal, the Connecticut Journal of Public Interest Law, and the NYU Journal of Legislation and Public Policy. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Authority. She clerked for the Hon. Thomas L. Ambro of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, graduated Phi Beta Kappa with high honors from Swarthmore College, and received her JD from Yale Law School.

**Jenny R. Yang** is a senior fellow in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute, where she is developing the new Workplace Equity Initiative. As structural and technological changes transform work, she is working to revitalize our country's workplace laws and employment practices to build a future that advances opportunity for all to work with dignity. She served as chair, vice chair, and commissioner of the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) from 2013 to 2018. Under her leadership, the commission launched the Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace to identify innovative solutions to prevent harassment at work. Yang led efforts to tackle systemic barriers to opportunity, including enhancing the EEOC's annual data collection to include employer reporting of pay data and studying the EEOC's systemic work over the past decade, culminating in the public report, *Advancing Opportunity: A Review of EEOC's Systemic Program*. Yang created new procedures for public input on guidance documents to promote transparency and launched digital systems to facilitate online charge information. Yang is also a strategic partner with Working IDEAL, where she assists employers in comprehensive harassment prevention efforts, independent investigations, and in the design and implementation of employment practices to promote diversity, inclusion and equality of opportunity.