

Dept of Social Science – Job Talk

Work and Labour Studies (WKLS)

Simon Black

Dates

Monday,
April 29

Times:

Research

Presentation

10:00 am
– 11:30 am

Teaching

Presentation

2:00 pm
– 3:30 pm

Location:

701 Ross
South

All sessions will be
open to faculty &
students.

Light catering will
be available.

Make Child Care Great Again: Race, Anti-Unionism, and the Potential Unmaking of Home Care Worker Unionism



Photo Credit: Liz Cooke,
jacobin.com

Research Presentation Abstract: In the wake of the 2014 US Supreme Court decision in *Harris vs. Quinn*, conservative foundations launched state-level anti-union campaigns aimed at convincing publicly subsidized home health care and home child care providers to become “union free”, i.e. to opt-out of paying agency or “fair share” fees. As part of the broader attack on public sector unions, these campaigns seek to roll back the gains made by some of the lowest-paid and most marginalized workers in the economy while depleting union treasuries and undercutting labour support for the Democratic Party. These campaigns have not been race neutral: conservative foundations and allied anti-union actors have targeted their appeals to white home health care and home child care providers in rural and suburban areas. In this paper, I examine anti-union propaganda in two such campaigns and unpack the relationship between race, gender, anti-unionism, and the potential unmaking of home care worker unionism. I explore how anti-union propaganda makes a direct appeal to white home care providers that draws on racialized and gendered tropes that simultaneously connect home care worker unionism to women of color, to welfare, and to the urban. Following David Roediger, I argue that whiteness as an identity is what some providers embrace *instead of* class-consciousness. In this respect, whiteness is at the very core of conservative campaigns to dismantle home care worker unionism and in order for home care worker unions to survive and thrive in a ‘Right-to-Work’ climate, they will have to counter such campaigns with anti-racism organizing that fosters class consciousness among providers who identify as white and builds worker solidarity across race and geography.

Simon Black is an Assistant Professor of Labour Studies at Brock University. His research employs a feminist political economy approach to the study of work and labour in urban, national and transnational contexts and explores how race, class, gender, citizenship/migration shape social reproduction and the organization of both paid and unpaid work.