



May 31, 2012 - What every business should know about employing people with conviction histories

Panel

Esta R. Bigler established and directs Cornell University ILR's Labor and Employment Law Program, convening social scientists and attorneys to address labor and employment law and workplace issues to influence litigation and public policy decisions. Her focus areas include the use of criminal records as a screening device for employment, the impact of employment on reducing recidivism, employer attitudes toward hiring people with criminal records and the collateral consequences of incarceration.

A graduate of the ILR School and Georgetown University, Ms. Bigler was previously a field attorney with the National Labor Relations Board, deputy director/general counsel of New York City's Bureau of Labor Services, and director of Cornell's New York City Extension Program which provides training, education and research for professional adults. She continues to teach labor and employment law to ILR undergraduates in Ithaca and adult students in New York City.

Alphonso David is an attorney with experience in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. He currently serves as Deputy Secretary for Civil Rights for New York State Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, where he works on a full range of legal, policy, legislative and operational matters affecting civil rights throughout the State. Prior to accepting this post, he served as Special Deputy Attorney General for Civil Rights for the Office of the New York State Attorney General, where he supervised Assistant Attorneys General, and legal and administrative staff in the Bureau, as well as strategic planning, case development, policy analysis and community outreach.

Prior to joining the Attorney General's Office, Mr. David served as Deputy Commissioner for Operations and Special Counselor to the Commissioner for the New York State Division of Human Rights. He also previously served as a Staff Attorney at Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund where he litigated cases relating to marriage, parenting rights, discrimination in schools and access to health care. Prior to working in public and non-profit sectors, he served as Corporate Counsel for Canyon at Peace Park; and a Litigation Associate at the law firm, Blank Rome LLP. David began his legal career as a judicial clerk to the Honorable Clifford Scott Green in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Mr. David also serves as an Adjunct Professor of Law at Fordham University School of Law and Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

Amy L. Solomon serves as Senior Advisor to the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice. Ms. Solomon established and co-chairs the federal interagency reentry working group, which supports the Cabinet-level Reentry Council and is now comprised of 20 federal agencies. Ms. Solomon also represents the Department of Justice in other interagency efforts focused on urban policy, public safety, and place-based strategies. Prior to joining the Department of Justice in 2010, Ms. Solomon spent 10 years at the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center, directing a large portfolio of policy-oriented projects relating to prisoner reentry and community supervision. Ms. Solomon published widely and provided expertise to the Institute, external organizations, and the media on reentry and public safety issues.

Ms. Solomon previously worked at the Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice, where she developed crime policy and community crime-reduction initiatives; drafted speeches, articles, and white papers for senior Department officials; and provided a research basis for emerging crime policy initiatives. She contributed to the development of the national prisoner reentry agenda, involved in crafting and implementing the initial reentry court and reentry partnership initiatives. Ms. Solomon has also managed a community service program for ex-offenders, developed reentry strategies for a state Department of Correction, and worked with juveniles in detention, probation, and school settings.

Ms. Solomon received the 2011 Attorney General's Award for Outstanding Contributions by a New Employee for Exceptional Leadership to the Cabinet-Level Reentry Council. She holds a Master in Public Policy from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Fernando Santiago is Fedcap Building Manager at the Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island, where he oversees a team of 13 workers who maintain the two national landmarks. Mr. Santiago, who earned his GED while serving eight years in New York State prison, completed Fedcap custodial training in 2003 and became a Fedcap employee that year. In 2011, he was recognized for Outstanding Achievement, Career Advancement and Exceptional Character in the Workplace.