

EconLab Opportunity for 2024-25: RA for the Center for Economic History

Title: Research Assistant, Center for Economic History

Openings: Three

Project Description:

The Center for Economic History at Northwestern seeks students to assist with data collection for a project focused on the role of the Black Church in impacting historical Black-White economic mobility gaps in the US. The economic mobility of Black Americans has lagged far behind that of their White counterparts and continues to do so today. In this project, we study the role of religious institutions as a determinant of this observed economic mobility gap. We hypothesize that Black churches may improve intergenerational outcomes for members by providing informal economic insurance. Simultaneously, we expect that strong ties to their churches can also prevent Black individuals from migrating to take advantage of faraway economic opportunities, thus reducing both geographic and economic mobility. Our analysis aims to help scholars understand which of these mechanisms dominates, while shedding light on the historic role of the Black Church in shaping Black economic history and development relative to Whites. At a broad level, this project also serves to explore both how and why religious institutions matter for determining socioeconomic outcomes, particularly with regard to the persistent mobility gaps observed across different racial groups.

Position Description:

This project is currently in the data collection and preliminary analysis phase. RAs will assist with collecting and digitizing of data on locations and founding dates of historical Black Churches up until 1920. Data sources include books, archival records, and Church convention records. Using these sources, RAs will manually collect information on Black Churches and help construct a comprehensive database of historical Black Churches. This position is expected to last until at least the end of fall 2024 quarter and there is possibility of continuation in winter and spring.

Application Requirements:

Interested applicants should email mrashid@u.northwestern.edu a copy of their transcript, resume and a paragraph describing their interest in this project and position. We expect to conclude hiring by the start of fall quarter.