

**SECTION ON MINORITY GROUPS
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN LAW SCHOOLS**

2025 AALS Conference Program

“Teaching Abolition”

The AALS Section on Minority Groups (SOMG) invites submissions for the “Teaching Abolition” program at the 2025 AALS Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California. The program will be held on Wednesday, January 8, 2025, from 2:40 PM to 4:10 PM.

This panel will explore the emerging field of abolitionist pedagogy and its applications to law teaching. Abolitionist thinking draws from the centuries-long abolitionist movement to end the trans-Atlantic slave trade and abolish the institution of slavery around the world. In the United States, this revolutionary movement, which culminated in the U.S. Civil War and the 13th Amendment’s abolition of slavery “except as punishment for crime,” provides a vital historical grounding for today’s abolitionist scholars and activists. Contemporary abolitionist thought is increasingly central to debates over criminal law, policing, incarceration and other modes of punishment and control. Like the original anti-slavery abolitionists, today’s abolitionists call for eliminating oppressive legal, political, and economic systems, such as prisons, police, and exploitative labor markets, while building alternative institutions to address social issues through a restorative, transformative framework rooted in human rights and racial justice.

The panelists will share approaches for teaching abolition across the law school curriculum, from first-year criminal law to seminars on civil rights, family law, immigration, business law, and more. Topics may include: positioning abolitionist thought alongside traditional theories of punishment (retribution, utilitarianism) in criminal law; teaching the historical lineages of abolition, from the anti-slavery movement to prison industrial complex; confronting and de-normalizing the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and other systems of oppression in private and commercial law; engaging with works by leading abolitionist scholars like Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Allegra McLeod, Dean Spade and others; and cultivating students’ “radical imagination” to envision liberating alternatives to oppressive legal systems.

The panel will equip law faculty to teach abolition not just as a theoretical lens, but as an urgently relevant social movement reshaping law and policy. Presenters will share syllabi, assignment ideas, and classroom strategies for linking abolitionist ideas to doctrinal courses and clinical work. They will model how to create spaces for students to grapple with abolitionist praxis as both a descriptive account and radical horizon for law’s transformation. By foregrounding abolitionist perspectives, this panel seeks to empower legal educators to produce lawyers capable of dismantling the interlocking systems of racial, economic and carceral oppression inscribed in law.

We invite anyone interested in participating on this panel to send a 500 to 1000-word abstract to Marissa Jackson Sow at mjackso4@richmond.edu. Questions about the session or application process may also be directed to Professor Jackson Sow. **The submission deadline is Friday, August 9, 2024.**