EARN Webinar:
Pathways for Hiring People with Disabilities into Clean Energy Jobs
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Featured Panelists

Melissa Shetler
Senior Training and Education Associate
Climate Jobs Institute

Melissa Shetler began her labor career as a community organizer with the Laborers’ Eastern Region Organizing Fund, working to build multi-stakeholder coalitions to ensure quality and labor standards in affordable housing. She was the Director of Organizing and later Political Director for the Ironworkers Local 46, and served as the Executive Director of Pathways to Apprenticeship, a direct entry pre-apprenticeship program focused on union career opportunities for residents of public housing and justice-involved individuals.

Melissa is a program presenter for Michigan State University’s Building Trades Academy where she teaches strategic organizing. She has an M.A. in Adult Learning and Leadership from Columbia University’s Teachers College and a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies from SUNY Empire State College.
As a Training and Education Associate, Zach Cunningham works with labor partners and state-based climate jobs coalitions to develop educational programs and resources that engage union members and leaders in the fight to tackle climate change through high-quality, union job creation. In addition, he is currently studying the role pre-apprenticeship programs play in creating a diverse, equitable clean energy economy.

Before joining the Climate Jobs Institute, Zach was a high school teacher and worked as a labor educator with the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), Local 1000 AFSCME. He holds a Master of Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell’s ILR School and sits on the United Association for Labor Education board.
Jason Shaw was born and raised in Texas. With the discovery he was Deaf at the age of 2, he was mainstreamed at Richardson Independent School until graduating high school. He attended Gallaudet University followed by University of North Texas, until he was encouraged by his grandfather to enter the electrical trade. Jason’s grandfather worked for Dallas Power and Light (now Oncor) for over 36 years as linesman and eventually became an electrical engineer with no college degree. Jason Shaw is now a master electrician, with over 28 years of experience in the electrical trade including building controls and solar PV systems. He also owns an electrical contractor business in Texas.

Jason has been actively working to get more Deaf people into the electrical trade. In recognition of his efforts, Jason received two awards for Employer of the Year in 2015, from Austin Mayor’s Committee on People with Disabilities and the Texas Governor’s Lex Frieden Employment Award with Blue Paw Energy Service. In addition, he and several other Deaf businesses owners co-founded the Texas Deaf Chamber of Commerce, which became the nation’s first state Deaf Chamber of Commerce in 2021. Jason is currently the president of the Chamber, and one of the projects he is involved with is to establish registered apprenticeship programs, starting with the electrical trade, to bring more Deaf and hard of hearing people into these fields.

Since 2022, Jason has worked for ENGIE North America as the master electrician of record for Texas with distributed solar and storage, where he reviews and approves designs for solar PV installations while handling permits. In addition, he serves as the regional service manager for Texas and manages the operations and maintenance of solar PV systems in Texas.
As the director of DEI and Culture at ENGIE North America, Tutu Adeniran leads the development and implementation of DEI initiatives that align with the company's vision and values. She has over 14 years of experience in internal audit and finance, which enables her to assess and improve the processes and policies that foster a diverse and inclusive workplace. Tutu is a certified public Accountant (CPA) and a Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE), as well as a graduate of the Leadership Master Series at UC Berkeley.

Tutu’s mission is to make careers in the clean energy industry accessible to all, and to support senior leaders in navigating the complex challenges they face in the culture and DEI space. She enjoys working collaboratively with employee resource groups (ERGs), senior leaders, culture councils, and business managers to drive cultural change and promote inclusion. She successfully established the first ERG for Black employees, developed communications strategies for recognition of culturally significant days, and spearheaded process improvement efforts that resulted in significant cost savings and enhanced financial controls.
Derik Kendrick is a construction manager and co-owner of Axium Solar and Automated Controls, two thriving family-owned businesses. For 30 years, since joining the family business in 1994, he has dedicated himself to its growth and success. In 2008, they ventured into the renewable energy sector by establishing Axium Solar, where Derik oversees construction projects to ensure quality and efficiency. With about 150 employees, their companies have become leaders in the industry, driven by a passion for sustainability. Derik works alongside his father, son, brother, and nephews, fostering a collaborative work environment. Additionally, Derik heads up Axium Solar’s initiatives with the Deaf community, is fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), and helps work towards an inclusive work environment on job sites. Axium has received recognition from the Texas Governor’s office due to Derik’s leadership and example in this area. Outside of work, Derik enjoys vacationing, hunting, and spending time with his family. He is married with a teenage daughter at home and three wonderful grandchildren.

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