



Department SEMINARS

"Fighting racism with/in
economics? The Journey of
Phyllis A. Wallace"

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TUESDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2023
4:00 PM

Room Dono Giannessi, DEM



A B S T R A C T

In addition to gender, a large literature developed on the economics of racial discrimination, while racism and how to counter it remained blind spots in most economic models. This article describes Phyllis A. Wallace's work on discrimination and her practices as a government, and later think-tank, economist. Wallace graduated in economics (Yale, 1948) at a time when, as an African American woman, she could not access public facilities and conferences when held in the South. After a career at the CIA, she led the technical research of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the main agency that addressed racial and gender discrimination during the Johnson Administration's 'war on poverty.' Her work had a tremendous impact, especially on legislation passed in the early 1970s and on landmark lawsuits. The paper reconstructs Wallace's economic ideas on discrimination through her published works, as well as her practices of expertise outside, and activism within, the economics profession.

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