



We must make Pay Equity a Priority Every Day, Not Just April 20!

by Angela Walton

According to the most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the gap between men's and women's earnings **widened** between 2007 and 2008 from 78 percent to 77 percent for all year-round workers. Women of color are impacted even more; African-American women earned 30 percent less and Latinas earned 42 percent less than did men as a whole. To match men's earnings for 2009, women will have to work from January 2009 through April 2010. This year, Equal Pay Day will be marked on Tuesday, April 20.

We've Come a Long Way, But Not Far Enough

Recent headlines such as "Top 75 Women in Business" in a recent edition of *Black Enterprise* magazine, lauding the accomplishments of exceptional women who have made it to senior level positions—including the coveted "C Suite"—may say to some that the glass ceiling has been shattered. Other stories of successful women such as Carly Fiorina (the former Chairman and CEO of Hewlett-Packard), Sherry Lansing, Martha Stewart, and Condoleezza Rice imply that "we've come a long way, baby."

Surely these examples coupled with the fact that women now make up over 48 percent of the workforce and are 62 percent of the students on today's college campuses suggest that we have arrived. Enrollment in the professional programs (business, law, and medicine) experienced the most dramatic gains. Enrollment in these programs rose from nine percent in 1970 to 47 percent in 2000. However, a closer examination of the "bread and butter" statistics suggests that we still have a lot of work to do before we close the gaps.

The general perception is that the earnings gap closes at the highest education levels; statistics continue to show that the opposite is true. In Georgia, for example, the gender pay gap is 71 percent amongst college graduates 25 and older; the median annual earnings for women is \$50,600, while the median income for men is \$70,800.

Many thanks to Angela Walton, our Public Policy chair, for putting together this very informational article. It will help Atlanta Branch members mark Pay Equity Day appropriately. Additional ideas on Pay Equity Day can be found on AAUW's national website. Thanks also are due to Alta Birdsong, who early on encouraged us to commemorate this day in a positive way.

-Mary Lynn Merkle, Co-president

For all workers in Georgia, the gender pay gap is 81 percent; the median annual income for women is \$32,900 for women and \$40,500 for men. Moreover, research released in April 2007 by AAUW shows that just one year out of college, women working full-time already earn less than their male colleagues, even when they work in the same field. Ten years after graduation, the pay gap widens.

In a recent survey conducted by the AFL-CIO, 99 percent of working women reported that equal pay is "extremely important." Almost one-third reported that their current job does not provide equal pay for equal work.

The Remedy for Wage Discrimination against Women and People of Color

Pay equity, also called comparable worth or fair pay, is a reform effort to pay different job titles the same based on their value to their employer regardless of the gender predominance of those working in such titles. It tackles the type of discrimination that occurs when jobs filled predominantly by women and/or people of color are paid less than other jobs, filled primarily by men, that require similar levels of skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions.

To continue the fight against wage discrimination, AAUW is urging the Senate to "act swiftly" on the Paycheck Fairness Act (s. 182/HT 12) to address the wage discrimination issues faced by women and people of color. The House has already passed the Paycheck Fairness Act and the Lilly Ledbetter Act with strong bipartisan support. The passage and support of these bills by both Houses of Congress is necessary to send the message that wage discrimination is unlawful and will not be tolerated.

The AAUW Atlanta Branch Can Make a Difference!

Here are some things we can do collectively and individually to promote awareness of this issue and change the wage landscape:

- Contact your Senators and urge them to support the Paycheck Fairness Act.
- Send a "Keep the Change" e-card to supporters to promote awareness of this issue.
- Host salary negotiation workshops and seminars on college campuses and in the community at large.
- Write letters to the editor(s) of local publications.

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- Assess your current skills and value you bring to the workplace.
- Benchmark your income by researching current salaries for similar positions in your field.
- Develop alternatives to your current situation through networking and professional relationships.
- Demonstrate value daily by focusing on the achievement of the organization's goals.
- Create Wage Clubs for women as a place to discuss wage discrimination issues and ways to overcome them.
- Partner with other community organizations to promote awareness of this issue.
- Encourage your place of business and the businesses you support to conduct a pay-equity audit.
- Call in to local radio talk shows to discuss Equal Pay Day.
- **Wear RED on Equal Pay Day to symbolize how far women and minorities are “in the red” with their pay!**

The wage gap will not be closed overnight, but it will be closed. It's going to take the effort of many to put an end to these practices. We as women must know and appreciate our value, demand that others respect our value, and be prepared to defend our value on the Capitol steps and in the workplace. ❖

Announcing A Possible New Project

by Mary Lynn Merkle

The Public Policy and College-University Relations chairs (Angela Walton and Betty Slater) are planning a project that will teach young women to negotiate with employers or potential employers for pay increases.

Angela has a background in workshop presentations particularly as it relates to the workplace, and she is willing to provide leadership for this project and to teach other interested Branch members to assist.

Betty, who has developed excellent relations with area colleges and universities and with student members, will assist Angela in finding women's groups to whom we can effectively deliver these workshops.

Stay tuned as the planning stages continue. And, of course, if you want to be a part of it all, contact Angela at 404/617-4735 and/or Betty at 404/237-6806. ❖

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