Black Women’s Unemployment Rate Remains High

Vicky Lovell

Despite some general improvement in the labor market in recent months, Black women’s employment remains extremely precarious. The overall unemployment rate, which rose from its pre-recession low of 3.9 percent in December 2000 to a recent high of 6.4 percent last June, floated down to 5.6 percent in January of this year. A look behind the overall numbers however, finds that Black women continue to face significant difficulty maintaining employment. In February 2004, unemployment for these workers was very high: 8.8 percent. In each of the last six months of 2003, nearly one of every ten Black women wanting a job remained without one (see figure right).

Disappointing employment opportunities for Black women are reflected not only in unemployment but also in declining labor force participation. Between 1999 and December 2003, the share of the adult Black female population that is actively in the labor force—either employed or seeking employment—fell by three percentage points. Black men and white men and women experienced only minor declines in labor force participation over this period (1.2, 1.0, and 0.1 percentage points, respectively).

Black workers always face a less welcoming labor market than white workers, and unemployment rates are economic gains since the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, women still earn less, are less likely to own a business, and are more likely to live in poverty than men. In fact, at the rate of progress achieved between 1989 and 2002, women would not achieve wage parity for more than 50 years!

New IWPR Report Addresses
Women’s Employment and Earnings: How Many More Years Until Equality?

Misha Werschkul and Jody Herman

The Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) is releasing a new report entitled Women’s Economic Status in the States: Wide Disparities by Race, Ethnicity, and Region to coincide with this year’s Equal Pay Day. The report is part of a ten-year Status of Women in the States project, and provides state-by-state data on women’s earnings, the wage gap, and poverty, disaggregated by race and ethnicity. IWPR’s new report shows that full-time year-round employed women still earn only 76.2 percent of what full-time year-round employed men earn. While women have made important economic gains since the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, women still earn less, are less likely to own a business, and are more likely to live in poverty than men. In fact, at the rate of progress achieved between 1989 and 2002, women would not achieve wage parity for more than 50 years! Generally speaking, women in Western and Northeastern states experience higher economic status than women in the Midwest and Southeast. In addition, despite some progress, racial and ethnic disparities are wide everywhere in the country. African American, Native American and Hispanic women all experience high-
Women and men often differ in the issues they consider important. For example, in a Washington Post/ABC News poll of 1,200 people conducted in early March, 72 percent of women but only 57 percent of men responded that education would be the single most important or a very important issue for them in making their choice in November’s presidential election. Health insurance will be extremely important for 72 percent of women, but only 56 percent of men; the situation in Iraq for 74 percent of women but only 64 percent of men. Women and men gave taxes about equal importance (62 and 61 percent). Terrorism was a slightly more important concern for men than women (80 percent vs. 77 percent).

According to the same poll, had the vote been held in early March, between only President Bush and Senator Kerry, Kerry would have had a 21 percentage point advantage with women (58 percent of women were for Kerry vs. 37 percent for Bush) and a 2 percentage point advantage with men (49 percent of men for Kerry vs. 47 percent for Bush). With Ralph Nader in the race, Kerry’s advantage among women falls but is still substantial (13 percentage points), whereas his advantage among men disappears (-2 percentage points).

IWPR is issuing as much information as we can throughout the election season. At a New Hampshire debate I attended the Sunday before that primary was held, I heard two of three candidates debating women’s issues cite data generated by IWPR. In 2000, both major candidates cited facts and figures from IWPR’s Status of Women in the States reports, as did several candidates for governor. This year IWPR is releasing States reports focusing on specific issues this spring and summer (women’s economic status now and working mothers and child care in June) and the remaining nine states reports will be released in October 2004.

Although the election season is long, it is not too early to get involved. Work for the candidates of your choice, express your views, mobilize your friends and neighbors.

Heidi Hartmann
Gender, Religion, and Civic Activism: IWPR’s New Project on Women’s Political Activism Within Interfaith Groups

Amy Caiazza and Carrie Hanlon

IWPR is beginning a new study that will explore women’s participation in interfaith social justice organizations. We hope that the study will analyze the successes and challenges that interfaith groups see in efforts to promote women’s leadership, as well as identify ways to inspire women’s political activism by analyzing how some interfaith groups successfully motivate women to participate and become leaders.

Some interfaith groups are predominantly run and staffed by women; and in a few groups, women are responsible for significant decision-making, planning, and other leadership roles. Women’s work in faith-based groups may be a particularly effective way to get them involved in public life as activists, as voters, as political leaders. This study will help determine how faith-based organizing successfully inspires women and enables them to develop their political skills. Further, the study will provide information that can keep women central to ongoing political debates about the relevance and contributions of religious values and faith-based organizations to government and public life.

The new study, sponsored by the Ford Foundation, will be conducted over the next year. The project will conduct interviews with leaders and activists in interfaith groups, as well as a public education effort to build bridges between interfaith and secular social justice leaders. In addition to researching women’s faith-based activism, IWPR will engage a diverse group of scholars, religious and women’s rights activists, and political leaders in discussions about how to motivate women’s political activism.

IWPR officially launched the new study on January 28 at a meeting of political leaders, activists, and scholars interested in women and religious organizing held at the Brookings Institution. Participants such as Kim Bobo of the National Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice, Dr. Martha Burk of the National Council of Women’s Organizations, the Hon. Mary Rose Oakar of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, and Dr. Theda Skocpol of Harvard University’s Department of Government contributed to spirited discussions of women’s involvement in faith-based organizations. With their first-hand experiences of work within interfaith groups, leaders such as Ms. Mary Gonzalez of the Gamaliel Foundation and Ms. Karen Olson of Family Promise offered an invaluable perspective. A researcher and author of books on faith-based organizing, Dr. Richard Wood of the University of New Mexico also presented his research at the meeting.

A Connection Unveiled: Tobacco Smoke and Breast Cancer

A. Judson Wells

One aspect of women’s health that is beginning to receive some attention is the probable connection between breast cancer and exposure to tobacco smoke, either from active smoking or from exposure to second hand smoke. Late last year the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) released for comment a draft of a report that updates their very well received 1997 report, Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke. In the new draft, based on 16 breast cancer studies, they state that there is conclusive evidence that passive smoking can cause breast cancer, and by implication, so can active smoking. In the 1997 report CalEPA said, based on the four studies they then had, that the association was suggestive but inconclusive. CalEPA’s conclusion regarding breast cancer flies in the face of what some of the “authorities” in the field have stated, specifically the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute. In spite of the fact that the medical literature on breast cancer and passive smoking has been building since 1985, the Cancer Society, in their current web page, says that women who start smoking in early adolescence might be at some increase in risk, but possible risk from passive smoking is not mentioned. The National Cancer Institute in 2003 did not include passive smoking as a risk factor for breast cancer. Now they say there is some suggestion of an association, but the evidence is weak.

Breast cancer is different from lung cancer in that the smoke does not contact the affected organ directly, but must be metabolized and circulated to the breast through the blood and lymph systems. There is considerable evidence that breast cancer, even late in life, results from exposure to cancer causing agents either during childhood or when the breast is developing between puberty and first pregnancy. By combining the results from the four best studies in the CalEPA draft, one can calculate an average increase in breast cancer risk of about 70 percent for passive smoking. When the active smokers were compared, as they should be, with the non-passively exposed never smokers, the increase in risk for active smoking was about 80 percent. Taken together, these increases in risk indicate that about 40 percent of all breast cancer is associated with exposure to tobacco smoke.

Studies that measure exposure at all stages of the life cycle are critical in analyzing women’s breast cancer (cont’d on p. 11)
support would help ensure that teachers are adequately compensated, that the quality of care is high, and that lower and middle-income families have equal access to quality care. Currently, low pay in the early care and education field leads to high turnover and difficulty retaining well-qualified providers, which in turn reduces the quality of care. Through improved access to quality care, government investments in publicly-funded pre-kindergarten would improve children’s cognitive, linguistic, and behavioral development.

According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, Georgia and Oklahoma are exemplary models of state-level universal pre-kindergarten programs. Georgia’s full-day program has provided universal classes for four-year olds since 1995 and in 2003 served a majority of four-year-olds. Oklahoma’s pre-kindergarten program allows all 4-year olds to participate and served 60 percent of all four-year-olds in 2003. The D.C. public school system is one of the few school districts that provide regular all-day classes for 3- and 4-year old children in each elementary school.

Other states have passed universal early care and education initiatives. In 2002, Florida passed a ballot initiative stating that every 4-year-old should be provided with high-quality pre-kindergarten learning by 2005. West Virginia has also passed legislation to implement universal pre-kindergarten programs by 2012. Louisiana’s State Board of Education has retreated from implementation of legislation passed in 2001 by increasing the number of districts that are not required to offer pre-kindergarten programs.

Recent studies suggest that a national universal pre-kindergarten initiative would receive broad public support. A recent poll by Lake Snell Perry found that the vast majority of voters feel that there is not enough affordable child care available. A majority of women, both Democrats and Republicans, believed that preschool education is important, and most women felt that there are not enough preschool programs. A poll of the Democratic Presidential primary candidates by Take Care Net found that all of the candidates supported public funding for universal, voluntary pre-school programs. In light of the strong demand for expanded early care and education, and a growing awareness of the need for supports to improve work-life balance, several major advocacy organizations are attempting to make early care and education a major issue in the 2004 Presidential campaign.

This summer the Institute for Women’s Policy Research will release state-specific briefing papers on the need for universal pre-kindergarten in New Mexico and Wisconsin. Current statistics on labor force participation by race and ethnicity and for women with children under age 6 and age 18 will be included in the report to illustrate the demand for early care and education expansions. The report will also present information on state pre-kindergarten policies and the availability of child care subsidies. These briefing papers, funded by the Rockefeller Family Foundation, will be released in late June. With support from the Macarthur and Packard Foundations, IWPR is also working with leaders in selected states, including California and Massachusetts, to estimate the cost of expanding prekindergarten.
Sue Cobble’s Book Celebrating ‘Labor Feminists’ in DC

Kathy Vi and Regan Chemsiki

On September 9, IWPR, in cooperation with The Division of the United States Studies of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, was proud to co-sponsor the launch of long-term IWPR member Dorothy Sue Cobble’s new book, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America*. Dr. Cobble asserts that “all feminisms are not alike, and all feminist histories have not yet been uncovered.”

In this, her third book, Dr. Cobble discusses the socially and ethnically diverse ‘other women’s movement.’ “By the 1940s,” according to Dr. Cobble, “a new generation of labor women emerged who were dedicated to making first-class economic citizenship a reality for wage-earning women.” What Cobble calls ‘labor feminists’ set their goal as ‘full industrial citizenship.’ Unlike the ‘new,’ more middle-class feminists of the 1970s, they supported protective legislation and opposed the Equal Rights Amendment. Their feminism championed the labor movement and the needs of working-class women; they recognized that oppression based on class and race could be as harmful and as difficult to deal with as gender inequities. From the 1940s through the 1960s they called for legislation that would mandate equality — guaranteeing equal pay for equal work — while recognizing difference — mandating maternity leave.

Serving as commentators for the launch event were Karen Nussbaum, Assistant to the President of the AFL-CIO, and IWPR’s own Dr. Heidi Hartmann. Each of the commentators focused on the importance of studying the history of the women involved in the labor movement who kept feminism alive between the first and second prominent waves of feminism. They also stressed using the lessons learned by the labor women of this era to aid in the current struggles of the modern women’s movement; both commended Cobble’s book as a valuable tool in such study.

Dorothy Sue Cobble is Professor of Labor Studies, History, and Women’s and Gender Studies as well as Director of the Institute for Research on Women at Rutgers University. She is the editor of *Women and Unions: Forging a Partnership* and the author of *Dishing it Out: Waitresses and their Unions in the Twentieth Century*, the winner of the 1992 Herbert A. Gutman Book Prize.

To read the introduction to Cobble’s new book, please visit www.pup.princeton.edu.

**MEDIA NOTES**

Yi-Ling Tan

IWPR has continued to receive wide media coverage on multiple issues. Significant media attention over the past several months addressed gender economic disparities and workplace concerns. Dr. Barbara Gault was quoted in a front-page *Washington Post* article focusing on minority and gender discrimination in the workplace. Dr. Vicky Lovell’s research on unionization in the retail food industry was cited in the *San Diego Union Tribune*. The Status of Women in the States publications were cited in the *Capital Times* (Madison, WI) and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* several times, in articles highlighting the initiative of Wisconsin Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton to improve Wisconsin’s economy by increasing the economic status of the state’s women. The *Albuquerque Tribune* cited the Status report in an article on female business owners.

IWPR Director Dr. Heidi Hartmann and Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever appeared on several live radio shows about women and the economy, the federal budget, and President Bush’s Healthy marriage Proposal, including shows in Los Angeles, CA; Boulder, CO; Huntington, WV; Valdez, AK; Taos, NM; Sacramento, CA, and other local and nationally syndicated radio shows.

The *Georgetown Public Policy Review* published an interview with Dr. Hartmann, which focused on equal pay. Dr. Hartmann was also quoted in an article in the *Nation* responding to Lisa Belkin’s *New York Times* “Opt-Out Revolution” article.

The *Orlando Sentinel* quoted Dr. Gault on children living in poverty following welfare reform. Dr. Lovell was also quoted in *Women’s eNews* on older women’s employment. Dr. Jones-DeWeever was prominently quoted in a *Christian Science Monitor* story on government-promoted marriage initiatives. Dr. Jones-DeWeever was also quoted in a *New Standard* article on the economic disparities between African Americans and whites. IWPR’s research was also cited in the *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland) in a story regarding women and Social Security benefits.

Family issues also gained media attention. Dr. Amy Caiazza was quoted in *The Blade* (Toledo) and *AlterNet.org* on the role of presidential wives. Dr. Caiazza was also quoted in several stories on the growing number of childless women, including the *Boston Globe*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, the Charlotte (NC) *Post*, the *Star-Telegram* (Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX), the *Oakland Tribune*, *Women’s eNews*, and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*.

The Communications Consortium Media Center (CCCMC) recently published a review of a media covering low-wage work issues. This analysis showed that IWPR ranked in the top five research organizations most quoted in the media on low-wage work issues. (The media included 8 major newspapers and ABC, CBS, and NBC News).
Women’s Economic Status in the States

Reporting Back & Moving Forward: The Status of Women in the States Project

Jean Sinzdak

The work of our state-based Advisory Committees to the Status of Women in the States project continues to make changes for women. New and innovative programs and research from our state partners provide exceptional models for state-based activities to improve women’s status.

For example, the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota (WFM) recently released the Status of Women in Minnesota Counties report, utilizing IWPR’s Status of Women in the States reports as a model for developing the report’s methodology. The report ranks all 87 Minnesota counties on four key issue areas: political participation, employment and economic status, reproductive rights, and health and well being. The report also includes a web-based tool in which a policymaker, community leader, or member of the general public can visit the WFM website and click on a community than ever before. Stay tuned for the upcoming reports to be released this summer and fall!

The Alliance for the Status of Missouri Women was formed as an outcome of the release of the Status of Women in Missouri report in 2002. In November 2003, the Alliance held one-year anniversary press conferences across the state to showcase Missouri’s low grades on women’s status. To build on that momentum, the Alliance held a series of Women’s Agenda Assemblies this spring to establish priority issues for a women’s legislative agenda, through which the Alliance hopes to effect public policy change to raise Missouri’s grades on the status of women.

The West Virginia Women’s Commission is working on a campaign to increase the number of women registered to vote, in response to the state’s low grade in that area in the Status of Women in West Virginia report. Also, West Virginia committee co-chair Barbara Howe will travel to a women and leadership program in China to talk about mobilizing for change in a rural state, highlighting the report as a resource.

On a final note, IWPR would like to acknowledge the hard work of Betsy Nowland-Curry and her colleagues at the Kentucky Commission on Women. With a change in the governorship, the Commission’s offices have unfortunately been closed. While it is not unusual for a new governor to appoint new Commissioners, it is unusual to eliminate a Commission on Women entirely. Ms. Nowland-Curry and her staff, Lori Kidwell and Ann Ferrell, did an excellent job in working to build the economic status of the state’s women, and it is critical that the momentum continue. They coordinated the Task Force on the Economic Status of Kentucky’s Women, which included over 300 men and women from over 55 counties. The Task Force’s report details recommendations for improving the lives of Kentucky women and consequently all Kentuckians. They also coordinated the first-ever Summit on the Economic Status of Kentucky’s Women, which was a tremendous step forward in developing action plans to address the issues affecting women in the state. Certainly their work will continue to inspire all those committed to improving women’s economic status at the local, state, and national level.

IWPR will keep you posted on important happenings in the states! Please share your news with us by contacting Jean Sinzdak at (202) 785-5100 or sinzdak@iwpr.org.

Data Advisors Group Explores Race and Ethnicity in the States

April Shaw

On December 9, 2002, IWPR convened a meeting of its Data Advisors Group in the IWPR conference room for the Status of Women in the States project. Several leading experts were in attendance: Dr. Marlene Kim, University of Massachusetts-Boston; Dr. Roderick Harrison, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; Sonia Perez, National Council of La Raza; Dr. Matt Snipp, Stanford University; Dr. Jared Bernstein, Economic Policy Institute; Peter Tatian, Urban Institute; Dr. Greg Squires, George Washington University; Dr. Elena Silva, AAUW Educational Foundation, IWPR staff who attended included: Dr. Heidi Hartmann, Dr. Barbara Gaulit, Dr. Amy Caiazza, Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever, Jean Sinzdak, April Shaw, and Misha Werschkul.

At the meeting, the group discussed the indicators in the Status of Women in the States project and advised IWPR how to address questions of race and ethnicity in the 2000 Census report, since the categories vary from those in past censuses. For the first time, individuals could report that they belong to two or more racial groups. The advisors made recommendations on how to disaggregate racial and ethnic data, immigrant data, and multi-race data. In addition, the group will review the upcoming reports before they are published. The 2004 round of Status of Women in the States reports feature more state-level data by race and ethnicity than ever before. Stay tuned for the upcoming reports to be released this summer and fall!
Women’s Employment and Earnings: How Many More Years Until Equality?

On the state level, there are also significant differences. Women in the District of Columbia, the state with the smallest gender wage gap, catch up to men’s earnings on January 30th. Women in the state with the widest wage gap, Wyoming, have to work until July 4th for their earnings to catch up to the earnings of men in Wyoming. Comparing the racial breakdowns with the state breakdowns reveal even greater disparities. For example, African American women in Louisiana will have to wait to observe Equal Pay Day until January 13, 2005; this means that they have to work 378 extra days to make up the earnings that they lose over one year, compared to the average white man.

The report also looks at women’s poverty by state and by race and ethnicity. Women are least likely to live in poverty in New Hampshire, Minnesota, and Maryland. Women are most likely to be poor in many Southeastern and Western states, including Mississippi (19.4 percent of women were living in poverty in 2002), Arkansas (18.9 percent), the District of Columbia (17.5 percent) and New Mexico (17.4 percent). Women’s poverty rates also differ by race and ethnicity. Nationally, 25 percent of Native American women, 24.1 percent of African American women, and 22.5 percent of Hispanic women aged 16 and over were living below the federal poverty line in 1999. White women (9 percent) and Asian American women (12.4 percent) are less likely to be poor.

The report recommends policy changes to improve women’s economic status, including strengthening support for equal opportunity laws, improving education and job training opportunities, and supporting the economic development of Native American reservations.

For more information on women’s economic status, check out IWPR’s new report at http://www.iwpr.org/. For more information on Equal Pay Day, see http://www.pay-equity.org/day.html.

NEW RELEASES

Report

Women’s Economic Status in the States: Wide Disparities by Race, Ethnicity and Region by Amy Caiazza, April Shaw, and Misha Werschkul. The first part of the Status of Women in the States 2004 series, this report provides state-by-state data on women’s economic status including their earnings, their occupations, the wage gap, business ownership, and poverty levels. The results illustrate how economic opportunities for women differ tremendously in different regions and states, and, even more profoundly, across different races and ethnicities. April 2004. R260. ISBN 1-878428-86-1, 48 pages, $15.00 Order form on back cover.

Florida’s Unemployment Insurance System: Barriers to Program Adequacy for Women, Low-Wage, and Part-Time Workers, and Workers of Color by Vicky Lovell and Maurice Emsellem. Exploring the effectiveness of Florida’s unemployment insurance (UI) system, this report concludes that the Florida system is not currently providing enough support for temporarily unemployed workers and that women, low-wage, and part-time workers collect UI at a rates that are much lower than those of other workers. The authors include a set of recommendations for Florida that would allow more people to qualify for UI and improve the unemployment trust fund. March 2004. C354. ISBN 1-878428-84-5, 32 pages, $10.00. Order form on back cover.

See www.iwpr.org/pdf.html for all IWPR New Releases
FDA Over-the-Counter Decision for Emergency Contraception

Sarah Benatar

The Food and Drug Administration has opted to delay its decision on whether or not to approve a change in the prescription status of the emergency contraceptive pill Plan B until May. When faced with the February 20th deadline, the agency chose to take an additional 90 days to consider the application submitted by the Women’s Capital Corporation in April of 2003 for over-the-counter (OTC) conversion of Plan B. Women’s Capital Corporation received approval to market Plan B with a prescription in 1999, but access issues have limited the use of the emergency contraceptive product. The pharmaceutical firm Barr Labs has agreed to market the product if FDA grants OTC conversion of Plan B.

By law, FDA is required to respond to an application within 10 months, making the decision deadline, also known as the user fee date, February 20, 2004. Though the agency typically responds with an approval or denial by the user fee date, they do have the option to request more data and postpone the decision 90 days. The decision to delay in this case, however, is somewhat extraordinary. Typically FDA will request additional time only if the data are inadequate, or there is not widespread agreement regarding the safety or efficacy of the product. With this decision, FDA has disregarded the outcome of the agency’s Advisory Committee on Reproductive Health Drugs meeting in December 2003, when the committee overwhelmingly recommended approval of OTC conversion. The committee, made up of appointed medical experts, voted 24-3 that Plan B is safe enough to be sold without a prescription based on safety and efficacy data. The agency’s decisions rarely contradict an advisory committee recommendation.

Requiring a prescription for emergency contraception has severely limited the use of the product, which has proven to be very effective in preventing unintended pregnancy. The prescription status requires that individuals seeking emergency contraception must locate a doctor willing to prescribe it and a pharmacy that stocks the product within the timeframe that it is effective. Emergency contraception is extremely effective if taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, and is more effective the sooner a woman is able to take it. This can pose a significant barrier for many women who find themselves in a bind over a weekend, or during a holiday, or in a region of the country where few physicians are willing to prescribe the product because of their political or religious beliefs. In addition, many pharmacies have stated that they do not stock emergency contraception because of low demand, while others refuse to stock it based on “moral” reasons.

The choice to delay the decision on OTC conversion of emergency contraception has not been the only blow. The agency has also moved the decision from the Office of Drug Evaluation, where scientific reviewers assess applications, to the office of FDA Commissioner Mark McClellan, who was appointed by the Bush Administration. The delay and this move have been criticized by some who believe that political concerns are being allowed to trump scientific evidence, and have caused great concern for supporters of the OTC switch.

IWPR General and Project Support

Rebecca Sager

Support for IWPR’s research, education, and outreach activities is funded primarily by foundations, organizations, and individuals. We are able to fulfill our mission of providing information about economic indicators, social trends, and the effects of significant public policies on women and their families with the generous support of: the Anne E. Casey Foundation for our work on access to unemployment insurance, paid sick leave, and job quality; the Otto Bremmer and the Rockefeller Family Foundations for The Status of Women in the States project; the American Association of University Women for studying the educational status of women; the Ford Foundation for research on interfaith activism The Status of Women in the States, job quality, and access to education and training; the AARP for our work on older women’s poverty; the Joyce Foundation for work on work supporters and job retention; Mailman, Packard, and the MacArthur Foundation for our work on early care and education; and the Nokomis Foundation for funding The Status of Women in Michigan report, and the New Prospect Foundation for general support.

And special thanks to all of IWPR’s generous and loyal members and donors. Your commitment to IWPR makes our work possible.
Ellen Delany, IWPR Board Chair, Hosts IWPR’s Inaugural House Party!

Alison Stein

On January 29th, old friends, new friends, IWPR members, and staff gathered at the home of Ellen Delany, Chair of the Institute’s Board of Directors, for IWPR’s first-ever house party. Occurring less than 24 hours after the New Hampshire primary, conversation focused on the important role of women in the upcoming election cycle, and how people can use IWPR’s research to evaluate and educate candidates on issues of importance to women.

IWPR Study Director, Dr. Amy Caiazzo, discussed why it is critical for people to support IWPR’s research on women’s participation in the political process. “In our research, we have found that in places where women’s status is highest, social capital is highest, too. These findings suggest that if you invest more in women, you will build stronger communities and a better political system. But guess what? We’ve also found that at the rate of change in the 1990s—the fastest ever, by the way—women will not achieve equality in elected office for over a century—which means a century of losing out on women’s talent expertise, and representation of women’s interests in the political process.”

Nancy Ryan, Director of the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women, spoke of how she uses IWPR’s The Status of Women in Massachusetts report in her ongoing efforts to bring women’s issues to the forefront of the policy debate in Massachusetts.

“The Status of Women in Massachusetts provides me with the tools I need to make a case for women and their families living in Massachusetts. I would not be able to do my job without IWPR’s critical research.”

Black Women’s Unemployment Rates Remain High

(cont’d from p. 1) Typically significantly higher for Black women than for white women—usually more than twice as high, in both good economic times and bad. Thus, the highest unemployment rate adult white women faced recently (4.6 percent, in April 2002) was substantially lower than the lowest rate for adult Black women in the last thirty years (5.5 percent, in December 2000 and again in April 2001).

High levels of occupational segregation by race and sex contribute to the divergence in Black and white women’s experience of our economy. For instance, more Black women work as nursing aides than in any other occupation. While this occupation grew by 23 percent from 2000 to 2003, most of the new jobs went to white women.

Black women are also disproportionately employed in sales and office occupations (34 percent of all Black women workers were employed in these occupations in 2000), sectors where the employment of Black women fell by 5 percent. Several occupations with high concentrations of women employees, including cashiers, medical assistants, and janitors and building cleaners, experienced decreases in Black women’s employment and increases in white women’s employment from 2000 to 2003.

Many of the jobs that have been shedding Black women workers—maids and housekeeping occupations, janitors and building cleaners, child care workers, retail salespersons, and cooks—pay low wages. These workers often begin their unemployment in a vulnerable economic position and are less likely to have enough savings to ward off financial disaster. Some will qualify for unemployment insurance benefits (UI), although payments to low-wage workers are small. UI is a federal-state program and individual states control the eligibility and benefit standards. Workers who quit their jobs because of incompatibility between family care and employment are usually denied UI, as are part-time workers in many states and workers with short job tenure. Working with the National Employment Law Project, IWPR has produced three reports on the impact of UI systems on women and on the low-wage workers—in Texas, Georgia, and Florida (see www.iwpr.org for PDF versions and for ordering information).

Better support for workers who become unemployed is essential, but heading off job loss is even more critical. Even in good economic times, help in maintaining stable child-care, housing, and transportation is needed to help low-income workers stay on the job; paid-time-off policies are also crucial. So is stepped-up enforcement of equal employment laws. In periods of weak job growth, like the current recovery, federal fiscal policy should play a role in stimulating the economy to create more jobs. Unfortunately, the recent tax cuts are not working to spur job growth, and the cuts in government spending they require only exacerbate the situation.
Profile on
IWPR Member
Carolyn Hopley
Alison Stein

While there are many ways to contribute to the feminist movement, IWPR member Carolyn Hopley has used film to promote the visibility of women’s issues around the world. Carolyn Hopley founded Third Wave Television, Inc., a feminist media production company, after attending the 1995 United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing.

“At the UN conference, I learned about the ability of the media and television to empower women around the globe. I saw how the media could give the experiences and voices of women greater magnification.”

Almost a decade later, Hopley’s films have won numerous awards, have been aired on public television stations, and are used by schools, libraries, and individuals around the world. These films, narrated by renowned journalists like Paula Zahn and Maria Bartiromo, address a variety of contemporary feminist issues including suffrage, women and gun control, and child care. IWPR’s Heidi Hartmann is featured in “Women Count: Smart About Money,” a highly regarded Third Wave Television Production that highlights women’s financial management issues during different stages of life—from a woman’s first job through her retirement. Working with Heidi on the film may have been Hopley’s first direct experience with IWPR, but her knowledge and interest in the Institute was several years in the making.

“I heard Heidi speak some time ago and was deeply impressed with her work. I have always been eager to support her organization because of the useful and solid information they produce. To the best of my knowledge, IWPR is the only group of its kind.”

Hopley has devoted more than twenty years of her life to the feminist movement. After graduating from the Union Theological Seminary in New York, she became active in Connecticut’s chapter of NOW, serving as president from 1988 through 1990. During her term as president, Hopley worked to pass state laws in Connecticut that helped counter the effects of Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, a 1989 Supreme Court decision which curtailed access to abortion by enabling states to pass legislation to regulate or restrict reproductive rights.

Currently, Hopley and Third Wave Television staff are working feverishly to complete a film that focuses on women’s issues and the upcoming presidential election. They hope that this topical film will motivate more women to vote and to become active in the political process.

To learn more about Carolyn Hopley and Third Wave Television, please visit their web site at www.thirdwavetelevision.org.

Profile on
New
IWPR Board Member
Esmeralda O. Lyn
Regan Chemski

“As a Filipino-American academic with an expertise in finance, I hope to bring a different perspective to many issues that IWPR is involved in,” says Esmeralda O. Lyn, Ph.D., IWPR’s new treasurer and a member of the Board of Directors.

Dr. Lyn is Professor of Finance at the Frank G. Zarb School of Business at Hofstra University, where she has been teaching since 1982. She loves what she does: “I am still imbued with wide-eyed idealism about this profession – that we learn and teach for the sheer love of knowledge and the desire to share that knowledge with others, especially our students.” Dr. Lyn’s areas of specialization include mergers and acquisitions, international finance, and agency theory. She has published articles in such journals as the Journal of International Business Studies, the Journal of Business Finance and Accounting, Advances in Taxation, and Advances in Working Capital Management.

Last year, Dr. Lyn had the opportunity to learn more about IWPR through her colleague at Hofstra, Dr. Cheryl Lehman, who served as our previous board treasurer. After Dr. Lehman nominated her for the position, Dr. Lyn did her homework, “I visited IWPR’s website to learn more about the Institute and started reading some of its research output. After much thought, consultation with people I respect, and discussion with Heidi [Hartmann, IWPR President], I accepted the nomination and joined the board.”

Contributing to Dr. Lyn’s expertise in finance is her past experience as a finance officer at the United Nations in New York where she spent some time on a foreign assignment in Bangladesh. She has also worked for Integrated Resources, Inc., Smith Barney Shearson, and has done consulting work for various companies. She is currently on the board of the Nassau Educators Federal Credit Union and the Global ShareResource Foundation. Dr. Lyn has been editor-in-chief of Corporate Finance Review and has also served as the Co-director of the Merrill Lynch Center for the Study of International Financial Services and Markets at Hofstra.

As for IWPR’s future, Dr. Lyn hopes her position on the board will provide her with the chance to help make IWPR “the first organization that comes to mind when women’s issues and policies are discussed in public and private forums.”

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were generally weak in that they failed to measure adequately occupational exposure and, particularly, exposure during younger ages, before first pregnancy. The emerging conclusion of the best studies is that exposure to tobacco smoke is a probable major breast cancer risk factor. Some “authorities” notwithstanding, women should be warned that both active smoking and exposure to other people’s smoke should be avoided, particularly during the years before first pregnancy. Smokers with girls at home should smoke outside, and smoking in automobiles should be avoided if girls or young women are present. Women’s organizations could agitate to make sure that the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute pay increased attention to what is in the CalEPA draft, and warn women about their increased risk. To get a hard copy of the CalEPA report, call Mr. Jose Saltana on 916-322-0289. The full report (about 700 pages) is also on the internet at www.arb.ca.gov/toxics/ets/dreport/dreport.htm. Those who would like more information may contact me at ajwel@earthlink.net.

A. Judson Wells, Ph.D, is a long-time IWPR member whose research focuses on the health risks of tobacco.
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