After the Hurricanes: A Focus on Women's Status

Erica Williams

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita brought great devastation to the Gulf Coast region with ripple effects throughout the nation. They made clear the legacy of economic disparities along racial and gender lines and how those disparities threaten us all. IWPR responded to the tragic events in the Gulf Coast by compiling recent data on women and people of color in the metropolitan areas hardest hit by Katrina and Rita in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Our Briefing Paper, The Women of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast: Multiple Disadvantages and Key Assets for Recovery, Part I: Poverty, Race, Gender and Class both highlights the vulnerability of women and people of color in the region, and emphasizes the need to incorporate the lessons of their experiences into plans for rebuilding.

Using 2004 data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, IWPR provides a detailed portrait of poverty among women and people of color in the city of New Orleans and the New Orleans metropolitan statistical area, the Biloxi-Gulfport-Pascagoula metropolitan area of Mississippi, and the Beaumont-Port Arthur metropolitan area of Texas. The paper also presents data on poverty in the cities and metropolitan areas to which many hurricane victims have moved.

The paper found a high proportion of female-headed families in all metropolitan areas affected by the hurricanes. For example, in the city of New Orleans 56% of all families with related children under 18 were headed by women. Four in ten female-headed families living in the city of New Orleans and the New Orleans metropolitan areas were poor. Poverty rates among these families are also very high in Beaumont-Port Arthur (34.7%) and Biloxi-Gulfport-Pascagoula (28.6%) metropolitan areas.

African Americans are nearly 70 percent of the population in the city of New Orleans, nearly 40 percent in the

Finding Our Common Values: IWPR Sponsors Atlanta Events on Religion & Feminism

Amy Callazza and Inka Subedi

The Institute for Women’s Policy Research continued its project on religion, politics, and women’s public vision this fall with a series of events in Atlanta, Georgia. Events began on November 8 with a public conversation on religion, social justice, and the women’s movement, followed by activities on November 8 and 9 for members of IWPR’s Working Group on Women’s Public Vision.

The public event, a panel called “Speaking of Values,” focused on women’s experiences and motivations in women’s movements and religious social justice organizing. Speakers evoked the values that drive their own activism: a dedication to living out love and compassion, a recognition of the violation of human dignity caused by injustice, and a respect for the interconnectedness of humanity. To illustrate these values, each drew forcefully from their religious traditions and life experiences. Speakers included Saleemah Abdul-Ghafrur, editor of Living Islam Out Loud: American Muslim Women Speak; IWPR Study Director Amy (cont’d on p. 4)
What's happening with welfare reauthorization? The 1996 TANF law (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), which ended the entitlement to income assistance for poor families in the United States and provides temporary assistance with a maximum 5-year life-time limit, has been continued a dozen times, even though it was expected to be reauthorized back in 2001. The House and Senate have never both passed bills that could then be ironed out in conference committee between the two houses. This could be just as well since any revisions might only make the 1996 law worse, despite the many efforts by the advocacy community to get Congress to improve it. Meantime, the US Congress has finally decided to do something about the large federal budget deficit emanating from a slow economic recovery, tax cuts, and expenses for the war in Iraq and the Katrina recovery. And what programs are they targeting for spending cuts: Medicaid, food stamps, student loans, and various other programs targeted at the poor and near poor. In addition, at this writing they still plan more tax cuts for the well-off. (A good web site to check on progress or setbacks on these issues is www.chn.org.)

In the face of a likely curtailment of funds to meet the basic needs of those with low incomes, our government continues to spend money on “marriage promotion” or its Healthy Marriage Initiative, under the leadership of Wade Horn, Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, DHHS. The 1996 law allows states to spend TANF funds on marriage promotion initiatives in keeping with the purposes of that law which include:

- To end dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- To encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families;
- To reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

In addition, it appears from the DHHS website that funds from a variety of other programs (child support, the Children’s Bureau, community services, and refugee resettlement) are being used to fund federal research and demonstration projects promoting marriage among low-income communities.

At the recent 27th annual research conference of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (the main professional conference for faculty who teach in public policy programs), Dr. Horn summed up what has been learned so far from the millions of taxpayer dollars spent on marriage promotion among low-income populations as follows: 1. if services are provided by legitimate community organizations (rather than unknown providers), low-income people will attend; 2. often participants find the services useful and some ask for more services; and 3. the services offered might provide an opportunity for some women to get out of abusive relationships (he mentioned one anecdote that illustrated this). While we can all be happy about the last outcome, especially if more than one woman has been helped, the lack of results on other outcomes after many years of research is stunning. In other words, there is no evidence that the programs have lengthened or strengthened a single marriage or encouraged a single marriage that wouldn’t have happened otherwise.

When the lack of research results regarding outcomes was pointed out by yours truly, panel members fell over

(cont'd on p. 5)
Women earners gained a bit on men in 2004: The gender wage ratio for median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers now stands at 76.5. This is a slight increase from 75.5 in 2003 but statistically the same as in 2002 and 2001. In the last twenty-five years, 16.3 points have been added to the gender wage ratio from 60.2, with most of the gain occurring in the 1980s. Unfortunately, the numbers behind the gender wage ratio document a decline in median earnings for both women and men from 2003 to 2004. Since women's earnings fell less than men's (from $31,550 to $31,223, or 1.0 percent, for women, and from $41,761 to $40,798 (2.3 percent) for men), the gender wage ratio rose.

Weekly earnings data for full-time workers (which exclude the self-employed) show that Latinas and African-American women experience the widest gap in earnings when compared to white men (with gender wage ratios of 57.2 and 69.0, respectively). Asian women's earnings come closest to parity with white women's (83.7), followed by white women's (79.8). Comparing within race and ethnic groups, Asian women have the lowest earnings relative to men (76.4), although Asian workers of both sexes earn more than their white, African-American, and Hispanic or Latina counterparts. Weekly earnings of both African-American women and Latinas are much closer to those of their male counterparts (88.9 and 87.1, respectively).

The gender wage ratio is very consistent across educational groups. Among full-time workers aged 25 and over, the gender wage ratio for weekly earnings of those without a high school degree was 74.9 in 2004. For high school graduates and workers with a college degree, the ratio was 75.6 and 75.2, respectively. On average, women with a high school degree earn only $42 a week more than men who did not complete high school.

The highest-paying broad occupational category for women working full-time is management, business, and financial operations, in which women earn an average of $812 per week. In the two top-paying occupations for women within that category—chief executives, and computer and information systems managers—women earn 69.9 percent and 79.4 percent as much as their male colleagues, respectively. Even in traditionally female occupations such as elementary and middle school teaching and nursing, women's earnings are substantially lower than men's. (The gender wage ratio in these two fields is 84.7 and 86.8, respectively.)

Women pharmacists have the highest median weekly earnings of all women: $1,432. This is 85.1 percent as much as male pharmacists earn.
Finding Our Common Values
(cont'd from p. 1)

Caiazza; Sherry Frank, Director of the Atlanta Chapter of the American Jewish Committee; Georgia State Representative Nan Grogan Orrock; Rev. Sandra Robertson, director of the Georgia Citizen's Coalition on Hunger; Rev. Roslyn Satchel, Director of the National Center for Human Rights Education; and moderator and IWPR President Heidi Hartmann.

Lively discussion followed the presentations. For example, some feminists in the audience expressed concern that they were being asked to dilute their focus on women's lives for a focus on social justice more generally. Other participants stressed the importance of standing firm on controversial issues such as reproductive rights or gay and lesbian rights. Others stressed the need to build movements that are truly inclusive of women of all backgrounds. Participants included women from philanthropy, grassroots organizing, education, advocacy, and religious organizations.

IWPR's co-hosts for the event included The Atlanta Women's Foundation, the National Center for Human Rights Education, Sisters Chapel of Spelman College, and Atlanta Women's Action for New Directions. The event was sponsored by The Sister Fund.

The panel was followed by events for members of IWPR's Working Group on Women's Public Vision. Members of the group, who met initially in June at IWPR's conference, visited the Georgia Citizen's Coalition on Hunger (GCH), which is directed by Working Group member Sandra Robertson. Rev. Robertson and several GCH staff members described their strategies for mobilizing low-income communities, and especially women. For example, the coalition sponsors a thrift store, hunger hotline, and farmers' market, all of which fill two needs: they provide important services to Atlanta's low-income communities and work as recruitment sites for GCH's mentoring workshops, which in turn encourage low-income participants to embrace political leadership.

After the site visit, Working Group members enjoyed dinner and lively conversation about the day's events. The next day, members reconvened to discuss ways to promote stronger connections between religious social justice movements and women's movements and to advance women's public values. Participants discussed the contributions of feminist and womanist theologies, the rifts between "religious" and "secular" feminism, and strategies for overcoming those rifts. Particular attention focused on the intersections of race, class, and gender and strategies for overcoming skepticism and stereotypes based on differences among women.

Over the next two years, IWPR will continue to convene the Working Group and pursue strategies identified at the Atlanta meeting. This work is sponsored by the Ford Foundation. For more information on IWPR's project on religion, politics, and women's public vision, please visit our website, which includes a special project site launched in October of 2005. The website outlines IWPR's publications for the project, public events and meetings, and members of the Working Group.

Bottom left photo: Pradeepa Upadhyay, Nepal Sewa Center & Latifa Lyles, National Organization for Women

Top right photo: Heidi Hartmann, IWPR President, & Sandra Robertson, Executive Director of the Georgia Citizens' Coalition on Hunger, viewing the Coalition's organic farm

For more information on IWPR's work in this area, please contact Dr. Caiazza at caiazza@iwpr.org or visit: www.iwpr.org/Politics_Religion_PublicVision

Althea Morrow, Georgia Citizens' Coalition on Hunger, & Heidi Hartmann in the organic vegetable garden

Working Group on Women's Public Vision

Working group members Margaret Rose & Afeefa Syeed with Saleemah Abdul-Ghofur, editor of Living Islam Out Loud
President’s Message
(cont’d from p. 2)

themselves to say that it doesn’t matter if we don’t know whether or not they work, that indeed lots of government programs are funded without any evidence that they work. And this at a research conference at which all four other members of the panel were either university- or nonprofit-based public policy researchers. Dr. Horn even stated that it doesn’t mat-

ter if the programs don’t work because “we rescued the word ‘marriage’ in polite public policy discourse. Recapturing the word tells us that the government values marriage and that’s important.” A fairly expensive semantic effort.

Just thought you’d like to know about your tax dollars at work.

MEDI A HIGHLIGHTS

Holly Troth

Over the past few months, IWPR’s work has reached diverse audiences across the nation through significant press coverage of issues affecting women and their families.

IWPR’s new report, In Our Own Backyards: Local and State Strategies to Improve the Quality of Family Child Care, was mentioned in the Chicago Tribune, The Herald (FL), and the Sun Herald.com. Dr. Barbara Gauld, who coauthored the report, was quoted in reference to the vital role family childcare providers play within communities.

Dr. Vicky Lovell was quoted in a Boston Globe article on the Bureau of Labor Statistics decision to discontinue collecting data for its women worker employment series. The Herald News (NJ) cited an IWPR briefing paper which uses the BLS data set that is to be discontinued and quoted Dr. Lovell.

Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever participated in an NPR’s series, Debating marriage’s effect on poverty, hosted by Alex Chadwick. Dr. Jones-DeWeever argued that investing in education and job training would do more to combat poverty than marriage education. Dr. Jones-DeWeever was also interviewed by Marketplace on marriage and poverty.

IWPR’s Status of Women in the States reports continued to receive press cover-
age. The reports were mentioned in The Star-Ledger (NJ), Business & Economic Review, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, The Daily Mining Gazette (MI), The Kentucky Post, and The Providence Journal. An article in the Argus Leader covered the first South Dakota Women’s Summit, which was held in response to the Institute’s report on women in South Dakota.

IWPR continues to be a leading source for research on the wage gap and women’s earnings. Dr. Hartmann was quoted in a Scripps Howard News Service article on women’s earnings which appeared in the Courier Press, Albuquerque Journal, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and The News Journal (DE). IWPR was also cited as a source on the wage gap in numerous papers including, the Detroit Free Press, Michigan Live Online, The Daily Oakland Press, Star Tribune, and The Boston Globe.

IWPR researchers have also participated in a number of interviews. Dr. Jones-DeWeever was interviewed by Black America Web on strengthening black families in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. Dr. Lovell was interviewed by KPFK Radio in Los Angeles on the 85th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment. Dr. Amy Caiazzo was quoted in Newsday on the new feminism wave, and Erica Williams appeared on Telemundo on “The Price of Being a Woman.”
Getting Even: A Book Event at IWPR

Over her working lifetime, a woman will lose between $700,000 and $2 million. DON'T LET IT HAPPEN TO YOU.

Getting EVEN

Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men & What to Do About It

EVELYN MURPHY
with E.J. GRAFF

On October 6, the Institute hosted a reception in honor of IWPR Member Dr. Evelyn Murphy's latest book, Getting Even: Why Women Don’t Get Paid Like Men & What to Do About It. The huge response to the event was a testament to increasing public awareness and concern about the persistence of the gender wage gap. Following a brief reception, Dr. Murphy discussed Getting Even, in which she identifies and describes five types of workplace discrimination: “blatant sex discrimination, sexual harassment, workplace sex segregation, everyday discrimination, and discrimination against mothers.” Getting Even draws upon recent lawsuits, real-life stories, and statistics to demonstrate the impact of women’s lost wages. The book reports that, a working woman loses between $700,000 and $2 million in wages over the course of her lifetime due to workplace discrimination.

IWPR General and Project Support

Rebecca Sager

Support for IWPR’s research, education, and outreach activities is funded primarily by foundations, organizations, and individuals. The Institute is able to fulfill its mission of providing information about economic indicators, social trends, and the effects of public policies on women and their families with the generous support of: the Ford Foundation, AARP, Metro America Foundation, and the Retirement Research Foundation for work on Social Security research and education efforts; Pre-K Now and the National Institute for Early Education Research for cost estimates related to preschool expansion; the Service Employees International Union for a study on nurses’ wages; the National Education Association for work on the quality of early education jobs; the Ford Foundation and the Sister Fund for a project to raise awareness of women’s involvement in faith related organizing on social and economic justice issues; the Annie E. Casey Foundation for work on job quality, paid leave, welfare programs, and work supports; the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation for a study on home-based child care; the Ford Foundation for work on paid family leave and job quality; the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for an evaluation of The Status of Women in the States project; and Pfizer, Inc., the New Prospect Foundation; the Stewart R. Mott Charitable Trust, and many other organizations and individuals for general support funding.

2006

NATIONAL CALENDAR

January 6-8, 2006
“Women’s Work and Pay in the 21st Century: Lessons and Prospects” (Workshop)
Presenter: Vicky Lovell, Ph.D., IWPR Study Director
American Economic Association
Annual Meeting
Boston

January 19-20, 2006
National Academy of Social Insurance
18th Annual NASI Conference
Older and Out of Work: Jobs and Social Insurance for a Changing Economy
Washington, DC

February 12-19
Ms. Second Annual Politics & Prose Caribbean Cruise
www.msmagazinecruise.com

February 16-19, 2006
American Medical Women’s Association
The Smart Future Strategy
Tucson, Arizona

February 23-26, 2006
Eastern Sociological Society
Annual Meeting
Boston

February 24-26, 2006
Eastern Economic Association
Annual Conference
Philadelphia

For a complete list of IWPR speaking engagements and events, visit www.iwpr.org

AS ALWAYS, IWPR IS GRATEFUL FOR THE GENEROUS AND LOYAL SUPPORT OF OUR MEMBERS AND DONORS. WITHOUT YOU, THE INSTITUTE'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE.
Spotlight on IWPR Fellows

Alexandra Barrosana

IWPR is excited to welcome three Fellows this year who provide significant support to the Institute in fundraising and research. Holly Trout joins IWPR as a Development Fellow. She graduated from Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts in 2004 with a degree in Art History. Along with researching current and prospective foundations, Holly writes foundation reports and proposals. She writes and distributes mail solicitations and, often serves as a point-person for IWPR’s events. Holly hopes to use the experience she gains with IWPR in her career involving fundraising in the field of art.

Jessica Koski joins IWPR as a Mariam K. Chamberlain Fellow. She graduated from Bowdoin College, Maine, in May 2005, where she double-majored in Economics and Women’s Studies. In 2004, Jessica studied abroad in Madurai, India, and participated in a research project on women’s activism and strategic use of feminine norms. Having done research on the wage gap and the history of women’s work, she finds working for IWPR a perfect fit. Her interests and research experience allow Jessica to provide considerable research support to IWPR’s work on job quality, paid family and medical leave, and social security.

Inku Subedi is also serving as a Mariam K. Chamberlain Fellow. Inku brings considerable research experience to IWPR. She received degrees in Anthropology/Sociology and Psychology from Lafayette College, Pennsylvania. In her senior thesis, entitled “Attitudes Toward Aging and Older Adults,” Inku explored young women’s attitudes about body image and culture, concentrating on Nepalese and US women. Her previous experience includes participating in a study on the class system of Stone Town, Zanzibar, and participating in the development of a strategic plan to revitalize the cities of Easton and Philipsburg in Pennsylvania. Inku is currently working with the IWPR research staff on the evaluation of IWPR’s Status of Women in the States project and on the Women’s Public Vision project.

After the Hurricanes

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broader New Orleans metropolitan area, and over 20 percent in Beaumont-Port Arthur and Biloxi-Gulfport-Pascagoula. Median annual earnings for African American women who worked full-time, year-round were very low in all of the regions hit by the hurricanes, at $19,951 in the city of New Orleans, $20,798 in the broader New Orleans metropolitan area, and $21,552 in Beaumont-Port Arthur.

Older women in the Gulf Coast also face serious disadvantages. In all three metropolitan areas and the city of New Orleans, women make up the majority of people aged 65 and older. These women face high poverty rates at 24.3% in the city of New Orleans, 16.1% in the broader New Orleans metropolitan area, and 14.6% in the Beaumont-Port Arthur metropolitan area of Texas.

The study found that in many of the cities and metropolitan areas to which victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have evacuated, women have also struggled with high poverty and low earnings. Baton-Rouge, Louisiana, Jackson, Mississippi, and Little Rock-North Little Rock, Arkansas, for example, all have high poverty rates among women at 18.0%, 21.7%, and 18.1% respectively. Shreveport-Bossier City and Lafayette, Louisiana, and Charleston-North Charleston, South Carolina have particularly low earnings for African American women with median annual earnings for full-time, year-round work at $20,897, $15,131, and $20,776, respectively.

Our findings make clear the vulnerability faced by women and people of color in the region and the challenges they are likely to face in the coming years, particularly given their separation from other family members, friends, and neighborhood networks. If we are to ensure that the region is rebuilt in a way that does not replicate pervasive ine-

To view the briefing paper online, visit www.iwpr.org/pdf/D464.pdf