

This program on equal pay ran from April 13 to April 24, 2015.

Many thanks to all who contributed to the conversation. We have a long way to go to achieve pay equity, let alone gender equality in the hearts, and minds, and wallets of all.

Cherie Sorokin and Jeanne Lese

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### **The discussion**

We encouraged members to first visit the Association's website, [www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org), and read the information on equal pay issues and AAUW's efforts in this area. Members were asked to share comments about equal pay issues, especially any personal experiences they've had dealing with or helping to prevent gender based pay discrimination at work or as an activist or advocate or member of an AAUW branch, or all of the above!

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### **Some additional and provocative reading sources not from AAUW were suggested during the course of the discussion:**

1. Working moms are often paid less than women without children.

The Motherhood Manifesto, published by working mothers in 2006:  
<https://www.momsrising.org/page/moms/manifesto/chapter7>

2. More controversial and broader than equal pay is this article in **The Guardian**: "Screw leaning in. It's time to slam the door in Silicon Valley's face." The general theme: "We're mad as hell and not going to take it anymore!" from young women in Silicon Valley and the Tech industry. *Warning: The language from the tech industry is quite strong.*  
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/15/screw-leaning-in-its-time-to-slam-the-door-in-silicon-valleys-face>

3. The Motherhood Manifesto, Chapter Seven: Realistic and Fair Wages  
<https://www.momsrising.org/page/moms/manifesto/chapter7>

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## Comments from participants

- "... I really related to the Life magazine: Portrait of a Working Mother in the 1950's. My mom was just such a woman, supporting two kids at the time. It was interesting to note that in 1956, 16% of women with kids under the age of 6 worked outside the home. The percentage is so much higher now, so AAUW's position in this area is timely and relevant. It was also interesting to note that at that time, it was 7 years before an Equal Pay Act, over a decade for a proposed ERA amendment, and it has taken half a century for Americans to observe Equal Pay Day!"
- "A section that really resonated was 7 personal stories of Equal Pay. The African American woman who lost more than \$1 million as an engineer due to race; the teacher who also had to deal with marital status. The most telling was the future law student/ minority woman who was told by another minority woman: " You are going to be underpaid, so there's really no point! The need for women to step up, mentor and speak out is critical. I loved the success story of the Lab Tech. As with Lily Ledbetter, this woman wasn't supposed to discuss salaries with co-workers. Companies that can't or won't be transparent about salaries shouldn't get our business until they make significant changes, not just talk about it. I also really liked the math consultant who persisted because she felt a real obligation to be a role model. We need more role models!"
- "I love reading and being a part of AAUW research by supporting AAUW Funds, because AAUW reports deal with relevant and timely problems, and always offer recommendations for change at several levels. In Pay Equity, that would be at the individual, corporate and policy levels."
- "I found the stories on the AAUW website of women who have experienced pay disparity both interesting and disheartening. Such a wide variety of positions in which the pay gap continues to rear its ugly head!"

- “I’m delighted that California Online is doing a program on equal pay. This issue continues to affect my life.”
- “Reading all the available materials on the national website reinforces my pride in belonging to such a community of women nationwide!”
- “At a recent event here in Marin County honoring women who had been “Rosie the Riveters” during WWII, it was interesting to hear that **many of them were, in fact, paid equally to the men in the factories where they worked, because they were NEEDED.** After the war the pay gap again opened because women weren’t supposed to be working, or were seen as taking jobs NEEDED by men.”
- “The pay gap is more than an economic reality; it reflects how women are valued in general. It’s a symptom of the underlying disease!”
- “I was lucky enough to work as an attorney and ultimately corporate executive for a bank which took gender equality relatively seriously (after having been sued, of course). Still it was always amazing to hear the age old biases creep into discussions of whether jobs were functionally equivalent and being paid equally.”
- “I was taking a class in “Women in Christianity” for my Masters of Liberal Arts. We learned that after the big European diaspora to the US, women found it necessary to seek jobs to help their families. The Catholic Church was so concerned that the women were working outside of the home and not being “barefoot & pregnant,” they encouraged businesses to pay the women lower wages than the men!
- The pitiful pay situation of part time (adjunct) teachers in colleges and universities is widespread and especially disheartening. From the personal experiences in this group, we know this situation has gone unchanged for at least 35 years and shows no signs of abating. We heard several personal stories from members

participating in this discussion and here are a few excerpts:

- “I teach 12-15 classes/week from SF to San Mateo as an adjunct, but still makes less than \$40,000/year and I have a Masters. When the colleges/universities pay so little for adjuncts, we have to make our salaries by teaching all over the place. Our office is in our car trunk. Every semester we wait to find out if we are even going to have a class, and we don’t find out until less than one week before the start date.”
- “It makes me so angry to find out that a male teacher is making three times more than me, even though I have more credentials and experience in teaching higher ed.”
- “I couldn’t agree more. It is not an easy issue. Many colleges would fold if they had to pay adjunct faculty fair wages. I have known a few adjunct profs who teach single courses at as many as 4 or 5 colleges a semester. They have no life, and certainly do not earn a living wage. Not to mention the killer driving schedule.”
- “I’ve been teaching in higher education academia for the past 17 years. Not only have I been affected by the adjunct faculty status, but about 8 years ago I also was made aware that a male professor was making 3 times my salary. As far as I know, he did not even have a BA degree. I had 9 years teaching experience and a Masters. I gradually was told about other male teachers with comparable or less experience making more than me from someone that was privy to instructors’ salaries. I finally decided to speak with an equal rights advocate group about my dilemma. After several months of compiling information and evidence, I was told that I did not have enough for them to take my case. I needed to find a male with comparable or less experience who started at the institution at the same time as I did. I have identified that individual but I’ve never had the courage to ask him about his salary. He is still teaching there, as I am. I remain in a quandary as to how to proceed. I’m not interested in suing but

rather changing the culture that exists in this rather large, powerful institution.”

- “Your case just shows how women end up being caught between a rock and hard place! My first reaction is to say we all hope you can find the courage; but also, if you don't ask you may never know. *It's probably how you do the asking that will matter. Anyone in the work place now, have any suggestions?*”
- “Unfortunately colleges and universities are still abusing part time teachers in the same way. It is a disgrace. Most colleges would have to close if they lost their part time faculty.”
- I don't have personal proof that I was paid less than the men who were teaching in the colleges where I taught English. In the Catholic ones, I remember that the nuns who did the hiring were very concerned that the married men would have enough to live on. (What single women lived on did not concern them so much!) I am fairly certain that my salary in other jobs was also lower. When I worked as a writer for a mutual funds company, they had to hire me through an agency because I could only work 2 days/week (the other 3 I was part time teaching in a college). I got a pittance because of the strange circumstances. But the worst pay was truly teaching part time in a college. They paid \$1000/course to women; I am not sure about the men. Most classes involved weekly writing assignments and term papers, and when you added up the hours, it barely paid me to drive in and park. The good part was that I was at a school that let me design my own classes and choose my own texts, as long as the students did the required number of writing assignments. I can remember one particular semester when I had 3 separate classes, with 3 preparations etc., and was teaching 9 hours a week. Some full time faculty members were also teaching 9 hours a week but they were getting a full salary and benefits.”
- “Hopefully, the plight of adjunct teachers will be resolved by the unionization of adjuncts. Our working conditions are

deplorable and we are being so used and abused by colleges/universities.”

Although the discussion was largely serious, there was a little humor, too.

- On Tuesday, Equal Pay day, I told my son that I wore red. He replied that that was appropriate because women are always in the red! I replied that I was going to get my AAUW friends to pelt him with rotten eggs! His response was "no problem, they throw like girls!" If he wasn't 33 years old, I would have put him in "time-out". ☹

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### **Closing Comments**

- A participant noted that per Phyllis Schlafly, women need to be paid less so they can find good husbands. See <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2014/04/15/3426856/prominent-republican-women-need-to-be-paid-less-than-men-so-they-can-find-good-husbands/>  
[Prominent Republican: Women Need To Be Paid Less So They Can Find Husbands](#)
- Participants noted how sad it is that Schlafly is still spouting off stuff like this, and that people still support what she says. She is, alas, still quite effective and not to be underestimated. She is 91 years old, however, and can't live forever!
- Several participants expressed appreciation to those who shared their stories
  - Your stories “inspire all of us to work that much harder to ensure equity for all!”
  - “I just want to thank everyone for sharing their stories. I think it really brings home the importance of the issue and that for many of us, the situation has been going on for some

time. Sharing stories strengthens the message and reinforces our fight.

- Just after the program was official concluded a branch member pointed out that the efforts of the San Francisco Branch on Equal Pay Day had been reported in AAUW's April 17 Washington Update, as follows:

**State Spotlight: California**

In northern California, AAUW San Francisco collaborated with the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women to hold a stellar equal pay rally at city hall. AAUW San Francisco is acknowledged as the leading advocacy group on equal pay advocacy in the city. The branch was asked to host a press conference, and Roberta Guise, branch Co-Chair of Public Policy, served as the event's MC. Six San Francisco city supervisors attended, speaking about equal pay and their commitment to co-sponsor a resolution declaring April 14 as Equal Pay Day in San Francisco. Other equal pay supporters in attendance included representatives from Gap Inc., a regional administrator from the Department of Labor, and members of the Bay Area Equal Pay Coalition. Several media outlets covered the press conference, resulting in stories in the [San Francisco Chronicle](#) and [San Francisco Examiner](#), along with pieces on local CBS and Fox affiliates.

A hearty congratulations to the San Francisco AAUW branch!! And thanks again to all of you CA Online branch members who participated in this program.

*Summary by Cherie Sorokin and Jeanne Lese, May 5, 2015*