

The importance and power of coming together to work for change - advocacy, research, community organizing and leadership for gender equality.

About Me:

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to this wonderful event today. I thought I would start by saying a little bit about myself and my journey to social justice work, which is very much intertwined with my work with AAUW.

I am the President of the NYS Board of AAUW – the American Association of University Women – for the 2014-16 term. My parents are products of the Civil Rights movement – they grew up in a segregated America, and they were the first generation to significantly benefit from the fruits of the civil rights movements of the 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s: Access to better education, better housing, and a true pathway to seek redress against unreasonable, unjustified, and unfair behavior. I am referring, of course, to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the year I was born.

And my parents instilled in their children an appreciation for the opportunities we have, and a strong sense of the importance of access to justice to effectuate positive change, and paying it forward – that is, working to make sure that we do what we can to leave the world a better place for the next generation.

After graduating from Williams College I went to NYU Law School, which I chose NYU because of its motto, “A Private Institution in the Public Interest.” I loved law school, I loved studying the law, and I loved its intellectual curiosity and rigor. However, I did not love the steep price tag that came with that quality education. Yet the \$80,000 I came out with is less than half of what students are coming out with today – something I am sure all of you can relate to!

After clerking for a federal judge after law school graduation, I went to work for a large law firm. It was an excellent firm, one of the best in the country, the people were wonderful, the training non-paralleled. But for someone like me, with a passion for social justice, it was a bleak existence. Luckily, after 5 years I had paid down a significant amount of my law school debt and was at a point when I could “trade up” to something that was a better fit for me, and I plotted a course to move into non-profit work.

While the salary at most nonprofit institutions is a fraction of a Wall Street law firm, never let anyone tell you it is easy to find these jobs. As a friend of mine said, who was doing the exact same search I was at the time, there are 1,000 people vying to make \$30,000 a year, all highly qualified and highly motivated. But, by persevering and utilizing my personal contacts, I landed what was my dream job – director of communications and government relations for Legal Services NYC, the largest provider of free civil legal services to the poor in the United States.

I stayed there for 11 years – much longer than I had initially planned – and left when I was asked by my councilmember to come work for her to help her build her legislative policy platform. It is a stressful job, it is unpredictable, and there can be a lot of disingenuous people you have to

interact with, but I am doing incredible things that are having a real impact in improving peoples' lives, and there is joy in my heart.

At about the same time that I made the move to legal services, I also moved to Staten Island, NYC's smallest borough. I immediately began looking for outlets that would help me meet professional women such as myself. At a women's power brunch on a sleepy summer Sunday afternoon, I was seated next to the Membership chair of AAUW/SI. And the rest, as they say, is history.

About AAUW

- The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is the nation's leading voice promoting equity and education for women and girls. Since its founding in 1881, AAUW members have examined and taken positions on the fundamental issues of the day — educational, social, economic, and political.
- 1885 - First research report issued - *Health Statistics of Women College Graduates*, establishing that, contrary to popular belief, women's health was not adversely affected by attending college.
- 1905 - Pay Equity Advocacy Begins - AAUW supports the first federal pay equity legislation.
- 1913 - Report on Civil Service jobs and pay - The report detailed the number of women employed by 13 government departments, the positions they held, and their salaries. It found that women were paid about 78 percent of what men who are similarly employed earn.
- 1920 - Marie Curie, a future Nobel Prize-winning scientist, receives contributions from AAUW towards the purchase of one gram of radium in order to continue her research.
- 1938 - Discrimination in academia documented - *The Living Wage for College Women* is published. It documents widespread sex discrimination in academia and serves as the basis for future campaigns to improve the status of women on campus.
- 1946 - AAUW is granted permanent U.N. observer status.
- July 1964 –AAUW member, Rep. Martha Griffiths (D-MI), the first woman to serve on the U.S. House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee, is credited with ensuring that gender was included in the original wording of the Civil Rights Act, which passed on July 2nd of that year.
- 1981 - AAUW establishes the Legal Advocacy Fund to support women who seek justice in instances of sex discrimination in higher education. Two years later, it becomes a separate AAUW corporation.
- June 1987 - AAUW votes to extend membership to male college graduates. We are a big tent!
- 1993 - Through the hard work of the AAUW Lobby Corps, the Family Medical Leave Act passes.
- 2002 –AAUW hosts its first National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL) at American University in Washington, D.C. More than 250 students attend; now, over 600 students a year attend.
- January 29, 2009 - President Barack Obama signs the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act: This law makes it easier for workers to seek redress for sex discrimination on the job, restoring the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's practice of counting each unfair

paycheck as an act of discrimination. AAUW members and supporters worked tirelessly on this bill and were in the room with Lilly Ledbetter when President Obama signed the bill into law.

Pay Equity

Poverty and Women

According to an analysis of the latest census data by the National Women's Law Center, in 2013 women and children were disproportionately impacted by poverty:

- More than 1 in 7 women – nearly 18.0 million – lived in poverty in 2013, with about 43% of these women living in extreme poverty;
- More than 1 in 16 women lived in extreme poverty in 2013;
- The poverty rate for women was 14.5%, 3.5% higher than it was for men;
- Women in all racial and ethnic groups experienced higher poverty rates than white, non-Hispanic men;
- Nearly 2.9 million women 65 and older lived in poverty, twice as many as men (1.3 million);
- The poverty rate for women 65 and older was 11.6%, 4.8 percentage points higher than the poverty rate for men 65 and older (6.8 percent); and
- Unfortunately, the poverty rate is increasing: the poverty rate for women was higher in 2013, at 14.5%, than in 2000, when it was 11.5%, and the extreme poverty rate for women also increased during that same period from 4.4% to 6.3%.¹

Gender Pay Gap:

What do these statistics say to you? To me, they say that the gender pay gap is real, and it hurts women and families. Among full-time, year-round workers, women are typically paid 78 percent of what men are paid – the same as in 1913!!!! When you account for all factors known to affect pay, women are still paid almost 7 percent less than men just one year after college — and the gap only grows from there.

Over a lifetime of work (47 years), the total estimated loss of earnings of women compared with men is \$700,000 for a high school graduate, \$1.2 million for a college graduate and \$2 million for a professional school graduate.

The pay gap persists across all racial and ethnic groups, and it is found in every state. However, the pay gap is worse for women of color. AAUW's report *The Simple Truth About the Gender Wage Gap* found that among full-time workers in 2013, Hispanic, American Indian, African American, and Native Hawaiian women had lower median annual earnings compared with non-Hispanic white and Asian American women. The wage gap was largest for Latina women, who were paid only 54 percent of what white men were paid in 2013.

It's important to know that while the gap is closing in certain areas, female students, on average, will be making 7% less than their male counterparts just 1 year after college, and this gap will

¹ National Women's Law Center, 'Insecure and Unequal: Poverty and Income Among Women and Families,' 2000-2013 (September 2014), at 7-11, http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_2014_nwlc_poverty_report.pdf. See also Press Release, U.S. Census Bureau, Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2013 (Sept. 16, 2014), available at <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2014/cb14-169.html>.

widen with time. And because women make less money on average, it will take them longer to pay off their student loans. In the meantime, this means they may incur higher credit card debt, have less disposable income to save for a car, a mortgage, retirement, and other major expenses.

Recent research has found that 40% of households with children include a mother who is either the sole or primary earner for her family. Pay equity is the key to families making ends meet and moving working families into the middle class. Pay discrimination also limits women's life choices and has real short-and long-term consequences. It impairs the ability of women and families to buy homes and pay for college educations, and it limits their total lifetime earnings, savings, and benefits, which makes women much more vulnerable to poverty in retirement.

Start Smart Salary Negotiation Workshop:

A woman graduating from college today will earn roughly \$1 million less over the course of her career than her male counterpart will earn because of this gap. Negotiating salaries is a challenge for women at all stages of their careers because women are less likely than men to ask for the pay they deserve. [Start Smart salary negotiation workshops](#) empower college women with the confidence, knowledge, and skills they need to negotiate salaries and benefits. It prepares women to overcome the gender wage gap and teach them to benchmark and negotiate for a fair and equitable salary when they enter the job market.

As a matter of fact, Stony Brook University will be hosting a Start Smart Salary Negotiation Workshop on March 24th. Catherine Duffy, ceduffy@notes.cc.sunysb.edu is administering the program on campus.

Higher Education:

AAUW's recent report, *Graduating to a Pay Gap: The Earnings of Women and Men One Year after College Graduation*, found an unexplainable percent difference in the earnings of male and female college graduates one year after graduation, even after accounting for many factors including college major, occupation, industry, sector, hours worked, workplace flexibility, experience, educational attainment, enrollment status, GPA, college selectivity, age, race/ethnicity, region, marital status, and motherhood.

Graduating to a Pay Gap also found that the median student loan debt burden was slightly higher in 2009 for women than men. In addition, in 2009, nearly half (47 percent) of women one year after college graduation were paying more than 8 percent of their earnings toward student loan debt. Only 39 percent of men were in the same position. Further, 53 percent of women and 39 percent of men were paying a greater percentage of their income toward student loan debt than they could afford.

Elect Her: Campus Women Win:

Women hold only a small fraction of elected offices in the United States:

- 19% of the U.S. Congress are women
- U.S. ranks 75th in the world for women's political representation
- Women of Color in Office: 6.2% of U.S. Congress; 5.3% in State Legislatures
- Women in NY State Legislature: 21.1%; 1 women in Executive Office (Lt. Gov. Hochul)

Engaging women in politics and electing them to office earlier in life is the key to strengthening and increasing our representation in government. AAUW addresses this challenge with its ***Elect Her: Campus Women Win Initiative***. It is the only program in the country that encourages and trains college women to run for student government and future political office. A collaboration between AAUW and Running Start, Elect Her addresses the need to expand the pipeline to women running for office and to diminish the longstanding political leadership gender gap.

Many of the campuses who apply for Elect Her show a disparity between the number of women and men serving in prominent leadership roles on campus. An important part of encouraging young women to step up and lead starts with participation in student government.

Elect Her sites in New York include: **Stony Brook (March 27), Ithaca College, SUNY Albany, Syracuse University, University at Buffalo.**

Legislative Advocacy:

Paycheck Fairness Act, S.84. The National Committee on Pay Equity estimates that working women lose \$434,000 over the course of their careers because of unequal pay practices.

This bill takes crucial steps to empower women. With the *Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009* signed into law on January 29, 2009, the *Paycheck Fairness Act* represents the next step in ensuring equality for women in the workplace.

The *Paycheck Fairness Act* builds on the success of the *Equal Pay Act of 1963* (EPA), which first established that it is illegal for employers to pay unequal wages to men and women who perform substantially equal work. While this landmark law made impressive strides in alleviating pay discrimination, women today make an average of 78 cents for every dollar made by men. With women making up 47% of the workforce, such disparities in pay should not persist.

S. 84 updates and strengthens the *Equal Pay Act* in a number of important ways. It increases penalties for employers who pay different wages to men and women for "equal work," adds programs for training, research, technical assistance, and pay equity recognition awards, and makes it more difficult for employers to avoid EPA liability. It also protects employees from retaliation for sharing salary information with coworkers or making claims of discrimination.

Join the AAUW 2-minute activist!

Equal Pay Day is April 14 this year! If you are not already planning an Equal Pay Day event on campus, there is still time to plan; AAUW can provide you with resources.

Bringing Activism Home

The Lily Ledbetter's story is a good example of community organizing - building a movement to create change. If you aren't familiar with her story, she worked at a large corporation for a number of years before finding out she was being paid substantially less than her male colleagues with the same experience and similar or equal job responsibilities. She sued and

initially won but lost in the US Supreme Court because she didn't bring the suit with the statute of limitations – applying a much more narrow interpretation than had previously been applied to such situations. With advocacy and support from AAUW, the Lily Ledbetter Act was introduced and signed into law.

Another issue closer to home for you, however, may be the issue of campus sexual assault, which is being talked about openly on college campuses right now because survivors came forward and said - enough. They shared their stories on a national stage and campaigned on campus for change. There are now male students standing up against sexual and domestic violence as well as members of the LGBTQ community. The NYS legislature and governor are moving quickly on legislation to strengthened students' rights and colleges' responsibilities. AAUW was integrally involved in the negotiated rulemaking process with the U.S. Department of Education and Office of Civil Rights, as well as in pushing for the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which included the Campus SAVE Act.