

Why Women Need Unions — and Free Choice in the Workplace

Join us to hear about the dramatic difference that unions make for women's economic security, and why the Employee Free Choice Act is needed to get us there.

Deborah Chalfie is the Deputy Director for Policy at Change to Win, a partnership of seven labor unions and six million members founded to represent workers in the industries and occupations of the 21st century economy. Change to Win is committed to restoring the American Dream for a new generation of workers — wages that can support a family, affordable health care, a secure retirement, and the opportunity for the future.

Rachna Choudhry is the Policy and Advocacy Manager at National Partnership for Women & Families, a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family responsibilities.

Date/Time: Tuesday, May 26 / 12 noon sharp to 1:30 pm.

Open to the public, no reservation necessary.

Place: American Council on Education,
One Dupont Circle, 8th Floor Kellogg Room

Bring brown bag lunch, soft drinks available from a machine.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

A photo ID must be shown at the security desk of One Dupont Circle.

Please allow time to go through the sign-in system.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 23

Meet Our Member Organizations

Starting Feminist Philanthropy Programs: Two Creative Programs to Help Girls in Africa

Patricia Ortman founded the all-volunteer Girls Gotta Run Foundation, Inc. in 2006. She was inspired by a *Washington Post* article by Emily Wax titled, “Facing Servitude, Ethiopian Girls Run for a Better Life.” A link to the article may be found at www.girlsgottarun.org. The article described how running in Ethiopia helped girls stay in school and avoid early marriage. Ethiopian men and women are known for their success in running and winning international races.

Ortman didn’t know Ethiopians here when she started this project. But she did know some people who went to Africa frequently; they were on the staff of the Population Reference Bureau where her husband worked.

Ethiopia also has the highest rate of vaginal fistulas. These tears, between the vagina and the rectum, cause the girls to be unable to control either urination or defecation, resulting in permanent leakage of both. This ruins the girls’ lives as most are unable to obtain the medical attention necessary to repair the damage. Because the girls are then considered dirty and are no longer desirable, they are rejected by both their husbands and their families of origin, becoming permanent social outcasts. While 18 is the required age for marriage, many young girls are forced into child marriage especially in rural areas and are likely to develop fistulas after childbirth.

Ortman thought she should be able to help with these problems if others would join her. Using her local email list, she asked for volunteers and received many responses, including one from the Sewall-Belmont House. She ran the



Patricia Ortman



Wendy Lesko

first Girls Gotta Run event there in 2006, a show featuring shoe art. (Ortman also is an artist.) Voice of America broadcast an article about the event and it was aired in Ethiopia.

On mornings in Addis Ababa, the streets are filled with groups of girl runners; thirty percent of them are homeless. Training to be athletes helps them gain personal independence. Besides athletic shoes, the Girls Gotta Run Foundation provides money for training clothes, extra food (“calorie money”), coach subsidies, and other training-related expenses.

Dr. Ortman did connect with Dana Roskey who set up preschools in Ethiopia to honor his fiancée who was killed in a car accident. Roskey, a runner himself, had met homeless girls running in Addis Ababa. He started Team Tesfa, for Girls Gotta Run. Now there is also Team Naftech and Simien Girl Runners. Girls must stay in school to belong to the teams.

The foundation recently partnered with Running Across Borders which is studying Ethiopian runners to learn why they are the best in the world. One of the leaders of this group confessed that previously they were concerned with men and boys, but they now are starting to focus on girls as well; Girls Gotta Run is helping sponsor training for three of those women. An exhibit at Strathmore and an article on the girls’ running teams in Ethiopia in *The Washington Post*, *Kids Post*, promoted the venture.

Wendy Lesko was depressed by the Bush war in Iraq and decided the world needed more women leaders, because she believes women have different priorities than men. Although she

Program Summary, continued

has two sons and thinks boys in the U.S. have problems, such as high dropout rates, she is concentrating on the cause for educational equity of girls worldwide.

Youth Activism Project is the umbrella organization (www.YouthActivismProject.org) that supports the School Girls Unite Program (www.SchoolGirlsUnite.org) which focuses on U.S. school girls helping girls in Mali go to school. The girls here raise money to provide scholarships to 75 girls in Mali plus five older students who attend high school in Bamako.

She also encourages these young women to be involved in public policy; Lesko helps prepare them to testify and influence civic actions such as national and international laws. She works with two diverse groups of middle and high school girls in Maryland. Some of these girls are from Africa. She said, "One 13-year-old from Mali serves as a key liaison with our sister organization located in Mali, West Africa."

Young people need coaching to help them lobby and influence Congress, Lesko said, and added, "This will help to cultivate our next generation of women leaders." U.S. girls met with legislative assistants to Sen. Barbara Mikulski and with other congressional representatives and have impressed these legislators. These young constituents have extra credibility because of the first-hand evidence provided by their sister organization made up of 20 young women leaders who are among the lucky few to be attending high school or college in Mali.

School Girls Unite combines philanthropy and advocacy. Mali has the fourth highest child marriage rate in the world, and the group was successful in getting the Maryland congressional delegation to be champions of a

current bill to prevent child marriages. Their two-minute video petition can be viewed at www.schoolgirlsunite.org. Rep. Chris Van Hollen credited School Girls Unite's lobbying that helped to increase the foreign assistance appropriation for the Education For All Act by \$200 million for FY 2009.

In Mali the young women go to press conferences, meet with the Minister of Education, and campaign for equal access and abolition of school fees. Lesko said these young activists receive serious attention by Mali officials, and U.S. policy makers also are responsive because these advocates are genuine when they lobby. They focus on the U.N. Millennium Development Goals of universal education and gender equity and are pleased to have seen a steady increase in the number of girls going to school in developing countries since School Girls Unite started in 2004.

School Girls Unite chose Mali deliberately. They analyzed UNICEF countries that had a low percentage of girls in schools and where girls held low status. They avoided countries that also had other major problems that would drain energy such as conflict and high rates of HIV/AIDS. (Mali was low on each.) However, Lesko noted there is a language barrier in addition to the cultural barriers. Most of the U.S. girls don't speak French well enough to communicate in Mali but several African women mentors are very helpful.

Lesko said the girls are writing a bilingual (French/English) action guide, titled, *Girls Gone Activist! Education is a Human Right*, which will be published in June. Lesko would like to share this unique resource with Girl Scouts and other groups and is eager to explore opportunities to partner with other youth empowerment organizations.

2009-10 Board of Directors

The following slate will be voted upon by CWI members at our annual meeting in June.

President / Barbara Ratner
VP Membership / Kellye McIntosh, D. Anne Martin
Secretary / Harriett Stonehill
Directors / Roslyn Kaiser, Ruth Nadel

Joan Aron

We sadly acknowledge the death on April 12 of long-time Clearinghouse member Joan Aron; she served on the CWI board of directors for several years. A former senior policy analyst at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Aron also taught at NYU and Virginia Tech and was a Fulbright professor at the University of Haifa in Israel.

Equal Pay

On Equal Pay Day, April 28, the Institute for Women's Policy Research released an analysis that shows that for nearly every occupation for which data are available men out-earn women. The report states:

“Men earn more than women even in jobs that are most common among women, such as administrative assistants: women earn only 83.4 cents for a man's dollar; elementary and middle school teachers: women earn 87.6 cents for a man's dollar; and registered nurses: women earn 97.4 cents for a man's dollar.

“Men and women still tend to be concentrated in very different jobs, with the most common jobs among women paying less than the most common jobs held by men. For example, the highest paying of the ten most common occupations for women, ‘registered nurses,’ pays \$1,011 in median weekly earnings, whereas the highest paying of men's top most common jobs is ‘managers, all other,’ which pays \$1,359 per week. The lowest paying of the most common jobs for women is ‘cashier’ at \$349 per week, whereas the lowest paying most common job for men is ‘cook’ at \$404 per week.”

Ariane Hegewisch, Study Director at the Institute for Women's Policy Research, says, “Women tend to be in the minority of workers in the occupations with the highest earnings. We need to ensure that women are fully informed about the earnings potential of an occupation before they choose their careers.”

Data (for 2009) for the report comes from the Bureau Of Labor Statistics. To view a fact sheet, see: www.iwpr.org/pdf/C350a/pdf.

GlobalPOWER

The Center for Women Policy Studies will hold its third GlobalPOWER program in Washington from May 31-June 5 to confront international trafficking of women and girls as a global women's human rights crisis. According to CPW, GlobalPOWER “is a new model of women's global policy that creates sustainable long term partnerships — across borders and over time — among women members of parliament worldwide. Participants come from Bahrain, Namibia, Pakistan, Dominica, Kenya, Burundi, Uganda and Zambia, and women state legislators from Florida, Maryland and Utah. They join the network of women from 14 countries and five U.S. states who took part in previous GlobalPOWER meetings.

Martha Burk/ New Mexico Pay Equity Task Force

Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico has appointed Martha Burk to chair a recently-created task force on pay equity. Burk, former head of the National Council of Women's Organizations, has been serving as the governor's senior adviser on women's issues. The 14-member task force will examine the state's policies on gender, ethnic and racial pay equity within agencies and recommend solutions to eliminate gaps. (*Associated Press*).

Women Pay More For Some Insurance

From Women's Health Policy Report

As reported in the *New York Times*, “Health insurers would be willing to end the practice of charging women higher premiums than men for individual insurance policies if the government agrees not to establish a public insurance plan,” according to the president of America's Health Insurance Plans, who spoke at a Senate Finance Committee hearing ... “that focused on ways to cover uninsured U.S. residents as part of a comprehensive overhaul of the nation's health care system. President Obama and congressional Democrats support the creation of a government-run insurance program that would compete with private insurance plans.

“About 9 percent of U.S. residents, including about 5.7 million women, are insured through individual policies. Unlike employer-sponsored plans, premiums for individual insurance policies typically charge women higher premiums than men. Women in these plans can be charged 25 percent to 50 percent more than men for the same coverage. Insurers say the disparity results from women using more health care than men, especially during their childbearing years.

“Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) recently introduced legislation that would prohibit insurers from considering gender when setting premium rates. Kerry said the premium disparity is ‘just plain wrong, and it has to change.’ In November 2008, insurers said they would accept all applicants, regardless of illness or disability, if Congress mandates coverage for all U.S. residents. Last month, the industry proposed to end the practice of charging higher premiums to sick people.”

NATIONAL EQUAL PAY DAY, 2009: A PROCLAMATION BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Harriet Beecher Stowe helped galvanize the abolitionist movement with her groundbreaking literature. Frances Perkins advised President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and led the Department of Labor during one of its most challenging periods in history. Barbara McClintock helped unlock the mysteries of genetics and earned a Nobel Prize. These and countless other women have broken barriers and changed the course of our history, allowing women and men who followed them the opportunity to reach greater heights.

Despite these achievements, 46 years since the passage of the Equal Pay Act and 233 years since our Nation was established with the principle of equal justice under law, women across America continue to experience discrimination in the form of pay inequity every day. Women in the United States earn only 78 cents for every dollar a man earns, and today marks the inauspicious occasion when a woman's earnings finally catch up with a man's from the previous year. On National Equal Pay Day, we underscore the importance of this issue to all Americans.

If we wish to honor our Nation's highest ideals, we must end wage discrimination. The Founders established a timeless framework of rights for the American people. Generation after generation has worked and sacrificed so that this framework might be applied equally to all Americans. To honor these Americans and stay true to our founding ideals, we must carry forward this tradition and breathe life into these principles by supporting equal pay for men and women.

Wage discrimination has a tangible and negative impact on women and families. When women receive less than their deserved compensation, they take home less for themselves and their loved ones. Utilities and groceries are more difficult to afford. Mortgages and rent bills are harder to pay. Children's higher education is less financially feasible. In later years of life, the retirement that many women have

worked so hard for—and have earned—is not possible. This problem is particularly dire for women who are single and the sole supporters of their families. Women should not and need not endure these consequences.

My Administration is working to advance pay equity in the United States. The first bill I signed into law as President, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, allows more women to challenge pay discrimination by extending the timeline within which complaints can be filed. This law advances the struggle for equal pay, but it is only an initial step. To continue this progress, I issued an Executive Order establishing the White House Council on Women and Girls. This high-level body, composed of Cabinet members and heads of sub-Cabinet agencies, is charged with advancing the rights and needs of women, including equal pay.

Still, Government can only advance this issue so far. The collective action of businesses, community organizations, and individuals is necessary to ensure that every woman receives just treatment and compensation. We Americans must come together to ensure equal pay for both women and men by reminding ourselves of the basic principles that underlie our Nation's strength and unity, understanding the unnecessary sacrifices that pay inequity causes, and recalling the countless women leaders who have proven what women can achieve.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 28, 2009, as National Equal Pay Day. I call upon American men and women, and all employers, to acknowledge the injustice of wage discrimination and to commit themselves to equal pay for equal work.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

BARACK OBAMA



Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

10401 Grosvenor Place #917
Rockville, MD 20852

FIRST CLASS MAIL

COMING EVENTS

Tuesday, June 2

Legacy of Light at Arena Stage.

“Legacy of Light” is a feminist play by Karen Zacarias at the Arena Stage; it is about women in science and work and family challenges. A 50 percent discount is available for tickets on Women’s Networking Night, June 2. A post-show discussion is included in the performance. The play will be presented at Arena’s temporary space in Crystal City. Tickets may be purchased by phone (202) 488-3300 or at the Arena Stage sales office in Crystal City. Check out the May 8, 2009, *Washington Post* Karen Zacarias story www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/07/AR2009050701702.html

Tuesday, June 23

Meet Our Member Organizations Join us for the CWI monthly meeting and learn more about our member organizations.

Photos: from the speakers; Editor: Roslyn Kaiser; April meeting summary draft by Jennifer McGuire, AAUW; Production: Letterforms Typography & Graphic Design.

CWI Board of Directors, July 2008 - June 2009

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