

Looking at Equal Employment: Where We've Come and Where We're Going

After a long history of advocacy for equal employment opportunity for women at the state and federal level, an impressive body of law and enforcement has emerged. Yet, major gaps persist for the aspirations of women in the workplace. One issue of interest to us is sex discrimination. Our speakers will review recent court decisions, which have directly affected working women, and what it is like for them to confront discrimination in the workplace. They will also outline some of the continuing obstacles to the achievement of equal employment for women.

Our Speakers are **Peggy Mastroianni**, Associate Legal Counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), responsible for developing legal guidance on a wide range of issues and **Ann Hopkins**, nominated for partnership at Price Waterhouse in 1982 only to be denied, pursued her lawsuit ultimately to the Supreme Court and became the first court-ordered partner.

Date/Time: Tuesday, January 25, 2011 / 12 noon sharp to 1:30 pm
Open to the public, no reservation necessary.

Place: One Dupont Circle, 8th Floor Kellogg Room, Washington DC
Bring brown bag lunch, soft drinks available from a machine.

Last chance to renew your membership.

Please fill out the form on page 7 and mail it with your dues, otherwise, you will be removed from our newsletter mailing list the end of January.

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.

The CWI meeting will be cancelled if bad weather closes government offices.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 22, 2011

Iran's Resistance to Women's Rights

CWIS October speakers were **Dr. Haleh**

Esfandiari, director of the Middle East Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and **Leila Milani**, a human rights lawyer with special expertise in dissident and activist groups based both in and outside of Iran.

Dr. Haleh Esfandiari opened the presentation by speaking about her experience in prison in Iran in 2007. She was accused of fomenting a velvet revolution, an accusation and also in some cases a charge, brought against other dual national and Iranian intellectuals. In her book *My Prison, My Home* she gives an account of the months she spent as a political prisoner in Iran's notorious Evin prison where she fought false allegations that she was involved in a plot to overthrow the Iranian regime. She explained that when two countries are enemies, ordinary citizens are often the victims. She talked about the jailed American hikers in Iran accused of spying. She brings their case up because when she was in prison, her family, her colleagues at the Wilson Center, and the media used petitions to pressure for her release. She asked everyone to help these hikers and other political prisoners in Iran directly or indirectly by talking about them, writing about them, and in the case of the hikers contacting their congressman, to ask them to intervene on their behalf with foreign dignitaries.

In her presentation she described the mindset of Iranian intelligence, their fears and phobias. They were worried about the size and activity of organized groups including workers, students, and the women's movement. She said the regime believes it could deal with labor movements and students but not with several thousand women. They can't shoot them. For example, every Saturday a small group of women would demonstrate in a park. When the one-million-signatures



Haleh Esfandiari



Leila Milani

campaign was founded in 2006 the government decided they wouldn't allow them to function as a group. In public, the government could control them. This is what Esfandiari was told in 2007, but in 2009 the regime showed that it can treat women as harshly as other protes-

tors, as we saw in the case of Neda, a philosophy student who was shot while watching the protest movement in the street. There are many women activists in Iran's prisons right now, including Nasrine Sotoudeh, a woman lawyer who is on a hunger strike. In the last few years many international human rights awards were given to Iranian women and the campaign. For example, Iranian human rights lawyer Shirin Ebadi was the first Muslim woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Esfandiari then gave a brief summary of the history of the Iranian women's movement. In the late 19th and early 20th century a group of women started pushing for access to education and health care. On the eve of the 1979 revolution when the Shah was overthrown, the Iranian women's movement among other things had achieved a family protection law that was passed in 1967 and amended in 1975. It included changes in the age of marriage, which was raised from 13 to 15 and then to 18 for girls, the right to seek a divorce, the right to work, and the right to child custody; family courts were set up to look into family disputes. Equal access to education was the law of the land. There were women ministers, ambassadors, members of parliament, generals, and women working in the public and private sector. The revolution made promises in three spheres: (legal, political, and social) for a better life, and more freedom and democracy.

She stated that after the revolution, the family protection law was suspended and family courts were dismantled. The age of marriage was reduced to nine and it took 20 years to change

the age of marriage for girls to 13. Polygamy became legal, and women lost their right to seek divorce and child custody. That right is only reserved for men. Child custody now goes to the husband and in the absence of the husband, custody goes to the male members of the father's family unless the court decides otherwise.

Women from all classes protested and the government published a marriage contract containing twelve clauses, including the right of divorce and child custody. But many women are hesitant to place these conditions on their marriage. Today there are more women entering universities than men, which has worried the government and prompted them to toy with the idea of introducing a quota system in favor of men. After the revolution, among other things, buses were segregated, women could not become judges, and the veil was imposed on women. The problem was not necessarily the veil, but the fact that the choice of what to wear was taken away from them. Before the revolution, women were free to wear what they wanted including the veil and a scarf.

As for political rights, women kept the right to vote and be elected to parliament. Esfandiari noted that today there are seven women in parliament — down from 13 under President Khatami. They are all conservative and even pushed for polygamy but there was such a protest by women that parliament decided to shelve this motion. She said President Ahmadinejad has reached out to conservative women. The activities of the one-million-signatures campaign for women's rights were severely restricted. Having lost his female constituency in the post-election crackdown, President Ahmadinejad nominated three women to his cabinet. Parliament rejected two and approved one who is currently serving as Minister of Health. She belongs to the conservative camp and as a former member of parliament she advocated a bill to segregate the health care system in Iran, but her proposal was rejected by parliament. Ahmadinejad appointed two women as vice president.

Discussion with Esfandiari:

How can we support the women's movement in Iran?

All progress women have made in Iran is due to their own effort. People who want to help

should be guided by Iranians on the ground. You can support them from outside Iran but since it is a very delicate situation, a wrong move could seriously harm them and they could be charged with spying or fomenting a velvet revolution. Be guided by the women on the ground.

What happened to the universities in 1950?

Tehran University, established in 1934, from day one admitted men and women. In the 70s, there were two or three women's colleges and a women's university, which still operates. It is called Al-Zahra University.

What became of Shirin Ebadi?

Shirin Ebadi is a lawyer by training and has represented a number of women activists in court. She was my lawyer and helped work for my release. Shirin Ebadi is the moral voice of Iran outside the country. She is currently living in London.

How is the work world for women in Iran today?

Few women are appointed to decision-making positions in the government. In the private sector, women run businesses. Women are highly educated and have MBAs and are quite savvy. They are well trained, quite capable; men accept them as their bosses.

Leila Milani grew up in Iran and is a follower of the Baha'i faith. She said the Evin prison in Iran is called the Evin University because there are so many intellectuals in it. She also reminded us to keep the stories of the hikers alive and keep the stories of the people of Iran alive.

Milani talked about the feminist movement in Iran and how it started in the mid 1800s when a woman named Tahereh unveiled herself. She was killed but she said, "You may kill me now but you can't stop the emancipation of women." Milani continued that between 1997 and 2005, when Khatami was elected as president, the women's rights movement was reborn.

Unfortunately the government of Iran can always hide behind Sharia law. She highlighted some of the current problems in Iran: Honor killings, self-emulation which usually happens in smaller cities and villages where girls who are forced to marry or are raped, and trafficking of Iranian women and girls — a multi-million dollar business. Smugglers go into villages and lure girls

with promises of greater things to come and then take them to brothels. The laws for the traffickers are less severe than the laws for those being trafficked. She talked about legalized prostitution in the form of temporary marriages which last anywhere from 45 minutes to 99 years, and the children of these relations do not have birth certificates and therefore have no access to schools. She also talked about her non-profit organization called "Iran Rooyan" which reflects these stories.

Discussion with Milani:

Are there young women's activists in your age group in Iran?

Absolutely. In fact, we have a young journalist who just came out of Iran and is a critical component of our organization. These young women are smart, capable, and willing to put their voices out.

Is rape a problem in Iran?

Rape is considered a shame on the family. There is no law against marriage rape. Rape was committed against men and women in Iranian prisons. One of the prison doctors made it public.

You mentioned starting a website. Can you tell us what it's called?

The site is being developed and we hope to have it active the beginning of the new year. It is called www.Iranrooyan.org. Rooyan means growth and development. We capture Iranian women's stories in this site and we hope to raise international awareness about their situation through it.

There are all kinds of religions and factions in Iran. How do activists reconcile their differences?

They may have philosophical differences but they have one goal in mind. A good example is the one-million-signature campaign which was a grassroots movement.

Program Summary — November 23, 2010

Looking at You: Working Women Then and Now

The November meeting's featured speakers were **Sara Manzano-Diaz**, director of the Women's Bureau in the US Department of Labor, and **Harriett Harper**, long-time CWI board member, retired Women's Bureau chief economist. Both speakers addressed the past



Sara Manzano-Diaz

and current undertakings of the Women's Bureau and were introduced by CWI former president and present Board of Directors member **Ruth Nadel**. Nadel worked with the Women's Bureau for 21 years before her retirement in 1989 and led the establishment of a childcare center in the Department of Labor, the first government office to offer such a service. She continued to work to promote employer childcare options, creating a



Harriett Harper

program with the Alliance for Childcare focused on how to balance work and family. In the 1980s Nadel also worked on eldercare issues. Harriett Harper discussed the state and objectives of the Women's Bureau during her employment there, which began in 1979. She described the period when she began working with the bureau as a time of "great transition for women — a period when women were coming into their own in many aspects of public life." At that time, women made up 35 to 45 percent of the labor force and earned only 59 cents for every dollar earned by a man. They were also employed primarily in traditional occupations. Ultimately, Harper noted, the

issues faced by women today are the same issues that women faced in the 1980s and even the 1920s, when the Women's Bureau was created. She listed a number of issues that the Bureau was focused on at the time, including equal pay, employer-provided childcare, incarcerated and immigrant women, women in nontraditional jobs, alternative work patterns, displaced homemakers, women entrepreneurs, and women's educational backgrounds as reflected in their work and opportunities.

During her time in the Division of Statistical and Economic Analysis of the Bureau, despite limited funding for the research, Harper encouraged increased attention in collecting and using statistics on women from multiple government and other sources to support the work and agenda of the Bureau. The Women's Bureau produced a significant amount of literature during her time there, she noted, including four handbooks. Harper believes that the strength of the Bureau at that time was its ability to gather and disseminate information effectively. She also noted the importance of the support it received from various women's organizations.

Women's Bureau director Sara Manzano-Diaz discussed issues on which the Women's Bureau is currently focused. Manzano-Diaz began by noting that this year celebrates the 90th anniversary of the Bureau, yet "the more things change, the more they stay the same" — women are still fighting for issues like equal pay for equal work, just as they were in the early 1900s. The pay gap, however, still exists and particularly affects minority women. Yet, she emphasized, essential accomplishments have been made, noting some of the successes of the Bureau, such as the promotion of legislation like the Equal Pay Act and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. The Director said that now may be the first time that the Bureau has been successfully aligned with other key officials in the administration and emphasized her approval of President Barack Obama's stances on women's issues. She stated that he "has been really good for women," citing his signing of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and appointments of two women Supreme Court justices.

Manzano-Diaz then described her vision for the Women's Bureau: to empower working women to achieve economic security. To achieve

this objective, the Bureau will be focusing on four issue areas until 2012, the first of which is equal pay. The Bureau is part of the President's Task Force for Equal Pay and will be holding a research summit, the results of which will be presented to the task force. The group is also reviewing obligations of employer and employee rights as related to equal pay and will be creating an Equal Pay Enforcement Task Force. She indicated that the federal government has already hired 200 investigators to find out whether equal pay guidelines are being enforced in the workplace.

The Bureau will also be focusing on issues of work/life balance, which Manzano-Diaz believes is "a family issue, not only a women's issue." Obama has emphasized the benefits of workplace flexibility, which is "good for families, profit, and the planet," according to Manzano-Diaz. The bureau began hosting National Dialogue on Workplace Flexibility forums this year that highlight how workplace flexibility can be implemented, its benefits, and stories from people who have utilized it successfully.

Another priority issue area for the Bureau is reintegrating homeless women veterans into civilian life, according to Manzano-Diaz. The bureau has developed a care kit for service providers working with homeless women veterans. Finally, the Women's Bureau is focusing on advancing women into "21st century" careers, such as green and nontraditional jobs. She hopes to help women adapt to a new workforce where few blue collar jobs are available by developing new green jobs, creating new jobs instead of exporting them, and increasing the number of girls and women in the science and mathematics fields.

The talks were followed by a discussion session. During this time, Harper and Manzano-Diaz addressed the point that the Women's Bureau is, according to Harper, the "most efficient agency in the federal government," considering the fact that it advocates for 71 million women on a very small budget. Manzano-Diaz also noted that the Bureau is currently transitioning back to focusing on policy and research. Arlene Winfield, a retired Women's Bureau employee, spoke about recognizing the important role that the labor movement and unions played in women's incorporation into the labor class and in how Ruth Nadel, while working at the Women's Bureau, helped lay the ground

work for the Family and Medical Leave Act when she asked for, but was denied, permission to use some of her own leave to care for her ill husband.

Manzano-Diaz also discussed an event the bureau held in November called *Women Working Together — Writing The Next Chapter of HerStory!* which recognizes both older and younger women who have worked for working women's equal rights. The event enabled these

groups to create a dialogue about these issues and learn from and about one another. Manzano-Diaz also fielded a question about possible budget cuts for the Women's Bureau as a result of the new Congress, stating that if the agency's budget is cut, it will increase its collaborations with other groups in order to maximize its impact and will be as resourceful as possible with the funding it does receive.

Felice Sorett We acknowledge the passing of long-time CWI member Felice Sorett, who died in October at age 89. Felice served as treasurer of CWI from 1981-1995. Active also with League of Women Voters, she was president of one chapter, later a member of the state board, and then worked in the national League office. According to the obituary in the *Washington Post*, after she retired from the League, Felice volunteered at the Smithsonian and as a tutor for the OASIS organization.

President's Message

The beginning of another year and resolutions. We start anew, probably tackling the same old ones, hoping for better success this time around. Unrealized New Year's resolutions also seem to be the pattern of women's issues. Each year we make a little progress, but the same issues face us. Hopefully, we will be able to maintain our momentum but we must never stop making the public aware of what is important for women and their families. The Clearinghouse on Women's Issues' mission is to provide the information that helps those interested in helping women improve their lives. Your dues keep this mission attainable so please mail a check for your dues if you haven't already done so.

We apologize for not being able to produce a November newsletter. The summaries from our October and November meetings are included in this January newsletter. We have spent much time discussing how to make the newsletter an easier task, but have thus far not come up with any workable solution. If any of you have any suggestions, **or would like to do some writing for us**, we would love your input.

Let's hope 2011 is a good year for us, but most importantly, that it is a healthy one!

Barbara J. Ratner

CWI Member Organizations

- Equal Visibility Everywhere (EVE)
www.equalvisibilityeverywhere.org/
- Fairfax County Commission for Women
www.fairfaxva.gov/host/women/local.html
- Federally Employed Women (FEW)
www.few.org
- Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF)
www.feminist.org
- League of Women Voters of DC
www.lwvdc.org
- Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW)
www.mdlegagenda4women.org
- Maryland Women's Heritage Center
www.mdwomensheritagecenter.org
- Montgomery County's Chapter of the National Organization for Women (MCNOW)
www.mcmdnow.org
- Montgomery County Commission for Women
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw
- National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO)
www.womensorganizations.org
- National Women's Editorial Forum
www.mediaforum.org/NWEF
- National Women's Law Center (NWLC)
www.nwlc.org
- Office of Women in Higher Education (OWHE)
www.acenet.edu/
- Service Employees International Union Local 500
www.seiu500.org/
- Union Theological Seminary
www.utsnyc.edu
- United For Equality, LLC
www.united4equality.wordpress.com
- Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)
www.wowonline.org
- Women's Research & Education Institute (WREI)
www.wrei.org

2010-11 Membership

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CWI, Holly T. Joseph, Treasurer, 8504 Rosewood Drive, Bethesda MD 20814

Individual - \$25 Under 30 years - \$15 Organization - \$35 or three years \$90

I would like to help CWI's outreach with an additional tax-deductible contribution: \$ _____

Women at the Top in Big US Companies: Still Too Few

From the New York Times

“Even though women represent about half of the nation’s work force, most companies in the S&P 100 have no female or minority representation according to a recent report.

“The report, *Examining the Cracks in the Ceiling: A Survey of Corporate Diversity Practices of the S&P 100*, found that 56 of those 100 companies did not have female or minority employees in their “C-Suite” or most senior positions, while only 14 of those companies have two or more diverse officers in those positions. The report found that white males represent 92 percent of the chief executives of the 100 companies.

“According to the report, women make up approximately 18 percent of director positions within the S&P 100 and just 8.4 percent of the highest-paid executive positions in those companies.” The report found that 38 percent of the 100 companies “demonstrate a robust commitment to diversity, both internally and externally,” with 30 percent of the companies giving their boards some oversight of diversity issues.

Among investment management companies, Calvert has long been one of the leaders in pushing for corporate diversity. “We are very concerned about the fact that women and minorities continue to be under-represented at the highest levels of management,” said Barbara J. Krumsiek, the president and CEO of Calvert Group, Ltd.

“Without a pipeline of female and minority executives in highly-paid, highly responsible positions, it will be very difficult to achieve board diversity, which is critical to strong governance and good management.”

Kudos to Connecticut

According to the Partnership for Women and Families, when the newly-elected governor of Connecticut takes office, he promises “to be the first state in the nation to enact legislation allowing workers to earn paid sick days.” We hope it happens and that other states take notice.

The New Congress

From Womens eNews

Women make up 17 percent of Congress. Although, with the recent elections, the number of women in Congress remains the same, a record number of Republican women will take their place in the new Congress. Compared to women in other national legislatures, the US ranks 90th in the world. Most Americans would be surprised to learn that Rwanda is close to the top of the list, since it is a country considered far behind the US in many ways. “Part of the reason is because many other countries have quotas to ensure that a significant number of women are serving.”

Note: Republican Susana Martinez is the first Hispanic women in the US elected to govern a state — New Mexico.



Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

10401 Grosvenor Place #917
Rockville, MD 20852

FIRST CLASS MAIL

COMING EVENTS

**Sunday,
January 30**

2011 Women's Legislative Briefing. 12:30p-5p. University of Maryland Shady Grove Campus. Keynote Speaker: Sara Manzano-Diaz, Director, Women's Bureau US Department of Labor. Registration required. Admission \$15. For more information: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw or call 240-777-8330.

April 8-9

The Feminist Majority's **Women Money Power Summit** will take place at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel in DC April 8-9, with luncheon and congressional visits April 7. The event is cosponsored by the YWCA/USA and other organizations. Registration is now open femmaj@feminist.org

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