

# Let's end the need for Equal Pay Day



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Guest Columnist

Earlier this month people in the United States commemorated Equal Pay Day — the day in which women finally caught up with men's pay from 2018. In other words, it took women 16 months to make what men made in 12 months, and for women of color, the predicament is worse. It takes Hispanic women more than 22 months to catch up with men.

How did women in 2019 end up making less than 80 percent of what men are paid for the same work? We need to begin the timeline with World War II. Eighty years ago, men headed off to war, and subsequently, their absence resulted in vacant industrial jobs back home. Out of necessity, women became the embodiment of the iconic Rosie the Riveter, and many of them liked it.

The women enjoyed the sense of purpose, the work, and the independence that having a job afforded them. Then the war ended, the men returned home, and the women had to retreat to the domestic sphere. Television shows like "Leave it to Beaver" and "Father Knows Best" were used as catalysts to convince women that their most important jobs were to be wives and mothers (and to vacuum in pearls, heels, and perfectly pressed dresses).

Unfortunately, when women went to work in the 1980s, their salaries were seen as extra spending money, while men were viewed as the primary bread winners for their families. As a result, women were

paid a fraction of what men were paid for the same job.

For readers interested in ending Equal Pay Day, here are a few suggestions of how to achieve equal pay for equal work.

- No matter your gender, talk about how much money you make with women who do similar work or want to do similar work.

- If you are a supervisor, make sure that people are paid fairly. Advocate for them if they are not.

- Women should apply for management positions. Look at ads for the next job you want and fix weaknesses. Do not believe that you must meet every job qualification 100 percent to apply for the position. There are some things that can be learned on the job; men have known this fact for years.

- Encourage young girls with interests in traditionally male-dominated fields. Send them to appropriate camps and go to their science fairs. Never say "girls can't do math" or similar phrases. Do not feed the stereotype.

- Never negotiate when you are desperate. Be willing to walk away.

Today 64 percent of women are primary breadwinners for their families. Their salaries certainly do not constitute "extra spending money." Women's pay is vital to keeping the electricity on and putting food on the table.

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