

Women in the Workforce after World War II: Rosie the Riveter vs. G.I. Joe, 1945

Documents

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Women in the Workforce after World War II

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**Document 1: President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Message to
Congress, "Four Freedoms"**

January 6, 1941

In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression -- everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way -- everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want -- which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants -- everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear -- which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor-- anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called new order of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.

To that new order we oppose the greater conception -- the moral order. A good society is able to face schemes of world domination and foreign revolutions alike without fear.

Since the beginning of our American history, we have been engaged in change -- in a perpetual peaceful revolution -- a revolution which goes on steadily, quietly adjusting itself to changing conditions -- without the concentration camp or the quick-lime in the ditch. The world order which we seek is the cooperation of free countries, working together in a friendly, civilized society.

This nation has placed its destiny in the hands and heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women; and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God. Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights or keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose.

To that high concept there can be no end save victory.

Source: Congressional Record, 1941, Vol. 87, Pt. I.

**Document 2: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Speech
for a Declaration of War**

December 8, 1941

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives:

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation, and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American island of Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And, while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya.
Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.
Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam.
Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.
Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island.
And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has therefore undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense, that always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us. No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people, in their righteous might, will win through to absolute victory.

I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph. So help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

Source: The National Archives

**Document 3: President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order
No. 9066**

February 19, 1942

The President

Executive Order

Authorizing the Secretary of War to Prescribe Military Areas

Whereas the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage to national-defense material, national-defense premises, and national-defense utilities as defined in Section 4, Act of April 20, 1918, 40 Stat. 533, as amended by the Act of November 30, 1940, 54 Stat. 1220, and the Act of August 21, 1941, 55 Stat. 655 (U.S.C., Title 50, Sec. 104);

Now, therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion. The Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary, in the judgment of the Secretary of War or the said Military Commander, and until other arrangements are made, to accomplish the purpose of this order. The designation of military areas in any region or locality shall supersede designations of prohibited and restricted areas by the Attorney General under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, and shall supersede the responsibility and authority of the Attorney General under the said Proclamations in respect of such prohibited and restricted areas.

I hereby further authorize and direct the Secretary of War and the said Military Commanders to take such other steps as he or the appropriate Military Commander may deem advisable to enforce compliance with the restrictions applicable to each Military area hereinabove authorized to be designated, including the use of Federal troops and other Federal Agencies, with authority to accept assistance of state and local agencies.

I hereby further authorize and direct all Executive Departments, independent establishments and other Federal Agencies, to assist the Secretary of War or the said Military Commanders in carrying out this Executive Order, including the furnishing of medical aid, hospitalization, food, clothing, transportation, use of land, shelter, and other supplies, equipment, utilities, facilities, and services.

This order shall not be construed as modifying or limiting in any way the authority heretofore granted under Executive Order No. 8972, dated December 12, 1941, nor shall it be construed as limiting or modifying the duty and responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with respect to the investigation of alleged acts of sabotage or the duty and responsibility of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, prescribing regulations for the conduct and control of alien

enemies, except as such duty and responsibility is superseded by the designation of military areas hereunder.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

The White House,

February 19, 1942.

[F.R. Doc. 42-1563; Filed, February 21, 1942; 12:51 p.m.]

Source: Executive Order No. 9066, February 19, 1942.

Document 4: National War Labor Board General Order No. 16

Adopted November 24, 1942 as amended January 3, 1944, and August 20, 1945

Sec. 803.16—Wages of Female Employees

Increases which equalize the wage or salary rates paid to females with the rates paid to males for comparable quality and quantity of work on the same or similar operations and increases in accordance with this policy which recognize or are based in differences in quality or quantity of work performed may be made without approval of the National War Labor Board, provided that such increases will not be used in whole or in part as the basis for seeking an increase in price ceilings or, in the case of products or services being furnished under contract with a federal procurement agency, will not increase, the cost to the United States.

Source: War Labor Reports (Wage & Salary Stabilization 24, War Lab. Rep. Published 1945). Washington, D.C.: The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc..

**Document 5: The Selective Service and Training Act of 1940,
as amended in 1944**

EXCERPTED

Sec. 8. (a) Any person inducted into the armed forces under this title for training and service who...in order to perform such training and service, has left or leaves a position (other than a temporary position) in the employ of any employer and who (1) receives such certificate, and (2) makes application for reemployment within ninety days after he is relieved from such training and service or from hospitalization continuing after discharge for a period of not more than one year-

(A) if such position was in the employ of the United States Government, its Territories, or possessions or political subdivisions thereof, or the District of Columbia, such person shall-

- (i) if still qualified to perform the duties of such position, be restored to such position or to a position of like seniority, status, and pay; or
- (ii) if not qualified to perform the duties of such position by reason of disability sustained during such service but qualified to perform the duties of any other position in the employ of the employer, be restored to such other position the duties of which he is equalized to perform as will provide him like seniority, status, and pay, or the nearest approximation thereof consistent with the circumstances in his case;

(B) if such position was in the employ of a private employer, such person shall-

- (i) if still qualified to perform the duties of such position, be restored by such employer or his successor in interest to such position or to a position of like seniority, status, and Pay; or
- (ii) if not qualified to perform the duties of such position by reason of disability sustained during such service but qualified to perform the duties of any other position in the employ of such employer or his successor in interest, be restored by such employer or his successor in interest to such other position the duties of which he is qualified to perform as will provide him like seniority, status, and pay, or the nearest approximation thereof consistent with the circumstances in his case, unless the employer's circumstances have so changed as to make it impossible or unreasonable to do so;

... (c) (1) Any person who is restored to a position in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (A) or (B) of subsection (b) shall be considered as having been on .furlough or leave of absence during his period of training and service in the armed forces, shall be so restored without loss of seniority, shall be entitled to participate in insurance or other benefits offered by the employer pursuant to established rules and practices relating to employees on furlough or leave of absence in effect with the employer at the time such person was inducted into such forces, and shall not be discharged from such position without cause within one year after such restoration.

(2) A is hereby declared to be the sense of the Congress that any person who is restored to a position in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (A) or (B) of subsection (b) should be so restored in such manner as to give him such status in his employment as he would have enjoyed if he had continued in such employment continuously from the time of his entering the armed forces until the time of his restoration to such employment...

Source: Record of the United States Congress, 54 stat. 85, September 14, 1940.

**Document 6: Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944
 (The GI Bill of Rights)
 as amended in 1945**

EXCERPTED

The GI Bill provided four major kinds of help for veterans:

1. Education and job training; 2. Guaranty of loans; 3. Unemployment allowances, including aid for self-employed; and 4. Assistance finding jobs.

Title I, Chapter. Hospitalization, Claims, and Procedures

SEC. 104. No person shall be discharged or released from active duty in the armed forces until his certificate of discharge or release from active duty and final pay, or a substantial portion thereof, are ready for delivery to him or to his next of kin or legal representative; and no person shall be discharged or released from active service on account of disability until and unless he has executed a claim for compensation, pension, or hospitalization, to be filed with the Veterans' Administration or has signed a statement that he has had explained to him the right to file such claim: Provided, That this section shall not preclude immediate transfer to a veterans' facility for necessary hospital care, nor preclude the discharge of any person who refuses to sign such claim or statement: And provided further, That refusal or failure to file a claim shall be without prejudice to any right the veteran may subsequently assert.

Title III, Chapter IV. Education of Veterans

Sec. 400, Part VIII.

1. Any person who served in the active military or naval service on or after September 16, 1940, and prior to the termination of the present war, and who shall have been discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable, and who either shall have served ninety days or more, exclusive of any period he was assigned for a course of education or training under the Army specialized training program or the Navy college training program, which course was a continuation of his civilian course and was pursued to completion, or as a cadet or midshipman at one of the service academies, or shall have been discharged or released from active service by reason of an actual service incurred injury or disability, shall be eligible for and entitled to receive education or training under this part; Provided, That such course shall be initiated not later than four years after either the date of his discharge or the termination of the present war whichever is the later; Provided further, That no such education or training shall be afforded beyond nine years after the termination of the present war.

2. Any such eligible person shall be entitled to education or training at an approved educational or training institution for a period of one year plus the time such person was in the active service on or after September 16, 1940, and before the termination of the war...

3. Such person shall be eligible for and entitled to such course of education or training full time or the equivalent thereof in part-time training, as he may elect and at any approved educational or training institution at which he chooses to enroll, whether or not located in the State in which he resides, which will

accept or retain hi, as a student or trainee in any field or branch of knowledge which such institution finds him qualified to undertake or pursue...

Title III, Loans for the Purchase or Construction of Homes, Farms and Business Property

Sec. 500 (a) Any person who shall have served in the active military or naval service of the United States at any time on or after September 16, 1940, and prior to the termination of the present war and who shall have been discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable after active service of ninety days or more, or by reason of an injury or disability incurred in service in line of duty shall be eligible for the benefits of this title.

Any loan made by such veteran within ten years after the termination of the war for any of the purposes, and in compliance with the provisions, specified in this Title is automatically guaranteed by the Government by this Title in an amount not exceeding fifty per centum of the loan: Provided, That the aggregate amount guaranteed shall not exceed \$2,000 in the case of non-real-estate loans, nor \$4000 in the case of real-estate loans, or a prorated portion thereof on loans of both types or combination thereof.

Title IV, Chapter VI. Employment of Veterans

Sec. 600 (a) In the enactment of the provisions of this title Congress declares as its intent and purpose that there shall be an effective job counseling and employment placement service for veterans, and that to this end, policies shall be promulgated and administered, so as to provide for them the maximum of job opportunity in the field of gainful employment. For the purpose there is hereby created ...a Veterans' Placement Service Board

Title V, Chapter VII, Readjustment Allowances

Sec. 900 (b) The number of weeks of allowances to which each eligible veteran shall be entitle shall be determined as follows...

Sec. 901 (a) Readjustment allowances shall be paid at the intervals prescribed by the unemployment compensation law of the State in which the claim is made

Sec. 902 (a) Any person qualified under subsection (a) of section 700, and residing in the United States who is self-employed for profit in an independent establishment, trade, business, profession, or other vocation shall be eligible for readjustment allowances under this title within the time periods applicable, and not in excess of the total amount provided in this title.

Source: The Amended Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (The GI Bill of Rights) as amended December 28, 1945. Army Information Branch, Information and Education Division, War Department, Washington, D.C.

Document 7: Letters and Testimony of Women who worked during World War II

At seventeen, Vi Kristine Vrooman responded to the call of patriotism with the driving enthusiasm of a Coast Guard officer's daughter. In 1943, she became a riveter at the Boeing Company in Seattle, Washington.

"I wanted to do my bit. My father was across the ocean fighting a whole bunch of strange people, and we were all very patriotic. Very much so. We were all into the war.

"Boeing had a two-week training period in which they made you feel wanted, and instilled patriotism, like, get out there and buy bonds and win the war and build those planes. We were making B-17s. you were really pumped up.

"I'll tell you, at seventeen, I had to be the best-looking riveter in the country. My family was classy so instead of getting the kind of clothes that most people would wear—anything they wanted really—I got what amounted to designer overalls. I used all my money to buy those nifty overalls. I learned to tie head scarves very well.

"The guys were exempt from the service because of defense work and families, and they were courteous and kind and caring about this little kid with this funny little riveting gun. Nobody hit on me. Nobody.

"The biggest thrill—I can't tell you—was when the B-17s rolled off the assembly line. You can't believe the feeling we had. It was incredible. Everyone in the place felt, 'Yeah, we did it. We did it!' Boeing was a nifty company to work for. We were all so proud. We were there for a reason—to win the war—it was what we could do. We helped win the war. We felt like we were nifty. We were nifty.

"All the people from Oklahoma coming west—it really happened. They came. The money was good. I think I was making \$98 a week. Probably more than my dad was making. He was in charge of landing craft in the Mediterranean. Our days were full with ten-minute breaks where I learned how to smoke with those women from Oklahoma. And a half hour for lunch.

"After the war, most of the workers went back to Oklahoma. And when the guys came back, the women all went home and did the dishes. There was no question about that. None of the women said, 'I don't want to lose this job. I want to stay here and do this. I want to get this big money.' They didn't. it was like an unwritten law. They just packed their tool kits and went back home.

"I didn't have any problems about it at all. It was like you were holding your job for your husband, maybe he was sick or something. We were supposed to go home and get married and have babies. I've talked to some people and find there was some resentment among the women, but the women I worked with all felt that this is the way it is: the guys are coming back and the women went back to jobs as little secretaries and nurses. It was different for me, of course. I was younger than most. And riveting and welding weren't exactly the kind of jobs that women would stay on in, anyway. Not what women would ordinarily do."

Having unloaded construction tiles at a lumberyard as a high school senior in Mapleton, Minnesota, and fed a crusher at a hemp plant a year later, Vera-Mae Widmer Fredrickson was employed as a punch press operator at Honeywell in Minneapolis, Minnesota, toward the end of the war. She had worked her way up to that position.

"At first, I was put on a bunch of jobs that were women's jobs because I had fantastic hand-eye coordination, but these jobs were boring beyond belief and they wouldn't let me work at my own pace because then I'd be a wage buster.

"Finally, they put me on a punch press, which is a big machine that punches metal, and I just loved that. It was very noisy. You had to wear ear plugs. It was a man's job because you handle this big weight. It was physically demanding. I felt I had more control, however, in what I was doing than in other jobs. It was very tiring. When you're adjusting to punch the hole for the bomb sight, you sit there and adjust and adjust and adjust the tension. Oh, it was maddening.

"I was happy in that job, but I got boosted because the guys came back from the service. It was 1945. the guy came back to my specific job., it was union and the punch press was a man's job and had always been. They put me on the extraordinarily tedious jobs of putting labels on switches and adjusting screws, which women were supposed to be good at, and I quit. I was furious. I went to the union about it, too. Didn't do a bit of good. They said, 'Boys from the service, you know.'

"I went to work as a waitress. After that, my jobs were traditional female jobs because they were available. Overnight, those jobs that were men's jobs vanished. We women talked about it, some of us. Some were just passing time, waiting for their boyfriends or husbands to come home. Or some were being patriotic, and making more money than they'd ever made in their lives.

"But some felt like I did. I'd always wanted men's jobs. I'd been resentful that the word was that women could be secretaries, nurses, that jazz."

Another Californian who took quickly to welding was Mary Entwistle Poole of Tiburon. Before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Poole taught in a little country high school near Sacramento. Believing that teaching seemed "rather irrelevant" with the war going on, Poole answered an appeal for workers to help at Marinship in Sausalito, California. First, she enrolled in a welding school for four days at San Rafael High School.

"After a disastrous beginning, I finally caught on. I went there the first day and proceeded to get my rod stuck. You operate with a welding rod that's more than a foot long and this is attached to an electrical stinger. The heat from the electricity melts the rod and also melts a little bit of the steel plate that you weld on, and the two are supposed to form a bond. Well, I just got my rod stuck and I had to call the instructor.

"He said, 'Well, the first day, this happens all the time. It'll be okay.' The second day the same thing happened and the third day the same thing happened and I didn't want to come back. It thought, I guess I'm not made for this. The fourth day all the things seemed to fall in place and I was welding, welding. The instructor came by and said, 'You know, I almost told you not to come back yesterday.' I said, 'Well, I almost didn't come back.'

"I've always told people that he taught me a great lesson that all teachers should learn—that you never give up on anyone. He didn't give up on me and the fourth day said, 'You know, you can do welding fine. You can go down to the yard.' There was further training there.

"I worked all three shifts by the time I'd been there three years, from July of '42 until August of '45. I started out on the day shift. I became leadman on that, which meant I had a crew. It varied from ten to fifteen. That happened because the fellow who was the boss of the first crew of women found out I had been a teacher. He came to me one day and said, 'You've been a teacher, haven't you?' I told him yes. He said, 'How would you like to run this?' I said, 'What do you mean run it? I'm not even a journeyman welder

yet.' He said, 'That doesn't matter. You know what I want to do? I want to get away from here. I want to get down to the other end of the yard and never see any of these women again.'

"I said, 'Well, if they don't object, I don't object.' So I became a welder leadman with very little knowledge. I didn't know what I was doing.

"They were in such a hurry to get the ships built that they had you welding long before you were a really good welder but you didn't do anything that would have caused danger to the ships, glass welding and that kind of thing, until we got pretty good. I worked there about a year and then discovered that the people who worked the graveyard shift just as welders, not leadmen, worked an hour less than the day shift and got paid much more an hour and I thought, why am I doing this? Here I've got all these worries about who has disappeared and all that kind of stiff, so I went on the graveyard shift.

"The only reason welding was a man's job is that men had always done it. There was no reason in the world why a woman couldn't be just as good a welder as a man anytime. In fact, I would say if I had to take a position on the question, I'd say that women probably make better welders, possibly because of their hands. Their skill. Sewing and all the things that you do when you're a housewife, playing the piano, maybe. All of those things help you in welding. Dexterity.

"I think that also they were more conscientious. They might not be now, but they were then. I would say that I didn't know any men welders who were any better than the women.

"It was fun. I really enjoyed the job. I was a good welder and had no regrets about anything I ever did. I don't think anybody ever found any fault with my welding, which was a great source of pride. If you're a teacher, you might do a good job but hardly anybody ever notices. How do you tell the difference between a good one and a bad one? But you can easily tell the good welders from the bad ones. It's right there in front of you. You can see it, the foreman can see it, everybody else can see it. It was the first time I'd ever done anything like that. I could see that I was doing a good job. I'm very proud of it. People say I brag about it. Well, why not?"

Source: Reprinted by permission of the publisher John Wiley & Sons, Inc. from *Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II*, by Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise. Copyright © 1994 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

When I first arrived in Los Angeles, I began to look for a job. I decided I didn't want to do maid work anymore, so I got job as a waitress in small black restaurant. I was making pretty good money more than I had in Sapulpa, I didn't like the job that much; I didn't have the knack for getting good tips. Then I saw an ad in the newspaper offering to train women for defense work. I went to Lockheed Aircraft and applied. They said they'd call me, but I never got a response, so I went back and applied again. You had to be pretty persistent. Finally they accepted me. They gave me a short training program and taught me how to rivet. Then they put me to work in the plant riveting small airplane parts, mainly gasoline tanks. The women worked in pairs. I was the riveter, and this big strong white girl from a cotton farm in Arkansas worked as the buckner. The riveter used a gun to shoot rivets through the metal and fasten it together. The buckner used a bucking bar on the other side of the metal to smooth out the rivets. Bucking was harder than shooting rivets; it required more muscle. Riveting required more skill.

I worked for a while a riveter with this white girl, when the boss came around one day and said "We've decided to make some changes." At this point he assigned her to do the riveting and me to do the bucking. I wanted to know why. He said, "Well, we just interchange once and a while." But I was never given the riveting job back. That was the first encounter I had with segregation in California and it's didn't sit too well with me. It brought me back some of my experiences in Sapulpa-you're a Negro, so you do the hard work. I wasn't failing as a riveter – in fact, the other girl learned to rivet from me- but I felt they gave me the job of buckner because I was black.

So applied to Douglas Aircraft in Santa Monica and was hired as a riveter there. On that job I did not encounter the same prejudice. As a matter of fact, the foreman was more congenial. But Maywood, where Lockheed was located, was a very segregated city. Going into that city, you were really going to forbidden territory. Santa Monica was not a segregated community.

I worked in aircraft for a few years, then in '43 I saw an ad in the paper for women trainees to learn arc welding. The salary sounded good, from dollar to a dollar –twenty-five an hour. I wanted to learn that skill and I wanted to make more money, so I answered the ad and they sent me to a short course at welding school. After I passed the trainee course, they employed me at the shipyards. That was a little different than working in aircraft, because in the shipyard you found mostly men. There I ran into another kind of discrimination: because I was a woman I was paid less than a man for doing the same job. I was an arc welder, I passed both the army and navy tests and I knew I could do the job, but I found form talking with some of the men that they made more money. You'd ask about this, but they'd say "Well, you don't have the experience," or "The men have to lift some heavy pieces of steel and you don't have to," but I knew that I had to help lift steel , too.

They started everyone off at a dollar twenty and hour. There were higher-paying jobs, though, like chippers and crane operators, that were for men only. Once, the foreman told me I had to go on the skids-the long docks alongside the hull. I said, "That sounds pretty dangerous. Will I make more than one-twenty an hour?" And he said, "No, one-twenty is the top pay you'll get." But the men got more. It was interesting that although they didn't pay women as much as men, the men treated you differently if you wore slacks. I noticed for example, that when you'd get on the bus or the streetcar, you stood all the way, more than the lady who would get on with a dress. I never could understand why men wouldn't give women in slacks a seat. And at the shipyards the language wasn't the best. Nobody respected you enough to clean up the way they spoke. It's didn't seem to bother the men that you were a woman. During the war years men began to say. "You have a man's job you're getting paid almost the same, so we don't have ton give you a seat anymore or show the common courtesies that men show women." All those little niceties were lost.

I enjoyed working at the shipyard; it was a unique job for a woman, and I liked the challenge. But it was a dangerous job. Many people were injured by falling steel. Finally I was assigned to a very hazardous

area and I asked to be transferred into a safer area. I was not granted that. They said "You have to work where they assign you at all times." I thought it was getting too dangerous, so I quit. The war years had a tremendous impact on women. I know for myself it was the first time I had a chance to get out of the kitchen and work in industry and make few bucks. This was something I had never dreamed would happen. In Sapulpa all the women had to look forward to was keeping house and raising families. The war years offered new possibilities. You came out to California, put on your pants and took your lunch pail to man's job. In Oklahoma a woman's place was in the home, and man went to work and provided. This was the beginning of women's feeling that they could do something more. We were trained to do this kind of work because of the war, but there was no question that this was just an interim period. We were all told that when the war was over we would not be needed anymore

I grew up on a farm in northeastern Oklahoma, knowing nothing but the Depression. My father the lost the farm and we moved to town just when I was starting junior high school. I lived there until the eleventh grade, when I was forced to quit school to go to work.

When I was nineteen I fell in love with a boy from Oklahoma. George was also from a depressed area and joined the Navy to get ahead. He was stationed in California and I decided to come and join him. I felt there would be more opportunity in California and I was determined that I was going to have a different life.

I had twenty-five dollars when I left Oklahoma. I answered an ad in the paper looking for riders to California and paid twelve dollars for the trip. I arrived here with twelve dollars to my name and lived with friends until I could get work.

I got a job as a pastry cook at a restaurant in Whittier, a very exclusive place. I was making fifteen dollars a week and was very proud of myself. George and I were planning to marry. Then Pearl Harbor was attacked and his ship was immediately sent out to fight in the Pacific. After he left I knew I had to make it on my own. I saw an ad in the paper announcing the opening of a school for vocational training in aircraft. I was looking for the opportunity to learn something else, and wanted to earn more money. I worked during the day cooking and went to school at night studying bench mechanics and riveting, how to read blueprints and use different aircrafts tools.

After about three months the instructor said "There's no use in you spending any more time here. You can go out and get a job." He gave me a graduation slip and I went down to San Diego to look around because George's mother lived there. I went to Convair, which was Consolidated Aircraft then and they hired me.

I was one of the first women hired at Convair and I was determined that I wasn't going to lose the job and be sent back to working as pastry cook. Convair had a motto on their plant which said that anything short of right is wrong and that stuck with me. I went to work in the riveting group in metal bench assembly. The mechanics would bring us the job they had put together, we would take the blueprints and rivet what they brought us.

They would always put the new people with another person, a "lead man." The man I went to work for was really great. He saw my determination and would give me hard job to do. The other girls would say, "Joplin don't give her that, I'll do it." But he would say, "I'm going to break her in right, I'm going to do it the hard way." He told me later that he had made a mistake and been too easy with the other girls. I tackled everything. I have a daring mother who was afraid of nothing, so maybe I inherited a little bit of that from her. I remember my brother who was in the air force at the time, and friends laughed at me one day thinking I couldn't learn this mechanical stuff. I can still see them, but it only made me more determined. I think it probably hurt their pride a little bit that I was capable of doing this.

Pretty soon I was promoted to bench mechanic work, which was detailed hand riveting. Then I was given bench with nothing to do but repair what other people had ruined. I visited a man recently who's seventy four years old and said to my daughter, "All we had to do was foul up a job and take it to her and she's fix it."

I loved working at Convair. I loved the challenge of getting dirty and getting into the work. I did once special riveting job, hand riveting that could not be done my machine. I worked on that job for three months, ten hours a day, six days a week, and slapped three-eighths-or three- quarter- inch rivets by hand that no one else would do. I didn't have that kind of confidence growing up because I didn't have that opportunity. Convair was the first time in my life that I had the chance to prove that I could do something, and I did. They finally made me a group leader to help break the new women in.

Our department was a majority of women. Many of them had no training at all, particularly the other women. We had women in our department who ex-school teachers, artists, housewives, so when we could give them a job from the production line the job would have to set up for them. I'd sit them down and show them how to use the drill press, the size drill to use, the size of screws, the kind of rivets, whether it was an army rivet or a navy rivet-a navy rivet was an icebox rivet, the army was not and so on. Then I would go back and check to see if the riveting was okay, and if there were any bad rivets they had to take them out. Most of the time, I had to take them out myself. As a group leader that's what I did, and I did it at the same time I was doing my job as a bench mechanic. There were four male group leaders and myself. Theoretically we should have been classified as group leaders and paid for that type of work, but we were not. I felt that was discrimination and we were being used by the company and fought against it.

Shortly after I went to work at Convair I was chosen by the people in our work group to sit on the wage review board. The company had automatic wage reviews, and when I first started those were the only raises that we received. The women were lucky, though, if we got a five-cent-an-hour increase on a review. Some of the women got three cents, some of the women even got two cents, and some of the women were passed over. To us it seemed that the men's pay automatically went up and out didn't. I was fortunate enough to get raises, even a ten-cent raise, and I actually had an assistant foreman come up to me and say, " Don't say anything to the other girls about getting a raise." I told him, " I don't discuss my personal raises, but how about the other women who are deserving, too?" So on the wage board I fought for myself. Some of the things we did change. For example, they were forced to classify you because of your work. And somewhere in the back of their minds they had the idea that they were not going make a woman anything but a B mechanic. As a B mechanic you could only go to a dollar an hour, and they were determined that no woman would ever become an A mechanic or a A riveter. But we really fought that, and we proved to them by bringing them on the job that were doing A mechanic work and producing more than the men. So I got my A mechanic classification and raise to a dollar-fifteen an hour.

Another thing we fought for was the two-hour break. For the first two years we were timed when we went to the rest rooms. You had to ask permission every time you went and you had to matrons checking to make sure you didn't loiter or overuse your time. Finally they instituted a ten minute break every two hours. I also sat on the safety board the whole time I was at Convair, for the safety requirements they demanded of women were more unreasonable than what they demanded of men. In the beginning we had caps and uniforms we were supposed to wear, but the women rebelled at that. We felt we could be safe and wear the clothes that we wanted. Eventually the company did become a little more relaxed about dress, so won some victories there too.

Source: Franklin D. Mitchell and Stephen Schechter, *The Homefront: American During World War II*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984. pp. 118-121, 122-125. Courtesy of University of California, on Behalf of USC Special Collectionss.

Document 8:

**“SHALL WOMEN HAVE EQUAL PAY”,
A Symposium Compiled by Doris Herrick Cochrane
for *Independent Woman*,**

April 1944

“Calling All Women”! Calling All Women”! That is what the United States Government has been doing ever since Pearl Harbor. “Coming, Coming.” That has been the women’s answer, until women now form a third of the labor force. Women’s deeds speak for them. They have performed men’s jobs and produced comparable work. And their reward? It has not been, on the whole, in comparable rates of pay. The Federations has always held that women should not depress the labor market by undercutting the pay envelope. It believes that the returning soldiers should find the wage rate maintained, and that justice requires that pay rates be determined by performance rather than sex. To secure the views of the nation’s business, labor and professional leaders, we recently requested statements on this important problem. Twenty of the country’s leaders have submitted significant statements on equal pay for comparable work. They form a valuable record of view and practices in this year of 1944. The principle of equal pay is heartily endorsed by labor leaders and by several representatives of management. Others have hedged with exceptions. A few are non-committal on the pay principle but report certain company practices recognizing the services of women. Eight replies that for various reasons they were unable to make a statement. The outright opponents of equal pay apparently avoided the question by failure to respond to the request for a statement. Fourteen fell into this category. Here are our answers:

Eric A. Johnston, President
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE UNITED STATES

“Although the Chamber of Commerce of the United States has never taken a position on the question that women should receive the same pay as men for the same work, I favor the principle and am sure that there is increasingly general acceptance of it on the part of employers. Personally, I do not fear women in industry, or their employment. The more people we have producing, the higher will be our national income and the higher our level of well being.”

Henry E. Abt, Director, Group Relations Department
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS

“The following is the NAM’s official position on the subject of ‘Equal Pay for Equal Performance’ as approved by our leadership and directors: In the matter of wage policies we advocate the principle of equal pay for equal performance by women. In effectuating this policy it is essential that consideration be given to methods whereby ‘equal work’ may be measured. In this connection we recommend that industry give thought to the wider use of such techniques as job analysis and evaluation to determine the precise nature of the job and the elements comprising it. In approaching this problem certain pertinent factors are apparent, among them: 1. The practical difficulties of measuring what purports to be the same job without using such techniques as job analysis and evaluation to determine whether the work is strictly comparable. Experience shows that women in a factory generally require more servicing than men in the way of ‘setting-up,’ lifting, and the like. 2. The higher rate of absenteeism among women as compared to men. 3. The greater susceptibility of women to fatigue, making it necessary that they be allotted more rest periods. 4. The general inability to upgrade women to better jobs such as foremen, supervisors, etc. This prevents the

best development of industrial workers. 5. The shorter industrial life of the women worker. 6. The designation of certain jobs in a company—because they are more suitable and desirable for women—as ‘women jobs’ and which are therefore performed only by women.”

William Green, President
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

“The American Federation of Labor has repeatedly declared for equal pay for equal work regardless of sex or color. With the great increase in the number of women workers since the beginning of our war effort, however, more concerted effort has been made to establish standards definitely providing for the payment of equal wages for equal work performed. The need for such concerted action will be even more pronounced when our industries must be re-gearred to peacetime levels at the same time that millions of our armed forces and war production workers must find employment in industry. Without adequate protection at that time it will be difficult, if not impossible, to maintain standards of production and consumption upon which our American economy is based...The most influential factor in establishing equal pay in industry is the union. Equal pay is necessary to protect the standards of both men and women.”

Philip Murray, President
CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

“The CIO stands unequivocally for equal pay for equal work for women as it stands for equality of treatment of all workers, regardless of sex, race, national origin or belief. This has been our policy since the beginning of the CIO, and remains so today. In wartime, with millions of women workers needed on the production lines, this policy must be enforced with particular emphasis, not only as a matter of justice, but also an aid to securing full war production. Even before the war, a large proportion of CIO membership was made up of women. Today, of course, this production is much higher. Evidence of the important part women play in the CIO, in helping formulate and carry out its win-the-war programs, is seen in the fact that many hundreds of positions of leadership within our unions are occupied by women...The CIO is proud of its record in securing the principle of equal pay for equal work in contracts with employers and in the decisions it has secured from government agencies...The policy of the CIO is simple and direct. We favor equal treatment for women workers as we favor equal treatment for all workers. This is the basis on which we have built our organization, which today comprises more than five million American working men and women, dedicated to production for an early victory and a new world of equal opportunity after the war.”

Mrs. Edith B. Joynes, President
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

“The platform of the National Education Association urges that ‘teachers of equivalent training and experience should receive equal pay, regardless of sex or grade taught.’ This principle which is so fundamentally sound has helped many cities to adopt the single salary schedule. The salary policy is one of the greatest influences in determining the quality of the individuals who work for the schools. And so we urge a salary schedule as a means of helping both the school system and the teachers. The trite saying ‘we get what we pay for’ is as applicable to a teacher as to an article of clothing. The man or woman who is qualified to teach our children is entitled to an adequate salary... When parents and taxpayers see that better school salaries bring better service for their children and the justice in ‘equal pay for equal service’ every effort will be made to provide the needed funds.”

Paul G. Hoffman, President

THE STUDEBAKER CORPORATION; ALSO CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

"The Studebaker Corporation thoroughly approves of this principle [of equal pay for comparable work] and has adhered to it as a matter of policy for many years."

C.M. Chester, Chairman, Executive Committee
GENERAL FOODS CORPORATION

"Long before industry looked to women for the help necessary to produce the goods of war, General Foods regarded them as essential to its success. In both our plants and offices women have, since the company was first organized, worked side by side with men on the basis of equal pay for comparable performance... The future opportunities for women in industry should be bright. More and more business men and industrialists are recognizing the great present and potential services of women in American business and professional fields."

Elizabeth Christman, Secretary-Treasurer
NATIONAL WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Source: Independent Woman, 23:108, April 1944.

Document 9: “Equal Pay for Equal Work for Women” Bill, S. 1178

Sec. 2. It shall be an unfair wage practice for any employer engaged in commerce or in transactions or operations affecting commerce---

(a) to discriminate in any way in the payment of wages as between the sexes; or

(b) to pay wages to any female employee at a rate less than the rate which he pays or has paid to male employees for work of comparable quality or quantity, except where such payment is made pursuant to seniority or merit increase system which does not discriminate on the basis of sex...

Source: The Congressional Record

**Document 10: President John F. Kennedy's Executive Order 10980:
Establishing the President's Commission on the
Status of Women**

December 14, 1961

WHEREAS prejudices and outmoded customs act as barriers to the full realization of women's basic rights which should be respected and fostered as part of our Nation's commitment to human dignity, freedom, and democracy; and

WHEREAS measures that contribute to family security and strengthen home life will advance the general welfare; and

WHEREAS it is in the national interest to promote the economy, security, and national defense through the most efficient and effective utilization of the skills of all persons, and

WHEREAS in every period of national emergency women have served with distinction in widely varied capacities but thereafter have been subject to treatment as a marginal group whose skills have been inadequately utilized; and

WHEREAS women should be assured the opportunity to develop their capacities and fulfill their aspirations on a continuing basis irrespective of national exigencies, and

WHEREAS a Governmental Commission should be charged with the responsibility for developing recommendations for overcoming discriminations in government and private employment on the basis of sex and for developing recommendations for services which will enable women to continue their role as wives and mothers while making a maximum contribution to the world around them:

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States by the Constitution and statutes of the United States, it is ordered as follows:

**PART I—
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

SEC. 101. There is hereby established the President's Commission on the Status of Women, referred to herein as the "Commission". The Commission shall terminate not later than October 1, 1963.

SEC. 102. The Commission shall be composed of twenty members appointed by the President from among persons with a competency in the area of public affairs and women's activities. In addition, the Secretary of Labor, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission shall also serve as members of the Commission. The President shall designate from among the membership a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, and an Executive Vice-Chairman.

SEC. 103. In conformity with the Act of May 3, 1945 (59 Stat. 134, 31 U.S.C. 691), necessary facilitating assistance, including the provision of suitable office space by the Department of Labor, shall be furnished the Commission by the Federal agencies whose chief officials are members thereof. An Executive Secretary shall be detailed by the Secretary of Labor to serve the Commission.

SEC. 104. The Commission shall meet at the call of the Chairman.

SEC. 105. The Commission is authorized to use the services of consultants and experts as may be found necessary and as may be otherwise authorized by law.

PART II—
DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT'S
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

SEC. 201. The Commission shall review progress and make recommendations as needed for constructive action in the following areas:

- (a) Employment policies and practices, including those on wages, under Federal contracts.
- (b) Federal social insurance and tax laws as they affect the net earnings and other income of women.
- (c) Federal and State labor laws dealing with such matters as hours, night work, and wages, to determine whether they are accomplishing the purposes for which they were established and whether they should be adapted to changing technological, economic, and social conditions.
- (d) Differences in legal treatment of men and women in regard to political and civil rights, property rights, and family relations.
- (e) New and expanded services that may be required for women as wives, mothers, and workers, including education, counseling, training, home services, and arrangements for care of children during the working day.
- (f) The employment policies and practices of the Government of the United States, with reference to additional affirmative steps which should be taken through legislation, executive or administrative action to assure nondiscrimination on the basis of sex and to enhance constructive employment opportunities for women.

SEC. 202. The Commission shall submit a final report of its recommendations to the President by October 1, 1963.

SEC. 203. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government are directed to cooperate with the Commission in the performance of its duties.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

THE WHITE HOUSE

December 14, 1961.

Source: The Federal Registrar, The National Archives

DECLARATION OF PURPOSE (Not Reprinted in U.S. Code)

Section 2

(a) The Congress hereby finds that the existence in industries engaged in commerce or in the production of goods for commerce of wage differentials based on sex-

- (1) depresses wages and living standards for employees necessary for their health and efficiency;
- (2) prevents the maximum utilization of the available labor resources;
- (3) tends to cause labor disputes, thereby burdening, affecting, and obstructing commerce;
- (4) burdens commerce and the free flow of goods in commerce; and
- (5) constitutes an unfair method of competition.

(b) It is hereby declared to be the policy of this Act, through exercise by Congress of its power to regulate commerce among the several States and with foreign nations, to correct the conditions above referred to in such industries.

Section 6

(d) (1) No employer having employees subject to any provisions of this section shall discriminate, within any establishment in which such employees are employed, between employees on the basis of sex by paying wages to employees in such establishment at a rate less than the rate at which he pays wages to employees of the opposite sex in such establishment for equal work on jobs the performance of which requires equal skill, effort, and responsibility, and which are performed under similar working conditions, except where such payment is made pursuant to

(i) a seniority system; (ii) a merit system; (iii) a system which measures earnings by quantity or quality of production; or (iv) a differential based on any other factor other than sex: *Provided*, That an employer who is paying a wage rate differential in violation of this subsection shall not, in order to comply with the provisions of this subsection, reduce the wage rate of any employee.

(2) No labor organization, or its agents, representing employees of an employer having employees subject to any provisions of this section shall cause or attempt to cause such an employer to discriminate against an employee in violation of paragraph (1) of this subsection.

(3) For purposes of administration and enforcement, any amounts owing to any employee which have been withheld in violation of this subsection shall be deemed to be unpaid minimum wages or unpaid overtime compensation under this chapter.

Source: The Equal Pay Act of 1963 (Pub. L. 88-38), as amended, as it appears in volume 29 of the United States Code, at section 206(d).

Document 12: Title VII—Equal Employment Opportunity (Excerpted)

DEFINITIONS

SEC. 701. For the purposes of this title--

(a) The term "person" includes one or more individuals, labor unions, partnerships, associations, corporations, legal representatives, mutual companies, joint-stock companies, trusts, unincorporated organizations, trustees, trustees in bankruptcy, or receivers.

(b) The term "employer" means a person engaged in an industry affecting commerce who has twenty-five or more employees for each working day in each of twenty or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year, and any agent of such a person, but such term does not include (1) the United States, a corporation wholly owned by the Government of the United States, an Indian tribe, or a State or political subdivision thereof, (2) a bona fide private membership club (other than a labor organization) which is exempt from taxation under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954: Provided, That during the first year after the effective date prescribed in subsection (a) of section 716, persons having fewer than one hundred employees (and their agents) shall not be considered employers, and, during the second year after such date, persons having fewer than seventy-five employees (and their agents) shall not be considered employers, and, during the third year after such date, persons having fewer than fifty employees (and their agents) shall not be considered employers: Provided further, That it shall be the policy of the United States to insure equal employment opportunities for Federal employees without discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex or national origin and the President shall utilize his existing authority to effectuate this policy.

(c) The term "employment agency" means any person regularly undertaking with or without compensation to procure employees for an employer or to procure for employees opportunities to work for an employer and includes an agent of such a person; but shall not include an agency of the United States, or an agency of a State or political subdivision of a State, except that such term shall include the United States Employment Service and the system of State and local employment services receiving Federal assistance.

(d) The term "labor organization" means a labor organization engaged in an industry affecting commerce, and any agent of such an organization, and includes any organization of any kind, any agency, or employee representation committee, group, association, or plan so engaged in which employees participate and which exists for the purpose, in whole or in part, of dealing with employers concerning grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours, or other terms or conditions of employment, and any conference, general committee, joint or system board, or joint council so engaged which is subordinate to a national or international labor organization.

(e) A labor organization shall be deemed to be engaged in an industry affecting commerce if (1) it maintains or operates a hiring hall or hiring office which procures employees for an employer or procures for employees opportunities to work for an employer, or (2) the number of its members (or, where it is a labor organization composed of other labor organizations or their representatives, if the aggregate number of the members of such other labor organization) is (A) one hundred or more during the first year after the effective date prescribed in subsection (a) of section 716, (B) seventy-five or more during the second year

after such date or fifty or more during the third year, or (C) twenty-five or more thereafter, and such labor organization--

(1) is the certified representative of employees under the provisions of the National Labor Relations Act, as amended, or the Railway Labor Act, as amended;

(2) although not certified, is a national or international labor organization or a local labor organization recognized or acting as the representative of employees of an employer or employers engaged in an industry affecting commerce; or

(3) has chartered a local labor organization or subsidiary body which is representing or actively seeking to represent employees of employers within the meaning of paragraph (1) or (2); or

(4) has been chartered by a labor organization representing or actively seeking to represent employees within the meaning of paragraph (1) or (2) as the local or subordinate body through which such employees may enjoy membership or become affiliated with such labor organization; or

(5) is a conference, general committee, joint or system board, or joint council subordinate to a national or international labor organization, which includes a labor organization engaged in an industry affecting commerce within the meaning of any of the preceding paragraphs of this subsection.

(f) The term "employee" means an individual employed by an employer.

(g) The term "commerce" means trade, traffic, commerce, transportation, transmission, or communication among the several States; or between a State and any place outside thereof; or within the District of Columbia, or a possession of the United States; or between points in the same State but through a point outside thereof.

(h) The term "industry affecting commerce" means any activity, business, or industry in commerce or in which a labor dispute would hinder or obstruct commerce or the free flow of commerce and includes any activity or industry "affecting commerce" within the meaning of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959.

(i) The term "State" includes a State of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, Wake Island, The Canal Zone, and Outer Continental Shelf lands defined in the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act.

EXEMPTION

SEC. 702. This title shall not apply to an employer with respect to the employment of aliens outside any State, or to a religious corporation, association, or society with respect to the employment of individuals of a particular religion to perform work connected with the carrying on by such corporation, association, or society of its religious activities or to an educational institution with respect to the employment of individuals to perform work connected with the educational activities of such institution.

Source: The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

1998

Examining Trends in the Gender Wage Gap

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Although the gap between women and men's wages has narrowed substantially since the signing of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, there still exists a significant wage gap that cannot be explained by differences between male and female workers in labor market experience and in the characteristics of jobs they hold.
- After hovering at about 60 percent since the mid-1950s, the ratio of women's to men's median pay began to rise in the late 1970s and reached about 70 percent by 1990. The gender pay ratio is currently on the rise again, surpassing 75 percent in 1997.
- The gender gap has narrowed faster among younger women and among married women with children. The data that permit disaggregation by demographic groups show the overall gender pay ratio rising from 57 percent in 1969 to 68 percent in 1996 (the last year for which these data are available). In contrast, among women under 40, the gender pay ratio rose from 58 percent in 1969 to 74 percent in 1996. Among married women with children, the gender pay ratio (relative to all male workers) rose from 53 percent in 1969 to 68 percent in 1996. Relative to all male workers, wage gains have been faster for non-Hispanic black and non-Hispanic white women than for Hispanic women.
- The most recent detailed longitudinal study found that in the late 1980s about one-third of the gender pay gap was explained by differences in the skills and experience that women bring to the labor market and about 28 percent was due to differences in industry, occupation, and union status among men and women. Accounting for these differences raised the female/male pay ratio in the late 1980s from about 72 percent to about 88 percent, leaving around 12 percent as an "unexplained" difference.
- Over the last twenty years, increases in women's accumulated labor market experience and their movement into higher-paying occupations have played a major role in increasing women's wages relative to men's. Changes in family status, in industry structure and in unionization also worked to narrow the gender pay gap, while increasing economic benefits from skills and increasing wage inequality would have, by themselves, widened the pay gap. In addition, the decrease in the pay gap that remains "unexplained" after controlling for measured differences between men and women has been a large contributor to the narrowing of the pay gap.
- The evidence is that labor market discrimination against women persists, although it is difficult to determine precisely how much of the difference in female/male pay is due to discrimination and how much is due to differences in choices or preferences between women and men. One indirect and rough measure of the extent of discrimination remaining in the labor market is the "unexplained" difference in pay. Some studies have tried to measure discrimination directly by

looking at pay differences among men and women in very similar jobs or by comparing pay to specific measures of productivity. These studies consistently find evidence of ongoing discrimination in the labor market and support the conclusion that women still face differential treatment on the job.

Source: "Explaining Trends in the Gender Gap," *A Report by the Council of Economic Advisors*, June 1998.

Executive Summary

Women have made remarkable gains in education during the past three decades, yet these achievements have resulted in only modest improvements in pay equity. The gender pay gap has become a fixture of the U.S. workplace and is so ubiquitous that many simply view it as normal.

Behind the Pay Gap examines the gender pay gap for college graduates. One year out of college, women working full time earn only 80 percent as much as their male colleagues earn. Ten years after graduation, women fall farther behind, earning only 69 percent as much as men earn. Controlling for hours, occupation, parenthood, and other factors normally associated with pay, college-educated women still earn less than their male peers earn.

Individuals can, however, make choices that can greatly enhance their earnings potential. Choosing to attend college and completing a college degree have strong positive effects on earnings, although all college degrees do not have the same effect. The selectivity of the college attended and the choice of a major also affect later earnings. Many majors remain strongly dominated by one gender. Female students are concentrated in fields associated with lower earnings, such as education, health, and psychology. Male students dominate the higher-paying fields: engineering, mathematics, and physical sciences. Women and men who majored in “male-dominated” subjects earn more than do those who majored in “female dominated” or “mixed-gender” fields. For example, one year after graduation, the average female education major working full time earns only 60 percent as much as the average female engineering major working full time earns.

The choice of major is not the full story, however. As early as one year after graduation, a pay gap is found between women and men who had the same college major. In education, a female-dominated major, women earn 95 percent as much as their male colleagues earn. In biological sciences, a mixed-gender major, women earn only 75 percent as much as men earn. Likewise in mathematics—a male dominated major—women earn only 76 percent as much as men earn. Female students cannot simply choose a major that will allow them to avoid the pay gap.

Early career choices, most prominently occupational choices, also play a role in the gender pay gap. While the choice of major is related to occupation, the relationship is not strict. For example, some mathematics majors choose to teach, while others work in business or computer science. One year after graduation, women who work in computer science, for instance, earn over 37 percent more than do women who are employed in education or administrative, clerical, or legal support occupations. Job sector also affects earnings. Women are more likely than men to work in the nonprofit and local government sectors, where wages are typically lower than those in the for-profit and federal government sectors.

The division of labor between parents appears to be similar to that of previous generations. Motherhood and fatherhood affect careers differently. Mothers are more likely than fathers (or other women) to work part time, take leave, or take a break from the work force—factors that negatively affect wages. Among women who graduated from college in 1992–93, more than one-fifth (23 percent) of mothers were out of the work force in 2003, and another 17 percent were working part time. Less than 2

percent of fathers were out of the work force in 2003, and less than 2 percent were working part time. On average, mothers earn less than women without children earn, and both groups earn less than men earn.

The gender pay gap among full-time workers understates the real difference between women's and men's earnings because it excludes women who are not in the labor force or who are working part time. Most college-educated women who are not working full time will eventually return to the full-time labor market. On average, these women will then have lower wages than will their continuously employed counterparts, further widening the pay gap.

What can be done about the gender pay gap? To begin with, it must be publicly recognized as a problem. Too often, both women and men dismiss the pay gap as simply a matter of different choices, but even women who make the same occupational choices that men make will not typically end up with the same earnings. Moreover, if "too many" women make the same choice, earnings in that occupation can be expected to decline overall.

Women's personal choices are similarly fraught with inequities. The difference between motherhood and fatherhood is particularly stark. Motherhood in our society entails substantial economic and personal sacrifices. Fatherhood, on the other hand, appears to engender a "wage premium." Indeed, men appear to spend *more* time at the office after becoming a father, whereas women spend considerably less time at work after becoming a mother. Women who do not have children may still be viewed as "potential mothers" by employers, who may, as a result, give women fewer professional opportunities.

Ideally, women and men should have similar economic opportunities and equal opportunities to enjoy meaningful unpaid work, such as parenting. Improving women's earnings could have positive consequences for men who would like to spend more time with their children but who can't afford to reduce their work hours. Likewise, workplace accommodations for parenting could be valuable for fathers as well as mothers. Other groups may also benefit from greater flexibility in the workplace, including older workers seeking "partial retirement," students hoping to combine work with study, and workers with other kinds of caregiving responsibilities.

The pay gap between female and male college graduates cannot be fully accounted for by factors known to affect wages, such as experience (including work hours), training, education, and personal characteristics. Gender pay discrimination can be overt or it can be subtle. It is difficult to document because someone's gender is usually easily identified by name, voice, or appearance. The only way to discover discrimination is to eliminate the other possible explanations. In this analysis the portion of the pay gap that remains unexplained after all other factors are taken into account is 5 percent one year after graduation and 12 percent 10 years after graduation. These unexplained gaps are evidence of discrimination, which remains a serious problem for women in the work force.

Women's progress throughout the past 30 years attests to the possibility of change. Before Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, employers could—and did—refuse to hire women for occupations deemed "unsuitable," fire women when they became pregnant, or limit women's work schedules on the basis of gender. Schools could—and did—set quotas for the number of women admitted or refuse women admission altogether. In the decades since these civil rights laws were enacted, women have made remarkable progress in fields such as law, medicine, and business as well as some progress in nontraditional "blue-collar" jobs such as aviation and firefighting.

Despite the progress women have made, gender pay equity in the workplace remains an issue. Improvements to federal equal pay laws are needed to ensure that women and men are compensated fairly when they perform the same or comparable work. Flexibility, meaningful part-time work opportunities, and expanded provisions for medical and family leave are important to help women and men better balance work and family responsibilities. Making gender pay equity a reality will require action by individuals, employers, and federal and state governments.

Source: "Behind the Pay Gap," American Association of University Women Foundation, 2007.

Document 15: The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993

Enacted February 5, 1993

Excerpts from Public Law 103-3: An Act To grant family and temporary medical leave under certain circumstances.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.--Congress finds that--

- (1) the number of single-parent households and two-parent households in which the single parent or both parents work is increasing significantly;
- (2) it is important for the development of children and the family unit that fathers and mothers be able to participate in early childrearing and the care of family members who have serious health conditions;
- (3) the lack of employment policies to accommodate working parents can force individuals to choose between job security and parenting;
- (4) there is inadequate job security for employees who have serious health conditions that prevent them from working for temporary periods;
- (5) due to the nature of the roles of men and women in our society, the primary responsibility for family caretaking often falls on women, and such responsibility affects the working lives of women more than it affects the working lives of men; and
- (6) employment standards that apply to one gender only have serious potential for encouraging employers to discriminate against employees and applicants for employment who are of that gender.

(b) PURPOSES.--It is the purpose of this Act--

- (1) to balance the demands of the workplace with the needs of families, to promote the stability and economic security of families, and to promote national interests in preserving family integrity;
- (2) to entitle employees to take reasonable leave for medical reasons, for the birth or adoption of a child, and for the care of a child, spouse, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- (3) to accomplish the purposes described in paragraphs (1) and (2) in a manner that accommodates the legitimate interests of employers;

(4) to accomplish the purposes described in paragraphs (1) and (2) in a manner that, consistent with the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, minimizes the potential for employment discrimination on the basis of sex by ensuring generally that leave is available for eligible medical reasons (including maternity-related disability) and for compelling family reasons, on a gender-neutral basis; and

(5) to promote the goal of equal employment opportunity for women and men, pursuant to such clause.

SEC. 102. LEAVE REQUIREMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.--

(1) ENTITLEMENT TO LEAVE.--Subject to section 103, an eligible employee shall be entitled to a total of 12 workweeks of leave during any 12-month period for one or more of the following:

(A) Because of the birth of a son or daughter of the employee and in order to care for such son or daughter.

(B) Because of the placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care.

(C) In order to care for the spouse, or a son, daughter, or parent, of the employee, if such spouse, son, daughter, or parent has a serious health condition.

(D) Because of a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the functions of the position of such employee.

(2) EXPIRATION OF ENTITLEMENT.--The entitlement to leave under subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (1) for a birth or placement of a son or daughter shall expire at the end of the 12-month period beginning on the date of such birth or placement.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor