

We Still Discriminate Against Women: We Just Don't Realize It

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President John F. Kennedy signs the Equal Pay Act of 1963 into law.

My mother often likes to tell stories around the dinner table, her favorites being “funny” Facebook posts shared at work or the occasional run-ins with old friends at the supermarket. Sometimes, though, they’re much more serious. I remember one night, she came home frustrated after a situation had erupted at work.

A coworker, who happened to be the only other woman in the office, had asked around for salaries, and in a brief moment of surprise and confusion, her male coworker of the same position had responded. As expected, his wage was much higher, an inevitable truth that is not uncommon in workplaces in America and around the world. I asked my mother if it was the same for her, if she too was affected by this ever-present issue. She simply nodded, and I began to realize how this system of gender discrimination was taking its toll on my own family.

This isn't just a Democratic issue; it affects every woman who swipes her time card early in the morning and returns home exhausted at the fall of night. Gender discrimination is not about political affiliation. It's an issue of ignorance that continues to plague our workplaces. It's a reality that isn't changing anytime soon if we continue to sit still and allow a billionaire television star to decide the future of the working class.

It's obvious that something needs to change. But in this environment, it's impossible to speak up without repercussions. We risk our jobs, our relationships, our livelihoods. It's a paradox: the ones who have never been affected by the issue are somehow at the front of the movement, and the women experiencing daily discrimination don't feel empowered to speak up. Our society is full of empty voices from celebrity "advocates" and silenced cries of the oppressed.

The history of the gender pay gap dates far back to the introduction of women to the workspace. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 was the first federal declaration stating that women and men must be paid equally by employers for positions that require the same level of expertise and responsibility. Back then, women earned 59 cents to the dollar.

It seems like we've come so far since 1963. With ever-increasing awareness of female empowerment and the #MeToo Movement, we'd think that gender discrimination is simply an issue of the past. But while we're making kitchen-cleaning robots and finding new ways to heat up our frozen pizzas, we're still failing to realize the ongoing oppression of women.

In [2018](#), women earned 85 cents to the dollar. It took us 55 years to earn an extra 26 cents on our salaries. We celebrate these milestones as we gradually narrow the wage gap, but our slow "progress" begs the question: How far have we really come?

On April 4, 2017, Ivanka Trump [tweeted out](#) the hashtag #EqualPayDay with a link to an article claiming that the gender pay gap could disappear by the year 2143. In 2017, that was 126 years into the future; today, that's 124 years into the future—124 years too many. If our government stays the way it is, it'll be impossible for me to see a day when I can bring home the same paycheck as my male counterparts. It's ridiculous that politicians even celebrate Equal Pay Day, a "holiday" meant to celebrate and bring awareness to the "narrowing" wage gap. Would this strange day even exist if we treated women as equals from the beginning?

Turns out, this supposed act of "advocacy" was just a pity tweet. That same year, Ivanka Trump made \$82 million from various stocks and businesses. The woman "advocating" for equal pay is the daughter of the man who widened the pay gap in the White House by three times. The woman in the White House has never experienced wage inequality, nor will she ever due to her status.

I doubt she noticed, but under the headline of the article that Ivanka Trump shared is the caption, "Pay gaps are closing for white females, but not at the same rate for women of color." The hypocrisy of the situation is very real; the people "advocating" for our rights are the same ones who refuse to use their political power and influence for good.

The 2019 U.S. women's national soccer team has recently [made waves](#) in their fight for gender wage equality, marking a new stepping stone in the global fight. A lawsuit made its way to the U.S. Soccer Federation, eventually winning its battle and securing equal pay for the female players right before the final victory of the World Cup.

This story made national headlines as the issue of the gender wage gap resurfaced, becoming a major topic of conversation once again. With leaders rising up every day to join the race to the White House, we hear new viewpoints almost every day on this issue. Most of them say the same—that our system needs to change—from [Pete Buttigieg](#) suggesting wage transparency to [Kamala Harris's plan](#) to require data reports from employers by law.

Studies even show the benefit of closing the gender wage gap, for both the employer and the employee. The [Institute for Women's Policy Research](#) found that just by paying women as much as men for the same positions, the poverty rate drops by 50%. It would also bring in an additional annual \$513 billion in income to the American economy. The GDP would increase by 5% with more women entering the workplace, and employers would have a larger pool of applicants, bringing in more qualified candidates to take positions.

All signs point to yes—we need change, we need equality. We're not stuck in an age when our most pressing issue is where we'll find plants to gather while the men go hunting. Women have bills to pay, families to support, and requirements to live—the same needs and responsibilities that men have, too. We're no different; we're human and equal. We can't sit still as we listen to celebrities in a world of glamour while we ignore the voices of our neighbors crying out for change.

When I asked my mother why she didn't speak up about the wage inequality, she simply answered, "I don't want to lose my job." She's seen all of this before: the discrimination, harassment, and unfair rules that she's forced to follow. And yet, each time, she's learned that staying quiet is the safest option.

It's a terrifying reality for women around the globe: the ultimate decision between justice and losing everything. It's a decision that we shouldn't have to make, one that future generations should never have to even contemplate. The answer is simple: bring justice for women by treating us like the individuals we are. The only thing we can do is continue to speak out until our voices begin to spark progress—and fast.

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