

Economic Injustice of Pay Inequality & Occupational Segregation In West Virginia

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ESSAY 1: CONTEXTUALIZATION

Creating a plan for addressing gender inequality in West Virginia without knowing the people and the historical context of the long-entrenched poverty that perpetuates an atmosphere of survival for existing is a disservice to the people. West Virginians are cautious of people who are not from their community, especially those outside the state. One of the International Community Development program's foundational concepts is relinquishing assumptions for successful programs for communities. In an area such as West Virginia, which resists change and is cautious of people outside of their community, it is imperative to listen, learn, and respect them. The same methods in different locations cannot universally solve poverty. Nonetheless, understanding the background and the people can help address gender inequality within the state.

To adequately understand the history of gender inequality in West Virginia and improving people's lives requires an awareness of the depth of poverty and lack of economic growth that has a longstanding history throughout the past and present. West Virginia is located in the poorest part of the country's Appalachian region of the Central area (“About the Appalachian Region” and Latimer and Oberhauser 273). The Central region of Appalachia’s “subregion reports the highest overall poverty rate at 22.1 percent” (Latimer and Oberhauser 273). The state has seen the population decline, with *Forbes Magazine* stating it is the “worst in the U.S.” (Adams and Strauss). The pay inequality and occupational segregation of women within West Virginia can be found due to the masculine culture described in “Hofstede's Insights and “Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: Understanding Different Countries.” “Hofstede's Insights” reveals a contrast between the masculine culture’s emphasis on “money and achievement” instead of “quality of life” within a culture of high poverty. There may be discontentment with circumstances, but suggestions for change clashes with the “Hofstede's

Insights” on “ego” that reflects an attitude of an incorrect assumption that suggestions of change equate to a judgment of the people instead of wanting to transform economic injustice.

Defined expectations of gender roles in the state have caused some women to be employed in lower-paying traditional careers. The lack of post-secondary education of adults is a contributing influence. Hofstede's description of the “Uncertainty Avoidance Index” can explain the resistance of a poor state's willingness to try innovated ideas. Therefore, understanding that any plan for combating gender inequality must include that "people feel that they are in control of their lives" (“Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions”). People must feel as if they are the leaders of change, and there is no outside judgment of their economic situation. Community-driven advocacy campaigns to eliminate job applications' salary history can empower citizens to create lasting change and decide their economic futures. Otherwise, strategies for equality without knowing the people will automatically be rejected.

Throughout the state's history, career opportunities for women were defined by cultural gender roles. The co-director of Marshall University's Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia provided insight into the cultural influence and gender. It was explained, "what is considered nontraditional [jobs] in W.V. is not necessarily nontraditional [careers] in other states with it being an agricultural coal state" (Co-Director). Cultural expectations that married women were not to work outside of the home explains decades of communities violating a West Virginia Supreme Court order against firing married female teachers. The 1911 West Virginia Supreme Court decision resulted in no statewide change with the continuing acceptance of discrimination for decades (O'Brien).

With minimal employment opportunities for women at that time, excluding married women from teaching continued to perpetuate women's reliance economically on their husbands.

Such past dependence creates a culture where domestic violence is ignored, and women doubt they can become financially independent. Gender discrimination was still present in the 1990's research article "Towards a Gendered Regional Geography: Women and Work in Appalachia." One of the women in the article expressed the often-accepted idea up until recent years that husbands decided if their wives worked and if they had a well-paying job, it was culturally expected that the wife would not work (Oberhauser 235). Less than twenty years ago, it was not understood why a woman with a husband who had a career would want to have a job outside the home. Once the historical-cultural gender role of women is understood, it is not surprising that occupational segregation has in the past been a barrier to equal pay within the state.

OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

Women in West Virginia are less likely to be employed and earn less than women nationally (Hess, Hegewisch, and Claudia Williams 1). Women in WV earn .06 cents less than women do nationally. For African American women in West Virginia, it is .17 cents less than women earn nationally, and Latina women earn .20 cents less in the state than women do nationally ("Taking Steps"). Research reveals that "wage disparity often starts in a first job and worsens over a women's career" ("Taking Steps"). Occupational segregation is defined as the "idea that women earn less because they work in female-dominated jobs and occupations" (Cohen and Huffman 883). Research has shown that occupational segregation exists in state government employment throughout the country, reflecting the private sector, with few women in leadership positions (Hunt, Rucker, and Kerr 583). The government hypocritically publicly proclaims the need for economic growth and development but has not practiced paying women equally or providing career advancement opportunities. In recent years in West Virginia, four times a fair pay bill was introduced into the legislature but did not move through either chamber

very far. Sadly, this year, Governor Jim Justice had a national campaign to end the state income tax while drastically increasing the state's sales tax. While the plan was ineffectively promoted, another fair pay died without any movement in the House of Delegates or any comment from the Governor's office. On April 5th, I called the Governor's office and left a message for a person in the communications department. I asked if there were any thoughts about the recent fair pay bill and the Governor's idea for eliminating the state income tax to increase people's income. However, a bill to help the wages of West Virginians received very little attention. While I explained the information was for my thesis in my message, I was unsurprised when I did not receive a callback.

Furthermore, in the private sector, of the 114,435 West Virginia businesses in 2012, "women-owned firms" were only 39,065 ("Quick Facts WV"). Long-term employment in traditionally female careers limits future earnings and job advancement (Cohen and Huffman 882). Without an innovative approach to providing all citizens with equal opportunity, it will impact the state's economy and hinder low-income women from achieving independence.

One program, "Jobs and Hope," in West Virginia is open to all citizens, particularly those with a history of addiction, create employment opportunities, and provides skills training. With the program, the lead transition agent explained, "there is no other state with a similar program with a statewide cooperation of state and nonprofit agencies." During the interview, it was emphasized the need to "be creative" with helping people during the pandemic to continue receiving assistance (Lead Transition Agent). While the program is not exclusively for women, it is an innovative approach with a state that has struggled with opioid addiction. Providing opportunities where certain crimes can be erased from people's records and driver's licenses restored allows more people to work at jobs to earn a livable wage. Individuals trying to regain a

new future for their lives would benefit from legislation that eliminated the salary history requirement.

Furthermore, the organization Dress for Success Rivers Cities helps prepare women with an interview outfit, resume, and interview tips. The resource development specialist stated that the small staff works to help women who have been referred by various agencies and have "lost their jobs, unemployed, and recent graduates." With a grant, the organization hopes to create a career center in the office to help women further (Resource Development Specialist). Without the assistance of both organizations, disadvantaged women could be regulated to low-paying jobs throughout their work lives.

ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In *Walking with the Poor*, Myers states, "the poverty of women is physical, spiritual, and social. This must be an area of special concern for those working for human transformation" (113). The past work, *Gender and Disasters: Foundations and Directions*, reiterates that poor women are often forgotten when rebuilding after a crisis (Enarson et al. 132-135). While those who are vulnerable and need help should be assisted, women in poverty are susceptible to increased hardships when a crisis occurs. Incorporating rights-based development into community engagement empowers the citizens to believe their voice can make a difference. Myers defines rights-based development as "helping the poor become effective, informed, active citizens" (167). Through this practice, communities can hold lawmakers accountable for policies that impact them and their communities. I have often heard Mark Shriver with Save the Children Action Network say that "poor people don't vote," thus advocates must be their voice, but what if the poor did become engaged and advocate for their communities. Perhaps then, if those who are

impacted voice their opinions and become part of the process to create policy, laws would change.

A misconception in community development is that the individual action takes precedence over the need for collective engagement. Often writers like Cynthia Moe-Lobeda bemoan the impact policies have on the poor and vulnerable but promote personal awareness as an illusion for constructive change. The writer declares that "while individuals' actions will not alone dismantle systems of evil, those systems will only be dismantled if individuals do act. Our actions towards justice are vital, even while they may seem inconsequential" (Moe-Lobeda 98). Individual actions are inconsequential for any impact on transforming structural systems. It is disingenuous to promote the idea that random individuals can persuade lawmakers to act. However, organized community established advocacy has shown throughout the last century in this country can produce generational transformation.

CONTEXTUALIZATION & FUTURE WORK

While I have been an advocate throughout the ICD program, raising awareness of the poverty in my rural state and its challenges, I am conscious it does not represent all rural areas of the country or places of poverty. Nor are the causes of generational poverty that impact women and income in the state, the same in other regions of the world. I am a steadfast believer in the importance of learning a community's history to explain the current problems and causes. Trying only to address obvious current issues will not solve multifaceted matters. Likewise, while talking to people about causes and solutions to questions can help create programs, it is necessary to learn the history of an area to research independent sources that may have differing viewpoints and provide contrasting information.

Learning about a community's culture and the people allows for an opportunity to individualize a program's plan, helping those in need. A historical reference of the poverty and past inequality is necessary to achieve an objective that a community adopts and advocates to end the gender income gap in West Virginia. Understanding the influence of culture and gender roles has on women's decisions regarding having a career, then refocuses on the need for a law to eliminate past salary history from job applications to empower women for economic independence. The bill is not exclusively beneficial for women, but people from various backgrounds could be aided. Rights-based development is an opportunity for citizens to work with the developer to directly advocate for their community's issues. Therefore, recognizing that individual influence is limited for policy change unless people collectively support community transformation. To fully understand a community's problems, learning the history of the issues is equally vital as listening to citizens of an area.

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ESSAY 2: QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

While information can be gained with qualitative research, the impact of cultural reluctance to engage with those who are not part of one's community is a barrier to understanding in-depth information from interviews. Qualitative research can be a foundation to ensure that needs are being met and what those needs are. However, quantitative information provides a broader explanation of the impact of a program—both qualitative and quantitative help understand the progress in developing a program's success. Engaging stakeholders and a population of those in need can represent a limited sample of opinions regarding what resources are needed. Recognizing that West Virginians are reluctant to provide qualitative information for someone they do not know is a credible concern for a community developer who wants to learn first-hand information about a community. Therefore, cooperating with participants in an established program will increase the likelihood that the organization gains insight to advance economic development and contribute to the community. Periodic program evaluations can address reluctance to speak with developers with those with whom there is already a relationship.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH & THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

If a researcher has a relationship with an organization, there is a likelihood of gaining insightful information into people's needs and how they can be best helped. However, in West Virginia, if people do not know stakeholders personally, they are less likely to speak with researchers. Collecting journal articles and observations provides insights when people are reluctant to collaborate. Interviews have helped to explain the cultural influences that contribute to gender roles. While historically, women participated in the workforce when society deemed it necessary in World War II without regard to gender roles.

Furthermore, the state's domestic violence rate urges economic reform to pay equality and employment opportunities. The issue cannot be addressed solely through policy or training, but both approaches are necessary to sustain far-reaching economic justice. It is essential to understand the people and the issues before conducting qualitative research to be aware of the various methods needed to further gender and economic justice in West Virginia.

Through qualitative research, the possibility of increased disease and the lack of employment opportunities within the state was discovered. An interview from December 11, 2019, with the program coordinator for the Prenatal Hepatitis B Prevention Program, with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, connected an increase of the disease until 2016 and the possible connection with the lack of employment. There is a link between drug use and illness, but it is not the only explanation for the rise in infections (Program Coordinator). The loss of jobs possibly led to an increase in depression, which could explain why there was an increase in Hepatitis cases (Program Coordinator). The opioid deaths in West Virginia for many years were reported in the national news. January of last year, it was reported that “almost 60,000 in the last five years” have died from a drug overdose in the state (“Minority Leaders Respond”). All cities in West Virginia have a population of less than 60,000. The impact of losing more people to drug-related deaths than any city in the state must be recognized as having a lasting negative impact on the economic conditions in West Virginia.

Likewise, economic justice is imperative for women’s safety and independence. West Virginia is ninth in the country for teens who marry before age eighteen (“Child Marriage – Shocking Statistics”). A brief conversation with a victim advocate explained the issue of domestic violence in West Virginia. The advocate stated that there had been a change in the mindset regarding domestic abuse in the last thirty years. The issue is now seen as a societal

problem, but that has not reduced abuse occurrences. She stated that “every 15 seconds a woman is beaten. West Virginia leads the country in domestic-violence-related deaths” (Victim Advocate). Economic dependence can result when women have limited occupational opportunities and low wages. In such circumstances, financial abuse can be present. Various types of abuse have all been shown to impact the survivors' mental and physical health (Stylianou 381). In the article “Economic Abuse Experiences and Depressive Symptoms Among Victims of Intimate Partner Violence,” Amanda Stylianou writes:

Economic abuse occurs when a perpetrator utilizes behavior that ‘controls a woman’s ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources, thus threatening her economic security and potential for self-sufficiency’ (Adams et al. 2008, p. 564).

Economic abuse occurs in three main ways: (a) controlling the victim’s access to economic resources, (b) sabotaging the victim’s ability to obtain and maintain employment, and (c) exploiting the victim’s personal economic situation (382).

Therefore, creating opportunities for women to have economic independence and earn an equal income is essential to begin cultural changes for gender equality. Often overlooked in the discussion of abuse is the mental damage that occurs. Increasing the ability for women to learn skills and become empowered to believe in themselves is part of the process of reversing the mental programming an abuser inflicted that hampers a survivor from believing in their capabilities.

Nonetheless, qualitative research reveals that women were recruited for nontraditional job opportunities when it was nationally beneficial. The program officer for the West Virginia Humanities Council spoke last September about two defense plants used for World War II in South Charleston, WV. Sunstein and Chrieri-Strater’s writing about archives was beneficial in

reviewing the photographs of the plant. The writers acknowledge that “we understand history through the perspective of the people who lived at the time. Archival historical research allows us to do just that” (Sunstein and Chriseri-Strater 325). At the South Charleston Museum, the program officer explained that “employment records were one of the first things trashed after the war.” This fact limits the information known about the women who worked at the two plants (Program Officer) or the Rosie the Riveters as they were collectively known nationally. He was aware that “4,000 women” worked at one of the locations, but it was unclear if they were the same women throughout the war or representing a total over the years (Program Officer). Interestingly, when I was at the South Charleston Museum, I learned that before the United States' involvement in the war, there was an apprenticeship program for young women in preparation for the war (Program Officer).

Four and half years before the attack on Pearl Harbor, “three out of four women voters surveyed did not approve of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she had a husband capable of supporting her” (Kopp 590). The attitudes of married women working are parallel to the cultural bias in West Virginia that allowed for the discrimination of married female teachers. However, once the United States joined the war, and there was a necessity for female defense workers, mindsets shifted. Nonetheless, the article “Breaking Out of the Pink-Collar Ghetto” attributes that policy changes require transformation for an occupational opportunity. The authors report on “the importance of policy intervention as a solution for overcoming institutional barriers that may prevent some women from obtaining jobs with higher wages” (289). Training alone will not change cultural ideas for gender roles. Policy changes are needed, and with more women in leadership to enact these changes.

OBSERVATION & RESEARCH

Through my observations of a local Rosie the Riveter Memorial, it was apparent that the women who worked in defense plants in various parts of the country during WWII have been mostly forgotten. The small memorial is hidden from a far corner of a roadside park that runs beside the main road in St. Albans, WV. I pass the park four times a day going to and from work. However, I, too, forgot the memorial existed. It is not easily noticeable from the main road sitting past the park and camping area. The benches at the memorial are very close to the riverbank without a railing. I was not comfortable getting too close to the memorial benches. If a “Rosie” is alive, she would be in her 90’s, and it is doubtful that survivors visit the memorial. A few years ago, a person with the local chapter representing a group celebrating the work of the women expressed her opposition to the location of the memorial. The idea of one involved in WWII is of a man, but the women's work to build the defense machinery allowed for the soldiers' work. A female soldier statue was only included with other memorials to soldiers from various wars on the state capitol grounds on November 11, 2011 (Female Soldier Statue Observation).

Another interesting observation was the Katherine Johnson statue at West Virginia State University. Katherine Johnson is known for the movie *Hidden Figures*, but it was only in recent years that she became famous even within the state. As a fellow alumnus of the same university she attended years ago. It is noteworthy that the school did not recognize her work in the NASA program until after the film’s release. I assumed the statue would be located near the science building but found it by accident near the road close to the media building. However, when she attended the then college for African American students, there was also a high school on the campus. Perhaps, the media building was the original building for the college. Even with the

movie's popularity and Mattel creating a Barbie in her image, I wonder how much is known about a West Virginian women's influence in the NASA program's early years.

The West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture, and History Museum include two small exhibits representing women. One exhibit that was seen when first entering the museum was for the anniversary of women gaining the right to vote. It includes brief information about the work of women in the state to vote, the Rosie the Riveters, and historically women involved in politics. Also, there is a very small room with an exhibit dedicated to the "Changing Roles of Women." While throughout the museum, there are pictures of notable West Virginian women such as author Pearl Buck, and I believe Senator Shelly Moore Capito was included. Most of the highlights of the accomplishments of women end decades ago. The exhibit dedicated to the "Changing Roles of Women" focuses on women working first in the home then at the various changing jobs women had decades ago. However, the artifacts end with a judicial robe and gavel from the 1970s. Two of West Virginia's five Congress members are women, including Senator Captio, who has been in Congress for twenty years, first as a member of the House of Representatives and now as a Senator. There have been other prominent women elected to political office in the state. The image associated with the state is of the mountaineer, the male mountaineer. The traditional thought of the man working while the woman stays home marginalizes women's contribution to the workforce and the economy.

PROGRAM EVALUATION & THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

Program evaluations provide opportunities to review the plan's effectiveness to create a women's economic empowerment-focused career center incorporating an advocacy campaign. A program evaluation allows for setting specific goals to measure the desired outcomes' progress. Several outcomes will be reviewed for a career center and advocacy campaign to be considered

successfully assisting women. Reviewing the resources sought by those served by the career center and the number of advocates participating in contacting lawmakers will help determine if specific markers are accomplished. Conducting a program evaluation of both the career services and the organization's advocacy branch provides insight into how successful the organization is at delivering training and achieving long-term policy changes.

Measuring qualitative and quantitative assessments for the project proposal can provide balanced information for a program evaluation. The program evaluation will include counting those who have received certification from the various programs and what specific programs to know the most valuable resources. Secondly, a count of the number of women who utilized the center's career services with interview and resume assistance will be a part of the quantitative review. There will be a collection of data for both avenues of aid for the number of women who found work and earn a livable wage due to the center's assistance. Qualitative research can help explain the strengths and weaknesses of the services available. Basic computer skills training will be offered for older or lower-income individuals who may only have had limited experience operating a computer. Likewise, various computer programming certifications are offered. Communication with the participants throughout their engagement with the center will help in understanding their experience. Statistics and interviews will provide a well-rounded report of the accuracy of helping the specific population. Reviewing what resources are being utilized can provide insight into the program's strengths and weaknesses and where more resources should be directed.

Conversely, evaluating how many advocates actively engage with community-driven work to contact lawmakers can foretell the effectiveness of seeking long-term equality transformation. The number of advocates and the frequency they contact lawmakers can help the

organization determine if more focus should be devoted to promoting the need for participants to advocate for themselves and other women to establish government-endorsed gender equality. By evaluating the effectiveness, the advocacy could be reviewed if there is an increase in lawmakers supporting legislation. The reading *Defining Evaluation Purposes* describes this type of evaluation's purpose is for "program and organizational improvement" (Mark, Henry, and Julnes 52 and 55). The practical approach to reviewing how to improve the program's impact is "likely to have less concern with methodological rigor and validity and more concern with the timeliness of information [... to] make adjustments in program operations" (Mark, Henry, and Julens 55). The desired outcome is to review if the center is provided training to help women find jobs and earn a livable wage while encouraging advocacy by participants for more comprehensive societal transformation.

Likewise, understanding the center's strengths and weaknesses, it is crucial to learn from the advocates where improvements can be made. Knowing if advocates feel supported and listened to can help retain advocates after utilizing the center's services. Also, listening to advocates and developing relationships can inspire them to recruit others to join in community engagement for income equality. The organization must sincerely want honest feedback rather than only reaffirming the program's positive aspects. For the center to be most effective at empowering people, listening to the weakness of the program's services is more important than the positive feedback the organization receives because this reveals gaps in the community development.

ACTION RESEARCH & THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

Both qualitative and quantitative combined can provide complementary insight into the project proposal's effectiveness. Action research can be a guide for focusing on the program

evaluation of the project proposal. Using such a plan can allow reviewing both the training and the advocacy branch of the program. The method involves collecting information for necessary changes. An action research plan helps determine the effectiveness of improving the lives of the participants. Action research is more than gathering statistics, while valuable, but instead evaluates the long-term implications of the training center and advocacy plan.

Action research is a valuable concept to determine the impact of providing computer certification and career assistance for women. Ernest Stringer's book *Action Research* explains that action research can "clarify the issue investigated and reveals the way participants describe their actual experience of that issue- how things happen and how it affects them" (36). Only measuring those who complete certifications without further investigation into whether it resulted in the participants finding higher-earning jobs, then the research could be misleading. The framework concludes there is to be some action taken for improvement at the end of the review. Action research represents an evaluation plan to determine from those involved seeking career assistance the effectiveness of accomplishing eliminating occupational segregation.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The focus of action research is on learning from the person whom a program intends to help; as a West Virginian, incorrect assumptions that effective plans in other parts of the country can be assumed to also work in the state without organizations knowing the people. From a community development standpoint, this is also relevant because programs to serve the people adequately require listening to how it is currently working. Asking participants if the program is providing resources for a need pertinent to their lives or learn information that are obstacles for them getting a higher-earning job. Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice in *Reconciling All Things* write that this idea has been criticized "that would slow us down" (83). Concern

regarding the amount of time needed to conduct an evaluation and collect interviews is an important question to address. Therefore, as part of the program, the staff regularly ask participants for feedback throughout the different stages of resources available such as when one skill set course has been completed. However, an openness to review from participants as they progress is necessary. Likewise, the most time-consuming aspect of the evaluation would be the long-term follow-up of whether participants become employed in higher-earning jobs. If people utilizing the services are not completing certifications or using the career assistance are not employed earning a livable wage, the program fails to reach its objective. Furthermore, if participants are not interested in advocating for income equality, then there will be a constant struggle for economic justice without policy changes.

Cultural behaviors regarding community and outsiders are a real obstacle for qualitative research in West Virginia. Nonetheless, the information I gathered from observation provides insight into the state's views of gender roles. Speaking with a victim advocate and researching journal articles highlights the demand for economic justice for gender equality due to domestic violence. In the past, World War II created a necessity for women to be accepted in male-dominated occupations. A program evaluation can provide insight into the effectiveness of an advocacy campaign and the career center's impact on the number of women who are helped. Using action research for a program evaluation helps learn more than simple facts and increases the number of women assisted with career help and are interested in advocating for pay equality and economic justice.

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ESSAY 3 ICD VALUES

Incorporating the International Community Development (ICD) values into a plan to address economic injustice requires respect and informed knowledge of those struggling with poverty in West Virginia. Equal economic opportunity means women can self-determine their financial future. Social justice seeks to ensure that the vulnerable and needy have access to employment opportunities without prejudice of expectations due to economic status. There is a need for women to participate in the policy decision-making process. Without representation, women's unique needs are ignored, and there is an increase in inequality. Including those who would benefit from promoting economic justice in the decisions increases the likelihood of a plan's acceptance and informs the community practitioner of the development program's gaps. Empowering those who could benefit from economic justice helps to promote lasting long-term community transformation.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice for women's economic equality does not force a particular career path for women. Instead, it works to allow an equal opportunity for the individual to determine their career path. Women's economic equality is supported with equal access to education, career opportunities, and a comparable wage to men. However, if a woman would decide on a more traditional path, it should be supported as long as the decision is hers and not one because of the biased cultural expectations. In pursuit of economic justice provides women in abusive relationships a financial foundation to seek an independent life. To fully achieve gender equality, women must be empowered in different career sectors in society to be included in the decision-making process in corporations and government.

Economic empowerment allows women to decide career decisions for themselves instead of deciding due to income circumstances. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, in her writings, shockingly reveals that “nearly half (48 percent) of [U.S.] Americans are either poor or low-income” (4). She further explains that “the poor in this country are disproportionately women and people of color” (Moe-Lobeda 7). In the United States in 2020, poverty for an individual is an income of \$13,465 and for a family of four, the income is \$26,695 (“Poverty Thresholds”). In West Virginia, 16.0% of people are in poverty (“Quick Facts WV”). The burden of childcare increases the wage gap and the poverty struggles that low-income women face (Busch 1083). Melissa Latimer and Ann M. Oberhauser write that “researchers conclude that women’s average hourly earnings are significantly lower than men’s partly due to childcare responsibilities as well as gender and racial discrimination (284). Save the Children Action Network (SCAN) works to advocate for affordable childcare primarily at the federally funded level but encourages volunteer advocates to contact state lawmakers, as well. The federally directed advocacy plan works to provide low-income families the same decision opportunities to decide if women will work or if one or both parents pursue further education.

Economic justice seeks to empower women to self-determine their futures and live independently without relying on unhealthy relationships for financial support. Economics is almost always the reason a person stays in an abusive relationship. The Institute for Women’s Policy Research finds that “74 percent of survivors report staying with an abuser for economic reasons” (DuMonthier, and Dusenbery 1). The research discovers a lack of financial help for those attempting to leave abusive relationships (DuMonthier, and Dusenbery 2). The focus is often on the immediate need for safety, but organizations do not provide financial resources to reduce the rate of people returning to abusive relationships. In an interview with the YWCA

Resolve Family Abuse Center director, I learned of various short-term solutions the organization provides to help survivors leave relationships. Still, I never heard of available assistance to help to establish long-term financial independence (Director). Perhaps, resources are available, but the focus is on short-term help. Likewise, it reiterates the thought, the article by Carolyn Copps Hartley and Lynette M. Renner, which declares that “46% of women reported that it was ‘very’ to ‘extremely difficult to live on their current income’ (440). Therefore, the importance of supporting women to earn the same income as men and have equal opportunities for career advancement can determine if they can financially live without the reliance of an abuser for economic survival.

Social justice seeks to end bias that limits the career opportunities for women. The discrimination is explained as “glass walls operate to segregate women into occupational positions based on their sex, while glass ceilings impede the promotion of women with certain occupations based on their sex” (Hunt et al. 572). Engaging as a decision-maker will have wider influence beyond one’s immediate life. Likewise, the Gender-Empowerment Measure (GEM) seeks not only to increase the possibility of women self-determining their futures but to be leaders in politics, economics and to have “power of economic resources” for creating the policies (Willis 172). Therefore, an advocacy plan is limited in impact without increasing the number of women in politics to promote gender equality policies (9). For policy changes to end income inequality, women must have leadership opportunities.

The lack of resources in the rural state with high poverty must be recognized as a barrier. A determination to change one’s life is essential, but those desires are unfilled dreams without financial help and support. The article “High School is not Too Late: Developing Girls Interest and Engagement in Engineering Careers” recognizes that the biggest obstacle for girls from low-

income families that kept them from attending college was due to “a lack of financial resources” and “support” (Bystydzienski, Eisenhart, and Bruning 93). For a high-poverty population, debt for a possible future career is illogical. To expect that transformation will be accepted without recognizing how the cultural mindset of low expectations for change impacts the vulnerable, the entrenched barrier to accepting social justice is not fully comprehended.

SOCIAL JUSTICE & COPOWERMENT

Cultural mindsets define the ideas of gender roles and community expectations for change. Respecting those who encounter discouragement from the lack of community support entails incorporating those obstacles they face as part of a program. Advocacy plans will not be followed through if the lack of support that often exists is not forecasted so that there is a circle of encouragement to provide strength to continue. The resistance of innovation is warned against due to the acceleration of change that can hamper communities' development. Incorporating solutions to barriers into a plan signifies respecting people to listen to their concerns and value their thoughts as necessary.

Just as the mindsets of gender roles influence occupational opportunities for women in West Virginia, the opposition to development and transformation is as equally impactful as to the new ideas that people are willing to accept. There must be an acknowledgment that the discouragement of working against low expectations is not a mental failure that requires more self-encouragement but rather a substantial obstacle that increases the likelihood of giving up. Petra Kuenkel in *The Art of Leading Collectively* explains that “discouragement reduces our potential, our strength, and our contribution” (89). While the writer naively promotes a “change of mindset” but does not understand the paralyzing truth of opposing community attitudes, which can result in quitting (Kuenkel 89). Therefore, listening to people, understanding discouragement

is not merely their perception, and incorporating concerns will increase the likelihood of adopting a plan. Listening is essential but limited in impact if problems are not incorporated into community development.

For a future vocation, when people express concern that a new program will not be accepted, it is essential to consider how the community will more likely implement the changes. David Bornstein and Susan Davis in *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know* accurately caution that “new ideas are often rejected by the very people who stand to benefit from them, especially if they feel imposed upon or baffled by the proposed changes” (22). The community development practitioner’s role is to facilitate communication as to why there is resistance. After the practitioner receives feedback on how the community suggests those concerns could be addressed for a community engagement plan to advocate eliminating the pay history from job applications, they can then brainstorm ideas with community members obstacles lawmakers may have for the bill. The bill has failed twice before in the legislature. There is an assumption that lawmakers have decided there is no need for the law. Likewise, those who could be impacted have not been engaged to learn why they could benefit and how it would positively contribute economically to the state.

If the concerns about why a community may not buy-in to change, then quickly rejecting transformation is likely, which Thomas Friedman in *Thank You for Being Late*, warns the inability to adjust to change can create “dislocation” (29). The writer defines “dislocation” as being “when the whole environment is being altered so quickly that everyone starts to feel they can’t keep up” (Friedman 29). While individually or corporately directed, this caution is a concern for a state that has historically demonstrated a propensity to oppose new ideas. Therefore, ideas must be community developed and initiated to encourage gender and economic

justice within the state. Accepting innovation is beneficial to the state, but people individually must believe that change will happen.

Observing the photos of the anniversary of President Lydon Johnson's "War on Poverty" at the Clay Center, I noticed how after more than 50 years, how little had changed in photographs. A description of the "War on Poverty" stated how photos of poverty were used to convince Americans why Appalachia's poor needed help (*Looking at Appalachia*). Parker Palmer writes in *Let Your Life Speak* about the negative impact of "insecurity about identity and worth" (86). Palmer is writing to the individual about their vocation, but collectively the people of West Virginia and the larger Appalachian region has been misrepresented and mischaracterized in the national press. Just as entrenched as the cultural mindsets of gender and resisting innovation is, so is the disbelief of expecting anything more than to survive. Again, this reality has stifled new ideas and expectations, especially those in the lower-middle class of the population. There is a reality of the additional layer of barriers to any program that will initially be rejected that "it won't work" or "not how things are done." Empowering women in the state beyond motivational ideas that change is possible requires a definite plan with specific outcomes and goals that recognizes the cultural mindsets and barriers that are real and have prevented economic transformation.

A plan to educate and prepare women for careers can lead to employment opportunities and possibly inspire participants to become volunteer advocates for economic justice and gender equality changes. The operations director with Generation West Virginia expressed the need for computer training in the state and that often, companies "struggle to find employees for those jobs." A career center that involves computer skills training and preparation to help with job placement can help people discover that change is possible if they see results in people they

know or themselves. For West Virginians that perceive reality as it is, not for what it could be, observing concrete results is vital for motivation for advocacy to be inspired that transformation is possible. Inspiration from tangible changes could become the foundation of community-driven advocacy. The career center participants will be supported to educate lawmakers, and the public on the necessity of an equal pay bill by acknowledging the limitations of training as long as bias in pay and employment opportunities is legally permitted.

The ICD idea of copowerment is included with a career center proposal that would provide individuals resources to make decisions about their lives and become financially independent. Likewise, the opportunity for training, career preparation, and apprenticeship opportunities would be to educate the participants and those involved in the program, informing the planners of the program's strengths and weaknesses through ongoing monitoring and evaluation. There would routinely be follow-up surveys with participants after completing the program or, if they did not, to determine the effectiveness of providing relevant training that would result in employment. For those who did not finish the program, there is an opportunity to learn if there is a failure in available resources to help people gain an education. Open communication throughout a person's time at the center is essential for those receiving training to most effectively be assisted and for the leaders to know what gaps are present in potentially resulting in a person not completing a certification plan. The career center will allow for people who feel as if survival is their life and do not have the power to determine their futures to control the direction of their lives.

VOCATION & LISTENING

Listening and respect are the most significant elements for an effective community development practitioner. While planning and research are critical for a program's possible

success, the plan will struggle to connect to the community designed to help without respectfully listening. It is crucial to understand “why” a problem exists within a historical context and the personal impact; acknowledging the cultural barriers that will resist a new plan is relevant for planning. The art of respectfully listening requires more than hearing people’s concerns and opposition to ideas. It includes asking for help as to how those problems could be addressed. Suppose the listening is only limited to how an issue could be addressed but does not incorporate the cultural behaviors and assumes acceptance of a plan because their solutions were included. In that case, people will feel the ideas are not their own. Cultural traditions include beliefs and mindsets, even if the cultural idea contradicts any change. Knowing that this is a barrier can then be a beginning to understand how to help people create solutions that can address the resistance.

In the future, respectfully listening to people’s concerns in opposition to a new plan is just as relevant as listening to their possible ideas for solutions. If people do not feel respected, they will not accept any program requiring their involvement beyond receiving assistance. Assumptions and lack of listening can determine the failure of a program. While I hope to move from West Virginia, being from a misrepresented state, it does provide a caution to respectfully listen to people first before presuming explanations for problems and why community members have not previously addressed issues.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

My personal transformation started several years ago when I began taking back control of my life. My brother told me seven and half years ago that I “have learned how strong” I am. However, one roadblock after another of trying to move forward has resulted in a continued cycle of survival. I have always wanted to have a career where I could be creative and help people. Even though in West Virginia, I rarely interact with people from different cultures, I was

always interested in learning about people, different places and wanted to travel. However, that is not how my life turned out. My adult life has been about survival and getting by. It is rare in my community to hear of anyone flying, especially it is even more unique for anyone to travel to another country. I left a job nine years ago, thinking I would work for a nonprofit organization to make a positive impact, to learn it was actually a telemarketing job. I do not have any relevant work experience related to ICD. Still, I have life experience such as the necessity of paying my rent with my credit card because of any extra expense then I could not pay my bills, including my rent. I know the experience of struggle and lack of expectations. In West Virginia, with few job opportunities, I have been told many times I should “be happy to have a job.” It does not matter if it is a job I do not enjoy, here earning a livable wage is the goal.

Nearing a new decade of life a few years ago, I was inspired to join the Save the Children Advocacy Network in 2018. Flying for the first time and alone to Washington, D.C. that year for the Advocacy Summit. At the Advocacy Summit, I heard the stories of the lack of maternal healthcare and wanted to make a difference. However, I have found that a desire to make a difference does not translate to opportunity. I enrolled in a Graduate Certificate program in Public Health. I learned more about the lack of healthcare opportunities in other countries and the sad numbers of women's deaths in the United States. At the end of the year program, I was going to enroll in the full graduate degree. Still, because of issues, I instead was researching other programs based on job applications that listed possible degrees with the expectation of getting another job. I enrolled in the ICD program because it was an opportunity to travel to England, where I have always wanted to visit. Then secondly, there was the chance to meet the other people in the program. Recently, I have had the opportunity to join the External Relations Committee as a volunteer member for the state agency, Volunteer West Virginia. Nonetheless, I

am still unsure if having an interest in social justice and gender equality can translate to a vocation beyond my current circumstances.

Social justice seeks to co-empower women to self-determine their career and financial future without pay inequality and occupational segregation so that they can have the opportunity to be in policy-making careers to decide bills that impact their lives. Without equal pay and job prospects, women in domestic violence situations are more likely to stay in those relationships because of a lack of financial independence. Developing a career center could be an opportunity to empower low-income women in their careers and finances while providing support for community advocacy engagement regarding gender equality. Barriers to social justice are learned and addressed by listening to people's concerns about accepting innovation and the possibility for change.

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APPENDIX
PROJECT PROPOSAL

For pay inequality to be permanently addressed in West Virginia, legislation is necessary for all citizens' long-term economic improvement. With a history of culturally accepted employment discrimination, creating a state code to eliminate the pay history requirement as part of the job application process will enable women's income to equal men. Eliminating the discriminatory practice of requesting the previous salary could positively impact women and other citizen groups with such legislation. Creating a plan for gaining support for economic justice could create momentum for the passage of the bill.

Income inequality affects more than the material possessions a person can afford. Instead, it impacts one's healthcare, whether women can leave abusive relationships, and whether they can obtain leadership positions to influence gender equality policy. Research confirms that occupational segregation still exists and limits the jobs women are hired. Therefore, creating a plan to support reintroducing the Katherine Johnson and Dorthey Vaughan Fair Pay Act to eliminate the past pay requirement from job applications could reduce West Virginia's income inequality. A women's economic empowerment career center goal is to encourage women to achieve financial independence and pursue leadership careers.

A career center for computer skills training, interview, and resume assistance can also serve as an opportunity for advocacy. Women will be encouraged to advocate for themselves and others in poverty for economic justice. The initial central policy direction for the training facility is the Katherine Johnson and Dorthey Vaughan Fair Pay Act. Those who have struggled in lower-income jobs and occupation segregation could speak of the relevance and economic necessity for pay equity legislation.

KATHERINE JOHNSON & DORTHEY VAUGHAN FAIR PAY ACT

By amending the previous versions of the Katherine Johnson and Dorthey Vaughan Fair Pay Act, there is an increased likelihood of the bill's passage. Previously, each of four times the bill was introduced included eliminating the salary history requirements from applications and allowing employees to discuss their incomes. The previously introduced legislation intended to level the income of employees in West Virginia. However, when co-workers discover one another's income, unity is not created to fight unequal pay. Perhaps amending the legislation to only focus on not including past salaries for job applications could help various groups. The bill would confront both gender inequality and poverty in the state. An obstacle for passage is the emphasis of individualism described in “Hofstede Insights” of the United States and “Hofstede's Cultural Understanding of Different Countries.” The United States' individualistic culture views the importance of hard work for achievement and primarily the interest of self above community (“Country Comparisons” and “Hofstede's Cultural Understanding”). Poverty can be seen as a personal struggle and not an issue impacting the larger community. Therefore, educating lawmakers that occupational segregation is real and that hard work can be diminished by income inequality would help them understand why the bill is necessary. Educating lawmakers of the need and statewide support for a pay equality bill reiterates why advocacy as part of a career training center is needed. While personal stories may impact policymakers, facts of how economic injustice correlates to a more significant community financial impact could persuade policy changes. Connecting the correlation between policy and the economic impact on the state illustrates the government’s responsibility to correct legislatively authorized inequality.

BACKGROUND

Women in West Virginia have encountered discrimination in pay and occupational opportunity in the past. A court case did not alter cultural ideas that permitted discrimination against married female teachers. Nationally, the federal government has participated in discrimination against women as recently as twenty-nine years ago, with pregnancy being an acceptable reason for employment bias, not that many decades ago. Occupational segregation has been permitted nationally for educated women to isolate them into traditional careers without policy or corporate decision-making ability.

In a forgotten West Virginia Supreme Court case in May 1914, Hallie Jane Jameson won her claim against a school district that fired her because she was a married female teacher (*Jameson vs. Board of Education*). Nonetheless, the court decision did not alter the career opportunities for women. Katherine Johnson, a West Virginia native and famous for her work in helping create the space program for NASA and known for the movie *Hidden Figures*, also encountered employment discrimination decades later. The film *Outliner: The Katherine Johnson Story* retold how the brilliant mathematical mind could not tell anyone she was married because of the possibility she would be fired from her high school teaching job in the state (09:10). The practice of deliberate defiance of the Supreme Court decision Richard O'Brien reveals "that the endurance in the majority of the counties of such discrimination against women was largely due to the willingness of people in those counties to accept it" (*Persecution and Acceptance*). Cultural expectations permitted employment discrimination against women. Katherine Johnson would eventually stop teaching because of pregnancy. She only returned to working a few years later once her three daughters were born and the views of women and

employment had changed (11:23). It is unbelievable that one of the first people working in the space shuttle program encountered employment discrimination due to race and gender.

Employment discrimination is not isolated to West Virginia but has been a national practice, as well. From a national perspective of the acceptance of employment inequity based on gender, pregnancy was legally allowed for employment discrimination bias. On October 31, 1978, The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, became law which prohibits discrimination based on pregnancy, including employment. Only a little more than 42 years ago did the federal government declare that women have the right to work, even those who are pregnant.

Even nationally, there was little expectation that educated women could ascend to leadership and managerial roles. The PBS documentary series *Independent Lens* episode, *9to5 The Story of a Movement*, tells women's limited opportunities in past decades. Sadly, from what appears to be a dated public service film, one-story explains how an educated woman with a bachelor's degree and one semester for a master's program "worked hard and now types 100 words a minute" as a secretary (01:00). In another story, the documentary retells how a boss wanted a secretary to "remove a calendar from a wall" (09:00). While this story is decades old, I have seen a minimal number of men in the workplace who expect women to make copies for them or run the mail through the postage machine instead of doing it themselves. There have been significant accomplishments in women's employment opportunities, but there is still occupational segregation and pay inequality.

A more recent example of accepted gender bias is found in the United States Senate in 1992. In episode two of the Hulu Original Docuseries *Hillary*, the viewer discovers that there were only two female senators before the presidential election that year. There was no women's restroom on the Senate side of the Congress (32:40). Only after four more women became U.S.

Senators that year did the “Majority Leader George Mitchell ordered their own bathroom built” (33:50). This discriminatory story displays the lack of acceptance that women could be leaders in deciding policy. The stories all tell a narrative to communicate the traditional role expected of women.

Occupational segregation is not isolated to one place. Employment discrimination is still present with women paid less than men. Women still encounter limited opportunities for managerial or leadership positions. Therefore, policy changes are needed for equality, for there to be a governmental declaration that discrimination is not acceptable.

CAREER CENTER & ADVOCACY

A career training center could help low-income women to earn a livable wage and provide a center for advocacy for the organization and participants for community engagement for equal pay policy changes. Such a center near the state capital and a bus terminal in a shopping area could provide accessibility for those without transportation to receive the training. For funding, grants and corporate sponsorships will be significant for the career center with a central focus on low-income and older women. A career center would provide free computer training, resume and interview assistance with different course terms for certifications. While Dress for Success offers resume and interview help, the office's location is only accessible to a specific population living near Marshall University, Huntington, WV. A career center in St. Albans, WV, would be located between the capital of Charleston and the next largest city of Huntington.

Similarly, NewForce Training, a grant-funded program, provides computer program training (Operations Director Generation West Virginia). While any plan would have to be open to both men and women, the proposed idea would primarily focus on helping women control

their lives independent of any policy changes, which does not negate the need for new legislation. The nonprofit organization would provide training for varying levels of certifications to enhance the possibility of employment. With corporations' assistance, the center will provide paid apprenticeships to complete the training program with employment experience. Likewise, the nonprofit organization would serve as a central hub to cooperate with other similar organizations for advocacy to pass the Katherine Johnson and Dorthey Vaughan Fair Pay Act and other legislative policies for economic justice and gender equality. With volunteers who are participants in the program, lawmakers and the media can learn directly from those impacted by unequal pay, occupational segregation, and the need for policy changes. A career center conveniently located near public transportation could help those in need of specific skills training to improve career employment. It could also serve to organize women for the passage of pay equality legislation.

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

Creating support for the income equality bill to be reintroduced and possibly successfully become law will focus on gaining public support. For a perspective of the broad impact of gender equality, it is reported that "women perform two-thirds of the world's work, and own one-tenth of the world's income, are two-thirds of the world's illiterate and own less than one-hundredth of the world's poverty" (Myers 113). Often women are the least represented in leadership participation (Myers 215). While gaining the stakeholders' support would focus primarily on the more considerable statewide impact of a possible increase in incomes, the public support plan would emphasize how individuals are impacted in the state. To establish broad, consistent support of fair pay and future gender equality-directed legislation, the career center

will be an advocacy support unit for training volunteers and creating advocacy networks throughout the state.

Myers states, “development interventions alone are not enough. The social systems within which the poor live must now become the focus of transformational change” (page 271). Through advocacy, women can then create policy changes that can have a permanent impact. On the other hand, programs are limited in the scope of the issues they can address and the possibility of widespread change. The center will coordinate with other community organizations within the state to participate as part of the advocacy unit.

One group of constituents to organize meetings about a potential bill to become volunteer advocates are college students throughout the state. The four-year institutions are located in various areas throughout West Virginia, expanding the number of advocacy groups to contact more WV Legislature members about the bill. Working with organizations on campuses could create momentum with possibly new voters to become involved in advocacy. Perhaps, if the bill was successfully introduced and passed, it could encourage future participation in current events. Also, if they are full-time college students and not working a job, they would likely have the additional time to advocate for the bill. Partnering with colleges could be an opportunity to incorporate the course curriculum into action through the advocacy process.

The second group of constituents to engage with the bill to become volunteer advocates would be senior citizens. The group initially may not seem to be impacted by a pay inequality bill, as presumably they would be retired from working. However, the state has a large number of grandparents raising their grandchildren. Therefore, it is a possibility that senior citizens would have to continue working as they age. Pay inequality can impact seniors with age discrimination, particularly for older women who may have found their employment

opportunities limited to low-paying gender-specific jobs. Cooperating with senior centers and senior service programs to arrange meetings with citizens about the legislation to inform them how they are impacted could likely be the constituency group that could finally prompt the legislature to pass the bill.

STAKEHOLDERS

Creating a timeline to contact stakeholders before the legislative session and following up with advocacy can help achieve the bill's passage. With the legislature only in session 60 calendar days, a plan is needed to gain support so that time is not wasted researching who legislative leaders are and what organizations' relationships should be established. Kelley and Kelley state that it is possible at "times we fail to convince our boss or our key stakeholders with words alone" (132). Organized facts for stakeholders of the state's pay inequality and how the individual will be assisted, but overall, will contribute to the state's income. Also, focusing on how the passage could aid those participating in the Jobs and Hope program, the legislature previously passed. The program helps primarily those who have had an addiction to enroll in educational programs and obtain a job (Lead Transition Agent). Likewise, Lynch and Walls remind us that there is a difference in "doing good versus doing well" (22). Just getting the bill reintroduced is not an accomplishment, and no one will be helped. The bill has been introduced four times with minimal movement. Stakeholders must understand the individual and collective impact on the state the bill could accomplish.

It is critical to limit advocates' discouragement, which could be achieved by the center actively involved in providing support for volunteers. Workshops on advocacy, policy, and legislation basics can educate volunteers to meet with lawmakers effectively. The center's staff need to be open to listening to advocates' concerns about creating a policy transformation unit.

Guiding the volunteers about advocacy will help them feel as if they are part of a team working towards equality instead of thinking they are on their own. The center's primary concern is not the number of certifications accomplished and bills passed but rather the people impacted.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

For my experience, I took a job as a secretary a month after graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science. During the program, the department chair warned that the most likely job opportunities would be government office work, which I did not want to a career in; however, it was the degree my then-husband thought I should pursue. One month after receiving my degree, I went to the legislature for the first day of the session to visit a fellow alumnus who was a policy analyst for a state senator to see if there were any available temporary jobs during the session. The vice-chair of education for the committee she worked at was hiring a per diem secretary/clerk of the military committee he chaired. Months later, I was offered a full-time job as a secretary/clerk for the education committee, but I did not want to be segregated into an administrative, secretarial job. However, that is what ended up occurring. Two years later, with the frustration of only finding governmental office jobs, I sought help from the career center from the university I graduated from. The person over the office insisted on directing my resume towards administrative positions even with my constant objections. Over the last eleven years, I have applied for countless non-administrative, non-clerical jobs. State jobs I have applied for, which were not administrative, were either rejected or, instead, I was submitted for very-low paying secretarial jobs. Career advancement opportunities are difficult to find once segregated into a traditional occupation.

Social justice demands economic equality opportunities. Reviewing the background of state and national employment discrimination explains the longstanding inequality that women

have encountered. Understanding the obstacles that women have faced inspires the reintroduction of the Katherine Johnson and Dorothy Vaughan Fair Pay Act. A community-developed framework to engage those impacted could ensure the bill's passage. An amended bill that solely focuses on eliminating the request for salary history from employers could help different groups of people move from poverty. Perhaps contacting specific constituency groups could increase the participants supporting the passage of the bill. Likewise, a career center providing computer training could empower women to decide their economic future and obtain leadership jobs to influence decisions, including gender equality policies. The center could become an avenue for community-driven advocacy with the staff's support and guidance. The volunteer advocates provide first-hand accounts of their experience in low-earning jobs and the larger community impact.

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