

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to [news@portlandobserver.com](mailto:news@portlandobserver.com).

# OPINION

## How Much Do We Make Compared to Men

### Dramatic differences state by state

BY MARTHA BURK

For years, Time magazine has a run a feature on the best places to live in the United States. But nobody ever ranked the best places for women — until now.

A major factor for anyone's quality of life, of course, is the ability to earn a living. And nationally, according to a new study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, women



workers pull in an average of just \$38,000 a year, compared to \$48,000 for their male counterparts.

But it varies dramatically from state to state. You could either be shortchanged or reap a relative bonanza all because of where you hang your hat.

Young women in the District of Columbia rake in the most, at nearly \$54,000 a year, and Maryland women come in second at 40 grand. Way out west, Idaho is dead last at just under \$25,000, edging out New Mexico and Mississippi for bottom-of-the-barrel honors.

And that ever-present pay

gap with men? It's better in New York. Though women in the state overall get just 87.6 percent of men's pay, young women actually out-earn their male peers by 2 cents on the dollar — which puts that state at the top of the heap.

Women in Wyoming suffer the most in that regard, getting paid just 67.9 cents to their brother's buck.

One reason could be that Wyoming women have their first babies much younger — at an average age of 23 — compared to their sisters in Gotham, who wait until they're 27 or 28, giving them more time to get educated and start careers.

Some states are closing the

gap faster than others, but it's going to be a long time before women in any state reach parity with men.

Based on historic rates of change, Florida will be first, but not until 2038. And poor Wyoming won't be equal for another century and a half.

There are a few other surprises. Well, maybe more than a few. For example, young women in D.C. binge drink more than those in America's sin city, Las Vegas. Is that due to frustration with government gridlock? The report doesn't say.

Researchers also look at depression. As you'd expect, sunny climes like Hawaii and

California boast the happiest workers, while cold, rainy states are downers.

What's a girl to do?

Since not everybody can just pick up and move, a better question is what the states can do to improve women's lives. Providing better educational opportunities and higher pay, including a bigger minimum wage, would make great places to start.

Martha Burk is the director of the Corporate Accountability Project for the National Council of Women's Organizations and the author of the book *Your Voice, Your Vote: The Savvy Woman's Guide to Power, Politics, and the Change We Need*.

## Too Many People Still Left Behind on Jobs

### Dark cloud inside a silver lining

BY MARC H. MORIAL

One of the advantages of my position as the president and CEO of the National Urban League is that I have both the opportunity and platform to speak to so many of our nation's young people. I was presented with that same opportunity recently as a featured speaker of the Medgar Evers College Global Lecture Series.

As I addressed that crowd of future lawyers, IT professionals and perhaps even a president of the National Urban League, it struck me that for a number of these students—our future workforce—they may encounter an America and a job market that is hostile to the principles of economic mobility on which our country was founded.

Five years after the widely-accepted end of the global economic downturn commonly known as the Great Recession, America's economy inches ever closer to full recovery. In fact, the start of 2015 saw the most sustained period of job creation this cen-



tury.

But the dark cloud inside this silver lining is that too many people are still being left behind—particularly in our communities of color, where unemployment remains at a crisis level, even as our economy continues to rebound.

For blacks and Latinos in America, the economic devastation of the Great Recession is as real today as it was when it began in 2007 and what we've found in our newly released 2015 State of Black America report - "Save our Cities: Education, Jobs + Justice" is a mixed economic bag that reflects a stark tale of two Americas.

The U.S. economy added 295,000 jobs in February of this year. For the first time since 1997, we have seen 12 straight months of private-sector job growth above 200,000 and unemployment is down to 5.5 percent—its lowest rate since May 2008. But despite this encouraging news, the black unemployment is twice that of white unemployment, wages are stagnant and many working people are not earning enough to make ends meet.

The Equality Index in the State of Black America report

catalogued black, Hispanic and white unemployment and income inequality in the nation's largest metropolitan areas. Overall, the black unemployment rate was at 11.3 percent and the Latino unemployment rate stood at 7.4 percent versus a white unemployment rate of 5.3 percent. Of the 70 cities ranked for black-white unemployment, almost half (33 cities) had a black unemployment rate above 15 percent. In seven of those cities we discovered Great Depression era black unemployment rates of 20 percent or higher.

It is clear that for far too many blacks and Latinos, our nation's economic recovery is only something they read or hear about. According to our analysis, America's comeback is bypassing large swaths of people in black and brown neighborhoods—and that is dangerous—not only to those communities, but to our nation. A recovery that leaves millions of its citizens behind will ultimately threaten America's sustained growth.

In a recent report on jobs and unemployment in the black community, Economic Policy Institute economist Valerie Wilson said, "Even before the Great Recession,

black unemployment has consistently been twice as high as white unemployment. To address this problem, we need to look beyond simply returning to the pre-recession status quo and implement policies aimed at ensuring that everyone who is willing and able to work has a job."

A central focus of the National Urban League is workforce development, and being in the business of creating jobs and proposing solutions to our longstanding challenges, our organization has advanced the following public-policy recommendations:

Passage of a transportation infrastructure bill with a targeted jobs component; passage a targeted, large-scale summer youth/young adult

jobs bill; and raising the minimum wage to a living wage.

Experts are predicting another strong month of job creation. While we applaud every stride our country makes in resuscitating our once battered economy, we remain vigilant—and concerned—about the disparity of access to these benefits among our nation's citizens as revealed in the State of Black America report. I am concerned for all Americans, but especially for all the students I meet who live in those communities in crisis and are working so hard in their classrooms now while they dream of a better future.

By Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

### The Law Offices of Patrick John Sweeney, P.C.

Patrick John Sweeney

Attorney at Law

1549 SE Ladd

Portland, Oregon

Portland: (503) 244-2080

Hillsboro: (503) 244-2081

Facsimile: (503) 244-2084

Email: [Sweeney@PDXLawyer.com](mailto:Sweeney@PDXLawyer.com)