

THE PERSONAL PRICE OF CARE

Taking care of a loved one — or someone else's loved one — is a virtuous thing, and that's something that Eugeneans of all stripes can agree on. So why are caretakers so frequently economically penalized for their work?

Economist Nancy Folbre's keynote speech March 8, "Women's Gains, Mothers' Losses: Capitalism and the Care Penalty," will address aspects of something called the care penalty.

"The care penalty is the price that caregivers pay for taking on responsibilities or obligations to care for others," Folbre says. "It's pretty evident what happens to earnings when people take time out of the labor market."

It's not just that caregivers, so frequently women, lose out on wages temporarily while caring for children or the elderly, Folbre says. "It lowers your earnings over the entire course of your life, often adding up to a pretty substantial sum of money."

One way to examine the care penalty is to look at different groups of caregivers and non-caregivers that are otherwise similar. "Economic differences between mothers and non-mothers, controlling for differences in education and other factors that might affect their labor market productivity, are actually greater than differences between single women and single men," Folbre says.

Since women are so often the caregivers in American culture, that can mean that in data the care penalty can be obscured. As a result, Folbre says, "a lot of what we see today as gender differences in pay or promotions are kind of a result of the care penalty."

The influence of the care penalty is shown further in the differences between groups of men, who often have families but also have cultural expectations of care that are different than those of women. "Men who are fathers tend to earn more than men who aren't fathers; they're often working harder and longer hours in order to help support their families," she says. In contrast, women who



NANCY FOLBRE

are mothers are more likely to take time out from paid employment for care.

The care penalty isn't limited to women who take time from their careers, intentionally or by happenstance. "There's also a second related but distinct penalty for entering an occupation that involves paid care work," Folbre says. When factors that might skew the data are accounted for, and recognizing that exceptions do exist, "generally a job that involves taking care of other people pays less than a job that doesn't."

Even within the caregiving field there are some occupations that are paid less than others, such as childcare and caring for people in nursing homes. Folbre says that there are several possible explanations for this. Having a lot of women in a field tends to lower the wage that's offered, and Folbre says women may continue to choose the lower-paid profession because they find an intrinsic satisfaction in it.

How can women avoid being dinged by the care penalty? Folbre says that, just as one might guess, the answer is education, which adds a certain level of flexibility to caregivers' lives.

"There's a lot of discussion today about why there are more women than men finishing college," Folbre says, "and I think the reason ... is that a college education is particularly valuable to women because it enables them to move into traditionally feminine occupations but at a higher level and that has kind of a protective effect."

Folbre says that one of the next topics she plans to investigate involves how we think about public spending and finance, with an emphasis on how societal spending resembles the spending of a traditional family.

Folbre will deliver the keynote address at the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics' Gender Equity and Capitalism Conference, 7 pm Thursday, March 8, Knight Law 110, UO, full schedule available at wkly.ws/17q

— Shannon Finnell

BRING YOUR DAUGHTERS AND YOUR DEMANDS

The next generation of young women, who still face inequality and disparaging slurs from the likes of Rush Limbaugh, will be the focus of "Women Amplified," a march taking place on March 8, International Women's Day.

The "Uniting Girls, Inspiring Futures" event will address Planned Parenthood funding, contraceptives, gender equality and pregnancy discrimination.

The event is being organized by an activist known as Lotus, in close connection with Occupy Eugene. Gay/straight alliance students from local high schools have been invited to participate in the march as have other groups closely tied to the issues being presented.

"I figured maybe 50 people would show up," says Lotus, who was ultimately surprised by the overwhelming response of support she has received for the event.

Lotus has a lot of ideas for what will take place, but she does not want it to be confined to one expression of discontent instead of another.

"I'm trying not to put too many things in stone because I want to go where the people want to go," she says.

The plan is to gather at Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza at 4 pm and see what happens from there. Speakers will expound on the transition from matriarchal to patriarchal societies of the past and talk about the struggle for women today. There will be food and music and then a more radical call for change through street theater, topless protesters and a reclamation ceremony, all part of a deliberate stance to get a younger generation involved in women's rights.

— Ted Shorack

YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY?

When it comes to the current condition of elected women in politics, "grim and dismal would be a good place to start," Mary V. Hughs, founder of the 2012 Project, said at a Public Interest in Environmental Law Conference panel March 3.

Oregon can only boast 14.3 percent of its congressional delegation and 27.8 percent of the state Legislature with ovaries. The election of new women to Congress peaked in 1992, but then "The effort to elect women into government flatlined," Hughs says.

Now the effort to keep women involved in politics locally is growing again, thanks in part to Emerge Oregon. "Our goal is to have women trained and ready to go in the pipeline," says Laura Coyle. Emerge is accomplishing that by graduating its fourth class, which includes 24 women who are interested in running for offices such as city councils, school boards and county commissions. Its 53 alumnae include state Rep. Val Hoyle of Lane County and state Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer of Portland.

Cynthia Wooten, a former Oregon legislator and a founder of the Oregon Country Fair, urged women at the PIELC panel to think of what they can do for their communities. "I would say to women: We need you desperately," Wooten said.

Emerge 2012's kick-off event is 5:30 pm Tuesday, March 13, at the Oregon Electric Station, 27 E. 5th Ave.; cost is \$51.

— Shannon Finnell

SATURDAY, MARCH 10

American Association of University Women: Women veterans of WWII, 9:30am social time, 10 am brunch, 10:30 am program, Westminster Presbyterian Church, 777 Coburg Rd. Eugene Russian singing group Ruskii Dukh, 5-7 pm, Cozmic Pizza. Don.

SUNDAY, MARCH 11

That Takes Ovaries – An Event to Celebrate Women's History Month, presentation of The Golden Ovary award presentations, variety, 5:30 pm, Cozmic. FREE.