



“Challenging People to Shape
a Better Future Now”

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Unequal Pay for Equal Work

When John and Ann start-
ed working on Jan. 1,
2013, John had an
immediate advantage. Because
women earn 77 cents for every
dollar men earn, it took Ann until
last Friday [April 11, 2014] to earn
the same amount of money that
John earned in the calendar year of
2013.

The issue of unequal pay is so
important that President John F.
Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act
50 years ago. While we have come
a long way, baby, the pay gap has
remained stubborn. This is why
President Obama signed the Lily
Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act
as soon as he assumed office.

This year, to commemorate
National Equal Pay Day (that’s the
day Ann finally earns as much as
John), the president signed an
Executive Order protecting work-
ers from retaliation when they
speak of unequal pay in the work-
place (one of the ways employers
can maintain unequal pay is to
make discussing pay grounds for
firing). The president, through the
Secretary of Labor, is also requir-
ing federal contractors to provide
data on pay, race, and gender to
ensure that employers are fairly
paid. Furthermore, the Senate is
considering the Paycheck Fairness
Act, which may pass the Senate,
but not the House of Representa-
tives.

We know all about John and
Ann, but what about Tamika? If
women earn 77 percent of what
men earn, what about African
American women? Women surely
have come a long way, but some



**BENNETT
COLLEGE**

Julianne
Malveaux

are moving far more slowly than
others. How many African Ameri-
can women are there in the
Senate? Among Fortune 500 lead-
ers? In other positions of power?
What about pay? African Ameri-
can women earn about three
quarters of what other women
earn, meaning that if it takes Ann
until April 11 to catch up with

largely ignored.

It wouldn’t take much for the
president, or some of those femi-
nist groups who support paycheck
fairness to throw in a line or two
about African American women.
Nor would it hurt African Ameri-
can organizations, especially
those who serve Black women, to
point out this injustice. Are
African American women invis-
ible? Don’t we count? African
American women raise the major-
ity of our children, and shoulder
many of the challenges in the
African American community.
Ignoring us in a con-
versation about unequal pay
simply marginalizes our experi-
ences and us.

one occasion. She is an amazing
woman with a talent for “breaking
it down.” When she learned that
men doing the same job she did
earned more money, she cried
“foul” but the law said it was “too
late” for her to complain. In her
inimitable way, she said that gro-
cers did not charge her less money
because she was female, nor did
doctors, or anyone else. She said
that higher-paid men didn’t have
to make uncomfortable choices
about which child would get new
shoes or clothes.

African American women can
tell the same story as Lily Ledbet-
ter. Indeed, the gaps African
American women are likely to be
more severe than the ones Lily
Ledbetter faced. The pay gap for
African Americans is larger and
too many live in food deserts
where the cost of food is higher
even as the quality is lower.

When African American women
are marginalized, so are our girls.
They are left with the mistaken
impression that we have not
fought for our rights. We’ve been
fighting and fighting, but some-
how the story of a sister struggling
is too unremarkable to be noted by
the media.

Race and gender continue to
shape the opportunities that
African American women have,
and race and gender continue to
marginalize us Black
women. When do African Ameri-
can women have equal visibility in
the policy and imagery arena?
When we demand it and when we
stop applauding our own margin-
alization.

African American women earn about three quarters of what other women earn

John, It will take Tamika until
about June 1 – about another
six weeks – to catch up. Tamika
earns in 18 months what John
earns in 12 months.

Even African American women
with the highest levels of educa-
tion experience these differences.
White men with a postgraduate
degree earn a median salary of
\$1,666 a week African American
women earn a median salary of
\$1,000 during the same time peri-
od. For all the talk of pay equity
and paycheck fairness, the status
of African American women is

The focus on “overall” data is
yet another way of marginalizing
not only African American
women, but other people of color
well. Reporting aggregate data
gives some notion of economic
progress. Reporting specific data
about African American women
and men makes it clear, for exam-
ple, that African Americans
experience depression-level
unemployment rates.

I was delighted when President
Obama signed the Lily Ledbetter
Act, and I have been privileged to
hear Ledbetter speak on more than

Irresponsibility is Hallmark of Ryan Budget

In the same week that we
marked the 46th anniversary of
the assassination of Dr. Martin
Luther King, Jr. and learned that
7.1 million Americans had
enrolled in the Affordable Care
Act, House Budget Committee
Chairman Paul Ryan introduced a
draconian 2015 budget plan that
increases military spending
through 2024 by \$483 billion – to
pre-sequester levels – yet cuts
non-defense spending by \$791 bil-
lion.

This illogical plan proposes to
repeal the Affordable Care Act,
end Medicare as we know it, and
slash critical safety-net programs,
including the Supplemental Nutri-
tion Assistance Program (or SNAP
– formerly food stamps), Head
Start and Pell Grants. It is ironic
that a plan called the “Path to
Prosperity” is nothing more than a
path to political grandstanding and
partisanship that has no place
among constructive efforts
focused on real prosperity for all
Americans, not a select few.

At a time when Americans are
looking to Washington for solu-
tions to the problems of income
inequality and the ever-increasing
Great Divide, the Ryan budget
goes in the opposite
direction. Rather than closing the
gaps, it exacerbates the problems
by raising taxes an average of
\$2,000 for middle-class families
with children, according to the
Office of Management and Budg-



**TO BE
EQUAL**

Marc Morial

et, while giving the wealthiest tax-
payers a break by lowering their
taxes from 39.6 percent to 25 per-
cent.

The Economic Policy Institute
(EPI) estimates that the “prosper-
ity proposal” would result in the
loss of 3 million jobs over the next
couple of years, thereby reversing

burdens seniors, the disabled, and
children – while cutting taxes for
the rich. “Tax cuts for people
who don’t need them and eco-
nomic insecurity for everyone
else is grossly irresponsible budg-
et and economic policy,” he
added.

The Center for American
Progress called Ryan’s plan “the
same conservative, top-down poli-
cies that have failed the nation’s
middle and working-class fami-
lies, seniors, and the economy,”
while the New York Times called
it “Destructive to the country’s
future.”

Thankfully, spending for the

this plan and get serious about
developing a responsible budget
that does not depend on hurting
millions of working and middle-
class Americans to benefit the
richest few.

I would expect that Rep. Ryan
would be more conscious of the
critical need to accomplish this,
especially as this year’s State of
Black America report and the new
Black-White Metropolitan Equal-
ity Index™ finds that three of the
five least equal cities in America
for unemployment and two of the
five least equal cities for income
are in his home state of Wiscon-
sin. With an equality index of
23.8 percent (on a 100-point
scale), Madison ranked at the bot-
tom for Black-White
unemployment (18.5 percent vs.
4.4 percent). With an equality
index of 40.3 percent, Minneapo-
lis ranked at the bottom for
Black-White median household
income (\$28,784 vs. \$71,376).

The night before Dr. King’s
April 4, 1968 assassination, he
said:

“The question is not, if I stop to
help this man in need, what will
happen to me? The question is, if I
do not stop to help the sanitation
workers, what will happen to
them?...Let us move on in these
powerful days, these days of chal-
lenge to make America what it
ought to be. We have an opportu-
nity to make America a better
nation.”

It is ironic that a plan called the ‘Path to Prosperity’ is nothing more than a path to political grandstanding

the gradual upward trend in job
creation. In short, the Ryan budg-
et, while not surprising in its
familiar ideology or fanciful push
towards austerity, represents the
height of irresponsibility and is a
blueprint for disaster for millions
of hard-working Americans. It has
immediately, and rightfully, drawn
widespread condemnation.

Ethan Pollack, Senior Policy
Analyst with the non-partisan
Economic Policy Institute con-
cluded that much like the budget
Ryan proposed last year, this one

next two years was set by the
budget agreement passed in the
Senate and the House and signed
by President Obama in December
2013. So it is unlikely that the
Ryan budget will become law in
the short-term or is for anything
more than show. Nonetheless, it is
a dangerous “vision” for our
nation. The National Urban
League strongly rejects this budg-
et because of its likely destructive
impact on employment, the econo-
my and poverty. We urge Paul
Ryan and his colleagues to drop