

# THE Skanner®

Challenging People to Shape  
a Better Future Now

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# Opinion

## My Truth – Celebrating Strong Women

**H**ave you ever experienced a sunken feeling, a feeling of despair, of hopelessness? You know the feeling you have or the moment you find yourself feeling regret after something has happened and you're thinking, "If I coulda, woulda, shoulda."

Well, you have to seize the moment, every moment! If you want to tell someone you love them, you need to do it. Don't hesitate and don't let anyone else make or take away your decision to express your feelings. If you want to tell someone you don't like them, well, think again and also ask yourself "what do I hope to accomplish," or "what is the end game?" We have to understand that there are consequences and repercussions for our actions and our inactions. We have to be accountable and also hold others accountable.

Years ago I went to a funeral and a young man stood up and said that he wished his loved one could hear all the accolades that were being shared that day because his relative took his last breaths thinking that he was unloved. What a tragedy.



Cheryl Smith  
Publisher,  
Texas Metro News

Which brings me to my truth. I really like Caller I.D. This feature has kept me free from telemarketers, bill collectors, exes, and folks who only call when they want something.

Well recently, a number appeared on the caller I.D. and

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while it was unfamiliar to me, I felt compelled to answer. And I'm glad I did. When the call was completed, I sat deep in thought. The caller informed me that they had come across my number and wanted to alert me of the passing of someone who was very special to me.

I met Juanita Benson when I moved to Dallas and attended

my first FAMU alumni chapter meeting. Over the years we became close and at one point she served in my cabinet as my vice president.

We had long talks about life, our love for FAMU and our common interests. Juanita finished FAMU in the early 1960s, and me in 1980. What a difference time makes, but we bridged the gap and shared so many special moments.

When we were really active with the alumni chapter, we had active members from the 1940s - 1980s and we had events that appealed to all

pecially her son, Bill, whom she was very proud of.

I am so glad that Bill reached out to me. Unfortunately, he was unable to contact me in time to share in the celebration of life for his mom and that saddens me because just one more moment with my friend, just one more... Juanita believed in me.

The thought of her passing brings back so many fond memories of her living. I am grateful for the time we shared together because there was no pretentiousness. Instead there was a sincerity and compassion that made Juanita so special. Juanita didn't have to guess about the relationship we had. So I don't have to ponder this thought at all.

When I ask myself which do I prefer, being in attendance at Juanita's celebration of life to tell others how much I cared for her or sharing those expressions with her while she could hear me, I feel better. And while I didn't get the opportunity to say farewell, I take solace in knowing that every conversation ended with expressions of love, respect and appreciation, strengthened by prayers.

## Moving Toward a More Liveable Wage

**I**t is unfathomable that the federal minimum wage has not been increased in more than a decade, since 2007. That the wage, at \$7.25 per hour, has remained flat through recession and recovery, through extremely high unemployment rates and much lower ones. Republicans have absolutely refused to consider minimum wage increases, and in early March rejected a bill that would increase the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2024. Still, with the Democratic majority in Congress, the bill came out of committee on a 28-20 party line vote.

While the federal government drags its feet, six states, the District of Columbia and several other cities now have a minimum wage that will rise to \$15 in the next few years. In late March, Maryland joined California, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Illinois in increasing the minimum wage, even though Republican governor Larry Hogan vetoed the legislation. Both houses of the Maryland legislature overrode his veto, even though he melodramatically noted that a higher minimum wage would "devastate" the Maryland economy.

Unions, McDonald's workers, and the Fight for Fifteen have fueled the national push to raise the minimum wage,



Julianne Malveaux  
NNPA  
Columnist

especially as people have noted that wage stagnation has resulted in an extremely uneven economic recovery. While those at the top are celebrating economic growth, those at the bottom have barely

“While those at the top are celebrating economic growth, those at the bottom have barely experienced it

ly experienced it. And the current minimum wage of \$7.25 produces annual pay of \$15,080, assuming that someone works a full 40 hours a week all 52 weeks of the year, which is often unlikely because many minimum wage jobs are part-time jobs.

The poverty line for a family of three (a working mom and two children) is \$16,910.

A woman working full-time at the minimum wage is living below the poverty line. She qualifies for SNAP (food stamps), and possibly for federal housing aid if she can get it. All too often, the list for housing subsidies is full, as is public housing, so assistance is not an option. What is a woman earning such a low wage to do, then, living at the economic periphery? She house-shares, lives with family or endures homelessness. She lines up to get food at food banks or from other charities. She struggles to make ends meet, while her Congressional Representative earns \$174,000 a year whether they produce or not. (I'd suspend Congressional pay when they choose to shut down the government).

Too many of the people who earn the minimum wage, mostly women, are caretakers. They mind our children and our elders, as nannies and home health workers. While we say that our children and elders are precious, we don't pay the folks who care for them as if they are. Parking lot attendants, who care for our automobiles, often earn more than the people who care for our children, mothers, and grandmothers. And yet the economy depends on them! How many working women would be hard

pressed to work if their nannies or home health workers stayed home? And how would the economy adjust to the absence of nearly half of the labor force?

Ai-jen Poo, the Executive Director of the National Domestic Worker's Alliance, recently spoke about workers in the care industry, how poorly they are paid, and how essential they are. Eighty-eight percent of these workers are women, mostly women of color, and while demand for their services is increasing (with an aging baby boom, and increased births to millennial women), pay is not. Poo and her organization are working to raise the visibility of these workers, not just so we can see them, but so we can ensure that they are adequately paid. The movement toward a living wage must include these workers.

Kudos to Maryland for taking a step in the right direction. Shame on House Republicans who are enjoying economic recovery, but denying its benefits to those at the bottom. The Fight for Fifteen has momentum now. This is a great time to keep up the pressure on the states and on the federal government. Increasing the minimum wage lifts people out of poverty. Shouldn't we all be able to support that?