Black Women's EQUAL PAY DAY

2024 TOOLKIT

Make your voice heard for Black Women's Equal Pay Day! Share one of these graphics on your social media accounts with **#ClosetheWageGap**.

We're including text for posts, but feel free to customize them based on your experience. Your voice is an essential part of this work!

ACCESS GRAPHICS HERE

BWR
MISSISSIPPI
BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE

MAKING
MISSISSIPPI WOMEN
SECURE

GRAPHICS

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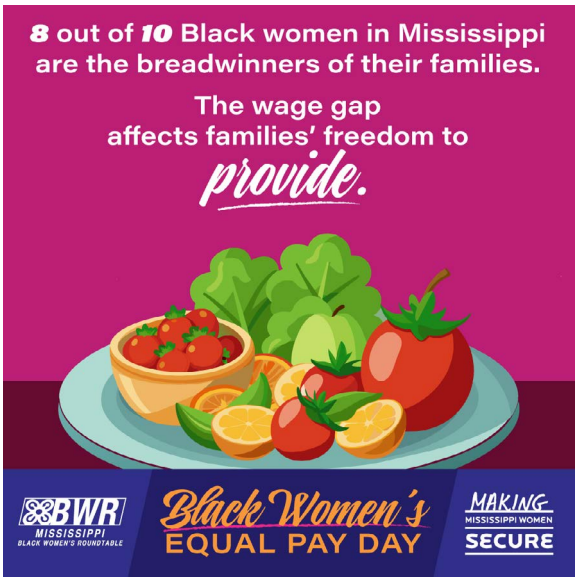
It's a date! On July 9, join us—Black women and allies—advocating for Black Women's Equal Pay NOW! Together, we can #CloseTheWageGap that robs Black women of hundreds of thousands of dollars over their lifetimes.

The wage gap robs Black women across the country of money that could be used to support themselves and their families. Make a plan to take economic security TO THE POLLS and #CloseTheWageGap NOW!



Black women in Mississippi lose over $20,000 a year due to the #WageGap. That's money that could go towards food, housing, childcare, education, and more resources essential to building economic security and setting up the next generation for success. Make your voice HEARD online and at the polls and let's #ClosetheWageGap!

GRAPHICS

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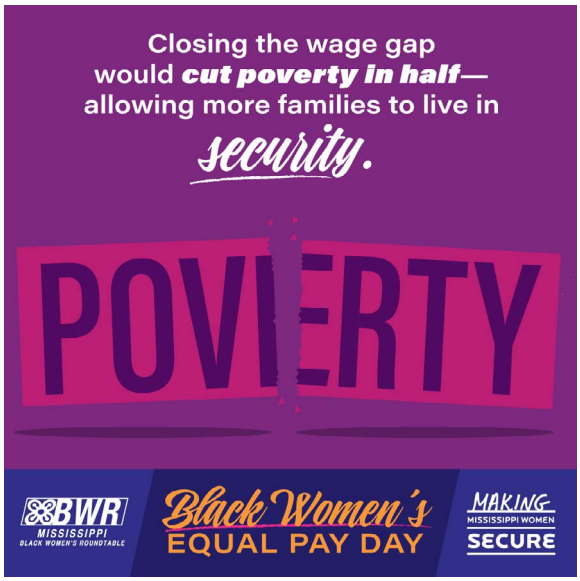
The first step is to take a step! MS BWR has a variety of ways to build leadership, engagement, and advocacy skills to take your place at decision-making tables. NOW is the time to #ClosetheWageGap!



Closing the wage gap is an economic boost to families living in our communities across the state. Make your voice HEARD online and at the polls and let's #ClosetheWageGap!

CONTENT

This Q&A from the MS BWR website contains data and storytelling to help explain why Black Women's Equal Pay Day is such an important symbol, and how Black women in Mississippi can take that symbol to the polls to improve their lives. You can share the link on your social media or in your newsletters to give your audience a thoughtful look at how the wage gap affects Black women.

ACCESS Q&A LINK HERE

Cassandra Welchlin on the Wage Gap for Black Women

As Black Women's Equal Pay Day (July 9) approaches, we sit down with our Executive Director, Cassandra Welchlin, for an insightful discussion of the wage gap, its implications, and how Black women can build power through community engagement and lifting the sister vote.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research found that 4 out of 5 Black women are the primary breadwinners for their families. How does that resonate with you?

When I think about this statistic, I think about how most of a woman's paycheck fuels her household. Because in Mississippi, eight out of ten Black women are the breadwinners of their families, the wage gap impacts her healthcare and her ability to look after her well-being, which affects her ability to work. It's challenging.

Also, because she's so focused on putting food on the table and keeping a roof over her family's head she has a lot less money to do some of the long-term things that will be beneficial for her, like saving for retirement or investing in career development so she can make more money.

She has to work longer and harder than anyone else, is the caregiver for her family, and is often not in a position to help position them for success if, God forbid, she loses her low-paying work, gets sick or passes away. Black women are underemployed and don't make enough money. Yet local and state economies are fueled by Black women's paychecks.

Why is the wage gap so significant for Black women in Mississippi? What other elements are at play?

Race is definitely at play here. When discussing the wage gap, we also talk about who it impacts. And it's impacting Black and Brown women, who are

facing not only racial discrimination but also gender discrimination. And we know that discrimination runs deep.

The other thing that comes to mind in this conversation is what women are losing from the wage gap. Black women in Mississippi are making 55 cents to the dollar. Over a year, she's losing over $20,000 a year. I call that wage theft.

That $20,000 could go towards groceries for her family. It could go towards a mortgage or rent. It could go to several other necessities to support a family: utilities, gas, child care, and household expenses. But instead, it's lost in the wage gap. And it's not happening only in Mississippi. Black women are losing wages across the country.

The Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable offers various ways for Black women to get involved in their communities, from leadership training to voter mobilization. How does voting and community participation help address the wage gap in Mississippi?

MS BWR always takes issues like the wage gap to the polls. When we engage Black women in voting, we ask them, 'What's important to you?' We ask, 'What do they need to take care of their families? To be economically secure? To be caregivers?' They say, 'We need higher-paying jobs. We need access to health care. We need access to child care.'

It's so important that we talk about voting holistically because it's not about the candidate. It's about solving the issues you discuss at the kitchen table. Her vote is tied to that issue, like the wage gap, which is tied to her household and the pocketbook.

Moreover, we know that Black women are the primary breadwinners of their families. We spoke about that earlier. That means we must bring the wage gap issue to the polls because our paycheck is essential to support our household.

One of our key programs is the Power of the Sister Vote, which really brings Black women into a space where they can elevate their skills as leaders and access the tools they need to educate their own communities about these issues, take them to the polls, and make a change. We actually have a Boot Camp coming up in July in Cleveland, Mississippi, people can go to **msbwr.org** to get more information!

When we engage Black women in voting, we ask them, 'What's important to you?' We ask, 'What do they need to take care of their families? To be economically secure? To be caregivers?' They say, 'We need higher-paying jobs. We need access to health care. We need access to child care.'

What are the broader implications of the wage gap inequity?

The broader implications of the wage gap are its impact on the state and local economies. When we talk about who's in the workforce, especially in Mississippi, Black women and women are in the workforce. Half of them are minimal-wage earners. If we close the wage gap, we're cutting poverty in half, and we know Mississippi has a significant poverty rate in this country. We'd also be ensuring that women can better contribute to the economy in a way that benefits the state.

Let's say, for instance, a woman who lives in a local community takes her dollar and patronizes the grocery store. She then drives to a gas station and patronizes that business again. Then, she goes to a local grocery store to get food for her family. Her dollar is turning over and over again in that local community, which benefits the local community and promotes the larger state economy.

Mississippi continues to say it is a work-friendly business state. If that is the case, then we've got to make sure that we are doing our part by having a good equal pay law on the books that protects women when they are working and their wages, especially for Black and Brown women.

Do you see the wage gap as a product of history or a consequence of poor legislation?

This is a great question! I see it as both. When we think about it, Black women birthed the labor that made this country wealthy, particularly in the South, and we never got a monetary benefit from that. Then, we moved into Jim Crow, and we still weren't paid what we were worth because of systems rooted in white supremacy that still exist today.

Inequities like the wage gap are a continual consequence of a system that does not benefit or consider us. Mississippi is still governed primarily by white men who do not appreciate our experiences as Black women. We are not the priority to them.

That's why it's essential for us to be involved in the legislative process and be at those decision-making tables. That's why we need to be part of implementing and forming public policies and embody what Shirley Chisholm says, 'We're bringing our chair to the table.' We take that seriously at MS BWR to equip and train Black women to be leaders, not only in our communities but also at these policy-making tables where policies such as the minimum wage and equal pay laws are being made.

I think about my mom's story again. She worked right across the street from the state capitol. When I was just two or three years old, I had to go to work with her because she didn't have enough money for childcare. But she worked across the street from the state capitol, where lawmakers had the power to write a law to increase her wages to a living wage because she was just making $2 and some change.

That's why we need to be part of implementing and forming public policies and embody what Shirley Chisholm says, 'We're bringing our chair to the table.'

We're still there. We're still working at the legislature to make sure that, as Marian Wright Edelman says, 'No mom has to choose between the child she loves and the job that she needs to take care of her household.'

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