

Advocacy: ONE Campaign: Poverty is Sexist

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Each year the Advocacy team selects an area of focus from among the four members' deepest cares and concerns. This year, the Advocacy team is focusing on ending extreme poverty worldwide.

By Tammy A.K. Mixon-Calderon, Executive Director, Wesley Community Centers of Savannah, Inc.

Overwhelmed and at her wit's end, Sharon arrived for an appointment with Wesley's Family Advocate in dire need of help and a plan. Sharon is 26 years old and the single mother of six children. The needs were many – food, shelter, clothing, assistance filling out applications, and a long-term plan of action. Wesley provided Sharon with food for her family, bus vouchers, and clothing. Her youngest child was immediately enrolled in Wesley Community Center's childcare program so that Sharon could focus on a long-term plan without worrying about her baby. Her older children were provided public school uniforms so they could focus on school without worry about their attire. Sharon enrolled in case management and began to regularly meet with Wesley's Family Advocate. She enrolled in Early Learning College to improve her parenting skills, received assistance filling out paperwork for child support and re-instatement of public benefits, and created a resume to seek employment.

Although Sharon was able to find employment, her situation still falls into the category of “the working poor.” Sharon, and many other women who come through Wesley Community Centers of Savannah, Inc.'s door for help, are working but still find themselves in a financial crisis.

Tia has two children enrolled in our child care program, and Tia is a cosmetologist. Tia and her children's father were doing okay with financial obligations until a serious crisis hit them. One afternoon, the kid's dad came and picked them up from our child care center. Heading home, the police stopped him and he decided to jump out of the car and run from the police, leaving the children behind and in danger. Dad is now in jail and will serve time. Tia is now under a financial burden to manage expenses from one income which originally was covered by two.

Thanks to grants and some generous donors in the community, Sharon and Tia are able to receive assistance from Wesley's Family Advocacy Program, under the umbrella of Wesley's Family Life Center. Just as Sharon has been helped with many resources like child care and linkage to other resources, Tia, too, has been the benefactor of assistance with help with rent and utility bills.

Many women are marginalized poor. Poverty comes in many shapes, sizes, and colors. However, many women, even those who try to pull themselves out of their financial situations, are at a dead-end road. For women who live in Georgia, the wage gap is no different than many other states around the country.

A *Fact Sheet* for Georgia indicates median annual pay for a woman who holds a full-time, year-round job is \$36,650 while median annual pay for a man who holds a full-time, year-round job is \$45,396. This means that women in Georgia are paid 81 cents for every dollar paid to men, amounting to an annual wage gap of \$8,746. ¹The wage gap can be even larger for women of color. Among Georgia women who hold full-time, year-round jobs, Black women are paid 63 cents, Latinas are paid 49 cents, and Asian women are paid 74 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. ² Georgia's gender wage gap spans the state. In 13 out of 14 (93 percent) of Georgia's congressional districts, the median yearly pay for women who work full time is less than the median yearly pay for men who do. ³

If the annual wage gap were eliminated, on average, a working woman in Georgia would have enough money for:

- More than 15 additional months of child care;⁵

- One additional year of tuition and fees for a four-year public university or the full cost of tuition and fees at a two-year community college;⁶
- Approximately 69 more weeks of food for her family (more than one year's worth);⁷
- Nearly seven more months of mortgage and utilities payments;⁸ or
- More than 9.5 additional months of rent.⁹

(Information from the National Partnership for Women & Families | Fact Sheet | Georgia Women and the Wage Gap, April 2017)

If Sharon, Tia, and other working women who are caught in this poverty sexist scenario are able to have a chance to earn equal pay for equal work, women would not have to consistently seek out social services to help “fix the immediate financial crisis.” Instead, Sharon, Tia, and other women may be able to seek out Wesley Community Centers and other agencies to be support networks for women who have stepped up from poverty and are able to discuss how to continue to progress toward truly being self-sufficient for them and their children.

A step in the right direction on this path is the ONE campaign. The One Campaign would love for YOU to join forces with them to fight against extreme poverty. Check it out [here](#).

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