**Why Are News Organizations Paying Women, Minorities Less?**

S

tudy after study initiated by NewsGuild-CWA locals at some of the nation’s most prestigious newsrooms have reached the same conclusion: Women and minorities are getting paid less than their white, male counterparts. And it means every local has an obligation to request data from media employers about the gender, racial identity, disabilities and pay of employees as they prepare for contract negotiations, President Bernie Lunzer said.

Union efforts to document and eliminate pay disparities at the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Minneapolis Star-Tribune and the Philadelphia Inquirer, Daily News and Philly.com were the focus of a panel at a Guild meeting in Pittsburgh in August; the intense interest in the panel discussion apparently mirrors the feelings in newsrooms across the country.

When confronted with union data showing a pattern of differences in pay, publishers generally denied there was a problem — even though they sometimes implemented individual salary adjustments.

Despite some progress, however, gender- and race-based pay inequities remain widespread.

**WSJ Leads the Charge**

IAPE, the Guild local that represents employees at the Wall Street Journal, brought the issue to light in 2016 and again in 2017, long after it first documented pay inequities.

An IAPE analysis conducted in 2016 showed that women earned, on average, 86.8 percent of what men earned, up from 76 percent in 1991.

Dow Jones, which publishes the Wall Street Journal, refused to acknowledge inequities, but granted raises totaling $270,000 to 31 of 1,300 IAPE-represented employees, including at least one increase of 27 percent or approximately $14,870.

Not satisfied, IAPE reviewed the data again in 2017, this time employing a consulting firm, Strength in Numbers, to help analyze it.

“We found, again, what we believe was an alarming gap,” said Tim Martell, the local’s executive director. On average, women earned 87.2 percent as much as men.

The consulting group conducted an age regression analysis to determine whether after accounting for experience there was still a gap, said Louise Radnofsky, a WSJ reporter who is the director of the local’s Washington Bureau.

The firm concluded there was, especially for women in their 30s. “It was really part of a pattern that was established when they first started working for the company” and would follow them through their careers, Radnofsky said.

“Unfortunately, sadly and shamefully,” the statisticians were unable to analyze salaries for men or women of color because there were not enough people of color employed to make valid comparisons, IAPE President Bob Kozma said. “That is something we’re trying to correct.”

Dow Jones is currently providing additional pay increases, which the union expects will affect more than 20 employees and total approximately $170,000.

**Embarrass Them**

Attracting the attention of union members and the public are important in motivating management to address pay inequities, Martell said.

“I cannot overstate the power of the embarrassment factor,” he said, referring to news organizations’ sensitivity to the public’s perception of them…

“Our goal has been to lift the veil of secrecy.”

**Philadelphia Follows Up**

Following IAPE’s model, the Newspaper Guild of Greater Philadelphia has made substantial progress in reducing the wage gap at the Philadelphia Inquirer, Daily News and Philly.com, Executive Director Bill Ross said.

The results of a study commissioned by the Newspaper Guild of Greater Philadelphia in 2016 were “staggering,” he said. It revealed that in all job classifications and in all years-of-service categories, average salaries for women were less than men.

Salaries for minorities were lower than overall average salaries, except for sportswriters, and just 13.2 percent of staffers were minorities. (According to a 2011 analysis by the Pew Charitable Trusts, minorities comprise close to 60 percent of the city’s population.)

After the study was concluded, union leaders presented a list of proposals to Philadelphia Media Network, the publications’ owners, which included recommendations for pay adjustments, examination of recruitment practices, and re-establishment of a Newsroom Diversity Committee.

**Keeping the Pressure On**

Management was keenly aware of the potential for embarrassment evidence of pay disparities could cause and assured the union it would address the matter.

Union leaders kept up the pressure, sharing study results with union members and reaching out to potential allies. The Guild sought support from the board of directors of the foundation that runs the papers, and met with David Boardman, dean of Temple University’s School of Media and Communications, who was reportedly “appalled” by what he heard.

With contract negotiations underway, pay equity was front and center. Negotiations were key to helping the local significantly narrow the gap, Ross said.

An August 2017 follow-up analysis shows that the total gender gap is down by 41 percent, in large part because of negotiated salary increases.

Average salaries for minorities also improved, but continue to be slightly lower than the average.

**It’s Not Unusual**

NewsGuild leaders at the New York Times, Washington Post and Star-Tribune found similar disparities.

At the New York Times, a union study released in May 2016 revealed that people of color earned, on average, 10 percent less than their white counterparts and women earned 7 percent less that men, reported Grant Glickson, president of the NewsGuild of New York.

In response, management conducted its own study and made a handful of adjustments without discussing them with the union.

At the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, a 2016 study showed that women were earning, on average, 95 cents on the dollar compared to men; black women were earning 86 cents on the dollar, Hispanic women were earning 93 cents, and Asian women were earning 88 cents, said local President Janet Moore.

The Guild is working with the company to get more recent pay data so an updated study can be done.

Using management-provided data from 2014, a committee of Washington Post employees found that, on average, women earned 86 percent of what men earned, and minorities earned 85 percent of what white employees earned, said Cet Parks, executive officer for the Washington-Baltimore News Guild.

**Where to From Here?**

The Guild is determined to make the fight for pay equity “part of the fabric” of the Guild’s ongoing work, Lunzer said.

Tackling pay disparities highlights the value of the union, Radnofsky pointed out during a question-and-answer session at the conference. It’s tough to address this issue at non-union news organizations, she said. And, because of intense interest among union members, pursuing the matter presents an opportunity to engage new activists, delegates noted.

News organizations, which pride themselves on holding the powerful accountable, are reluctant to have questionable pay practices exposed; the Guild should take advantage of this sensitivity to demand action.

Cutline:

AP reporter Jill Bleed comments during the question-and-answer session. Standing, Bill Baker, unit chairperson at the New York Times, waits to speak.