



March 17, 2003

# GEORGETOWN LIVING WAGE REPORT

**A study of the economics  
and ethics of work  
and employment at  
Georgetown University, a  
Catholic and Jesuit  
institution in  
Washington, D.C.**

“AS A  
UNIVERSITY  
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RACIAL,  
SOCIAL,  
ECONOMIC AND  
POLITICAL  
JUSTICE.”

—JOHN J.  
DEGIOIA

# A TRADITION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

We as students, faculty, and staff of Georgetown University comprise an institution built upon the Jesuit tradition of social justice. Indeed, this tradition is more than a statement engraved upon a stone building or a phrase buried in a dusty charter; it is a value that informs our daily lives and distinguishes Georgetown from other universities. We cannot however take for granted our tradition of social justice, for Georgetown has only cursorily embraced this mandate. Even though we have attempted to carry this call for justice into the community and broader world, we have failed to address the systematic social injustices that exist within Healy Gates.

We forget that apathy and complacency are present not only externally, but internally as well. Surrounded by structures and systems that perpetuate social and economic inequality, University President Dr. John J. DeGioia has rightfully challenged us as a community, to launch a “counterattack against injustice; a decision to work with others toward the dismantling of unjust social structures so that the weak, the oppressed, the marginalized of this world may be set free.”<sup>2</sup> We as students at a Catholic and Jesuit university have a responsibility to rise to this challenge. “As a university, we need to place ourselves on the cutting edge of change, to be a part of this city’s historic quest for racial, social, economic, and political justice,” as Dr. DeGioia said.<sup>3</sup>

THEY CLEAN THE CLASSROOMS, HALLWAYS, LABS, AND LIBRARIES THROUGH WHICH GEORGETOWN STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO PURSUE THEIR ACADEMIC STUDIES. THEY COOK AND SERVE THE FOOD THAT GEORGETOWN STUDENTS EAT. THEY COMPLETE THE UNRECOGNIZED AND UNAPPRECIATED JOBS THAT ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE DAILY FUNCTIONING OF THE UNIVERSITY.

# THE REALITY AT GEORGETOWN

The ideals of social responsibility captured in Georgetown's Jesuit mission and President DeGioia's statements must command much respect. However, the true reality of social justice today at Georgetown University contradicts our spoken intentions to a degree that is appalling. While the rhetoric of justice flows through our campus, it is the very individuals who clean our classrooms, feed us and spend their days and nights ensuring a safe environment who have been denied justice in the University's policies.

Neglected and underappreciated, these workers arrive in the late hours of the night, or in the early hours of the morning, they complete the unrecognized jobs that nevertheless are essential to the daily functioning of the University. Georgetown has failed to embrace this indispensable population. Georgetown subcontracts, or outsources, many services through other companies such as P & R Enterprises, Marriott, Mailboxes Etc., and Allied Security. For example, while janitorial employees hired directly by Georgetown earn at least \$10.25 an hour, no P & R employee has reported earning more than \$8.50 an hour and some earn as little as \$7.20.<sup>4</sup>

This wage disparity not only represents apathetic compliance with blatant wage discrimination, but also a more fundamental hypocrisy between our Jesuit mission and our administrative practices. Because of this wage disparity, many workers serving our community earn poverty wages that in no way enable them to provide for themselves and their families. But, not only is this a simple matter of wage inequity, but a system of dehumanization whereby these individuals are denied access to health care, child care, facilities on campus, and any chance of making a better life for themselves and their families.

LIVING WAGE NUMBERS:

**\$10.21**

ALEXANDRIA, VA  
AS OF 2000

INDEXED ANNUALLY TO  
THE POVERTY LINE FOR A  
FAMILY OF FOUR WITH  
COST FOR HEALTH  
INSURANCE

**\$10.68**

CAMBRIDGE, MA  
AS OF 1999

ADJUSTED ANNUALLY

**\$12.00**

SANTA CRUZ, CA  
AS OF 2000

- ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY  
ORGANIZATION AND REFORM NOW  
([WWW.ACORN.ORG](http://WWW.ACORN.ORG))

AND THE ECONOMIC POLICY  
INSTITUTE ([WWW.EPINET.ORG](http://WWW.EPINET.ORG))

# TALKING JUSTICE AND DOING JUSTICE

Georgetown's stated commitment to social justice necessitates that the University pay each and every working member of the Georgetown community a living wage. A living wage is not a fixed wage rate. A living wage is indexed annually to the cost of living in a given area. It provides for the basic needs of workers and their families, including food, housing, health care, and child-care, and thus relieves workers from dependence on government social programs.

In addition to an annually indexed wage, living wage ordinances and policies in cities and on campuses have addressed health benefits, vacation days, community hiring goals, public disclosure, and language that supports neutrality in union organizing. The first living wage was enacted in Baltimore, Maryland in 1994, and since its implementation a nation-wide living wage movement has instituted 103 living wages in cities, campuses and communities across the country.<sup>5</sup> Cities like Los Angeles, Cal., Alexandria, Va., Cleveland, Ohio, Buffalo, N.Y., Cambridge, Mass., and Oakland, Cal. all now have living wage ordinances applying to municipal and subcontracted companies' employees.

This movement for social justice, which started at the municipal level is now spreading to colleges across the nation. Currently, students and workers are campaigning for a living wage on more than 35 campuses, including Notre Dame, Princeton, Yale American, UVA and the University of Michigan.



**\$49,218**

**ANNUAL COST OF LIVING FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR IN THE D.C. AREA**

**\$11.87**

**THE LIVING WAGE IN D.C. FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR WITH TWO WORKING PARENTS**

**-ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE**

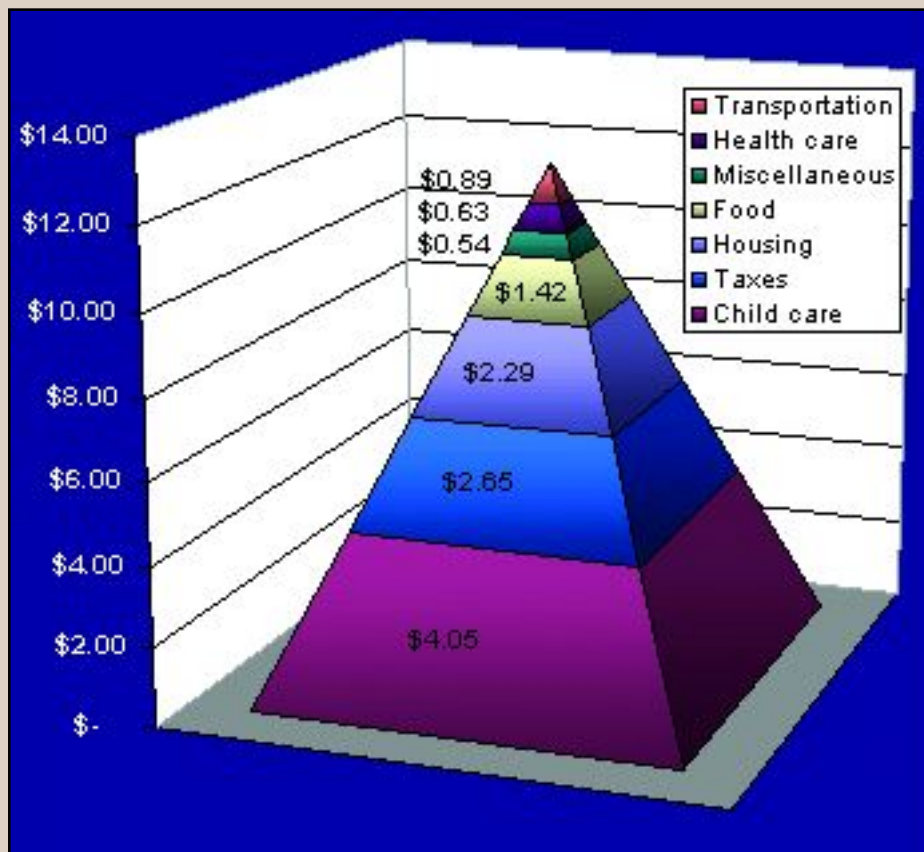
# A LIVING WAGE AT GEORGETOWN

Many agencies have published research and subsequent recommendations for living wage rates in the D.C. area. The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) in Washington, D.C. conducted a review of the average family budget in the District in 1999, taking into account the costs of food, clothing, housing, health care, childcare, clothing and transportation in order to calculate an accurate livable annual income. EPI determined that a livable income for a family of four (two parents, two children) must be \$49,218 per year, calculating to \$11.87 per hour for each parent based on a 40-hour work week.<sup>6</sup>

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) conducted a similar review in order to determine a Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington, D.C. The Self-Sufficiency Standard measures how much income is needed to adequately meet a family's basic needs without public or private assistance. Taking into account the same basic necessities reviewed by EPI, WOW determined that for a family with two adults and two children, a living wage would be \$12.48 per hour for each adult.<sup>7</sup> Both of these estimates demonstrate the incredible disparity between the wages that many workers at Georgetown receive and the living wage in the D.C. area. A worker, like those employed by P&R, earning roughly \$8 an hour would on a 40-hour work week makes \$16,000 working 50 weeks a year— far below the federal poverty line for a family of four (\$17,650).<sup>8</sup>

# HOW THE LIVING WAGE IS CALCULATED:

## COMPONENTS OF A LIVING WAGE



This chart shows the components of the living wage for a double income family with one school-aged child and one toddler.

The source for the data is the 1998 Self-Sufficiency Standard for the Washington, D.C. metro area published by the organization Wider Opportunities for Women.



**“EVERYONE SHOULD  
BE ABLE TO DRAW  
FROM WORK THE  
MEANS OF PROVIDING  
FOR HIS LIFE AND  
THAT OF HIS FAMILY,  
AND OF SERVING  
THE  
HUMAN  
COMMUNITY.”**

**-CATHOLIC  
CATECHISM<sup>10</sup>**

# LOW WAGE WORKERS AT GEORGETOWN

The lack of a living wage policy at Georgetown has consequences that manifest themselves in real human lives. Many working members of the Georgetown community have no other choice but to take on one or two additional jobs to compensate for the deficient wages they earn at Georgetown.

One worker described his typical workday as a race against time. He comes into work at 11 PM each night, leaves Georgetown at 7 AM, getting home around 9 AM, and then must leave home again at 2 o'clock in the afternoon to arrive at the airport by 3:00 PM for his second job—from which he would travel directly again to Georgetown at 11 PM.<sup>9</sup> Many workers' stories echoed this man's, as most have been forced to work additional jobs cleaning office buildings, hotels, airports, or working at restaurants, in order to provide for their families.

One would think that such a striking example of American work ethic in cooperation with the Jesuit tradition would result in some hope of upward social mobility; however, social barriers such as language have negated their efforts toward personal improvement. Most of the P&R janitorial workers come from Central America and speak very little English. When asked, the majority of them showed a great desire to learn English; they understand learning English to be an essential step in improving their lives.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, given the time constraints of working multiple jobs and their lack of financial and other resources very few workers are able to take any English classes. These barriers, as well as the insufficient wages individuals earn working at Georgetown, have trapped them in a cycle of poverty, with no hope of upward social mobility.

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SCHOOL.”**

**–P&R  
EMPLOYEE  
ON THE  
GEORGETOWN  
CAMPUS**

# THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

It is not just the individual workers that are affected by a lack of living wage, but also their families. Many P & R employees are single mothers working to support children. One woman, when asked about the difficulty of working multiple jobs, shook her head and told the interviewer, “Yes, working two jobs is very, very hard. But it is not a choice. I have three children, and I want them to go to school.”<sup>12</sup> It reflects very poorly on Georgetown’s commitment to education when our very own employees salaries become obstacles to their children’s education. Additionally, without enough money to pay for adequate housing, many P & R employees reported that they must house numerous extended family members, friends, and in some cases random acquaintances, into single-room apartments in order to keep a roof over their heads.<sup>13</sup>

In another area that impacts families, no P & R employees reported receiving health care benefits.<sup>14</sup> Even worse, several employees reported specific illnesses and injuries that impeded their ability to work efficiently, as well as their everyday lives. However, they are completely powerless in this situation. With a salary that hardly affords them a space in which to live and no health care coverage, these individuals are forced to continue working despite the long-term damage they are undoubtedly inflicting upon their bodies. With severely limited access to health care, workers are essentially sacrificing their health so that Georgetown’s students and faculty can enjoy safely sanitized bathrooms and clean classrooms.





**“THERE IS TOO MUCH WORK TO BE DONE IN ONE SHIFT AND TOO LITTLE PAY. ALL OF US WORK 2 JOBS, USUALLY A PART-TIME AND A FULL-TIME...**

**IF WE GOT PAID MORE, WE COULD WORK LESS TIME. THEN, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET MORE SLEEP AND GET THE WORK DONE FASTER.”**

**-P&R EMPLOYEE  
AT GEORGETOWN**

# COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

As a community here at Georgetown University, we now find ourselves in a crisis. Not only has it become clear that our integrity as a Jesuit university is in jeopardy, but the lives and the welfare of the individuals who sacrifice so much—while receiving so little—have been completely neglected. One worker summarized the reality she and her coworkers face every day when they awake to face the new day ahead of them, “I would just like to repeat that there is too much work to be done in one shift and too little pay. All of us work 2 jobs, usually a part-time and a full-time, but I think some may work 2 full-times. So, most of us don't get enough sleep and more importantly, we don't get good sleep because we have to sleep during the day which is a bad time for sleeping. If we got paid more, we could work less time. Then, we might be able to get more sleep and get the work done faster. Now, it is very difficult to get it all done.”<sup>15</sup> When confronted with the option of voicing this opinion to management, she replied, “What are we supposed to do, get yelled at by the boss? Risk being fired?”<sup>16</sup>

AS A JESUIT  
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—  
NOT  
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# THE JESUIT VISION

The policies and institutions that have denied workers at Georgetown and at colleges across the nation access to upward social mobility have also silenced their voices by disregarding the injustice under which they work daily.

William C. Spohn, the Director of the Bannan Institute for Jesuit Education and Christian Values summarized the opinions of Jesuit educators at universities across the nation, saying that, “If a Jesuit Catholic university is only a marketplace for ideas, a forum for discourse without end and without consequence, has it not failed its mission? Such a university ought to listen to the voices of the marginalized, since they are the test of how genuine a community we have.”

Spohn adds, “Colleges and universities have to act justly in their internal policies if they are to model the justice they want to teach. Hiring practices, wages for custodial and other staff, fair policies of consultation and governance must all be held to standards of fairness and concern for the common good.”<sup>17</sup>

It is clear that Georgetown has failed in its mission to do justice within its own gates. Ignoring the plight of the most marginalized individuals on our campus, the University’s policies are not in concordance with our stated ideals of social justice. As a Jesuit university, Georgetown should be working to end poverty—not creating it.

Now is the time to rise to our rhetoric and do justice to all the members of our community. Only through a calculated change in employment policy, will Georgetown establish consistency between our mission as a Catholic and Jesuit university and the reality of life here.

# THE LIVING WAGE POLICY

**The university that seeks to teach justice must also do justice. The implementation of a living wage for all working members of the Georgetown community is of paramount urgency for the well-being of our university. All those who contribute to our community must be treated fairly and justly, with respect and dignity. We must enact a proactive employment policy that engages the economic realities of workers' lives, paying a living wage indexed annually to the cost of living for all employees within the university community.**

**1. All working members of the Georgetown community guaranteed a living wage.** All working members of the Georgetown community, including all individuals directly employed by Georgetown University, all employees of subcontracted companies, and all other workers otherwise affiliated with the university, must be guaranteed a living wage, or its salary equivalent, under university policy.<sup>18</sup> This policy is intended to ensure equal treatment for all working members of the Georgetown community within its Jesuit tradition, and to specifically and justly address the current economic realities of the employees of P&R Enterprises, Marriott International, manufacturers of Georgetown licensed goods and apparel in the U.S. and abroad, Mailboxes, Etc., The Clyde's Group, Wisemiller's, Follett Inc., Allied Security, Georgetown University, and any others as defined above.

**2. Annual Adjustment of living wage.** The mandated living wage will be adjusted annually based on the cost of living in the D.C. area, reflecting the costs of food, housing, child care, health care, transportation, utilities and education—the basic necessities of life—for all working members of the Georgetown community and their families.

**3. Guaranteed wage parity.** Wage parity will be guaranteed for all working members of the Georgetown community who perform equivalent duties, regardless of employer. Such parity will maintain a nondiscriminatory environment of equal pay for equal work, and will serve to further safeguard the Georgetown community from engaging in relationships with companies who do not share our commitment to justice and fair labor conditions.

**4. Access to appropriate resources.** Georgetown University will provide all working members of the Georgetown community access to affordable health care, child care, job training, English as a Second Language instruction, and other campus resources, including access to and use of Lauinger Library, Yates Fieldhouse and other university facilities. Some in the university community already enjoy these job benefits, but when all can, the Georgetown community will see equal opportunity for individuals.

**5. Fair working conditions.** Everyone in the Georgetown community has the right to a safe and harassment-free environment. The living wage policy guarantees this right to all Georgetown's working members, regardless of whether they are employed directly by the university or not, and will ensure access to appropriate grievance procedures if their rights are violated.

**continued ~**

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# THE LIVING WAGE POLICY

6. **Commitment to a sustainable work force.** The living wage policy commits Georgetown to providing full-time jobs when possible, and part-time or temporary work only when necessary, as determined by the nature of the work. Two part-time workers are not preferable to one full-time worker doing the same job. A strong community is built by those who care about it and share sustained personal investment in it. Georgetown must actively offer full-time employment to qualified workers in a fair and equitable manner.

7. **Job security.** All working members of the Georgetown community have the right to job security, regardless of departmental or contractual reorganization. In implementing the living wage policy and in any and all subsequent organizational changes, no jobs, wages or union status (including contracts and/or recognition) will be eliminated or diminished as a result of said changes. Ultimately, the University has a responsibility to all working members of the community, and if subcontractors prefer to disengage from the University rather than respect our commitment to social justice, the university has an obligation to employ any workers who consequently lose their jobs.

8. **Right to organize.** The living wage policy guarantees all working members of the Georgetown community the right to freely associate and organize, and commits the university and all subcontracted employers to card-check neutrality. Georgetown University and other campus employers will remain neutral and not interfere in organizing or union matters, will recognize a union bargaining agent following the demonstration of a majority of workers' signed union cards, and will not contest NLRB elections or engage in other legal manipulation and maneuvering that would violate the spirit of neutrality. Union organizers should be able to meet with any and all workers (on non-working time) without the employee fearing for their job security.

9. **Implementation of the living wage.** Georgetown University will revise all existing contracts to reflect and include the living wage policy before they are renewed. The university and all subcontractors will adjust and pay all wage increases retroactive to the date of the adoption of the living wage policy. All new contracts will reflect and include the policy.

10. **Disclosure.** The University and subcontracted employers must disclose the pertinent economic details regarding the implementation of the living wage policy. Without substantial and meaningful communication between Georgetown University and its subcontractors, the living wage policy cannot be implemented effectively. Sub-contracted employers must engage with the policy by providing the university community detailed information on wage scales, benefit packages, grievance procedures, neutrality policies, etc. They must demonstrate accountability within their organizations for all aspects of the living wage policy, under the terms of their contract. Furthermore, without open dialogue and transparency of policy between the university administration and the campus community as a whole, a university that respects the value of democracy will have no mechanism by which to evaluate the effectiveness of this or any policy.

11. **A timely response.** The Georgetown Solidarity Committee requests a response to this policy report from University President Dr. John J. DeGioia on or before March 31, 2003 as the implementation of a living wage is a matter of utmost urgency to the university community.

# NOTES

1. Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., “Men for Others: Education for social justice and social action today.” July 31, 1977.
2. John J. DeGioia, “Engaging the Tensions, Living the Question.” Oct. 13, 2001.
3. John J. DeGioia, “Standards of Excellence for a Justice Agenda.” Oct. 11, 2001.
4. Information gathered from interviews conducted by the Georgetown Solidarity Committee with P & R employees in February of 2003. Due to the lack of any guaranteed job security or neutrality policies from P & R, GSC does not wish to compromise the job status and subsequent welfare of any individual who consented to an interview and will not release individuals’ names.
5. Association for Community Organization and Reform Now
6. See [www.epinet.org/datazone/fambud/budget.html](http://www.epinet.org/datazone/fambud/budget.html), [www.epinet.org/subjectpages/labor.html](http://www.epinet.org/subjectpages/labor.html), and *Hardships in America: The Real Story of Working Families*, [www.epinet.org/books/hardships.pdf](http://www.epinet.org/books/hardships.pdf) for more information on EPI’s research.
7. See [www.sixstrategies.org/states/state.cfm](http://www.sixstrategies.org/states/state.cfm) for WOW’s research
8. Federal Register, Vol 66, No. 33, pp. 10695-10697, Feb. 16, 2001.
9. Interviews with P & R employees, conducted by GSC. Feb 2003.
10. Cf. LE 6.
11. Interviews with P & R employees, conducted by GSC. Feb 2003.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. William C. Spohn, “The University that Does Justice,” *Conversations in Jesuit Higher Education*. Spring 2001.
18. Students employed by the university part-time need not be granted a living wage—they have the opportunity to receive financial aid in order to address their economic necessities-. The policy must distinguish between those who are here primarily to work, and those who are here to learn.

Images courtesy Georgetown University Office of Design and Publication Services, The Working Circle, and Buckner Adoption and Maternity Services.

This report was produced by the Georgetown Solidarity Committee.

For additional commentary, please contact GSC spokesperson Dunya Cope (784-8688, [dcc27@georgetown.edu](mailto:dcc27@georgetown.edu)) or any of your friendly neighborhood GSC members, and please visit [www.georgetownsolidarity.org](http://www.georgetownsolidarity.org) for more information on our campaign.