

FORUM

Unmarried mothers can make a difference in 2016 election

Jolonda Ware
Guest Columnist

Over half of all babies born in the US today are born to unmarried mothers, a demographic trend with tremendous

“Unmarried women are the largest segment of the New American Majority.”

—Jolonda Ware

potential to reshape public policy for the better.

Unmarried motherhood has economic implications for families and children that we should expect to surface in this year's coming election. Not only should we expect increased clamor for progress on wages, paid leave, affordable childcare and other policies that level the playing field for women in the workplace, but reproductive health and rights will be front and center as the lynchpin of women's economic security.

It's clearer than ever that the decision of when and how many children women have is determinative when it comes to their financial security and family stability.

Significant work remains to transform the economy into one that works for today's families.

More than half of unmarried young mothers with children under the age of 6 live below the poverty line; that's five

times the number of married women with children. In addition:

*Almost 50 percent of the 3.3 million adult Americans earning minimum wage or below are unmarried women.

*58 percent of all children living in poverty live in single-parent households, most often led by an unmarried mother.

Among unmarried women, black, Latina and Native American women face greater challenges than white women when it comes to earnings, wealth, health

care access and other indicators. African-American women made 64 percent, American Indian and Alaska Native women made 59 percent, and Hispanic women made just 54 percent of what white men make in the U.S.

The number of unmarried new moms is increasing most rapidly among non-college educated women who are also most impacted by economic downturns, stagnant wages in low-wage industries, lack of access to health care including reproductive health services, as well as antiquated workplace standards that leave most working women without affordable child care,

earned sick days or paid family leave.

2016 will be a landmark election year for women, the majority of them working moms. For the first time, unmarried women will outnumber married women as a share of the voting age electorate. Although getting these women to the polls is a challenge, unmarried women potentially have an even bigger role in determining the future direction of our country than in 2012, when they made up over one-fifth of the electorate.

Unmarried women are the largest segment of the New American Majority — a set of voters who tend to participate less frequently in elections but who tend to support populist economic and social issues as well as a robust role for government in ensuring fairness, opportunity and safety.

Unmarried moms play an increasingly central role in securing the future of our economy and our elections. With that role comes tremendous opportunity to advance policies that don't just help them and their families, but make our country better for everyone. That's something we should all celebrate.

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High School graduates are poised to make a difference

James B. Ewers Jr.
Guest Columnist

syllabus that you will receive from your teacher at the first class meeting. There are some high school graduates who have trouble adjusting to college because they were accustomed to getting assignments done at the last minute. I speak from my experience both as a college student and as a college teacher that this strategy does not work. You will only meet with frustration and failure.

Going to college for the right reasons is also extremely important. Going to college to be with your friends, to escape real work or because your parents "forced" you to go will probably not keep you in college. The rigors and demands of college are such that you will have to stay focused.

Increasingly, there are more students coming out of high school who want a position with training. The most important part of this option is that it is a job with training. The training element allows you to advance and to acquire new skills. Going into a job without a training component will not give students the job satisfaction that they need. In fact, some graduates will job hop until they find one with a training opportunity. Many companies because of downsizing are willing to invest in new high school graduates by training them for a long-term commitment.

There are some companies that will also pay for college courses or provide tuition reimbursement. Either way gets your foot in the door and keeps it in the door. A lot of high school graduates want hands on experience, so getting a position after high school is a great idea. To some, sitting in a classroom all day is boring so they would rather be on the job practicing their craft.

The Armed Services is another wonderful opportunity for many high school graduates. Memorial Day

is coming, and it reaffirms the important role that the military has played in shaping our country and allowing us to live free each day. We probably take our service personnel for granted because they have always been there for us.

Recent wars have given us new perspectives on just how important our men and women in uniform are. High school graduates who are interested in the military should thoroughly research their chosen branch. As you might have heard, requirements are getting tougher. It is a great career choice with wonderful opportunities.

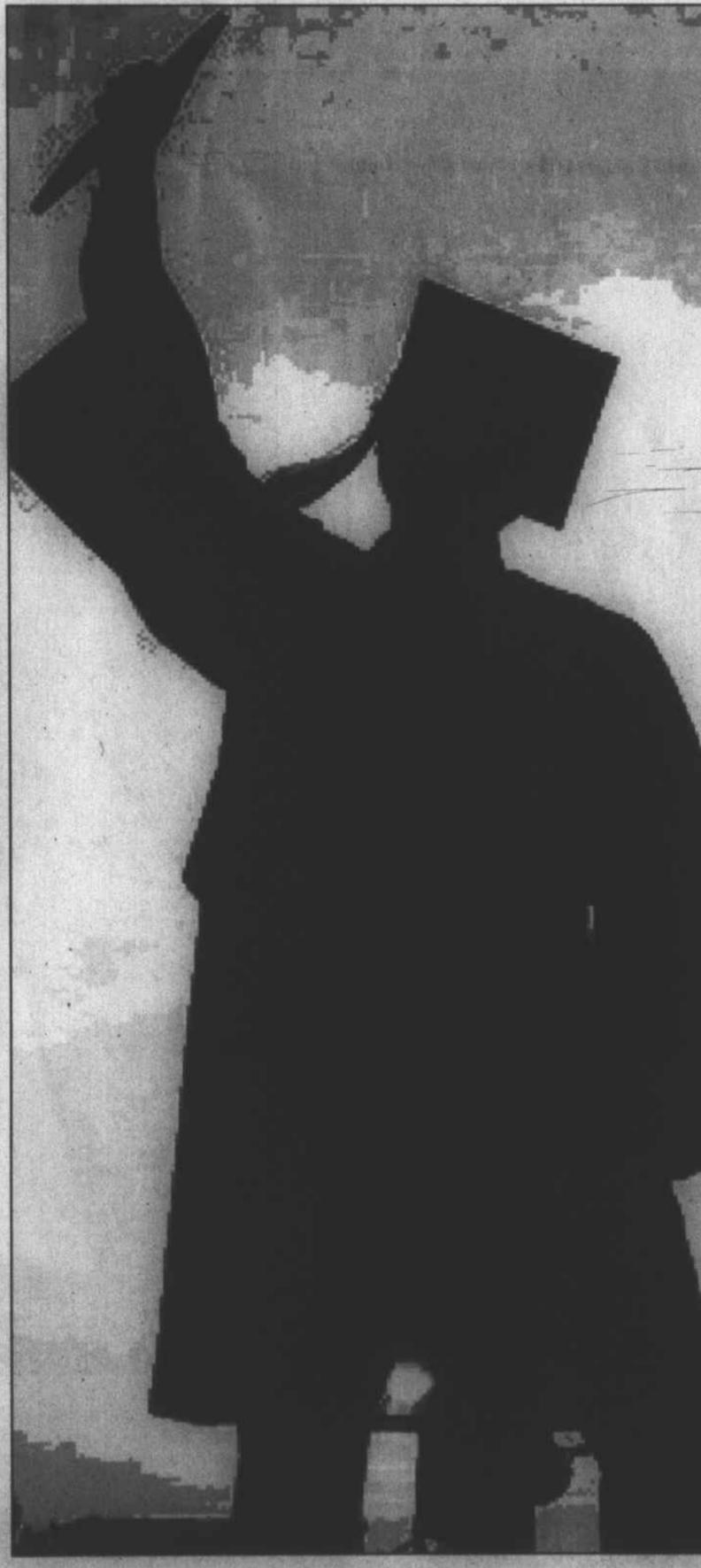
Parents and love providers of new high school graduates need to give them support and encouragement. Knowing that you are in their corner will give them a big boost. Not to worry as their success may not happen on your time table but it will happen, just on their time table.

The competition for all of these options has become increasingly more competitive. My advice is to take your options seriously and don't waste any time. Your high school days will soon be behind you. You will close that chapter and enter a new chapter filled with both opportunities and challenges.

Good luck and much success. Keep your dreams ever alive and never, ever give up!

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It is that time of year when high school graduations will be front and center. These festive events are filled with congratulations, high fives and tears of joy.

It is my opinion that in many ways, the high school graduation is a rite of passage. It signals that a young person has crossed into adulthood. The many years of late nights, writing papers and taking copious notes have all paid off. Students will have many fond memories of field trips, club affiliations and favorite teachers. Some students will graduate with multiple honors while others are happy just to finish high school. The common element among them all is that they are now members of the class of 2016.

Parties and receptions are held in honor of the graduates. They are toasted and roasted and all have a good time. The lurking question in the minds of both graduates and parents alike is, what is the next step after high school?

Let's take a quick tour of the available options.

First and foremost, we must make the assumption that new high school graduates will want to take another step. It is my strong belief that doing nothing is not an option. Parents will agree. Many high school graduates will enter college either during the summer or the fall of this year and some high school graduates already have earned some college credits. What is important, I think, for students going to college is that they really want to go. It sounds simple but it is true. I will say more on that later.

The academic bar is raised and more is expected of you. Late nights writing papers will turn into later nights. Deadlines for receiving papers will be listed in the all-important