Protecting Women’s Civil Rights

BY GLORIA BLACKWELL, LESLEY PERRY, AND MELISSA ROGERS

In June 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that the sex discrimination case *Wal Mart v. Dukes* was too big to move forward as a class action. Civil rights lawyer and 1993–94 AAUW Selected Professions Fellow Suzette Malveaux echoed AAUW’s displeasure. “Class action is so important because it really does level the playing field between giant corporations and employers,” she said.

During her career, Malveaux has worked to secure assets for survivors of the Holocaust and represented victims of the 1921 Tulsa, Oklahoma, race riot before federal courts and the House of Representatives. In 2006, she co-wrote an authoritative casebook on class action, and in March 2011 she published “Class Actions at the Crossroads: An Answer to *Wal-Mart v. Dukes*” in the *Harvard Law and Policy Review*.

Malveaux, an associate dean of academics and law professor at Catholic University of America, knows firsthand about the struggles of the women of Wal-Mart. Eight years ago, she was an attorney for the plaintiffs. Malveaux knows the time, resources, and courage required to bring a class-action suit against an employer, especially one as powerful as Wal-Mart. “Women have not given up in their fight for pay equity and fair promotions, even in a climate that makes court access harder.”

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