

# FANS CELEBRATE WORLD CUP CHAMPS, RALLY FOR EQUAL PAY

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NEW YORK (AP) — Adoring fans packed New York City's Canyon of Heroes on Wednesday amid a blizzard of confetti to praise the World Cup-winning U.S. women's national soccer team as leaders on the field and advocates for pay equity off it.

Crowds chanted "USA! USA!" and workers sounded air horns from a construction site as the hourlong parade moved up a stretch of lower Broadway that has long hosted so-called ticker tape parades for world leaders, veterans and hometown sports stars.

Co-captain Megan Rapinoe and her teammates shared a float with Mayor Bill de Blasio and U.S. Soccer Federation President Carlos Cordeiro. Rapinoe struck her now-famous victory pose, took a swig of Champagne and handed the bottle to a fan. Goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher held the World Cup trophy aloft.

Aly Hoover, 12, of Glen Ridge, New Jersey, stood at the sidelines with a poster of the face of Alex Morgan, another team star. "I just want to be like them," she said.

Garret Prather brought his newborn son "to celebrate how the American women made us proud on and off the field."



The team sealed its second consecutive tournament win by beating the Netherlands 2-0 on Sunday. It will get \$4 million for winning the World Cup from FIFA, the international soccer governing body. The men's French team got \$38 million for winning last year.

The U.S. women's team has sued the U.S. Soccer Federation for gender and pay discrimination. The federation will give the women bonuses about five times smaller than what the men would have earned for winning the World Cup. The case is currently in mediation.

Kate Lane, who watched the parade, called the pay gap "massive" for the soccer players and "across the board" for most women.

"Especially in male-dominated professions," said Lane, of Limerick, Ireland. "Women put just as much commitment into their work as their male counterparts."

She's hopeful the younger generation is soaking up the message from the women's team, noting a girl about 7 years old wearing an "Equal Pay" T-shirt.

Earlier Wednesday, team members joined New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, as he signed a bill that expands gender pay equality in the state. He said women's soccer players should be paid the same as male players.

U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, a Democrat, introduced a bill Tuesday that would bar federal funding for the men's 2026 World Cup until the U.S. Soccer Federation provides equal pay to the women's and men's teams.

At a City Hall rally after the parade, the presidential candidate de Blasio, also a Democrat, honored the team with symbolic keys to the city, saying it "brought us together" and "showed us so much to make us hopeful."

After chants for "Equal pay!" from the crowd, Cordeiro said women "deserve fair and equitable pay. And together I believe we can get this done."

At the rally, Rapinoe noted the diversity of the team: "We have pink hair and purple hair, we have tattoos and dreadlocks, we got white girls and black girls and everything in between. Straight girls and gay girls."

The parade is named for the strands of ticker tape that used to be showered down from nearby office buildings. The tape has since been replaced with paper confetti, which drifted down from office buildings throughout Wednesday's parade, along with documents and spreadsheets folded into paper airplanes.

The Department of Sanitation said it has assigned 350 workers to parade cleanup, with trucks, backpack blowers and brooms at their disposal.

The team had already started celebrating its record fourth Women's World Cup title. After touching



down at Newark Liberty International Airport on Monday, players shared a toast and sang “We Are the Champions.”

Team members appeared on ABC’s “Good Morning America” in Times Square on Tuesday to show off their trophy and answer questions from cheering kids.

Rapinoe, the outspoken star who won the awards for the tournament’s best player and top scorer, also appeared on CNN and MSNBC later Tuesday.

Rapinoe told CNN’s Anderson Cooper that President Donald Trump’s slogan “Make America Great Again” is “harking back to an era that wasn’t great for everyone. It might’ve been great for a few people.”

Rapinoe told MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow that Trump had yet to invite the women’s soccer team to the White House.

Trump had tweeted that he would invite the team, win or lose. Rapinoe has said she wouldn’t be going to the White House. The team has accepted an invitation to visit Congress.