



BEING A MALE ALLY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING WOMEN'S SUCCESS IN THE BUILDING TRADES

An ally listens to as many voices of those they are allying with, is engaged in constant learning, reflects on how someone's status of race/gender/class/religion/sexual orientation (and more) confer advantage. Most importantly, an ally takes ongoing (public and collective) action to support the communities that do not benefit from conferred advantage.

Advantage is not negated by one advantage versus another. Advantage is about how society accommodates you. Acknowledging advantage is a necessary pre-requisite to talking about gender/race.

Privilege is a favored state, whether earned or conferred by birth or luck. Do you recognize yourself in the following statements?

- I can be confident that my co-workers won't think I got my job because of my sex/race - even on a publicly funded project.
- If I make a mistake on the job, I can feel sure this won't be seen as a black mark against my entire gender/race's capabilities.
- Chances are my political and union elected representatives and the bosses in my construction company are mostly people of my own race/sex. The more prestigious and powerful the elected position or job title, the more likely this is to be true.
- I can go home from my job, apprenticeship class, or union meeting without feeling isolated, out-of-place, out-numbered, unheard.
- The odds of my encountering sexual/racial harassment/graffiti/slurs on the job are very low.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my race or gender.
- I can be confident that the ordinary language of the construction site will always include my gender.
- I will probably never be asked when I discovered I was heterosexual.
- I will never be expected to change my name upon marriage or questioned if I don't change it.

- Reflect on any “advantages” you may have based on gender/race/sexual orientation.
- Make a list of as many of the advantages you have working in the construction industry that are related to your gender/race or other status.
- When did you first become aware of differences? What was your reaction? Were you the focus of attention or were others? How did that affect how you reacted to the situation?
- What are the “messages” that you learned about women or minorities when you were a growing up? Have your views changed considerably since then?
- What is your level of comfort when you are the only: male/white person/straight person/young person/or of another religion.

- Every major religion in the world is led primarily by people of my own race/sex. Even God, in most major religions, is usually pictured as being white and male.
- I can choose blemish cover or bandages in flesh color and have them more or less match my skin.
- I will never worry that I have to leave my religious group because of my sexual orientation.

AS AN ALLY YOU CAN:

- Offer to be a mentor, facilitate informal support groups and mentoring programs, and networking activities.
- Avoid isolating individuals from underrepresented groups: safety and support in numbers!
- Emphasize:
 - ability is expandable
 - effort and process matter
 - learning comes from mistakes
- Support policy and contract language that supports tradeswomen:
 - Paid Family and Medical Leave
 - Pregnancy Discrimination
 - Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

Check out this great article: <http://everydayfeminism.com/2013/11/things-allies-need-to-know/>

Understanding what **privilege** means requires understanding that you have the **privilege** of being unaware of **privilege**.

LISTEN TO TRADESWOMEN! THEY SAY IF YOU WANT TO BE AN ALLY:

- “Don’t think that because you worked with one woman in the past that you know about working with women.”
- “Talk to us. Not to people who might know us. We are all our best representatives.”
- “Don’t try to “school” us. Instead work with us and treat us as you would your brother.”
- “Call other guys out when they’re being jerks.”
- “Remember that you wouldn’t blame all men for the actions of one, nor should you do that to women.”
- “Stay open-minded, listening, letting tradeswomen spread their wings, pushing them up, speaking to others about their accomplishments instead of failures, and remember that everyone was a beginner at one time.”
- “Don’t assume that you are the good guy just because you want to be. It takes courage and strength and effort to be honest about your privilege and the ways you are invested in keeping it.”
- “Know that often we can’t speak up. Check out this great article that explains it.” <http://gutsmagazine.ca/blog/why-women-dont-speak-out>

DON’T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

Don’t assume:

- low expectations
- we are all alike
- we fit a stereotype or will defend one
- our previous knowledge is not credible
- That we will speak up about racist/sexist behavior or that it is okay if we don’t say anything

BEING AN ALLY IS EASY:

“STAND UP FOR YOUR SISTERS AS YOU WOULD YOUR BROTHERS.”