



**“IT’S NO LONGER
A MAN’S WORLD”**

JEDI•Opener

Justice • Equity • Diversity • Inclusion

This work is under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.
You are free to redistribute the work with attribution. You may not use the material for commercial purposes.
And, you cannot remix, transform, or build upon the material.

CW•EA

**PROTECTING CALIFORNIA'S MOST
CRITICAL RESOURCE**

Member Story



I was working as an OIT at a small city facility and was one of only two female operators on the project. Eager to learn and be respected by the male operators, I volunteered for any “dirty” job I could get. I heard that some of the operators at the facility did not believe that women could make good operators and were only hired because of diversity quotas. I felt that I had something to prove.

One morning, the Ops Supervisor was seeking volunteers for a future wet well cleaning job. I immediately volunteered, but the Ops Supervisor responded in front of the male operators, “oh no, we’ll have the guys handle this one.” I felt angry, embarrassed, and deflated.

After the meeting, I asked to speak to the Supervisor and told him that my operator certificate doesn’t say “female operator,” it just says “operator.” Then I shared how his statement made me feel, and that I felt it lessened my opportunities to fit in with the male crew.

The Supervisor was visibly surprised and shaken by my strong feelings about his response, and he shared that he just meant that he knew I could do that job, but that it would be better for me to contribute “something brainier” as I was capable of more.

Laurie Brenner

“It’s no longer a man’s World”

He acknowledged my concerns and told me sincerely that it had not been his intention to reflect that I was not capable at all; in fact, he intended for quite the opposite effect.

Open and honest, respectful communication cleared the air, and I was never excluded from any job I volunteered for again.

Although gender issues do exist in our industry, sometimes they are unintentional and it is everyone’s job to professionally call out, clarify and work through these issues when they arise. I helped the Supervisor understand that this was still a sensitive issue (with so few women in operations) and he helped me to understand that there are genuine supporters of diversity and equity out there.

TAKEAWAYS:

- Have you ever been in a situation where your gender was an issue? What did you feel or do?
- Has anyone expressed to you concerns about gender equality? What was your response?
- Do you know someone who is a supporter of gender diversity and equity?





Laurie Brenner
Union Sanitary District
CWEA San Francisco
Bay Section
Past Board Member



PROTECTING CALIFORNIA'S MOST
CRITICAL RESOURCE

Thank you Laurie for sharing your story!
To share a story or for resources, visit dei.cwea.org

dei.cwea.org