

# DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP

The founding documents of the IBEW in 1891 and NECA in 1901 provided a blueprint for membership diversity – unrestricted by age, gender, race or ethnicity. Outlines of the blueprint were evident in the shipyards of wartime Portland of 1945. Churches and Portland City Club favorably recognized NECA/IBEW Local 48's impulse towards diversity, compared to other trades.

"It is estimated that there are between 500 and 1,000 Negroes out of the present membership . . . There are no racial discriminatory regulations . . . Within the union, everyone has equal rights."  
Portland City Club Report  
"The Negro in Portland July, 1945"

Journeyman Mark Smith was a wartime shipyard electrician (IBEW Card #906028). In 1952, Smith was appointed Deputy State Labor Commissioner – the highest such position ever achieved by an African-American. Another shipyard electrician, Marie Gleason, worked until she retired, in 1962, to become the first woman in the nation, among 17,000 men, to earn full benefits under IBEW's pension plan. Likewise, gender played no role when Local 48 hired Lois Burnside as manager of its Federal Credit Union in 1954.

NECA/IBEW Local 48 created an equal opportunity gateway into the electrical industry in 1963, forming a Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC). Women and minority graduates of JATC gradually filled the ranks of the industry. In 1984, women JATC grads comprised 20% of the electricians hired by McCoy Electric to renovate the historic Paramount Theater. In 1987, EC Company selected JATC graduate Sandra Carr as its "Outstanding Electrician" from among 160 employees.

In 1993, JATC hired Nancy Mason to diversify programs. A year later, of the 714 applicants for JATC, 9.8% were women, 17.2%, minorities. The trend continued in 1998 with JATC's move to a new \$6 million NECA/IBEW Electrical Training Center (NIETC).

In 2000, IBEW Local 48 elected Keith Edwards the first African American business manager of an IBEW local in the nation.

In 2009, the Daily Journal of Commerce presented its Minority Contractor Award to NECA member O'Neill Electric owners Local 48 journeyman Maurice Rahming and his wife Ali O'Neill.

Today NIETC programs have the highest percentage rate of completions for women and minorities of such programs in Oregon and southwest Washington.



IN THIS 1944 PHOTO, AN ELECTRICAL MAINTENANCE CREW COMPRISED OF 29 MEMBERS OF IBEW LOCAL 48, ONE-THIRD OF THEM WOMEN AND MINORITIES, WERE STILL SMILING EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD JUST WORKED TOGETHER ON THE OUTFITTING DOCK OF OREGON SHIPBUILDING CORP. WITHOUT A VACATION SINCE THE SUMMER OF 1942.



KEITH EDWARDS

*"Local 48 has been able to achieve great things . . . It comes from getting along and understanding (that) we are all in the boat together . . ."*

Keith Edwards, Representative  
Ninth District, IBEW International



THE NATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS, PREDECESSOR OF THE IBEW, HIRED MARY HONZIK IN 1896, MAKING IT THE FIRST UNION TO HAVE A WOMAN ORGANIZER ON ITS STAFF.

