



## #MeToo: Public Pain, Reckoning, and Healing Through Justice

By Megan J. Peterson, Executive Director

There's a tremendous amount of pain breaking through to the surface right now. This #MeToo reckoning is bringing to light how pervasive sexual assault and harassment are in our lives.

Victims and survivors are being heard in a way that feels new, raw, and more powerful than ever before. We're seeing consequences – meaningful, swift consequences – for many – but not all – perpetrators. I feel hopeful that this surfacing is a true breaking-through to real, lasting social and cultural change.

In this powerful moment, I'm reflecting on how our work at Gender Justice is about creating that change by putting power back in the hands of people from whom it is unjustly withheld.

Our work is about using the law to make things better – so that what has happened to our clients doesn't happen to someone else. We make use of the law to ensure that there are consequences for those who cause harm – and that includes institutions.

**But our work isn't only about winning lawsuits.**

If you take a step back, our work is also truly about healing. Together, we help those who have been harmed to regain dignity, agency, and a sense of closure through seeking justice. Our work is about standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our



**BRIGHT SPOT:** Gender Justice secured a \$120,000 settlement for Hannah and David Edwards (telling their story above), and their transgender daughter, for the discrimination she experienced at Nova Classical Academy in St. Paul. (Photo by James Robins.)

clients to support them on their journey of moving from victim to change agent. They are truly heroes for justice who are drawing a line in the sand to say, "No more."

Our brave clients are the bright spots in what can feel like very dark times. **As a supporter of Gender Justice, you're making more bright spots possible every day.**

*Continued...*

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# Healing Through Justice...continued

With your support, Gender Justice secured a settlement for our clients, Hannah and David Edwards and their transgender daughter. The settlement also included meaningful policy changes at their daughter's school, Nova Classical Academy in St. Paul, to support and protect transgender and gender nonconforming students.

School administrators across Minnesota now have the benefit of seeing what it takes to create a supportive and safe learning environment for all students – and they can learn from Nova what the consequences can be if they don't take steps to protect transgender students.

As is sadly too common for those thrust into the public eye, the Edwards family have withstood incredible backlash and harassment from anti-transgender zealots in their community and across the country. They never wavered from their commitment to pursuing change for their daughter and all transgender students. We've been in awe of their strength and powerful advocacy.

**We hope you join us, and the Edwards family, in celebrating this victory that would not have been possible without you.**

At the heart of our work at Gender Justice, we see all forms of gender discrimination as connected. It's sexist ideas about women's role in society that breeds workplaces rife with sexual harassment. Beliefs about gender and sex as immutable characteristics breed intolerance and hatred towards those who dare to rebel against the gender binary. And it's the long history of feminism, queer liberation, and all other struggles for justice for people of color, immigrants, Indigenous people, and people living in poverty that show us that change is possible, the road is long, and only through linking our arms in solidarity will we achieve and sustain justice.

**Thank you for linking arms with us!**

## Thank You, Kathleen!

Gender Justice's board chair, Kathleen Murphy, will be rolling off the board at the end of 2017. Deeply invested and involved since our founding, Kathleen has provided crucial vision and leadership for which we are incredibly grateful.

Kathleen's contributions helped build Gender Justice from an idea to a reality. She built our first website and helped to recruit our first board. She oversaw hiring our first (non-founder) executive director and ensured we had bylaws!

**"It is with a touch of sadness, but a lot of celebration, that I step away from this great organization and turn over the reins to new board leadership. You can count on me to support Gender Justice's future success in any way I can, and I trust that I can count on you to do the same."**

-M. Kathleen Murphy, board member 2011-2017,  
chair 2014-2017



# Building a New Construction Sector Across Minnesota

You know the importance of stable and fair income to all Minnesotans. But that's not what women and people of color experience in the construction sector. Together, we're working to change that.

Women and people of color, historically excluded from high-paying jobs in construction, are still seriously underrepresented in the sector. In 2016, only 15.93% of hours worked on MnDOT projects in Hennepin and Ramsey counties were performed by people of color. Women fared even worse— only 5.08% of the hours on those projects—despite making up 50% of the state's working-age population. Moving outside the metro area, the percentages of hours worked by women and people of color fall off precipitously.

We know the importance of stable and fair income to all Minnesotans. **This is why we are so proud that our co-founder Lisa Stratton was on the task force that pushed to reform the state's hiring goals.**

The largest increase—from 6% to 20% for metro area women—is especially meaningful. The goals for women hadn't changed for over a decade. Your support of our work means that more women, including women of color, have a chance for fair and equitable opportunities in high-paying careers in the construction trades.

As we celebrate our huge success, the stories of two of our clients highlight that the goals are only one piece of the puzzle.

**Discrimination still happens despite the goals.**

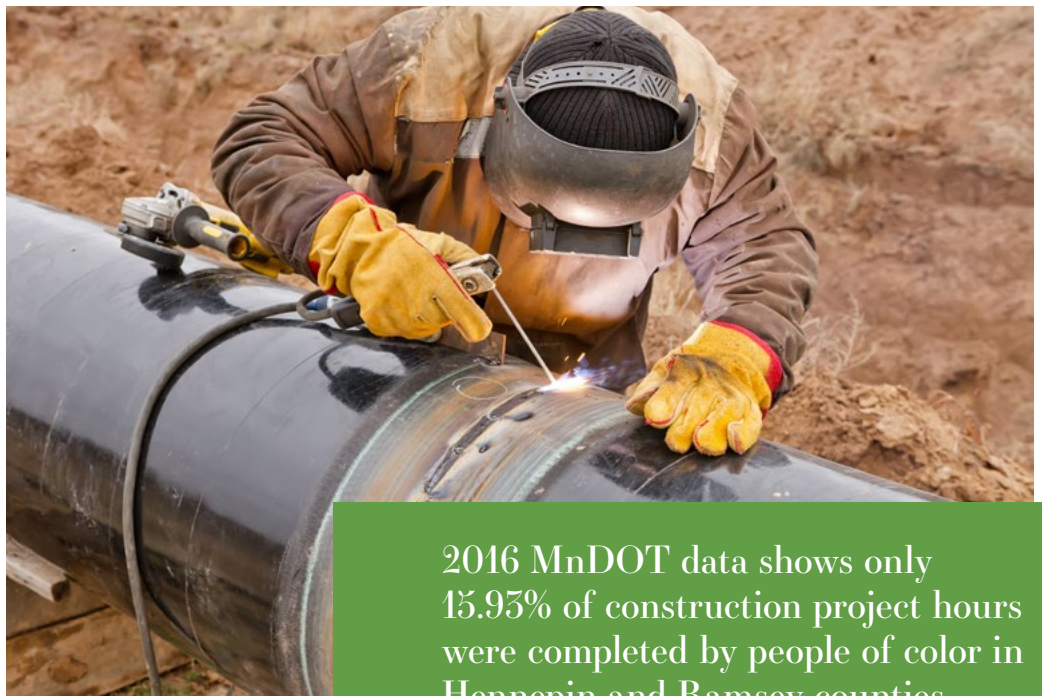
Two of our clients, Kim Brinkman, a white woman, and Doug Gatlin, a black man, are union sprinkler fitters. They completed five-year apprenticeships and each have over a decade of experience. Yet both have experienced a very similar pattern of discrimination within the union and among contractors.

Doug is one of a handful of black journeyman out of 400-plus union members and Kim is one of only two journeymen, but both had to take a job requiring a daily five-hour roundtrip commute because it was the only work they could get. For Kim, the lack of work led to her losing her home and leaving the state just to find work.

Sadly, their stories are not unique. Even if they are paid the same rates as their white male counterparts, women and people of color are often hired less frequently and work fewer hours, resulting in less income. Too few work hours also decreases health and retirement benefits, and deprives them of networking and training opportunities with the rest of the team. Those who protest risk being blackballed.

**With your help, we can eradicate these unfair employment practices so that all Minnesotans have the opportunity to succeed in the trades.**

Thank you for your support...together, we fight for people like Kim and Doug!



2016 MnDOT data shows only 15.93% of construction project hours were completed by people of color in Hennepin and Ramsey counties.

# Donor Spotlight: Sharon Chadwick

“I am certain she would have greatly admired the mission of Gender Justice and would be honored to have this contribution made on their behalf.”

Her mother wasn't always comfortable with her sexual orientation, yet one of the last things Augusta Chadwick said to her daughter Sharon was to never give up the fight for marriage equality.

Augusta passed before she could see her daughter get married. But before she died, she set up a trust to which Sharon and her sister Cathy are co-trustees.

Sharon and Cathy recently directed a significant gift from the Augusta Chadwick Charitable Trust in

her mother's honor to Gender Justice. Augusta was acutely aware of the limited opportunities for women based upon gender bias — it stopped her from her dream career in finance.

Due to her steadfast belief in equality, Sharon believes her mother would be honored support the mission of Gender Justice because it's broader than women's rights alone.

**We're so grateful to honor Augusta Chadwick's legacy by carrying on her commitment to equality through our work.**

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## Historic Workplace Justice Efforts Continue

After a quarter century of standing up against workplace injustices and harassment of women, the organization Workplace Justice Committee dissolved last year. But their work continues through Gender Justice!



Gender Justice is honored to receive a substantial donation from Workplace Justice Committee to continue in the spirit of their mission.

Also known at times as the Older Women's League of Minnesota, founding members Jean Knox (pictured left) and Diane Cummisford provided the backbone for the Workplace Justice group that met regularly from 1992 to 2016, and shared advice with women who faced harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Both Knox and Cummisford were accomplished leaders in the scientific pursuits at major Twin Cities corporations when denied advancement based on their gender, and they individually initiated key litigation against their employers more than three decades ago.

**These unexpected funds are greatly appreciated and Gender Justice is especially honored to carry on the pioneering efforts of the Workplace Justice Committee.**

Thank you to Jean and Diane for their commitment to gender justice!

# You're Pregnant? You're Fired!

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When special education paraprofessional Lisa Dexter told her employer she was pregnant, she thought it was good news. But her employer ended up using it against her.

As Lisa was approaching the end of the pregnancy, her doctor asked her not to lift anything over 25 pounds by herself. She didn't think asking her employer, Mounds View Public Schools (MVPS), for this accommodation would be problematic. There were always other people in the classroom with her who could help out with any lifting.

**To her shock, MVPS told her that she would have to go on unpaid leave for the entire school year because they couldn't manage with the lifting restriction.**

This is a common problem during many pregnancies, and lots of employers take the easy way out and refuse to help their pregnant employees. Under older legal standards, employers can come up with an excuse to get out of accommodating these kinds of pregnancy restrictions: they don't have any "light duty" jobs or the restriction is too much of a burden on their business.

**We worked to change that...with your help.**

A coalition of advocates for pregnant workers including Gender Justice convinced the Minnesota legislature to change the law. The new law says that employers have to give pregnant employees more frequent restroom, food, and water breaks; seating; and most importantly for Lisa, that they have to allow them to work even if they can't lift more than 20 pounds. As Gender Justice co-founder and Senior Counsel Lisa Stratton put it, "Firing an expectant mother for communicating clearly with her employer is pregnancy discrimination, plain and simple."

**"Firing an expectant mother for communicating clearly with her employer is pregnancy discrimination, plain and simple."**

Lisa Dexter's case is one of the first to test the new law. Employers all over the state should get the message that their pregnant workers are valuable, and shouldn't be tossed aside just because they might need some temporary limits on heavy lifting.



Gender Justice is part of the leadership in a coalition of advocates working to close the wage gap across the country. Our five-part strategy includes policy changes to accommodate pregnancy & caregiving. (Lisa Stratton pictured with other coalition leaders are joined by EEOC Commissioner Jenny Yang and former Commissioner David Lopez, far left.)



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Gender Justice works to combat discrimination based on sex, gender, or sexual orientation. These types of discrimination harm everyone, no matter how they are perceived or self-identify.

If you have experienced sexual harassment or assault at work, school, or when seeking health care, our lawyers may be able to help.

**Call our intake line at  
651-789-2090 ext 6.**

[genderjustice.us](http://genderjustice.us) [f GenderJustice](https://www.facebook.com/GenderJustice) [@GenderJustice](https://twitter.com/GenderJustice)

## Double Your Donation. Double Your Impact.

We have a \$10,000 match! Through the end of the year, all donations will be matched dollar-for-dollar. All donations are tax-deductible.

When you donate to Gender Justice you are creating a world where gender equity is a reality. You are joining the force for change and progress. You are breaking down gender barriers.

**Visit [GenderJustice.us](http://GenderJustice.us) and donate today – thank you!**

