



To: Metro and Regional Public Owners

June 24, 2020

From: Metropolitan Alliance for Workforce Equity (MAWE)

Dear Metro and Regional Public Owners,

We are the Metropolitan Alliance for Workforce Equity (MAWE), a historic partnership between the Building and Construction Trades unions and the Pacific NW Regional Council of Carpenter, diverse construction contractors, pre-apprenticeship programs, and community-based organizations. MAWE works to promote economic opportunity and equity in workforce and contracting and develop practical strategies to address historic inequities in the region. These partners developed Portland's first Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) to create a framework for shared community oversight and accountability, fair labor standards, and goals and resources to increase contracting and workforce opportunities for historically underserved community members.

The goals of MAWE are to:

- Support the creation of good quality construction jobs and contracting opportunities in the Portland Metro area.
- Specifically connect these jobs and opportunities to historically underrepresented populations, especially people of color and women.
- Sustain and grow the training and community infrastructure with resources in order to address the regional need for a trained, qualified, and diverse construction workforce and contractor pool.
- Work with partners, contractors and public owners to replicate best practices on construction projects and systematize those practices region-wide in order to accomplish workforce and contracting equity.

**We represent over 200,000 constituents and their families in our collective power.**

Addressing hostile and unsafe worksites has long been a priority for MAWE. We understand, on many levels, that when a worker is treated with hostility, bullying, racism and sexism, or outright neglect on the jobsite, everyone suffers.

Workers subjected to such treatment and worksite leaders are not sufficiently trained or prepared to communicate and intervene to the degree necessary to ensure a safe and efficient jobsite and particularly, to protect the worker. Furthermore, jobsites with a culture of harassment suffer from poor morale, safety issues and lack of productivity. The industry stands to lose good talent due to that individual leaving the industry for good. Most importantly, when the worker is a woman or person of color, these hostile actions are a clear reflection of how deeply sexist and racist the Construction industry still is. The typical solution for decades has been to move the perpetrator to another jobsite without any measure of accountability or change in behavior.

Without any consequence, these incidences have no sign of decreasing and continue to have deep and detrimental impact on the industry and on the community.

Last week, MAWE learned from our labor and community partners that on May 20, 2020, a noose was hung on the PSU/OHSU/PCC/City of Portland project in downtown Portland, Oregon. Upon finding the symbol of racism, hatred and a clear threat of violence, a female apprentice of color immediately reported to her company foreman, at TCM Corp, a subcontractor to Andersen. The foreman responded that it was “probably a joke” and did nothing further. The apprentice then went to an Andersen foreman, who indicated he would address it at a foreman’s meeting, but then later indicated to the apprentice he had “forgotten about it”. The apprentice took it upon herself to remove the noose when those in charge took no action. Neither of these responses by foremen was acceptable. Nor is the lack of action and outrage since the incident occurred. We can no longer stand by and excuse such behaviors in this way, for if we do, we are complicit.

This egregious occurrence further highlights the critical need for swift regional action. If you are not already signed on: **We call for all regional public owners to immediately adopt the Construction Career Pathways Regional Framework** which includes the action to “IMPLEMENT WORKSITE ANTI-HARRASSMENT AND CULTURE CHANGE STRATEGIES.” Additionally, all agencies should look for the **Regional Respectful Workplace Model Review Committee** forthcoming recommendations and call to action in the early Fall.

In the meantime, these types of occurrences happen regularly on your jobsites to workers of color, whether you are aware of it or not. With this in mind: We call for all public owners in the region to take swift action now by implementing the following measures. We must not delay when immediate positive action will make a difference.

1. Immediately sign the attached Positive Jobsite Culture Pledge
2. Provide a hotline or resource on all jobsites to anonymously report any incidents and make sure information about how to report incidents, what penalties are, and penalties for retaliation on reporting workers is clearly posted for all workers to access, and is part of jobsite orientations for all workers regardless of subcontractor level
3. Report any incidences immediately with appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Oregon’s Department of Justice Bias Crime hotline (1-844-924-BIAS), and local law enforcement
4. Provide clear protocols for immediately reporting incidents and internal communication of incidents up the chain of command on the jobsite and for follow up with the individual
5. Share incidents reported with industry stakeholders in a transparent, consistent and timely manner so we can measure progress, or lack thereof as necessary
6. Require that General Contractors (GC) have clearly written disciplinary procedures regarding a zero tolerance policy that includes holding accountable supervisors and foremen who fail to act on reported incidents and ensure subcontractors have the same
7. Require that all staff, including jobsite foreman, superintendents and stewards have training on what the GC protocol is and how to implement and/or support
8. Require that the General Contractor on a project does a daily scan and removal for similar symbols of racial terror, racist and sexist symbols, and degrading graffiti written on common areas and toilets, keeping a log of this daily scan and reporting regularly to the owner on the results
9. Establish a line of communication between apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship program support personnel and company staff assigned to such reports
10. Require that all General Contractors have a Jobsite Culture training in place to be implemented on jobsites and include it in the scoring criteria to award contracts

11. Contractually enforce assessed damages for every reported incident based on a thorough and prompt investigation and due process, with substantial increased fines for each additional incident and utilize collected funds to support diverse workforce and contractor development efforts

The values of the labor movement and community and industry partners must lead us to not only speak out, but also to stand for justice. We, as stakeholders in the industry and in our region, recognize that we must take this moment to work together to put an end to systemic racism and sexism and create workplaces which allow all workers to have dignity, feel safe, and do their jobs without fear or harm. We understand that many of you are taking some initial steps, and we promise to stand with you and support you in addressing the culture of our industry and working together for change if you choose to walk this road with us.

While our industry has made changes for the better, we still have a long way to go. The time to act is now. As guardians of public assets and the common good, we insist that you act on these measures with urgency knowing you have our support. Public Owners are accountable for what occurs on public job sites. We ask that each public owner please provide a detailed response to this call to action in writing to MAWE within two weeks.

Regards,

**MAWE Partners**

Bricklayers Local 1  
Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council  
Constructing Hope Pre-Apprenticeship Program  
Division Midway Alliance  
Healthy Communities Coalition PDX  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48  
Laborers International Union Local 737  
National Taskforce on Tradeswomen’s Issues  
O’Neill Electric Inc.  
Operating Engineers Local 701  
Oregon Tradeswomen  
Pacific NW Regional Council of Carpenters  
Painters and Allied Trades International Union District Council 5  
Portland Harbor Community Coalition  
Portland Jobs with Justice  
Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center  
Portland YouthBuilders  
Professional Business Development Group  
Rose Community Development  
The Main Street Alliance of Oregon  
The Rosewood Initiative  
Urban League of Portland  
Verde  
Worksystems