

Erica Stewart

Tradeswomen Heroes Award
Winner - November 2020



Level of Experience: Journeyworker

Years in Trade: 22 years

Union: Boilermakers

Local: 693

Bio

Erica Stewart became a Local 693 Boilermaker at Ingalls Shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi, really by accident. She had served in the U.S. Army and was looking for her next steps in a career when a friend asked her to join her on a trip to Pascagoula where the friend wanted to apply for shipyard work. Erica went along, and when they arrived, on impulse, she decided to apply, too. Long story short: Erica got the job.

That's been a happy accident not only for Erica, but for the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers as a whole and all who have the great fortune to work with and interact with her—at the shipyard, at conferences, on committees and anywhere else she might be.

Erica has served as the President of Local 693 and other lodge leadership roles. She was appointed by the Boilermakers union to also join staff as an International Rep, and in 2019, International President Newton Jones selected and appointed her to serve as the union's National Coordinator of Women in the Trades Initiatives. In that role, she has led the creation of the Boilermakers' Women's Caucus and the first-ever Boilermakers Women At Work event. She is also a member of NABTU's Trades Women Build Nations committee.

Erica has served on many panels to encourage union men and women to seek leadership roles, as well as panels that address the challenges and opportunities facing tradeswomen. In 2019, she represented the Boilermakers union as part of a delegation at the IndustriALL annual women's conference in Geneva, Switzerland.



Erica is a graduate of the Harvard Trade Union Program and is married and is the mother of three grown children—two sons and a daughter (all union!). She is a "superfan" of her grandson, Dallas.

Why Erica Was Nominated

Erica Stewart is the very embodiment of what it means to be a Tradeswoman Hero. She is a woman of action who is as much an empathetic listener and convener of issues and concerns as she is a truth-teller, leader and passionate problem solver.

When Erica started her career at Ingalls Shipyard in 1998 after serving in the U.S. military, she quickly learned that there were those who resented her purely for being a woman. She endured hateful, ugly comments and actions—not unlike many women in the trades. But she stood up for herself—and for her sisters around her. Something she's done ever since, giving generously of her time, knowledge, strength and voice.

And when Erica stands up, it's hard not to take heed. She is like a magnet, drawing people and issues together and igniting them with enthusiasm and passion to make changes happen—whether the issues are general labor issues or things that need to change for women in the trades.

It's little wonder why the Boilermakers' International President took notice of her as a leader and appointed her as an International Rep and later created a role for her as National Coordinator of Women in the Trades Initiatives. It's also little wonder why

tradeswomen and men alike seek her out for counsel and to serve on panels, committees and in other leadership roles.

But the one thing that really sets Erica apart as a Tradeswoman Hero is her dedication to lifting up and encouraging other women into leadership roles. This is a priority for her, and her impact can be clearly seen through the growing movement of women leaders surrounding her—women she's given a hand to, and who she, in turn, has charged with doing the same. It's what makes her my personal hero.