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2 MR. GRAY: At this point, we are going  
3 to hear from an anonymous witness who we'll  
4 refer to as CL1 and another person after that,  
5 another anonymous witness after that. We will  
6 also be hearing live testimony, and if any of  
7 the persons here in the room have some  
8 testimony that you would like to present,  
9 please see Shirley in the green jacket at the  
10 table or Mr. Ben Wright over there as well.

11 I'll wait for one more minute until we  
12 get some of the panel members up. We are  
13 going to start again, so if the panel members  
14 would come forward, we can get started.

15 Audio CL1, can you hear me?

16 WITNESS AUDIO CL1: Yes.

17 MR. GRAY: I think we need a little  
18 more volume, so I'm going to ask if someone  
19 will adjust the speaker, so bear with us for a  
20 minute.

21 Could you say something?

22 WITNESS AUDIO CL1: Yes. Can you hear  
23 me?

24 MR. GRAY: Yes, we can.

25 WITNESS AUDIO CL1: Very well.

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MR. GRAY: You can proceed to give your testimony. Feel free to self-edit anything that you think would create a problem for you.

You can proceed now.

WITNESS AUDIO CL1: Thank you. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of the Commission.

I'm a minority woman over twenty years of age residing in New York City. I'm an electrician by trade and have journeyman status. Specific information on my dates of years of apprenticeship and journey status might tend to identify me, so I apologize for not discussing specifics.

My apprenticeship lasted over five years because the final year was extended to eighteen months. When I signed up for the apprenticeship, I remember one woman who signed up came and the next day and withdrew her application because she had been beaten up by her husband for signing up for the application.

As soon as I entered the apprenticeship program, I found much to discourage women from

1  
2 continuing. Women weren't welcome. No toilet  
3 or changing facilities were available. Some  
4 men did not say that they did not want a woman  
5 there, but they treated you as if we were  
6 invisible -- as if I was invisible.

7 Those assigned to teach women did not  
8 go into detail, but acted as though they were  
9 obeying a silent, unwritten order: telling  
10 them too much is against the rules, teach them  
11 a certain amount, just enough to keep them  
12 busy. We had to force ourselves on them in  
13 order to be able to learn. The males did not  
14 have to do that, they were treated with  
15 respect.

16 Since then, I have worked with fifteen  
17 or twenty different shops. The first day is  
18 the struggle with toilet and bathroom  
19 facilities. Every job I go on to I have to  
20 struggle because they know I'm coming, but  
21 they never provide those things. Although I  
22 must say recently they have been providing it,  
23 but I think that's because of the struggle we  
24 have been through all these years.

25 Then there was always some Casanova

1  
2 trying to hit on me, not always in my trade,  
3 necessarily. Every time you transfer to a new  
4 job, you're the women on the job breaking in  
5 the guys. I am constantly handling problems,  
6 not problems relating to the job, problems  
7 relating to me as the girl or the target to be  
8 hit on for the day.

9 When I was an apprentice they put most  
10 women on big construction jobs. The problem  
11 with that was that you didn't learn very much.  
12 I was always told that if you got on a small  
13 job it was the best experience and you will  
14 make the best electrician in the field. So,  
15 of course, they put me on big jobs.

16 On the big jobs a lot of times I was  
17 put on a gang called the bull gang. You  
18 unload trucks all day and you do manual labor  
19 such as chopping with a hammer and chisel.  
20 Have you ever changed a fuse with a hammer and  
21 chisel? On one job, I and another journeyman  
22 from the Dominican Republic were put on a bull  
23 gang unloading trucks. I believe this was  
24 biased against us based upon my sex and his  
25 national origin.

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2 I remember when I first started, some  
3 man asked me if I should be asked to unload  
4 something. The foreman on the job said that  
5 the director of the apprenticeship program  
6 instructed him that no consideration is to be  
7 given to women apprentices. Unfortunately,  
8 that was interpreted that we were not even to  
9 get the ordinary help that anyone should get  
10 in doing a difficult job. It gave them the  
11 green light to give us the extra-heaviest jobs  
12 and still feel good about it.

13 My first employer was a small shop,  
14 only one employer, several mechanics and two  
15 apprentices. All were white except one  
16 mechanic and both apprentices. I was the only  
17 woman. My first partner was also Hispanic,  
18 and would scratch his genitals when he talked  
19 to me. He also told me he and a group his  
20 young buddies had gotten drunk together and  
21 gang raped a woman they thought was a dike.  
22 He claimed that he had not participated and he  
23 felt sorry for her, but her did not try to  
24 stop them. I took it that he was trying to  
25 find out if I was a lesbian and trying to tell

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me his attitude and the attitude of the other men.

He did not try to teach me the work. He was showing me one little thing and go off, leaving me by myself to do both of our jobs. In about a month I complained to my foreman and he talked to my partner. Obviously, my partner decided that he didn't want the hassle, so I got transferred to another journeyman.

Of course, upon leaving him, he told me that I was a "fucking apprentice" and I had no rights. I think he complained to the foreman about me on his own besides me complaining to the foreman.

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The next partner I had was very skilled, an older member. He knew a lot about the electrical field but was too busy to take the time to train me. It made him nervous when I asked questions. I didn't learn anything from him. I guess he told the foreman that it wasn't going to work out, so they switched me again.

My third partner was an older member.

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2 He showed me -- he showed more interest in  
3 teaching me how to bend conduit. He was a  
4 storyteller. Working with him was more like  
5 socializing than intensive training. My  
6 assignment with him lasted two months. Then  
7 they had me on my own. They gave me little  
8 things to do here and there, but never  
9 assigned me another mechanic.

10 All the workers on the site used to  
11 have to change clothes in the same shanty and  
12 there was a lot of explicit sexual talk and  
13 photos from Playboy and Penthouse. The  
14 foreman cursed all the time and talked about  
15 how he was going to get into his wife's pants  
16 when he got home. I responded to this by  
17 telling him he was a jerk to be saying that in  
18 front of me.

19 The other apprentice used to tell  
20 explicit sexual stories about his encounters  
21 with women while we were having lunch. He  
22 brought in nude photos that he had taken of a  
23 woman and showed them around while telling the  
24 scenario of how the pictures were obtained.  
25 The foreman was at his desk in the room at

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those times.

This apprentice also kept asking me to go to dinner with him. Finally, I agreed to go for the sake of friendship. We went to dinner and that was it. After that dinner, he kept on asking me out and I kept refusing. He began verbally harassing me, saying he lusted for me and wanted to go to bed with me.

That was the last time I ever made the mistake of assuming that I could socialize with a male apprentice or co-worker. This problem would come up all the time and eventually I decided the only thing to do was to be distant and up front and diplomatic. Whenever I went to a foreman about this sort of problem, the message I got was that it wasn't reasonable, and that I should just handle it, the boys would be boys syndrome. After less than a year I was laid off from that job.

Another problem was the lack of bathroom and changing facilities. Regularly, if you went to the portable toilet designated for women, a man would be in the toilet. One



1  
2 day a woman in the -- a woman was in the  
3 woman's room and a guy came in. She told him  
4 that it was the women's room, but he said that  
5 since the other men went in here he was going  
6 to use the bathroom. She protested and said  
7 that he should at least wait until she leaves  
8 the bathroom. He used the bathroom and cursed  
9 her out using ethnic slurs. She told the  
10 steward about it.

11 The steward said that he believed that  
12 the guy had apologized. I thought that more  
13 stringent steps should be taken because there  
14 could have been a physical confrontation. The  
15 steward took the position that it was out of  
16 his hands and if an agreement could not be  
17 reached to the satisfaction of the two people,  
18 one or both would be laid off. They laid both  
19 off.

20 There is no seniority provision in the  
21 job or union or on-job contract. There's a  
22 lot of discretion with the general foreman  
23 about who to keep and who to lay off. If the  
24 general foreman doesn't know who to lay off,  
25 he'll often go off to the subforeman and the

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subforeman will choose should get laid off.  
The foreman's name will be on the slip. There is no job slip record to prove productivity as any way to challenge a layoff.

About five years ago I had my own locker on the job next to the men's locker. They punched holes in the walls and tried to make me think they were looking at me. I put black tape over the holes. Then they put pornography over the door, all kinds, men with men, men with women, women with women. Finally, they put glue in the lock to keep me out of my own locker, but I got in and I went to work.

In other jobs we had to share a shanty with men, as I earlier stated, and the walls were covered with explicit pornography. This would be a very uncomfortable feeling because in the course of the day, the guys would look at these pictures and come out to the job site and then look at me in the same fashion they would look at these pictures.

At another site a male tradesman gave a male apprentice a gay male magazine. The

1  
2 apprentice got very indignant about it and  
3 went to the foreman. The foreman got very  
4 upset, saying this was going too far and  
5 threatened to beat up the guy who gave the  
6 apprentice the magazine. I pointed out to the  
7 foreman that nobody gets upset when a woman  
8 gets a pornographic magazine from someone. At  
9 first he argued it was different, but after we  
10 talked he agreed that maybe it wasn't right  
11 for men to subject the women to pornography,  
12 either.

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Sexual harassment is always a problem. On one job the general foreman had a crush on me. He would come to where I was working about twenty times a day, stare at me and ask me why I was working so hard. He said I didn't have to work too hard, he could arrange something, the subforeman was his drinking buddy.

All of the other guys did in response to the harassment was laugh and smile. They would not step in to tell the foreman to stop. In all my years of working I only recall two men who stood up for me and said they should stop.

When the foreman would come I would tell him I had a job to do, it makes me nervous for you to stand around. After three months he must have rejected -- he must have felt rejected or something because he did a 360 degree turnaround and he began to verbally harass me, supervising my work with a magnifying glass day after day, day after day, until I finally told him to go to hell. He laughed and said, "I love to see your temper."

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2 The only other person I could have complained  
3 to was the shop steward, and he was oblivious  
4 to it all.

5 I started missing a lot of work time.  
6 I would take two days off a week. I was  
7 having nightmares about this foreman. It was  
8 affecting my love life and my spouse. One day  
9 I was so stressed out that I took four days  
10 off in a row. When I came back I was  
11 transferred to another job.

12 After this experience I decided that I  
13 was never going to let that happen to me  
14 again. I decided that I would tell them to  
15 stop it and that I would file charges against  
16 the guy, the company, the union, whoever. The  
17 problem with this approach is that you might  
18 end up digging ditches for the rest of your  
19 life.

20 Attempting to take problems to the  
21 union leadership also doesn't help. The union  
22 never tried to prepare the men for the fact  
23 that women were coming in. A group of women  
24 asked to meet once with the apprentice  
25 director, and I was informed that the director

1  
2 told them that the sexual harassment on the  
3 job sites was something that they would have  
4 to deal with on their own.

5 During my apprenticeship I was informed  
6 that several women had submitted a written  
7 proposal to the union which requested that the  
8 union send union reps, job stewards and others  
9 in management for a day to Mayberry to tell  
10 the men that the women were having problems  
11 and that the steps should be taken to correct  
12 the problems because the union could be held  
13 liable. The union never addressed the issue  
14 and they never got back to them.

15 In the years that I have been in the  
16 trade, no women have risen to a foreman level  
17 or other leadership positions in the union.  
18 Males continue to move into union political  
19 positions, males of their same age. I think  
20 that these guys have been hand picked and  
21 groomed for those positions. They do not  
22 groom women as far as I can see. But then  
23 again, they don't have bathroom facilities in  
24 which to groom anyway.

25 In the years that I have been in the

1  
2 trade, no women -- sorry, I am repeating  
3 myself.

4 I think the union committee which  
5 interviews women for admission to the  
6 apprenticeship program discriminates against  
7 women. I think they pick women who they know  
8 will drop out. Many of the women who come in  
9 get disgusted and quit the program. At least  
10 60 percent of the job is knowing how to deal  
11 with the harassment and poor conditions.

12 Women who have made it know what it  
13 takes. When women are going to drop out, the  
14 union doesn't get them to talk to other women  
15 in the union, even though we have encouraged  
16 the apprentice director to give a woman's name  
17 to them, women have come and gone and have  
18 never had a chance to talk with another woman.

19 There is a panel of union women, but  
20 many of them are not women others would feel  
21 comfortable complaining to. They were hand  
22 picked. In my view, the more women in the  
23 trades the less sexual harassment will go on.  
24 But it is important for women to learn not to  
25 let it go on and to stand up for themselves.

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It is also important for mechanics to stand up for their partners and their apprentices and not allow this to continue.

MR. GRAY: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Are there any questions?

MS. ABDUS-SALAAM: You mentioned you were an apprentice for over five years. Is that the normal length of time for apprenticeships in the electrician's union?

WITNESS AUDIO CL1: Yes, it is.

MS. ABDUS-SALAAM: Can you tell me exactly how long the apprenticeship is?

WITNESS AUDIO CL1: It's four years apprenticeship and eighteen months as an MIJ, which is subjourneyman level.

MS. ABDUS-SALAAM: So, altogether, to become a journey level apprentice you have to spend five-and-a-half years as an apprentice?

WITNESS AUDIO CL1: Yes.

MS. ABDUS-SALAAM: Were there many women in your apprenticeship classes?

WITNESS AUDIO CL1: In my apprenticeship classes there were no women.



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2 MS. ABDUS-SALAAM: There were none  
3 other than you?

4 WITNESS AUDIO CL1: Yes, ma'am, in the  
5 actual schooling, in my classes.

6 MS. ABDUS-SALAAM: How long ago did you  
7 start your apprenticeship, if it wouldn't  
8 reveal --

9 WITNESS AUDIO CL1: That would be quite  
10 specific and it would reveal me.

11 MS. ABDUS-SALAAM: All right.

12 Thank you.

13 WITNESS AUDIO CL1: Thank you.

14 COMMISSIONER PECK: All told, including  
15 your apprenticeship, how long have you been  
16 working in a nontraditional area?

17 WITNESS AUDIO CL1: Once again, I feel  
18 that would be incriminating.

19 COMMISSIONER PECK: Okay. Can I ask  
20 you something that would be a little bit more  
21 subjective: The discussion that we've had  
22 about women and sexual harassment, you  
23 mentioned about being harassed and also being  
24 referred to or people trying to find out if  
25 you are a lesbian. How much of the sexual

1  
2 harassment of women in nontraditional jobs do  
3 you think has to do with the equation if you  
4 are doing this you are a lesbian? I know  
5 there are many different reasons, but do you  
6 have any idea?

7 WITNESS AUDIO CL1: Yes. I would say  
8 approximately 60 percent of the harassment is  
9 because they think if you're not dating  
10 someone on the job you must be a lesbian.

11 I would like the panel to understand  
12 one thing. I have been listening to the radio  
13 very carefully on this and they are focusing a  
14 lot on the racism. And I would appreciate it  
15 very much in my heart if you don't neglect the  
16 fact that there is a lot of sexual harassment  
17 on the job.

18 MR. GRAY: We have received consider-  
19 able testimony. In fact, if I have to try and  
20 estimate I would say somewhere in the range of  
21 30 to 40 percent, at least, if not more, on  
22 the issue of harassment of women in the trades  
23 and we have a considerable amount in written  
24 form as well.

25 WITNESS AUDIO CL1: I'm glad to hear

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that.

MR. GRAY: Are there any other questions?

Thank you very much for coming forward under very trying circumstances.

WITNESS AUDIO CL1: I would like to thank you all, too.

MR. GRAY: Thank you.