

NEVERTHELESS, SHE PERSISTED

June Harris, Central Region Vice President,
Local 306 President, Women's Committee Chairperson



Although its first official meeting is scheduled for April 2018, the new NPMHU Women's Committee has been active since its appointment late last year. The committee consists of the following eight mail handlers: Committee Chairperson June Harris—Central VP/Local 306 President; Teresa Harmon—CAD Manager; Felandria Jackson—Local 305 President; Kelly Dickey—Local 322 President; Juanita Contreras—Local 302 Vice President; Yvette Johnson—Local 300 Vice President; Joyce Weber—Local 318 Treasurer; and Roxie Olds-Pride—Local 311 Treasurer.

As previously noted, the mission of the NPMHU Women's Committee is to encourage, recruit, and engage women of all backgrounds to join and be active in the National Postal Mail Handlers Union and the entire labor movement. We want to strengthen our sisters and help them achieve a better standard of living for themselves and their families.

One primary goal of the Women's Committee is to serve as an advocate about issues stemming from the unique barriers and challenges faced by women within the workplace. To this end, we hope to become a liaison on these issues to USPS management through the NPMHU's Contract Administration Department.

With the arrival of 2018, we know that the year holds the possibility of tremendous progress on various issues concerning women in the Postal Service. As everyone surely knows, the percentage of women represented in our great Union has increased significantly in recent years. Women now have major influence in the NPMHU and in labor unions across our nation.

That is one reason why we find it imperative to voice our support for the **#MeToo** movement. Although this movement has touched women from diverse races, ethnicities, and industries, the members of the NPMHU Women's Committee want to state publicly that we are also dedicated to making sure that our voices, issues, and thoughts are being heard in every possible forum. We too have heard the stories of women in the Postal Service who have experienced some form of harassment, sexual and otherwise, from their co-workers. Most are afraid to report this blatant disrespect by fellow workers because of their basic need to provide for their

families. Many times, the fear of reprisal keeps them silent. The NPMHU Women's Committee wants to assure the entire NPMHU membership that we are going to confront this problem head on.

In an effort to arm ourselves with the necessary tools and information, Committee Member Roxie Olds-Pride of Local 311 and I attended the 2017 Women Build Nations Conference sponsored by LiUNA and other building trade unions. This meeting was held in Chicago, IL from October 13 to 15, 2017. The attendees came from just about every state in our country and from many professions that are male dominated. It was inspiring, yet sometimes saddening, to hear the numerous stories told by our Sisters. There were numerous workshops given on various topics to help in educating and protecting women in the workplace. ***One vital message of the conference was the importance of joining with our Brothers in the labor movement in a joint effort to achieve the goals of equality, respect, and fairness in the workplace and our unions.***

March is "Women's History Month." The National Theme this year is ***"NEVERTHELESS, SHE PERSISTED: Honoring Women Who Fight All Forms of Discrimination Against Women."*** This phrase was born out of a speech recently given by Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) during the Jeff Sessions confirmation hearings, when Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-KY, tried to silence her. At the time, Warren was reading an opposition letter penned by Coretta Scott King in 1986. ***"Nevertheless, she persisted."***

During the month of January, two of our Sisters, Local 322 President Kelly Dickey and Local 302 Vice President Juanita Contreras, attended their local "Women's March" held in Pittsburgh, PA and San Francisco, CA, respectively. The constant theme across our nation at the numerous marches on this day was "the power of the women's vote" or "power to the polls." We need to be heard loud and clear in the mid-term elections this year. In unity, there is strength!!

If you have any issues or agenda items you want addressed by the NPMHU Women's Committee, please submit them to any committee member. We are looking forward in great expectation to a lively exchange of ideas and suggestions.