Boeing engineer shares her story in ‘Courageous Conversations’

By Karen McLean
SPEEA Publications Editor

In 1984, Theryl Johnson broke a lot of ground. Her move from Louisiana to Seattle to work as a Boeing engineer covered more than just thousands of miles.

“When I started, I was the only Black engineer and the only female Black engineer,” Johnson said. “My first six or seven years were challenging.”

At times, a few coworkers’ interactions felt like microaggressions. “Early on, I had a fear of speaking up,” Johnson said. “My reservations were because I witnessed retaliation against others who did.”

As time passed, she spoke up more. So did fellow co-workers when they witnessed those microaggressions that came across as racist and/or sexist behavior.

“Other people were speaking up,” she said. “That was a good feeling.”

Acknowledging work remains to make minorities feel equal, she is glad to see Boeing today is much different than when she started as a young engineer.

“It starts at the top with management,” Johnson said. “They are supportive of the message to be open, honest and be your authentic self at work.”

Aerospace Town Hall

She shared her story at a virtual Aerospace Industry Town Hall, called ‘Courageous Conversations’ June 16.

Hosted by the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals (OBAP), Johnson joined a panel of speakers representing pilots and flight attendant unions, aircraft owners/operators and others committed to outreach on behalf of aerospace professionals.

The panel discussion included 15 speakers and continued on page 5.
‘I Am A Man’ poster at SPEEA memorializes MLK Jr. and his support for workers’ dignity

The ‘I Am A Man’ framed posters in the SPEEA offices represent a significant event in history. The sign is a replica from a 1968 strike by sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. Martin Luther King Jr., a civil rights champion, joined efforts to support the workers and then came back to Memphis for more marches and speeches. On his second trip to help the trash haulers gain respect, workplace safety and living wages, he delivered his ‘Mountaintop’ speech and was assassinated the next day.

SPEEA and IFPTE leaders carried these posters in a tribute march in Memphis on the 50th anniversary of King’s assassination, April 4, 2018. Also in the SPEEA offices are photos of sanitation workers carrying ‘I Am A Man’ picket signs as they walked past National Guard troops holding bayonets in 1968.

Joel Funfar, IFPTE SPEEA-Area vice president, joined the commemoration of the march in Memphis. After he came back, he suggested framing the posters and getting the photo for the SPEEA halls.

“This history isn’t always being taught,” said Funfar. “I hope these prompts conversation and questions about King’s push for labor and civil rights. The slogan, ‘I Am A Man,’ highlighted how the African American garbage workers were not even treated like people. It was a push to be treated with respect as human beings by the employer and the people of Memphis.”

Learn more about civil rights and ‘I Am A Man’

- Striking sanitation workers belonged to American Federal, State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). More information, including a timeline related to the Memphis sanitation workers’ strike, is at www.afscme.org/about/history/mlk.
- The Civil Rights Museum is also an excellent resource. The museum is in the building where Martin Luther King Jr. was shot (the balcony of the Lorraine Motel). The exhibit includes a garbage truck like the one that crushed and killed two sanitation workers, Echol Cole and Robert Walker. See more at www.civilrightsmuseum.org.

SPEEA joins demands to end racism

The SPEEA Executive Board unanimously voted to join the growing list of labor unions calling for justice and an end to racism after the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The member-elected board approved the letter June 4. See the letter – next page and also at www.speea.org.


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SPEEA joins labor in demanding an end to racism and justice for George Floyd

The senseless killing of George Floyd, a Black father, husband, brother, and son, by Minneapolis Police officers has shaken our nation and exposed the stark reality of the rampant social injustice that still exists in our society today. Hand-cuffed and face down on the pavement, Floyd died a humiliating death. With an officer’s knee on his neck, two other officers holding him down and a third standing idle nearby Floyd pleaded; “I can’t breathe, I can’t breathe,” until the life of one more Black man was no more.

Floyd’s death is a harsh and tragic reminder of the unjust treatment inflicted on Black men and women, along with all people of color, in the United States. Sadly, this was not an isolated incident. Floyd’s death is just one of the more recent unjust killings of Blacks at the hands of law enforcement and vigilantes – earlier this year, Breonna Taylor was killed in her own home by police in Louisville and Ahmaud Arbery was killed by three white civilians while jogging in Georgia. Racial profiling, oppression, brutality, and indifference has existed for centuries since before our country formed. It is long past time for change.

The 20,000 members of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), IFPTE Local 2001, stand with our labor union brothers and sisters around the United States and condemns in the strongest possible terms the actions of the officers in Minneapolis. We demand a full and complete investigation of Floyd’s death and an end to the inappropriate use of force by police officers everywhere. We demand justice for George Floyd and his family so that his death does not become another statistic.

We join our fellow unions in the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) in calling on the U.S. Congress to immediately conduct hearings on the systemic racism that exists in our country. We demand legislation that protects communities of color in our country and finally puts real meaning into the words “all men are created equal.” Finally, we stand side-by-side with the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and other local unions throughout Washington state in reaffirming our commitments to eliminating racism from the labor movement, calling out injustice wherever it occurs, and combating the structural and institutional inequities that advantage some while denying others their full human dignity.

Ryan Rule
President
Michelle Cooper
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Shaunna Winton
Secretary
Keith Covert
MW Vice President
Dan Nowlin
NW Vice President
Daniel Peters
NW Vice President
Mike Shea
NW Vice President

Approved by unanimous vote on Thursday, June 4, 2020.
Got questions?

Council Reps can help find answers

Have a question about a workplace issue or your contract? Your Council Rep knows where to go to find answers.

Council Reps are co-workers who volunteer to serve as liaisons to the union. They receive training to respond to issues and questions. When needed, they go to SPEEA contract administrators and other staff to get answers and resolve problems.

What Council Reps do

- **Information** – Find answers to questions about contract benefits and workplace issues.
- **Workplace issue** – Step into a disciplinary, investigatory or performance meeting to monitor the process and ensure the contract is followed.
- **Communication** – Share news from the union related to informational updates, an event or a report from the monthly Council meetings.
- **Policy** – Serve as a representative for members in their district when voting on motions and to set union policy at Council meetings.
- **Solidarity** – Recruit new members to join SPEEA and encourage them to become active by voting, coming to SPEEA events and becoming Area Reps.

Ask for your Council Rep if your boss wants to talk

If your boss wants to talk about discipline, Performance Management or a security issue, you have the right to ask for your Council Rep.

Council Reps serve as union representatives to ensure the employee is treated fairly, within the framework of the contract and labor law.

The right to union representation is often referred to as Weingarten rights, based on a 1975 Supreme Court ruling.

SPEEA contract administrators provide extensive training for Council Reps to attend these meetings and follow up with Council Reps to help with issues and questions.

If a Council Rep is not available, contact the nearest SPEEA office:

- Tukwila 206-433-0991
- Everett 425-355-2883
- Wichita 316-682-0262

How to request a Council Rep attend your meeting with the boss

“I am respectfully invoking my Weingarten Rights and request to have my Council Representative present prior to answering any of your questions. Please let me know how you want to proceed.”

Council Rep vacancy

Interested in serving as your as co-workers’ workplace union liaison? Check out these resources.

- **Opening in your district?** – To find out if you reside in a district with a vacancy, go to www.speea.org (drop-down menu: Councils/Forms, Petitions, Delineations).
- **About the role** – Learn more about the Council Rep’s responsibilities at www.speea.org (drop-down menu: Member Tools/Council Reps).

Area Reps are a good starting point

If you’re not already an Area Rep, consider signing up. This is a great way to support your union without the time commitment of becoming a Council Rep.

In this position, you are on the frontlines of getting SPEEA information to share with others.

You also serve as a liaison to your Council Rep if a member has a question.

See more about the Area Rep role at www.speea.org (drop-down menu: Member Tools/Council Reps).

To sign up, talk to your Council Rep.

Verify work location to confirm district

If you’re a SPEEA-represented employee at The Boeing Company, have you checked your work location lately in Worklife? If you moved to another building, floor or area, your records will not be updated unless you make the change.

SPEEA needs your location information to determine your Council district. This also gives you easier access to a Council Rep who can help answer your questions and keep you informed of union news.

Find your Council Rep

Council Reps and their contact information are available online at www.speea.org (drop-down menu: Member Tools/Find Your Council Rep).

Find your district

Tom Klipp is in the right place at the right time for helping the next generation of aerospace workers gain experience. Klipp, an Everett Council Rep, recently joined the advisory committee at Lake Washington Institute of Technology. He serves on the committee as a labor representative for the Mechanical Design program. Klipp is a level three technical drafter at Boeing in Model Based Definition.

SPEEA members are appointed to serve on these committees to help with curriculum development. Klipp attended his first meeting of the committee in June. Other representatives came from the aerospace supply chain, medical equipment and construction/architecture companies.

In addition to the advisory committee, Klipp volunteers with a Boeing Associate Technical Fellow to help a team of students at Purdue University. The students are learning 3-D modeling by building a P-51 Mustang, a fighter plane flown by the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II.

Klipp is well suited to help the college with mechanical design because of his 31-year career in aerospace, primarily in payloads, including stow bins, partitions and the Interiors Responsibility Center in Everett. He also worked at Dassault Aviation on business jet interiors before returning to Boeing in 2010 and working in payloads, then propulsion.

**'Bit of a nerd'**

While doing mechanical design for work, he never lost his passion for building model airplanes and tanks. “I’ve always been a bit of a nerd,” said Klipp. “Working in CATIA (Computer-Aided Three-Dimensional Interactive Application) is very similar,” he said.

Becoming involved in SPEEA sounded good to Klipp, who is a third-generation Boeing worker and union member. His grandfather and father were both in the Machinists’ union.

He credits Council Rep James Raskob for recruiting him as an Area Rep, to help the Council Reps to share SPEEA news and answer questions. When an opening came up for Council Rep, Klipp stepped up. “I didn’t have to think too hard. There was a need, and getting to help other people makes me feel good.”

Klipp credits his manager, Russ Mahoney, with recruiting him for the technical college labor rep role. “I didn’t know this possibility existed,” Klipp said.

Mahoney knew about it through his work as a skill team captain, connecting with local community colleges. Mahoney also has a background in drafting and technical design.

Mahoney asked Klipp because of his experience at Boeing and other companies. “They need people with 3-D design to partner with colleges like this,” Mahoney said.

“What I do at Boeing is pretty cool,” said Klipp. “I would like to see that continue for others, to help make them the best employees the company can get. For whatever reason that they don’t go to a four-year accredited college, they can still get a meaningful job that is fun and important.”

**Boeing engineer shares her story in ‘Courageous Conversations’** continued from page 1

moderators who talked about what racism looks like in their industry and how they and others are working to change that.

Some of the solutions come from recruiting next-generation minorities to consider aerospace careers. Other ideas include emphasis on diversity in hiring to reflect multiple perspectives.

The speakers also talked about the importance of conversations.

For example, a white pilot shared the power of a conversation he recently had with a flight attendant about racism. The pilot was a passenger on another airline, and the attendant noticed what he was reading – “White Fragility” – and started a conversation. He told the panel that discussion helped him learn so much and inspired him to keep seeking more information.

**Executive Board letter**

OBAP reached out to SPEEA after reading the Executive Board’s letter condemning racism – a letter Johnson had a hand in crafting. The Executive Board unanimously approved the letter, which appears in this issue of Spotlite (P3). The IFPTE letter is at www.ifpте.org.

As chair of the SPEEA Diversity Committee, Johnson is committed to making the workplace more inclusive of all minorities. She readily agreed to join the panel, “Courageous Conversations,” and share her experiences.

“It was really an honor,” she said. “I’m happy we are having more conversations like this. I was glad to be included and talk about my experiences.”

**SPEEA Diversity Committee**

The SPEEA Diversity Committee works to address problems and issues associated with a lack of understanding about diversity. Members are welcome to attend the meetings held at 4 p.m. (Pacific Time) and 6 p.m. (Central Time), the second Wednesday of the month. Meetings are held virtually for now. Details are in the online calendars at www.speca.org.
**Midwest Teller appreciates learning the union’s ‘inner workings’**

**W**ICHITA – Linda Staley is glad she stepped up to help the Midwest Tellers Committee overseeing ballot counts and Council delineation.

“It’s good to know the inner workings of the union,” said Staley, about becoming a Teller.

“If you’re holding a position, you can see how things work and can give your opinion, other than just voting.”

Council Reps Shelly Jones and Yvette Ponolar Washington both encouraged her to apply for the committee. Staley had been serving as an Area Rep and designated alternate if her Council Rep could not attend a Council meeting.

Staley works on the defense side of Spirit AeroSystems. She started her aerospace career at Boeing Wichita in 1986. When Boeing sold its Wichita operation, she transitioned to Spirit AeroSystems.

Staley joined the Wichita Technical and Professional Unit (WTPU) when it started in 2000. “I was glad to see it coming,” she said. “It was certainly needed.”

**Union household**

Although she has not belonged to any other union, she grew up in a union household. Her father always talked about how the union helped save his job in the construction business, because African Americans were not always treated fairly. “He was always a staunch union man,” she said.

In right-to-work Kansas, represented employees can reap the benefits of a union without paying dues, but not Staley.

“I never gave it a second thought,” she said, “because of what my father believed and taught us about unions.”

She sees the difference unions make in her own contract and benefits and those of her children. Her son belongs to the local International Association of Machinists (IAM) at Spirit. Her daughter also belonged to the IAM before Spirit laid her off.

“I have seen when my children have worked for companies without unions and how much insurance is, for example,” she said. “And I’ve seen how much easier it is when you have a union.”

**How to apply for Teller**

The Midwest Tellers Committee needs one member and the Northwest has three vacancies.

If you have been a regular SPEEA member in good standing for the preceding twelve-month period, consider applying.

See the petition and details at [www.speea.org](http://www.speea.org) (drop-down menu: Councils/Forms, Petitions, Delineations).

**Help and heart for those with layoff notices**

By Karen McLean

SPEEA Publications Editor

Bill Messenger goes where most people would rather avoid. “I help people navigate unemployment benefits,” said Messenger, who works for the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), AFL-CIO, as Workforce Development director.

He specializes in Rapid Response which helps people learn about an umbrella of unemployment benefits, job search and training assistance.

He also files petitions on behalf of unions and companies for Trade Act, also known as Trade Adjustment Assistance. If the petition is successful, the federal government provides additional funding and training benefits to help those laid off due to outsourcing.

He works with both union and non-union employees with layoff notices.

**Maximize benefits**

“My job is showing people how to maximize the benefits available,” he said.

That includes recently helping an individual waiting 11 weeks for unemployment benefits due to an issue with the system. Then, he took part in a two-hour Rapid Response seminar for SPEEA-represented employees with layoff notices in Snohomish County and surrounding areas.

In the past 14 years in this role, he has gained a lot of experience and connections to work through barriers and glitches in government processes. His advice applies to anyone.

“This is a system. It helps to be polite, patient and persistent,” Messenger said. “It’s on you.”

His other advice is “training, training, training,” because too many people, he finds, think they are too old to go back to school. He noted the range of ages of students in school these days, especially at community and technical colleges.

“It’s all about life-long learning,” he said. “Some of the best students I’ve seen are older. It’s their job now, going to school.”

**Union leader laid off**

Messenger worked for 31 years at Weyerhaeuser’s pulp mill in Cosmopolis, Wash. He worked his way up from choker-setter to turbine and boiler operator. When Weyerhaeuser decided to shut the mill down, Messenger was president of the local union, the Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers (AWPPW) Local 211.

“It was one of the hardest things I’ve done in my life,” he said. “Everyone was looking to the union leadership on what to do.”

Messenger and others pushed for the state to intervene. They looked at an employee buyout and also tried to find another buyer. In the process, Messenger met his predecessor at WSLC. They became friends as they worked together for a year on a feasibility study to save the mill.

When his friend retired, he encouraged Messenger to apply for the vacancy. “My heart is in it,” Messenger said, about helping people find work.

He became involved in the pulp workers’ union because he appreciated the benefits of the contract. “I could put two kids through college. This job had been pretty good to me,” he said. “We had someone bargaining for us. There is strength in unification.”

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**Webinars on layoff resources**

Due to the large number of layoffs, Washington state and Kansas offer Rapid Response seminars to help.

Local, state and federal resources are covered in these virtual meetings. The resources include job hunting help, unemployment insurance tips and training opportunities.

Invites to the informational webinars go to employees who have either volunteered for layoff or received an involuntary layoff notice. All are welcome.

For information, see the online calendar at [www.speea.org](http://www.speea.org) and/or email speea@speea.org.
Facing a layoff can be difficult and challenging. SPEEA-represented employees have contractual rights and benefits to help with the transition. Union contract administrators continue to monitor the layoff processes to help ensure impacted employees receive all the benefits guaranteed by our union contracts.

### About contractors

The companies are required to provide SPEEA information regarding layoffs. Our union contracts also require the company to adhere to the agreed upon layoff processes. This information includes names and job codes of direct employees issued layoff notices and contractors performing the same work.

SPEEA contract administrators use this information to ensure the company meets the requirements of our bargaining unit agreements relating to layoffs and the dismissal of contract labor.

### Priority recall

- Boeing - Informed SPEEA the link to register for Priority Recall would soon be live. Expect a notice from Boeing and SPEEA when this is available.

- Spirit – Will maintain a record of all laid-off employees who are on layoff status.

When hiring starts again, SPEEA contract administrators will monitor for contract compliance to ensure employees who maintained their priority recall rights are given the option to return to work.

### Help available from SPEEA Cares

The SPEEA Cares fund provides emergency assistance for members and their families who are facing difficulties due to layoffs or other issues in the Northwest and Midwest.

For approved requests, the fund pays up to $500 for a one-time-only bill related to housing or utilities and can also provide a gas or grocery gift card.

Donations to SPEEA Cares keep the fund going to help members facing financial crises.

More details, including how to donate, are at www.speea.org (drop-down menu: Member Tools/Layoff Information).

### SPEEA layoffs at Boeing and Spirit

Including involuntary and voluntary layoffs, a total of 2,554 SPEEA-represented employees are leaving Boeing. At Spirit AeroSystems, 130 total SPEEA-represented employees are leaving.

#### Involuntary layoff totals

- Boeing – 1,230
- Spirit – 111

At Spirit, a total of 302 represented employees were warned of possible layoff at the end of May, which means 191 are keeping their jobs.

#### Voluntary layoff totals

- Boeing – 1,324
- Spirit – 19

### Trade Act assistance update

SPEEA and the International Association of Machinists (IAM) District 751 are petitioning for Trade Adjustment Assistance resources, also known as Trade Act for employees at The Boeing Company. If the petition is accepted, additional resources are available to laid-off employees.

The Trade Act benefits currently apply to laid-off employees at Spirit AeroSystems because their petition was certified earlier.

### Ed Wells

SPEEA-represented employees at Boeing can find resources through Ed Wells Partnership, including Boeing Education Network (BEN) on-demand classes on writing resumes and preparing for interview. Go to edwells.web.boeing.com on the Boeing intranet for more information.

### Boeing Voluntary Layoff data

The Boeing Company accepted 1,304 applications for Voluntary Layoff (VLO) from the SPEEA Prof and Tech bargaining units. Among those who took VLO are 92 Associate Technical Fellows and 24 Technical Fellows. The top job functions were: Profy - Engineering Mechanical and Structural (190) and Techs – Engineering Production (171). Most left the company June 5.

### More resources online

For information on unemployment benefits for Washington, Kansas, Oregon and California, medical coverage and other important items, visit the SPEEA website at www.speea.org. Click on the “Member Tools” button on the top right-hand side of the homepage. Then select “Layoff Information” from the drop-down menu.

### ‘Self-evaluation’ does not apply

For SPEEA-represented employees at The Boeing Company, the self-evaluation in the interim performance review process does not apply.

The automated Workday notification advises SPEEA-represented employees to disregard the self-evaluation, but continued reliance in messages has raised questions. The self-evaluation is not part of the SPEEA process and should not be completed.

If additional clarification is needed or questions arise, contact SPEEA at speea@speea.org.
The Ed Wells Partnership introduces EWP Live!

By Jerry DiLeonardo
SPEEA co-director, Ed Wells Partnership

For more than 10 years, the Ed Wells Partnership has collaborated with Boeing Leadership, Learning, and Organizational Capability (LLOC) and Creative Services to produce and deliver a live Boeing Education Network (BEN) presentation each Thursday at lunchtime. These programs were specifically geared to the SPEEA-represented work force yet were also available to the entire Boeing enterprise. Since 2009, we produced more than 440 BENs that reached more than 165,000 live viewers. Topics ranged from the highly technical to general interest such as Social Security 101. Virtually all of them have been great successes.

With the shutdown due to COVID-19 and the ensuing cutbacks at the company, the BEN studio in South Park, Wash., has been permanently shuttered, drawing to an end this wonderful collaboration.

While one chapter closes, another opens. Coming soon to the Ed Wells Partnership will be EWP Live! This production, during the same Thursday time slot, will have everything you came to expect from an Ed Wells sponsored BEN, albeit in a slimmed-down package. You can expect the same great subject matter, fantastic presenters, the ability to chat via questions and the availability of on-demand viewing after the live presentation.

EWP Live! will be hosted by the staff at Ed Wells and be presented over WebEx Training Center. Look for advertisements for Ed Wells Live! in our bi-weekly email and expect to receive a meeting notice the Monday prior to a presentation.

We realize we have a lot to learn as we embark on this journey, so please bear with us as we go through some growing pains. We will continue to send out surveys, and we encourage your feedback. We hope to see you on EWP LIVE!

About Ed Wells Partnership

Ed Wells, a SPEEA-Boeing contract benefit, provides free technical training, professional development and career coaching/consulting along with grants to attend technical conferences. Ed Wells also produces Ed Wells Live! broadcasts on topics of interest to employees in SPEEA bargaining units. Go to edwells.web.boeing.com for more.

Spirit delays return to work site

ICHITA – Employees will continue to telecommute through July 15, Spirit AeroSystems announced June 9.

Employees who are on temporary telecommuting arrangements were originally scheduled to return to the work site June 15.

Spirit leadership also noted the shortened work week (32 hours) will also continue until further notice.

Spirit continues to monitor government guidelines for re-opening in case of changes and additional details.

SPEEA reminds those who returned to the work site remaining safe at work is every employee’s top priority. If lapses occur, report them to your manager and also let SPEEA know through your Council Rep or email speea@speea.org.

Virtual movie night: ‘I Am Not Your Negro’

Join the SPEEA Diversity Committee to watch and discuss ‘I Am Not Your Negro’ Tuesday, July 21, via Zoom.

All members are welcome to sign up for the virtual meeting and access the movie through SPEEA. The program starts at 5 p.m. (PDT)/7 p.m. (CDT). Email meetings@speea.org.

The committee hosted a group viewing of this movie at the Tukwila hall in February, but the COVID-19 pandemic postponed scheduling the showing at the other SPEEA halls.

“The committee didn’t want to wait any longer, especially in light of nationwide Black Lives Matter protests,” said Theryl Johnson, SPEEA Diversity Committee chair and Seattle Council Rep. “We hope the movie helps build awareness and dialogue among our members.”

About the movie

The movie is based on the work of James Baldwin, a novelist, playwright and activist, who was close friends with Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Baldwin wrote the manuscript in the 1970s after the three civil rights leaders were assassinated. The documentary, featuring Samuel L. Jackson as narrator, also features some of Baldwin’s personal observations of racism and American history.

Raoul Peck directed the film, nominated for an Oscar in the best documentary feature category in 2017. The movie won several awards, including ‘Best Documentary’ from the British Academy of Film Awards.