



DEI IN MOTION

Understanding Intersectionality

August 2026

This month we mark Women's Equality Day on August 26, the anniversary of the certification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. It is a good time to reflect on intersectionality, a concept at the heart of the WTS mission.

Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term in 1989 to describe how overlapping parts of a person's identity, such as gender, race, disability, age, and socioeconomic background, combine to shape their experience in ways no single category can explain. The history behind Women's Equality Day shows why. The 19th Amendment did not deliver the vote to all women: Native American women were not recognized as citizens until 1924, and Black women in much of the country could not vote until 1965. Chicago's own Ida B. Wells saw this coming. In 1913 she founded the Alpha Suffrage Club, the first Black women's suffrage organization in the nation.

For WTS members, intersectionality is a reminder that the path through our industry does not look the same for every woman. The only woman of color on a project team, a mother returning to a culture built around long hours, and a technician managing a disability on a job site each face challenges a single mentorship or recruiting program may not reach. Designing our programs with these differences in mind opens doors for members who might otherwise fall through the gaps.

The same is true of the people our systems serve. A bus route, station design, or fare structure that works for one rider may burden another. Planning for riders at these intersections produces transportation that works better for everyone.

As you celebrate Women's Equality Day this month, we encourage you to lead with curiosity. Ask about the experiences that shaped a colleague's path and consider how your own perspective can make room for others.