

OIL BOOM RESULTS IN WOMEN ENTERING A TRADITIONALLY MALE WORK ENVIRONMENT



The oil boom has found lots of takers amongst women, who saw this traditionally, male-dominated profession, as a new avenue for working and ensuring a better world for themselves and their families. Innovative technology and modern techniques, like horizontal drilling, have revealed that lands once thought to be bereft of oil, had unexploited reserves, that could be tapped for a 100 more years. Linda Trujillo is amongst the first, to lead the way for women to take advantage of America's new gold rush. Every morning she wears her overalls and pulls on her steel toed boots, and sets out to a Kansas drilling rig, where she works throughout the day. Her job entails mixing the chemicals used in the process known as hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking." Trujillo, a single mother of three, said, that her older sister had informed her that there were jobs available in the oil fields and that they were well paying. Trujillo said that she left her job at a fast food restaurant in New Mexico and relocated herself and her family to Kansas, a state that was experiencing an oil boom. She said, that she took the decision, because, "I needed to make something better for my kids." She said that she used money she got from her tax-refund to earn a license to drive heavy construction equipment. She said, that she is the only woman, on a six man drilling crew. "It's really stressful to work around a lot of men, and being the only woman, it's kind of awkward, but I manage. They've adjusted to me," she says. Trujillo's bold initiative to invade a traditionally male domain has opened hitherto uncharted territory for women workers. According to Rigzone, a group that analyzes data for the oil and gas industry, there are 29,500 more women working in this industry, compared to the number that worked in America's oil fields in 2004. Compared to 48,900 women then, there are 78,400 women currently working in the oil industry. Kailee Cain is learning how to operate heavy equipment at the Warren County Career Center in Ohio, in anticipation of a job at the oil fields, following her college degree. "Construction is just as open to women as it is to men," she told ABC News. "I don't see anything difficult about it. It's kind of nice to be able to work around a bunch of guys. It makes me feel empowered." Amber Eitnien, a mother of three, was all praises for the Warren County Center, where she learnt how to become a heavy equipment operator, in preparedness for a job in the horizontal drilling industry. She says that she was taught everything from digging ditches and basements to site constructions. "You name it, they teach it here," she said. Dick Reese, a heavy equipment operating instructor, said that one in four students who came to the Center were women. "A lot of them do a heck of a lot better than the guys do. It's amazing," he says. Geologist Leah Kasten left her teaching job, to work in the oil fields of Kansas and Oklahoma. Her new career, gives her a six-figure salary, hence she's willing to compromise and spend three weeks in the month, in a temporary housing in a "man camp," set up for the oil field workers. "There's absolutely nothing, there's no disadvantage to being a woman out here, Kasten says. I don't even think about it. I really don't." Linda Trujillo has reaped rich dividends from the bold decision she made. From a "run down trailer" she has moved her family to a three-bedroom house. Moreover, Todd Seba, her supervisor is happy with her and counts her amongst his most valuable employees. "We're a team, so as long as you're part of the team, you fit in, Seba says. She's good, she's good, she's part of the team and that means a lot."