



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Jessica Chang - Case 2 of Cases of Discrimination Against Asian Americans

Year

2009

Description

A case describing obstacles faced by Asian Americans in the workforce.

Body

Jessica Chang: Background

Personal History: Second-generation Chinese-American, born and raised in Storrs, Connecticut. Both parents are originally from Hong Kong and are now citizens. Her father is a physics professor at the University of Connecticut, and her mother teaches science at a local high school. Has one younger brother. Parents are not active in community affairs.

High School Accomplishments: Salutatorian of senior class, All-State chorus, flautist, gymnast, National Merit finalist, hospital candy-striper volunteer. Rejected for admission to Yale.

College/University: Graduated from Cornell with B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in electrical engineering and computer science. Met and married fellow graduate

student Barton Buchanan III.

Employment: Accepted offer as Design Engineer at Dynamo Disk Incorporated, the world's second-largest manufacturer of disk drives for personal computers. Husband works for another firm in the Boston area.

Case

Jessica worked for Dynamo for six years and began to notice that several people who started working at the company after her were becoming managers. She felt that she had been doing a good job and wondered why she had not been offered a managerial position also. After much consideration, Jessica scheduled a meeting with her supervisor and shared her feelings that time was running out on her in terms of keeping up with her peers, most of whom were one or two promotions ahead of her. Her supervisor expressed surprise that Jessica was interested in becoming a manager. He said that she always seemed to be cheerful and happy with her work. In fact, Jessica reminded him of the wife of one of his "closest" friends, Richard Wang. Apparently, Mrs. Wang was a wonderful cook and mother. When pressed, Jessica's supervisor said that she wasn't "leader-like" and needed to be more assertive.

This meeting angered Jessica, and she had a long discussion with her husband. After a period of soul-searching, Jessica selected Marge Ross, one of only two women managers at Dynamo, as a role model. Although Jessica was uncomfortable with some of Marge's behavior, which she considered "masculine", she learned and became more outspoken. She began to interrupt at meetings, learned to hold the floor when others tried to break in, and honed her presentation skills. She developed a thick skin when encountering sexual and racial jokes, especially during customer meetings and business trips. Two years later, she was offered a promotion.

Discussion Questions

1. Should Jessica have selected Marge Ross as her role model?
2. Why or why not?

Rights

Use of Materials on the OEC

Resource Type

Case Study / Scenario

Parent Collection

Cases of Discrimination Against Asian Americans

Topics

Discrimination in the Workplace

Diversity

Employer/Employee Relationships

Research and Practice

Workplace Ethics

Discipline(s)

Computer Engineering

Computer Sciences

Computer, Math, and Physical Sciences

Engineering

Research Ethics

Publisher

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