

Submission #30

I was inspired to submit my story by the courage of others who have shared their stories. I am sharing my story so others feel less alone.

I do not believe that the Law Society of Alberta will help a single one of us. I believe very much that the people who treat us badly are the same people who end up in positions of power and they are not going to change. I think this project is nonsense. I hope however that my story helps someone feel less alone.

This is a list of things I as a dark skinned woman have been told in my ten years of practice:

- 1) I was called an assistant repeatedly on record by a senior Crown Prosecutor and a senior Provincial Court Judge during a prelim. The Crown apologized to me eight years later when I mentioned it.
- 2) I was told I was a “miserable bitch” once for reading a book and not smiling while I was waiting for a courtroom to open by another senior Crown Prosecutor. I had started basically bringing a book and reading before court so that particular lawyer would stop harassing and picking fights with me. I guess you can say it wasn’t successful.
- 3) I have only recently (this last two months) started to be called by order of call. I was always called at the end of the docket even though white lawyers were called in order of seniority. I asked if I could just come at 1 PM every day and was told that was not acceptable and I would have to wait my turn (apparently after all the white lawyers were done). I had a day when I was needed in three courtrooms at different times and the white clerk (all the clerks are white) would not call my matters. I finally interrupted and asked the judge, I have one adjournment and I am the most senior lawyer and I am now late for two courtrooms, why are junior lawyers being allowed to go ahead of me and do dispositions? And she told me I would have to talk to the clerks. This has now changed and I am now called in order of call and the judges insist on it when the clerks do otherwise. Everyone acts like I am being given a huge honor even though this is how the white lawyers are treated.
- 4) I was told on record by a judge that he didn’t think it was a good thing that I came back when I did from maternity leave. No one stood up for me. To be clear no other lawyer has EVER stood up for me.
- 5) A White QB Justice (I’ve never seen a POC as a Justice) implied I got pregnant on purpose so I wouldn’t have to run a jury trial.
- 6) A white lawyer gossiped about me behind my back the first time she saw me in court about a small problem with my appearance. She did not once tell me her concern, she just gossiped to other white lawyers about it. She continued to gossip about me for literal years and is still angry and hostile towards me for confronting her about it.
- 7) I notice how white lawyers who have had babies or are pregnant are treated and I was never treated better. I find in general I was treated worse when I was pregnant and when I had my child.
- 8) I find when white lawyers ask me to mention something about racism/sexism it is a trap. I was once asked why I did not like an event and after repeated questions I finally said that another lawyer had approached, come to my table and immediately said that he should be able to “punch women when they look at him funny.” I said that lawyer should not be invited to events as he made other women uncomfortable. It became a huge incident and I was blamed.

- 9) A white woman lawyer who is a Partner at a major firm tried to tell me that she understood about my struggle as a racialized person and I asked her why her firm only employed white lawyers. She is still very angry about it. Her firm is still all white.
- 10) I am repeatedly accused of having gone to Bond or one of the English law schools. I went to a Canadian law school and I wasn't accepted in a diversity category. I deserved to get in. I find it's the White lawyers who are most likely to have gotten into law schools with substandard LSATs and Grades but that they accuse any POC they see of this kind of behaviour.