

This material is part of a collection that documents the harassment, discrimination, and retaliation perpetrated against Alaska's women research scientists by their supervisor, with full knowledge (and arguably, "tacit approval") of their federal employer, the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

From: AAD, PWA-ACTING
Sent: Thursday, May 08, 2008 10:54 AM
To: Bower, Cindy
Subject: RE: Communique from Alaska

Dr. Bower,

This email is in response to your "Letter of Conscience and Concern" dated May 4, 2008. While I appreciate you bringing this to my attention, ARS management is aware of your concerns as they are currently being handled as grievances. Because of this, I am unable to address these matters at this time.

Sincerely,

MOLLY KRETSCH
Acting Associate Area Director
USDA, ARS, PWA
800 Buchanan St.
Albany, CA 94710-1105
Voice: (510) 559-6071
Fax: (510) 559-6170
Email: PWA-Acting.AAD@ars.usda.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: Bower, Cindy
Sent: Sunday, May 04, 2008 7:02 PM
To: AAD, PWA-ACTING
Cc: Hammond, Andrew; Brownell, Karen
Subject: Communique from Alaska

Dr. Molly Kretsch
Acting Associate Area Director
Pacific West Area
Agricultural Research Service
PWA-Acting.AAD@ars.usda.gov

May 4, 2008

Dr. Kretsch,

I have studied the ARS Policies and Procedures Manuals, but I found no guidance for communicating with Area personnel about a matter of conscience. Through this Letter of Conscience and Concern, I wish to alert you to a potentially disastrous situation that is being contemplated by the Research Leader here in the ARS Subarctic Agricultural Research Unit (SARU) in Fairbanks, Alaska.

An email notification of candidates interviewing for a horticulturist/curator position here in SARU was just provided to scientists in our unit on Thursday (1 May 2008). I've attached the announcement to this email. Both of the interviewees are women. Perhaps it has escaped your notice, but 100% of the female research scientists in SARU have filed grievances concerning the abusive, career-damaging, and discriminatory leadership style that our current RL, Alberto Pantoja has demonstrated towards women.

I would like to protect the ARS from future lawsuits by requesting that the Pacific West Area honestly consider the future of whichever of these

Do you think that Molly Kretsch acted ethically when she chose to ignore the information provided to her about the unlawful discrimination that awaited the new female curator?

We now know that the curator was brought into the ARS's discriminatory environment, was subjected to harassment and discrimination by our male supervisor, and ultimately left.

YOU DECIDE: Why do women in power (such as Molly Kretsch) knowingly allow the careers of other women to be attacked, instead of adhering to U.S. antidiscrimination laws and enabling the women to be protected from abuse in accordance with U.S. laws?

I strongly believe that my supervisor's harassing and discriminatory behaviors against every woman research scientist in his unit could have been stopped in 2008, if (among the many ARS administrators who were notified), there had been even one who was willing to follow U.S. antidiscrimination laws.

female candidates is hired into the curator position, (i.e. what makes Area administrators believe that the new curator will somehow be immune to Dr. Pantoja's discriminatory treatment, when the three current women scientists were not).

I strongly believe it is unconscionable to bring another woman into a work environment that is demonstrably hostile to women, and I would hope that the ARS would at least provide the selected candidate with the following information before her employment begins:

- Every female research scientist in the unit has filed more than one grievance detailing the abusive, discriminatory situation at SARU
- EEO has been contacted by every female research scientist in the unit, and lawsuits are certainly being seriously considered
- The RL blatantly demonstrates inequitable treatment when dealing with women, (e.g., no woman has ever been appointed Acting-RL in Alaska, whereas every male SY in Fairbanks has been given that career-building opportunity, including GS 12 level scientists and those still on probation)

However, perhaps these problems can be attenuated. Is it possible to assign the new curator a mentor from another ARS unit for at least three years? That would ensure oversight and continuity, in the (likely) event that she finds herself the only female scientist in SARU and thereby loses access to the knowledge base she'll need concerning the grievance process, EEO, and other administrative information.

I am truly sorry to be bringing this situation to your attention. However, another capable female scientist is about to have her life and professional career irreparably damaged by accepting employment into SARU, and this issue is weighing heavily on me. I will forever regret that the ARS administrators did not warn me of the hostile work environment for women before I accepted my current position. Thank you for whatever help you can extend to SARU's future curator.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Bower
Research Food Technologist
Subarctic Agricultural Research Unit (SARU)
USDA ARS, Pacific West Area
360 O'Neill Building, University of Alaska
Fairbanks, AK 99775-7200
(907) 474-6732
Cindy.Bower@ars.usda.gov

Attachment: Curator/Horticulturist Candidates

It's now August 2012, and I still regret that I ever accepted employment with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, a U.S. federal agency that openly allowed discrimination against all of their women research scientists in Alaska.

My career was irreparably damaged by my ARS supervisor, but he didn't do it alone. He was aided by every ARS administrator (and human resources employee) who saw the evidence (of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation being perpetrated against me and the other women), but chose to ignore ARS ethical codes, U.S. laws, and their own basic humanity.