

I have been an employee of the City of Vancouver for over 24 years. I am filing this complaint of harassment, discrimination, hostile work environment and retaliation by my supervisors Jonathan Young and Bronson Potter because of the treatment I have personally received and experienced.

I feel that since Mr. Potter has been employed by the City, he has deliberately and intentionally created a hostile work environment against women, minorities and women over 40, that I find personally offensive to me as a woman, minority and person over the age of 40. When I have raised the issue of his treatment of women, I have been personally retaliated against by both him and Mr. Young.

In December 2013, Mr. Potter was speaking to a female co-worker about the office attendees at an upcoming office Christmas party. During the conversation, he referred to a female staff member in our office as, "Oh ya, she's the one with the big tits." Not only was I told of this statement, made by Mr. Potter, by the person he told it to, but I also heard it from several other individuals both inside and outside of the City. I subsequently raised concerns about this statement to both Mr. Young and Mr. Potter and was immediately given the cold shoulder by Mr. Potter.

In October, 2014, I applied for a promotion for Chief Assistant City Attorney. I was one of several applicants, but the only female interviewed. Because of my years of experience with the City, I was arguably the most qualified. The first panel was an internal panel consisting of City attorney office staff and an outside attorney. The second panel consisted of an all male management leadership team (MLT) panel.

After the completion of the interview process Mr. Potter unilaterally decided to throw out the recruitment process and offered the job to Mr. Young, a white male under the age of 40, who was employed with the City for only a handful of years. Mr. Young did not apply for the position and did not go through any interview or application process. Mr. Potter subsequently told me he selected Mr. Young because he believed whoever he hired would take his place as City Attorney when he retired. Mr. Potter told me that although I, Dan Lloyd and Jeff Capell were all the top candidates, he did not select me because he didn't like my demeanor and felt I was not deliberative enough. I was subsequently told, by a member of the MLT panel, that after the last interview was completed, Mr. Potter announced to the MLT panel that the City Attorney office panel would come in and fight to have me hired, but that the MLT panel had to stand united against that. I was also told that the MLT panel felt I was too soft, however, I do not recall who told me that. I believe the real reason I was not selected for the Chief Assistant City Attorney position is because I am a female over the age of 40, and that Mr. Potter wants to assure that his successor as City Attorney is male.

In addition to the statement he made about a female staff member's breasts, Mr. Potter also referred to another female temporary staff member in our office as a

“Bitch.” He also joked that he needed to, “..go put his wig on” making fun of another female staff member in our office who wears a wig.

I believe Mr. Potter’s conduct and attitude to be discriminatory toward women and feel he has created a hostile work environment for me. I feel Mr. Young has joined Mr. Potter in engaging in retaliatory conduct toward me.

On November 12, Mr. Young approached me at approximately 8:20 a.m. He told me he and Mr. Potter needed to speak with me downstairs at 8:30. I said I had another appointment and he told me not to worry, he had taken care of it. I asked what the discussion was about and he told me it involved a matter of misconduct involving myself.

I went to the HR Department and the director arranged for me to have Lee Lofton, an African American and HR ER/LR Analyst, who routinely sits in on all types of employment matters, sit in on the discussion with me. As we were talking, Mr. Potter and Mr. Young came downstairs, opened the HR Director’s office door and told me I had an appointment with them and needed to go. Mr. Lofton followed me out and they asked him if he was going to be my witness. I said yes. They then told me he could not be my witness because they needed to discuss a matter involving attorney client privilege issues. They told me I could have Dan Lloyd, a white male, as my witness since he is on the litigation team. I objected saying I did not want a representative who was subordinate to them and suggested the HR Director, a female, be my witness. I said since she is a department head, she could be privy to our discussion. They refused to allow her to be my witness and went and got Tim Haldeman, a white male, to be my witness. They then marched me into a small glass encased conference room on the 2nd floor accessible even by the general public and right across from the City Manager’s Office. As we sat down, Mr. Young told me I was the subject of an investigation but did not tell me the nature or the subject of the investigation. I feel the content of the meeting was further discriminatory and retaliatory toward me. After the meeting, Mr. Young pulled out a pre-signed letter and told me I was being placed on paid administrative leave, I was not told why or for how long I was being placed on paid administratively leave. I felt ashamed, embarrassed, violated and was in total shock.

Despite repeated requests for reasons why I was placed on leave, I did not receive any information until over a month after I had been placed on leave. The City kept me on leave for nearly four months, until March 1, 2016. When I was returned to work, some of my work had been taken away, my merit pay increase was delayed and I felt retaliated against and complained of being retaliated against three separate times. Despite being placed on involuntary leave by the City for nearly four months, when I was returned I received no discipline, no mention of any wrongdoing in my subsequent two performance evaluations and also received my full merit increases.

When I returned to work, I was told the jokes were, - if I am an ethical and good employee I might be placed on administrative leave; if someone's card key did not work, they joked they must be being placed on administrative leave.

For a considerable time, the work environment created by Mr. Young and Mr. Potter has caused me to lose sleep, lose weight, throw up and suffer anxiety and panic for which I have sought medical treatment. I have had nightmares about the discriminatory and retaliatory work environment. While on involuntary leave, I felt shunned by my acquaintances, that they believed I had done something terrible to be on leave for so long. I was told that many people I know, who do not work for the City, had found out I was placed on involuntary leave and there were many rumors about what I had done wrong. I was embarrassed to go out in public for fear I might run into people I know.

During the period I was on leave, I also had to explain the situation to my children. They became fearful for their future – every day was agony, not knowing whether I would retain my job or not and having very little communication from the City.

When I did return to work, my return was difficult. There were many important events and meetings I had missed that impacted the service I could provide to my clients. Additionally, it was decided without my knowledge that my work distribution had changed.

Since my return to work, I have obtained numerous documents through a public records request. I am filing a separate Whistleblower complaint based on the information I received.

Debra Quinn