

“My decision to resign was not based on academic politics or on basic personality differences although I am sure the dean viewed it that way. I, who thought I could not be touched by political infighting, who was secure in my own world, even arrogant, had just become a symbol defining the state of our academic medical system, certainly at Stanford, and most probably at other medical schools as well. The fact that Dean David Korn *would* appoint as a chair of my department someone who expressed an overt contempt for women, and lacked the basic fundamentals of humanity, was a direct, hard slap to my face, and confirmed, in a manner vivid enough for all to see, my second-class citizenship within our work environment” (92).

*Frances remains on the Medical Faculty Senate until the first of September. The topic for the meeting following her resignation is sexual harassment.*

“In 1991, sexual harassment, long an ingrained and traditional part of the medical world, was virtually never discussed, nor was it explicitly defined. I was aware Stanford had a history of sexual harassment, particularly in conjunction with my own department, but had chosen to ignore it because it was nebulous, secret, and did not seem particularly important to those who were in a position to stop it. It was a history I was about to discover in detail, the first link in a chain of episodes that finally opened my eyes to reality” (97).

*Luann and Jolie file their grievances with Human Resources in 1988, claiming Gerry had sexually harassed them. Their allegations were never investigated, and dubbed “open to individual interpretation.” What sort of behavior did the allegations concern?*

“They had received numerous thinly veiled invitations from Gerry for sexual activity – they were Hispanic, women, inferiors, and fair game. His frequent suggestive comments heard by everyone in the clinic area – such as “Let’s you and me get it on, babe” and “Bet I could make you happy in bed, sweetheart” – were not really taken seriously, were met with hesitant giggling, but, at the same time, were demeaning and made the two women very uncomfortable...On occasion, they would “jokingly” be backed into corners, or spread-eagled against walls, where escape meant physically pushing the obstructing body while deflecting arms and hands” (98).

*Frances responds: “Was this really ‘sexual harassment’? Were they confusing Gerry’s actions with the innocent touching most of us in medicine are guilty of? ... I had seen Gerry nibble on nurses’ necks and ears or put his arms around their rib cages so their breasts and his arms were in contact. Some even appeared to invite attention from him” (99).*

“I suddenly realized there was something that bothered me even more, something extraordinarily difficult to define. It was not only about touching and fondling – it was an attitude. In my department women had no value. I hate the term ‘sexism’ because there’s no ‘sexuality’ per se in what I am talking about. I was not being pawed or handled in the clinic or office area – that only happened to me in the operating room or at departmental luncheons, away from *conscious* patients. But there was an implicit message in the neurosurgery office routine, and from Gerry’s verbal comments, that I was inferior because I was a woman, and for no other reason. Gerry knew I could hold my own as a neurosurgeon, but somehow he did not see me as an equal...All those years of toughing it out and not thinking about how I was being treated ended abruptly as my conversation with Luann and Jolie continued”(99-100). *Why this change now?*

*The senate meeting is packed, standing room only. Frances opens the floor to any students who want to share their stories anonymously. Among their stories are:*

“I’m not sure how to disguise this – this professor showed a printout of his wife’s uterine contractions to the class and said ‘Of course, none of *you* will experience this.’ And, I thought, can’t he see who’s in the audience? So much of the time our professors make us, as women, just simply disappear – we don’t exist.”

“In one of my classes – our classes – the professor showed a slide of a blow-up doll – you know, the naked woman ones – and told us ‘Meet Angel, your new companion.’ He was discussing respiratory physiology. [The slide was in no way connected to the content of the lecture]. I went to him after the class and said I thought his slide was offensive, and he told me *I* had a problem – *he* didn’t” (102).

*A male professor of radiology poses the question “Why did you men come to the meeting?”*

“I’ll be glad to tell you why – because we don’t like what’s happening to our female classmates...my girlfriend’s been fighting off her goddamn chief resident for the past four weeks. He rubs up against her whenever he can, and pats her butt as a ‘thank you’ any time she does a bit of scut work he’s assigned to her. He’s always got his hands on her. Last week she slapped him after he grabbed at her breast while she was working on a chart, and then he started tussling with her, locking her arms to keep her from slapping him again, and told her how cute she was when she got angry.”

“What’d she do?”

“What do you mean, what’d she do? What *could* she do? He controls her. He’s the one who does her evaluation, and she may need that evaluation for the residency she wants a year from now. If you guys think this is an isolated incident, think again – this guy’s harassed every female student he’s had on his service, and of course he gets away with it. They can’t complain – a bad evaluation lives with you forever.”

**“The students were trying to tell us that we had spent our entire professional lives supporting a structure subject to abuse. It was one that now needed our help so that it might change” (102-103).**