



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# Charles Tang - Case 1 of Cases of Discrimination Against Asian Americans

## Author(s)

Anonymous

## Year

2009

## Description

A case describing obstacles faced by an Asian American in the workforce.

## Body

### Charles Tang: Background

**Personal History:** First-generation Chinese-American, born in Taiwan and raised in San Francisco. Came over from Taiwan when he was six, and now he and his parents and his younger sister are all citizens. His father is a staff physician at a local hospital, and his mother teaches Mandarin Chinese at the local community college. Their social life centers around a Chinese immigrant community in San Francisco.

**High School Accomplishments:** Graduated in the top 10 percent of his senior class, an accomplished tennis player, National Merit finalist, second-chair violinist in the San Francisco Youth Symphony.

College/University: Graduated from the University of Chicago with B.S. and M.S. degrees in electrical engineering. Dated one Asian woman, but the relationship ended badly. Has not dated since.

Employment: Accepted offer as Design Engineer at Dynamo Disk Incorporated, the world's second-largest manufacturer of disk drives for personal computers. Moved in with a buddy (Caucasian) from his high school tennis team who works for another high-technology firm in the Boston area.

## Case

Charles's first assignment was a project to cost-reduce Dynamo's popular but mature product, a 5 1/4-inch floppy disk drive. He had initial problems because his first supervisor was abusing alcohol. The supervisor's behavior finally resulted in his leaving the company. Unfortunately, Charles's career took a hit. With a new supervisor, Charles got back on track and contributed well. He was a quick study and soon made suggestions which were later implemented. A year later, the project had exceeded its objective of a 20% cost reduction, largely due to Charles's ideas. However, his supervisor credited others more than Charles. His subsequent assignments were similar. He worked well on small teams with his contributions generally underestimated due to a perception that his quietness was a sign of a lack of understanding or confidence. Since he rarely complained, his supervisor thought that he was generally satisfied with his job. Having been at Dynamo for five years, Charles began to observe that many of the people who had started at the company with and after him were moving into managerial positions. His roommate was now a department head at his company. Charles felt that he was doing an excellent job and wondered why his opportunity to move up had not arisen. What Charles did not know, was that his peers were effectively networking. They belonged to the same churches and outside organizations as their bosses. Their children played together, and many were active in various social groups.

### Discussion Questions

1. In Charles's early years at Dynamo, what were some of the obstacles he faced?
2. What could Charles have done differently?
3. What could his supervisor have done differently?

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**Resource Type**

Case Study / Scenario

**Parent Collection**

Cases of Discrimination Against Asian Americans

**Topics**

Discrimination in the Workplace

Workplace Ethics

**Discipline(s)**

Engineering

**Publisher**

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