

**E-MAIL CONTRIBUTIONS****Discrimination compromises US national security**

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The MIT report confirmed the widespread discrimination against women in science. Within days of this report came revelations of some very serious security breaches at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Allegedly, one Wen-Ho Lee leaked US atomic secrets regarding the advanced W-88 warheads to China. At the congressional hearings conducted on this matter, DOE administrators defended their hiring of foreign-born scientists in sensitive positions at the national weapons labs by citing a lack of qualified US-born scientists.

In the early 90s, myself and four other women -- all Ph.Ds, all highly qualified in the physical and computational sciences from top universities, all vetted by the extremely competitive Los Alamos Postdoctoral Fellowship application process -- left the very same laboratory that Wen-Ho Lee was employed in, in the very same field of computational physics. Why did we leave? Our opportunities for advancement at Los Alamos were very clearly linked to -- and limited by -- our personal relationships with senior lab scientists. Two women got together and actually alleged sexual harassment, to the predictable detriment of their careers. Three of us simply left without explanation -- two for tenure-track faculty positions, the other for further postdoctoral research elsewhere. No, none of us had children, or were even planning them.

The MIT report cites a poor response to outside offers as an expression of an institution's unconscious discrimination. Los Alamos did not respond with a counter-offer of permanent employment to any of us, despite the obvious prestige of our academic offers...but they sure kept Wen-Ho Lee on. Discrimination thus compromised US national security. Don't believe me? China just tested an advanced nuclear weapon based on the data leaked from Los Alamos, and I know five women who were qualified and in position to do Wen-Ho Lee's job there -- sans the leaks.

Why so few? You can use a rocket scientist to figure that one out: just talk to one for five minutes. Sure, our brilliant careers were probably damaged by gender discrimination. Sure, I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by sexual harassment. And? Those W-88s aimed at everyone's back yard bother me a whole lot more.

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