**Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review**

Submissions from women and men who have experienced discrimination at work while pregnant, or while on or on return to work after taking parental leave

**Submission Number 278**

**Part C Submission Response**

I was working for government agency A (GAA) and applied for a promotion to government agency B (GAB) in May 2010. I was told in November 2010 that I was rated suitable in that process but that there were no vacancies. Friends who worked for GAB told me that there were in fact vacancies and that 2 people had been long-time acting in positions that could have been filled from the process - and that those 2 people's higher duties was continuing. As I had just found out I was pregnant, I decided that I didn't really care and I'd not pursue it. It would have become common knowledge at GAB that I was pregnant given the social and business networks I had established there.  
  
In May 2011, two weeks before the merit list I was on was due to expire and when I was 7 months pregnant, I received a really strange e-mail from GAB's Personnel/Recruitment section reading along the lines of "Hey, we're just doing some housekeeping...the merit list you're on is due to expire. Do you want to stay on it even though there's no jobs?" I was suspicious and responded back to let them know that yes, even though there were no jobs, I did want to be left on the list.  
  
On the day before the merit list was due to expire, I got a phone call from a Director at GAB offering me a job. My friends at GAB told me that the 'rumour mill' at GAB was saying that they had to offer me a job as the 2 people who had been acting in the positions were ranked lower than me and they wanted to give them their promotions, but couldn't without offering one to me. GAB had tried to trick me into agreeing to leave the merit list.  
  
I told the GAB Director that I was pregnant and due to start maternity leave from GAA next week, but that I would be able to return to work full-time in October 2011. They advised that this was okay and that they'd delay my Gazettal until September 2011. This didn't sound right to me - especially when I saw that the 2 people ranked lower than me were gazetted the next week.   
  
  
  
I contacted GAB's recruitment section (whilst on maternity leave from GAA) and challenged the fact that my Gazettal (and effectively my transfer to GAB and substantial payrise) was being withheld until September. GAB's Personnel section advised that a 'mistake' had been made and said that they'd get it sorted out....which they did do. However, I wholeheartedly believe that it wasn't a 'mistake' and that it was a conscious decision by GAB to not have to pay my maternity leave - if I'd never picked up on the issue and challenged it, GAB would have not had to pay my maternity leave from July - September 2011.   
  
I was gazetted the next week and therefore transferred to GAB whilst on maternity leave and they took over paying my maternity leave, albeit a fortnight late. I didn't bother pursuing that issue, even though I was financially disadvantaged for that 2 weeks and this has also affected my increment dates each year since.  
  
My first actual day in the office at GAB was in October 2011. I was basically told 'there's your desk and off you go'. Computer access took 2 weeks to be granted. I went into 10 hours negative flex in my first week - because what could I do without computer access? It took me a number of months to dig myself out of that negative flex.   
  
My colleagues were of little support - to this day, I still believe I was set up to fail by them. Some of them who I was promoted over appeared to resent the fact that I had 'beat' them in the selection process and made it clear to me that as I was getting paid 'the big bucks', I could work things out myself. I was aware of whispers and office gossip that I "wasn't any good", "was useless", "is crap", "doesn't do anything". I asked for help and training but didn't receive it.   
  
I fell pregnant again in 2012 and had a really troublesome pregnancy that meant taking a lot of personal leave. My colleagues continued to bitch and gossip about me. Luckily my (male) manager was very supportive of me, and I was comfortable sharing with him my feelings about the office gossip about me - to which he responded "I have no problem with your work. You do everything I ask of you and do it well. Ignore the haters." That comment really helped me - and I have ignored my haters since.  
  
I'm back at work (full time again) with 2 children under 2, and am finally feeling accepted and valued by GAB and my colleagues, some of whom (not knowing that I know what they were saying about me behind my back) have commented to me "You're like a different person now". No, I'm not a different person - I have managed to rise above the lack of support and hate campaign that was directed at me ever since I joined the organisation. I've also had to deal with knowing that GAB went out of their way to try to NOT promote me (whether or not that was because I was pregnant or because I was an external applicant, or a combination of both).