



PRINT MATTERS

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Ann Adkins
Johnson Press of America
800 N. Court St.
Pontiac, IL 61764

Dear Ms. Adkins,

As I was reading the January 2019 Publisher's Corner – A long journey – it was with a great deal of chagrin that I read the following statement from Marilyn Burkley, "I didn't have the confidence that I could do anything challenging in terms of a job, so I settled for secretarial work." What a belittling statement to all women engaged in "secretarial" work!

Having spent the past 35 years employed in "secretarial" work in one form or another, I have certainly found it more often than not to be a challenging occupation requiring the abilities of a multifaceted individual. I certainly don't feel as though I "settled" for less in any job. Indeed, I believe that it was Ms. Burkley's past "secretarial" experience that helped qualify her for her present position.

Hopefully in the future Ms. Burkley can use her expertise as a writer to be more supportive of women, regardless of their position in the work force.

Sincerely,
Just a "Secretary"

A great lesson for all of us

Hi. I'm ready to come out from behind the curtain. My name is Tracey Timpanaro, and I've been the editor of *Print Matters* for almost a decade now.

It is a job I love very much. This is the first time I have addressed you directly, and there is a very good reason for doing so at this time.

We received an anonymous letter in response to a quote that ran in the Publisher's Corner column of our January issue. The column was a profile on a freelance editor, Marilyn Burkley, and the author of the letter was upset about something Burkley had said. Please read the letter on page 1 for the full story.

The letter absolutely upended me, so I would like to reply here. And I would like to start with an apology. Because I believe the letter writer is 100% correct, and I apologize most profusely for the offense. The thing is, I fervently share the belief that there are no unimportant jobs, and that every person on this earth is equal, regardless of his or her wealth or job or social status. I pride myself on being a free-spirited hippie who is very open-minded and shares kindness with everyone I encounter as I go about my daily life.

In fact, I even remember being appalled at some prejudice I experienced while in high school. I am Caucasian, and my boyfriend was Mexican. We lived in a middle class suburb in Houston, where many domestic workers are Hispanic, and I remember my parents' friends joking that I was going to become a maid. It was a twofold insult: to the nature of the job and to the notion that it was the "only" job Hispanics could have.

The second issue I want to address is that I will take full responsibility for the statement. I wrote the piece, and took copious notes during the interview, but I misinterpreted what Burkley said with disastrous consequences (see sidebar).

Even though that's what I thought she meant, how in the world did that quote not alarm me during the proofing process? It also wasn't caught by the other five women on our team who are equally sensitive and open-minded. And, for the record, all were equally mortified for having let it go through. "I am embarrassed," said one. "Truly awful," said another.

One of the women on our team once worked as a secretary for an organic chemistry professor at a prestigious university. She said he would have been lost without her. "I kept him up-to-date, in line, and in check so he wouldn't always be off on tangents," she said. "If I hadn't kept him on schedule, he would be doing research in the lab, oblivious to what day it was and what had to be accomplished that day."

But back to my culpability. I could try to pin this on my mother, who would willingly admit that she instilled a bit of her Ivy League intellectual snobbery in me, but that wouldn't be fair.

Nor would it be fair to say I was influenced by the era in which I grew up ('70s-'80s), where secretaries did not have the status they deserved. At 52, I can certainly think on my own.

So was it because I was on deadline and under the gun? I say no. After giving the matter some good thought, my conclusion is that even with all my grandstanding about how open-minded and fair I am, there is clearly a bit of bias left in me somewhere. Perhaps that's true of most of us?

In addition to apologizing, I wanted to give all of us a reason to think about where we might have hidden prejudices and how they affect our behavior. So I thank the secretary for shaking my foundations with her letter. I very much appreciate the teachable moment, and I vow to be more careful in all I say and do (and edit!) from this moment forward.

BURKLEY'S CLARIFICATION

As part of our internal discussion about this issue, JPA President Ann Adkins made this comment about the years she spent working as a secretary: "My colleagues unknowingly taught me a great deal about adjusting how I interact with individuals based on needs, personalities and unpredictable human nature." This really rang true for Marilyn Burkley, who said, "This is so true, and one of the hardest things (for me) about being a secretary! I did not have good social skills, especially at 18 when I got my first job. So I was not trying to denigrate the secretarial role. It was just an unfortunate word choice that, if I had noticed it, I would not have used."

Burkley explains further what she was trying to communicate. "By 'settled for' I didn't mean that secretarial work was somehow a lesser job, but that, because there were no job fairs or career counselors at my high school, I wasn't exposed to very many choices," she said. "Therefore, I took the path of least resistance and most familiarity, which was being a secretary like my mother was. I spent the bulk of my working years in secretarial jobs, and believe me, I took umbrage at the 'just a secretary' line. It was hard work and I was not that great at it — for me personally it was not a good fit. I had 'settled' for work that required qualities I didn't have and that did not let me use abilities I did have."



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Publisher's Corner

Women. Working together. Awesome!

Consider these stats:

- 52% of women say they have never had a mentor because they never found the right person to ask.
- 67% of women say they have never been a mentor because they've never been asked.

The Printing Industries of America and Girls Who Print aim to move those statistics in the right direction. The groups have come together to launch the Women's Print Mentoring Network (WPMN), which matches women in the printing and graphic communications industries with their peers. The collaborative effort is meant to address the growing need to develop and retain women as a driving force in their industries. The network will foster relationships and expand networks in order to enhance personal and professional goals.

"We have been working toward this launch for more than a year and we couldn't be more proud," said Adriane Harrison, human relations director at Printing Industries of America and co-founder of the program.



Amy Miller, CEO of Trinity Graphics Inc. and Castle Press, an award-winning business in Anaheim, Calif., was one of the first to sign up as a mentor. "Empowered women empower women," she said. "Our industry is dependent on creating impactful products for our customers. Developing a network of women and helping them grow influence across our industry will help us all tap into the kind of creativity that our customers crave — and ultimately, give our customers a competitive advantage."

Printing Industries of America is the largest graphic arts trade association in North America, representing an industry with 1 million employees. Girls Who Print is the world's largest online network of women in the printing industry, with 8,000 members.

To sign up as a mentor or mentee, or for more information, please visit womensprintmentoring.com.