



DAILY LIFE

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Employment letter from 1939 shows workplace sexism

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It was a few weeks before the Second World War broke out and across the Atlantic Josephine Calavetta was working at a photography studio in New York.

The 22-year-old was impressing her superiors with her skill and work ethic and asked to be transferred to a different studio- Studio #60- in Brooklyn.

She was denied the opportunity. While the vice-president of Grant Photo Corporation admitted he "would be only too glad" for her to take up the position because they knew she was up to the job, he could not allow it "due to the fact that we have to have a man manager in New York City".

GRANT PHOTO CORPORATION

SOLE OWNERS AND OPERATORS OF **TRU FOTO** REGISTERED
STUDIOS TRADE MARK
CAMERA and GENERAL ENLARGING DEPARTMENTS

16-18 WEST TWENTY-SECOND STREET
NEW YORK

August 21, 1939.

Miss J. Calavetta,
S. S. Kresge Co.,
164-01 Jamaica Ave.,
Jamaica, L.I., N.Y.

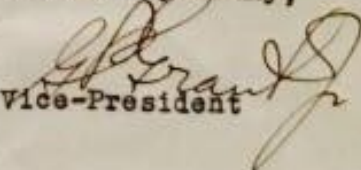
Dear Miss Calavetta:

Miss Anderson has explained to me that you phoned her with regard to a possible transfer to Studio #60, Brooklyn. I wanted to make a point of telling you myself that we would be only too glad to transfer you into this studio, for we know that you can improve it over its present level, but due to the fact that we have to have a man manager in New York City, we have kept Studio #60 for the express purpose of being available in case of emergencies and trouble with equipment.

We would like to agree to your wish, but under the circumstances we have to keep the studio operated by a man.

I intend to visit your studio within the next few days, for I would like to see how the Portrait Lighting is standing up, and to get your reaction to it and also to the "shower bath curtain effect" which we invented for your studio.

Yours very truly,


Vice-President

GPGJr:R

Her story [was published on *Women You Should Know*](#) as part of Women's History Month.

One of Josephine's jobs at the studio was to colour black and white portraits.

"At that time, hand-colouring was a prestigious job, involving meticulous work that required immense skill. Josephine would apply watercolours, coloured oils, crayons or pastels, over a black and white image's surface using brushes, her fingers, or cotton swabs."

A year after the initial rejection, the company received a letter from a client, Mrs Kimball, praising Calavetta's work.

In his reply, the vice-president agreed with Mrs Kimball's assessment, noting "we have difficulty in discovering girls deserving promotions".

Calavetta left the company in 1941 and married Antonio Maneri "who *did*, in fact, have the utmost admiration and respect for the incredible woman she was".

At 94-years-old, the remarkable woman graduated Valedictorian of her class at the assisted living home she lived at until passing away in 2012.

Source: [Women You Should Know](#)

This story was found at: <http://www.dailylife.com.au/life-and-love/work-and-money/employment-letter-from-1939-shows-workplace-sexism-20150304-13ufic.html>