**Interview 16**

Allison S: Okay. Um, so my first question for you is just, do you mind introducing yourself and telling me a little bit about who you are, where you're from, and your education and employment background?

Participant 16: My name is Participant 16. My employment background most recently was in - as an administrative assistant, working for defense companies. Previous to that, was in central writing and editing, and before that was sorry i'm journalism and newspapers journalism and back in the day when they had newspapers a lot. And so... I’m sorry, I think that answers um the crux. Did I miss any detail about the exploring questions.

Allison S: Um just your education. What was your education background?

Participant 16: Okay, my education background is a Bachelor of Arts in English from small college in Pennslyvania, [college name, something science college]. And that's the extent, you know, previous to that I had high school. But I have a BA.

Allison S: Got it, cool. Um where, whereabout did you grow up?

Participant 16: I grew up outside the Philadelphia area.

Allison S: Outside of where? I’m sorry.

Participant 16: The Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area.

Allison S: Oh gotcha, and are you there now? Or you're in DC area?

Participant 16: Yes, I live in the DC area, the suburbs of northern Virginia [something county].

Allison S: Gotcha, got it. Cool. So, in this most recent role, can you tell me a little bit more about what you did day to day and what the company that you worked for was like?

Participant 16: My most recent role, and see, that’s been... I sort of categorize my role and my most recent role because of the contracts. I was contracted, sort of spanned 2012-2018, and so the experience with contracts were very similar. And so, my role was as an administrative assistant, working with lots of contractors. As the administrative assistant slash office manager, because there are I think over 100 people on the program, it was very busy. It was very customer service oriented, customer facing, and so I was working on three or four different computer networks, having to log in to different ones that do different things like email or access databases, and yeah. That’s the general description.

Allison S: Yeah. What kind of companies were you working for?

Participant 16: I was working for defense contracting companies. This most recent one was the DXE after the... after the merge and then sort of spun off, it's very confusing because it was sort of a very hectic environment. It was DXC technologies which, DXC technologies I’m sure, and was formed from the merger of HP and CSC.

Allison S: Got it, and how big were these organizations that you were working with and how many people were like in the office with you at any given time?

Participant 16: So this was a large enterprise and I... Yeah, pretty much...Well, yeah. So this environment was very large, it was like 100 people... It was a classified environment, so I’m just trying to – I don’t want to over-speak here. But see... at different times because the contractors have various meetings and such, I say there are at least a dozen people in the office. It was a large suite, you know, with several dozen offices. So at least a dozen people on in the office at any one time and then, you know, up to several dozen people. But you know, obviously doing their own thing because you know, it wasn't like a big mosh pit or anything. You know not like a big bear pit. I’ve also worked in a newsroom, which is not contesting for a person with a visual disability, but. And so, that was you know much more loud actually, because there's so many people talking at the same time, so yeah.

Allison S: So, day to day, you were working mostly with customers, did you also work with colleagues and coworkers a lot? Were you interacting with other people that you worked with often?

Participant 16: My most recent position at DXC was not particularly collaborative because my job was primarily to get people started, to ramp them up, to get their office set up and troubleshoot any kind of activity or meeting issues. Basically, assisting them to find resources or supplies, tell them about company policy and that sort of thing, and because there were so many people, that was what my primary day to day was like. Previously, I had worked as a template editor and that was much more interactive. So, I had to get documents from people, had to attend meetings, and then provide status, and listen to other people and then sort of find out what might depend - what my work dependencies were to interact, to be part of a whole so to speak, and then look forward to project completion.

Allison S: Got it, and how long were you in that particular role?

Participant 16: In roles of project completion?

Allison S: Yeah.

Participant 16: Let’s see... I have a copy of my resume. From 1998 to... About 19 years.

Allison S: 19 years. Okay, so that was a long time that you were working in that. Okay, gotcha.

Participant 16: To be clear, I had to go from different contractors because either the work was completed and I can move on or was laid off, and then you know, I just had to start a new project actually because that's the nature of the work.

Allison S: Sure, sure. Um, so how did you feel about your different jobs? Like what did you like about them, what did you dislike? And if you could rate your like overall job satisfaction from 1 to 10 with 10 being the best and 1 being the worst, what would you give it?

Participant 16: Okay. I like finishing things, that's one thing about documents I like because there is, it’s very - I don't mean to insert a pun, but it's very black and white because you have... It's very clear when something is done. Although in editing, in copy editing, which was up to me because I had a quote unquote degree in English, everybody says: “okay, defer to him.” Although there were some people who disagreed, because you know there’s a period after. Sometimes things can get petty, that was probably one of the things that bothered me the most. You know, I was supposed to be the - my role was editor, but there are sometimes people, for whatever reason, they didn't have... I have no true knowledge of the motivation, but they will get petty and say: “okay, this is not, this is not matching your grammatical standards” and then they would argue with me. It’s like, I’m the editor. So, there was dependence about that workplace and I'm sure that was probably racism or whatever, but again, I don't know.

Allison S: How long were you an editor for?

Participant 16: Let’s see. I was in the technical writing slash editing field for... for the 19 years. Yeah, off and on. So yeah, I went from different projects and got to work with a lot of people, which was another somewhat - well, I tend to try to draw the best lessons learned from any experience, whether it be perceived as negative or positive, so getting to work with a lot of different people helped me learn different communication styles, or at least be familiar with them and prepare for them. And so yeah, there's no (…) work with that. The positive side, what I liked, was the completion when especially at um - I worked for AT&T, for a stint about um... primarily in the proposal department which is probably the most challenging but also in a way, the most rewarding. Because there was so much to be done and there was some pettiness from some people, some of my coworkers but I was able to - I was working on projects that directly added to people's longevity at that company because I was working on proposals that would bring in new business, and for people's budgets, and so they were able to repay programmers to come on, and so that was very directly helpful to maintain people's employment. So, I was especially proud of that. As I said, it was very challenging because I was learning new technologies and probably working the hardest I’ve ever worked.

Allison S: Did you feel like you could be yourself at your different jobs or did you find that you had to maybe act a certain way?

Participant 16: Um... different work environments. There was one time I um... because this is the study is about Asian Americans, I did spend some time at USA Today. And I worked as an administrative assistant, editorial working, different things, transcribing newscasts. I was able to write my own stories, write for news stories, but I had to do that on my own time so that was very draining. I work primarily on the production side. But in that role, I worked on something with the diversity committee and so, and I also was involved with the Asian American Journalist Association at the time, which was late - well actually early to mid 90s, and so I was very conscious of my minority status racially speaking, and also because our diversity committee which was actually hidden by one of my... well primarily my mentor, who is Caucasian and he sort of started the diversity committee. So yes, I sort of felt bad, but on a day-to-day basis and actually only in retrospect, do I realized that maybe I should have acted certain way, but I only acted the way I thought things that I should... Just you know, race in other words didn’t really play a part. I just, I considered myself a journalist or a researcher and worked from there.

Allison S: When you say in retrospect maybe you should have acted a certain way, what do you mean by that?

Participant 16: Um... At the time, I didn't know that much about the Asian Americans news, about diversity actually, because on a day-to-day basis, I was just going to work. So, I was just doing my thing and actually, I was probably... And that’s where I wouldn’t have now because I left the field, but I was underpaid. There was... I think the journalism field is historically underpaid and understaffed. So. But, looking back on it now may I should have been more cognizant, more supportive, more knowledgeable about Asian American issues. Because being in high school and college, even though I did take Japanese and Chinese politics, that was just a course, course about... It was all sort of centered in other countries, Chinese politics was just so... and I didn't have a lot of education about Asian culture or integration that those who mentioned in high school. And I think that might be because when I was in college, it was very hard for me to catch up, because I'm visually disabled and it was very hard to keep up. So, I was constantly – and I really didn’t have a social life, even more so just because I was always tired or sleeping, if not studying. But it would be... especially with Internet now, we didn't have Internet back then. So now, you can access anything, which I do. There’s streaming services and there’s all these... Asian American culture is in... Actually, more recently, since let’s say Crazy Rich Asians, you know, movies that they are like nationwide, much more, inclusive.

Allison S: Right yeah. Did you feel like your race mattered or impacted how you were viewed or treated at work?

Participant 16: Yes, yes. Um again, I don't remember how. On a day-to-day basis, I would just go to work, especially at USA Today. So yes, I did because there were so many... at least at this newspaper, there were not a lot of Asians, not in the department I was in. But to be clear it was... because USA Today was, you know, sort of a groundbreaking newspaper at the time, it was all colored (...) Very um... Very well-known. Because it looked like um... Remember, you know, remember the TV boxes, the newspaper boxes, they looked like TVs. It was very popular, right, because color was very popular and especially among travelers, business travelers. And so, yes, I was aware of my race at the time, and you know I do... For myself, I don't consider myself really looking that Asian, but I was aware of it, yes.

Allison S: Do you have any experiences that you can remember where you felt like maybe you experienced racial comments, or any kind of stereotyping or discrimination?

Participant 16: I wish I could tell you, um I don't... I don't know anything, experiences, you know, firsthand experiences, because besides being visually impaired and hearing impaired, I am deaf in one ear. So, I think especially because it involves the workplace, I have been discriminated against I think because of my disability, I have been discriminated against... I feel because, just you know, been laid off certain times and also at least in journalism, it’s very competitive So unfortunately, I don’t know any experiences, yeah. I don’t know of any.

Allison S: That's okay, yeah. If you think of something later, you can also always come back to it. Can you think of any times when you felt particularly emotional at work, this could be any kind of emotion, you could have been anxious or happy or really upset or irritable any of those kinds of things?

Participant 16: Okay, so my own personal experience um... When I was in journalism, um I had not planned... Because I'm visually impaired and didn’t think... I wasn't especially good in school, and I didn’t have um... Actually, not very good in math or science at all, so when I chose English, I really didn't have a defined idea of what I was going to do after I got out of college. And so, when I went into journalism and it was just what I thought an English major should go into, either writing or I didn't want to go into \_\_\_\_, so I had to do something that was writing based. So, when I was at USA Today, I was there for several years and I kept on seeing - they had an internship program where they pull other newspapers owned by \_\_\_\_, which was the parent company of USA Today, and so they would come every semester, so to speak. You know, for a few months at a time, and there would be sort of an internship program but there was like, well, people from all the newspapers. And I felt a little... Actually, I felt very marginalized because my positions is... and to be clear, they did give an opportunity to work there, which was great. And this was also after I worked in accounting because I need to get my foot in the door, and so I applied and really, really interviewed hard to get into an accounting position at USA Today. I was working at the time, and then I transferred over to the new section after about 13 months. Again, hired I think because primarily because of my disability. Maybe, through some sort of core program, but possibly including my race. And anyway, I felt irritable at USA Today because there was no... At the time, there was no advancement opportunities. But after a while, and opportunities back then were such that.... there were fewer. I'm not sure if it was me or it was the general work environment. But I think, again, looking back now, I find that opportunity is where you find it. And so it’s really up to you to find it. I wish I had been educated more about finding opportunities in high school and college, but that was not the case. And to be clear, it also fell on me to have that responsibility to do stuff. But I felt irritable because I saw these people, granted they were experienced journals, cycling through every few months but I felt like behind. And luckily, after several years, I did find a mentor who did a worse internship actually, to help me get out to a really small newspaper, about 20,000 circulations in there. And I learned from the ground up why journalism at a small paper is so very, very difficult. It’s even much more difficult than that at a national newspaper. That was, again very challenging, but very informative. So that was my journalism experience. Anxious? I am sorry to go to \_\_\_, but my most anxious experience was at AT&T where there was a lot of rush. To get to these \_\_\_\_ documents because they um... either side will not decide if the company got new business. And I had a disability, and I told my employers that. And they just do different things, um they had me \_\_\_ hearing my phone with their (…) laptops. But race, I don't think... I don’t know for sure if race played a role in how they treated me. But my emotions was... Yeah, anxious is definitely the word. During pauses out, working late hours, listen to meetings, taking direction from several different people, responding... So now I'm trying to go happy. So, happy... Again I guess, we'll go back to the flip side AT&T experience, where there was actually... This sort of qualifies the happy emotion but it was more part happy in part relief in getting projects done because actually, I was responsible for packaging the physical documents to send and so once that was done I was happy. It was out the door and then you know, hands off, leave it up to the customer to decide, to review the information and decide.

Allison S: Back when you felt irritable and anxious, did you feel like you were able to openly express how you were feeling at work or did you feel like you kind of had to just keep it in?

Participant 16: Yeah, I think you had to keep it in if there’s... um definitely, you will try and find a sympathetic ear, but you have to find somebody who's in your role, sort of \_\_\_. And who had time and had bandwidth. And if they had families, they usually don’t have bandwidth. And also in the journalism field, okay that's... You just... that’s not possible. And also being Asian, you don't want to trouble other people because you try to solve things yourself. But I'm trying to think about my most recent experiences and contracting... Yeah again, I keep it myself because your role is to be the whatever it is, whether it’s administrative assistant system or \_\_\_\_\_ or whatever the role was. That's your role and you... It’s a business, and so you have to perform and you know, you just do the best result. And yeah, I think that's just the nature of the business, the nature of work.

Allison S: Was that ever difficult for you?

Participant 16: Um, to keep it to myself?

Allison S: Yeah, or to perform. Or to make sure that you were you know, showing up in the way that you felt like you needed to despite how you were feeling.

Participant 16: Yes, I think so. Because of my disability and the nature of my vision and... So I think physically speaking, it was hard for me. From a racial perspective, I don't know. I don't know, I think that falls... if racism played a part, again, I think because it's a work environment, people, especially employers and managers are aware of the reality of discrimination or perceive discrimination, then they will not let that be obvious. You know, it's also... you know, they don't let you know that they’re discriminating against you. There’s some other policies and some other workarounds.

Allison S: Sure. What was it like working with customers in your more recent role as an administrative assistant and office manager? Was it difficult? Were customers ever difficult to work with, or were they mostly just pretty nice, professional people?

Participant 16: It was a range. There were definitely people who are nice and... like I always believe from my experience, people normally... people can be nice, but people can also be not nice if circumstances warrant you know... Depends on resources and depends on whatever they’re going through, as well as myself, you know, and so... Because it was an especially large program, we did have people who did things that were... that were grounds for dismissal. But there were also people who were very nice, very helpful. Because it was a very challenging program, and the program was I think... This was like four years ago, so the program had to change to a different contractor and so my contractor company was sort of sold to another company and so that was mid program, and that was... so it's very, very challenging, very hectic. So, my experience... So, when I say - to wrap up a little bit, the nice people which... I'm not sure how it could be especially nice because there was staff, and there was me, and there was you know... I was sort of like the hub of certain information, and so I didn't really have a peer, so to speak. I did have an HR manager who was sort of my back-up, but I was in the office, and this was a novice site specific relation, so I really didn't need a peer or have a peer. So... but people were generally nice, generally speaking. Because, you know, it was not nasty. Again, negative... There was one person who just bought some things in that were not allowed by security at the time and I don't want to get into specifics but um... and so that person was reprimanded by one of mid-level managers and I was interviewed to corroborate with what she did, and I just responded honestly, but unfortunately, she was terminated. I don't know what happened to that person, but... yeah that was unfortunate, someone was terminated. Again, that’s nature of work.

Allison S: Sure, sure. Um, is there anything else about your workplace that we haven't discussed that you would want to talk about?

Participant 16: No.

Allison S: No? Okay. Yeah well, those are most of my questions, and it was really great to hear your stories and I have a couple of demographic questions for you, that maybe didn't come up yet. First of all, can you tell me - do you mind telling me your age?

Participant 16: I’m 56.

Allison S: And can you tell me your ethnic background?

Participant 16: Yes, I’m Chinese. My parents were born in China, but I was born here.

Allison S: But you were born here. So you're a second-generation immigrant?

Participant 16: Yes. Yes.

Allison S: Yeah, yeah, yeah sure um. Do you let's see... Oh, I think we already answered all these questions. You're located in DC area, in Virginia yes. Okay, and you grew up in Pennsylvania right? Okay, yeah. Those are all my questions. Yeah. Is there anything else you wanted to talk about or not right now?

Participant 16: No.

Allison S: Cool well, thank you so, so much for your participation. I really appreciate it, and I also have payment for you as compensation for your time for participating. Do you have like Venmo or PayPal by chance?

Participant 16: Um...I think I cancelled my PayPal account. I don’t think I have Venmo.

Allison S: You. Do you take checks?

Participant 16: Yes, I have an address.

Allison S: Sure, well that can work too. I can mail you a check if that's easier too. I don't know if you have Zelle, maybe not?

Participant 16: Oh, I do have Zelle.

Allison S: Zelle? Okay, um is it under your email address or your phone number, do you know?

Participant 16: I think it might be better under my phone. I never tried it with my email address