



**“LEADERSHIP
FLOWS
DOWNHILL”**

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Member Story



When I was eight years old, I immigrated to the United States from South Korea, where we lived under the threat of an invasion from North Korea. Although women have more freedoms and rights in the U.S., I can remember my mother telling me that I had to go to school, study hard, and take care of myself as a woman.

After college, I joined the police force because I enjoyed working with people. However, what I saw was a lot of racism and sexism in the department. I also recognized how detrimental a lack of leadership on these issues can be. That's when I vowed when I advance into leadership, I was going to do things differently.

After leaving policing, I started a new career in water — transitioning to another male dominated field. Despite the obstacles, my dedication to hard work helped me rise through the ranks at a rapid pace.

My goal was to become a general manager. I wanted to be in charge, not because of ego, but because I knew I could create a safe and nurturing environment for women and people of color. I wanted to create a space that I'd want to work in.

Joone Kim-Lopez, General Manager, Moulton Niguel Water District

“Water Needs More DEI Accountability”

There are more than 7,000 water systems in California, and it makes me sad to be one of the few women of color leading a utility. Thankfully, there are more women in the industry than ever before. We still have a long way to go to experience true DEI in the workplace — especially at the top.

What we need is an accurate count of people of color in leadership positions. Then, we must work hard to increase that number. I believe the only way to make DEI a true force in our industry is to harness the support of leaders. There must be incentives that get people to do the right thing around DEI. We need accountability.

I have a lot of faith in our industry. That’s because I know when you are a good person and try to help others, you create a force that is greater than all of the “-isms” combined.

TAKEAWAYS:

- What can you do to help women of color feel seen, heard, and accepted within your workplace?
- If you don’t feel a sense of inclusion within your workplace, have you communicated your thoughts to leadership?
- What value does diversity in leadership bring to a workplace?





Joone Kim-Lopez
General Manager
Moulton Niguel
Water District



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Thank you Joone for sharing your story!
Visit dei.cwea.org for resources or to share your story.

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