



SEXISM—CHINA TAKES ON THE US

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After reading “[Sexism, China Style](#)” on the well-written [China Law Blog](#), which comments on a [posting originally on the “Josh in China” blog](#), and all the associated comments, I have to let fly with a little venting and let y'all in on a little secret...

WOMEN ARE HIRED ON THE BASIS OF THEIR LOOKS, HEIGHT, WEIGHT AND MEASUREMENTS HERE IN AMERICA, TOO! It is just illegal to put these requirements in the job posting or “want ads” or to say that these influence hiring and other work-related decisions in the US

As a woman who has worked both in China and the US I happen to think that China is actually less sexist than is the US (Or maybe the US is more “height-ist”? I am a SHORT woman.) From my standpoint, as a woman working in China, there are fewer obstacles to promotion and success—if a person is competent—than there are in the US And if competence isn’t the only critical factor, at least the other job requirements are listed (height, age, and so on). I say this as an employer and employee in China

In China, [women “hold up half the sky.”](#) That was Mao’s saying to justify women in the workforce at a time when China needed all able-bodied souls to contribute to rebuilding China’s economy and industrial base... that was within a decade or so of Rosie the Riveter reaching prominence in wartime America, by the way... largely for the same reasons. Women in China were out beating on rocks with sledgehammers even in the 1990s—probably still do, though I can’t vouch for this first-hand now. I don’t think of that as sexism.

People often ask what it was like to be a woman working in traditionally male-dominated heavy industry in China, and I always tell them that it was easier in China than in the US. In my case, I believe this was true because my local colleagues saw me first as a foreigner; second, as someone who had decision-making authority AND could speak Chinese; third, as female. In the US, it was “female” first.

Things in China have changed from the Mao days. Capitalism has ushered in higher standards of living (duh), shorter shirts, and the return to SEXISM that traditionally existed in China. (Confucius says a wife is subservient to the husband.) However, let’s not make the mistake in thinking that China is very different from the U.S .on many points—at least from a woman’s point of view.