

The First

Diane was recently elected as president of a prestigious academic organization. She is the first Asian American to serve as president and only the second woman to do so. Diane prepares tirelessly for the first meeting and carefully explains her goals for the organization and decision making process. Still, she notices that some members turn to the vice president, Mike, a white male, for definitive answers. Mike immediately re-directs those questions to Diane. After the meeting, she and Mike talk about it. Diane is worried that members are not taking her seriously. They both hope the situation will improve as members get used to the leadership change.

Later that week, Mike forwards Diane a number of emails that relate to Diane's responsibilities. Diane gets frustrated because the emails should have been sent to her in the first place. In the second meeting, Diane clarifies the difference between her and Mike's responsibilities. Still, some members clearly look to Mike for the final answer on issues under Diane's purview. It is clear that group members are looking to the vice president as the authority.

For Discussion:

- How might group members' perceptions of Diane's identities as an Asian American and a female affect the way she is treated?
- Asian women are often stereotyped as being quiet and deferential. How might Diane's understanding of these stereotypes factor into her decision-making process?
- What would you recommend that Diane do?
- What are Mike's responsibilities in this situation? How can he best support Diane?