

Jobs and Unemployment: Teenagers Facing Backlash of Economy

By Keith Bryant

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Michelle Wong epitomizes what it means to be a parent's dream to see their child strive for success in college.

A sophomore at San Jose State University, Wong paid for her private high school education on her own but is now struggling to find a job in this tough economy.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the jobless rate for teens is 26.4% as of January 2010 compared to 20.3% as of July 2008. This 19 year-old and business savvy student is not feeling hopeful about her job outlook.

"I have been looking for jobs this past school year, but I have not found one that interests me. I want a job in which I could interact with people daily, but unfortunately I have been finding jobs that are not socially active."

Though this action movie lover has her doubts about finding a job at this moment, she is confident that she will have better luck in finding a job in the future.

"I am very optimistic that our economy will turn around, just like it did when my grandparents were living during the Great Depression," said Wong.

Wong's optimism keeps her going as she has experienced much worse hardships in her life than having no luck finding a job. Between the years of 2004-2008, this light-hearted teenager attended Mercy High School in Burlingame and paid a little more than \$16,000 a year for tuition.

This industrious teenager paid for her education by working as a secretary at a hats and scarves company called the Goorin Bros. Company. Wong was paid minimum wage and worked 5 hours every day of the week.

Unlike, many teenagers who lack experience, drive and good work ethic, she possess these outstanding qualities.

According to the same Wall Street Journal article, many employers think teenagers between the ages of 16-19-lack experience, maturity, drive, job skills and work ethic.

However, in Wong's case she is not lacking skills but age. In an article from Youngmoney.com, it reports that employers are hiring people 21 and over because they either have more experience or completed their college education.

"I believe this to be true," stated Wong. "In the many job searches I have been going on with friends, I found twice as many jobs for students who are over 21."

It is a surprise that this international business student has no job. This fun and carefree female is fluent in English, Spanish and several Chinese dialects. Furthermore, she volunteers at a tax agency to gain experience in her career field.

Wong a financial aid recipient is trying to do everything to expand her business skills for her career path but the rising cost of education may cause a roadblock. Currently she pays \$17,000 for college.

Many employers value a future employee's education, but budget cuts toward the California State University system is causing students to be less competitive in our economy.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, of all the people in the labor force for more than half of 2008, those with less than a high school diploma have a higher unemployment rate of 18.7%, compared to 1.3% of people in the labor force with a bachelor's degree.

"If the tuition continues to rise at SJSU it may be very difficult for me to get my bachelor's degree because I am paying tuition with financial aid and my family is too poor to put me through college."

Wong, who comes from Visitation Valley in San Francisco and a low-income family making less than \$35,000 a year, believes she could pull through these economic challenges and achieve her dream of becoming an international business tycoon.

"I am not going to let these economic troubles put me down because I am very hopeful that things will get better and I can achieve my career goal," stated Wong optimistically.

This aspiring international businesswoman is a role model for youth to defeat adversity in these times of economic and financial uncertainty.