

## **Can names be a barrier to be hired?**

Today I read in German news an article about this topic. There, in Germany it is as much an issue as it is in Canada: so, the short answer is yes. However- the suggestions made as a remedy are not acceptable and only represent a short term (individualized) solution to the problem.

The suggestions were: apply with a different name to get into the first round of interviews, if only your first name sounds foreign, apply with an initial only, or apply with a name that is “westernized” or represents a nickname.

These solutions offered show a refusal to deal with the real issue: systemic discrimination against foreigners. It is also an ethical dilemma. Why should anybody in this world have the need to apply with a made-up name or to hide his;/her/their names. Names are part of our identity. Name stand for what we are, representing our family, our culture, our heritage.

Frankly I find these suggestions repelling. The issue of discrimination should be address on a training / HR level, create awareness of synergy that lies in our diversity.

The problem should be addressed in a systemic way just as the problem is systemic.

As a society we should confront such issues head on, not attempting to whitewash it by offering individual solutions if they are solutions at all. I even would go so far as to foresee negative backlash for the individual: for one: would I as an employer what to hire someone who is not honest or lacks the self-esteem to stand up for who they are? Surely not.

But we cannot leave this problem to a “system” alone without recognizing that we all are part of this system. We all have the moral obligation to speak up and point our wherever we see social injustice or racial profiling.