

the Liberator

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LIBERAL ARTS COUNCIL
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS IN AUSTIN

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WHITE RESUMES

May 16, 2016 · by The Liberator Magazine · in Julian Munoz Villarreal, Print Issues, Uncategorized. ·

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Written by: Julian Munoz Villarreal

Applying for jobs is a delicate process. Who we are as potential employees is carefully compiled from class experience, internships, and the people around us. This compilation becomes the narrative we project out into the job market. A lot hinges on that personal portrait. We conflate it, embellishing details, and for some, these flourishes mean changing who you are. Many people of color, women, and queer people choose to change, whiten, and conform themselves in order to appeal to potential employers.

Unlike much of the working world, the University of Texas at Austin is a place where one's identities are often empowered and reaffirmed. Students can major in Women and Gender Studies, take classes on the Black Power movement, join the Asian Business Student Association, walk in Latino Graduation, or join the LGBTQ-inclusive Delta Lambda Phi or Gamma Rho Lambda Greek organizations.

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White presenting resumes...receive twice the number of callbacks, even

PRINT ISSUES

- FALL 2015



~~ "The Language Issue" ~~

MAY 2016

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Yet, this inclusive environment often conflicts with a corporate culture that is largely heteronormative, male, and white. Numerous studies have revealed racial, gendered, and sexual biases in employers' selections during the hiring process. A March 2016 University of Toronto study showed that hiring processes still show favor for more white-presenting resumes over those of people of color. White presenting resumes, marked by having a typical white associated name or professional experiences, receive twice the number of callbacks, even for companies with espoused diversity initiatives.

Brandelyn Franks Flunder, director of the Multicultural Engagement Center, believes many of these initiatives are not fully implemented because of the lack of funding and drive that fosters a diverse work environment. "Diversity is a buzzword," Flunder said. "Diversity is something that companies and organizations can say without giving any resources, time, or talent to making it happen...a lot of companies do not have mechanisms in place to support that diversity."

People of color, women, and queer people often change themselves when writing their resumes, CVs, cover letters, and presentations. In the same University of Toronto study, interviews with Black and Asian students revealed 36% of those students reported "whitening" their resumes, with a further two-thirds responding they know other people who have done so. "Whitening" involves things like changing a name to sound "whiter;" omitting racial identifiers, such as religious or professional organizations; or even including interests that they considered stereotypically white, such as hiking or mission trips.

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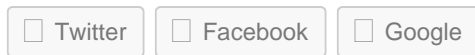
People of color, women, and queer people have different—and often intersecting—ways in which they change their presentation for job

applications and interviews. These alterations include shortening gendered names to initials on resumes for women, straightening hair for black women, or even queer people changing the sound of their voices.

The Liberal Arts Career Services is one of the resources that UT students turn to when constructing their professional narratives in a way that is both representative and professionally successful. Tatem Oldham, Assistant Director of LACS, says the office does not encourage students to change their name nor other personal identifiers, instead encouraging them to “evaluate the corporate culture of an organization as part of their job search process and to evaluate if the organization is a good fit for them.”

Director Franks Flunder understands that some students may choose to change their identity in such a way. Rather than blame those students, she suggests that the pattern of applicants obscuring their identities reflects a wider system of prejudice. She believes, however, that once marginalized people attain these jobs, even when initially changing their narratives, they begin to change the system from the inside.

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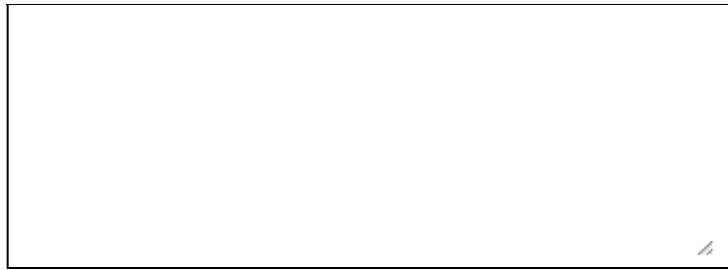
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