

EMPLOYERS IN THE US ADOPT A NON-DISCRIMINATORY EMPLOYMENT POLICY, RIGHT? NOT QUITE



soon to fall much lower than that, now that the President can concentrate on it full-time, it still has not translated into more jobs for the people. Given that the unemployment, when taken in isolation for the black folks is almost double the national average, a black woman decided that she has to do something drastic to get out of this demographic isolation seclusion and up her chances of landing a job. Yolanda Spivey for all her efforts had failed to find employment even after two years and she was unable to pin point the reasons why she was unable to do so. She wondered if those little squares that she ticked-off, indicating race and gender in job-applications, were impacting her marketability. On a hunch, she decided to test an experiment in which she would pretend to be white and see if her search would yield results different from when she projected herself as who she really was, a black woman. She created a Monster.com resume and profile, mentioning her original professional experience, her education and other factors, with one major difference – this time she called herself Bianca White and as the surname she chose denotes, she stated that she was a white woman. Spivey was astounded to find that from day one she began to receive enquiries from prospective employers. She narrated the experience saying that it all began when she noticed that the Job-search engine had added a “diversity questionnaire” to its site. Here the applicants could identify personal details, including gender and race to prospective employers. The site assured applicants that this would in no way negate or endanger their chances of employment. Moreover, Monster said that the questionnaire was mandatory and could not be passed over, whilst applying for a job posted on its site. She said that assuming the site’s contention that it would not adversely impact her job chances, she would write that she was a black woman, but when reservations crept in she began to select the “decline to identify” option. When responses were not forthcoming she assumed that her being black was one of the reasons and then decided to assume the nom-de-plume Bianca White. She said to ensure that the respondents could not cross check, she created an email account and resume for her new name. She did not alter her employment history or her educational qualifications. However, she removed her home phone number, but mentioned just her cell number and changed her cell-phone message to say, “You have reached Bianca White. Please leave a message.” She filled in the diversity questionnaire and this time she released her identity as being a white woman. She received a call on the very first day and the following day she had numerous calls from prospective employers seeking an interview. Spivey was shocked, her worst fears confirmed. Some employers even followed up their first calls with more. All the time her original and factually more correct, Monster.com account, open and active, lay moribund and virtually non-existent, even though it had the same qualifications and accomplishments as Bianca, to the employers who were so desperate to get Bianca on their payrolls. She continued her charade for just a week, but it revealed to her that this talk about employer equality and non-discrimination policies and the importance and value of diversity at the workplace were all a sham, a façade that was consciously and by design being carried out shamelessly and selfishly. Spivey found out, at her expense that identifying yourself as black will certainly constrain your employment prospects and that white people will get preference – the economy can keep plummeting, who cares?