

Comment & Views

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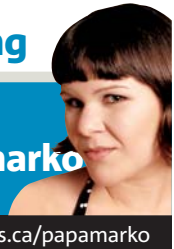
Comment

Thinking outside the jewelry box

Relating

Sofi Papamarko

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Ah, springtime! When a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of love. And, in extreme cases, to thoughts of c-c-c-commitment. (Well, gentlemen. If you like it...)

The glut of engagement ring and wedding band options can be overwhelming. Princess or pear cut? Solitaire or sidestone? White gold or platinum? And do you really need to spend two months' salary on a sparkly?

Many couples are opting for more affordable, ethical, ecological and original options. Here are a few alternatives to going the traditional ring route:

1 Re-purpose old jewelry. "Instead of a wedding band, I wear a ring that my

parents gave me for my 13th birthday," says Allison Outhit, who wed husband James in 2006. "It's five small braided gold bands held together with a little clip. For me, it symbolizes the five members of my immediate family." Rings with stories attached can be far more meaningful than new jewelry. If you've inherited an heirloom necklace or earrings, have a jeweller reset the gemstones into a band.

2 Buy ethically. "There's nothing I can't tell you about my jewelry," says

Ryan Taylor, proprietor of the Fair Trade Jewelry Co. (ftjco.com) in Toronto. Taylor designs rings with ethically mined ore sourced from Colombia via Amichoco's Oro Verde (Green Gold) program and uses Canadian diamonds exclusively. He encourages customers to do their research and ask a lot of questions. Taylor also suggests dealing with makers as opposed to salespeople. "They're passionate and they understand everything about their material. If you're

looking to get the next most significant purchase to a car, you should be getting that sort of service. You should walk out of a place knowing everything about (the ring) you just bought."

3 Do whatever makes you happy. "Jay and I were THIS close to getting Batman wedding rings," says writer Karla Pacheco. "Out of the SkyMall catalog, no less — those fine purveyors of Lord Of The Rings-inspired jewelry, executive phone chargers, and enormous stone Buddhas for the

captive airline audience." Pacheco and her fiancé eventually decided the Batman rings were a touch tacky. They scoured small jewelry shops in their neighbourhood the weekend before their wedding and opted for simple \$75 bands. Says Pacheco, "At the end of the day ... what they symbolize is more important than what they look like or what they cost."

Sofi Papamarko is a 20-something writer based in Toronto. Her heroes include Desmond Morris and Nancy Sinatra.

Views

Keeping pace with growing diversity

Speaking Out

Wendy Cukier



Forward-thinking organizations have shown that effectively managing diversity and embracing inclusion offers a competitive advantage — improving access to skilled workers, growing increasingly diverse and global markets, increasing productivity, and fuelling innovation.

A recent Statistics Canada study adds further fuel to the diversity imperative. By 2031, more than one-quarter of our population could be foreign-born, more than half from Asia. Almost one-third could be visible minorities, nearly double the current rate.

The vast majority (96 per cent) of visible minorities will live in cities, comprising 63 per cent of the population of Toronto, 59 per cent in Vancouver and 31 per cent in Montreal (compared to less than five per cent in smaller towns).

Will we be ready? While progress has undeniably been made, research shows overt and systemic discrimination persists across sectors. The barriers are complex. There is the Catch 22 of no Canadian work experience, no job — no job, no Canadian work experience. Undervaluing foreign credentials, challenges navigating informal job markets, and complex cultural differences are all barriers to full employment.

The underfunding and fragmentation of services for immigrants remains a problem and impedes the matching of skilled workers to employers.

A recent study in Peel region, west of Toronto, revealed that only 40 per cent of immigrants surveyed were satisfied with services they received. This fell to 25 per cent among immigrants with a university education, suggesting the current models and one-size-fits-all approach to language training and job supports are not meeting their needs or expectations.

And racism remains the problem that dares not speak its name. A particularly damning study by Oreopoulous showed that resumés from English-named applicants with Canadian credentials were three times more likely to receive interviews than applicants with Chinese, Indian or Pakistani names and foreign credentials.

The Peel study revealed more than 40 per cent of visible minority immi-

grants were likely to perceive discrimination by employers compared to 22.8 per cent of white immigrants.

What to do? There are no easy solutions to complex problems. An integrated approach is needed to address barriers at all levels. Better pre-immigration counselling, credential recognition and bridging programs, one-stop shopping for support, specialized services and training for more highly educated, more access to internships and mentoring are all important.

Most of all, more work needs to be done within organizations across sectors — government, education and business — to create more welcoming, fair and inclusive environments.

Wendy Cukier is the associate dean of the Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University, and the founder of Ryerson's Diversity Institute.



MICHAEL DE ADDER

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