

Job Applicants Leave Much to be Desired



by Phyllis Chesler

I've been searching for a new assistant. With a former assistant's help, we vetted at least 200 or more applications. This search has confirmed what I already knew but somehow hoped was not true.

The coming generation of college-educated applicants cannot seem to spell and do not write grammatically. Applicants have misspelled my name, used phrases like "I'm gonna," feel totally entitled to their (indoctrinated) opinions and, unasked, do not hesitate to share them in their cover letters.

"If I feel disrespected by a teacher I try to correct them because they are biased and ignorant."

“Your ideas threaten my existence” (this from a she/her).

“I cannot work for someone whose ideas I don’t approve of.”

When asked to name some books they’ve read or enjoyed among the Western canon, the classics, one applicant said “Zane Grey westerns.” Another listed their favorite classics as “Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald.” A third referred mainly to Romance, Magical, and Horror titles. A fourth only mentioned books by women and men of color.

With two wonderful exceptions, no one had heard of and/or ever read or chose to mention any second wave radical feminist work—or, for that matter, had even a nodding acquaintance with Homer, the ancient Greek playwrights, Chaucer, St. Augustine, Shakespeare, Rousseau, Voltaire, Coleridge, Wordsworth, George Eliot, Collette, Virginia Woolf, Walt Whitman, Charles Dickens, Tolstoy, Simone de Beauvoir—just on and on.

There was one applicant who is religious and studies the Hebrew Bible...and I was sorely tempted to hire him sight unseen but cannot do so.

A good friend advised me to be prepared for no-shows—and for those who do show up, for the most profound regrets if I end up hiring them.

“Don’t be surprised if they walk out in the middle of the day without a backward glance.”

Only a handful of applicants had even a passing acquaintance with foreign policy, the Middle East, religion, or history.

Well, I once had an assistant who was technologically very competent and reliable but who said she prided herself on never having read a book written before 1985. I had another assistant, but only briefly, who came right over to me to announce that she did not agree with what I had published; that in her view, feminism fought for the right for women to

parade about half-naked, even naked, if that's what they wanted to do.

Why am I surprised? I and others have been writing about this slow-motion educational train wreck for a long time.

But there is some good news too. One-only one-applicant specializes in 19th Century Literature, has an M.A and will be pursuing a Ph.D.

Reader, I may very well hire her. Clearly, we both reside in the past, prize language and literature and may actually be able to communicate with each other.