

126428 - Giving children western names in order to avoid racial discrimination

the question

My husband and I will be blessed with a baby boy soon inshallah. We have been discussing names since our marriage three years ago and could not seem to agree. My husband, an Arab, would like to name his children English names because of the society we live in. Through his experience, he is afraid that his children will be limited / discriminated against in their abilities in life (specifically Job opportunities) due to stereotyping / racism in North America. I am a non-Arab and would like to name our children Arabic names because they are beautiful and I believe it will keep them connected with their cultures and religion. Although I understand my husbands concerns completely, I am afraid that giving them purely English names would encourage complete assimilation into the Western culture. I requested that he selects a name that sounds English but is Arabic ... he seemed okay with it, but always returns with English names such as Daniel! I do not want to push him into naming our child something he will not like. We have compromised on a name which is an Arabic word and an English name: "Dean". Is this name okay to name a baby boy?.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

We were happy to read what you said about Arabic names connecting a person to his origins and reducing his assimilation into western society. Hence you should adhere to this view and choose a good name which will show that the child is a Muslim, because this is part of the identity to which he must adhere and preserve.

With regard to what your husband said about jobs and racial stereotyping, although your husband has some justification for that, it is not as strong an argument as the fear of the evil of assimilation into society and loss of identity, and being deprived of the opportunity to show one's Islam openly and call people to it. This is what a person should be keen to do and hope that

his children will be callers to their religion, adhering to it and feeling proud of their values and origins.

Moreover, no one knows the future except Allaah. Reality today indicates that Islam is spreading quickly and is advancing in those societies, praise be to Allaah.

Our advice is to choose a good name for your son from among well known Muslim names such as Muhammad, Ahmad and ‘Abd al-Rahmaan. Every person has a share of his name. Muslim (2132) narrated that Ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The most beloved of your names to Allaah are ‘Abd-Allaah and ‘Abd al-Rahmaan.”

Secondly:

It is makrooh to name a child Dean because there are some reservations about this name: he may be asked about in the house, such as saying “Is Dean there?” or “Is Dean with you?” [which in Arabic sounds like asking if there is any religious commitment, or do you have any religious commitment?], and the answer may be no, which is an odd and weird thing to say, because it implies that there is no religious commitment in the house.

Muslim (2136) also narrated that Samurah ibn Jundab said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade us to give our slaves four names: Aflah (successful), Rabaah (profit), Yasaar (wealth) and Naafi’ (beneficial).

Al-Tirmidhi narrated it as follows: “Do not call your slave Rabaah or Aflah or Yasaar or Najeeth, lest it be said “is he [that quality] there?” and it be said no.” Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Sunan al-Tirmidhi.

For more information on the etiquette of naming children, please see the answer to question no. [1692](#).

We ask Allaah to guide you.

And Allaah knows best.