

Yolo. Wolf. Chia. Which one isn't a child's name? (Hint: All three appeared on several birth certificates last year.)

In a world where simply being unique isn't good enough anymore, some parents have taken to naming their kid exactly that — Unique. Or Eunique, depending on how they prefer to spell it. More than half of parents polled last year said they favor unusual names, which is up nearly 10 percent from 2013, according to the parenting site BabyCenter.com. And this trend is only expected to grow, say researchers, who've found that more than ever, baby naming is tethered to a narcissistic urge to be different. Jean Twenge, author of *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement*, poses this question: "Does having a name like Messiah then predispose you to narcissism?"

There's been a rise in more distinct names like Messiah, Major and even Princess.

Unusual names are nothing new, though they've recently become more commonplace and at the same time more differentiated. While society went through individualistic swings in the past, as people moved from more communal dwellings to urban centers, these days the shift away from blue-collar gigs to more white-collar jobs is driving the movement from "we" to "I." That's because white-collar professions reward standing out — or, more aptly, rising above — whereas the working class tends to promote collectivism. "People higher in social status show a greater preference for uniqueness and tendency toward narcissism," says Arizona State psychology professor Michael Varnum. No wonder there's been a rise in more distinct but suggestive names like Messiah, Major and even Princess in the past couple of years.

[So, why are there more unique names today?]

Exclusive-sounding titles aren't all bad, of course. Thorvald Blough's name reflects his family's tradition of carrying on patronyms based on his male ancestors. (He goes by Thor because it's easier for people to "cope" with.) The fact that it's also the name of a Scandinavian superhero? Well, that's been helpful inspiration — especially when the 23-year-old recently moved from his hometown in California to London to pursue a career as an opera singer. "Not many people would do that," he says. "Maybe having the name Thor and always being a little bit different gave me the confidence."

Being a male opera singer is one thing, but how many greats do you know with the name Thor? Some studies show many of us live up to the names we're given — Denises are more likely to become dentists, Lawrences lawyers and Raymonds radiologists. So there might be something to calling your kid King. At the same time, unusual names can also be correlated to lower levels of social adjustment if they're too different. Most people are subconsciously attracted to the familiar, so they tend to be drawn to, say, the names Elizabeth or David instead of Juju or Braven (both of which showed up on birth certificates last year). "The interesting paradox is although people still prefer more common names, parents are less likely to give more common names," Twenge says. "They place more emphasis on uniqueness."

Overall, parents are more likely to pick outlandish or gender-flexible references for girls, such as Shiloh or Hayden. Meanwhile women's names rarely get passed down through the family tree the way men's names do, which is a sign society still puts more worth in men than women, some experts say. Names that sound like they're from lower socio-economic classes or minorities are also often discriminated against. For instance, job applicants with "black-sounding" names are less likely to get callbacks. And professors don't respond as often to emails from students with feminine or ethnic monikers. "You have to be careful: Naming practices reflect — and reinforce — values," says Ryan Brown, a professor at the University of Oklahoma.

↑ what does this mean?

It's a never-ending cycle: As the poor begin to borrow names from the rich, the rich keep finding new syllables to differentiate themselves. That could explain how you end up with names like Apple (thanks, Gwyneth) or North West (courtesy of Kanye and Kim). "Now there are no rules," Twenge says. "We'll name our kid after a fruit or a direction, or two directions."

→ Do you think names reflect socio-economic status?

Agree

Names *Nombres*

By Julia Alvarez

When we arrived in New York City, our names changed almost immediately. At Immigration, the officer asked my father, *Mister Elbures*, if he had anything to declare. My father shook his head no, and we were waved through. I was too afraid we wouldn't be let in if I corrected the man's pronunciation, but I said our name to myself, opening my mouth wide for the organ blast of the *a*, trilling my tongue for the drumroll of the *r*, *All-vah-rrr-es!* How could anyone get *Elbures* out of that orchestra of sound?

At the hotel my mother was *Missus Alburest*, and I was *little girl*, as in "Hey, little girl, stop riding the elevator up and down. It's not a toy."

When we moved into our new apartment building, the super called my father *Mister Alberase*, and the neighbors who became mother's friends pronounced her name *Jew-lee-ah* instead of *Hoo-lee-ah*. I, as her namesake, was known as *Hoo-lee-ah* at home. But at school I was *Judy* or *Judith*, and once an English teacher mistook me for *Juliet*.

It took a while to get used to my new names. I wondered if I shouldn't correct my teachers and new friends. But my mother argued that it didn't matter. "You know what your friend Shakespeare said, 'A rose by any other name would be as sweet.'" My family had gotten into the habit of calling any literary figure "my friend" because I had begun to write poems and stories in English class.

By the time I was in high school, I was a popular kid, and it showed in my name. Friends called me *Jules* or *Hey Jude*, and once a group of troublemaking friends my mother forbade me to hang out with called me *Alcatraz*. I was *Hoo-lee-tah* only to Mami and Papi and uncles and aunts who came over to eat *sancocho*¹ on Sunday afternoons — old world folk whom I would just as soon go back to where they came from and leave me to pursue whatever mischief I wanted to in America. JUDY ALCATRAZ: the name on the wanted poster would read. Who would ever trace her to me?

My older sister had the hardest time getting an American name for herself because *Mauricia* did not translate into English. Ironically,

although she had the most foreign-sounding name, she and I were the Americans in the family. We had been born in New York City when our parents had first tried immigration and then gone back "home," too homesick to stay. My mother often told the story of how she had almost changed my sister's name in the hospital.

After the delivery, Mami and some other new mothers were cooing over their new baby sons and daughters and exchanging names and weights and delivery stories. My mother was embarrassed among the Sallys and Janes and Georges and Johns to reveal the rich, noisy name of *Mauricia*, so when her turn came to brag, she gave her baby's name as *Maureen*.

"Why'd ya give her an Irish name with so many pretty Spanish names to choose from?" one of the women asked her.

My mother blushed and admitted her baby's real name to the group. Her mother-in-law had recently died, she apologized, and her husband had insisted that the first daughter be named after his mother, *Mauran*. My mother thought it the ugliest name she had ever heard, and she talked my father into what she believed was an improvement, a combination of *Mauran* and her own mother's name, *Felicia*.

"Her name is Mao-ree-shee-ah," my mother said to the group.

"Why that's a beautiful name," the new mothers cried. "*Moor-ee-sha*, *Moor-ee-sha*," they cooed into the pink blanket. *Moor-ee-sha* it was when we returned to the states eleven years later. Sometimes, American tongues found even that mispronunciation tough to say and called her *Maria* or *Marsha* or *Maudy* from her nickname *Maury*. I pitied her. What an awful name to have to transport across borders!

My little sister, Ana, had the easiest time of all. She was plain *Anne*—that is, only her name was plain, for she turned out to be the pale, blond "American beauty" in the family. The only Hispanic-seeming thing about her was the affectionate nicknames her boyfriends sometimes gave her, *Anita*, or as one goofy guy used to sing to her to the tune of the banana advertisement, *Anita Banana*.

Later, during her college years in the late 60's, there was a push to pronounce Third World names correctly. I remember calling her long distance at her group house and a roommate answering.

"Can I speak to Ana?" I asked, pronouncing her name the American way.

"Ana?" The man's voice hesitated. "Oh! You must mean *An-nah!*"

¹*sancocho* traditional Caribbean stew of meat and vegetables

Our first few years in the States, though, ethnicity was not yet “in.” Those were the blond, blue-eyed, bobby-sock years of junior high and high school before the 60’s ushered in peasant blouses, hoop earrings, *sarapes*.² My initial desire to be known by my correct Dominican name faded. I just wanted to be Judy and merge with the Sallys and Janes in my class. But inevitably, my accent and coloring gave me away. “So where are you from, Judy?”

“New York,” I told my classmates. After all, I had been born blocks away at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

“I mean, *originally*.”

“From the Caribbean,” I answered vaguely, for if I specified, no one was quite sure what continent our island was located on.

“Really? I’ve been to Bermuda. We went last April for spring vacation. I got the worst sunburn! So, are you from Portoriko?”

“No,” I shook my head. “From the Dominican Republic.”

“Where’s that?”

“South of Bermuda.”

They were just being curious, I knew, but I burned with shame whenever they singled me out as a “foreigner,” a rare, exotic friend.

“Say your name in Spanish, oh, please say it!” I had made mouths drop one day by rattling off my full name, which, according to Dominican custom, included my middle names, Mother’s and Father’s surnames for four generations back.

“Julia Altagracia Maria Teresa Alvarez Tavarez Perello Espiaillat Julia Perez Rochet Gonzalez.” I pronounced it slowly, a name as chaotic with sounds as a Middle Eastern bazaar or market day in a South American village.

I suffered most whenever my extended family attended school occasions. For my graduation, they all came, the whole noisy foreign-looking lot of fat aunts in their dark mourning dresses and hair nets, uncles with full, droopy mustaches and baby-blue or salmon-colored suits and white pointy shoes and fedora hats, the many little cousins who snuck in without tickets. They sat in the first row in order to better understand the American’s fast-spoken English. But how could they listen when they were constantly speaking among themselves in florid-sounding³ phrases, rococo⁴ consonants, rich, rhyming vowels?

² *sarapes* A long, blanket-like shawl

³ *florid-sounding* flowery; very ornate

⁴ *rococo* elaborate; flamboyant

Their loud voices carried.

Introducing them to my friends was a further trial to me. These relatives had such complicated names and there were so many of them, and their relationships to myself were so convoluted.⁵ There was my Tia Josefina, who was not really an aunt but a much older cousin. And her daughter, Aida Margarita, who was adopted, *una hija de crianza*.⁶ My uncle of affection, Tio Jose, brought my *madrina*.⁷ Tia Amelia and her *comadre*.⁸ Tia Pilar. My friends rarely had more than their nuclear family to introduce, youthful, glamorous-looking couples (“Mom and Dad”) who skied and played tennis and took their kids for spring vacations to Bermuda.

After the commencement ceremony, my family waited outside in the parking lot while my friends and I signed yearbooks with nicknames which recalled our high school good times: “Beans” and “Pepperoni” and “Alcatraz.” We hugged and cried and promised to keep in touch.

Sometimes if our goodbyes went on too long, I heard my father’s voice calling out across the parking lot. “*Hoo-lee-tah! Vamanos!*”⁹

Back home, my tios and tias and primas, Mami and Papi, and *mis hermanas*.¹⁰ had a party for me with *sancocho* and a store-bought *pudin*.¹¹ inscribed with *Happy Graduation, Julie*. There were so many gifts—that was a plus to a large family! I got several wallets and a suitcase with my initials and a graduation charm from my godmother and money from my uncles. The biggest gift was a portable typewriter from my parents for writing my stories and poems.

Someday, my family predicted, my name would be well-known throughout the United States. I laughed to myself, wondering which one I would go by.

⁵ *convoluted* difficult to understand; complicated

⁶ *una hija de crianza* a child raised as if one’s own

⁷ *madrina* godmother

⁸ *comadre* close friend

⁹ *Vamanos* Let’s go!

¹⁰ *mis hermanas* my sisters

¹¹ *pudin* pudding

1. What are the writer’s feelings about how Americans pronounced her and her family’s names?
2. In the essay, Alvarez notes that her mother thought that the pronunciation of her name didn’t matter. Do you agree with Alvarez’s mother? Why or why not?

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New Life in U.S. No Longer Means New Name

By SAM ROBERTS

For many 19th- and 20th-century immigrants or their children, it was a rite of passage: Arriving in America, they adopted a new identity.

Charles Steinweg, the German-born piano maker, changed his name to Steinway (in part because English instruments were deemed to be superior). Tom Lee, a Tong leader who would become the unofficial mayor of Chinatown in Manhattan, was originally Wong Ah Ling. Anne Bancroft, who was born in the Bronx, was Anna Maria Louisa Italiano.

The rationale was straightforward: adopting names that sounded more American might help immigrants speed assimilation, avoid detection, deter discrimination or just be better for the businesses they hoped to start in their new homeland.

Today, most experts agree, that traditional immigrant ^(tactic) gambit has all but disappeared.

"For the most part, nobody changes to American names any more at all," said Cheryl R. David, former chairwoman of the New York chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

Precise comparative statistics are hard to come by, and experts say there was most likely no one precise moment when the practice fell off. It began to decline within the last few decades, they say, and the evidence of its rarity, if not formally quantified, can be found in almost any American courthouse.

The New York Times examined the more than 500 applications for name changes in June at the Civil Court in New York, which has a greater foreign-born population than any other city in the United States. Only a half dozen or so of those applications appeared to be obviously intended to Anglicize or abbreviate the surnames that immigrants or their families arrived with from Latin America or Asia. (A few Russians and Eastern Europeans did, but about as many embraced their family's original surnames as adopted new ones.)

The vast majority of people with clearly ethnic surnames who applied to change them did so as a result of marriage (belatedly adopting a spouse's surname or creating a new hyphenated one) or childbirth (because they were legally identified when they were born only as a male or female child or were adopting a parent's name).

Iyata Ishimabet Maini Valdene Archibald of Brooklyn changed her name to Ishimabet Makini Valdene Bryce. Guo Wi Chan of Forest Hills, Queens, changed his to Ryan Guowei Chan. And after Jing Qiu Wu, the Flushing, Queens, mother of 5-year-old Star Jing Garcia, divorced, she renamed her daughter Star Rain Wu, dropping her husband's surname.

Several dropped Mohammed as a first name, adopting Najmul or Hayat instead. And one older couple changed their last name from Islam to Khan, but they said they were conforming to other younger family members rather than reacting to discrimination.

Sociologists say the United States is simply a more multicultural country today (think the Kardashian sisters or Renée Zellweger, for instance, who decades ago might have been encouraged to Anglicize their names), and they add that blending in by changing a name is not as effective for Asians and Latin Americans who, arguably, may be more easily identified by physical characteristics than some Europeans were in the 19th century and early 20th century.

Also, at least in certain circumstances, affirmative action and similar programs have transformed ethnic identity into a potential asset.

"If you are talking about 1910, the social forces on conformity were much stronger," said Marian Smith, senior historian of the United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, "whereas now an immigrant arrives with all these legal and identity documents, a driver's license in their pocket, a passport, with one name on it. To change this is a big deal."

Douglas S. Massey, a Princeton University sociologist, suggested that newcomers from overseas and their children no longer felt pressure to change their surnames beginning "during the 1970s and 1980s, as immigration became more a part of American life and the civil rights movement legitimated in-group pride as something to be cultivated."

You can apply to the State Supreme Court to change your name (for \$210) or to Civil Court (for \$65) as long as you swear that you are not wanted for a crime and are not doing so to defraud anyone. Immigrants can simply check a box on their applications for naturalization. (The government said that in 2005 fewer than one in six did so, and for every possible reason.)

A century or so ago, some names were simplified by shipping agents as immigrants boarded ships in Europe. Others were transliterated, but rarely changed, by immigration officials at Ellis Island. Many newcomers changed their names legally, from Sapusnick to Phillips (“difficulty in pronouncing name, interferes with their business,” according to a legal notice), Laskowsky to Lake (“former name not American”) and from Katchka to Kalin (Katchka means duck in Yiddish and a particular Mr. Katchka was “subjected to ridicule and annoyance because of this”).

Most requests appear to have been granted routinely, although as recently as 1967, a Civil Court judge in Brooklyn refused to change Samuel Weinberg’s family name to Lansing “for future business reasons, such that my sons shall not bear any possible stigma.” The judge’s name was Jacob Weinberg.

During World War I, another Brooklyn judge refused the application of a Weitz to become a Weeks. (1914-1918)

“There is no good reason why persons of German extraction should be permitted to conceal the fact by adopting through the aid of the court names of American or English origin,” the judge ruled. “It may involve some moral courage to bear German surnames or patronymics in these days, but the discomfort can best be borne by a display of genuine loyalty to this country.” *Why would they want to hide their German heritage?*

Physical appearance Nancy Foner, a sociology professor at Hunter College of the City University of New York, said: “Jews and Italians changed their surnames in the past so that people wouldn’t identify them as Jews or Italians, the famous cases of course being movie stars. But if you look, [phenotypically], nonwhite — East Asian, for example, or black — changing your last name is not going to make a difference. Betty Joan Perske became Lauren Bacall, and most people didn’t know she was Jewish; whatever name she used, Lena Horne was black.”

Lisa Chang, whose parents came from Korea in 1976, had assumed she would marry a Korean man, but decided to retain her maiden name when she wed a Caucasian instead.

“I felt like I would lose a part of myself and my Korean heritage and like I was cheating on my family’s name,” said Ms. Chang, 28, a troubleshooter for online advertising sites. “No one actually told me I had to change my last name, but I did feel some pressure from my future in-laws.”

Marija Sajkas, 40, a health care advocate who moved from Yugoslavia seven years ago, is adopting her Bosnian husband’s surname, Tomic — partly because it is easier to pronounce.

"I am fortunate," she said, "to have a great husband who also has a pronounceable surname."

Even these days, finding precisely the right adoptive name — one syllable or not — can be a problem. Not long ago, David M. Glauber, a Manhattan public relations executive, grew tired of having to spell his name every time he left a telephone message. Instead, he legally changed his name to Grant. The first time he left a message, a secretary asked: "Is that Grand with a 'd' or Grant with a 't'?"

Sam Roberts's grandfather arrived in the United States as Samuel Rabinowitz. His family first changed the name to Rubin, then to Roberts.

"Names" by Ruth Stone

4

This belongs to the following resource(s):

Becoming American: Exploring Names and Identities [1]

My grandmother's name was Nora Swan.

Old Aden Swan was her father. But who was her mother?

I don't know my great-grandmother's name.

I don't know how many children she bore.

Like rings of a tree the years of woman's fertility.

Who were my great-aunt Swans?

For every year a child; diphtheria, dropsy, typhoid.

Who can bother naming all those women churning butter,
leaning on scrub boards, holding to iron bedposts,
sweating in labor?

My grandmother knew the names of all the plants on the mountain.

Those were the names she spoke of to me. Sorrel, lamb's ear,
spleenwort, heal-all; never go hungry, she said, when you can
gather a pot of greens.

She had a finely drawn head under a smooth cap of hair
pulled back to a bun. Her deep-set eyes were quick to notice
in love and anger.

Who are the women who nurtured her for me?

Who handed her in swaddling flannel to my great-grandmother's
breast?

Who are the women who brought my great-grandmother tea
and straightened her bed? As anemone in midsummer, the air
cannot find them and grandmother's been at rest for forty years.

In me are all the names I can remember—pennyroyal, boneset,
bedstraw, toadflax—from whom I did descend in perpetuity.

"If I had been called Sabrina or Ann, she said"

5

By Marge Piercy

I'm the only poet with the name.
Can you imagine a prima ballerina named
Marge? Marge Curie, Nobel Prize winner.
Empress Marge. My lady Marge? Rhymes with
large/charge/barge. Workingclass?
Definitely. Any attempt to doll it up
(Mar-gee? Mar-gette? Margelina?
Margarine?) makes it worse. Name
like an oilcan, like a bedroom
slipper, like a box of baking soda,
useful, plain; impossible for foreigners,
from French to Japanese, to pronounce.
My own grandmother called me what
could only be rendered in English
as Mousie. O my parents, what
you did unto me, forever. Even
my tombstone will look like a cartoon.

"Untitled"

6

By Bakari Chavanu

I changed my name to Bakari Chavanu six years ago and my mom still won't pronounce it. The mail she sends is still addressed to Johnnie McCowan. I was named after my father. When I brought up the subject with her of changing my name, she said my father would turn over in his grave, and "besides," she said, "how could you be my son if you changed your name?"

I knew she was responding emotionally to what I decided to do. I knew and respected also that she was, of course, the giver of my life and my first identity, but how do I make her understand the larger picture? That the lives of people are more than their families and their birth names, that my identity was taken from me, from her, from my father, from my sister, from countless generations of my people enslaved for the benefit of others? How do I make her understand what it means for a kidnapped people to reclaim their identity? How do I help her understand the need for people of African descent to reclaim themselves?

"Sam Austin"

(7)

By Sam Austin

My name is an all encompassing, fully endowed, drench soaked, burnt and charred entity, glazed over with a dark molasses finish. And then given a strong strawberry smoke. It's a sweet song that every time you hear it sounds better than the last

If spoken correctly, it can get you the sweetest of love or the harshest of hate. Sam to Sammy to Samuel. I've heard those plus some. A man from the streets once told me it's not what you do, but how good you look doing it. And he's halfway right. If you flip my name just right, it gives the feel of an old 1930's gangster Dillinger, or a modern day Casanova. It's the way the girl down the street tosses in an extra long am into my name. "Hey Saaaaaam." Or the way that pretty girl with the sensual accent throws that low and long aaah into my name.

Mary.

(8)

Mary was a hand-me-down
from Grandma.

I was
the "Little Mary"
on holiday packages.
Merry Christmas:

Mary, mother of God,
who is a strong woman
in a male dominated religion.
Me,
a lone girl,
in a world of testosterone.
Because of her,
it means sorrow and grief—
I am very sad about this.

"How does your garden grow?" they often ask.
With colorful fruit like the pictures
I attempt to paint,
and beautiful flowers like the poems
I try to write.

They had
three little kids in a row,
and the middle one's me.

Mary, Mary, not always contrary.

"Sekou" (9)

I have a very unusual name. Not as unusual as I used to think because just last year I came face to face with another Sekou. He didn't look much like me, and we probably had very little in common, but when I stood in front of him and shook his hand, I felt we had some kind of secret bond. I could tell he felt the same way.

One day I asked my mom about my name, "How did you come to name me Sekou?"

"Well," she said, "I used to work with convicts, tutoring them, and one day as I walked across the prison courtyard, I heard someone yell, 'Hey, Sekou!' I thought to myself, 'Wow. What great name.' And I remembered it."

I didn't know how I felt being named after some inmate, but I've always been thankful for having it. I couldn't imagine hearing my name and wondering if they were talking to me or the other guy with the same name. I wouldn't like walking into a little gift shop and seeing my name carved onto a key chain. I've heard that somewhere in Northern Africa my name is quite common.

My name has a special meaning. Sekou Shaka, my first and middle name, together mean learned warrior. That's the way I'd like to see myself: Fighting the battle of life with the weapon of knowledge.

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing.

It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse--which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female-but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong.

My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild, horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it.

And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.

At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name Magdalena--which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least- -can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza. would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.

Jorje

The first day of school is always tough. New teachers and new classmates can make anyone a little nervous. As the teacher begins calling roll, I brace myself for the inevitable. And then it happens, a chill goes up my spine as the teacher calls out, "Is Jorje Chica present?" What's wrong with that, you may ask? Well, if you heard the brutal mispronunciation, you would understand. I find myself saying, "It's just George, with a G." In elementary school, giggles and laughter would follow. This laughter hurt me inside. At that moment, I would wish that I had a normal name. As school went on, my name would take the brunt of much teasing. "George Porgy pudding pie," the other kids would say. And, of course, there's the famous "George of the Jungle, watch out for that tree!"

It's been said that people like to hear their names. Personally, I think it depends on who is saying it. In school and in public, I play it safe by using George. Only at home or with my Hispanic friends am I comfortable with Jorje. Why is this so? I shouldn't have to do this, but hearing my name distorted, accidentally or purposely, hurts inside. I shield myself by settling with the Anglo "George." However, I do like to hear my true name. When my mother or grandmother calls me, my name sounds beautiful. I feel pride for my name, as well as my heritage. However, when someone really screws up on the pronunciation it sounds like a needle being dragged across a record. When this happens, I retreat into my American persona.

I am proud of my name. Either way you say it, it has a long and great history. Jorje comes from the Greek name George. The name George originated from the Georgics, a poetic treatise on agriculture by the Roman poet Virgil. Thus comes the meaning "farmer." In Biblical times, a Roman soldier named George converted a Lybian village to Christianity, after slaying a dragon which victimized the town. He was made a saint, and in the 14th century he was made patron saint of England. This proclamation led to seven British monarchs named George. The name George is also important on American soil. Our first president, George Washington, has been a favorite of Americans for the last 200 years. His popularity will no doubt, ensure the longevity of the name George in the United States.

My name may have a long and celebrated history, but it has more personal meaning to me. It represents a new beginning and a positive future. I'm the first in my family to have the name Jorje, so it's a fresh and unused name. I don't have to live up to the achievements of someone else, just because we share a name. My name is also unique. It differs in spelling from the Spanish Jorje. Another positive aspect of my name is the reason my mother chose it. In Cuba, my parents' homeland, my mother had a friend named Jorje. He had certain qualities that she wanted in her children. She said to me, "He was very noble, and was a good friend." She went on to say, "The name Jorje brings to mind great men and grand achievements. I guess had great expectations for you."

What use do names have for us? Names perform the public task of separating us from others. But, a number could do the same thing. There has to be more to a name than just a means of differentiating us from our fellow man. Names have to fulfill personal needs, too. My name is a part of who I am. Jorje is a reflection of my heritage. My name influences how I look at myself, and is a part of what I want to be, my own person. My name helps me keep one foot in the past, and the other in the future. By having a Hispanic name, I connect myself with my ancestry, while moving forward in life. Names may have literal meanings, and great histories. But, the personal definitions and histories are usually more interesting, and always more special. I hope to carve out my own personal history, one just as worthy as that of the famous Georges the world has seen.

Jorje Chica



i am kwakkoli

By Bisco Hill

A few months after my tenth birthday, my dad began to talk to me about receiving my Indian name. He said this had to be done in a ceremony by a medicine person or an elder in our tribe. My older sister, Megan, had received her Indian name, Maquequay (Woman of the Woods), when she was only three. At that time my family lived on the Oneida Reservation just outside of Green Bay, Wisconsin. My grandfather was alive then, and he asked a medicine man friend of his to name her and made the arrangements. I always thought my sister's Indian name was so perfect for her. I was told the medicine man meditated for three days before the name came to him.

My family moved from Wisconsin to Colorado three years before I was born. My grandfather died when I was only two and a half, and both of these major events delayed my Naming Ceremony. My dad talked about naming me for several years, but it was hard to pull it together long distance. Because of the sacred and traditional aspects of this, it is not like anyone can just call and order a Naming Ceremony, like ordering a pizza! As it happened, my uncle Rick became the chairman of the tribe when I was ten, and he was able to talk to the right people and select the time. The right time was the summer solstice, near June 20, and it was also the time of the annual Strawberry Ceremony.

There are many traditions connected to the Naming Ceremony. For one thing, there are a limited number of names among the Oneida people. When a person

dies, their name returns to the "pool" of available names and can be given to someone else. The medicine person decides whose energy fits which available name, or a person may ask for a certain name. In my case, I was named after my grandfather through my Anglo name, but I also wanted to take his Indian name which was available and had been waiting for me for seven years. I felt that if I had both of his names, it made a full circle and I was wholly connected to him and to my family. The name that was his is "Kwakkoli," or "Whippoorwill" in English.

A few days before the ceremony in June of 1990, my parents and I flew to the Oneida Reservation. A friend of my dad made me a beautiful "ribbon shirt." It was a shade of deep turquoise stitched with pink, purple and green ribbons. My family and I thought it was very special and that I looked good in it.

Two days before I was given my Indian name, my uncle Rick, my dad and I drove around and looked at certain landmarks on the Oneida Reservation. I saw where my dad had grown up. There is a statue in the middle of the reservation of my great-grandmother, Dr. Rosa Minoka Hill. She was the first female Indian physician in the United States.

Oneida is very small and different from any other city I have known. It has only one school, several baseball fields, a small convent, a store, a post office, two churches, three cemeteries, a tribal building, and about twenty houses. My dad and his brother knew the names of everyone. They knew who was married to whom and who everyone's grandparents and parents were. They remembered all kinds of funny stories and laughed a lot. I thought it must be nice to live in a small town where everyone knows everyone for all those years. It is also a place where everyone is connected by common heritage, customs and beliefs.

The night before the ceremony, I got very nervous.

Bisco Hill attends the eighth grade at Southern Hills Middle School in his hometown of Boulder, Colorado. He wrote this in the seventh grade. An avid sports fan, he loves to play football and baseball, with basketball being his favorite. In his school district, he was awarded the Boulder Optimist Citizenship Award for scholarship and citizenship. This past summer he was named an American Indian Scholar and awarded a camp scholarship for summer enrichment.

My stomach hurt as if I had the flu, but I think it was just butterflies. I finally fell asleep at about 3:30 in the morning. I don't know what I was afraid of—maybe just not knowing what was going to happen or what I would have to do. My mother could not come to the ceremony because only tribal members were allowed. We had just learned about this and I was upset that she couldn't come. She was disappointed, but told me to remember the details and tell her about it later.

When it was time to go, we thanked the Faithkeeper and the Chief and gave them gifts. The gift that I received, and will be mine for life, is a very special name that runs through my family and connects me to my grandfather, whom I barely knew. My name also reminds me of the many traditions and beliefs that are part of my heritage and about which I have a lot to learn and understand. I look forward to visiting my reservation as I grow up. ★

On our short drive to the reservation, my stomach felt like it was going to explode! I had to at least get those butterflies flying in formation! I was pretty anxious, but really excited about getting my Indian name.

I wanted my grandfather's Indian name, to be wholly connected to him.

We arrived at the longhouse a little early and I sat with my dad and one of his friends while other people finished setting up tables and chairs.

The Faithkeeper named the others and we all sat down as the Chief said a few more prayers. After about an hour, we all danced to Indian songs and drum music. It was fun, but became tiring after a while.

Next, we ate and drank. One of the drinks was a kind of strawberry juice. It is sacred and part of the ceremony because the Creator gave this gift of the straw-

285 Indian girls shed 'unwanted' names

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Updated 10/23/2011 1:56 PM

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MUMBAI, India (AP) — More than 200 Indian girls whose names mean "unwanted" in Hindi chose new names Saturday for a fresh start in life.

A central Indian district held a renaming ceremony it hopes will give the girls new dignity and help fight widespread gender discrimination that gives India a skewed gender ratio, with far more boys than girls.

The 285 girls — wearing their best outfits with barrettes, braids and bows in their hair — lined up to receive certificates with their new names along with small flower bouquets from Satara district officials in Maharashtra state.

In shedding names like "Nakusa" or "Nakushi," which mean "unwanted" in Hindi, some girls chose to name themselves after Bollywood stars like "Aishwarya" or Hindu goddesses like "Savitri." Some just wanted traditional names with happier meanings, such as "Vaishali" or "prosperous, beautiful and good."

"Now in school, my classmates and friends will be calling me this new name, and that makes me very happy," said a 15-year-old girl who had been named Nakusa by a grandfather disappointed by her birth. She chose the new name "Ashmita," which means "very tough" or "rock hard" in Hindi.

The plight of girls in India came to a focus as this year's census showed the nation's sex ratio had dropped over the past decade from 927 girls for every 1,000 boys under the age of 6 to 914.

Maharashtra state's ratio is well below that, with just 883 girls for every 1,000 boys — down from 913 a decade ago. In the district of Satara, it is even lower at 881.

Such ratios are the result of abortions of female fetuses, or just sheer neglect leading to a higher death rate among girls. The problem is so serious in India that hospitals are legally banned from revealing the gender of an unborn fetus in order to prevent sex-selective abortions, though evidence suggests the information gets out.

Part of the reason Indians favor sons is the enormous expense of marrying off girls. Families often go into debt arranging marriages and paying for elaborate dowries. A boy, on the other hand, will one day bring home a bride and dowry. Hindu custom also dictates that only sons can light their parents' funeral pyres.

Over the years, and again now, there are efforts to fight the discrimination.

"Nakusa is a very negative name as far as female discrimination is concerned," said Satara district health officer Dr. Bhagwan Pawar, who came up with the idea for the renaming ceremony.

Other incentives, announced by federal or state governments every few years, include free meals and free education to encourage people to take care of their girls, and even cash bonuses for families with girls who graduate from high school.

Activists say the name "unwanted," which is widely given to girls across India, gives them the feeling they are worthless and a burden.

"When the child thinks about it, you know, 'My mom, my dad, and all my relatives and society call me unwanted,' she will feel very bad and depressed," said Sudha Kankaria of the organization Save the Girl Child. But giving these girls new names is only the beginning, she said.

"We have to take care of the girls, their education and even financial and social security, or again the cycle is going to repeat."

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Woman named Isis wants public to change how it refers to terrorist group

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Miami-area resident Isis Martinez.

The Miami Herald

7 hr ago | By Kathryn Varn of The Miami Herald

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MIAMI — Let's play a game of word association.

The word?

Isis.

The association?

Terror or violence or maybe fear instilled by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, a terrorist group commonly referred to as ISIS.

But one Miami-area woman is trying to remind people that it's a woman's name.

Isis Martinez, 38, started a petition on thepetitionsite.com urging the media to refer to the group as ISIL, or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, to purge her and other women with her first name of the negative connotation.

"Whenever I was at a public place or a restaurant, there would be TV monitors with tickers at the bottom: 'ISIS warns,' 'ISIS kills,' 'ISIS threat,'" she said. "Every word after my name is incredibly negative."

Until the terror group surfaced, Isis was best known as an ancient Egyptian goddess in mythology.

The petition has gained about 1,800 signatures since Martinez started it in late August,

many of them in the last week since it sparked attention from local and national media outlets. On Saturday, in the latest horror, the group beheaded a British aid worker, following the murders of two American journalists.

Martinez and other supporters say ISIS is an inaccurate name and that the media should follow President Barack Obama's lead in calling the group ISIL.

But the question isn't one of accuracy as much as transliteration from Arabic to English, said South Miami-based foreign policy analyst Marsha Cohen.

"Everything about the title is somewhat negotiable," said Cohen, who also taught as an adjunct lecturer at Florida International University for a decade. "It's dependent upon who is doing the speaking and who is doing the listening."

It's tough to translate the group's Arabic name — al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi Iraq wa al-Sham. Dawla is state, Islamiya is Islamic and Iraq is Iraq. Sham refers to Syria and its bordering countries (other than Iraq). In that case, ISIL would be the more accurate translation.

But, in calling it that, "you're legitimizing this organization's claim not only to Iraq and Syria, but to the whole Middle East," Cohen said.

Her suggestion? Call it DIIS, an acronym formed from the Arabic name. However, she admitted that most media outlets wouldn't make the switch from English.

Cohen also pointed out that many organizations share in Martinez's struggle.

The Daily Telegraph wrote about the struggle of a nonprofit organization called the Institute for Science and International Security that refers to itself as ISIS. And the Palm Beach Post reported that developers changed the name of a new condominium going up in West Palm Beach from ISIS Downtown to 3 Thirty Three Downtown.

Many have suggested that Martinez go by her middle name, Teresa. But to her, changing her name would mean letting the terrorists win.

"I can't rebrand myself," she said. "This is my heritage."

She's been able to reach out through social media to many others named Isis who have signed the petition in support. But others view the campaign as selfish.

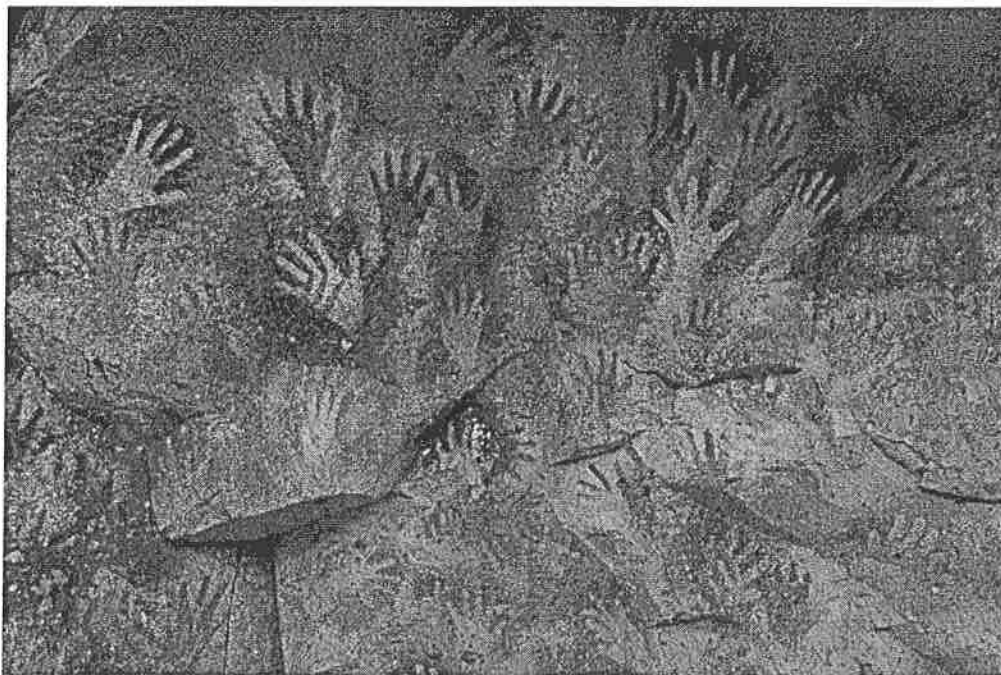
"Too bad Lady, it is not about YOU, it is about the description of the terrorist k-llers," commented a user on a WSVN.com story. "When they are gone, your problem will be gone. It will continue to be called ISIS."

Despite the bad feedback, Martinez is optimistic that her petition could spark a change.

Until then, she's prepared to endure the pitying looks when she introduces herself to strangers, the shocked reactions when someone calls out to her and the double take from the Starbucks barista writing her name on a coffee cup.

"It's me!" they'd say, and they'd leave a sign. Leave it on the cave wall. Maybe as a prayer, maybe a graffito, we don't know.

This was 30,000 years ago. Writing hadn't been invented, so they couldn't chalk their names on the rock. Instead, they'd flatten their hand, blow dust over it, and leave a silhouette like this:



And for 30, 40 centuries across Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Australia, this is how cavemen, cavewomen, cave kids, hunters, nomads, farmers, and soldiers left their mark.

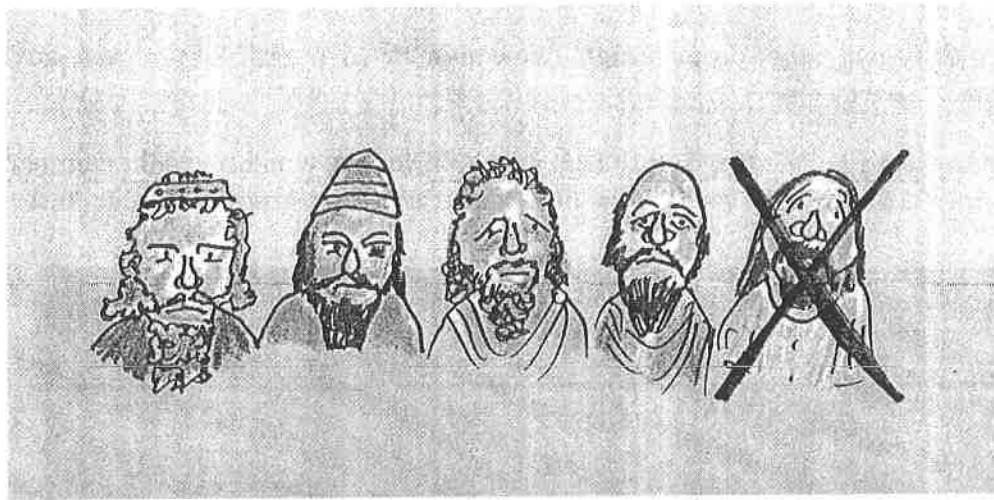
Every one of these handprints belonged to an individual, presumably with a name, a history, and stories to tell. But without writing, we can't know those stories. We call them hunter-gatherers, cave people, Neolithic tribes. We think of them in groups, never alone. Tens of thousands of generations come and go, and we can't name a single person before 3200 B.C., not a one. Then, in Mesopotamia, writing appears, and after that people could record their words, sometimes in phonetic symbols so we could listen in, hear them talking and, for the first time, hear someone's name—our first individual.

So who was it?

Who is the first person in the recorded history of the world whose name we know?

Just Guessing Here

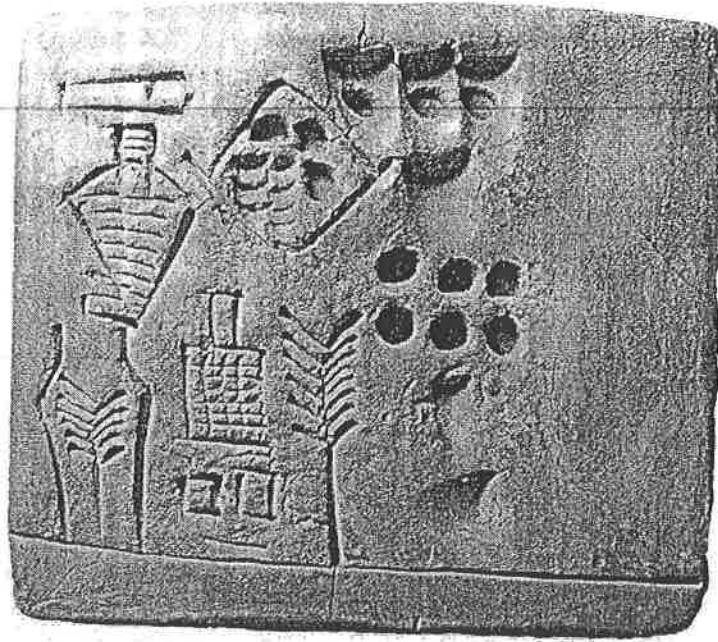
Would it be a she or a he? (I'm figuring a he, because writing was a new thing, and males are usually the early adopters.) Would he be a king? Warrior? Poet? Merchant? Commoner? (I'm guessing not a commoner. To be mentioned in an ancient document, he'd need a reputation, tools, and maybe a scribe. He wouldn't be poor.)



Would he be a person of great accomplishment or just an ordinary Joe? (The odds favor a well-regarded person, someone who is mentioned often. Regular Joes, I figured, would pop up irregularly, while a great king, a leading poet, or a victorious general would get thousands of mentions.)



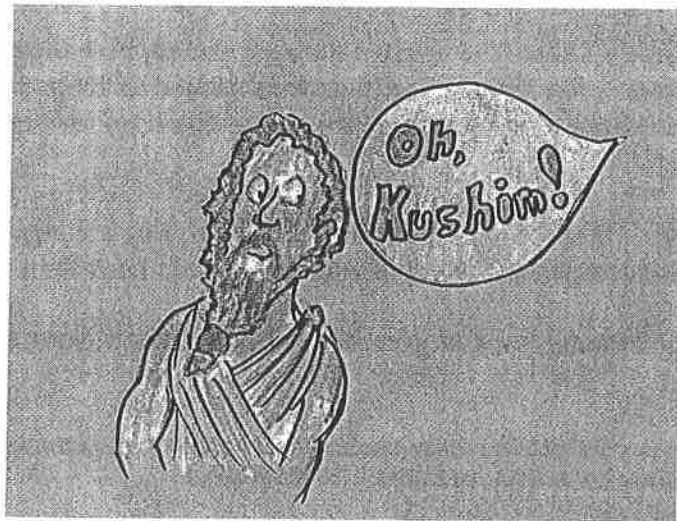
So I trolled the internet, read some books, and to my great surprise—the first name in recorded history isn't a king. Nor a warrior. Or a poet. He was, it turns out ... an accountant. In his new book *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, Yuval Noah Harari goes back 33 centuries before Christ to a 5,000-year-old clay tablet found in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). It has dots, brackets, and little drawings carved on it and appears to record a business deal.



It's a receipt for multiple shipments of barley. The tablet says, very simply:

29,086 measures barley 37 months Kushim

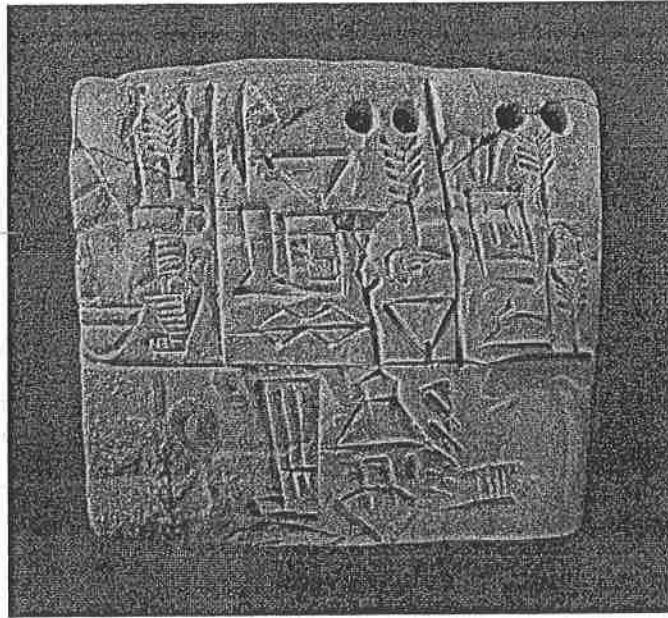
"The most probable reading of this sentence," Harari writes, "is: 'A total of 29,086 measures of barley were received over the course of 37 months. Signed, Kushim.'"



So who was "Kushim"? The word might have been a job title, not a person (maybe *kushim* meant "barley assessor") but check the video down below. It suggests that Kushim was indeed a guy, a record keeper who counted things for others—in short, an accountant. And if Kushim was his name, then with this tablet, Harari writes, "we are beginning to hear history through the ears of its protagonists. When Kushim's neighbours called out to him, they might really have shouted, 'Kushim!'"

It's pretty clear Kushim was not famous, not hugely accomplished, certainly not a king. So all of my hunches were off.

But wait. The Kushim tablet is just one of tens of thousands of business records found on the deserts of Iraq. A single example is too random. We need more. So I keep looking and find what may be the second, third, and fourth oldest names we know of. They appear on a different Mesopotamian tablet.



Once again, they are not A-list ancients. Dated to around 3100 B.C.—about a generation or two after Kushim—the tablet’s heading is, “Two slaves held by Gal-Sal.” Gal-Sal is the owner. Next come the slaves, “En-pap X and Sukkalgir.” So now we’ve got four names: an accountant, a slave owner, and two slaves. No kings. They don’t show up for another generation or so.

The predominance of ordinary Sumerians doesn’t surprise Harari. Five thousand years ago, most humans on Earth were farmers, herders, and artisans who needed to keep track of what they owned and what they owed—and that’s how writing started. It was a technology for regular people, not a megaphone for the powerful.

“It is telling,” Harari writes, “that the first recorded name in history belongs to an accountant, rather than a prophet, a poet, or a great conqueror.” Most of what people did back then was business.

Kings come, kings go, but keeping track of your barley—your sheep, your money, your property—that’s the real story of the world.

http://phenomena.nationalgeographic.com/2015/08/19/whos-the-first-person-in-history-whose-name-we-know/?utm_source=Facebook&utm_medium=Social&utm_content=link_fb20150820ph-krulwichfirstname&utm_campaign=Content&sf12166747=1