

HELLO

my name is

Valid

words | Obsee Abbajabal

layout | Akshaya Kumar

Sanjana Amatya '19 sat in Culture Clash, listening to her teacher, Jeremy Fitzpatrick, described many students' struggle in comprehending the novel they were reading in class. The novel is rich in Nigerian culture and the names of the main characters made it hard for students to keep the different characters straight. Fitzpatrick suggested that the class refer to the Nigerian names in the novel as more common names that they are familiar with in order to understand the text better. "I hated that so much," said Amatya. "It seemed pretty terrible to completely rename someone with another name without trying to put in the effort to say the name they were born with. They might just be characters but teaching students to completely disregard a name someone was born with is pretty harsh."

However, the erasure of cultural names was not Fitzpatrick's intent. "It's a mechanism to keep the names separate," Fitzpatrick said. "It's like color coding notes. [Afterwards], you are going to keep the cultural names separate." For a class that is supposed to teach students how to analyze cultural texts, the erasure of someone's name which directly coincides with their culture is very problematic.

This miscommunication can teach students the wrong thing, and the rhetoric they learn in school will influence their decisions throughout their life. If they choose to take this advice into account, the ideology of white supremacy will spread through a systematic approach.

In fact, this white standard of names have led to discriminatory practices by many businesses, including Hollywood. When actor Oscar Isaac started his career, he was concerned that he'd be restricted to play stereotypical Latino roles. He

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-Sanjana Amatya '19

A hidden power lurks behind each letter of my name. It is one of the first words that I learned to recognize and one of the first words that I learned how to say. My name is how I identify myself in this world. To some, it is too foreign and hard to say.

Primarily, ethnic names provide a glimpse of people's backgrounds and heritage. Often times, they are mispronounced and whitewashed, or glossed over, in order to fit the "white standard." This standard stems from the ideology of white supremacy where the set model of averageness is supposed to be the characteristics of a white person. From celebrities to average-day Americans, people are indirectly coerced to change their names to fit this standard. Teachers, students, and the rest of the general public must try their hardest to pronounce people's names correctly. The lack of effort causes society to gradually accept the ideas of white supremacy.

NAMES  
CAN  
IMPACT...

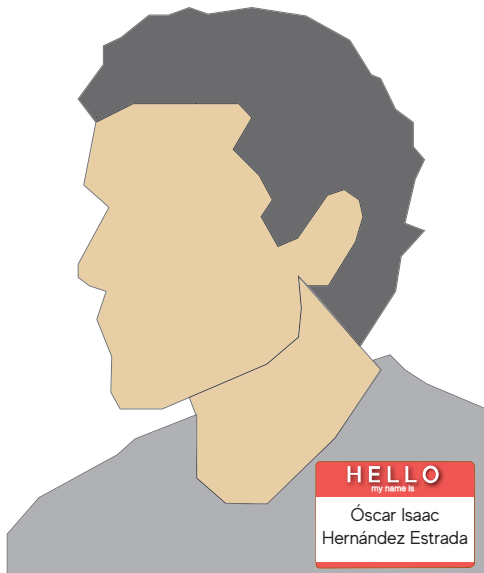


Grades



Acceptance to College

changed his last name from Hernández to Isaac in order to avoid restricted casting. “I don’t want to just go up for the dead body, the gangster, the bandolero, whatever.” Isaac said in an interview with “In” magazine. “I don’t want to be defined by someone else’s idea of what an Oscar Hernández should be playing.” Other celebrities and politicians that have changed their names include Bruno Mars, Ted Cruz, and Bobby Jindal due to similar reasons.



I can not blame these prominent individuals for dumbing down their original names, especially when the average American faces this same endeavor. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, traditionally African American names are less likely to get called into job interviews than people who have more white-sounding names. In a world where people are discriminated against for their name, it is our duty to make sure the power of names, people’s identities, can be heard.

**“You’ve got to correct me when I mispronounce something. I’m not going to take offense to it. If I get mad, it’s not at you for correcting me, it’s on me for not getting it.”**

**–Jeremy Fitzpatrick**

In fact, students have also had similar experiences to that of celebrities. Zenudin Omerovic ‘20 was also indirectly coerced to simplify his name for his teammates. “They were like, ‘Zenudin’s way too hard,’” Omerovic said. “They kept pronouncing it wrong, and I got annoyed so I was like, ‘You know what, just [call me] Z.’”

When Arundhati Soni ‘19 moved to the district, she was asked if she wanted to go by a nickname. She told the administrator that she wanted to be called Rooney. However, her name was soon mispronounced. “I was like, ‘wow you butchered the smallest name I have,’” Soni said. “It’s not that hard. I tailored it in an American accent for [the administrator] but [they] still messed it up.”

Amatya has also faced this awkward situation during roll call. “It gives me a little bit of anxiety because no one can pronounce my name,” Amatya said. “It’s always different versions.” Many teachers encourage students to always correct their names

if it is mispronounced.

“There’s research out there, like when you greet somebody, it takes you introducing yourself 20 times before the person will remember your name,” said Fitzpatrick. “The same thing goes for pronunciation. [Teachers] have to say it multiple times and you, as the student, have to be willing to correct us every time. I feel a lot of times, students [think that] after about five times ‘it’s just not worth it. They’re not ever gonna get it.’”

Omerovic does not believe there should be an emphasis on names in school. “At school, not really,” he said. “Cause it’s not like you’re gonna see those people ever again after four years.” However, a 2012 study by Rita Kohli and Daniel Solorzano found that pronouncing names incorrectly “impacts the world view and social emotional well-being of students which is linked to learning.”

In every avenue, names impact people’s lives. So, please learn to say my name because it is an integral part of who I am and who I want to be.



Profession



Future Spouse



Residence