

LOOK BOOK

EngageDEI

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Saba Abebe

She/Her/Hers

New Classrooms

My birth name, Tiruwork, pays homage to a very small community in the countryside of Ethiopia. This is where my grandmother was born; and two generations later, in Iowa; I would be given her name, which means 'real gold.' The name I use on a daily basis is Saba, which is actually the second name on my birth certificate. Saba was the Queen of Sheba. What I love about my name 'Saba' is that while it is rooted in my Ethiopian heritage for me; Saba can be found in various languages and religions. 'Saba' is a daily reminder of how names can open doors to being interconnected.



Swati Adarkar

She/Her/Hers

Children's Institute

My family is from India. My first name is Swati which is the name of the star Arcturus. It is the closest to the star Chitra (Spica) which is my mother's name. My brothers are named for constellations. My last name Adarkar mean from the place of Adari which is a small rural village in India.



Courtney Allison

She/Her/Hers

EdReports.org

I don't know about the history of my first or last name. My middle name is Weaver and is my grandfather's mother's maiden last name. When I was younger I was embarrassed by it. Now that I'm adult I like to imagine that perhaps there were craftsmen in my family and that is why I love handmade and handcrafted items that take care and skill to produce.



Rodrigo Arancibia

He/Him/His

High Tech High Graduate School of Education

Rodrigo, comes from the Spanish knight, Rodrigo "El Cid".



Allison Barr

She/Her/Hers

CenterPoint Education Solutions

I was named after the Elvis Costello song "Alison" (they liked the song and liked the name). So even though it's not the happiest of songs, I was named because of my parents' mutual love of music. And music has always been a big part of my life and our family traditions.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Mary Ann Bates

She/Her/Hers

J-PAL North America at MIT

I was named after my grandmother, Mary Miller. I've come to appreciate the dignity and strength in a fairly plain and common name, and I see it as a metaphor for the simple, quiet life my family chose in Ohio's Amish community.



Tracey Benson

He/Him/His

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

My name is Tracey Akinola Shobowale Benson. Tracey is the name of my American mother's favorite actress. Akinola was given to me by my Nigerian (Yoruba) father and means "strong one". Shobowale is our original family name from Nigerian precolonial times. Benson is our colonial last name.



Leslie Boggs

She/Her/Hers

National PTA

The journey behind my name was in honor of my mother's brother, Leslie. The name represented strength, kindness and overall beauty to my mother.

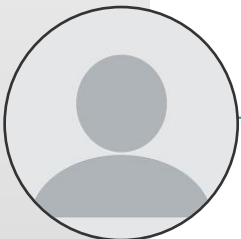


Soleil Boyd

She/Her/Hers

Cultivate Learning

My mom named me Soleil, which means "sun" in French, to honor the hard work the sun does to support all life on earth.



Molly Branson Thayer

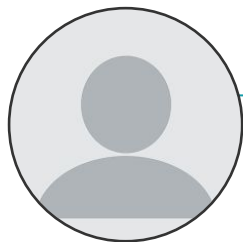
She/Her/Hers

UW College of Education

My first name, "Molly" was chosen by my hippie parents, and was controversial with my mom's Episcopalian mom, because it seemed like a nickname instead of a proper name. My original last name I don't know, but it was changed to "Branson" when my dad's Jewish parents immigrated to the US from Russia. My final last name "Thayer" is my husband and children's last name.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Jessica Brathwaite

She/Her/Hers

Community College Research Center

My mom named me, and my brother and father wanted me to be named Christina. My last name is British originally and came to my family by way of Barbados then Panama (slavery).



laura brewer

She/Her/Hers

Mean Well. Speak Well. Do Well., Inc.

You may have noticed I spell my name with lower case letters. I have a learning disability which affects/affected learning to write. I wasn't diagnosed until I was an adult and, by then, I had a lot of built up shame about feeling "stupid," struggling to write, and struggling with my differences in how I learn. The lower case letters now are a proud re-claiming of that part of my identity, without shame, and the parts of me that *I* misunderstood for so long.



Amy Briggs

She/Her/Hers

Student Achievement Partners

My first name means "beloved," which my mother liked (my dad preferred the more stately "Ann"). As a child, I didn't particularly love my name because I had to share it: with 2 or 3 classmates every school year, and with self-centered Amy March, one of my least favorite literary characters. My feelings have changed over time: as a teenager I came to Beloved, and marveled at Morrison's naming, and the meaning of names, including my own. More recently, my beloved 2-year old nephew has been saying my name, and that's pretty magical.



Tom Brock

He/Him/His

Community College Research Center



Rhonda Broussard

She/Her/Hers

Beloved Community

My name is Crystal Carter. Oddly, my husband's name and my maiden name are the same, so we're both Carters.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Tequilla Brownie

She/Her/Hers

TNTP

I was supposed to be named Angelique Michelle. Somewhere between the house and my delivery that changed to Tequilla Andrea. The only reason my mother could ever give me was that her nurse made the suggestion, and she liked it.



Kiara Butler

She/Her/Hers

Diversity Talks



Amanda Cahn

She/Her/Hers

Center for Public Research and Leadership

My mom tried to give all of her kids unique names, but then Amanda was one of the top ten given names in NYC the year I was born. I have just a middle initial, B., for my great grandmother Beatrice, so at least she got the unique part accomplished there. And Cahn is a derivative of the same root as Cohen, Kohn, etc, like that of many European Jewish families.



Jessica Carey

She/Her/Hers

New Classrooms

My parents got my first name from a Seals & Croft song and my middle name from Stark Trek (after princess Elaan of Trojan whose tears were a love potion that she used on Kirk).



Crystal Carter

She/Her/Hers

New Classrooms

My name is Crystal Carter. Oddly, my husband's name and my maiden name are the same, so we're both Carters.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Justin Cohen

He/Him/His

Wayfinder Foundation

My first name - Justin - comes from Latin roots signifying "justice." My surname - Cohen - is from ancient Hebrew and Aramaic, and is the name used by the high priests in early Judaism. While many people with the last name "Cohen" can trace their roots back to those high priests, my family's name was changed at Ellis Island from a harder-to-pronounce Ashkenazi Jewish name, as was the case with so many other immigrant families.



Kim Cook

She/Her/Hers

National College Access Network

My middle name Marie is to honor my maternal grandmother who died when my mom was a child. I share it with all of my female cousins from that line and passed it on to my daughter to honor a tradition of strong women who remember where they came from.



Jake Custer

He/Him/His

National College Access Network

I do not have strong connections to my name or its origins. The examples provided are great, but unfortunately, I do not have much of an attachment, background, or connection to my name beyond it feeling like it fits me. Here's the best I can do, "After lots of contemplation and actually naming me Eric at birth, my parents changed my name to Jacob when I was 2 weeks old for reasons they are still not sure of to this day. The name never really felt like it fit, and this may be the reason why. Jake always seemed to better represent my openness, and seemed more inviting than the formal Jacob and the name I more closely identify with."



Ben Daley

He/Him/His

High Tech High Graduate School of Education

Benjamin comes from the Old Testament. That's all I've got. I have good stories about both my children's names, so ask me about that! (Coleman - inspired by Ornette Coleman - my son is glad that my wife vetoed Ornette, & daughter Greer, which is a longer story).



Patrick D'Amelio

He/Him/His

Washington State Charter School Association

I am the youngest of ten children. My father's family has Italian roots and my mother's Irish. Given that our surname is Italian in origin, our given names are all inspired by the Irish.

ENGAGE DEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Barbara Damron

She/Her/Hers

Complete College America

My mother named me "Barbara", after her mother, whom she essentially despised! She also chose that name because it means "stranger" and that's what her mother was to her. Nonetheless, I long ago accepted my name and vowed to have good relationships with all my relatives and friends and colleagues -- and to never be a stranger to those who need me.



Nisha Dass

She/Her/Hers

Educators for Excellence

Nisha means 'night' in Sanskrit. When naming his two daughters, my father's only request is that they share his initials. And my mom just loved the name.



Carrie Ellis

She/Her/Hers

Celestial Consulting, LLC

I was named after three of my grandmothers. Carrie was my father's paternal grandmother, and Lenise is a combination of my grandmothers' names: Helen and Lois.



Dhanfu Elston

He/Him/His

Complete College America

My parents gave me and each of my siblings an African name to help mold a sense of ethnic consciousness and historical connection. Dhanfu (pronounced: dah-nee-foo) is Ghanaian and means "a thinker and a thoughtful brother."



Natasha Ettienne-Modeste

She/Her/Hers

Student Achievement Partners

Natasha means Christmas child and I was born 20 days before Christmas



Henry Fernandez

He/Him/His

Complete College America

Henry Fernandez, dad, spouse, Latinx, immigrant, LGBTQ+ community, educator, policy, politics.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Jeanine Forsythe

She/Her/Hers

Results for America

I was named after my aunt, who also is my mother's twin sister.



Astrid Fossum

She/Her/Hers

Student Achievement Partners

My first name, Astrid, comes from my Scandinavian roots and particularly my Estonian mother. It means "God's strength" and in Norse mythology "star." I guess it pleased both of my parents as my father is a Classicist. The Estonian pronunciations are ah-stree and UST-red (which I use), not the American Ass-trid.

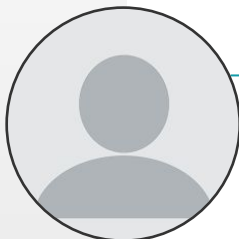


Molly Gilmore

She/Her/Hers

J-PAL North America at MIT

My first name, Molly, was given to me as a tribute to my mother's first name, Mary. In Ireland, where my mother's family is from, Molly is commonly a nickname for Mary.



Ann Hanson

She/Her/Hers

The Ounce of Prevention Fund

My parents gave each of their children the middle name Tennes, my mother's maiden name. And each of us has the last name Hanson, from my father. They're both a part of us and our names.



Marsha Shigeyo Hawley
She/Her/Hers

The Ounce of Prevention Fund

My father, from a family of 10 children, named me after his two youngest sisters. Marsha is the youngest sister, and she changed her name from Masako to Marsha when she was in grammar school to be "more American" and Shigeyo never changed her name and that became my middle name. When Japanese children are born they are given a Japanese character by their families that give meaning to their name. When I found this out I asked my parents what my character is but they both looked at each other and said they forgot - but that I could make up any character I wanted, and they thought that was better.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Zenia Henderson

She/Her/Hers

National College Access Network

My name is of greek origin, meaning hospitality. While I am super hospitable, I am not greek! My mother just picked it out of the baby book of names because she loved it!



Corinne Herlihy

She/Her/Hers

Community College Research Center

My name is a special connection to my mother's family. I was named after my great grandmother, Corinne, and I was very close with my grandmother, Melba Corinne. She was the head of the house, really smart, funny and made me feel like I could do anything.



Jennifer Holme

She/Her/Hers

VentureWell

I am named Jennifer for my Mother's Aunt Genevieve. In the Jewish tradition, there is a custom to name a child after family member, who has died; Parents hope that in receiving the name of an admired family member, the child will emulate in life the virtues of the deceased namesake. The origin of the last name Holme is Local; Meadow lands near or surrounded by water, grassy plains; sometimes an island. My father's family comes from the Lake District of England.

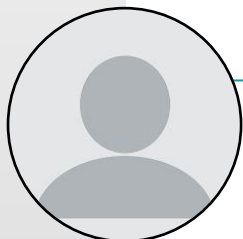


Sarah Hooker

She/Her/Hers

JFF

My first name, Sarah, reflects my mom's desire to recognize my Jewish heritage even though I grew up in an interfaith family. My last name, Hooker, belongs to my dad's family of low-income farmers in rural Illinois. It has, of course, been a source of endless teasing, amusement, and character-building throughout my life!



Omana Imani

She/Her/Hers

School's Out Washington

The meaning of Omana is woman in Hindi. I love it's uniqueness and that it represents my Indian ancestry. My last name, Imani, meaning faith in Swahili, is a name chosen upon the birth of my daughter 23 years ago!

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Kalila Jackson-Spieker

She/Her/Hers

J-PAL North America at MIT

My father's family originated in the Jackson area of Florida before heading north in the Great Migration, while my mother's family emigrated from Holland in the '20s. They picked the name "Kalila" simply because they liked it. It's supposed to mean "beloved" in Arabic, but I've also discovered it's the name of a trickster jackal in a set of fables called "Kalila wa-Dimna," which has been highly entertaining for the few students of Middle Eastern literature I've met over the years.



Toni Jaffe

She/Her/Hers

NWEA

What's in a name: my name is Antoinette Jackson Jaffe. My mother named me Antoinette not because we are French (actually I am Russian/German/English/Welsh/Scottish), but because she liked the name (why she waited until the third girl, is a mystery to me), however, I am Toni (through and through), a classic tomboy from an early age, and typically only use Antoinette for formal documents, and more. My middle name and last name are ones taken when my former wife and I married and wished to have one family name (that was neither hers nor mine) and integrated our spiritual and religious practice of Judaism which we both became (converted to). Jaffe means "beautiful" in Hebrew and we liked how it sounded and what it meant. My given middle name at birth was Jane (which I never liked), and so took the opportunity when legally changing my maiden name (Grabler) to Jaffe to change my middle name to Jackson (in honor of my father whose name was Jack). This way I kept the same middle initial. Jackson is also my sons given middle name, which was intentional to incorporate the legacy of my father and connect my son Hunter and me with a common middle name.

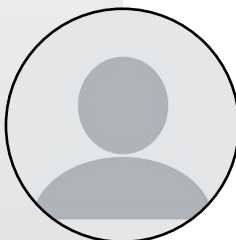


Jackie Jainga Hyllseth

She/Her/Hers

School's Out Washington

Jackie Kennedy and liked the name Jacqueline. (Today, I go by Jackie, not Jacqueline) People named Jacqueline are honest, benevolent and often inventive, full of high inspirations.



Shavar Jeffries

He/Him/His

Democrats for Education Reform

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"

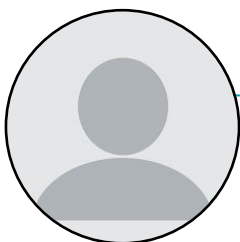


Donnidra Johnson

She/Her/Hers

EdReports.org

My name is Donnidra. It's pronounced Don-knee-druh. My father goes by Don and I was named after him. My son is also named after my father and my husband.

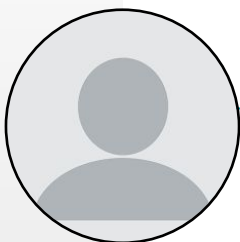


Melissa Johnston

She/Her/Hers

NWEA

I am Melissa Sheehan Zack Johnston. Each of my names holds special meaning to me. When I married my husband in October 2013, I took Mark's name as my own and love that it signals important aspects of my identity as wife and mom. Zack is my maiden name and was originally Zachariades. My grandfather's name was shortened in the immigration process when he moved to the US from Greece. Sheehan was my middle name growing up and was also my mom's Irish maiden name. I cherish this family name even more now as my mom passed away over four years ago. And I always remember my dad telling me that Melissa means honey bee in Greek. That certainly explains some of my qualities – sweet but fierce!



Gail Joseph

She/Her/Hers

Cultivate Learning



Mike Larson
She/Her/Hers

Education Reform Now

Even though our middle names are all different, I share a first name, Robert, with my father and grandfather. I feel a sense of connectedness with both (one living and one passed away) and a stronger sense of familial ties as a result. It also is not the name I go by, which is Mike, so it's often a surprise for people to learn this about me.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"

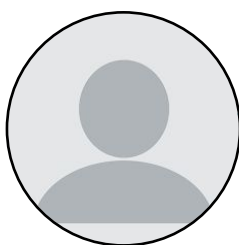


Lacey Leegwater

She/Her/Hers

Institute for Higher Education Policy

My mother wasn't a fan of my father's middle name (Levert), so she negotiated to avoid a jr. situation--if they had a boy, she'd get to name him; if a girl, my dad would get naming privileges. Dad just liked the name Lacey. My middle name, Adele, is a combination of my mother's grandmother, Della, and my father's mother, Aileen.



Daphne Logan

She/Her/Hers

The Ounce of Prevention Fund



Amy Loyd

She/Her/Hers

JFF

My middle name is Lizanne, the name of one of my mom's favorite students - but she was persuaded by her siblings to name me something short and easy to spell, thus, Amy. One-L Loyds are uncommon, and with my middle initial being L, my name is frequently misspelled. My birth family surnames are Valdez, Silva, and McKenney, so I carry the complexity of multiple identities, families, and communities with me, adoptive and biological.



Andrea Maertens

She/Her/Hers

Institute for Higher Education Policy

Although Dutch by nationality, I grew up in Belgium and the spelling with the "ae" in "Maertens" indicates my Belgian ancestry.



Selam Maru

She/Her/Hers

CenterPoint Education Solutions

Selam Maru - "Selam" in Amharic (Ethiopia) means hello and/or peace.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Jodi Mastronardi

She/Her/Hers

New Classrooms

I was named after my grandmother, whose name was Josephine. However, she never liked her name (she went by Jo), so when my mother named me to honor her, she named me Jodi Ann instead. I never met my grandmother, who died before I was born.



Jennifer Mayer-Sandoval

She/Her/Hers

Becoming Better Together, LLC

Fairness, loyalty, passionate

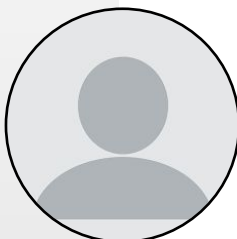


KD Maynard

She/Her/Hers

VentureWell

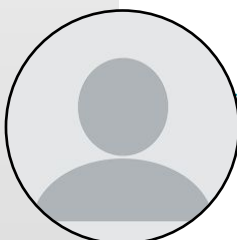
I have always been called by my initials. My given first name has no particular significance and my middle name is a family surname from my maternal grandmother. My first grade teacher called home, worried that 'she is a little slow - she doesn't respond to her name' - but I was not responding because when I heard 'KAREN,' it meant I was in trouble!



Tanner McCarthy

She/Her/Hers

Diversity Talks



Francesca McDaniel

She/Her/Hers

Washington State Charter School Association

"Francesca" means "free" in Italian. I was stubbornly born two weeks late on July 4th - Independence day- so my parents found it fitting.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Kristin McQuire

She/Her/Hers

Young Invincibles

My mom wanted a name that would assimilate so I could get a job. My grandmother used to watch a show called Dallas. Kristin was the woman who killed JR. Apparently it was a huge todo.



Nyema Mitchell

She/Her/Hers

JFF

I love my name, Nyema. When I like to sound fancy, I say I'm named after the John Coltrane song, Naima (also the name of his first wife). But really my mom, who did not listen to Coltrane or know the song, just liked the way it sounded.



Nathan Monell

He/Him/His

National PTA

I was named after a missionary pilot friend of my parents, Nate Saint. The origin of my name is Hebrew meaning "the gift."



Sydney Morris

She/Her/Hers

Educators For Excellence

My name is Sydney Jean Morris. In the Jewish tradition of naming children after those who have passed, I am named after two grandparents who I never had the chance to meet but whose names I carry proudly. Sidney was my mother's father, owner of a luncheonette in Brooklyn. Jean was my father's mother, an artist.



Kelsey Morse

She/Her/Hers

Jobs for the Future (JFF)

My first name comes from my dad - my parents had another name chosen until I was born and then my dad changed his mind!

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Lucretia Murphy

She/Her/Hers

JFF

My mom wanted a name that had my dad's initials. So she named me Lucretia Pilissa Murphy. She and my dad did not realize "Lucretia" was the name of a suffragette and assassin!



Pavithra Nagarajan

She/Her/Hers

Center for Public Research and Leadership

My name comes from Sanksrit, my first name meaning "purity". My last name is my father's name given to him at birth (Nagarajan), which he made his last name when he immigrated to America. "Nagarajan" means "King of the Cobras"



Aylia Naqvi

She/Her/Hers

Young Invincibles

My name is "Aylia" (ah-Lee-yah) which is a persian variation of an Arabic name name "Aaliya" with different pronunciation and meaning. Aylia means "most high".



Portia Newman

She/Her/Hers

PN Consulting

I have come to really love my name! The unique spelling is always a conversation starter. Portia-- No S, No C, No H, No E!

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"

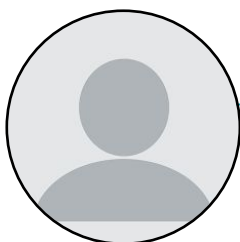


Derek Niño

He/Him/His

JFF

My last name is Niño, and the "ñ" means everything to me. My first name, Derek, is something that never really resonated with me; it clashes with my identity as a Mexican male since "Derek" doesn't sound, with all due respect, "Mexican enough." I later found out that my first name was something of a capitulation to my mom's/my half-Croatian, half-Irish, all-White side of the family, a reaction to their racism and disapproval of a "mixed" marriage.



Danielle Pacifico-Cogan

She/Her/Hers

Children's Institute

We all contain multitudes seen and unseen. Our names are a reflection of history. My name is rooted in the horrors of chattel slavery and the brutal conquest of the Americas.



Matt Padilla

He/Him/His

Education Commission of the States

I was named Matthew because my mom was a big fan of the 70's television show Gunsmoke - and the main character was Marshall Matt.

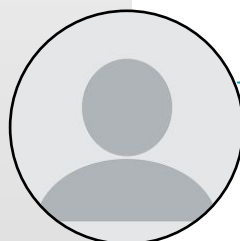


Edy Penn

She/Her/Hers

EdReports.org

I was named after my maternal grandmother. My brother was named after our maternal grandfather. My mom only had two kids so her parents and her children are both named Edith and John.



Vanessa Peterson

She/Her/Hers

NWEA

My name is of Greek origins and it means butterfly. My personality is very similar to a butterfly - colorful, bright and energetic. My parents were extremely accurate in naming me. Additionally, I received my name as a result of my parents naming all of their children using the same initials.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Michelle Sadrena Pledger

She/Her/Hers

High Tech High Graduate School of Education

My name is Michelle, and the sound of my name is music to my ears. I think it's the flow of "Chelle" that makes me think of smooth and sweet things like butter and syrup. My ethnic and socioeconomic background are hidden behind this innocuous and "normal" sounding name. "Michelle" does not provide any clues to my painful past or my promising future. It is a name that doesn't reveal that my father was a crack addict, or that we were poor, or that reading books let me escape and explore at the same time. It is a name that compels older people to sing the Beatles song, "Michelle Ma Belle", as if they were the first person to ever sing that song to me. Yet, I smile and play along because most Michelle's are pretty decent people.



Eric Polite II
He/Him/His

Becoming Better Together (BBT)

My name is Eric and I am one of three Erics in my family: my dad, myself, and my son. My surname "Polite" has always been a conversation starter and an adjective I've embraced as a Black man raised in the south leading equity work. In exploring my ancestry I traced the Polite surname to West Africa and Haiti.



Gabriel Ramirez

He/Him/His

Diversity Talks



Armen Rashidyan

He/Him/His

CareerWise Colorado

People will often tell me that I am not the person they expected to see after reading my name. My father is an Armenian, born in Iran - you wouldn't be surprised to hear that after looking at him (he looks the part). But I present as white, and people are always a little puzzled to read the name Armen Rashidyan. Armen is a traditional Armenian name, and Rashidyan is a modified regional one ('Rashid' being a traditional Muslim name, and 'ian' or 'yan' signifying an Armenian lineage).

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Nina Rees

She/Her/Hers

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

My parents were both born in Iran, but attended schools overseas, so their names – Esmail and Faribandeh – were difficult to pronounce and spell and so when I was born, they opted for a name that would be easy to spell and pronounce no matter where I lived. Having said this, most people know Nina as one of Columbus's ships but if you google Nina, it means "enclosure of fish" in Babylonian, and "fire" in Quechua.



Jessica Reveri

She/Her/Hers

Results for America

My middle name comes from my Dad's youngest sister - the member of his family to whom he was closest growing up in a troubled household.

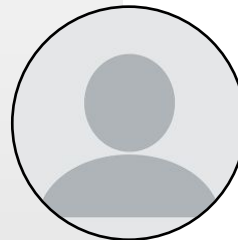


Ron Rice

He/Him/His

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

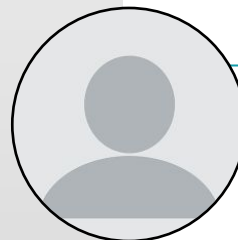
My name is my father's name, except our middle names differ, mainly due to the fact that he did not want me to be called "Jr" for the rest of my life. My middle name (Curtis) is my maternal grandfather's name, the son of a sharecropper with a 5th grade education that went on to start his own painting company. Ronald is Nordic for valiant, so I have been told.



Juan Rios

He/Him/His

Diversity Talks



Lihi Rosenthal

She/Her/Hers

Seneca Family of Agencies

Lihi translates into "She is for me" in Hebrew. In use, it is like a derivative of "my girl," that sounds close to my paternal grandmother's name of Leia (she died shortly before I was born and my parents wanted to honor her through my naming). My last name was actually purchased by my paternal family after World War I in reaction to growing antisemitism: my grandfather hoped Rosenthal sounded "less Jewish" than Fishman.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"

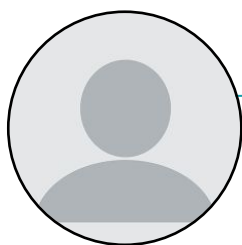


MK Sagaria-Barritt

She/Her/Hers

CareerWise Colorado

My given name is Mary Kathryn but I choose to go by MK, which the shorter name always worked in my favor as an athlete! When my wife and I married we joined our last names: Sagaria and Barritt. It feels powerful that we are creating a new path for our children who get to claim a strong maternal lineage.



Scheherazade Salimi

She/Her/Hers

Center for Public Research and Leadership at Columbia University

Scheherazade comes from 1001 Nights. Scheherazade was the storyteller and the hero of the story. She is considered one of the key feminist protagonists in literary history.



Hollis Salway
She/Her/Hers

CareerWise Colorado

My first name is my mother's maiden name, which gives me great connection to her whole family and has allowed me to carry on her side of the family's story in a day where it wasn't common for women to keep their own last name. Since then, I've come across it as a name of towns in New England and at my college and I've even shared it with some pro-football players (Hollis Thomas, formerly of the Saints!). I have enjoyed having a unique name as an adult (though was very disappointed that there was no pre-made mini-license plate for my bike at the toystore back in the 80's when I was growing up).

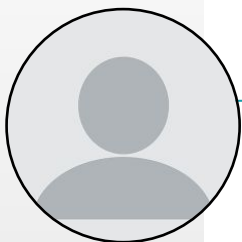


Steven Satterfield

He/Him/His

CenterPoint Education Solutions

My mother chose my first name as a tribute to her favorite movie star, Steven 'Steve' McQueen. He is often referred to as the 'King of Cool' and famous for his anti-hero persona. Similar to my namesake, I too am the King of Cool..



Frank Savina

He/Him/His

Charles A. Dana Center

Frank is short for Francisco, which is the Spanish version of Francesco, my father's Italian name.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Sarah Schultz

She/Her/Hers

Young Invincibles

Five generations of women in my family were named Ellen, including my mother who hates the name Ellen and goes by Terry, even though none of us really know why. So she went with Sarah (and Ellen as a middle name)!



John Scott

He/Him/HIs

Seneca Family of Agencies

I am from a Black catholic family of 8 kids and 2 parents. My name came from St. John in the Bible. They wanted me to be a priest but I'm serving in a much different way:)



Trabian Shorters

He/Him/His

BMe Community

Trabian is derived from the French Tres Bien, meaning very well. My mother who had barely begun her high school French class when I was born decided to spell it like Fabian to get people to pronounce it phonetically.



Carole Shellhart

She/Her/Hers

Children's Institute

My Aunt Caroline lived with my parents when I was born and I was named Carole Lynn in honor of her.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Glenn Singleton

He/Him/His

Courageous Conversations about Race

I was named after the Astronaut John Glen.



Lauren Sisneros

She/Her/Hers

Education Commission of the States

My married last name "Sisneros" as well as my maiden name "Espinoza" come from New Mexico and southern Colorado, a population that has been shaped by a mix of Native Pueblo peoples and Spanish settlers, sometimes referred to as "mestizos". "Lauren" is part of a tribute to the Jewish actress Lauren Bacall who my mother, a European Jew, selected. .



Thaddecia Smith

She/Her/Hers

Education Reform Now

I am named after my father, whose name is Thaddeus. My parents were hoping for a boy, who was to be a junior. However, they were blessed with a girl who they wanted to name after him in some way. My dad's name is biblical (Gift of God) and also has Greek origins (meaning brave/courageous).



Abigail Smith

She/Her/Hers

BlueSky Education

Joy of my Father.



Brian Sponsler
He/Him/His

Education Commission of the States

My full name is Brian Andrew Sponsler. In a forward looking naming strategy, my parents picked my middle name so that I could use it if I happened to not like my first name. There is a lot to unpack there about agency, flexibility and naming conventions we could do over a beverage.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"

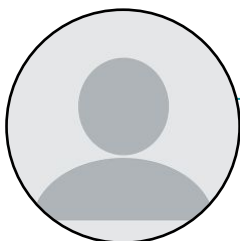


Rodrigo Villavicencio

He/Him/His

Washington State Charter School Association

I was named after my grandfather, it was my older brother's idea to name me after him. I am the only one in our family named after our grandfather.



Kate Walker

She/Her/Hers

Seneca Family of Agencies

My name is Katherine Rose and I've been called Kate since I was born. It was important to my parents that I had a 'formal' name along with a 'strong' nickname. My middle name came from my grandfather's sister, someone who was very kind and loving toward others. It was my mom's way of honoring my grandfather and the bond with her aunt.



Simone L. Ward

She/Her/Hers

Educators for Excellence

My mother grew up listening to the infamous American jazz singer Nina Simone. It is a tradition that she shared with my grandmother. And she always said, if she ever had two girls she would name one Nina, and one Simone. I am the oldest of three girls. But when I was born, she said, I did not look like a Nina, so she named me Simone. My sister's name is Nina. Hence began a life long obsession with the life and music of Nina Simone; who used her voice and lyrics to become a global social activist.



Dr. Yolanda Watson Spiva

She/Her/Hers

Complete College America

I was given the name Yolanda by my mother and father. Yolanda is a name, of Greek origin, meaning Violet. The form of the name in Greek is Iolanthe. In German and Dutch the name is spelled Jolanda, in Czech and Slovak Jolantha, in Polish Jolanta, in Italian, Portuguese and Romanian Iolanda. The name is also present within the Arabic language with the same spelling as in Spanish language, where its written starting with "Y" but spelled "J". Yolande is also a French version of the name. In French the meaning of the name Yolande is: Violet flower; strong.

People with this name have a deep inner desire to create and express themselves, often in public speaking, acting, writing or singing. They also yearn to have beauty around them in their home and work environment.

People with this name tend to be orderly and dedicated to building their lives on a solid foundation of order and service. They value truth, justice, and discipline, and may be quick-tempered with those who do not. Their practical nature makes them good at managing and saving money, and at building things in the material world. Because of their focus on order and practicality, they may seem overly cautious and conservative at times.

ENGAGE DEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Phil Weilerstein
He/Him/His

VentureWell

My surname Weilerstein translates to mean 'village on a rock' and I have remained true to my name in that I live in a very small town on a very rocky hilltop. There is no clear history around the origins of the name although family lore holds that it came from a village in Lithuania through which some ancestor passed. After emigrating to the US at end of the 19th century connections to those forbears have been lost.

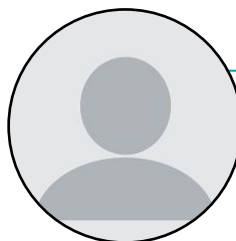


Craig Wesley

He/Him/His

Educators for Excellence

According to Wikipedia my name Craig derived from the Scottish Gaelic word, creag, meaning "rock." However I doubt very seriously my parents took this under consideration when they named me. My father's name was Greg Wesley Sr. and my brother's name is Greg Wesley Jr., I'm confident my parents wanted a name that was similar to my Dad's name.

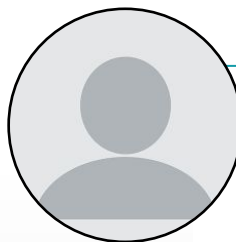


Helen Westmoreland

She/Her/Hers

National PTA

I am named Helen after my aunt, who was named after her aunt. As a child, I disliked having a name I perceived as "old" but now I feel it connects me to a lineage of wonderful women in my maternal line.



Elizabeth Whitford

She/Her/Hers

School's Out Washington

I am the youngest of four, with 3 older brothers. With the pregnancy for each of my siblings, my parent's planned to name a daughter, if they had one, a combination of my parents' middle names, which would have been Elizabeth Curtis (Whitford). When I was born, my mom changed her mind and gave me the name of Elizabeth Cecilia, forgoing my dad's middle name. Whitford is an English-origin name and came from one of my ancestors who immigrated from England to Rhode Island in the late 1600s.



Afi Y. Wiggins

She/Her/Hers

Charles A. Dana Center

My name, pronounced Ah-fee, is an Arabic name. In the height of the Black Power era, my mother and father joined the Sunni Muslim community and religion. At that time, it was important to them that their children be named something meaningful and grounded in their culture. My mother began investigating Muslim names and came up with Afi Yaminah. Afi means pure nature. Yaminah (pronounced Yuh-mee-nuh), means right and proper. Do those terms describe me? I'm certainly almost always right; proper, not so much. As far as pure nature, let's just say it is highly unlikely someone would use the word pure to describe me.

ENGAGEDEI LOOK BOOK

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Jovian Zayne

She/Her/Hers

OnPurpose Movement

My name is Jovian Zayne. Jovian derives from the word Jovial which means friendly and happy! Jovian is also a powerful name connected to the planet Jupiter. There are 79 (sometimes 80 depending on changing dynamics) moons that surround the planet Jupiter. They are called the "Jovian Planets." My parents equally named me Jovian Zayne.



Liz Zuckerberg

She/Her/Hers

J-PAL North America at MIT

When my mother was pregnant with me my parents were preparing to leave for a sabbatical in London where my father was to teach Physics. They decided I should either be called Elizabeth or Victoria after one of the queens of England. As Elizabeth Seton was one of the first native born citizen of the US canonized as a saint, and they were devout Catholics, that is the one they chose. We set sail for London on the QE2 a month after I was born and my first baby rattle was in the shape of a QE2 life preserver.

PROMISE54 TEAM

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Dawn Albert

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

I was originally named Devon. After three weeks, my mom changed my name because Dawn was more fitting to her: the sun coming up.



Latricia Barksdale

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

I'm not sure of the origin of my name, though my Dad came up with it and my Mom is convinced it's the name of one of his old girlfriends...it will forever be a mystery.



Courtney Broun

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

My parents chose my name for no reason other than they just liked it -- it's not a family name. My husband and I named our daughter in the same way -- her name isn't a family name but one we both liked.



Rebecca Knicely Cagle

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

Rebecca means captivating. My middle name, Shell, is probably the most meaningful, as it's my grandmother's maiden name and her life experiences have shaped my understanding of myself and who I want to be in the world.



Danielle Ceribo

They/Them/Their

Promise54

My first name means "God is my judge." However, my parents chose it only because it sounds good with my middle name, which is my maternal grandmother's name.

PROMISE54 TEAM

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Lora Cover

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

I was named after my great grandfather, Louie. He was an inventor, an immigrant and impeccable dresser, but most importantly, someone with a deep, unrelenting love of family. I like to think I carry that last piece (if not the fashion sense) from him.



Vanessa Douyon

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

Vanessa - was a name familiar across cultures (Francophone, Kreyol-Speaking, English-Speaking, Spanish-Speaking). Named after Vanessa Williams for her grace through the muck. Douyon - Haitian Family name.



Louis Gorton

He/Him/His

Promise54

My name is in part a tribute to the late Lou Sullivan, an openly gay transgender activist. Coming out to my family as trans was very difficult, but one of the happier moments came when I asked my mom to choose my "new" middle name. She chose Andrew, because she liked it. My last name, Gorton, was my grandfather's doing. Originally Goldberg, he is said to have felt compelled to change it in order to more easily assimilate as a pharmacist in a small town in rural NY state in the 1960s.



Andrew Greenia

He/Him/His

Promise54

"Greenia" is derived from the Old French word "grenier," an occupational name for a worker at a mill or granary. I received this name from my ancestors who immigrated to Detroit, a French settlement, where my family has been for three generations.



Lyle Hurst

He/Him/His

Data Specialist

Forest (German)

PROMISE54 TEAM

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Atalie Jacobs

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

The Lord is exalted



Cornelius Lee

He/Him/His

Promise54

Cornelius a biblical name. He was a Roman Warrior known for being a steward of fairness, love, and justice.



Leslye Louie

She/Her/Hers

Data Specialist



Monisha Lozier

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

My dad was a ragtime pianist who loved Scott Joplin, the American composer and king of ragtime. Joplin wrote one opera called TreeMonisha about a community of emancipated slaves and my dad named me after one of the main characters.



Alison Brock McGill

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

I'm named after my paternal grandmother (Mary Alice) and my father (Michael). As my parents' first-born, I was named Alison Michele in a nod to my father's family and lineage.

PROMISE54 TEAM

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Leslie Nair

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

I'm named after my maternal grandmother. My name means Holly Garden, which doesn't necessarily resonate with my identity. I did a better job of naming my kids!



Lucerito Ortiz

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

Little star/Little light



Kimberly Osagie

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

My parents immigrated to the United States from Nigeria, seeking higher education and a better life for themselves and their [then unborn] children. By the time I was born, my parents had a strong sense of what it felt like to be African in Louisiana. And so my first name would be American - unlike so many other children of Nigerian immigrants. I would blend in. My native name would be my middle name instead -- Eseosa. In the Edo language, ese means gift and osa means God. I am a gift of God. And my family name, Osagie, pulls on the strength of God and ends with the verb gie (pronounced gyeh) meaning sent. God sent. A big name to live up to.



Xiomara Padamsee

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

Pronounced "See-Oh-Mada." Literally my name means "ready for battle" and it was once the name of an Aztec princess.



Kiera Vinson

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

My first name is Gaelic, but has nothing to do with the fact that my mom heard it while watching a soap opera at a beauty salon. The salon reminds me of how and why I had so many formative experiences about my hair and natural beauty that sit with me to this day.

PROMISE54 TEAM

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Tiffany Williams-Virden

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

Manifestation of God



UnSuk Zucker

She/Her/Hers

Promise54

My name is UnSuk. The journey of my name, the journey of reclaiming my name is one of challenge and a story of my small act of resistance. My name is UnSuk; 은 Un 은혜 (Grace, Mercy), 숙 Suk肅엄숙할 (solemnity; dignity). In adherence to Korean tradition, my name was carefully curated by my grandfather, through Chinese characters, and ultimately selected and translated into Korean phonetic characters by my parents.

CATALYST:ED TEAM

"What is the meaning of your name?"



Bernadette Doykos

She/Her/Hers

Catalyst:Ed

I was named after one of my sister's teachers--after, I'm guessing, my parents ran out of names by the time they got to me.



Leona Christy

She/Her/Hers

Catalyst:Ed

My name is rooted in my South Indian, Catholic family: Leona (from my grandfather, Leon), Mary (my grandmother), and Christy (my father's first name). Growing up in North India, which has a very small Catholic population, my name often made me feel like an outsider. Now I embrace it because it reminds me of my roots.



Tre Johnson

He/Him/His

Catalyst:Ed