

Tell Me About Your Name

Arturo Urista

On my first day in first grade, I was very excited to have my name called out because it started with the first letter of the alphabet. Arturo, the letter A, the first and always the first. A tall isosceles triangle that makes me look tall and sound confident. After silencing the noisy classroom, the tall teacher taps the desk, then taps it again, and the last tap is loud. The class becomes silent. I become excited when the teacher utters those words.

"Class, I'm ready to take roll."

The teacher's voice was loud, and I could feel the sound waves of the last word, "R-O-L-L."

A big smile came across my face, and I for that tall teacher to say my name, 'ARTURO,' like loud sound waves. It will be heard above all our heads and across the schoolyard. I waited. Then I knew something was up after the third name. And I hoped my name would come up soon with the same vibrato. Then the giant surveys the class walks over to my desk, looks down at me, and whispers with a nod. That is when I realized that last name counts.

My dad had a way of adding words to my name. Usually, the words had negative connotations. For instance, "Arturo Cara de burro" translates to "Arturo has a face of a donkey, the appropriate noun for a beast of burden. Then he will add, "A-E-I-O-U el burro sabe mas que tu" Now he's insulting my intelligence. I know my father's words were all terms of endearment, but the words that came from my peers hurt more, the opposite of endearment. For example, "Art the fart" or "Artie-Farty ."For a middle school kid, those words were devastating and made me select who would be my friend according to how they said my name. I would listen to the way my peers way in pronounced my name, and I got variations. One the long AAAA TUUU ROO that sounded like they had known me since I was five. Then the short TURO, that sound was awesome to me. My six-letter name is down to four letters with the accent on the "T."

To this day, anyone who pronounces my name is subjected to my criticism of how they pronounce Arturo. I know that is harsh and uncalled for. I love my name. One time a lady asked me what the names of my siblings were.

I replied, "Juan Pablo, Norma, Javier, and Mario."

She responded that those were beautiful names and you have cool parents for giving you such names. Then I waited for her to say my name, so I could put her in categories of; "you got my name right," "Ah, you almost there," "That sounded bad, plus for effort," and the last "I hope I never see you again ."She never did. It's useless to criticize others for the mispronunciation of names, especially living in Southern Califas.

A student needed help in writing about how she got her name. She gave me her Chromebook to read what she typed. In her story, she said she got her name from her father's dream. I thought that was beautiful. The first letter of her name started with the letter "M," and she didn't know how to continue her paper.

I asked her.

"When was the first time you saw your name in writing in a public or school setting."

The student thought about it, and then she realized that on the first day in kindergarten, she had to sit on a floor where all the kids' names were in giant print. She realized that there was another kid she hated at the get-go with the same sounding name next to her. But that kid's name started with the letter 'A'. I told her that the letter 'm' has beautiful characteristics. The cursive "m" rolls like curve mountains and loops away. And the 'A' is just one isosceles triangle. You have two. She takes the Chromebook and continues to type in more words. I stood up, glanced at her Chromebook, and read what she was typing. She was writing about how her two triangles are better than one, and it's stronger looking. And two spikes can beat the hell out of one point. Two spikes rule one spike equals loser. My eyes widened because she was excited to type and scared because I was thinking of my name. Then I looked down, and I told her.

"You know the last name counts."