

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO HAVE A COMMON NAME

IQRA L. QAMARI

Being someone born with an inherent identity crisis, whenever I come across my namesake, my first instinct is usually to prove to them that I am the alpha and establish superiority because I tend to get highly territorial about my name. I can only imagine the struggles of someone bearing a common name and it seriously makes me break a sweat. It is a legitimate problem which no one seems to talk about. Well, fret not. You have my attention.

YOU'RE NOT LIKE OTHERS

Okay, I believe that you are a special snowflake, Maisha. But this name that you share with a million other Maishas really chips away at your sense of being extraordinary. Despite the fact that your attributes make you one in a million, your name suggests otherwise. Now, you can blame your parents for this but you will also realise that the damage is already done and accept defeat. You will not consider changing it because enduring a lifetime with this name would still be more tolerable than a day at the passport office.

SOCIAL MEDIA NUISANCE

You might find yourself tagged in certain posts by a horde of friends time and again that demands you treat them with pizza. Reason behind this: your name. Even restaurants nowadays give weekly discounts on your name as if they are providing you with some consolation coupon for your sufferings. This might be something hopeful for a change until your friends start tagging you again and you feel morally obligated to feed them.

Finding an email, username or any social media han-

dle corresponding to your name will be harder than finding Nemo. Furthermore, people also start declaring common personality traits among you and all your namesakes and make memes out of you as a category. So Nowshin, are you a person or a race?

EVERYDAY STRUGGLES

You were not only one of the five Zarins in your class but to make matters worse, once a rumour had started circulating that a certain someone had grown feelings for a Zarin from your class and you just sat there feeling the utter lack of passion in whoever labelled you. Teachers always confuse you with some other student and you always have to pinpoint who you exactly are. To avoid all the confusion in your life, you resort to the name your friends have mockingly baptised you with.

Desperate, you have tried reconstructing your name differently to the point of spelling Lamia as Laameeyughh only to make yourself stand out but this has only been a temporary relief. The only closure can come from becoming a parent yourself and passing on this token of pain to the next generation. It also feels like discrimination

when others exclaim delight at the uniqueness of your friend's name like they are meant for greatness but tell you that their uncle's daughter's pet snake is also named Tasnim.

A name is supposed to validate your existence but when it validates two others in the room as well, it can get a little displeasing. However, do not let me put you down with this article. After all, what's in a name?

Iqra suffers from wanderlust, dreams of discovering the Loch Ness Monster and occasionally complains about Economics. Tell her to get a life at iqra.kashmir53@gmail.com or www.facebook.com/iqra.l.qamari

Struggles of having a unisex name

SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

The day people stop making gender assumptions based on my name, the colours pink and blue will finally be free from the shackles of gender roles related stigma.

Here are the struggles of having a unisex name you can hopefully relate to if you have one:

THE REVELATION

'Tis a sunlit day. You are proudly wearing your name, oblivious of how your name is host to so many assumptions. After a few hours, you stumble across a revelation that ruins the vibe. As for me, my day was going pretty great until my friends bombarded me with their careful observations as to how my name didn't fit me. Later on, the newly acquainted people and my distant relatives' unwanted opinions opened my eyes to the fact that my friends' assertions were right. While the scenario might vary, it is after the revelation you start asking questions like "How did my parents name me?" and realise that identity crisis is real.

FEELING LIKE A FISH OUT OF WATER

Imagine you are outside a doctor's room, waiting with tons of other people with exactly the same name as yours. The assistant calls out your name, and everyone sharing your name stands up with you. You, particularly, stand up to witness the moment of truth i.e. the other people being of the opposite gender. Also, you are met

with shocking stares as if your name isn't suitable for you according to the "conventional" naming system. When you have a unisex name, such circumstances are like that one annoying class you can't bunk. Hence, to those around, you have to become the living proof whose name isn't a proper fit.

GETTING ADJUSTMENT PROPOSALS FOR YOUR NAME

I have often encountered people with hammers ready to adjust my name for me. They had suggested identifying me as "Tarzan" so that my name could sound "masculine" and be free of assumptions, of course. While one's name might not have received THIS bad of an adjustment proposal yet, you definitely have to deal with listening to how Anik from Anika, or vice versa sounds just appropriate for you.

ENCOUNTERING THE BEHAVIOUR POLICE

If you were thinking people just forget how your name and gender are two different poles once they meet you, then you are completely wrong. In an attempt to dig deep into the history of your name, they rather stray from their focus and start assessing your "manliness" or "girliness" based on your name. Good luck putting up with a "girly girl" or "manly man" attitude if your name is anything but.



What's in a name, yo?

THE OBLIVIOUS ONES ARE OBVIOUSLY INNOCENT

Have you ever received calls, emails, and messages by restaurants, shops, etc addressing you as "Sir" instead of "Ma'am" or the other way around? No? Okay. That's probably because

- 1) You don't have a unisex name.
- 2) The sender was kind enough to understand that unisex names exist and sometimes not jumping to conclusions is okay.

Having a unisex name is tough. It's an invitation to many people who want to let you know that their friends of the opposite gender share the same name as yours. Nonetheless, having such a name is special in its own ways -- one being the fact that you can draw some attention to yourself.

Is Shah Tarzan Ashrafi a better alternative to his current name? Let him know at fb.com/shahtazrianashrafi