

Call for Submissions: Name Tags

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Categories : Culture

Date : 13-04-2017

[art by Kristen Stone]

Hello! My Name Is Maybe Henry Milks, aka/fka Megan Milks, for now. I am pleased to introduce you to Name Tags, a new column devoted to issues and experiences related to names and naming. This column led a too-short former life in print as part of Chicago's quarterly newsmagazine *The Landline* (RIP) from 2012-3; here it finds new life. Same name. What follows is a revised, updated version of my original call for submissions.

Name Tags is open in content and form; interested writers should pitch me ideas at the email address below. Possible topics may include but are by no means limited to:

- Issues and experiences related to naming, renaming, unnamings, FKAs, AKAs, né(e)s, nicknames, identity, anonymity, language! and so on.
- A name marks, abbreviates, begins.
- A name is a failure, always already inadequate to describe that which it purports to name.
- A name is a tool for giving instruction, that is to say, for dividing being. (Socrates in Plato's *Cratylus*)
- We are given some names; we take others.
- What is your relationship to your name(s)?
- When I was a kid, I got called a lot of things: Nerd. Brown-noser. Cereal Baby. The nickname that stuck, though, was "Megan Milks the Cow." Because I was fat, I interpreted this sentence as a comment on my fatness—"Megan Milks, the Cow." As an adult, it wasn't until someone who didn't know me as fat made a wild or obvious guess at that nickname that I realized these jerks had (maybe?) only been verb-ing my last name. Whatever. I have since moved through this pain with a "Megan Milks: the Cow" Halloween costume.
- When has one of your names been a source of pain or a subject of ridicule?
- When has one of your names been misused, misspoken, misheard?
- What assumptions are made about you based on your name(s)?
- Tell us the story of your nickname(s).
- I used to play on a middle-school softball team with girls I didn't know who all knew each other. They tried to include me, but I was quiet and aloof; they stopped trying. When it was time to order jerseys, Coach said we could get nicknames on the back instead of our last names. Cool. I didn't have one. I wanted a fun nickname like everyone else, so I chose *Milkyway*; it would give the impression that I could hit the ball to a galaxy far, far away, that I was a real slugger. My teammates were perplexed. "Do people call you that?" the pitcher asked. I shrugged. When I went up to bat, no one knew how to cheer for this new, suspect person. My dad's voice rang out clear and strong, and all alone: "Go Milky! Hustle, Milky!" This regrettable attempt at self-naming is partly why I'm having a hard time [settling on a name](#) now that I have more reason to potentially change it.
- Who shares your name(s)?
- When Korean American filmmaker Grace Lee was growing up in Missouri, she was the only Grace Lee she knew. Once she left the Midwest however, everyone she met seemed to know "another Grace Lee." But why did they assume that all Grace Lees were reserved, dutiful, piano-

playing overachievers?

- There are at least three other Megan Milkses alive in the world today. At least one of them is queer. Another of them is or was a softball player.
- WEEEWHOOH WEEEWHOOH! Hi I'm Megan Milks! I live in CA and I'm just a tad insane. I get all poetic on this site, if that makes any sense. I love harry potter and I USED to like twilight....
- Megan Milks was the cover model for the It's All Butch 2011 monthly calendar.
- Megan Milks is listed as one of the hottest & coolest les/trans guys on lesking.com. You think we are all girls? Not really!
- Megan Milks is horrified that milk is now associated with white supremacy.
- Megan Milks does not drink milk.
- SOCRATES: You have forgotten what I told you a while ago, namely that I didn't know about names but that I would investigate them with you. And now that we *are* investigating them, you and I, at least this much is clearer than before, that names do possess a sort of natural correctness and that it isn't every man [sic] who knows how to name things well. Isn't that right?
- HERMOGENES: Certainly.
- A Namer has to know who people are, and who they are meant to be...When everyone is really and truly Named, then the Echthroi will be vanquished. (Proginoskes in Madeline L'Engle's *A Wind in the Door*)
- How do you name your characters? How do you name your characters from other planets?
- Where does your pseudonym come from?
- In 1983, a white American named Daniel James published a novel from the perspective of Mexican-American boy under the pen name Danny Santiago and won several awards.
- In 2015, a white American named Michael Derrick Hudson published a poem under the pen name Yi-Fen Chou. It was republished in *Best American Poetry 2015*.
- In response to the revelation of Hudson's identity, the Asian American Writers Workshop created a [white pen name generator](#). Mine is Preston Gilbert.
- In 2017, Rachel Dolezal, the white NAACP leader who posed as black for years, changed her name to Nkechi Amare Diallo.
- Even if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology, it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality. (Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action* 45)
- There is real power in remaining unmarked. (Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*)
- SOCRATES: Take courage then and admit that one name may be well given while another isn't.
- Which of your names is most right?
- Who is allowed to call you that?

Please submit your column or pitch to maybemilks@entropymag.org with "NAME TAGS PITCH" in the subject line. As this column evolves, I reserve the right to change its name.