

19th January, 2009

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

DEAR DIARY, names are very interesting; first names, middle names, why some people have two surnames and why different countries have their reasons and methods of naming. As much as it's everything to do with the parent who named you, the name you're stuck with defines who you are for the rest of your life and it then becomes nothing much to do with your parents but everything to do with you. It would be nearly impossible to see me as anything other than August but if I had my way, August wouldn't be my name. I'd call myself Lola Cinnamon. Maybe we should have the option to take part in a re-naming ceremony at age 25 to give ourselves a name which we think best suits us.

I reckon loads of people would choose a different name if they had the option. My guess would be about 2 out of 10 people would go for a change – possibly regretting it by the age of 40 and reverting back to their given name.

These famous people changed their names for one reason or another.

Birth Name	Now Known As...
Eric Bishop	Jamie Foxx
Jennifer Anastassakis	Jennifer Aniston
Caryn Johnson	Whoopi Goldberg
Eleanora Fagan Gough	Billy Holiday
Aliaune Damala Bouga Time Puru Nacka Lu Lu Lu Badara Akon Thiam	Akon
Alicia Augello Cook	Alicia Keys
Carole Yvette Marie Stevens	Chaka Khan
Georgios Panayiotou	George Michael
Reginald Dwight	Elton John

Then there are names which define an era: these names sound like elderly people born in Britain during the 40s: George, Doreen, Henry, Ethel, Enid, Doris, Arthur and Edward.

A handful of African American names which are cobbled together are often criticised for being unpronounceable or with apostrophes in strange places and a source of amusement

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like Alizé, Le'Keisha, La'Rhonda, Ma'Leek, De'Vaughan, Roshaundra, Can'Deesha or Da'Shaun. We've also gotten very used to a very famous one: Beyoncé.

Since the late seventies and eighties, children have also been called the names of alcoholic beverages – Brandy and Chardonnay; countries – India, China and Asia; cities – Paris, Brooklyn and Atlanta; perfume – Chanel; London borough's – Chelsea; designers – Armani; cars – Porsche and planets - Venus.

There are always going to be the flowers: Lillie, Rose and Daisy.

My cousin Carol was born in December. I wonder if she's a Christmas Carol or would she have been called Carol if she were born in April?

There were a huge amount of Jacqueline/Jackie's named in the early 1960's due to Jackie Kennedy's popularity.

Then there are those with names linked to a particular country, like Ireland for instance. Many moons ago, I worked with three Maureen's in Sainsbury's in the Arndale Centre in Wandsworth when I was a student. One was a black teenager and the other one was an Indian woman and in her 20s and the third one was about 50 and Irish – 50 year old Maureen seemed like the "authentic" Maureen! She was mature and Irish; she was the *real cheddar!*

I know two Gem's. One is female of Jamaican and English parentage and the other is a Turkish male.

I've never met a Marcia who wasn't black and even though Churchill was a Winston, it's far more likely that you'll find a Winston in the black community as well as Donavon, Lloyd, Delroy, Errol and Glenroy.

Foreign names are good: Adebowale, Ninghong, Funke, Fatima, Sanghita, Abdul, Joop, Jean-Paul, Bronwyn, Órlaith, Hikaru, Katarzyna, Dagmar, Artemis and Conchita. I used to work with a man by the name of Hiroshi Angelopoulos; he was half Greek and half Japanese.

What about hip-hop monikers:

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Nas	Nasir Jones
Jay-Z	Sean Carter
P Diddy	Sean John Combs
Biggie Smalls	Christopher Wallace
T-Pain	Faheem Najm
50 Cent	Curtis Jackson
Busta Rhymes	Trevor Smith

Then there are “ultra-modern” names like Erykah Badu’s children who are called Seven and Puma – Erykah’s real name so happens to be Erica Wright. My children are related to, or are friends of children with the following names: Storm, Taye, Mika, Skye, Summer, Trae, Saffron, Kye, Shae, Tate, Jordache, Dre, Codey, Summer, Maxim, Shakera, Blue and Cain.

I knew a girl named Georgia who said her dad wanted boys and got four girls. Her sisters are called Roberta, Michaela and Daniela.

Lord knows we only think of one thing when we hear the name Hitler!

Now where would be without an Oprah or a Barack? Watch out for new born Baracka, Barakeisha, Barabama, Barakesh, O’Barack, Rackabama and all sorts of other derivatives of the name.

Then there’s me; good thing I wasn’t born in September!

*August Mayfield*