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My Name

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My Name

Brenda Yañez Portillo

In Spanish, my last name is Yañez. Con una eñe o tilde sobre la ene.
In English, it is only Yanez. No eñe.
It is “we don’t have that letter in our alphabet”.
Or “it’s too complicated”.
It has become the gringo version of my real name, the easier version everyone uses because of its pronunciation.

For a long time, I let it slide.
I stopped correcting teachers, professors, administrators.
I gave up.
I told myself to let it go.
That this happened to everyone who looks like me.
Whose names sound like mine.

Yañez
I wonder where the name comes from.
Is it European? Indigenous? A mixture?
If I knew, would it change things?
Would it encourage people to learn how to pronounce it?
Maybe if I knew where it came from, I could be accepted without being looked at as inferior.

It wasn’t until I met a woman by the name of Maral Attallah that I began to reclaim my name.
She said “correct them, for this is your name and an important part of your identity”.
She even taught me how to find the eñe on a computer.
I will forever be thankful for her.

Now, my name will always be YAÑEZ.
It is a reminder of the obstacles my father overcame and continues to overcome every day.
It is his legacy.
His mark on this Earth.
It is everything I will become.

Yañez.

Con una tilde sobre la ene.

“Correct them, for its part of your identity”.

I remember those words.

Now, I correct people when they mispronounce my name.

Because mispronouncing my name is like denying a part of my identity.

Yañez.

What a beautiful name.

It is not a symbol of unworthiness.

But a symbol of struggle and perseverance.

It is who I am.

Everything I was, am, and will ever be.

Yañez

I love my name.

Love your name.

Embrace it.

Reclaim it!

To my familia, gracias por su apoyo incondicional. And to Maral Attallah, who helped me regain a part of my identity.