

# my name

BY SOPHIE SACO

My name carries “wisdom,” the wisdom of generations lost in translation. “Sophia” means wisdom in Greek, but I’m not Greek. The Spanish spell it “Sofia,” but I’m also not Spanish. My mom chose Sophia because only certain names sound right with a last name that sounds like “sack.” She told me later that it was for Queen Sofia of Spain and my other sisters were similarly named after royalty. Her name, Reina, or “queen” in Spanish, fits this narrative. But the narrative confuses me.

What am I?

I’m at a disconnect with my name and its roots: not quite old enough to reach deep underground, yet they connect with my would-be life in Cuba. Sophia sounds harsh in Spanish, like someone hurling *chancas*, or maybe like the groan of someone who’s frustrated. With a name like “wisdom,” you’d imagine I would know better. But I don’t.

In my Cuban life, I would be married with a child on the way. In my real life, I am studying. In Cuba, I could be preaching to God. In my real life, I am quiet and wear my chain with St. Jude on the pendant, my name in script beside it.

I’m still puzzled as to how, when I was nine, wisdom was associated with religion, so I asked myself: should I be religious? I answered, “I’m not sure.” My whole life since has been a sequence of “I’m not sure” or “I don’t know,” and it terrifies me. Somewhere along the line, I became afraid of living my life unlived, so I sought adventure. I sought the great unknown because I was tired of not being in control of my life, my history, and my name. So I took action, knowing for once that even though a queen is told to

sit quietly, my crown will stay put even if I run uphill through my struggles, shouting to the skies.

My story, however, is mine to tell and that’s what matters. My narrative is complex, but also simple. I used to hate my name; I went through phases of nicknames and various aliases to avoid being called “Sophia.” I confuse people because how could I hate such a beautiful name? It’s through reclaiming my name that I will water myself with fountains of books and knowledge to better reach my roots and complete the picture of my life because I refuse to be another “just.” *Just* a victim, *just* a survivor, *just* a speck of dust.

I was on the backburner for eighteen years, but I refuse to be a speck of dust any longer. Though I have crawled out into the light, I see vestiges of that dark place in my speech, my most prized possession. Most days

I’ll call me Sophie,” to bring up  
afraid negative memories of how he would whisper, “Sophia,” tugging at my shirt, or how my mom would yell, “Sophia!” annoyed at the dirty room. Nasty boys gave my name a bitter taste that lingered on my tongue

for years. I was afraid of even whispering my name, terrified of giving it power. For years I wanted to hide behind a name that wasn’t associated with bitter kisses and messy memories; I wanted a clear conscience and a name that wasn’t smeared. My mother made me question my name, wonder how such a harsh name fit a sweet girl. The harsh “a” sounds like a crash of lightning in my ears, worsening my relationship with the name.

I was consistently told I had changed, no longer the bouncing baby of her memories. My name was despicable to me, an entity I wanted to ignore until I found that one letter could change the whole meaning and feel of my name. From “Sophia” to “Sophie” I could hear the shift in tone, the lilt that made me giggle rather than curl into myself. The “e” sounded like a song; “Sophie” became my swan song, my final performance, my final evolution. But it isn’t my final form. I thought I had gone beyond the toxicity of my name, that I could hide behind someone else. But like Shakespeare said, “say forever and a day,” because the day when I accept my name will be the day forever ends. And it did. When I came to Wellesley and heard how Sophie didn’t quite fit within the context of such strong women, how they took the difficulties of life in strides, I came to the conclusion that I could tackle my trauma, I could reclaim my name. I realized that I wasn’t only sweet—I could be strong, I could be powerful. I love “Sophia.” I am Sophie Saco.

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*Sophie Saco '22 (ssaco@wellesley.edu) will be a Sophia again in the near future.*