

**Introduction:**

"Say My Name" is a video created by Chinese international students at Columbia University in response to a xenophobic prank where name tags displaying Chinese names were ripped off of residence hall doors (Yan, 2017). The targeted students created the video to share the significance and meaning behind their names. In this activity, participants will watch the Say My Name video, along with a video interviewing the students involved, and discuss the personal and cultural importance behind names as well as the importance of respecting names and pronouncing them correctly. Furthermore, they interrogate how racism and stereotypes can affect how individuals perceive themselves and aspects of their identity (such as their name).

**Facilitator Notes:**

In [Links](#), there is a clip from The Ellen Show, where Ellen interviews Ziqi Li (aka Lil' Mushroom), a seven-year-old dancer from Beijing. In one portion of the segment, Ziqi attempts to teach Ellen how to pronounce her name. There is the potential for this interaction to be interpreted as positive or negative, because she does "try" to pronounce her name correctly. However, some may interpret her attempts as mocking the pronunciation and the sounds within the Chinese language. Also, she gives up trying after awhile, which is something Americans commonly do when they encounter a name from a different language. The facilitator may decide to incorporate this video in with the activity and discuss its various interpretations and how Ellen's reactions may potentially contribute to the racism and stereotypes that Chinese individuals encounter.

**Objectives:**

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize both the personal and cultural importance of names.
2. Understand the importance of respecting names and pronouncing them correctly.
3. Recognize how racism and stereotypes can affect how individuals perceive themselves and aspects of their identity (such as their name).
4. Develop empathy for individuals who experience racism or xenophobia because of their name and culture.

**Time:**

30 minutes.

**Group Size:**

Entire Group.

**Materials:**

Access to the internet to watch and project [Say My Name video](#) and [Say My Name: The Chinese Students Fighting Racism BBC News interview](#) (in [Links](#)); Participant Instructions (in [Downloads](#)).

**Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:**

- Polarization
- Minimization

- Acceptance

## AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

### Cultural Self-Awareness

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

### Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

### Empathy

- To interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview.
- To demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.

### Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

- To articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings).
- To skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on these differences.

## Other Skills:

Friendship; Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion.

## Activity Instructions:

1. Begin by showing participants the “Say My Name” video. Then, show “Say My Name: The Chinese Students Fighting Racism” in order to provide context for why the video was created.
2. After watching the videos, debrief with the following questions:
  - Why are names important?
  - How do names relate to personal and cultural identity?
  - Why did the students from Columbia University create the Say My Name video? Why is it significant?
  - What sorts of origins stories did they identify for their names? Do you have any similar stories about your own names?
  - How do you think it made the students feel when they realized that they were the targets of a racist/xenophobic prank? How would you feel if that happened to you?

*Note: There may be participants who have experienced racism because of their name/culture, so approach this question sensitively and do not push students to share stories that may be painful.*



- Why do you think Chinese students often adopt an “American” name while in the United States? How might that affect their sense of identity?
- Why is the pronunciation of a name important?
- What did you learn about names, culture, and identity from these two videos?