

STORY FOR ALL AGES

THE RED BUD TREE



MAKING
A NAME
FOR
YOURSELF

A family lived way downtown in a big city. Uptown, there was a huge park, with acres and acres of deep woods, clear ponds, and rolling hills. The children grew up hearing stories of the large, beautiful Red Bud Tree that lived right in the center of the park.

One day, in early spring, the older children were at school. The youngest was alone at home with the children's grandmother and asked, "Nonna, please take me to see the Red Bud Tree?" They took the subway uptown and walked into the park. Nonna knew just where the tree would be, and there it was, a bare stump of wood, without a single leaf or bud.

Though the tree was quite unlike its name, that did not stop the youngest from bragging, "I was first to see it!" As soon as the next oldest sibling had Nonna all to themselves on a Saturday afternoon, they asked to go see the Red Bud Tree, too. Nonna made another trip. They

found the tree covered with bright red buds, some just starting to blossom, and looking very stunning.

Then, the second eldest had a turn in the summer, when the younger siblings were busy at day camp and the oldest off with neighborhood friends. "Nonna, will you take me to see the tree?" they asked. They rode uptown and walked into the park. "Here it is," said Nonna.

The child did not believe Nonna had found the right place. This Red Bud Tree had no red buds, but was covered with soft, feathery green leaves.

Some weeks later, the oldest sibling had earned some money babysitting and said, "Nonna, let me take you out for ice cream." But Nonna suggested they get on the subway and go see the Red Bud Tree, instead, as all the others had already been to see it. This time, the tree was covered with little bean-pods. Some had fallen to the ground, and the child gathered a few

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The Families pages are adapted from Tapestry of Faith lifespan faith development programs.

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to take home.

Upon arriving home, the oldest sibling rushed to tell the others, "I have just seen that tree and one thing I know, its name makes no sense. There are no red buds, just tons of little bean-pods, like these!" The oldest showed them.

Now each child told what they had seen: a dry stump, a colorful spectacle of red buds, a canopy of feathery green leaves...and a tree full of bean-pods. They wondered if the Red Bud Tree was magical, because it appeared differently to different people. Nonna was listening, a smile on her face. Finally, she said, "Yes, all of you have seen the same tree. Is it magic? Maybe. If you think the seasons of the year are a kind of magic, then, yes."

Inspired by a Jataka tale in *Ancient Tales for Modern Times*, a story collection from Skinner House (2016).

EXPLORING TOGETHER

People—like you—have their own names. Places, groups, and sometimes even things are known by their names. Where do these names come from? A name can show affection, respect, description, and much more.



Your Turn

Have you ever had the chance to name something or someone? Sometimes kids help name a family pet or even a new sibling. Maybe your catcher's mitt or your family car has a name. If you have a favorite doll or stuffed animal, did you keep the name it came with?

Change the Name, Change the Game

Do you agree that everyone has a right to be called by the name they choose? Cassius Clay, born in 1942, was given the same name as his father, plus "Junior." But he grew up to be quite different from his dad. He became a prize-winning boxer, eventually the world champion. He became a Muslim and changed his name to Cassius X, following the example of the civil rights leader, Malcom X, who had also converted to Islam. Soon after, he chose the name Muhammad Ali...the name we remember him by.



Who chose your name for you? Can you ask why they chose it? Maybe the name has a special meaning for them. Maybe it was chosen to honor or remember someone. If you want to change it, they will probably want to know why.

Would you ever change your name? What would you change it to? Why? If you're serious about it, think about how you might tell people about your decision.

Was the Red Bud Tree named well? How do you think it got its name?

REMEMBER: A name can tell you SOMETHING about a person, place, or thing...but not EVERYTHING!

Name Source Scavenger Hunt

Photograph the names on signs, monuments, and buildings around you.

Do the names reflect the people who live in your community?

Or do they come from people who lived there twenty, or 200, or even more years before you?



Does Rum River Need a New/Old Name?

There's a river called "Rum River" in Minnesota. But long ago, local people of the Dakota nation had a different name for the river. They called it "Wakhan," which means "Great Spirit" in the Dakota language.

It is thought that when Europeans came, they translated "spirit" to mean an alcoholic drink, like rum. They may have thought "Rum River" was a good translation, or maybe they thought the double meaning was a funny joke. Of course, the Dakota did not know about alcoholic spirits before Europeans brought them. Their name for the river honored the kind of spirit we talk about in Unitarian Universalism: the supreme being, the creative force of our universe. The Dakota considered the river sacred. A better translation might have been "God."

Today, some people want to rename Rum River. The name is considered especially offensive because the Europeans used alcoholic spirits, like rum, to destroy the Dakota communities. **Perhaps the river's old name should be brought back. What do you think?**



Who gets to give a place its name?

"Wanna Be" Name Tags

- Find a blank name tag and a pen.
- Now, look into yourself. It may help to use a mirror, and really look! Look until you discover a seed of something wonderful in you that could grow.
 - Do you want to be more kind? More brave? More peaceful? Name that seed! Write it on your name tag.
 - Greet yourself in the mirror with that name: "Hello, Peaceful!"
 - Introduce yourself this way to another person. Help them make their own "Wanna Be" name tag.



- See if giving yourself a new name will inspire you to live up to it!

This Hindu grandmother in Kerala, India whispers the name into a baby's ear—covering the other ear with a leaf—before the name is told to the rest of the family and guests.



WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

My name is **Mary Kate**, and my mother's name is Mary Grace. It's an Irish tradition to name girls after Mary, the blessed mother of Jesus in the Catholic religion.

My name is **Abdulatif**, which means "servant of the kind one," in Arabic. My mother calls me "Habibi," which is sort of like "darling" in English.

My name is **Tihun**, I was born in Ethiopia. My name means "let her be" in Amharic, an Ethiopian language. I also have the nickname, "Tunie."

My name is **David**, and my name means "beloved" in Hebrew. It's also the name of a great-uncle who died before I was born.

My name is **H.C.** My baby name was Hong, which means "red," a lucky color in Chinese. When my parents adopted me, they gave me the middle name, Caroline, in case I wanted a choice when I was older.



Ten Thousand Baby Names

When my youngest daughter was about two, she came across a tattered paperback on our bookshelves, *Ten Thousand Baby Names*. Drawn by the shining face of the baby on the cover, she brought it to me over and over and demanded that I read through the names. This was prelude to what was, at the time, her favorite story of all: How we chose her name. What's in a name? Always, there is a story. You were named for a beloved relative or, contrarily, for no one because your parents wanted a clean break. If you were a first son and your family went in for such things, you were called after your father, with "junior" tacked on. Recalling a romantic time, did your parents name you for a place they went together? Perhaps you carry the name of their favorite musician or movie star, or an affectionate nickname born of a sibling's mispronunciation. — Rev. Kathleen McTigue

■ When do you say your child's name aloud? What tone of voice are you likely to use?

■ How can you share with your child the care, history, and hope with which you chose their name?



Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Names of 58,000 American soldiers killed during the war in Vietnam are etched in the wall.

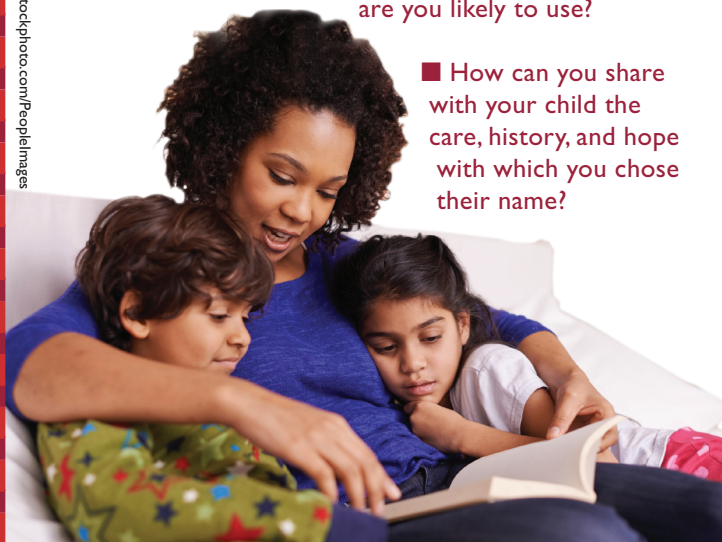
A name is full of history...and possibility, like a story's beginning. But a story has an end, and so it happens, at times, that we gather to say the name of someone who has died, to honor that person, to say goodbye, and perhaps to make a promise.

Too often, today, we read aloud not one name only, but a list. We share a litany of the names of young, black and brown people who have died violently and needlessly at the hands of our own police. We may stop what we are doing at home to watch on television as the names crawl by of people killed in a terrorist attack.

We can witness The Names Project, which honors, with individual, hand-crafted quilts, tens of thousands who died from HIV/AIDS. Each of these names...someone chose it, to start a story.

An ending is the last thing on our minds when we name a child—yet, all our lives end. When we speak the name of someone who has gone before us, we keep their story alive. We connect it to ourselves and carry it into the future. When we say the names in loving remembrance of those who have died, let us speak with reverence, gratitude, and perhaps, a promise.

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FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

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FIND OUT MORE

- "More Pushback against Native Names" describes contemporary conflicts over place names in Alaska: talkingalaska.blogspot.com
- This Families insert draws from a Jataka tale, "The Red Bud Tree," in the story collection *Ancient Tales for Modern Times* (Skinner House, 2016; available at inSpirit, the UU book and gift shop); two Tapestry of Faith programs, Signs of Our Faith and Building Bridges; and writings by the Rev. Dr. Jay Abernathy and the Rev. Kathleen McTigue in the UUA online WorshipWeb.

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