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Spanish to English

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Spanish to English

José Manuel Hernández

“Ho-zay Her-nan-diz?” she called out.
“Here” I replied.

I remember when my name, José Manuel Hernández, turned into just “Ho-zay”. I was just in preschool or kinder when it happened. I remember it being awkward because I was transitioning from speaking only Spanish at home to learning to speak English.

One day I came home and came across one of my neighbors, who is of Mexican descent but mostly speaks English. She told me that my name in English was different than it was in Spanish. My name in English was Joseph Manuel and not José Manuel. I was only about 5 or 6 years old and she was an adult, so she must be right, I thought to myself. If I was going to learn English and be like everybody else, I had to at least know how to say my name in English. So later that day at home when my mom called for me, “José Manuel!” I approached her and told her that my name was “Joseph Manuel.” She was surprised and confused and at the same time she thought it was cute and funny. She asked me where I had gotten the idea that my name wasn’t José but rather Joseph, so I told her.

She then explained to me that in English Joseph was the translation of my name but that my name will always be José Manuel and not Joseph. Despite having clarified that, at school no one ever said my name the way it’s supposed to be pronounced, in Spanish, except for my cousins and siblings. Everyone else just called me “Ho-zay.” And since technically they hadn’t changed my name, I put up with it. Nowadays when I meet someone new, if I feel like they won’t have a problem pronouncing my name correctly, I introduce myself as José.