

Becoming Monica:
Names, Naming, and Name Changing in Monica Sone's
Nisei Daughter

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Introduction

Monica Sone's 1953 fictionalized autobiography, *Nisei Daughter*, recounts the author's childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood growing up as an American-born child of Japanese immigrants in Seattle in the 1920s–1940s. Born Kazuko Monica Itoi in Seattle in 1919,¹ throughout her childhood and adolescence Sone was known among her family and her Japanese American (Nikkei) community as Kazuko or its endearing diminutives, Kazu and Ka-chan. To her few non-Nikkei friends she was similarly known by the slightly Anglicized names “Kazi” and “Kaz” (140, 148). It was only in the war years, separated from the West Coast where an Asian presence was common and relocated to Indianapolis (reset in the text to “a suburb of Chicago”) where Asians were an exotic rarity, and under the sponsorship of a retired couple who had been long-term missionaries to China, that she suddenly became known as Monica (217). If we consider Sone's text to be what Frank Miyamoto has described as “a statement of self-identity, and [...] a search for identity,”² then this abrupt (but apparently voluntary) onomastic transition from Kazuko to Monica represents on the young Miss Itoi's part both a compromise with, and a concession to, the Euro-American majority. First, embracing her Anglo middle name as her public identity constitutes a compromise with American society's Anglo and Eurocentric majority, primarily for the purpose of facilitating her inclusion in that society—inclusion that ironically should be her birthright as an American citizen but is nevertheless resisted by that society's ethnocentrism. It is at the same time a concession to that same Eurocentric

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1. Monica Sone, *Nisei Daughter* (1953; repr., Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 10. Further page number references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

2. S. Frank Miyamoto, introduction to the 1979 Edition of *Nisei Daughter* by Monica Sone, vii–xvi (1979; repr., Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), vii.

majority regarding the matter of just who has the authority to determine what does and does not constitute an “American” identity. That is, Kazuko’s choice to abandon the name by which she was known to her family and her ethnic community in favor of the Anglo-conforming Monica represents what Indian-Filipina American actress Angel Desai more recently described as “yielding to the direction in which America demands immigrants to bend” insofar as matters of names and personal identity are concerned; a demand Desai feels is placed even today on Asians in particular and amounts to “a form of erasure” requiring that they “do everything exactly the way [Anglo-Americans] do it and hide away everything that is unique and different about [themselves].”³ In other words, by consciously choosing to be Monica instead of Kazuko, Sone tacitly acknowledges and submits to the authority of the Euro-American majority to name her.

I : Names, Naming, and Name Changing

Names, both those we are given and those we confer upon ourselves—group names, personal names, family names, nicknames, professional names—communicate to the world a great deal about us. Justina Cheang, among others, has described them as vehicles of “self-presentation” through which we announce to the world our perceptions of who and what we are.⁴ That is, names often reveal such intimate personal information as sex; racial, national, and ethnic origins; religious affiliations; familial connections as well as individual relational standing within the family, such as senior (Sr.), junior (Jr.), or the third (III) bearer of a particular name. They also intimate the hopes and desires for our futures held by the parents who named us. They are, in other words, billboards declaring to the world our self-definition.

If names are symbolic representations of individuals, Valerie Alia reminds us that the act of naming is a universally practiced, potentially political activity indicative of power relations within families, communities, and even nations.⁵ That is, every act of naming, from the simple act of parents naming their children to the sort of sociopolitical relationships described in Louis Althusser’s political theories of interpellation,⁶ implies the authority of the name-giver over the named. The case of the parent-child relationship is obvious and has been demonstrated in

3. Angel Desai, “What’s in a name? Much more than I knew,” *American Theatre*, November 16, 2020, <https://www.americantheatre.org/2020/11/16/whats-in-a-name-so-much-more-than-i-knew/>. Italics in original.

4. Justina Cheang, “Choice of Foreign Names as a Strategy for Identity Management,” *International Communication Studies* 17, no. 2 (2008): 198.

5. Valerie Alia, “The Politics of Naming: A Personal Reflection,” *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* 55, no. 4 (2007): 457.

6. For a discussion of the concept of interpellation, see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

numerous legal test cases that have tended to support the parents' near absolute rights over naming.⁷ Less obvious are religiously based relationships, such as pastors conferring baptismal names on initiates—albeit names normally selected by the initiates themselves or their parents—or names directly or indirectly imposed by church administrators as a condition for inclusion.⁸ Similar is the student-teacher relationship. Indeed, immigrant history in the United States in particular is replete with examples of schoolteachers giving Anglo names to children whose ethnic names they could neither remember nor pronounce.⁹ Then there are sociopolitical relationships such as the colonial relationship, in which the colonizers have bestowed their own names on the places (New York, New Jersey), peoples (Indians), and even individuals they encountered (Robinson Crusoe's Man Friday), which Wale Adebaniwi argues in an Althusserian sense constitutes “a way of ‘governing’” a place or a people.¹⁰ There is likewise a similar act of interpellation noticeable in Sone's text when, for example, members of the racial majority label the Nisei Americans “Japs,” an identity the Nisei may resist and resent but nevertheless tacitly acknowledge (114 and elsewhere). In each of these instances of naming, the name-giver presumes to have the authority to assign identity to the named.

Changing one's name, in turn, constitutes an attempt to (re)assert authority over one's own identity and to define oneself and one's group membership.¹¹ Among immigrant groups and their immediate descendants, Asians in particular, name changing has been common. There are numerous reasons immigrants and their children might seek to change their names. Chief among these are concerns about discrimination. For example, Sonia Kang et al. report that Chinese immigrants tend to “whiten” their resumes through name changing in order to

7. See Carlton F. W. Larson, “Naming Baby: The Constitutional Dimensions of Parental Naming Rights,” *George Washington Law Review* 80, no. 1 (2011): 175–76.

8. See, for example, Kembo-Sure, “Naming as a Cultural and Political Metaphor,” *The Nairobi Review* 1 (2021): 4.

9. See Louis Adamic, *What's Your Name?* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), 38–39, and elsewhere; Gary Y. Okihiro, “The Japanese in America,” in *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*, ed. Brian Niiya (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 1993), 8; and Eileen H. Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: The Nisei Generation in Hawaii* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 169–71.

10. Wale Adebaniwi, “Global Naming and Shaming: Toponymic (Inter) National Relations on Lagos and New York's Streets,” *African Affairs* 111, no. 445 (2012): 646.

11. See Tai S. Kang, “Name Change and Acculturation: Chinese Students on an American Campus,” *The Pacific Sociological Review* 14, no. 4 (1971): 404; Ellen Dionne Wu, “‘They Call Me Bruce, But They Won't Call Me Bruce Jones’: Asian American naming preferences and practices,” *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* 47, no. 1 (1999): 24; and Darrell W. Drury and John D. McCarthy, “The Social Psychology of Name Change: Reflections on a Serendipitous Discovery,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (1980): 310.

“even the playing field” and “get their foot in the door” at least at the resume-screening stage of the hiring process.¹² Others change their names—voluntarily or otherwise—in order to minimize mnemonic and pronunciation difficulties for the majority community. Louis Adamic recounts numerous such instances among peoples of various European backgrounds,¹³ as do Gary Okihiro¹⁴ and Eileen Tamura¹⁵ among Japanese immigrants in Hawaii. Indeed, for similar reasons, after their marriage in 1947 Sone and her spouse likewise changed their family name from Tsuyuki, whose word-initial “ts” consonant cluster proved a phonological and mnemonic obstacle to the non-Nikkei midwestern community in which they had settled, to the more Anglo-friendly Sone that was the birth family name of Geary’s mother.¹⁶ Others, Ellen Wu points out, were often succumbing to pressure from the majority community for Anglo-conformity and, during and after World War II, the perceived need to demonstrate patriotism,¹⁷ this latter point, Martin Saavedra suggests, being particularly true of the Japanese Americans in the immediate aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack.¹⁸ To varying degrees, each of these issues are reflected in Sone’s text.

II : Ethnicity, Race, and American Identity

The questions of identity and of who and what constitutes an American are central to Sone’s text. As Miyamoto has pointed out, for the Nisei these were never easy questions to address because they often found themselves caught between two worlds that were often giving them “conflicting answers.”¹⁹ For instance, like most of her Nisei contemporaries, from early childhood young Kazuko considered herself “a Yankee” (18, 19). Nevertheless, she and her fellow Nisei had to contend on the one hand with the denials and rejections of their Americanness by their Euro-American compatriots who saw them only as “Japs” (114, 119, 122, 146, 158, 160, 171), and on the other with the assumptions of the

12. Sonia K. Kang, Katherine A. DeCelles, András Tilcsik, and Sora Jun, “Whitened Résumés: Race and Self-Presentation in the Labor Market,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 20 (2016): 10.

13. Adamic, *What’s Your Name?*, 27, 48, 50–51, and 101.

14. Okihiro, “The Japanese in America,” 10.

15. Tamura, *Americanization*, 169–71.

16. Monica Sone and Geary Sone, “Monica Sone interview on her career as a writer.” Interview by Joyce Wong and William Wong, July 16–21, 1972. Combined Asian American Research Project (CARP). Five reels. University of California, Berkeley. Bancroft Library. *Internet Archive*. https://archive.org/details/cubanc_000313. Part 8, 5:50–6:55.

17. Wu, “They Call Me Bruce,” 23, 30–31.

18. Martin Saavedra, “Kenneth or Kenji? Pearl Harbor and Japanese-American Assimilation,” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 185 (2021): 619.

19. Miyamoto, introduction to the 1979 edition of *Nisei Daughter*, vii.

Issei generation of their immigrant parents who saw them first and foremost as “tender Japanese saplings born on foreign soil” (24; also see 27, 28, 120), before eventually arriving in adulthood at an acceptance of, and sense of pride in, “being a Nisei” (236). Yet, the question remains: can a Nisei—or any racial and ethnic minority—*be* an American? This, in turn, is an issue that needs to be examined historically.

E pluribus unum—“from the many, one”—the national motto proposed in 1776 and today etched in the Great Seal of the United States, emphasizes a universalist ideological understanding of American nationality and identity initially envisioned by the founders. Ideally, it means that Americanness is not associated with ethnicity or with other factors such as religious or linguistic background. Rather, echoing earlier scholars, Sarah Song has suggested that being an American “means sharing a commitment to a set of values and ideas.”²⁰ That is, as Philip Gleason wrote, being “American” simply required that individuals “commit [themselves] to the political ideology centered on the abstract ideals of liberty, equality, and republicanism,” implying that inclusion in the national body “was open to anyone who willed to become an American.”²¹ However, Gleason quickly adds that, practically speaking, there was from the beginning a “latent predisposition towards an ethnically defined concept of nationality” that reflected the Protestant English heritage of the overwhelming majority of the new nation’s 1790s citizenry.²² He further points out that in the years prior to the War of 1812 the overall number of immigrants was rather low, about 250,000 in total, a level Gleason suggests precluded significant linguistic and cultural reinforcement for non-Anglo communities and contributed to a rather quick “Americanization” of the newcomers, especially insofar as language was concerned. Of greater concern in those early years was blocking the entrance of ideologically radical elements connected to the political upheavals then convulsing the European nations whose political ideals were often in conflict with those of the founding generation.²³

In his classic study of American immigration, Milton Gordon, in turn, suggests that these ambiguous attitudes about immigration in the early decades of the republic generally prioritized the recognized economic and political need of the individual states to rapidly expand their populations against concerns about the ethnicity, language, religious affiliations, socioeconomic class, and ideological orientation of the new arrivals. However, Gordon continues, from the 1850s

20. Sarah Song, “What does it mean to be an American?,” *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Science* 138, no. 2 (2009): 31.

21. Philip Gleason, “American Identity and Americanization,” in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1980), 31–58.

22. *Ibid.*, 32–33.

23. *Ibid.*, 33–34.

onward anxiety over immigration grew in tandem with the ballooning influx of newcomers with different religious beliefs, languages, and attitudes towards the Puritan and Evangelical values upon which American society was established.²⁴ This gave periodic rise to nativist movements such as the anti-Catholic Know-Nothings who achieved national prominence and power in the 1850s in part as a reaction against Irish immigration. As the sources of immigration began to further shift towards eastern and southern Europe, ethnicity also began to emerge as a more important feature in the conception of American identity, and pressure on the newcomers to “Americanize” increasingly took the form of a demand for what Stewart Cole and Mildred Cole called “Anglo-conformity”—the substitution of “superior” Anglo-Protestant language, beliefs, and traditions for their “inferior” non-Anglo norms—as the prerequisite for acceptance as Americans.²⁵ And, for many of these immigrants, a preliminary first step in what Laurence Barrett labeled the journey to “Waspdom, [...] was the swapping of an ethnic name for an ‘American’ one”: that is, adopting an Anglicized name for the family and Anglicized personal names for themselves and their children.²⁶ Thus, as Maxine Seller observed, by the second generation many immigrant descendants, especially those of European descent falling beyond the pale of Western and northern European backgrounds, had completed the journey to Americanization by making the American lifestyle and the American language their own, and by modifying their family names to Anglicized variations that would mask their ethnic origins.²⁷ Thus names like Adamczyk often became Adams, Baratz became Barrett, Barbieri became Barber, Bianco became White, Lukaszewicz became Lukas, and Protopowicz became Prescott. The American-born children, in turn, would likewise receive decidedly Anglo (and often patriotic) “American” personal names like George or Thomas or Benjamin for boys and Betsy or Martha or Mary for girls.

If ethnicity had become important in defining Americanness, from the beginning race—meaning a biologically shared set of distinctive physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, and eye and nose shape—was, as Seller points out, a barrier to inclusion.²⁸ That the founders intended their new nation to be a “white man’s country” is attested to first in the constitutional restrictions on inclusion in the national body of the already present African and

24. Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 91–92.

25. Stewart G. Cole and Mildred Wiese Cole, *Minorities and the American Promise: The Conflict of Principle and Practice* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 135–38.

26. Laurence I. Barrett, “What’s in a Name?” *Time*, December 2, 1993, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,979750,00.html>.

27. Maxine Schwartz Seller, *To Seek America: A History of Ethnic Life in America*, rev. ed. (Englewood, NJ: J. S. Ozer, 1988), 216.

28. *Ibid.*, 3–4.

indigenous populations²⁹ and then by the Naturalization Act of 1790 and its subsequent revisions that remained in effect until 1952, specifically limiting naturalization to “free white person[s].”³⁰ From the mid-nineteenth century, in turn, the arrival on the West Coast of Chinese—and later Japanese—immigrants triggered a series of exclusionary steps against Asians. These included the Chinese Exclusion Acts (1882, 1892, 1902), the anti-Japanese Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, and culminated in the Immigration Act of 1924 that was intended to permanently end Asian immigration. Even when all racial exclusions were formally lifted by the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952, the national origins quotas imposed by the new law effectively limited non-European immigration to negligible levels.³¹

Among Asian immigrants the Japanese in particular were eager for their American-born children to assimilate into American society, despite the social obstacles their physical characteristics often posed. The Japanese idea of assimilation, however, was dualistic in nature. That is, they envisioned their children as being BOTH Japanese AND American, bridges between two worlds who would be at home in either.³² This dualistic understanding of Americanness contradicted the prevailing notion of patriotic American identity, which from late in the nineteenth century and especially during the Great War was based on a binary either/or ideal that rejected the notion of the hyphenated American as unpatriotic and suspicious.³³ To facilitate the goal of assimilation, organizations like the Japan American Association urged their membership to “conform their persons and environment to American middle-class norms” in such matters as dress and in “learning English and the customs of white America.”³⁴ In line with their dualistic assimilationist hopes, in turn, the parents often conferred upon their children both Japanese and Anglo names, in some instances legally by adopting the American practice of first and middle names, or in others informally, such as baptismal names in the case of Japanese Christians, practices suggested in Sone’s text (e.g., 8, 10). In other cases they might alternate, giving some of their children Anglo names and others Japanese names, as seen in the stories of Toshio Mori.³⁵

29. U.S. Constitution, Art. I, § 2, cl. 3.

30. H.R. 40. 1790. Naturalization Bill. March 4, 1790. U.S. Capitol Visitor Center. <https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/exhibitions/artifact/h-r-40-naturalization-bill-march-4-1790>.

31. H.R. 5678. 1952. Title 2, Sec. 201 a, Immigration and Nationality Act. June 27, 1952. U.S. Government Publishing Office. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-66/pdf/STATUTE-66-Pg163.pdf>.

32. Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 50.

33. See Gleason, “American Identity and Americanization,” 42; Cole and Cole, *Minorities and the American Promise*, 137; Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, 99–100.

34. Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 50–51.

35. Toshio Mori, *Yokohama, California* (1949; repr., Seattle: University of Washington

III : From Kazuko to Monica

Sone's transition from Kazuko to Monica came rather abruptly, both in her text and in real life. In her autobiography she states that at birth her parents named her Kazuko Monica—"the Japanese meaning 'peace.' (Mother chose Monica from her reading about Saint Augustine and his mother, Saint Monica)" (10). Oddly, public records from the period—her birth registration,³⁶ her baptismal records,³⁷ and a 1926 Seattle port disembarkation record³⁸—record only the name Kazuko, suggesting that Monica is an informal name with no legal standing, perhaps linked to her family's Christian background. Similarly, those same records only include the name Seiichi for her brother Henry, and Sumiko for her sister. (Interestingly, birth records do indicate that the third child, known in the text as Kenji William, was legally named William Kenji.) In civil documents the name Monica first appears—as Kazuko's middle name—in records of the incarceration from 1942.³⁹ It is only when she registered as a student at Hanover College in 1943 that Monica appears as her given name,⁴⁰ and is likewise listed as her given name on her 1947 marriage registration in Detroit.⁴¹

Nowhere in the text or in interviews has Sone discussed the reasons for her transition from Kazuko to Monica. Given the fact that it comes during the war years and is first noted in connection to her incarceration and later release, it is reasonable to assume that it results in part from a desire to adopt a more decidedly

Press, 1985), 109.

36. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA., n.d. County Birth Registers, 1873–1965. Reel 3, 1391. *Family Search*. <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:Q9M-C9TX-G9LR-Z?cc=3418468> (accessed May 22, 2020).

37. Gail Nomura, personal communication. Email concerning Seattle Japanese Methodist Episcopal Church Records (University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, 1530). February 13, 2022.

38. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington D.C., n.d. Seattle Passenger Lists, 1890–1975. Microfilm Publication M1383, *Family Search*. <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-G5F1-9CTL?cc=1916081 & wc=M6BM-6TL%3A202226001> (accessed May 22, 2020).

39. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, D.C., n.d. Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210. Final accountability rosters of evacuees at relocation centers, 1944–1946, Minidoka. Densho Digital Repository. DDR-densho-304-8. Densho. Microfilm publication M1965, 10 rolls. <https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-305/> (accessed August 21, 2021).

40. Sara McNair Vosmeier, Professor, Department of History, Hanover College. Personal correspondence regarding Hanover College registration records, March 2, 2021.

41. Michigan Department of Community Health, Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics, n.d. Marriage Records, 1867–1952. *Ancestry.com*. <https://www.ancestry.com> (accessed February 26, 2021)

American identity during wartime. That desire, in turn, may likewise have received further urgency in the context of the midwestern location in which she found herself, where Asians were an exotic rarity and non-Anglo names would have presented mnemonic and pronunciation challenges to the surrounding community. In the end the transition is perhaps best understood as the culmination of a process of submission to pressures towards Anglo-conformity already nascent in her first ventures beyond the boundaries of her childhood Nikkei community and made more urgent for reasons she later gave concerning the transition in marriage of their family name from Tsuyuki to Sone.⁴²

Sone's text recounts only two incidents prior to her 1943 relocation to the Midwest that involve encounters with people beyond her Nikkei community and in which her name can be viewed as a site of contested identity. The first, in chapter III, recalls how Kazuko's elementary school teacher continually mispronounces Kazuko's name (50–51), while the second, in chapters VIII and IX, involves affectionate diminutive name formation and, to a much lesser extent, pronunciation that in the end imposes on Kazuko a slightly Anglicized identity (140, 148). On the surface both can be seen rather innocently as the consequences of the unfamiliarity of the non-Nikkei with Japanese names. At a deeper level, however, they can also be seen as (perhaps innocent) acts of imposed Anglo-conformity.

The latter and more innocent of the two incidents is recounted in chapter VIII, "Paradise Sited," and recalls Kazuko's extended hospitalization for tuberculosis, a situation in which for the first time she is genuinely a racial and ethnic minority among the patients in the ward. Much to her surprise and delight Kazuko is accepted as an equal among her fellow patients, particularly by a young woman identified in the story as Chris Young—in real life the writer Betty MacDonald. It is Chris who reaches out to Kazuko by inviting her to be roommates during their long-term hospitalization, and who makes efforts to signal her total acceptance of Kazuko and her Japanese heritage, including efforts to use what little knowledge she has of the Japanese language. And it is Chris who subsequently confers upon her the affectionate diminutive Kazi (140) and later Kaz (148). What makes them Anglicized versions of Kazuko is that both names conform to the English patterns of diminutive formation in the same manner, for instance, that Susan would become Suzy or Sue and Mildred would become Millie or Mil. In contrast, the usual Japanese patterns of diminutive formation would consist of attaching the endearing diminutive "chan" to the first one or two syllables of the name, as in Ka-chan, or of simply abbreviating the name by dropping the latter syllables, as in Kazu. And, while the text cannot possibly represent the phonic shifts that may have resulted from this process of Anglicization, one can almost hear in the names vowel shifts wherein the "a" in Kazi or Kaz would be pronounced more like the

42. Sone and Sone, "Monica Sone Interview," part 8, 5:50–6:55.

(æ) sound in “cat” than the (ɑ) sound in “calm” that much more closely approximates Japanese phonology. Obviously, there is no intention on Chris’s part of imposing an Anglo identity on Kazuko, but the result is that the name conferred, however affectionately, in fact does conform to Anglicizing patterns.

Perhaps more troubling is the incident Sone recalls involving her elementary school teacher, Miss Powers. Sone notes that the teacher consistently called her “KaZOOko,” because she “could never remember that there is no accent on any syllable in pronouncing my Japanese name” (50). On one level this sort of mistake might be easily attributed to unfamiliarity of the teachers with Japanese names. As such it would not be unlike incidents Kazuko later experienced in the Midwest, where “an Oriental face [was] [...] somewhat of a rarity” and “people much of the time mistook [her] for Chinese.” These misunderstandings inevitably extended to her name, “people dropp[ing] the first letter [of Itoi] and simply call[ing her] Miss Toy,” and her reluctance to correct such mistakes occasionally having comically embarrassing consequences, such as being mistaken by a nightclub owner for an erotic fan dancer named Ming Toy (220).

Unlike the general midwestern populace of that time, however, Kazuko’s teachers would not have been unfamiliar with Japanese people or Japanese names. As Sone has pointed out, the student body at the Bailey Gatzert School in her time was predominantly Asian, with only a few white children.⁴³ Consequently, the teachers would have been interacting with these Nikkei children and their families on a daily basis over a course of years and thus regularly exposed to the correct pronunciations of the children’s names. That they made efforts to use the Japanese names rather than arbitrarily assigning them more familiar Anglo names, as was done elsewhere,⁴⁴ is laudable. Nor is it racist in the same way as, for example, the police in Sone’s text calling her father “Charlie” (37, 39), a generic Anglo name applied to any Asian male, and most likely a transliteration of a fairly common Chinese name such as Cha Li.⁴⁵ Yet, given that Japanese names usually present few phonological anomalies to native English speakers beyond lack of stressed syllables—and only that anomaly regarding the name Kazuko—the failure of the teachers to learn the correct pronunciations can be seen as a variant of imposed Anglo-conformity. That is, the teachers on the one hand acknowledged and perhaps respected the non-Anglo identity of the children in their charge to the extent of using their non-Anglo names, while on the other, consciously or otherwise, they in fact did Anglicize the names by consistently pronouncing them in a manner that conforms to the phonological conventions and

43. Sone and Sone, “Monica Sone Interview,” part 5, 0.30–1:50.

44. For example, see Okihiro, “The Japanese in America,” 8.

45. Lindsey N. H. Chen, “On the Translation of Names in Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind*: A Study in Onomastic Acculturation,” *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* 64, no. 3 (2016): 140.

expectations of English. The resulting distortions, in turn, served only to amplify the non-Anglo origins of the names while simultaneously, to borrow a phrase from Angel Desai, “erasing [the] beauty and [the] meaning” conveyed in the correct pronunciations.⁴⁶

It is upon arriving in the Midwest as a young adult that Kazuko becomes Monica. Sone notes that until then America for her had meant the city of Seattle and in particular her “small Japanese community,” and that moving out now presents an opportunity to “shed [her] past” and “come to know another aspect of America which would inject strength into [her] hyphenated Americanism” (216). Indeed, the name she goes by in her new environment emphasizes her “hyphenated” status, her Anglo-conforming personal identity as Monica appended to her obviously non-Anglo family name, Itoi. Though the text never makes it clear, it is reasonable to assume that the transition to Monica was by choice rather than an imposition. For one, local media records indicate that though she was one of four Nisei students to enter Hanover at that time—“Americans with Japanese faces,” they were called,⁴⁷—she was the only one with an Anglo-conforming personal name.⁴⁸ Her decision to become Monica may reflect a pattern similar to the one Philip Oreopoulos noted among second-generation Chinese Americans, specifically intended to make name pronunciation easier for their Anglophone compatriots and to signal to the majority community their assimilation into American cultural norms.⁴⁹ Alternatively, it may originate in the fact that Sone came from a Christian family, a minority among the Japanese. Sone’s autobiography points out that her maternal grandfather had been a congregationalist minister in Japan (6) and that her family were long-term members of the Japanese mission of Seattle’s Methodist Episcopal church (7, 144). From this rather close-knit Japanese American environment Kazuko was now relocating into a deeply Christian environment, first in the home of her retired missionary sponsors, the Richardsons (217–21, 225), and later in the academic community of a Christian institution of higher education, Hanover College (Wendell in the text; 226–30), both constituting situations in which she might feel more comfortable with the “Christian-conforming” name Monica. If this latter reason underlies her name choice, there is a degree of irony in it since

46. Desai, “What’s in a Name?”

47. *Charleston Courier*, “Purely Personal News of Interest to Charleston People” (October 28, 1943): 2. Hanover Historical Texts Collection: Monica Sone, Primary Sources. <https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/260sone.html>.

48. *Triangle*, “Four Nisei Girls Join Hanover Students” (September 10, 1943): 1. Hanover Historical Texts Collection: Monica Sone, Primary Sources. <https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/260sone.html>.

49. Philip Oreopoulos, “Why Do Skilled Immigrants Struggle in the Labor Market? A Field Experiment with Thirteen Thousand Resumes,” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 3, no. 4 (2011): 161.

Christianity as a “world religion” ideally should inclusively transcend ethnicity and nationality.⁵⁰ The irony is then amplified in the fact that Kazuko’s retired China-missionary sponsors, who long lived in a non-Western environment and should therefore be accustomed to the non-European names of their Chinese co-religionists, are the first in the text to exclusively call her Monica, hinting that Christian identity construction and its naming practices may also result in a form of Euro-conforming cultural colonialism.⁵¹

Whatever the intentions behind voluntary name changing, Oreopoulos further notes that most frequently this Anglo/Christian-conforming gesture failed to achieve the desired effect. In Kazuko’s case, for example, although she seems to be warmly accepted by the members of her college community, she is nevertheless barred from membership in the campus sororities, ostensibly by “national restrictions placed on [...] membership.”⁵² Yet although the members say they “sincerely want to invite [her] into [their] group,” none even consider the possibility of resigning from the sorority in protest over those regulations.⁵³ This reluctance by members of the majority community to push back against such exclusionary rules suggests a tacit acceptance of the general view that minorities, by any name, are not *really* Americans. Indeed, such a view is implicit in the local newspaper description, cited earlier, of Kazuko and the other Nisei students as “Americans with Japanese faces,”⁵⁴ a comment itself suggestive of the presumed mutual exclusivity of the two.

The Monica/Kazuko of the text eventually arrives at a peaceful integration of her identity, asserting that she had now found “confidence and hope [...] the Japanese and the American parts of me were now blended into one” (237–38). However, this resolution is not a product of her new midwestern surroundings or any inclusionary gestures coming from that community. Rather, it emerges while visiting her still-incarcerated parents in Minidoka. This newfound confidence and hope flows from the accounts she hears from the Issei elders and acquaintances of her childhood recounting the sacrifices, including death in combat, of her Nisei friends in the war effort (233–35), and through the examples of her parents and the other Issei who refused to “hold grudges” (234) despite the injustices they endured or the sacrifices they and their children have had to make. Nor did the

50. See, for example, Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 176–77.

51. See, for example, Benson O. Igboin, “Colonialism and African Cultural Values,” *African Journal of History and Culture* 3, no. 6 (2011): 101; Lisa Kahaleola Hall, “Strategies of Erasure: U.S. Colonialism, Native Hawaiian Feminism,” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 278; and Regitze Margrethe Søbby, “Naming and Christianity,” *Études Inuit/Inuit Studies* 21, nos. 1–2 (1997): 293.

52. Oreopoulos, “Why Do Skilled Immigrants,” 227.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Charleston Courier*, “Purely Personal News.”

pressures for Anglo-conformity cease, either away from the anti-Asian environment of the West Coast or with the end of the war. Indeed, outside the text, as noted earlier, after her marriage in 1947 Monica and her husband Geary once more conceded to that indirect pressure for Anglo-conformity by changing their name from Tsuyuki to the more Anglo-friendly Sone—a change the presiding judge lauded as a positive step towards “Americanizing” their name, presumably not realizing that Sone, like Tsuyuki, is a Japanese name.⁵⁵ Seemingly, despite their patriotic service and self-sacrifice during the war—Geary served in the army in the Pacific theater⁵⁶—their name still set them apart as something outside the American fold.

Conclusion

Nisei Daughter was published in 1953, soon after the enactment of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 eliminated racial barriers to immigration (particularly those targeting Asians) that had been imposed over the years through the Chinese Exclusion Acts (1882, 1892, 1902), the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, the Asian Exclusion Act and National Origins Act of 1924, and finally the Immigration Act of 1924 (though national quotas on immigration remained in force until the enactment of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965). It also eliminated similar racial barriers to naturalization, which had been in place since the Naturalization Act of 1790. Appearing at a time when the preeminence of Eurocentrism and Anglo-conformity as the defining characteristics of American identity were first being questioned, *Nisei Daughter* is thus perhaps best understood, together with such works as Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1950)⁵⁷ and John Okada’s *No-No Boy* (1957), as marking those first tentative steps by American writers of Asian descent to articulate claims for an American identity that do not necessarily or completely conform to the dictates of either Eurocentrism or Anglo-conformity.

Since the publication of *Nisei Daughter* and these other works by Asian American writers, Anglo-conformity as the mark of American identity has increasingly come under even greater pressure and has faced many challenges. With its admission to the union in 1959, Hawaii became the first U.S. state in which Euro-Americans made up only a plurality. The civil rights movement in the 1960s also gave rise to the Black Power and Black Pride movements, sparking

55. Sone and Sone, “Monica Sone Interview,” part 8, 5:50–6:55.

56. *Ibid.*, part 7, 20:40–26:00.

57. It is worth noting that in naming matters, both for herself and her protagonist, Wong engages in a similar nod to Anglo-conformity as did Sone. That is, the name Jade Snow constitutes a direct English translation of the Chinese characters for her name, which would be pronounced Yùxuě in Chinese.

a renewed celebration of African heritage, culture, and art and an increase in Afro-centric names. The end of the Vietnam War, in turn, brought with it an influx of new immigration from Southeast Asia, and the digital revolution of the late twentieth century likewise drew an influx of newcomers from South Asia, all with their distinctly non-Anglo names. Today, as well, the District of Columbia stands at the precipice of becoming a Black-majority state, while Puerto Rico likewise could very well become the first Spanish-speaking state. And, in recent years, the nation elected a man with the decidedly non-Anglo name of Barack Hussein Obama to its highest office, and more recently a woman named Kamala Harris to its second highest office. Nevertheless, the same attitudes that questioned, doubted, and denied Sone's American identity from the 1920s to the 1950s remain strong. For one, the citizenship of Barack Obama and Kamala Harris, both the offspring of non-European immigrants, and with it their qualifications to hold office, has been repeatedly questioned and challenged. Further, the calls for restrictions on immigration today, like those resulting in the Immigration Act of 1924, seem specifically intended to target non-Anglophone, non- (Protestant) Christian, and non-European immigrants, especially at the southern border. A hopeful sign, though, is that for every critic who mangles and ridicules the "un-American" names of Barack Obama and Kamala Harris, there are more trying to pronounce them correctly.