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Xanquanii Lee
NSU University School

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Living Up to My Name

Xanquanii Lee

I am not a Rockefeller, a Kennedy, or a Ford; I am just a Lee. Unlike some people who must live up to their last names, I must live up to my first. My name is Xanquanii Lee and I am Brazilian. Xanquanii (Shan-qua-nē) is a name that is “out there.” It is not like John or George, names that are quite popular and have their own rendition all around the world. With my name, I almost always feel obligated to be happy, to make everyone have a good time, and not to be a shy quiet “guy.” I love the name my father gave me. He says that everybody is special, so everybody should have his own special name.

During the first weeks of school with new teachers, I know that my name will be butchered, sliced, minced, and ground before it comes out in an the appropriate package. Each day the during the roll call, the teacher says “Chris Kentington,” and he responds “Here.” Then comes a pause, a deep breath, an “O-boy!” and then the butchering begins: “Zanqweanee Lee?” “Here!” Some people butcher my name so badly that it seems that it has been in a terrible accident. Luckily, I am the perfect doctor to fix that problem. If it were not for my surname of Lee, I would never respond to my accident-prone first name. After I make constant corrections, my name finally gets implanted into people’s brains and is remembered for years. Of course it’s not just my name that makes it hard to forget me, but the personality that goes with it!

People ask, “What was your dad thinking when he come up with that name?” In Brazil we

have a religion of African descent called Candomblé, a polytheistic religion similar to the mythology of the Greeks and Romans. In this case instead of being called gods, the key figures are called Orixás. Candomblé worships the forces of nature through dances, colors, and food. According to Candomblé, each person has a divine origin linked to a specific Orixá, each of which has special powers and responsibilities. The Orixá that I am named after is called Xangô, the god of fire thunder and lightning. At the same time he is a saint of justice and a charmer. Even though my father named me after Xangô, who commands violent natural forces, my personality closely relates me to another Orixá, Oxalá, who is benevolent, wise, patient, tolerant, faithful in love and friendship, happy, talkative, and playful. At the same time he is an idealist, defending the weak and those who need justice.

I must live up to the name that was given to me by my father. My name represents great power and charm, as well as peace. I am Xanquanii Lee. Yes, it may be difficult to learn, but it's easy to remember.