



I'm a Lifetime Survivor — Put Some Respect on My Name

It always goes back to a person's name. What is it? Who named you? What is the meaning behind it? What is the significance of the name that was chosen for you?

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This post, by Kimberly Canady-Griffith, originally appeared on [The Well Project](#).

Last year at USCHA I stood in a room and said, We are not long-term survivors, but we are LIFETIME SURVIVORS. Never would I have thought that by me saying that name, that term, a year later I would be standing on the main stage with my fellow Lifetime Survivors and Dandelions reclaiming our time back. That one phrase has changed the game in the last year! I never liked the term verticals, maybe because I don't like math, HAA! (YOU GET IT?? NO, OK, LOL) or the fact that we have been through many different variations of a name that never adequately reflected the struggle, trauma, or even experiences of us.

It always goes back to a person's name.

What is it? Who named you? What is the meaning behind it? What is the significance of the name that was chosen for you? In the Bible we are taught that great power and significance are attached to names. We see that with Abram's name being changed to Abraham or even Jacob's name being changed to Israel. Your name matters!! Parents are fighting every day for nine months to come up with a name for their unborn child. Your name is your identity; it's what people call you. Your name is being judged before people can even see your face (every ethnic group already knows this too well). They judge your background, your ethnicity, your struggle...

So when we say to call us LIFETIME SURVIVORS or DANDELIONS, we mean it!!! We came up with that. We decided that you are not going to erase us from history and disrespect us by calling us whatever you decide today because the wind blew left and the sun is setting in the east. So from now on, don't identify me as a person born with HIV, don't call me a perinatal and please don't call me no damn vertical. Put some respect on my name and call me a Lifetime Survivor or a Dandelion.

The Well Project is a non-profit organization whose mission is to change the course of the HIV/AIDS pandemic through a unique and comprehensive focus on women and girls across the gender spectrum. Visit their website, <https://www.thewellproject.org/>, to access fact sheets (English and

Spanish), blogs, and advocacy tools, and to join a global community of women living with HIV.
