

"what by their
masters. since they
did

Sociology, Identity



"What is your name?" is often the first question people ask when they meet you. Names are a part of every culture and they are a way someone can identify and refer to you by. A name is more than a bunch of letters put together and each name has an underlying meaning whether it is a family member's name, an event that occurred during or before the life of the child, or a way to remember/commemorate someone's life. All names have significance, for example many people believed Beyonce and Jay Z's daughter's name, Blue Ivy, was just two words thrown together, but according to Jen McGuire it is because the couple is a big fan of the color blue and their obsession with the number 4 (IV). The experience of giving and receiving a name is an important event. When a person receives a name they essentially receive an identity and a place within society; it is a representation of who you are.

Names are an especially important aspect in Toni Morrison's novels. The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia says, "Morrison focuses upon how Africans lost their names through the institution of slavery, which in turn created a loss of connection with their ancestry" (Beaulieu 171). Morrison makes the effort to carefully craft her characters' names in all of her works, especially in *God Help the Child* and *Beloved* because she believes a name creates an identity and gives depth to the story. She also reiterates the sense of freedom that comes when a character, such as Joshua (Stamp Paid), has the ability to change their birth name. In an interview on NPR Morrison says, "a name is a very personal identification; trying to move away maybe from the history of having no name, and then personalizing it."

" When black people came to this country, they lost their names and they were given names by their masters. Since they did not have names " they began to call one another... by nicknames." Characters in Morrison's novels change their names after pivotal moments in their life because it gives them a sense of freedom and control over their life.