

## **"Henry or Moreno?"**

**The world of nicknames is one element that frequently illustrates the difference of being Hispanic, which brings both a lot of advantages and disadvantages. Nicknames are more than just labels in Hispanic households; they are markers of culture, affectionate emotions, and occasionally, sources of both discomfort and pride. Strangely enough, in the Hispanic culture people use a lot of nicknames instead of just using your regular birth name. There is nothing wrong with this but it really confuses other cultures in the sense of why use nicknames for anything instead of just using someone's regular name.**

**Having a nickname in my opinion is a very unique and important thing to have. It is a symbol of intimacy, identifying the close relationship that a person has with another person. Nicknames, whether given by friends, family, or coworkers, capture special occasions, inside jokes, and loving gestures. It reflects on who we are as a person and how we show ourselves to others, embodying a combination of identity and social bonding. Nicknames could be dynamic for any reason, could be changed within time for relationships, experiences, and personality. It also provides a window into knowing a person's emotion, humor, and cultural background, helping us figure out the relationship between two people or more. While nicknames differ greatly throughout the world, they are usually characterized by warmth and familiarity. Some of those nicknames from childhood could stick with you until adulthood, could help people have a better understanding of you from the past or the present. Overall having a nickname is evidence in showing the depth of human connection and the ability to express closeness in a world of designations.**

Being raised in a Hispanic family, I've never chosen a single nickname. I've been given five different names, each of which represents a different aspect of my personality and family life. Of these, Rubio and Moreno are two that stand out as being especially representative of Hispanic culture. Moreno, which means "black boy," and Rubio, which means "white boy," are popular nicknames for those with darker and lighter complexion tones, respectively.

The inclusion of suffixes like "-sito" or "-ito" further confuses the nickname landscape for many Hispanic youngsters, especially those who are the junior members of the family. I was called Morenito as a Jr., which at first didn't seem appropriate given my lighter skin tone. But the reason can be found in the larger cultural context, where skin tone refers to more than just hue; it also refers to a shared ancestry.

My father represents the great range of Hispanic identity; he was born in the Dominican Republic. The terms Rubio and Moreno are meaningful to him because of his dark skin tone and cultural background. In the country of the Dominican Republic, these terms are ways of descriptions, illustrations, and aspects of racial identity for some Hispanic Cultures.

My Colombian heritage though adds some complexity and confusion to some people since they are more pale than me. I am often known on my Colombian side as the "Morenito" since I have a darker complexion than my mother and brother. Since this is true, they affectionately call me "Morenito". The difference in skin tone within my family is what subjectively gives us the names "black" or "white" in Hispanic culture. We usually choose these names by perception and by how people see them in shape, size, color, smell,

or anything you could think of. Some people consider the nicknames that are given to us since birth harmful, but in the Hispanic culture, they are often seen as unique terms and only family-oriented jokes. The terms like "flaco" (thin), "gordo" (fat), and "feo" (ugly) sound very hurtful to people of the Hispanic race. These names have different meanings within the cultural framework that describes criticism. Growing up with these nicknames never made me feel any type of way towards my family or myself, in a way I felt more together with my family instead. I see it more as you're connected and close to a point where you can say hurtful things to each other but never take it seriously and know it's all about laughs and jokes.

I feel like in a way this turned me into the person I am today because I grew up in an environment where things aren't really meant to be taken to heart. There is also a time where you can tell when people are saying this as jokes and playing around with you. Or just being serious and trying to be hurtful and destroy your perception of yourself and give you insecurities. Either way I feel like this helped me become who I am and made people like me for being my own person, no one can say that i've been a horrible friend to them even if I never speak to someone again. You just have to get to know the person and know more of their background to fully understand how you should be with someone, if they weren't raised the same way as you there is no problem with that. But always make sure you keep the person comfortable and not cause any issues by saying something that they wouldn't like hearing.

**It is very important to know that there are still Hispanic members in the community who believe that these nicknames are still harmful and should be respected by the community. For some people, these names give off a lot of negativity and promote body shame and insecurities to people. This also creates a lot of stereotypes which could lead to people believing in these hurtful words that could affect someone as a person. As a community, we figure out the definition of sensitive and find out what is appropriate for everyone and appropriate for a smaller circle. We must respect every person's experiences and make sure it isn't hurtful or disrespectful to someone.**

**Hispanic culture is a patchwork of customs, languages, and identities. Nicknames like "Rubio" and "Moreno" draw attention to the complexity and are funny for Hispanic identity while also reflecting cultural perceptions toward skin tone. Ultimately, our cultural legacy is defined by our sense of humor, creativity, and sense of community. These go beyond labels to honor the depth of our shared experiences. When navigating the subtleties of Hispanic identity, we can find strength in accepting the complexity of who we are, despite what society may think.**