

Renaming Baltimore

Abbott Miller

WHEN YOU TELL SOMEONE YOU LIVE IN BALTIMORE, a strange smile comes over their face. It's often not based on any true knowledge of or insight about the place: Instead, I think it's because the word itself sounds funny. Here are some options to consider for renaming Baltimore and creating a new image for the Greatest City in America.



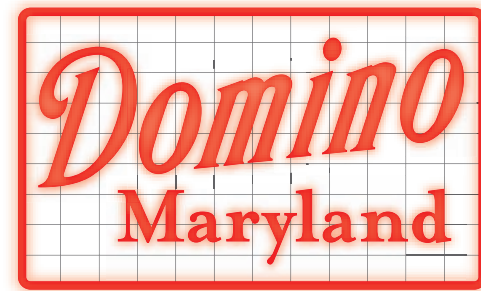
PROPOSAL 2

- Evokes heritage and environmental consciousness.
- Works well on T-shirts, license plates, meat, poultry, and fish.

MORE!

PROPOSAL 3

- Shorter and more upbeat.
- Fewer letters save time and money.
- Would be the only city in America to have an exclamation point.



PROPOSAL 1

- Utilizes existing signage, representing significant cost savings.
- Sweetness is a natural component of "charm," which is identified with Baltimore.
- Optimistic, utopian spirit.
- Same number of syllables as Bal-ti-more.

BELIEVEMORE

PROPOSAL 4

- Leverages the familiarity of a widely reviled campaign.
- Inexpensive to reproduce (black and white).
- Many existing "Believe" banners can be repurposed.
- Transfers religious faith to civic pride.
- Makes a hollow pitch to ease social crisis with a slogan.



BALTIMORE D.C.

PROPOSAL 5

- Emphasizes Baltimore's proximity to the nation's capital.
- Gives the city an inside-the-Beltway aura.
- Opens the door to future annexation-without-representation.
- Hello, Monorail!



PROPOSAL 6

- Exploits the cachet of Baltimore-based crime shows such as *The Wire*, *The Corner*, and *Homicide*.
- Incorporates numerals, recalling popular shows such as *24*, *Beverly Hills 90210*.
- Picks up two of the cities leading industries: crime and film.
- Assertive and unapologetic ("Not the 'Burbs!").



PROPOSAL 7

- Capitalizes on Baltimore's dwindling inner-city population.
- Creates a virtue out of second-tier status ("Not New York, and Proud of It!")
- Hip insider reference to the city's architectural legacy as home to two Mies van der Rohe buildings.

Where Hearts Lie

By Lalita Noronha

"SO, VINAY, IT'S SETTLED THEN?"

Vinay nods. He's heard it before—these questions that aren't really questions. Nothing has been settled in his mind, but his wife's mind was made up long before she'd posed the question. As always, Sonia brings things up just days before he's set to leave for America, and today, he's right in the middle of a shave. Can't a man find peace even in a bathroom? He considers his face in the mirror—square jaw, deep piercing eyes, thin lips over straight white teeth, a handsome face by any standards. His eyes drift below his neck to his chest—firm pectoral muscles covered with short curly hair, and a hard abdomen with just a hint of love handles. He'll take care of that, he vows. Once he returns from this trade show, there'll be a lull in his travels. He'll begin a serious work-out regimen. In fact, why not pick up a pair of Adidas in Baltimore? He wants to stay fit for health reasons, certainly, but also for the way women eye him, especially white-skinned American women, who have no false sense of modesty.

But, Sonia doesn't like Americans at all. Never mind that she doesn't really know any, except perfunctorily from contacts at the Lions Club or the Bombay Gymkhana whereas he, Vinay, *knows* all types—secretaries, professionals, housewives, people in planes, malls, grocery stores—as well he should. This is, after all, his seventh business trip to America. He's been to England and Germany too, but for his money he'll pick Americans anytime. They're warm, and friendly, if you overlook their quirks. But Sonia's tapered view gleaned from the glitz of TV and magazine ads had led her to a dynamically opposite conclusion.

"They don't mean what they say," she'd once complained.

"How so? Why do you say that?"

"Well, because I *know*. Like that woman who works out in the gym every Saturday, Eva—Eva-something—can't remember her surname. She'll smile, sweet like *halwa*, and say, 'how you doing,' then doesn't bother to listen. Why ask and then walk off? It's insulting. Half the time I talk to her backside. And that tall white fellow ..."

"Oh, but it's an expression, for God's sake—a form of greeting like *namaste*, or hi! You're not supposed to launch into your whole life story. No one has time to listen."

"Including you. You don't have time either."

Bitterness seeped from her pores. He'd decided to ignore the comment. He knew that tone; he heard that lorry filled with cement blocks coming full speed, and knew better than to stand there and get crushed.

In the beginning, life with her had been almost intoxicating. Everything about her, the way she carried herself, walked, talked, even scrubbed the floor, exuded an allure, a raw kind of sex, made all the more sexual by the unawareness of her movements. Other times, she was feisty, flirty, a very un-Indian girl, even on her "interview day." Arranged marriages, she would later joke, were interviews for lifelong jobs—no retirement, no benefits, just work! He remembered that day well. Her high cheekbones were like soft contours of

desert sand, smooth and brown, tapering to a voluptuous mouth and a small upturned nose. Her eyes were an oasis to drown in. *If* she'd let you. She was unexplored territory, a handful he knew he'd enjoy handling. And so he had. But now, still childless after ten years, they'd both abandoned their exploration. Disappointed and angry, she'd fed its embers. Her waist thickened, the beautiful angles of her body rounded, and even her lithe spirit was weighted with unspoken words.

SMOOTHING HIS JAW with approval, Vinay squints at the triple-headed razor, his newest American acquisition. How he loved these American-made products; loved the variety, choices, competitive prices. Hell, if you shopped around, almost

If she could glimpse the differences between Baltimore and Bombay, see beyond the superficialities of boundaries, she'd love Baltimore. Such a city of eclectic rowhouses; ethnic groups—German, Greek, Korean, Italian—who knew, perhaps there might even be a Little India tucked away in one of the neighborhoods.

everything was half price. You could practically eat for free—well not exactly, but you could pig out for a pittance at those all-you-can-eat places. Nice places, mind you, with big smorgasbords—roast beefs, hams, a variety of salads, even mid-Eastern stuff—tabouli, hummus, kebabs. Why, the breads alone were astounding—seven-grain, five-grain, multi-grain, whole wheat, with honey, without honey, sesame, and permutations and combinations, all catered to health nuts and America's changing faces and palates. It was luscious living—opulent and free.

That's why he'd like to migrate to America. It was the place to live. That's why he'd been secretly buying dollars on the black market in Bombay and smuggling them in, sewn safely in the lining of

his jacket under his arm pits. He'd even laid away a portion of his salary from each foreign project assignment for a little start-up nest egg, hatched with his sister, Amira, who lived in Baltimore. In fact, he even got her to file immigration papers for him—a bold, perhaps foolish move, considering he hadn't yet broached the subject with Sonia. Still, it was worth getting a head start. As a mere sibling of an American citizen, his priority rating wouldn't be as high as those of children and spouses. It made perfectly good sense to begin the arduous form-filling, bureaucratic journey. If he was smart, he would sow the seed now, and let it germinate into an idea she could later claim as her own. What did it matter as long as she agreed?

He puts on a pair of well-ironed brown pants and a cream shirt. His fingers riffle along the edges of his ties. Dressing for the embassy, even just to pick up a visa, takes some thought. Important people *look* important, more important than merited. They carry leather briefcases, smell of Boss cologne, most likely purchased on the black market, and politely excuse themselves to the front of queues.

It is later than he wants it to be. The road through the bazaar is the shortest route to the train station. Dust, dirt, dead leaves, banana peels, lumps and bumps of cement blocks lie in his path. He passes carts piled with pyramids of fruit—papayas, pomegranates, guavas—and vegetables—brinjals, gourds, okra.

He is peripherally aware of the ire of women bargaining down prices. "Oh, *bhaiya*, give me a final price. Enough of this *kit-kit*; I'm in a hurry."

One thing about Americans—no one quibbles about prices. Everything is always on sale. Time is precious in their culture; they hurry and get

everything done. Past meat stalls with fresh, red, lean sides of beef hanging from clips off a taut wire, his mouth waters for a juicy steak, with a buttery, un-spiced potato, but that will have to wait till he can rip off his vegetarian cloak in America. One thing about Indians—they spice everything. Everything looks yellow or red. He picks up his pace. A vagrant wind churns up loose-leafed newspapers and magazines from a pile lying beside a heap of coconuts. Passing a circle of women and children crowding the middle of the street, he wonders for an instant if something tragic has happened. But as the lilting, mesmerizing melody of a flute wafts in the air, he knows it's only a snake

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