

## So, you're kinda quiet; I guess I'll go first



By [Nafari Vanaski](#)  
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A friend of mine says a first column is like a first date. You know, pour on the charm, make a good first impression.

I can attempt that part, but I hope you don't mind picking up the tab. Fifty cents ought to do it.

As you can see, my name is Nafari (like "the fairy," not like "safari," as a co-worker pointed out). My father says he named me after Nefertiti, which means "the beautiful one has come."

That works for me. My brother and sisters, however, joke that it probably came from the breakfast cereal we ate every morning, called Farina. Probably because they're jealous. My last name is from my husband of nearly six years. If you want an idea of the type of person he is, he proposed to me on April Fools' Day. My parents, both of whom are from Barbados, were strict. That doesn't mean they grounded us a lot. In fact, my parents probably would have a completely different interpretation of the word, and it likely would involve an open palm. They didn't let us get away with a lot, but we tried -- and that, at least, was fun.

I got my first taste of journalism in high school. I wrote a column about voter registration and got a lot of feedback about it. Many people said they didn't know how to register to vote until they read my story, and the idea that I could help people made me feel good. That -- and seeing my byline -- hooked me. I started my career as a copy editor in Wilmington, N.C., in 1999. Since then, the idea of working under deadline continues to appeal to me, for some reason.

Most people guess as soon as I open my mouth that I'm not from around here. I grew up in Brooklyn. No, I've never been mugged, and I don't know how to hot-wire a car.

Growing up there was great. There are a few differences between Brooklyn and Pittsburgh. I have to chuckle when people talk about terrible traffic out here. I have two words: Holland Tunnel. And Brooklyn has a lot of people. No one "saunters" there. When you pass people on the street, there's not a lot of eye contact.

In Brooklyn, few people have lived there all their lives. Everyone came from somewhere else, and there's certainly value in that. You get to be exposed to so many different types of people.

Here, all of my neighbors on my block remember what my side yard looked like 30 years ago. Having that history and people around to tell it ensures that no one will forget it, which is wonderful.

As a result, I've found Pittsburghers to be territorial, which is a great thing if some weirdo's checking out your house when he shouldn't be. It's not so great when you're mowing your lawn and your neighbor's craning her head out the window, just to be, as they say, nebbly.

There's only one Pittsburgh. You see it in the chairs and cinder blocks used to reserve parking spots. You hear it in the "'n'ah" that concludes most statements. You can taste it in the french fries atop a steak salad. (I think we can all admit that just because you add lettuce, it's not really a salad.)

Whoops - that's my curfew. Should we try this again some other time? Maybe next Thursday? I'll be back then.