Reflections on Names

By Mark Romero

MA(R/S)K

Mark Gabriel Romero is my name.

A name is supposed to be an identifier - a mark on someone's person.

Mark Gabriel Romero - a name marked by Spanish colonialism.

Mark - Catholic
Gabriel - Catholic
Romero - extremely Spanish

And it all checks out. After all, the Spanish brought Catholicism
to the Philippines.

My name is supposed to identify me, but it has also masked me.

Growing up in rural Alabama,
there were no other Filipinos.
There were, however, Mexicans.

I played soccer with the Mexicans.
With the name Romero, I was one of them.

(UN)FAIR AND MEAN

One Mexican I played soccer with was named Fermin
(like fair and mean, fair-mean).

The white gym coach couldn't pronounce his name, so he shrugged and said,
"I'll just call you
Fermin (fur-min)."

I noted in my head that that sounded dangerously close to
"vermin."

I was glad that the coach could pronounce my name.
I thought his pronunciation of Fermin's name
was unfair and mean.