

## **We Are Salemians, Not Salemites**

I have a dream. A cause. Something offering meaning to my life. A goal that proclaims, “This man fights for what is right.”

I hereby proclaim that I devote myself to...

Making “Saleman” the word used to describe the people of Salem, not the horrible, distasteful, disgusting, so-wrong “Salemite.”

Why am I obsessed about doing this? Ah, let us count the persuasive ways.

First, Salemite sounds like a bug. A tiny organism that feeds on flakes of human skin whose first name is Dust. Do we really want to be associated with such an inconsequential creature?

We Salemians want to live large. Cast a giant shadow. Strike fear, or at least respect, in the hearts of cities competing with Salem for visitors, businesses, residents.

What if the antagonists of the Federation in the Star Trek saga were called Romulites instead of Romulans? “Captain, the Romulite ship is approaching!” Ooh, scary. Good thing they aren’t Romulans.

Second, we’re disassociating ourselves from the state we know and love when we call ourselves Salemites. People who live in Oregon are Oregonians, not Oregonites.

There’s a US Government Printing Office Style Manual (who knew?). It lists the official demonym for each state— what residents are called. Forty-one, count ‘em, 41, end in “ian,” “an” or “n.”

Just three end in “ite.” They all sound as bad as Salemite. New Hampshire. Wisconsin. Wyomingite.

Fun fact: in 2011 a blogger conducted an online poll to learn what other name Wyomingites might prefer for themselves. Wyomans easily beat out Wyomingites, which got only 10% of the vote. A very strong 2nd place showing for “Wymerrhymerbingbangs” indicates that Wyoming residents should be receptive to legalizing marijuana.

Third, nothing prevents us from breaking free of the shackles of our Salemite past. We can reinvent our image, just as hardly anybody knows that Lady Gaga once was Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta.

Some Googling revealed no sign that Salemite is an official term for us. At first I was shocked by Salem's Wikipedia page, as a sidebar says: "Demonym Salemite."

Always follow the footnotes, though. A tiny [4] [5] led me to the extremely shaky foundation for Wikipedia's assertion that Salemites is the proper term for Salem residents.

Two stories in the Statesman Journal used this word. Both of which are now in the paper's archives. "The page cannot be found" is the sole Wikipedian justification for a Salemite demonym.

I am not out to rewrite the history books, though this sure would be a cool thing to do if I ever develop magical powers.

I recognize that Salemite is part of our city's heritage. From now on the word can be regarded as we look upon a phrase like "ladies suffering from the vapours" — an archaic reference meriting a smile.

(Note to salemites.com: In a burst of Salemian enthusiasm I registered salemians.com; would be glad to hand that domain name over to you.)

Salemians, I salute you. Salemites, you're dead to me.

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Strange Up Salem seeks to lift our city's Blah Curse. Give us a Facebook like.  
Brian Hines blogs at [hinesblog.com](http://hinesblog.com)