

Being Bipoc

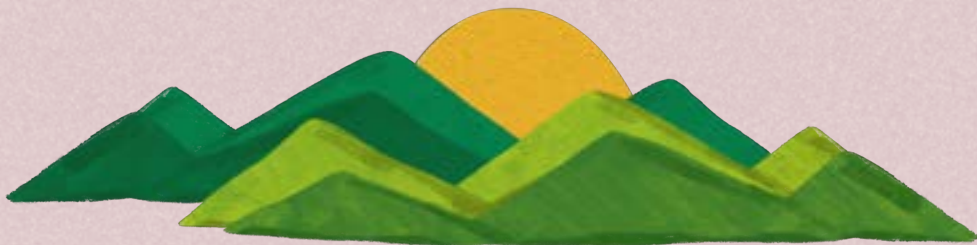


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Acknowledgement Of Country

The ANU BIPOC Department would like to acknowledge this zine, and all of the art and writings inside, was created and produced on the lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri Peoples. We pay respects to Elders past and present, and acknowledge the long history of art and storytelling on this land. As non-Indigenous people, we recognise our position as settlers on this land, and commit to standing with First Nations people. We commit to amplifying and prioritising Indigenous voices and perspectives in all of our work as a Department. We thank the Elders who have welcomed us to their country, providing protection as we work, study and live on the beautiful lands at the base of Black Mountain.



Officer's Note:

By Paria Najafzadeh



Hi everyone! My name is Paria (she/her) and I am/was your 2023 BIPOC Officer. It has been my greatest privilege to be your Officer this year and I am so grateful to everyone who put their trust in me and the executive to run the Department. This role has been so challenging, and so rewarding at the same time. It has been an honour to lead the Department and play my part in providing advocacy, community and safe spaces for students of colour on campus.

It has been a long year. We have run many events throughout, including our O-Week and Bush Week calendars, Fusion Fest, and of course the highlight of the year, BIPOC Ball in collaboration with the Indigenous Department. Our 'Zayn loves BIPOC' screen-printing event was a big success, and we were able to provide spaces for healing at BIPOC Talks. I want to thank everyone who came along to our events this year - your engagement is vital to ensuring the survival of the community the Department helps bring together. I encourage you to stay engaged and bring along friends so the Department continues to grow - the work of the Department is truly a team effort between the executive and the Collective.

Of course, racism still exists at this university, and the work of the Department is far (very far) from over. To anyone reading this Zine who is thinking about getting involved with the BIPOC Department, I encourage you to reach out to the team via our Facebook or Instagram to find out more. The Department has been the cornerstone of my time at the ANU and has provid-

ed me, and so many others, an essential source of community and support at a time when life as a student of colour is difficult. Beyond dealing with racism, whether overt or covert, many of us have left home to come to the ANU, and are struggling with weakened connections with our family and culture.

This zine was created to provide a channel for students of colour to express their identity as Bla(c)k, Indigenous and/or People of Colour. I want to thank all of our artists and writers for their hard work on this project. It is scary to write about your identity, to materialise the images in your mind, to be so vulnerable to share the core of yourself with the world (never mind producing work so powerful and beautiful). I thank everyone for their courage, honesty and bravery.

I want to give a massive thank you to my executive this year. They have pushed me when I thought I could not give anymore and have been the most understanding and supportive team I could ever ask for. Dorcas, Tisha, Abreshmi, Emalisa, Amber, Precious and Talei - I could not understate how much I appreciate you guys and I am so sad to be leaving you at the end of this year. I love you all.

I also want to thank Selena for her amazing work with BIPOC Talks. You created a space where people felt comfortable to open up about the deepest parts of themselves, allowing us to create connections with one another and grow stronger as a community. To anyone reading, I urge you to go to BIPOC Talks next year to learn more about yourself and others in the Collective. You are going to be so SO amazing as Officer next year and I cannot wait to see what you do with the role.

Lastly, I want to thank Abreshmi and Emalisa for making this zine happen. I am so grateful for the two of you leading this project and producing such a beautiful publication to share the experiences of our Collective. This zine has allowed many artists and writers to share their work and stories with the wider ANU community - this is essential in fostering understanding between communities. It would not have happened without you!

P.S. Stay tuned for our Racism Report documentary coming out in December!

Contributors

Writers:

Aamarah Walcott

Amber Lennox

Ananya V Banerjee

Anneysha Sarkar

Angela Paulson

Justine Friedman

Maitrey Khobragade

Maria Alkhouri

Miriam El-Behesy

Natalie Loos

Raida Chowdhury

Selena Wania

Sona Jerry

Talei Chang

Zaina Keriwala

Zainab Naleemudeen

Artists:

Emalisa Edwards

Maria Alkhouri

Natalie Loos

Designers:

Emalisa Edwards

Editors:

Abreshmi Chowdhury

Annyesha Sarkar

Angela Paulson

Emalisa Edwards

Sona Jerry

Editors Note

As we approach the end of 2023, it's only natural to reflect on the year that has passed. This year, in particular, has felt like an ever-lasting paradox, where sadness and happiness have coexisted in our daily experiences. The world around us seems to be a complex tapestry of emotions, leaving us wondering how we should feel in the face of it all.

In a world that often fixates on our differences to divide us, it is crucial that we take a moment to shift our perspective to how our differences let us gain knowledge and empathy for others. Instead of focusing solely on what sets us apart, let's focus on the shared human experiences that bind us. While the phrase "being BIPOC" may not directly resonate with everyone, the essence of our individual stories and expressions certainly does.

To every reader, regardless of your background, we invite you to explore the collection of work presented in the following pages. We hope that you will find a reflection of yourself within these pages, no matter how small. In the diverse voices and narratives that follow, may you discover the common threads of humanity that weave us all together.

Love your girls,

Emalisa & Abreshmi



Naturam Primum Cognoscere Rerum

BY RAIDA CHOWDHURY

In year 10, I was chosen to be one of the ten students nationwide to complete an (unpaid) five-day work experience at the Reserve Bank of Australia.

Standing in the lobby of the RBA, I greeted the other kids, with each of their appearance making my skin feel darker and darker, and in the next few days my abilities, more and more incompetent.

I struggled to keep up with their understanding and knowledge of the economy, I could only recite what was sluggishly taught in my public school. I found it difficult to hold a conversation with them, when they spoke about having work experience at the PM's office, or at their dad's law firm. I could only talk about working part-time at Hungry Jacks. When the experience ended, I felt, for the first time, the sense that I wasn't qualified for my passions, that perhaps I was a fraud.

I carried this feeling with me throughout high school, but never wanted to endorse it. I worked hard, and when the acceptance letter from the ANU came in, I knew this was my chance to fight the fraud. Afterall, I am older and wiser now.

Life is a circle, the same kids who were at the RBA work experience, were now at the ANU alongside me. The feeling found me again; brown, unintelligent, still working in hospitality, and a fraud.

In classes, I struggled to speak up. Everyone else seemed to have an opinion, a counter-opinion, a comment, a criticism, a contribution, while I remain paralysed in uncertainty, confusion and shame, barely able to grasp the content. When I did manage to keep up,



Designed By Emalisa Edwards

craft opinions, counter-opinions, comments, criticisms, contributions; they weren't mine, they were what I conjured to belong to my classes. But one can only hide so much. In my polished elite surroundings, my skin and my class continues to be a permanent stain.

With competitive admissions, ranking fourth nationally, offering prestigious courses, and a long list of notable alumni, the ANU fits the criteria of an elite university.

Elite Universities need hierarchies for the elites to be legitimised, for there to be a difference between elites and non-elites. This hierarchy is maintained through the production of cultural capital accumulated in the hands of elites. Cultural capital includes cultural knowledge and intellectual capital.

Cultural knowledge is acquired through a familiarity with elite spaces. Students who attended private schools, a vibrant majority

at the ANU, can smoothly transition into the ANU; joining clubs, student politics, drowning in extra-curriculars, going on exchanges. For these students, the ANU is a natural part of their trajectory.

Intellectual capital is earned from the greater resources, networks and support that public schools don't have the funds, nor the enthusiasm to provide.

Non-elite students struggle in institutions like the ANU, by falling behind academically, or losing access to opportunities or being ostracised in elite cultural spaces.

The trade-off between meeting financial priorities or doing unpaid campus work to build a resume, places emotional and financial distress on non-elite students. A full load of courses at the ANU is equivalent to full time work--working class students were never factored in. The sense of fraud comes naturally; do I really belong here if I can't even achieve the bare minimum of paying rent, without falling back in classes?

In 2019, the majority of residential halls along Daley Road were sold to hedge fund AMP Capital. Staying on campus opens up more opportunities for BIPOC and LSE students; opportunities to take up leadership roles, branch out creatively, and have greater access to teaching staff. But each year as the room prices increase, the ANU pushes out its BIPOC and LSEC students to make room for its white and affluent ones.

This allows the University to sustain its hierarchy, and maintain its position and status. The white and the affluent can bridge their cultural capital to further their opportunities; they can obnoxiously insert themselves into every leadership position on campus, build the most pretentious resumes, pull connections from their family and friends, become the embodiment of white-saviourism; all whilst fitting neatly into white

institutions. As they climb the ladder, so too does the ANU.

As neoliberalism continues to creep into Higher Education, the hierarchy will become much steeper. As of the 2022 Annual Report, the percentage of commencing enrolments from a lower-socio economic background at the ANU have decreased, and the general trend since 2018 has been decreasing numbers.

Decisions like increasing the fees of humanities courses by 113%, inevitably impact BIPOC and LSEC students more. Immigrants become risk averse from the years of marginalisation and insecurity. Pursuing a humanities degree, which entails higher debt and job insecurity in this climate is a risk.

Neoliberalism benefits elite Universities; the ANU is able to reap the benefits of a profit-motivated model, without facing shortages in incoming elite students, who have the funds to tolerate the 113% increase. The outcome; Humanities becomes dominated with white and affluent students.

This leaves the BIPOC students who manage to crawl in, having to work twice as hard to remain competitive in fields where they have no representation or networks.

The ANU seemingly has no real incentive to diversify its student body. But the University maintains a veneer of multiculturalism. After all, how will it attract the sweet money of international students, if it can't even hide its domestic racial inequalities?

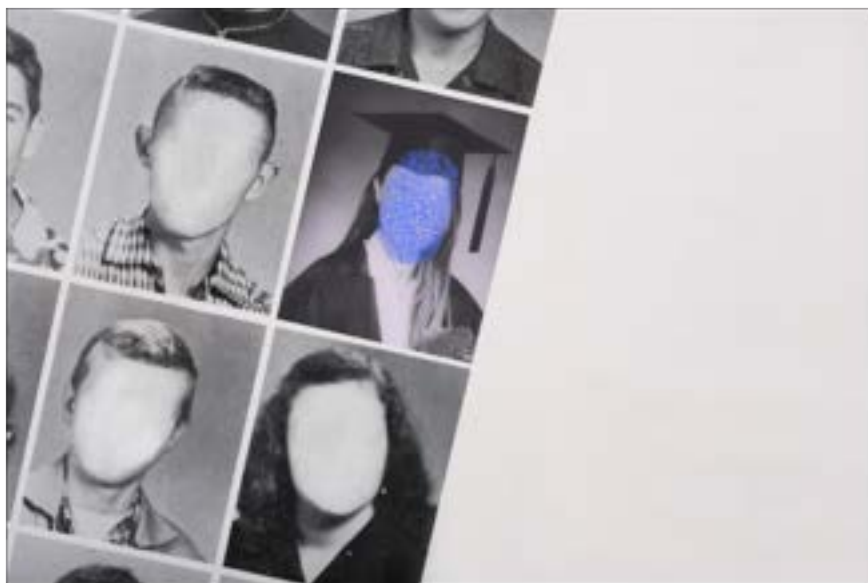
Of course, I don't expect all BIPOC students to agree with me. BIPOC students who fit in comfortably within the dynamics of the ANU are, either actively (often citing the need to "work hard") or passively aware of the need to assimilate. For many of them, this means dissolving away from their immigrant background, denying that race and class factors into achievements and invali-

dating the experiences of other BIPOC and LSEC students.

The narrative of a BIPOC non-elite student struggling to find a place in an elite academic institution is too easily romanticised. White and affluent students in elite Universities are not always sucked into daddy's firm, nor will BIPOC and LSEC students always rise as working-class immigrant heroes.

I don't think I have shaken off the feeling of being a fraud. My skin still feels darker, and in my classes I continue to feel paralysed. I am still at the bottom of the hierarchy. But as I had said, it is in the nature of elite Universities to summon this hierarchy. To know the nature of things, to finally see the invisible power dynamics that sustain the oppressive status quo, can be deeply cathartic.

Although the label of fraud looms over me, I have learnt to embrace what I aimed to hide; being a minimum-age worker, being BIPOC, being LSEC. As a result, the opinions, counter-opinions, comments, criticisms and contributions in this piece are many things, but they are not frauds, they are truly mine.



Designed By Emalisa Edwards



What's In The Name?

By Ananya V Banerjee

It is the first thing we share while introducing ourselves, something we carry a lifetime. From our passports to ID cards we have one particular name attached to us as our identity. Names aren't just names, these are reflection of our culture, religion, caste and what not.



I have Banerjee (a Bengali surname) as my last name but neither do I know Bengali nor have I been to West Bengal. So, isn't it cool to know a person and not assume characteristics of a person by just the name? My name means to be 'unique' or 'not like anyone else' and I wish to live by it. The meaning acts as a reminder to me to accept that it's okay if I don't fit into the world very neatly and to maintain my uniqueness and identity.

Recently, I added V as the middle name which stands for Verma. It is my mother's maiden name and I believe that I am equally associated to my paternal and maternal and hence the addition. In my culture, after marriage, a woman has to leave her maiden name which to me seems like loss of identity and thus, I decided to add my mother's maiden name to mine and feel proud of it.

There are many dimension to just a name, exploring some. As proud I am to be associated with my BIPOC or Indian identity, I love to be viewed and accepted as an individual as I am a human first and then representative of any community.



Coconut Kid: Brown on the Outside, White on the Inside

By Sona Jerry

“Sonya, Soh-nah, Sow-na, Sorr-na”. These were the various renditions of my name I encountered on my first day of school, despite it being a straightforward, phonetic, four-letter word. In hindsight, this marked my first experience with assimilation, where I unwillingly tethered my identity to a distortion of my name. Rather than continuously correct others, who could effortlessly pronounce names like “Hermione”, “Tchaikovsky” and “Michelangelo”, I went so far as to alter the pronunciation, diminishing my own significance in the process.

As a South Asian immigrant, for whom English was a second language, I ran miles to perfect my accent, expand my vocabulary, and navigate social norms in efforts to avoid “sticking out”. However, these attempts were ignored by individuals who wouldn’t even take three steps to understand my background, and would ridicule slight differences in clothing choices, skin colour, and school meals. When coupled with the glaring lack of positive racial representation in the media, whether it be Raj from the Big Bang Theory, Mr. Apu from The Simpsons, or Baljeet from Phineas and Ferb, all of whom are characterised as embarrassing and undesirable due to their comedic accents and static personalities that conformed to harmful stereotypes, I naturally yearned for characteristics that aligned with Western ideals. If only my hair, skin and eyes were lighter. If only the hair on my legs, arms and upper lip could vanish! I felt an allure to be perceived as “whiter”; as if being “brown” was synonymous with “abnormal” and “ugly”. You were celebrated and admired only if you possessed that coveted proximity to whiteness, and I, like many, felt pressure to conform. These desires for physical or behavioural change didn’t stem from self-hate, but rather a longing to be accepted.

Despite these moments of self-doubt, I gradually came to appreciate the beauty of my heritage. Most importantly, I embarked on a journey of self-discovery by researching colonial history and examining how it had woven its way into my self-contempt. As many South Asian influencers would argue, I began to “decolonise” my mind. Unfortunately, even in the very spaces that claimed to promote diversity, I found myself confronted by diluted representations of my culture that were simmered down to a mild state that made it more appetising for a white palate. I was told that the inherent essence of my culture was extreme, extravagant, and excessive, and needed restraint. I had permission to exist, provided I shoehorned myself into the acceptable brown woman archetype, where only the desirable facets of the brown identity - such as thick eyebrows, henna, nose rings, and milky tea skin that is no darker than a commercial spray tan - were allowed, while the rest was discarded. Once again in my adolescence, I was compelled to appeal to the white gaze, moulding myself into something I wasn't to be deemed “enough”.

With age, comes perspective. With the help of more positive role models and improved representation, I realised that I did not need to conform my identity to fit into someone else's narrow definition of who I should be. I began to celebrate my background, recognising it as a testament to generations of resilience and strength. Even my South Asian features, including the very aspects I had once felt pressure to change, became symbols of my unique heritage. Contorting myself to a single standard of acceptance was a disservice not only to myself, but to the richness of human existence. Beauty transcends the boundaries of culture, and it's our differences that make us extraordinary. For now, I will stick to my chai tea, naan bread, lentil crepes and yoga. However, it is important to keep in mind that by embracing diversity, our mere existence in white-dominated spaces becomes an act of rebellion. Only then can we break free from the shackles of conformity and pave the way for a more inclusive community for future generations.

Home

By Selena Wania

My Home is calling to me.

I have returned to it at last as nothing but a heap of worn bones
and flesh.

The Tree which I am buried under has its roots wrapped tightly
around me. She is hugging me so tightly, afraid that I will slip
through her hands – again.

Every limb of mine is bound around her roots coil, squeezing so
hard my flesh could burst.

Held down by such grip; my bones threaten to crack.

Together we are intertwined so I can never leave – again.

‘Never leave again’, she whispers.

The Soil underneath the Tree is in agreement. It is everywhere.
It slowly moves into my mouth, filling my lungs, clinging to
every breath I draw,

My eyes feel heavy in its dark abyss; the maggots now crawl
around in the muddy sockets of my eyes hoping to make a Home
out of me,

My flesh has now peeled off just like the Tree’s rotting bark.

The tiny Rocks are pressing against my skull and have cracked
it open.

My ribs have collapsed into dust, my heart lays bare.

Each vein has exploded staining the Soil. I lie there a mess of
brown and red.

My body rots in it till you cannot tell it apart from the Soil.

But I do not mind. I am Home.



Let the Tree tie me down. Let the Soil swallow me whole.

Let my tears moisten the ground because I have so many to give to You. I am so sorry for leaving.

I walked above your land for the first 14 years of my life. I now return still as your child.

I belong in Your land of my Home. Nothing can remove me now. Nothing will separate us. I have returned and I will remain here forever.

I am now the Tree and the Soil. The Tree and the Soil live within me. We are together, forever inseparable.

I am Home.

This piece is birthed from an immigrant's yearning for her Home. One day she will return never to leave again. She seeks comfort in the fact that Home will always remain within her

Mixed Race BIPOC

By Talei Chang

By definition, I fit under the mixed-race category, but also, not exactly. While ethnically different, both my parents grew up in the same place, and the traditional cultural conventions my dad would've been replaced by something entirely different. Sometimes I find it funny; you'd approach this chinese man suspecting to find mandarin, but he would immediately roll out in fluent bauan in a heartbeat.

But this, of course, is deeper than first impressions. In this way, I don't really resonate too much with being mixed race. This can be a good thing in a way; many mixed-race peoples struggle to accommodate a multitude of cultures and their place in it. Yet, I think there's a bit of a loss.

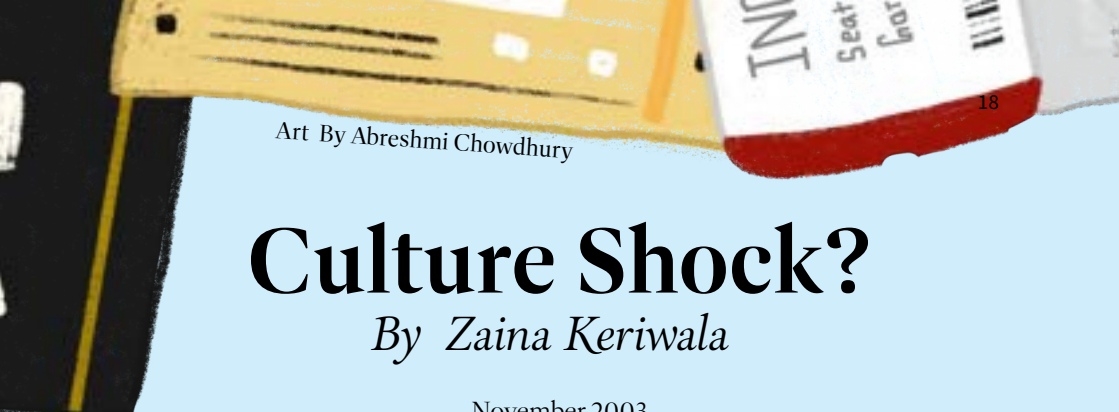
While identity is entirely more than skin deep, I still seem to mourn this other side of me; that presents itself in my face, my skin, my hair.

Already, the plight of being raised in Australia already displaces much of what I know. But I think I try and use the feeling of this cultural absence as motivation to learn more.

Of course, there is some of which I may not be able to remediate, but also, I have the unique privilege to educate myself on what I can; on both cultures



Art By Abreshmi Chowdhury



Art By Abreshmi Chowdhury

Culture Shock?

By Zaina Keriwala

November 2003

We looked up and around in absolute awe. This airport is HUGE! We thought. And so crowded as well! But so many different types of people! We hovered under the “Welcome to Sydney” sign with both our physical and emotional baggage. What an exhausting journey.

There was more awe in the car on the way to the Surry Hills. A new place we’ll have to call home. Looking out the window, it seemed like our old home, where we had come from, was a well, we only saw and had access to so much. But now, our world looked much wider and a bit more polished.

Our first Woolworths run was strange. We wondered if everyone was aware that we were new here. Such polite, smiley people. So many hellos and g’mornings. Back home, no one would have bothered to look twice. Here, it didn’t even seem to matter that we were a different colour or that we spoke a little differently. We felt welcomed.

But then we realized, we couldn’t buy it ALL at Woolworths. The cultural spices, various types of vegetables, and distinctive cuts of meat became a monthly venture.

Most errands had to become sporadic occurrences. It took us a while to figure out the public transport situation. And we could only be bothered to walk all the way every once in a while. And it also took a while to realize why we were receiving such questionable looks in public. We weren’t wearing trench coats and shorts and flip-flops like everyone else. We still dressed to go out like we used to. Cotton knee-length printed dresses and loosely embroidered pants. Fashionable, but maybe not for Surry Hills.

There were so many other things we couldn’t figure out for the longest of times. But we had no means through which to find things out. The internet was a thing of the future, and only available in cafes at inconvenient distances. Figuring things out only could happen through trial and error or if a friendly stranger picked up on our ridiculously evident confusion.

But we made it. Here we are twenty years later. Finally living in a society with many more people and stories just like ours. After good and bad experiences (mostly good), we figured it out. Call it assimilation if you want. But it isn’t really. We fit into a society that took us in openly for who we were. And we’re proud. Proud of our journey. Proud of the life we’ve built. And proud that we can call this home. So yes, culture shock. But, supposedly, reversed?



Culture Shock

By Maitrey Khobragade

In my younger years, every 2-5 years marked a new beginning, thanks to my parents' shifting careers. Just when I'd acclimatize to a place, forging bonds and adapting to the local culture, we'd uproot again. Such was life, moving from state to state depending on whose job beckoned next, my mother's or father's. When I finally chose to attend ANU as an international student, the leap felt larger than any previous move. India was home, with its customs and familiarities, and Australia? An enigma. The decision weighed on me; each day that inched closer to the departure intensified the anxiety gnawing at my heart. I yearned for a confidant, someone to share my apprehensions with, but instead, I bottled them up. Departure day dawned, and amidst warm wishes and hugs from my loved ones, I embarked on the 12-hour journey to Sydney. As I stood in the immigration queue, the Australian accent of the officer felt like my first true taste of foreignness, demanding all my concentration. But the surprises didn't end there. At ANU, I discovered that students addressed professors by their first names - an act unthinkable in India, where a casual "Sir" or "Ma'am" wouldn't suffice. I still think good comes out of it as I've learned how to navigate through culture shock which is something not a lot of people get to do.

Maitrey's Remedies

In Hindi we call cheap hacks/home remedies as "Jugad". It is a term used for using innovative ideas to solve everyday problems. Indian families are good at passing down generational knowledge. A lot of the home remedies I'm about to mention have been passed down by her parents.

If someone in our family catches a cold, it is a given to serve them easy to digest hot food with honey & pepper mix. It is ayurvedic and you instantly feel better in a couple of days.

BIPOC Fashion Icons

BY SONA JERRY

In the vibrant tapestry of global fashion, South Asia has long remained a hidden gem, its rich sartorial traditions often overshadowed by more widely recognized fashion hubs.

However, the time has come to shed light on the brilliance and innovation emanating from this diverse region. In this article, I wanted to celebrate South Asian fashion icons who have not only redefined the industry but have done so while proudly embracing their heritage. These BIPOC fashion luminaries have woven their cultural influences into the very fabric of their designs, creating a unique fusion of tradition and modernity that is both captivating and influential. Join us in discovering the trailblazing South Asian fashion icons whose contributions to the industry deserve our admiration and recognition.

Yasmeen Ghauri

This is Yasmeen Ghauri, the first South Asian supermodel. Yasmeen Ghauri is a trailblazing figure in the fashion industry, known for breaking barriers as the first South Asian supermodel.

Born in Canada to Pakistani parents, Ghauri's remarkable career in the 1990s helped redefine traditional beauty standards and diversify the modeling world. With her striking looks and undeniable charisma, she shattered stereotypes, inspiring a new era of inclusivity and representation in the world of fashion.



Rahul Mishra

These gorgeous outfits were all designed by Rahul Mishra, an Indian fashion designer. His outfits have been featured on Vogue runways.

His creations are masterpieces that showcase intricate needlework and craftsmanship, drawing inspiration from traditional Indian techniques and materials. Despite his undeniable skill and creativity, Mishra's journey has been marked by the reality of racism, which has at times hindered the recognition he truly deserves on the global stage, highlighting the ongoing need for greater diversity and inclusion in the fashion industry.



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Simone Ashley and Charithra Chandran

Both Simone Ashley and Charithra Chandran have emerged as South Asian fashion icons, captivating audiences with their distinctive style and effortless cool. Known for their roles in hit series like “Bridgerton,” both exude an understated elegance that resonates with contemporary fashion enthusiasts. With her unique blend of cultural authenticity and modern flair, Simone and Charithra have become a celebrated figure in both the entertainment and fashion worlds, redefining South Asian representation in the industry.



Maitreyi Ramakrishnan

Maitreyi Ramakrishnan is a dynamic South Asian fashion icon who has captured hearts with her unique charm and vibrant style. Best known for her starring role in the popular series “Never Have I Ever,” Maitreyi effortlessly blends her cultural heritage with a fresh and youthful fashion sensibility. Her unapologetic authenticity and relatable approach to fashion have made her a beloved figure and a symbol of South Asian representation in both the entertainment and fashion industries.



Rani Mukherjee

Rani Mukerji’s portrayal of Naina in the iconic Bollywood film “Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham” has solidified her as a timeless fashion icon. Her character’s transformation from a bespectacled introvert to a confident and stylish woman resonated with audiences worldwide. Rani Mukerji’s wardrobe in the film, characterised by elegant sarees and contemporary ensembles, continues to influence fashion trends, making her a revered figure in Indian cinema and fashion.

Leena Nair

Leena Nair, as the CEO of Chanel, stands as a groundbreaking figure in the fashion industry and a symbol of empowerment. Her leadership at one of the world’s most iconic luxury brands represents a significant milestone for diversity and inclusivity in the fashion world. With her visionary approach and remarkable achievements, Leena Nair has become a trailblazing South Asian figure who reshapes the future of high fashion, setting an inspiring example for generations to come.



Soul Language

BY ANGELA PAULSON

Whenever I get the age-old complaint from my parents that I don't speak my mother tongue Malayalam enough, I'm always ready with a list of excuses on why I prefer English. 'It's easier' - is how my argument usually begins - 'I speak better in English, I articulate better, I know more words - just let me speak English!'. In a way, my points are often valid. I speak English to pretty much everyone around me including my parents, and it's my preferred way of communicating. I feel as though you can see my personality better in English - and most importantly, the world that revolves around me also speaks English.

But, even after all these years of making English my only language - the moment I trip downstairs or someone jumps out to scare me from around a corner, the only word that will leave my mouth is 'Amma!'. 'Amma' quite literally translates to 'Mother' and is how someone whose mother tongue is English might say 'Oh my Gosh!' or swear exclaimatorily to a scare or a surprise. In a way, my mind is letting me know that regardless of how far I wander from it, my mother tongue is the only language that speaks to my soul.

It is like the roots of a tree connecting me to my identity. A tether that connects me to my home. Connects me to my ancestors - their hopes, dreams, their stories and their songs. Malayalam flows in a way that English

doesn't know how to. It builds universes and dances off the page, each word and expression invoking meaning that English cannot begin to describe.

When I was growing up in India, I was forced to learn English in school. They banned me from speaking Malayalam - citing that to succeed, English was the only option. This colonial ideology still persists today, with the belief that fluently speaking English is the only measure of success. Society fails to understand that my mother tongue is the language of resistance. It was what our ancestors made weapons out of - fighting colonial oppressors to protect their cultural values and beliefs. It was the language of poets and dreamers - and to take that from the tongues of children is to fragment their identity.

My mother tongue is the lens through which I see the world. It the first language I heard, and the only language that connects to my soul. When I speak my mother tongue, I stand on the shoulders of my ancestors. I am dreaming their dreams, singing their songs and carrying my hopes on their sacrifices. English will always be the language I speak more in, but Malayalam is the language I feel the most in.



Mourning a Choice We Never Had

BY AAMARAH WALCOTT

Our alarm rips us out of our peace,
We rush from our space into theirs,
Sit at an empty table in a full room,
The same bodies sit on the same chairs,
“I’m avoiding them,” we say,
“I try to avoid their stare.”

We weave through the crowd,
Walk past bodies of flesh and bone,
Sit at an empty table in an empty room,
At the back where we’re unknown,
“I’m avoiding them,” we say,
“I want to be alone.”

Yet again we walk another day,
Solitude a wound we cannot cauterise,
Sit at a full table in a full room,
Social performance and break the ice,
“I want to make friends,” we say,
“I want to be nice.”

Rushing to our next location,
Our stable breath long overdue,
Sit in an empty table in an empty room,
People enter two by two,
Now we sit at an empty table in a full room,
Our loneliness is in constant view,
“Why am I still alone,” we say,
Who is avoiding who?



Drawing By Emalisa Edwards

Natty's Film + Tv Recs

BY NATALIE LOOS



Fallen Angels (1995) directed by Wong Kar Wai

I would include 10,000 Hong Kong films on this list if I could....This is such a masterpiece and cult classic for a reason. Director Wong Kar Wai and cinematographer Christopher Doyle's collaborations over the years have provided such beautiful pieces and pioneered a particular style that a lot of photographers and film bros (derogatory) love to adopt in their works. With a heavily curated soundtrack, alongside impeccable shots and unique characters whose stories overlap, *Fallen Angels* is an iconic glimpse into Hong Kong visual culture and cinema.

Saving Face (2004) directed by Alice Wu

As a multicultural Chinese lesbian myself, *Saving Face* was one of the first films that really made me feel represented. It's a camp romcom that really encapsulates the Chinese concept of 'face' – a set of social values and behaviors that people are expected to conform to. From the director of *The Half of It* (2020), Alice Wu successfully communicates the complexities of being queer and Asian in a white majority society and the relationship between mother and daughter. The kiss scene really made me shed a tear :')!



Memories of Murder (2003) directed by Bong Joon Ho

Bong Joon Ho...you've done it again! This is a film of his that I revisit every two or so years. It's the perfect blend of suspenseful crime thriller with elements of comedy and wit. As a true crime lover, this film really sticks with me because it questions perception, the validity of 'truth' and heavily critiques the justice system. Knowing that the film is based on a true story, one that was unsolved at the time of production and its release, makes viewing *Memories of Murder* even more intense and chilling



Nope (2022) directed by Jordan

Nope!! There's so much to say about this film and Jordan Peele never fails to wow the WORLD! I've never seen a filmic depiction of aliens in such a unique and abstract way- so beautiful but also scary! The film really highlights the topical point of making a spectacle out of things, often through exploitation, and the various ethical concerns that exist in the entertainment industry. Seeing Daniel Kaluuya and Keke Palmer together on screen is such a treat!



Roma (2018) directed by Alfonso Cuarón

This film is so beautiful...there's something about a black and white movie that's so compelling. Roma is a domestic drama directed by Alfonso Cuarón, who looked into his own childhood in Colima, Mexico to inform the story. The film expresses how violence bleeds into every part of society, even amidst the upper-middle class and shows the unspoken racial and class divides that exist within every encounter. The intimate film ends with an emotional climax that creates a strong sense of catharsis and can really make you cry alongside the characters.

A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night (2014) directed by Ana Lily Amirpour

This Persian horror flick is a beautiful take on modern vampirism and womanhood. This quick synopsis should entice you enough – a skateboarding vampire zooms through the city to prey on men who disrespect women.



Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy (1990) directed by Tracey Moffatt

Tracey Moffatt is an incredible photographer, filmmaker and artist. Shaped by her experiences as an Aboriginal child of a white foster mother in the 1960s, Night Cries chronicles the complex and unsettling intergenerational experience between an aged white woman and an Indigenous woman (her foster child). The eerie 18-minute short heavily experiments with vivid color and sound to explore the intersection of domesticity and white settler colonialism.

Toast

BY ZAINA KERIWALA

Toast. Holding up a glass of champagne, dinging it lightly with a spoon, “I’d like to make a toast”. Eyes on you. A few, supposedly, ‘special’ words. Cheers around the room. Everyone is clinging their glasses together. Some people are getting a little teary. What even for? I’m not sure.

What toast looks like in my culture is a daily 3 p.m. ritual. Or 4 p.m. Or 7 a.m. Whenever you like, really. And it doesn’t just have to be once. It can be as many times a day as you’re in the mood for.

Our toast involves the scent of cardamon and cinnamon lingering around the lounge room. A waft of sweet milk and toasty black tea. Our toast involves a piping hot mug. Cold dew coating the outside. It involves a hard, crunchy, crumbly biscuit. A deceitful biscuit. A biscuit that breaks apart and turns to absolute mush if you dunk it in your tea for any longer than precisely 3.87 seconds. It’s a science. Any longer and it’ll fall in. Not something you’ll master on the first go. You’ll





lose many portions of toast to that delicious, scalding beverage before you realize that the right time to pull the toast out is exactly when you think, “I’ll leave it in just a second longer”. In our culture, toast is a thing for all ages, and timeless, in a sense, too. Whether it’s for breakfast, dribbling down your chin as you hurriedly try and inhale it all, so as to not miss the school bus for the third time that week. Or for after dinner, to compliment your 12th rerun of *The Office*. Or even just for the post-lecture migraine that happens when you’ve been talked at for two hours and haven’t really processed much at all. But the idea of toast in my culture, is pretty much the same as the regular, cliché concept of toast. It’s celebratory. But a celebration of the smaller things. Celebrating waking up in the morning, celebrating making it through the day, celebrating the gathering of a crowd. And it is important to celebrate the small things. It keeps one going.



*The BIPOC Fool: Key Meanings*²⁸

BY MARIA ALKHOURI

Skepticism, precariousness, steadiness, self-doubt, weariness, caution, suspicion, lack of spontaneity, risk-aversion

General meaning (upright): In the traditional Major Arcana, The Fool is the first card in the order, representing new beginnings, lack of commitment and child-like sense of curiosity about the world. The BIPOC Fool may be frustrated by cautionary tales of the past, and anticipates disappointments in new people and places. Guilt about reckless behavior, obligations to pursue careers that satisfy our family's sacrifices and being constantly wary of microaggressions and discrimination may weigh The Fool down from a new beginning. The Fool sees non-BIPOC experiencing life with envy that others didn't grow up so fast. The original dog who accompanies The Fool in their journey is here represented by a calculative cat. The BIPOC Fool's intuition, taking heed of every possible obstacle and let-down that may approach. If you receive this card in a reading, it may indicate that you keep from useful, risky experiences, and that your personal development is suspended by these anxieties or commitments to others. Be careful that you don't remain in this position, as the remainder of the Major Arcana relies on The Fool taking the first intriguing steps towards life.

Love and relationships (upright):

While the original Fool indicates a hopeless romanticism when in love, The BIPOC Fool is reserved from people who threaten their emotional stability. Receiving this card does not indicate a lack of interest in romance, but something blocking your ability to be vulnerable to someone new. In love, walls need to be broken down with acceptance that things could go terribly wrong. Since The Fool is usually the beginning of the tarot deck, this BIPOC Fool may indicate new beginnings never coming into fruition. If you receive this card in a reading, you may feel that your independence as you know it is sacred, and that romance requires a tug and pull of your boundaries. The person who receives this in a love reading may also find that love and relationships are not compatible with their other goals and ambitions, and that you must choose one over the other. This may appear to be so due to the relationships witnessed in your past, where careers or ambitions (particularly for women) were sacrificed for the

good of their relationships and familial ties.

Money and Career (Upright): Originally, The Fool represents upcoming opportunities where taking risks leads to great rewards. The BIPOC Fool worries for their career's stability, and the stability it provides others in their lives. Consider that there's a dream or aspiration of yours that was tucked away over the years for the sake of being extraordinary in traditional ways. If you receive this card, it may be a sign that whilst you enjoy your successes, they may not fulfill your interests outside of what others expect of you.

Health (upright):

While The Fool usually would indicate good, even youthful health, The BIPOC Fool may be conservative in their ways without meaning to be. Consider how your routine weighs down on your ability to balance your life and to do what gives you joy. This may indicate a stagnating sense of not necessarily poor, but not great health either. You may be limited by what you've been taught to understand 'healthy' is, and perhaps you're afraid to speak up when you're not feeling well in fear of admitting failure.

Key meanings (reversed): rebellion, impatience, restlessness, disobedience, embitterment, eagerness, complacency, rashness

General meaning (reversed):

The reversed meaning of The BIPOC Fool indicates a life of risk aversion which eventually leads to rash or reckless behavior. Receiving this card in reverse may suggest that after being tied down by fear of vulnerability, you are wanting to take the leap. Lack of guidance or example in your life may force you to disobey the rules and find yourself in precarious situations with no precedent on



how to deal with them alongside a BIPOC identity. You may suddenly find yourself feeling just as, if not more alone, than when you hesitated, and this may lead to a lack of patience for things to change. This card in reverse asks you to be patient with your vulnerability to the world, and that risks can't be taken with hard expectations. It may also indicate being easily influenced by new surroundings, and that lack of any judgment is becoming your way of rebelling against what was holding you back before.

Love and Relationships (reversed):

The BIPOC Fool in reverse may mean you are becoming restless with your own rigidity and are feeling impatient for new experiences. You may find yourself trusting new people and hopeful for new opportunities. However, while upright we may be overly cautious of love, in reverse we may become adventurous in spite of the unexpected, inviting even chaos into our lives for a sense of vitality.

Ethiopian Food

BY ANNEYSHA SARKAR

Last summer, I discovered the comfort of home-cooked meals in Ethiopian food. My friends – Mary, Arielle, and I went around different cafes in Civic, exploring our multicultural options.

Tucked away in the part of Civic that we do not frequent, Ethiopian food at Flavours of Ethiopia hit home for each of us. Mary loved Key Wat, a beef stew with tender pieces marinated in mild spice berbere. Arielle, who grew up around Middle Eastern food and culture found the Pistachio Baklava hit the right spots. The Injera bread satisfied my cravings for dosa – a thin, savoury pancake made of fermented batter which is made of lentils and rice. Dosas with chutney are a breakfast staple in the south of India.

Injera was an excellent choice to go with my pick of curries – Chicken Tibs, Red Lentils and Mix Veggies. The best thing about Flavours of Ethiopia is you can try multiple combinations of curries with injera or rice, and each time you experience a new burst of flavours. It is simply great.

The baklava was everyone's favourite. It was a culinary masterpiece – golden in colour, sweet and crispy, layered with crunchy pistachios and honey seeping through each of those layers.

Ever since, I have kept going back to Ethiopian food every time I miss home. I have managed to find my mother's cooking, similarities in Indian and Ethiopian flavours, and subtle flavour clashes – all on one platter.

Ethiopian food is my comfort food. Ethiopian food takes me back home.

BIPOC Fashion Icon

Natalie Loos





Other

BY ANONYMOUS

In a different time,
Under the tropics and the sunlight,
I made a promise to my mother,
When I left,

I wouldn't become an 'other'.

On foreign soil, the cold stilled my voice,
Unwelcoming to the deep intonation we enjoyed,
I realised my vow would smother,
Me if I don't meet these new expectations,

I'm the other.

unrecognised, she grew accustomed,
in her mind, her body with palm trees
absent,
too cold but convinced it's better this way,
a commitment, though distant, it weighs.

When she saw her mother again, the soil was coarser
and she
colder,

A new promise that she'd never come back when she's
older,

The language of her forebears fades away
Replaced by tongues that get her through the day to day.

RECIPES



Musakhan
by Miriam

Kothu Roti
by Zainab



Paneer Sabzi
by Ananya



Kothu Roti Recipe By Zainab Naleemudeen

Serving: 4 people

Ingredients

2 tbsp vegetable/olive oil
½ medium onion
1 tbsp minced garlic about 3 garlic cloves
1 tbsp minced ginger
3-4 red/green chillis
1 cup sliced leeks washed
¼ of a cabbage
½ tsp cayenne pepper (leave out if too spicy)

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a large wok over medium-high heat. Once the oil is heated, add the onions and cook till it's softened and lightly brown. Add the ginger and garlic paste/mince and sauté without burning.
2. Add all the vegetables and salt and stir for a few Minutes
3. Add the chopped rotis, chicken, curry and stir until the vegetables are just starting to soften.

1 cup leftover beef/chicken/veg curry (or you can make your own)
1 cup grated carrots
3 eggs
1 cup shredded cheese (optional)
Salt and pepper
6 Rotis - Chopped into small pieces
For most of the spices/ingredients I usually just feel it out but

4. Add the cayenne pepper and chilli
5. Crack eggs into a separate bowl and season.
6. Create a well in the middle of the kothu and add the eggs into the middle.
7. Scramble the eggs in the middle of the wok and once cooked mix with the rest of the kothu.
8. If you want to add cheese, mix it through now.
9. Serve

PANEER SABZI By Ananya Banerjee

250 gm of Cottage Cheese/Paneer

Chop 2 onions, 3 tomatoes

Heat a pan, put oil, preferably, sunflower oil
Put 1 teaspoon of garlic and ginger in the oil
Before the oil heats too much and garlic pops out of pan, put chopped onion
Stir the onions
Put one teaspoon of salt, turmeric power, coriander power, Indian spice blend/garam masala, pepper, cumin powder, red chili powder, kitchen king masala/paneer masala
Stir all spices in the onion mix
Keep the gas on low to mid and put tomatoes when the onion mix gets brown and shrinks
Let the tomatoes blend well, keep it on mid to high

gas for 10 minutes
Till then cut cottage cheese into small cubes
Put the cottage cheese into the pan when tomatoes leave some water, stir and cover the pan now for five minutes (only if you have good spice tolerance add one small red chilli, cut it into half, de-seed it)
Remove the lid carefully, stir and you will see the onion and tomato mix blended well with the cottage cheese
To garnish, add coriander leaves on the top and serve it hot with roti/naan/wrap
(if lemon lover, put few drops of lemon to the dish)
If you have more time, you can sauté 1 capsicum and 1 small onion, after cutting it into small cubes and add it to the main dish
use the measurements as a minimum for how much to put in.

While you cook, listen to good music, smile, and add lots of love and good vibes, it the secret to good food.... Cooking can't be rushed, so just enjoy the process.

This is the easiest and least time-consuming recipe; you might find being cooked in every other Indian household. There are other ways of cooking paneer, it can be paneer masala, paneer curry, shahi paneer, kadhai paneer and so on. I have seen my mom cook it and as in an usual Indian home, I would chat with her as she would cook and enjoy the aroma and irresistibly wait for it to be ready and get in my tummy.

Musakhan*

ROASTED CHICKEN & FLATBREAD WITH SUMAC, OLIVE OIL & ONIONS

Servings: 10-12

CARAMELIZED ONIONS

10 large yellow onions, diced
2 cups (480 ml) olive oil
½ tbsp (3 g) cumin
½ cup (32 g) sumac
Salt, to preference ½ tsp pepper

ROASTED CHICKEN

3 lemons, juiced
2 tbsp (30 ml) white vinegar
1 tbsp (18 g) salt
4 (3-lb [1.4-kg]) whole chickens, cut in half

MARINADE

¼ cup (60 ml) olive oil
1 lemon, juiced
Salt and pepper, to preference 1½ tbsp (9 g) allspice
2 tbsp (12 g) all-purpose poultry seasoning
½ cup (32 g) sumac

FOR SERVING

6 tbsp (36 g) sumac
6 thick, 12-in (30-cm) round flatbreads, taboon bread, gyro-style or naan
Handful of chopped parsley
½ cup (53 g) toasted almond halves
Plain yogurt
Jerusalem salad

In a large pot, mix the diced onions with the olive oil. Cover and cook on medium heat while sporadically stirring so as to not burn the bottoms. The onions will start to soften. This can take 20 to 30 minutes.

While the onions are softening, combine the juice from three lemons, vinegar and salt and let the chicken halves soak in this for 10 minutes or so before rinsing them off and patting them dry.

Now, make the chicken marinade by mixing together ¼ cup (60 ml) of olive oil, the juice from 1 lemon, salt, pepper, allspice, all-purpose poultry seasoning and ½ cup (32 g) of sumac until it looks sauce-like. Add all the chicken halves to a lightly oiled baking pan. Then, completely coat them with the chicken marinade.

Cover the chicken with foil and bake in a 420°F (215°C) oven for 1½ hours. The chicken is cooked once it reaches an internal temperature of 165°F (74°C).

At this point, the onions should be very soft and translucent. Now, add the cumin, ½ cup (32 g) of sumac, salt and pepper, as desired. Let this simmer together for 10 minutes, and then drain and reserve the olive oil from the onions, which will be used shortly. Taste and adjust the salt if needed and then set the onions aside.

Musakhan is Palestine's national dish and once you try it, you will look forward to making it again and again. There are layers of flavors to this meal. The caramelized sumac onions that top the fluffy flatbread known as taboon with the tender roasted chicken is just divine. When my mom would make this, we would dive in! No cutlery, just our hands ripping the bread with pieces of chicken and often dipping it in yogurt for the perfect bite. You will find that the sumac and olive oil, which are staple Palestinian ingredients, are the stars of this mouthwatering dish. Musakhan is not only vibrant in flavor, but color as well, and makes for a showstopping meal.

Take out the thick flatbread you will be using for the dish. If you have access to taboon bread, it would be perfect for this. First, oil the bread evenly with the drained oil. Then, top with the cooked onions evenly. Then, sprinkle 1 tablespoon (6 g) sumac on each flatbread evenly. Repeat with the other flatbreads.

Broil the flatbreads in the oven for 2 minutes until they are lightly crisped.

To assemble, top the flatbreads with the cooked chicken, a garnish of parsley and toasted almonds. Enjoy with plain yogurt and Jerusalem salad, such as the recipe used in the Kofta Tart dish.

* Recipe adapted from Dine in Palestine: An Authentic Taste of Palestine in 60 Recipes from My Family to Your Table submitted by Miriram El-Behesy

Lost In Translation

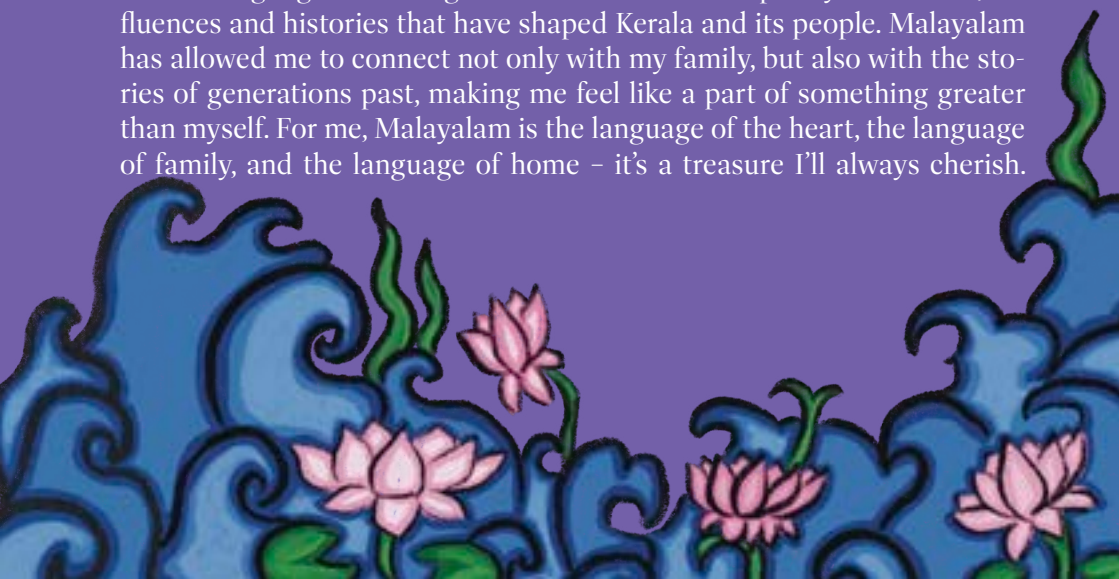
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By Sona Jerry

“If you talk to a person in a language they understand, that goes to their head. If you talk to them in their language, that goes to their heart” – Nelson Mandela

They say that language is the key to understanding a culture, and I couldn't agree more. My journey with my mother-tongue Malayalam, hailing from the Southern Indian state of Kerala, is not a mere means of communication for me; it is a connection to my roots, a vessel of traditions, and a comforting embrace that transcends words. It is through Malayalam that my grandmother spins tales of her childhood adventures, and my mother imparts her wisdom. Our family gatherings are a symphony of Malayalam conversations, where laughter flows freely, reinforcing our cultural bonds. Growing up in a Malayalee household in a distant part of the world, my connection to Malayalam was limited to occasional visits to Kerala and daily conversations with my family. English was the primary language of communication in my daily life. While it opened many doors, it distanced me from my rich heritage. My journey with Malayalam has been a vivid narrative, marked by fluent childhood articulation and impeccable pronunciation, only to be followed by stumbling over commonplace words, disjointed grammar, and the emergence of an unintended accent during my adolescence. This is not an isolated experience, and unfortunately in India, many parents and schools insist on exclusive communication in English, inadvertently rejecting Malayalam. This preference for English emerges from a tangle of colonial threads, where during British rule, English was promoted as the language of education and administration. As a result, English became synonymous with power and opportunity, rendering native tongues inferior. Generations internalised these narratives, passing them down like heirlooms. Today, English is perceived as a passport to a higher social class, where in the pursuit of global opportunities, the mother tongue is neglected. While I have been fortunate enough to not directly experience these attitudes, I can empathise with those who do. I too, struggle to access Malayalam language resources as I strive to salvage my dwindling vocabulary and sharpen my weakening comprehension, which further prevents me from reconnecting with my culture. Amidst these challenges, I find solace in the Sanskrit saying “Vasudhaiva kutumbakam”, which translates to “the world is one family”. This verse encapsulates the essence of unity and interconnectedness among humanity.

It reminds us that languages, despite their differences, are bridges that connect us to one another and to our shared human experience. Interestingly, my encounters with different languages such as Portuguese, Dutch, and Arabic, unveiled the layers of colonial history that influenced Malayalam and encouraged me to further learn it. For example, a discussion with a school friend who speaks Arabic revealed intriguing parallels in religious vocabulary within the Christian Indian community. We discerned resemblances in the word “angel”, which is “malaka” in Malayalam, and “malak” in Arabic. The term “qurbana” meaning “sacrifice”, resonated in both cultures within a religious context as well. In a similar vein, my favourite Malayalam word “chakara”, meaning “sugar”, is derived from the Portuguese word “acucar” which was introduced during sugarcane cultivation in the 1600s. Shared Portuguese words still used today like window (janela), onion (cebola) and lemon (narija), again echo this linguistic fusion. A unique memory of mine is accidentally unpacking the colonial connections of the Malayalam word for “toilet”, which is “kakhush”, with my South African school friend. Since my friend spoke Dutch-derived Afrikaans, I learnt that “kak” means poop, whereas “huis”, means house. I was amused by our discovery that “toilet” in Malayalam quite literally meant “poop house” in Afrikaans and Dutch. It was a humorous reminder that language can carry unexpected connections and quirks, even in the most mundane of words. Albeit small, these similarities proved that Malayalam is a diverse and dynamic medium, far more versatile than I had initially believed. Reflecting on the linguistic journey of Malayalam, I have come to appreciate the language as a living testament to the rich tapestry of cultures, influences and histories that have shaped Kerala and its people. Malayalam has allowed me to connect not only with my family, but also with the stories of generations past, making me feel like a part of something greater than myself. For me, Malayalam is the language of the heart, the language of family, and the language of home – it’s a treasure I’ll always cherish.



Media Recommendations

BY ANGELA PAULSON

Ohm Shanti Oshana

Starting on a lighter note, this rom-com revolves around a 17-year-old Pooja Matthew on the hunt for a perfect boyfriend after realising that if she doesn't, she might also eventually have to get an arranged marriage. Although it sounds cliché, this film was groundbreaking in how it was entirely female-centred. In a time in Indian cinema where decades of male leads have chased after their perfect girl, Pooja takes the lead and goes after exactly what she wants despite facing an insane amount of barriers. She sets the tone of the film in one sentence: 'Isn't this my story? I'll narrate it.' She is the narrator, the lead who chases after the man she becomes smitten with, and does at least two different dance numbers, while still managing to top her classes and become a doctor. It is a story of an intense one-sided romance that leaves you laughing, crying and sometimes cringing at the actions of our protagonist. It's the perfect movie for your next night and to welcome you into the world of Malayalam cinema.

The Great Indian Kitchen

Poignantly portraying the struggles of women who become wives, this film does not scream at you about the demeaning effects of patriarchy - it forces you to watch it. The movie follows a young woman who just got married and has to deal with the never-ending work in her husband's house. It never gives her a name, because she is not a character, she's a reflection of the millions of women who must face the same fate. The camera follows in silence the mundane tasks of her life - it is devoid of passion, happiness or contentment - she just exists to serve. As the plot moves along, you can feel her frustration building up, and yours too as you feel the emotions that she feels. 'The Great Indian Kitchen' is directed by Jeo Baby and stars Nimisha Sajayan and Suraj Venjaramood. It's available to watch on Amazon Prime Video.





Bangalore Days

This film feels like family. If you love a good coming-of-age flick a dramedy or a comfort film - this movie is the perfect fit for you. It follows three cousins - Arjun, Divya and Kuttan - as they fulfil their lifelong dream of living in Bangalore. Each of them ends up there in their way. Divya gets married to somewhat stoic Das, Kuttan begrudgingly accepts an engineering job and a nomad Arjun decides to work in a garage there. This film is light, breezy and airy - it brings the feels and the laughs and feels exciting - watching them figure out what they want and grow together is the perfect formula for a night-in flick. *Bangalore Days* is directed by Anjali Menon, and stars Nivin Pauly, Dulquer Salmaan and Nazriya Nazim. It is

Kumbalangi Nights

"Kumbalangi Nights" is a critically acclaimed Malayalam film that introduces us to four brothers, Saji, Bobby, Frankie, and Bonny, each burdened by their inner struggles and issues. Saji, the eldest, grapples with the wreckage of his failed marriage and the weight of fatherhood. Bobby, the second brother, is rendered mute by a traumatic past and harbours deep-seated resentment towards his family. Frankie and Bonny, the younger siblings, are carefree on the surface but hide their insecurities.

The film doesn't shy away from addressing the expectations placed on men in society. It prompts viewers to question these stereotypes and encourages a more open and empathetic understanding of masculinity. With its exceptional storytelling, extraordinary performances, and breathtaking cinematography capturing the soulful landscapes of coastal Kerala, it's a film that leaves an indelible mark on the heart.

What is Your Experience With Mother Tongue?

BY *NATALIE LOOS*

天恩 (Tin Yan) is my Cantonese name and my middle name, translating to ‘gift from the sky’ and was given to me by my mother when she was pregnant. The Chinese language is so beautiful because each character visually represents the thing that it describes. I made a little graphic honoring that name because it holds so much of my identity and was a part of my cultural heritage that I suppressed growing up in a predominantly White environment. With each image, the characters distort and slowly fade away.

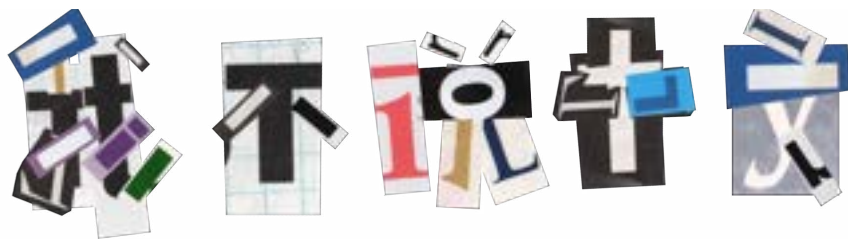
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天恩



My Otherness: Navigating mixed-race identity

BY JUSTINE FRIEDMAN



“Wo bú huì shuō Zhōngwén” I can’t speak Chinese. I remember rehearsing this phrase tirelessly whenever I’d visit my family in China, preparing myself to verbally affirm my Otherness. My Otherness – or more specifically, my whiteness – in China was something I became acutely aware of as soon as I noticed the way people would stare at me on the street. Or the way they would ask for photos with me. Or even the way someone assumed my Chinese mother was my tour-guide that one time.

This was disconcerting for me, having spent most of my life being so acutely aware of my Asian identity in the West. Growing up in predominantly white communities meant that my Otherness – in this context, my Asianness – was a key part of how I was perceived. The casually racist jokes, the stereotypes, the discrimination; all of these things told me that I was the Other. And so, despite being half-white, my experiences had me believe that I was seen as Asian first.

When I was suddenly faced with the realisation that in China I may instead be viewed as white first, I was immediately thrown into a crisis of identity.

How could I be defined by my perceived Otherness in both of my homes? This question initially caused me so much internal distress, but it later transformed into a valuable lesson. Why should I feel obligated to align myself with the racial identity that others assign to me? In answering this new question, I developed a newfound appreciation for my unique mixed-race identity.

Rather than trying to determine which “half” I belonged with, I learned to embrace a distinctive identity encompassing the best of both worlds.

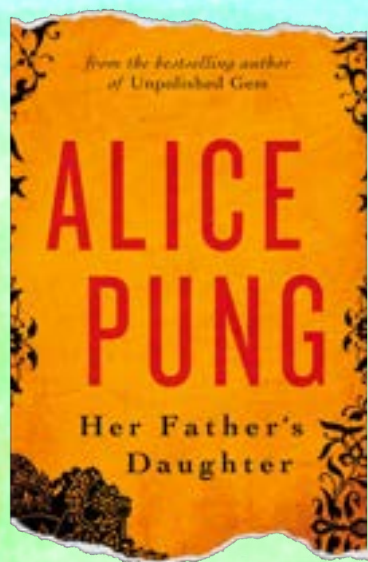


BIPOC MEDIA RECS

BY AMBER LENNOX

Alice Pung - Her Father's Daughter

I first read this on various buses throughout Vietnam. It documents Pung's father-daughter relationship, and primarily recounts her father's experience under the Khmer Rouge during the Cambodian genocide. She chronicles her parents' trauma, and how it has affected their lives while she grew up in the comparatively peaceful world of 1990's Melbourne. She is an incredible writer, and the imagery in her prose is horrifyingly descriptive and engrossing. The description of 'Operation Menu' especially stood out; where the American military carried out unapproved bombings on Cambodian land, and Pung writes of burnt human skin being akin to bacon at breakfast. Extra little points that showcase how amazing her writing is: the phrase 'self myopia of adolescence' and her description of drowsiness as 'soporific defiance.'

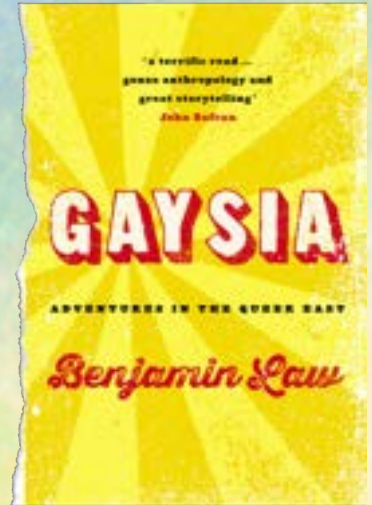


The Farewell

Lulu Wang's *The Farewell* is a cinematic masterpiece in my humble opinion. It follows Awkwafina's character's family returning to China from America under the guise of a fake wedding to say goodbye to her grandma -- the only person that doesn't know she only has a few weeks to live. The cinematography and framing is amazing, but the themes also resonate for children of immigrants. Particularly, the way Awkwafina's character finds it difficult to speak her mother language to her extended family and switching inbetween English and Mandarin when speaking to her parents - an experience POC would resonate with. Heartbreaking, but with moments of lighthearted brevity, this movie is a must see.

Benjamin Law - Gaysia

Benjamin Law is an insanely funny writer, and one of the few prolific Asian Australian writers that I found and loved when I was in my search for any sort of Asian representation in Australian. This book documents his eccentric travels throughout Asian countries like China, Burma and India, simultaneously showcasing the queer culture in these places, but also the discrimination faced. "Law goes nude in Balinese sex resorts, sits backstage for hours with Thai ladyboy beauty contestants, and tries Indian yoga classes designed to cure his homosexuality." Hands down a five star read.



Media Recommendations

BY SONA JERRY

Some of my favourite BIPOC movies, books, and songs are by South Asian/East Asian creators! Make sure to check out my recommendations, especially the movies, because they formed a large part of my childhood, and continue to make me laugh and cry, to this day!

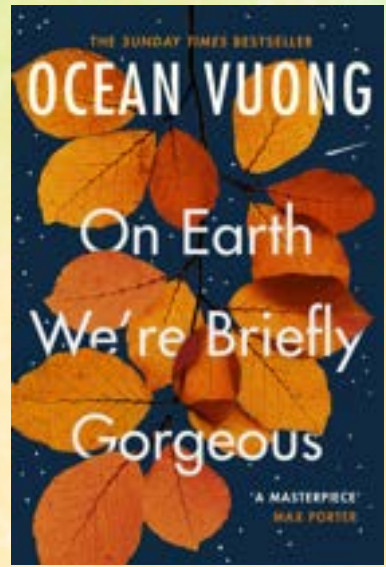
3 Idiots, directed by Rajkumar Hirani

“3 Idiots” is a 2009 Bollywood film that cleverly critiques the rigid and often oppressive education system in India. The story revolves around the unconventional journey of three friends through an engineering college, highlighting the immense pressure, unrealistic expectations, and lack of creativity often associated with traditional education. Through humor and satire, the film calls attention to the need for a more flexible and student-centric approach to learning and highlights the importance of following one’s true passions in life.



On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous by Ocean Vuong

One of my all-time favorite books, written by a true literary master, Ocean Vuong, is a testament to the power of storytelling. Through his eloquent prose and poetic prowess, Vuong beautifully weaves his personal experiences of growing up in a single-parent household, embracing his Vietnamese heritage, and navigating the complexities of identity and family. This poignant memoir captures the essence of a young immigrant's journey, offering a profound and unforgettable narrative that resonates with anyone who has grappled with questions of belonging, love, and self-discovery.



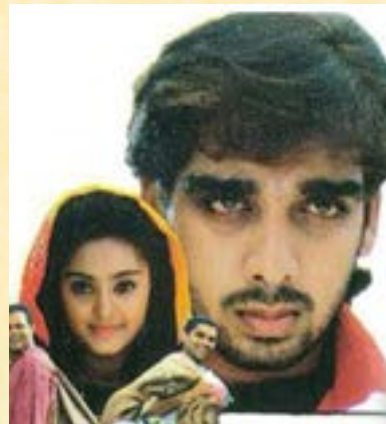
Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, directed by Aditya Chopra

DDLJ (Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge) is the ultimate family favorite in our household! The songs from this classic are like a time machine, instantly transporting me back to the 2000s, a time when I was young and happy. It's practically a rite of passage for brown kids of that era! Join Simran and Raj on their rollercoaster ride through Europe, as they play hide-and-seek with their parents' expectations and accidentally stumble into a love story that's as timeless as the film itself. DDLJ: Because who doesn't want a little dose of rebellion and romance, with a side of unforgettable tunes?



Kabooliwala, directed by Siddique Lal

"Kabooliwala," the 1994 Malayalam film, is a timeless classic that has captivated audiences with its heartfelt storytelling and memorable performances. Directed by Siddique Lal, the film weaves a touching narrative exploring the themes of innocence, companionship, and social class, through the friendship between a bugle player, and a circus performer. "Kabooliwala" has earned a special place in my heart as my all-time favorite movie, thanks to its heartwarming portrayal of the simple joys of life and the enduring bond between its two central characters.



Too White for The Brown Kids,

By ANONYMOUS

I think the title resonates with most immigrant kids, whether you're first, second, in between or third generation. As a South Asian immigrant in Australia, I've grappled with feeling caught between my heritage and adopted home. Mainstream Australian culture often homogenizes diverse experiences into singular narratives. At the same time, I've faced pressure within some South Asian circles to conform to narrow definitions of identity.

These experiences have been challenging, but not universal to all BIPOC. While people resonate with these experiences, many welcoming spaces exist where identities can interweave.

too brown for the white kids

To many white Australians, my brownness was the first and sometimes only aspect of me they saw. I was lumped together with all other brown people under one racial umbrella, despite the diversity in South Asian cultures and languages. On the other hand, they wouldn't see my identity at all. I was just a token friend they could prize during a BIPOC movement that had nothing to do with me. Otherwise, they'd give me their false sympathies when I talked about hate crimes or gaslit me when I talked about microaggressions. Either way, race/cultural conversations or ideas were not a safe topic in their spaces. These notions aren't very new to BIPOC people.

Navigating identity can be a disorienting experience. With white people, I've come to accept that they'll never fully understand my perspective as a person of colour, though that isn't an excuse.

PANTONEE

Too Brown

Too Brown for the White,

too white for the brown kids

What confuses me more is facing criticism from people in my own generation in the South Asian community. We all struggle finding ourselves between cultures but rejecting one another makes that journey harder. I've seen friends call each other "white-washed" for harmless choices, but I've also heard friends insult others as too "fobby".

We face enough barriers as is and there's no need to add to that struggle through judgement and arbitrary cultural goalposts. Instead, we need to offer each other mutual understanding.

Growing up in different BIPOC groups in very similar settings – a private high school to an elitist university – it seems like there's two defence mechanisms: being as detached from your culture as possible or more attached to it than the next POC person you meet. We're either trying to prove how alike we are to our white peers, or how very different we are to each other. Still, this is not to say that there are people who do find themselves comfortably in their Identity.

I think both negative reactions stem from a feeling of otherness that you don't belong as you are. What we need is true self-acceptance - where young people of colour can embrace their heritage with

PANTONEE

Too White

What does home/a safe-space look like, feel like, smell like, to you?

BY NATALIE LOOS

I've never been anywhere in the world that offers such a sensory overload like Hong Kong. Every corner is filled with new sights, sounds and scents that waft through the streets. Smells elicit so many emotions and remind me of particular memories. I captured some images that remind me of this very specific time of my life spent going back and forth between Hong Kong and Australia. Each odor is embedded with so much history and character. The smell of sweet bread from the bakery, fresh meat hanging on metal hooks in the markets, delicious cha siu and roast duck, the strong smell of fresh Chinese herbal medicine, incense in a bowl or rice and the fumes from ongoing traffic and air conditioners leaking in the summer heat- I love it all!





Photographs By Nat Loos



Cultural Shock

BY MARIA ALKHOURI

Generosity is very important to Middle Eastern people. Both the act of giving and of receiving, much like any conversation. Acceptance of someone's food, tea, produce, holy oil, is as symbiotically respectful as its offering. At its best, our generosity is an unspoken, common dialect, inviting playful competition between givers and receivers. At its worst, it's overbearing, mistaken for cocky displays of possessions, as if one could afford to give such abundance away. Which end of the spectrum you are witnessing really depends on who you talk to.

It took some training to convince my friends, when they come over, to just take the bowl of fruit and ma'amoul, regardless if they've 'just had dinner' or 'weren't hungry'. I needed my Mum to like them more than I needed them to feel comfortably full, or whatever it is white people feel after a meal. When I said that friends at school always asked for bites of my lunch, and my people-pleasing buttons were getting pushed, she defrosted and warmed up pastries she made to just give them the next day. "Haram", she'd say. "Maybe they don't eat well." My best friend loved dolma, and I'd always sneak him a healthy piece if I brought leftovers, so he was invited to come and eat as many leftovers as he liked. After grilling me for eating what looked like 'meaty turds' before having the nerve to try some, there he was at my house, beaming with happiness and dolma turd-juice. My Syrian-Iraqi-ness lives on in the dolma, and in feeding it to him until he's sick with gluttony.

It's unwavering, the part of us that keeps giving. And to this day, if I go empty handed to a dinner party, a birthday, a movie night just a few doors down from my college dorm, I feel sick with myself. It even caught me off guard when I finally made Middle Eastern friends at university, and suddenly I was fighting over who pays for brunch. And I seriously mean fighting. I recall squirming, watching my dad and uncle in Western Sydney embarrass us all from unruly scenes caused over restaurant bills. I was proud, to now be the one doing the embarrassing.

I don't think my parent's frustration with Aussies necessarily came from the news, the anti-refugee politics, or assumptions about our religion. It was the generosity, that in our homeland would be a no-brainer, being thrown back in our faces time and time again. "It's much worse if you don't take the food", I tell my white friends. I wondered, in primary school, why my best friend always came over to my house, but I hardly ever went to hers. I knew her other friends would always go, but rarely myself. When I asked her, the answer was plain.

Everytime they hosted me, my mother brought them sweets.

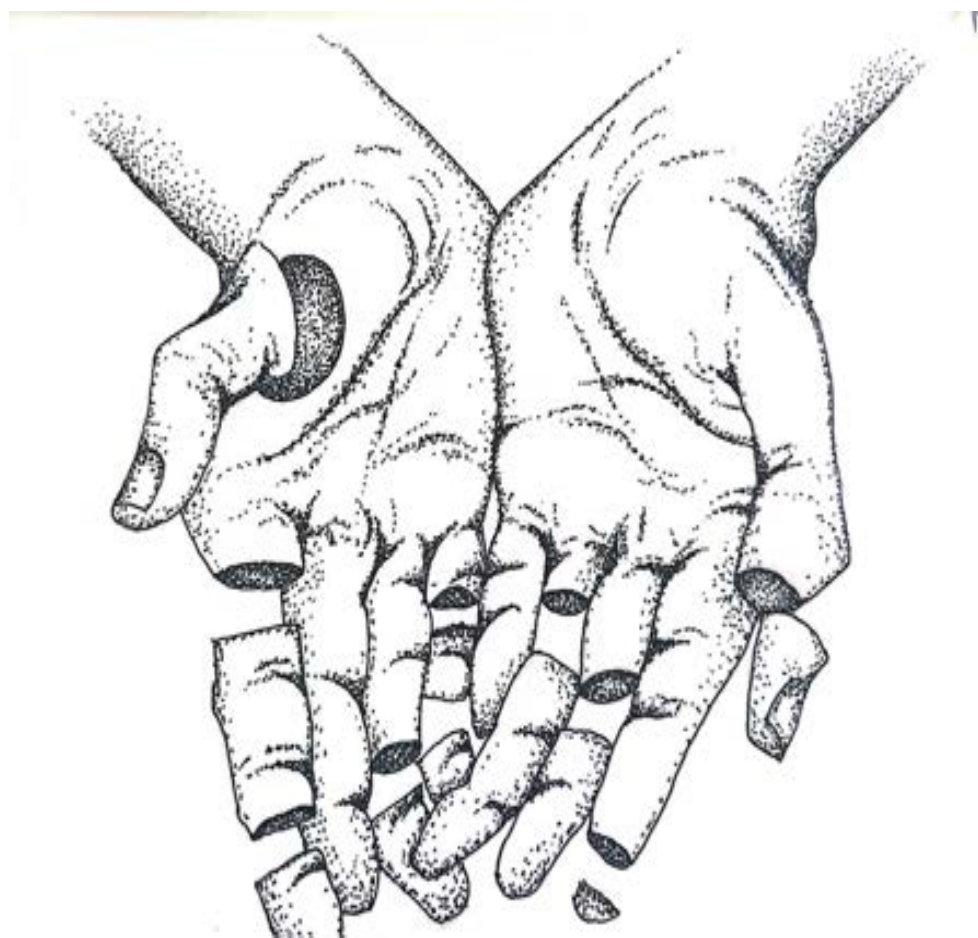
As a chronically shy child, I could understand that people find gestures they can't match a little awkward. Who could compete with Arabic desserts? Mama was less neutral about it. I also asked

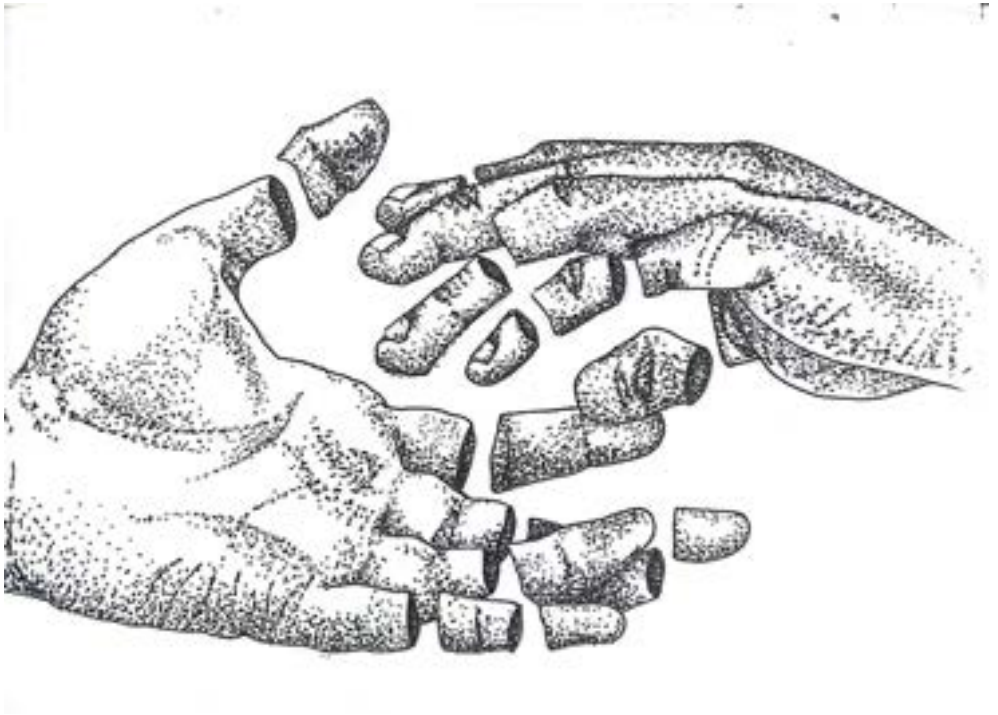
why she wasn't a P&F mum, the ones holding fundraisers and bringing orange slices to soccer games. Apparently they embarrassed her at the board meeting by sternly rejecting her offerings because the kids 'were just fine with their carrot sticks'. It started to crystallise with each aggregated encounter with timid, mico-aggressive white women who didn't know what else to do with an Iraqi woman's olive branch but to bend it: our generosity is lost in translation. Did my mother unveil a threat by asserting some kind of afternoon-tea superiority? Did they really think she was trying to overthrow the P&F hierarchy with her broken English and a tray of baklava? It's not fair to assume they meant to humiliate, since we learned over time that in white-Australia, communal kindness is more transactional. It's taught us to be wary when they offer us more than the usual, something that would have never crossed our minds before. What united us with each other back home, and abroad with other Middle Easterners, was digging deep fissures between us and our new home.

But maybe they really were just taken aback by it, feeling ridiculous to accept something like that because it would mean they'd be in debt to us. Maybe they were just surprised and didn't have time to think of all the cultural dissonances between themselves and my Chaldean mother who wouldn't be a citizen for another ten or so years. Maybe it wasn't their job to understand, but ours to recalculate our own habits and choose generosity with more intention. It's perhaps unsavoury to look back with such resentment for those women. It was a very rural town in New South Wales, where the land is so dry it feels like the sun is suffocating you from the ground, like Vaporub from hell. There was no exposure to people like us. To my classmates, I could've been from any Muslim country between Afghanistan and Algeria. There was no difference, regardless if I was actually Muslim or not. How were people supposed to act when we gave so much when the stereotype assumed we had so little? What happened to migrants from developing, war-torn countries begging for scraps?

Even the poorest, resource-less migrants will still out-do you by accident. Years later, I lived somewhere with a sudden influx of hundreds of Yezidi refugees from Iraq, very soon after the 2014 Yezidi genocide. I heard stories of my friends being offered plates of bread and meat from their new neighbours (probably either kibbeh or Iroog bread), and them not knowing what to do. One of the recipients was a vegetarian. As foreign as Yezidis were to Aussies, a vegetarian is a down right alien to (most of) us. I felt such shame that fellow Iraqis were offering their labours of love to unsuspecting, disenchanting veggos. I imagined the awkwardness, the language barriers, the rejection replaying over and over until they learned the same lessons we eventually did. I feel my mother's heart breaking, and even my own the times I've let my guard down for the wrong person. Those small moments punctuate our transition into this country more than any 'Stop the Boats' ad could warn us.

It doesn't matter to us how much we have, or how much you have. It's not even that personal really. It's spoken with hands, binding us beyond villages, faiths and borders, and across mother tongues. It's a conversation that never truly ends with one side. And we ask ourselves, what do we say when no one is listening?





Home

By Zaina Keriwala

Home is rays of morning sun shattering through the blinds. It's the blanket half fallen off my bed because I've slept a little too well. It's brushing my teeth, eyes still closed. Chugging cold Milo and racing to the bus stop. Home is the 584 school bus. Late. Again. The driver with his faded black cap and a smile too friendly. Absolutely packed because we're the last pick up. Standing and trying to untangle brutally tangled earphones, grab handle in one hand, phone in the other. Shoulders cramped from a science textbook I brought home and never opened. Home looks like bratty little kids with scented markers hogging the 3-seaters. Home is old classrooms with faulty air-conditioning and monotonous geography lessons. And lively history lessons. Everyone on the edge of their seats in full focus. Eyes wide at All Quiet on the Western Front. Home is cheesy cheese pizzas and cold aloe veras for recess. Leaving time for handball and the library at lunch. Walking a bit too fast at 3:30 because I didn't want to miss the bus. (I never did). Home is an under-ventilated bus and stinking, sweaty, riotous kids. It's my mum, smiling, waiting for us by the front door. A faded wooden front door completely flooded by the late afternoon sun. Kicking our scuffed school shoes off on the yellowed porch tiles and collapsing inside. Home is cold tiles on a scorching day. Home is mini almond Magnums a little bit too icy because our freezer is a little bit too cold. Teeth tingling as they sink into the ice cream. It's mindlessly watching live TV shows until sundown. Not sharing any width of the blasting aircon. Home is beanbags too hot to sit on but sat on anyway. Home is a few units of math homework and a sample paragraph for English. It's starting an assignment earlier than I need to because I have the time. Reading another few chapters of The Messenger because I have the time. Eating a hot dinner after it becomes cold because I have the time. Home is laying in bed, in the cool darkness, and thinking over my day. Hearing my dad click the lock on the back door and slide the blinds across. A sound that will never leave my memory. Home is a life where the air was a little lighter to breathe. Where the sun shone a little more. A place where I smiled a little more. A place made of up all the little things I took for granted. The little things. Greener and sweeter than anywhere else in my eyes. Home is a life I will never have again, can never have again. Henceforth, I will forever be settling for less.

a person, a place, a feeling

By Angela Paulson

I'm not sure I can define what home is. It's sometimes a place, sometimes a person - sometimes the smell of rain when it hits the ground. Sometimes, it's just a feeling.

It's something you don't realise you are in until you're holding your things outside your college dormitory watching your father's back as he gets in the car to leave. It's in the tears that stain your pillow when you tuck yourself into bed that first night, a thousand kilometres away from anyone you know.

It's the familiarity of 6 p.m. in your childhood home. In the ringing of your mother's laugh as makes chai on a hot summer afternoon. It's in the long road trips squished in the back seat of your family car, hearing your parents talk.

It's being six and pretending to fall asleep in the car so your dad carries you to the bed. It's the sound of a bike pulling up to your grandparent's house. It's on the thin mattresses on a cold tiled floor in India, giggling at your cousin's wild stories. It's the mess of my hair and the wind on my face as sit in the front seat of my uncle's bike as he drops me off for school on a cold Monday morning.

It was in my grandmother's kiss on my cheek at 5. It was in the ice cream I shared with my best friend at 8. It was in my mother's dosas on Saturday mornings at 15. It was in the giggling of my friends during English classes at 17. It was in holding my little brother for the first time at 12. It was in my dad tying my shoelaces for me at 10. It was in the laughter of my best friends sitting on the floor of my college dorm room at 18.
home is where I am.



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