



Issue - Vol 1

# The Bicultural Diaries

UK - Edition



*"I was born here, went to school here and work here.  
I am British. However, when I go to Bangladesh it also feels  
like home. It's a part of me I will always love and I know  
that it made me different from my peers"*



This editorial project will include interviews and various artistic photography compositions, which visualize and connect directly to the challenges and advantages migrants with ethnic and bi-cultural backgrounds face.

*The Bicultural Diaries.*



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# Stuck B Two C

*What is the recipe for long-term happiness? One crucial ingredient cited by many people is closeness in their social relationships.*

*Very happy people have strong and fulfilling relationships. But if we feel rejected by those who are closest to us our family and friends – it can sour our attempts to master the recipe for happiness.*

*Bi-cultural people, who identify with two cultures simultaneously, are vulnerable to this kind of rejection.*



# Between Cultures

*A person can become bi-cultural by moving from one country to another, or if they are born and raised in one country by parents/grandparents who came from elsewhere.*

*Various research has shown us that being bi-cultural is a tremendously beneficial trait because it makes us more flexible, adaptable and even creative in our thinking.*

*But bi-cultural people may experience their upbringing as the collision of multiple worlds.*



● Shelina Haque

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*The Bicultural Diaries*

*Born and raised in UK.  
Ethnic inheritance is Bangladesh.  
Identifies both as British and Bengali*

**Shelina HAQUE**

# Half & Half





**How would you describe your bi-cultural identity?**

- I was born here, went to school here and work here. I am British. However, when I visit Bangladesh, it also feels like home, it's a part of me I will always love and I know that it makes me who I am as well as making me different from my peers. Both my British side and Bengali side are a very equal part of me, I do not value one more than the other and therefore cannot compromise either one.

*Shelina Haque.*

**Where do you fit best amongst your two predominant cultures?**

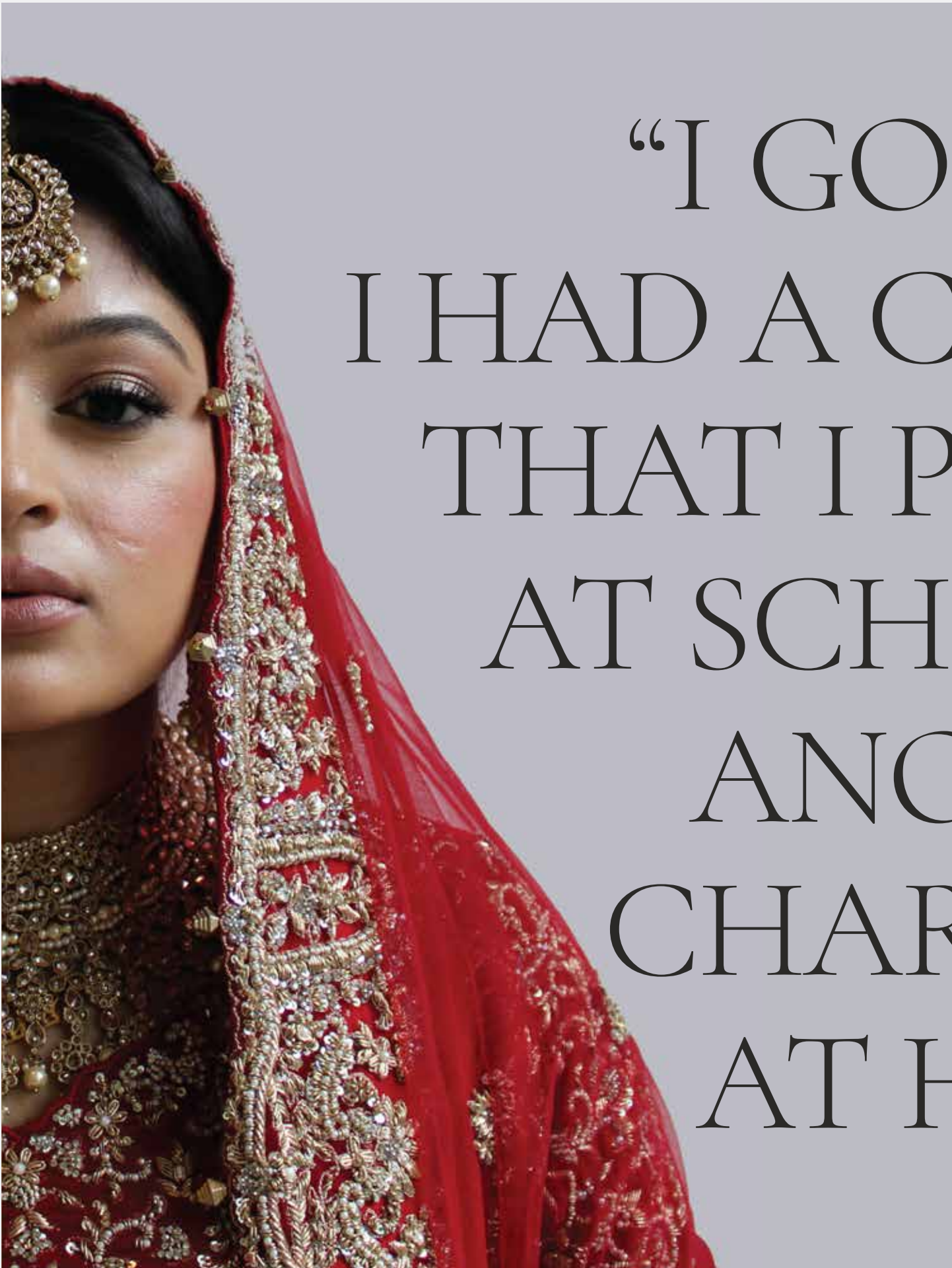
*- I can belong to both. I am confident in both. I find parts of myself that can sometimes connect to one side more than the other. In general, I believe I fit in to the British culture as a person born and raised here, however, I can easily and proudly switch and adapt to things such as some Bengali traditions that I value very much or general morals that come from my Bengali culture.*

**Has society ever made you feel rejected from either one of your cultures?**

*- When I go to Bangladesh, I have generally had positive experience. I don't feel out of place, people make me feel like a Bengali girl. That isn't always the case here. People can make me feel out of place or question my British side here. I understand that maybe because of the way I look so it's harder for them to accept me and how I identify myself as a whole*

**Do you recall searching for belonging, especially during your teenage years?**

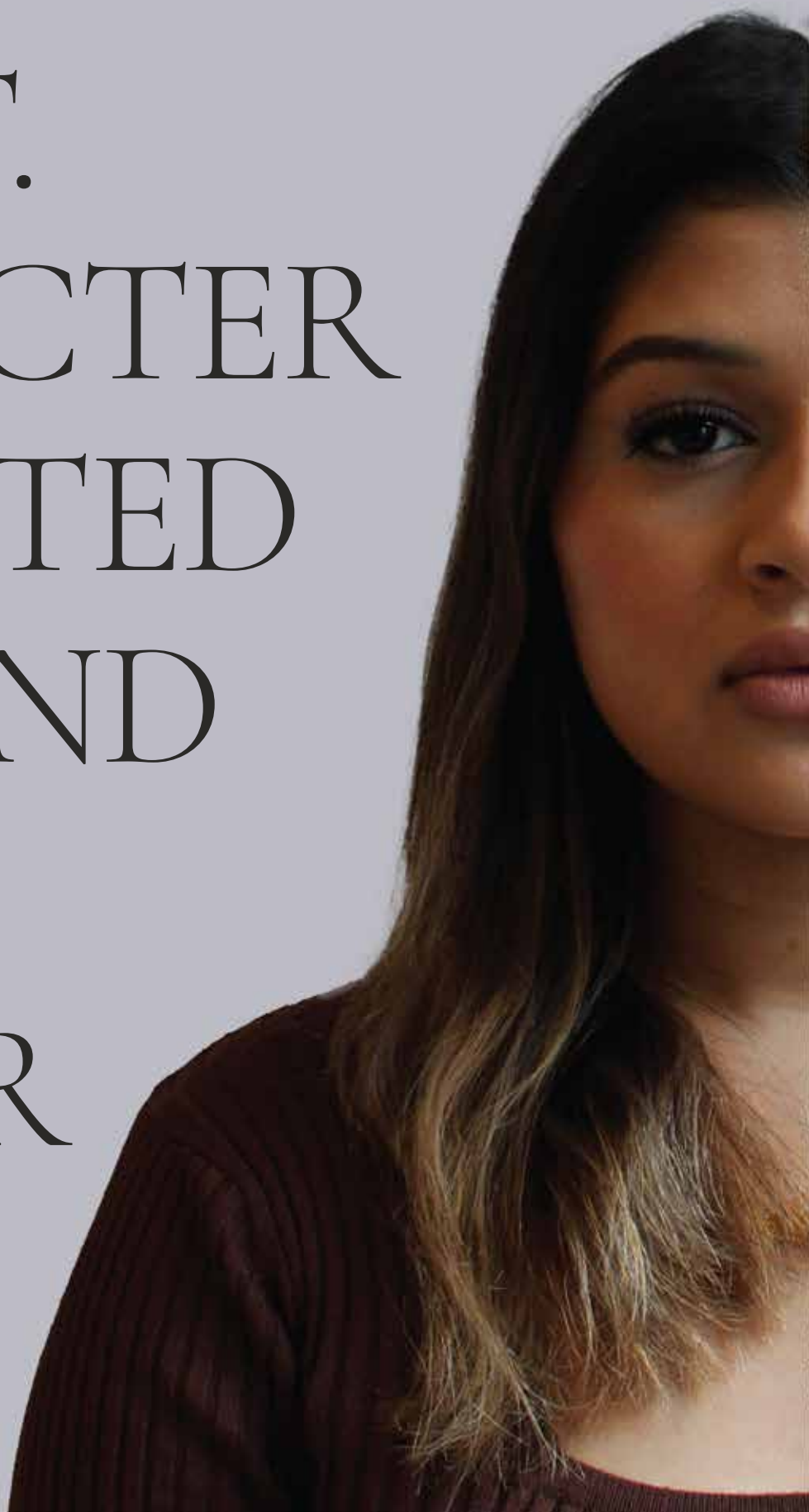
*- Yes, it was quite difficult. Where I grew up and studied, I was one out of three south Asians in my year. Naturally I felt the grit of being an ethnic minority most in school. Having to fit in and justify being Bengali and British was really hard. There was a lot of questioning of my identity, which lead to a lot of stereotypes and bullying. When I recall, it was one of the worst periods of my teenage hood. What made it worse was, back then I never understood why.*



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*The Bicultural Diaries*

*Born and raised in UK.  
Ethnic inheritance is Kenyan.  
Identifies both as British and Kenyan*

**Reece BEDFORD**

# The In Between





**How would you describe your bi-cultural identity?**

*- Cultural identity for me is a difficult one. Even with forms that ask about my ethnicity, I always tick the other box. My mum was born in Kenya and my dad was born in India as an Anglo Indian and I was born in the UK. Therefore, it is a question I still very much struggle to answer today.*

*Reece Bedford.*

**Can you tell me about your ethnic culture and traditions that stick out most to you?**

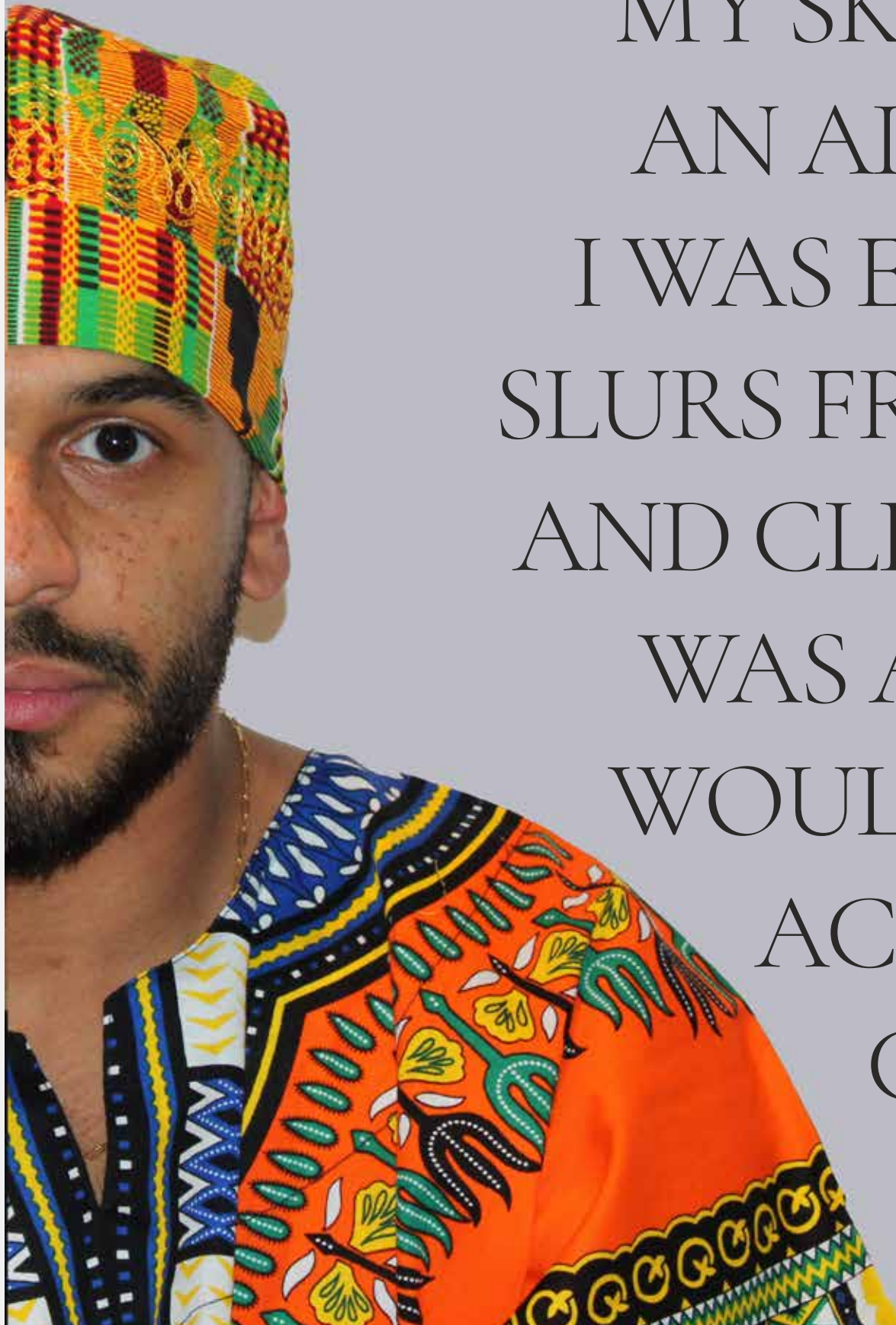
*- First thing that comes to my mind is food. Growing up, my mum and grandma cooked a lot of Kenyan dishes. When I was younger, I found the food quiet boring, however I grew to appreciate it and embrace it more. Another thing that comes to mind is traditional clothing. Traditional Kenyan clothing is not something I would wear usually, however my family have worn typical authentic clothes for weddings and special occasions sometimes around Christmas as well.*

**Where do you fit in best amongst your two predominant cultures?**

*- I have parts of both in me. I think being brought up in an ethnic household is very different to a British household, that I have seen from my friends over the years. Although I have a lot of interest and presence in my British side, I always felt I couldn't really identify as British of such even though I was born and raised here. I guess its more because of the influence I have had around me in terms of family and community. I am the first one in my family to be born in this country. I felt that from a young age you always identify with people who look like you or live like you. Therefore, in terms of how I felt for most of my life has always been from my African culture.*

**Do you recall searching for belonging, especially during your teenage years?**

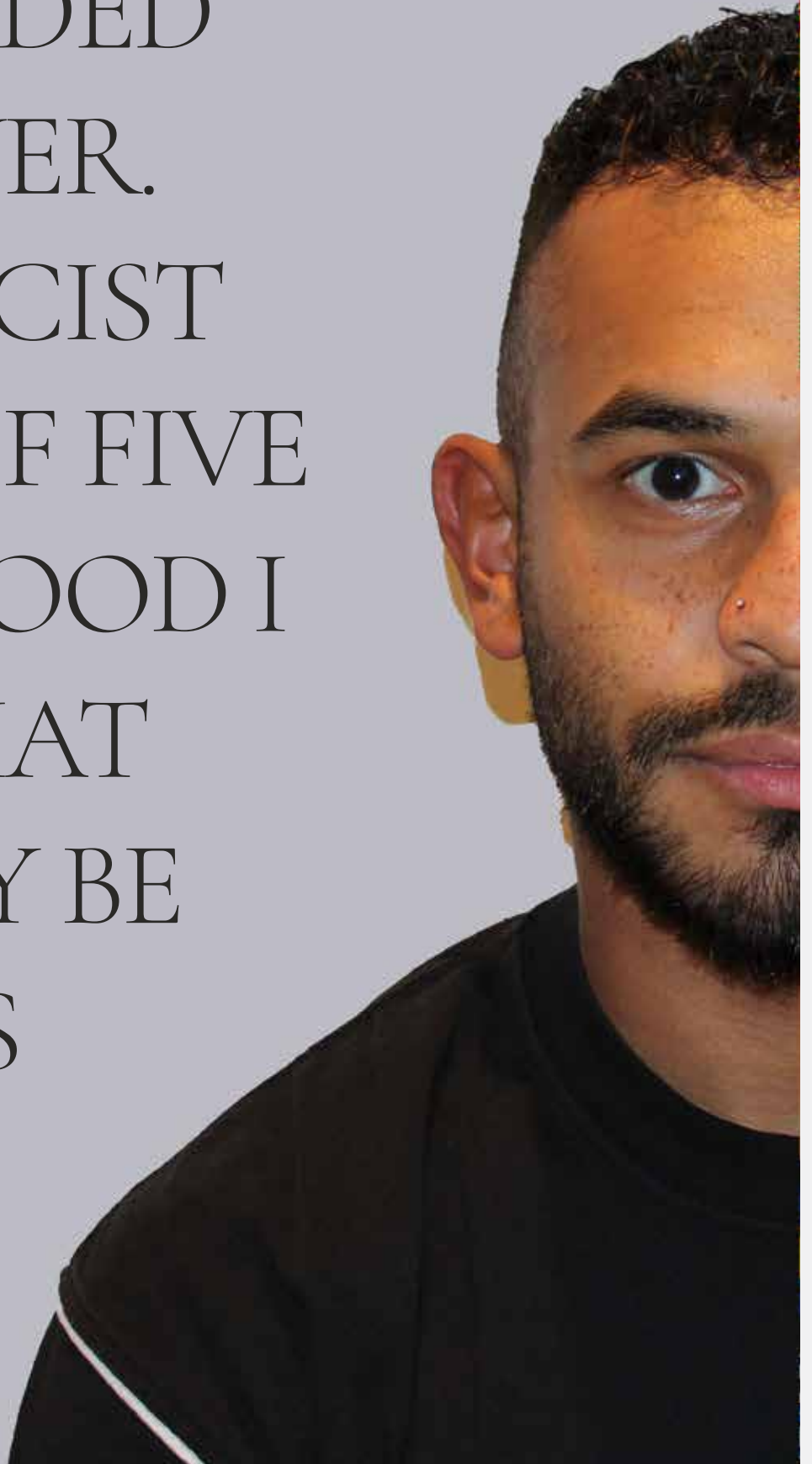
*- For years no one has ever correctly guessed my ethnic identity from my looks. For example, I don't have typical afro hair especially when its short but when its longer it gets curlier. I went to a predominantly white school and I remember a time I even straightened my hair to try and fit it with my peers. Also, my skin colour has added an additional layer where I was exposed to racist slurs from the age of five and therefore, I knew clearly, I was a minority that would never truly be accepted in this community. Hence, I did not even attempt to search for that sense of belonging in my British side.*



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*Born in UK, raised in Syria  
Ethnic inheritance is Syrian.  
Identifies both as British and Syrian*

**Diana FOX**

# Duality





### **How would you describe your bi-cultural identity?**

*-I think there is a very fine line between culture and religion. Especially for me. I was born in the UK and spent my childhood years in Syria. My parents are Syrian they identify as Syrian and therefore I am too. In my case, I see that most things I identify as culture can be religion and vice versa. So, for me a definition of a cultural identity in the UK has been and is a learning curve that I am still trying to navigate. In addition to my inherited culture, I am now married to a Caribbean, Christian. That within its self has also made me question culture even more and how to integrate my cultural beliefs with his, to form our new one. So, its definitely something I am still figuring out.*

*Diana Fox*

### **What makes you feel at home?**

*- For me what makes me feel at home, is food, music and dance. If I wasn't an Architect, I would have been a chef. I think it's the unspoken culture, you get to taste, see before you have opinions or bias. Music and dance is also a big part of my concept of home. For a long time, I partied at venues that typically played western music. Recently I found an Arabic event and the first time I attended they were playing Arabic music. I almost cried. I felt so connected as this was the first time I've been to a place in the UK that brings all Arabs together and everyone gets to dance to music that we listened to when we were children. I believe the idea of music and dancing is so much more powerful than what we see on the surface.*

### **What has been the impact of growing up in between two predominate cultures?**

*- I worked in sales for many years here in the UK, which helped me understand many cultures and personalities. Being bicultural has added traits to me such as being an open person and understanding others. Therefore, I find that I can naturally blend in with various groups. Having said that I am also very much able to hold my ground and able to bring in my culture openly and I make sure people know my cultural identity and my mixes. I try to integrate and reflect my culture, my beliefs and who I am, as much as I can in these friendship circles.*

### **Do you think hijab plays a role in your cultural identity?**

*- For me, when I decided to wear a hijab during my teenage years, I felt like a common person rather than a unique person. All my cousins and surroundings started to wear the hijab. I did not like the feeling of being tied and grouped to that single part of my identity. It felt like my hands were tied when I was wearing it and did not like the feeling. Over the years my thoughts have changed. I recently went to Saudi Arabia to visit extended family members. I saw how people dressed, wore the hijab and to show respect I also did, on that trip. I felt a sense of modesty that came with concealing beauty. I started to understand beauty as more of a personal thing rather than something to show. And I understood that concealing or preserving your beauty is something to be respected, and whether it's for religion, culture or something else, I now see it as a unique and personal thing.*



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I would like to thank the lovely participants; Shelina, Reece and Diana for participating in this project and opening up to share their intricate experiences.

*The Bicultural Diaries.*

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