

Knowing One Another



Through the Art of Drama

A Brick Lane Circle Publication



**Knowing
One
Another**

Through the Art of Drama

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To all those who live and work in increasingly diverse, complex and changing neighbourhoods, across the world, and are engaged, through creativity and passion, in maintaining and improving cohesion and harmony within their communities...

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Brick Lane Circle - Who Are We?

We are a voluntary organisation (company limited by guarantee, founded in 2006) set up to help:

Transform the intellectual landscape of the Bangladeshi in the UK and take the community to a new level of confidence and critical engagement with everything relevant for the community's progress and development.

Discover and promote the shared common roots of Britain's diverse population through research, knowledge sharing and learning about each other's history, country of origin and experiences in the UK

In order to achieve our objectives we organise seminars, exhibitions and events, and develop and deliver innovative projects and initiatives.

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Introduction

This publication brings together the outcomes of two projects delivered by Brick Lane Circle. The first one, called 'Knowing One Another', engaged a number of individuals from London's diverse communities, during 2014/15, to learn and write about each others' cultures, origin, migration and experiences in the UK. At the end of the project a book launch and celebration event was organised at the Rich Mix Centre in Shoreditch in London's East End. The Knowing One Another book has been reproduced in section two of this publication, under the title 'Knowing One Another Through Learning About Each Other's Origin and Migration'.

Following the amazing success of the Knowing One Another project, Brick Lane Circle developed a new project called 'Knowing One Another, Through the Art of Drama'. This time the idea was to look at different themes through drama, where individuals from diverse communities would explore their experiences, choose scenarios, produce scripts, rehearse and deliver public performances. The themes covered were Multi-generational, Multi-cultural, Multi-faith and Multi-routes into Britain. The first section of the publication contains scripts of the four themed drama performances, together with information on the directors, the experiences of the participants and images.

Each of the projects took about a year to complete with funding support from the Big Lottery Fund. In total, the first project engaged ten volunteers from London's diverse communities to discover and learn more about each other, including their places of origin, through the use of social media, interviews and internet searches. The second project engaged more than twenty diverse volunteers covering the four themes. Outcomes of both projects include a rich variety and depth of research, exploration, thought, interactions and understanding about living in a diverse, fast-changing city such as London. This publication is designed to share with the wider community the experiences of the participants.

London is a very diverse multi-cultural city and the levels of diversity are deepening and widening every day. Diversity brings positive benefits as well as unease and community tension arising from the myriads of cultures and faiths living side by side. The project sought to make positive contributions, through an innovative platform, towards improving community cohesion and better understanding between London's diverse communities.

These initiatives were set up as pilot projects to explore and test new

ways of challenging negative stereotypes and prejudices faced by all London's communities - minority ethnic and recent arrivals as well as long-established groups.

Brick Lane Circle believes that empathy is the key to community cohesion. We hope that this publication will help promote greater understanding, coexistence and mixing of London's diverse communities through the process of learning more about each others' contributions, cultures, experiences, struggles and ambitions.

SECTION 1

Knowing One Another Through the Art of Drama

The Connections We Make Multi-generational Britain	15
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The Connections We Make

Multi-generational Britain

A play in two acts about technology and different generations

Written and directed by Hussain Ismail, in collaboration with pieces written by volunteer cast members who explored everyday life, explored themes, chose areas to focus on and then developed scripts, rehearsed and performed.

'I have worked on many projects with Brick Lane Circle and volunteers it has recruited for theatre workshops through the years. In this latest project, Know One Another, I decided to lead the workshops on inter-generational aspects of East London.

I had not ever thought about or ever dealt with this theme artistically. This was a challenge for myself to see where the diverse participants could take the creative process and work that dealt with different generations of the Bangladeshi community and other ethnics trying to connect to each other despite the fragmented and alienating inner city environment.

I learnt something about the environment we live in as did the participants. We taught each other something new by discovering and uncovering the reality which we live in every day without ever acknowledging it.

I am always surprised by the creativity and energy of those that are not professional artists. As always Brick Lane Circle and its projects make us more aware of ourselves in our given environment.'

Hussain Ismail, Director

Characters

Naz: A second generation British Bengali man in his late twenties

Alia: A second generation British Bengali woman in her late thirties

Mahal: A first generation Bengali widowed elderly man.

Chris: A black British teenager who works in the local cafe

Reflection on the Project

By Ahmed Chwodhury (Participant)

'Connection' was a drama-based project that explored the theme of Multi-generational living within the context of the diverse communities of East London, although with a wider London and UK relevance. Britain today is highly diverse and culturally rich. It is a melting-pot of different languages, traditions, cuisines and religions.

In 2016, when Brick Lane Circle announced a year-long drama project entitled 'Knowing One Another Through the Art of Drama (KOA)', which included four themes, I became instantly interested in the project. As I liked the idea of participating in a ten-week workshop to explore a particular theme with a group of individuals from our diverse communities, develop scripts based on a variety of scenarios, rehearse and deliver public performances, I decided to join three of the themes. In this section I am writing about my experience of participating in the first of the themes covered, which was on Multi-generational issues. The end performance was called 'Connections', which was a play based on how a young Bangladeshi man and a young Bangladeshi woman in their early twenties helped an elderly Nigerian man in his sixties, whom they met in the park, to use Skype on his iPad to communicate with his family in Nigeria.

The theme was developed through an organic process and had not been pre-scripted. Over the duration of the ten-week period, the actors, who were community volunteers, worked on developing a narrative that could portray the challenges and tensions that exist between different generations living within close proximity to each other, particularly in an area with a highly diverse population. Ideas and concepts for the storyline evolved bit by bit, as the actors improvised on different scenarios. By the end of the fifth week, Hussain Ismail had the first draft of the script ready for the group to work on. During the remaining five weeks, the scripts underwent many changes until we, as a group, were satisfied on the final edition.

Drama is a wonderful medium for story-telling, and it has the power to touch the hearts and minds of people. Watching people perform live in a dimly lit room with other people is a truly thrilling experience. The theatre becomes a special and magical palace, when you hear hundreds of people laugh, scream and clap. All reacting together, being emotionally steered by actors on the stage.

My engagement with 'Connections' enhanced my existing understanding

of the current challenges and tensions that exist between the young and the elderly members of the ethnic minority communities. First, there is an issue with cultural differences between the two age groups, which includes certain slang/jargons used by the youth of today that elderly people find unable to understand. Second, with the ever-increasing social media culture amongst the youth, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, to name but a few, the elderly generations are feeling alienated and finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the 'Digital Gap'.

The team was very friendly and caring towards one another and their progress. By being involved with the project, I have become familiar with certain nuances and ways of working preferred by different directors: while some are relaxed and less challenging with the actors, others are very rigid and highly methodical.

As someone being born in Bangladesh and raised in the UK, I have thoroughly enjoyed the weeks and months that I spent being involved with the KOA projects. I believe that unique initiatives like KOA that Brick Lane Circle devised will not only help the volunteer actors/participants gain valuable acting, drama and community theatre skills, they will also learn about the different communities coexisting around them. Initiatives such as KOA will help serve an important aim of redressing and dealing with the challenges of racism and age discrimination, and will also aid in building positive community relations. I look forward to taking part in any future projects, such as KOA, that Brick Lane Circle may develop in the future.

ACT 1 – SCENE 1

Victoria Park

In Victoria Park on Tuesday afternoon, NAZ is sitting on a park bench reading. ALIA comes and sits next to him.

ALIA: It was different in my day.

NAZ: You talking to me?

ALIA: What do you think about smartphones? Friend or foe?

NAZ: I think they're God-given.

ALIA: God-given! How?

NAZ: My son saved my life with a smart phone.

ALIA: You don't know what they're doing with a smartphone. It could be dangerous.

NAZ: Dangerous? This book can be dangerous in the wrong hands.

ALIA: The photos can get into the wrong hands.

NAZ: What do you mean? (interrupted by MAHAL's arrival)

MAHAL: (nearing the bench) Excuse me.

NAZ: I didn't catch your name?

MAHAL: My grandson gave an iPad. I can't use it.

He sits between them.

NAZ: Chacha, you're interrupting the conversation.

ALIA: Come, sit down.

MAHAL: I don't know how it works.

ALIA: You don't need it!

MAHAL: What do you mean?

NAZ: I'll show you how to use it!

ALIA: Don't waste your time, uncle. It's better to be with him.

MAHAL: He says I can be with him through this thing. I don't know understand how.

NAZ: (taking the iPad) Look, it's easy. You just ...

MAHAL: (interrupting) He cried when he left. I was heartbroken.

ALIA: Why didn't you go with him?

MAHAL: My heart is not strong any more. They're gone to Spain – there's no halal food in there. No people like us. No Muslims.

ALIA: Uncle, there are Muslims and halal food. There is a strong Islamic history there.

NAZ: In Cordoba there is a church that used to be a masjid. Let me show you some images.

NAZ quickly Googles some images on the phone and shows MAHAL.

MAHAL: I don't know these things. I like to go back home but it's not the same any more since my wife passed away (he gets very sad).

NAZ: (He takes the iPad). You swipe your fingers and it turns on. You have some new messages. It says (message appears on the screen and he reads it out).

Assalamualaikum dada. We are in Grenada. We are really well.
Here are some pictures.

They all look at the pictures. During this time CHRIS enters. He is on

his phone playing Pokémon Go. MAHAL notices him.

MAHAL: That is them. That is my grandson and that is my son and daughter-in-law. They look like they are having a good time.

NAZ: Why don't you send them a message?

MAHAL: I don't know how.

NAZ: Technology is amazing. Think about what we can do now that our parents could only dream of.

CHRIS moves around playing his Pokémon Go.

ALIA: I know that, but it's about when it's not used properly. When it's misused by people and children who don't understand what they are doing or what is being done with them.

MAHAL continues to stare at the photos of his family but then becomes distracted by CHRIS.

MAHAL: What is that boy doing there?

NAZ: A new game: Pokémon Go. Everyone's playing it. There is internet in the cafe just there. I can show uncle how to use it.

They all walk to the cafe around the corner. NAZ kicks a football back to some

local kids.

ACT 1 – SCENE 2

The cafe

They are all in the cafe. NAZ and ALIA are sitting at a table together whilst MAHAL is skyping his family at another table.

NAZ: (Exasperated) You still use that brick?

ALIA: What's wrong with it?

NAZ: That thing is ten years old!

ALIA: It does the job.

NAZ: Really? A horse and carriage still does its job but we don't use that any more. I can do 101 things with my phone.

ALIA: Do you have real friends?

NAZ: I have hundreds of friends. On Facebook. On WhatsApp. And real friends.

ALIA: When was the last time you met those hundreds of friends?

NAZ: I don't need to physically interact with friends. I interact with them every day. I connect with them.

ALIA: Look at people around us here, they are with their family but are not really there with them. They are all looking on their phones.

NAZ: You can do so much with this (waving the phone). Like... check when the next bus will come...and much more.

ALIA: I don't want this thing to control my life. So much time is wasted on those things.

CHRIS: Are you guys ready to order?

Nobody responds to CHRIS.

NAZ: I do my banking on this.

ALIA: I wouldn't trust a phone with my personal data.

NAZ: Don't be so paranoid.

CHRIS: Sorry guys are you ready to order?

NAZ: I'll have a hot chocolate - what do you want?

ALIA: Just an Americano.

CHRIS: Coming up.

ALIA: The old gentleman over there might want something.

CHRIS: Sounded quite heated what you were talking about.

NAZ: Can you believe that people still use those phones?

CHRIS: (Chuckles) My granddad has got one of those phones.

NAZ: They don't know what they are missing.

CHRIS goes over to MAHAL, who is sat at the table skyping family.

CHRIS: Sorry to interrupt, but has anyone taken your order, sir?

MAHAL: (Skype disconnects. Looks confused at the computer.) Wait!
What?! I don't understand. Where have they gone?

CHRIS: I think the internet connection must be bad here.

MAHAL: Well what do I do!?

CHRIS: Errm, well, to be honest I don't know. I started working
here two weeks ago.

MAHAL: Well go and talk to your manager then! I need to talk to

my family! I need to know when they'll be back from Spain.

CHRIS: He's not here right now...(starts to look at his computer)... but it seems like you may have just exited skype.

MAHAL: (Confused) Exited skype?

CHRIS: Yeah, if you let me have a look.

(Goes on the computer and reconnects to skype.)

MAHAL: (Family pops up on screen. Looks at CHRIS.) Ahh thank you, thank you so much.

CHRIS: It's not a problem sir.

MAHAL: It's just so difficult! How is a man of my age to use something like this?

CHRIS: At least you are trying. I've been trying to get my granddad to use an iPad I got him so I can facetime him.

MAHAL: Facetime?

CHRIS: It's exactly like skype. (Notices MAHAL's iPad). Wait, your iPad should have it.

MAHAL: (Looks down at his iPad) Ah this, my grandson gave this to

me. What happened to just sending letters and using calling cards?

CHRIS: (Chuckles) You sound just like my grandad.

MAHAL: (Smiling) Your grandad must be a wise man. (Chuckles)

ALIA: There was a girl I knew. I was friends with her sister when I was younger and I used to go over and watch Hindi films on their VCR.

NAZ: Yeah I remember those days.

ALIA: It was a family event, sitting round the TV on a Saturday evening and watching a film.

NAZ: I've got three films on this phone right now!

ALIA: The sister met a boy. It was a secret relationship. He was Pakistani and her parents didn't know a thing. They met online and used the phone to message each other. Things happened when they were alone. They took pictures and sent them to each other. Then her parents said they thought it was time she got married. They had someone in mind for them. When she tried to end it with the boy he was angry. So he sent her father the images and uploaded them on her Facebook for everyone to see... (cut down)???? This was already here -?joan?

NAZ: Oh my god. That's awful.

ALIA: Then he printed graphic and nude images and humiliated

her by posting them through letter boxes on her street.

NAZ: That's horrible.

ALIA: The sister died.

NAZ: How?

ALIA: The parents sent her away to stay with family in Scotland. Everyone knew. Then a few weeks later she took some tablets and killed herself..

MAHAL walks towards their table.

ALIA: Look he's coming back. Let's not tell the old man this.

NAZ: Chacha, when are your family back?

MAHAL: They went on Saturday and they are back in two weeks.

ALIA: I'm sure you are missing them a lot, uncle. Have you got other friends and relatives near here?

MAHAL: I know some people from the masjid but I don't really talk to them. Sometimes I go to the local library to read the newspaper like the Bangladeshi papers and see my friend Mrs Begum there.

ALIA: The local community centre has a free lunch for everyone

on Fridays. You could meet new people.

NAZ: Uncle, they have internet in the library. You can use it there easily.

MAHAL: I don't think I will be able to use this on my own.

ALIA: If you ask someone at the library they can help you.

MAHAL: Why don't you two come to my house?

NAZ: That's okay, chacha.

MAHAL: I can make food for you. I don't cook any more. My daughter-in-law cooks everything. They put meals in the freezer for me to use in the microwave and I don't like using that either.

ALIA: Uncle, that's so nice of you. Maybe we can pop around for chai and visit you, as your family are not here? How is Friday after jummah? I'm not working this Friday.

MAHAL: Okay, I'll meet you outside the masjid. My home is near there.

ALIA: Salaam, uncle.

NAZ: Salaam, chacha.

MAHAL: Thank you. See you on Friday.

(MAHAL goes off)

ALIA: Poor man. It must be hard for him to be alone.

NAZ: That's where technology has helped him. He needs it.

Exit

ACT 2 – SCENE 1

Mahal's house

ALIA, NAZ and MAHAL are sitting and drinking tea in MAHAL's living room.

MAHAL: I've spoken to them nearly every day. iPad is wonderful!

NAZ: I knew you would be able to use it.

ALIA: Have you been out, uncle?

MAHAL: I go to the café every day. That boy helps me with the internet. He is always so happy to help. He's studying computers at university. He says I remind him of his grandfather. He is going to buy an iPad for him. I invited him too.

NAZ: These youngsters know so much more.

MAHAL: Do you know that if you press on this it takes you...

The doorbell rings. CHRIS arrives.

That must be him.

MAHAL goes to open the door and they come in together.

MAHAL: Come in. The others are here.

CHRIS: I convinced my grandfather to use an iPad. There's a class called iPads for the Older Generation. My grandfather is going. It's free - you could go too and I'll introduce you.

NAZ looks at his phone.

ALIA: Can't you stay away from that thing for five minutes?

NAZ: There's a bungee jump happening next week and my friends want to know who wants to join.

ALIA: A bungee jump! I've always wanted to do that!

NAZ: I've been doing for years. They need ten people for it to go ahead. It's next Sunday at the O2. You should come.

ALIA: Yeah, why not? I'd love to.

NAZ: Great. You'll need to be added to the group but you'll need a more updated phone.

ALIA: I'll think about it!

MAHAL pours everyone another cup of tea.

Exit

END





Hyphenated Identities

Multicultural Britain

Written and directed by Dr. Canan Salih, in collaboration with pieces written by cast members who explored everyday life, explored themes, chose areas to focus on and then developed scripts, rehearsed and performed.

'As an applied theatre practitioner (facilitator, writer and director), community engagement through theatre is a significant part of my practice. The multicultural project Knowing One Another by Brick Lane Circle was, therefore, of particular interest to me and I was excited about engaging with various participants in exploring the theme of Multi-culturalism and Multi-routes through performance.

By working with participants of various cultures, genders, ages and interests it was possible to manifest our differences, similarities and the unique nature of each individual and their cultural make-up that identifies them. We used performance technology, film, music, art, verbatim and scripted theatre, and through this journey we began to understand a little more about each other and ourselves. We talked about and demonstrated how we function in society, our own sense of agency, the things that connect us and how we make friends and can work with people we would not otherwise have worked with. This project, as a whole, was truly an example of ways in which we can Know One Another.'

Dr. Canan K Salih

Reflections on the Project

By Naznin Ahad (Participant)

'Hyphenated Identities' was an interesting experience for me. In fact, it was actually one of the best opportunities I have ever done throughout the early years of my youth (and still is). Canan was a very extroverted and an outgoing director bringing lots of fun and optimistic creativity within this project. She thought outside the box, she helped devise a play that would benefit and well more than satisfy us all.

Our project was around the theme of culture; however, we were able to discover and express culture in more than one definition such as identity, culture of taste, culture of passion, culture of talent rather than just simplistically stereotyping to a culture of one's ethnicity. The first session was getting to know us all and what culture meant for us and what we experience in our daily life and what makes us stand out individually.

By doing this, Canan helped us benefit to enjoy the experience while working hard. When visuals of a scene were different to the director's standards, we were actually able to mix our views and opinions together and feel like a director in this piece too by exposing it with our own monologues in each scene and also doing scenes of the gaming world that we all have similar taste in a few scenes also.

I felt amazing. I couldn't feel happier than being given the first opportunity to shine as being my own protagonist, without feeling left out like an extra in a performance I yearned and went out of my way for, in my life. I was someone who was like this in school, underestimated and given small roles and overthrown by others mercilessly competing and my talents swept to the side because I was socially left out.

However, the real beauty of this project was that not only was I the protagonist of the project's final piece to share my emotions and multi-talents, but everyone else was able to become a protagonist and a main cast of the project's final piece. Although there were lots of acting featured as our culture of talent, there were many other cultures of talent featuring in the pieces and soliloquies. For instance, I showcased a presentation of my artwork and drawing live as well as talking out my life story on stage as well as another participant but other participants including Canan showcased their talent through directing physical theatre, choreography and scriptwriting and also creative ideas to devise the piece overall.

Furthermore, these three months of effort for Hyphenated Identities

has been one of the most exciting adventures that I have come across: I really appreciate the opportunities, especially in a situation where these incredible projects are being reduced by fund cuts, to feel hard-working and committed. I thank my director Cana Salih for bringing our efforts to a wonderful outcome and Brick Lane Projects for ever giving me the opportunity to utilise productively my talents.

SCENE 1: On the screen appears - What's in a Name

Images of names and meanings, keywords and emotions light up the screen as sound-bites of various interviewed people can be heard. The cast walk on and move about the stage. On the floor are snippets of text on white paper, strewn across the stage area. In a pause in the sound-scape, one actor picks up a text and reads it out loud. This rhythm continues until all actors have had a turn to read.

SCENE 2: On the screen is the term Culture of Faith

Mosque Scene

IMAM and ERSAN sit centre stage right, in the foyer of the mosque. The IMAM is advising ERSAN.

IMAM: Listen, Ersan. You need to calm down with your rash actions and consider your future. Stop all this silly aggression and think about what you are doing. There's no point in learning all your surahs and coming to the mosque if all you are doing is getting into fights. Islam is a way of life and you need to think carefully about how your life may fit into the way of Islam.

ERSAN: Yeah, I know. I'm trying, it's just ... I don't know.
Their dialogue fades as we move onto stage left as AYSHA and EVA enter (outside the mosque)

AYSHA: So Eva, you're Agnostic, right?

EVA: Yeah.

AYSHA: What does it mean?

EVA: It just means that, I'm open to all beliefs, not just one. But I'm looking for that one belief that reaches me, deeply.

AYSHA: Well why don't you come to our mosque then? It's great! It's a peaceful place, calming, and we're like a big family. Come.

EVA: OK, I've always been curious about this place but was a bit reserved about going in.

NAZNIN: Oh don't be. It's a really welcoming place and our Imam is such a warm person.

Back to IMAM and ERSAN, as AYSHA and EVA enter the mosque stage left. AYSHA is showing EVA the mosque.

IMAM: You're sixteen now, you can't carry on like this. Soon you will be going to college!

ERSAN spots AYSHA and EVA and gets up.

IMAM: Where are you going?

ERSAN walks towards the girls.

ERSAN: Why did you bring a non-believer into the mosque?

AYSHA: She wants to know what Islam is like. She wanted to know what it's like to be in a mosque.

ERSAN: She's not even dressed properly!

AYSHA: Shut up man! What's it to you bruv ?! Can you just
back off!!

ERSAN: You're not thinking straight! You don't know who she is.
She might be a spy for Britain's First!

AYSHA: How can she be a spy when I've known her a long time. We
practically live together, in the same street for ten years!

ERSAN: That doesn't mean anything!

AYSHA: You know what? Just Piss off!

ERSAN: You what? Take that back!

IMAM comes and intervenes before the argument escalates.

IMAM: Estafurullah! Aysha! What did you just say?

AYSHA: What? It's him! He started it.

IMAM: What did you just say? I can't believe what you said that,
Aysha.

AYSHA: But what about him? He's racist!

ERSAN: I wasn't talking about her race, you idiot! I was talking

about her beliefs.

AYSHA: You see!

IMAM: Ersan! This is not how you treat a guest. Come on! Is this what you have been taught here? Is this how you treat a guest in the house of Allah?

ERSAN looks away frustrated and still convinced EVA is a spy.

IMAM: Go and sit down. I will deal with you later.

ERSAN moves away and exits.

IMAM: I apologise for this treatment. What is your name?

EVA: Eva.

IMAM: Eva, welcome to the house of Allah.

EVA: Thank you.

IMAM: You are most welcome. Never mind how you are dressed. Let me show you around the building.

EVA: Oh. Thank you. You're most kind.

IMAM: Not at all. We welcome all faiths in the mosque. Come, let's

start with the women's quarter.

They exit stage right with the IMAM pointing to different parts of the building.

SCENE 3: Sarah's Scene

Sarah enters carrying a bag stage left, as a young woman and man cross over from stage right, talking under their breaths. Sarah approaches down stage centre and places the bag on the floor. She pulls out some books and odd objects, before she finally takes out a St. Joan figure. She lovingly places the figure on the table in front of her and picks up her phone. She dials a number and waits for a reply.

SARAH: Mom? Hey, how's it going? I'm O.K., I found your little gift.

Scene 4: On the screen is the term 'Cultures of Taste and Expressions'

Images of Ahmed's artwork appear on the screen.

AHMED enters.

AHMED (V/O voice over):

It takes time to figure out one's gift in life, for me it took years.

Yes, you've guessed it! It's art and creativity in all its forms. More specifically it's painting.

The moment I discovered painting I fell in love with it.

I find painting to be a wonderful tool of visual language.

My first painting was of a tulip, which I painted from the photograph that I took in the summer. I think tulips are nature's symbol of romance and elegance. Their contours and beautiful colours are so inspiring.

My subsequent paintings included a series of mainly landscapes, mountains, lakes and trees. For me, mountains symbolise might and power, which gives me an inner strength, hope and escape destination for deep contemplation of God's creation.

Having tried various methods, ranging from impressionist to the contemporary abstractionists, personally I like to take inspiration from them all and mix and apply them as appropriate to my paintings, my feelings and aesthetic senses.

Over the last three years my technical, artistic, and expressive skills have grown and increasingly I feel the urge to paint every day. By doing so I feel that my creativity, originality, and individuality are also evolving.

Every artist does his or her art for a reason, which comes from an inner human urge to express oneself through a creative medium, whatever that might be. Through painting I find that I can escape to a wonderful world of imagination. Our world today is full of war and violence. To escape such harsh realities I see painting as to be a form of meditation, relaxation and deep contemplation, which is why I want to share this with you today.

AHMED turns his canvas around for the audience to see his latest painting, then walks off the stage with his painting.

Blackout.

SCENE 5:

SARAH enters and recites the poem 'Digging' by Seamus Heaney

SARAH: Digging By Seamus Heaney.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

SARAH exits.

SCENE 6:

NAZNIN enters and her pictures appear on the screen as she delivers her soliloquy. She stands, stage right, before an easel with a canvas and some charcoal.

NAZNIN starts to draw on the canvas.

My journey through 'Mein Kampf' (German for 'My struggle')

Comes out from behind the canvas.

My artwork is my pride and passion because it defines me for who I am, it displays my talents showing that people shouldn't underestimate me too much and it brings me confidence in my situations.

Resumes drawing.

Art calms me down when I am low or in distress and it makes me feel

at peace. Though it does get stressful sometimes at school. Without my artwork, (stops and walks around the stage) I'd have no talent to show at all and I think I'd fall into pieces without knowing who I am or what I'm good at. Without my artwork, I'd feel like a pathetic loser with no life.

Draws.

Without my artwork, I would have no clue of what jobs or what life I'd be able to make a living of. Art defines my hope and reason to stay strong, positive and optimistic in what will come my way.

Stops drawing and addresses the audience.

When I was younger, I was not very good at learning, I had special needs and I got bullied feeling isolated without any friends or hope. People would call me a spas, the girls would think of me as a pariah and everyone would make fun of my looks, my teeth, my flaws, and my talents, it was hell. I felt so depressed at that time. Even now it still happens and still hurts. But it doesn't just as much as it used to, now that I have friends (but not in my year group), experiences and things to rub on their face as a comeback.

Draws the finishing touches.

I started to know more about anime, k-pop, k-dramas and unleashed a talent, interests and another side of me I didn't know about. Without art, I would not be able to become the person I am today.

Reveals the canvas.

Blackout

SCENE 7:

JHEANELL and ERSAN enter centre stage and perform a fighting Matrix sequence with projection of the film in the background.

Blackout

SCENE 8: On the screen appears 'This is Not a Game – Gaming Culture'

(Ubisoft, (2007) Assassins Creed, Montreal <http://assassinscreed.wikia.com/wiki/Acquisition> [accessed 10.10.16])

The music from Assassins Creed plays in the background as the Assassins all enter in their cloaks.

Meeting Altair

MALIK: Wait! There must be another way. This one need not die.

Quick footsteps are heard as a figure in a white robe and hood runs up behind the man and forces him to his knees before plunging a hidden blade into the back of his head, killing him.

Two onlookers, MALIK and KADAR watch as ALTAIR finishes his kill.

KADAR: An excellent kill. Fortune favors your blade.

ALTAIR: Not fortune. Skill. Watch a while longer and you might learn something.

MALIK: Indeed. He'll teach you how to disregard everything the master's taught us.

ALTAIR: And how would you have done it?

MALIK: I would not have drawn attention to us. I would not have taken the life of an innocent. What I would have done is follow the Creed.

ALTAIR: "Nothing is true. Everything is permitted." Understand these words.

It matters not how we complete our task. Only how it's done.

MALIK: But this is not the way of--

ALTAIR: My way is better.

MALIK: I will scout ahead. Try not to dishonor us further.

KADAR: What is our mission? My brother would say nothing to me. Only that I should be honored to have been invited.

ALTAIR: The Master believes the Templars have found something beneath the Temple mount.

KADAR: Treasure?

ALTAIR: I do not know. All that matters is that the master considers it important, else he would not have asked me to retrieve it.

ALTAIR explores the temple corridors. He kills a Templar and afterwards KADAR and MALIK move in and, together, they get a look at the next room.

MALIK: There! That must be the Ark!

KADAR: The... Ark... of the Covenant?

ALTAIR: Don't be silly. There's no such thing. It's just a story.

KADAR: Then what is it?

MALIK: Quiet! Someone's coming!

Downstage of the Assassins, two Templar soldiers led by ROBERT DES SABLE enter and approach a large chest.

ROBERT: I want this through this gate by sunrise! The sooner we possess it, the sooner we can turn our attention to those jackals at Masyaf!

ALTAIR: Robert de Sable. His life is mine.

MALIK: No! We would want to retrieve the treasure and deal with Robert only if necessary.

ALTAIR: He stands between us and it. I would say it's necessary.

MALIK: Discretion, Altair!

ALTAIR: Ou mean cowardice. That man is our greatest enemy. And here we have a chance to be rid of him!

MALIK: You have already broken two tenets of our Creed. Now you would break the third. Do not compromise the Brotherhood!

ALTAIR: I am your superior, in both title and ability. You should know better than to question me.

ALTAIR approaches the Templars.

ALTAIR: Hold, Templars! You are not the only ones with business here.

ROBERT: Ah! Well, this explains my missing man. And what is it you want?

ALTAIR: Blood.

MALIK tries in vain to stop ALTAIR as he lunges for ROBERT with his Hidden Blade. ROBERT expects the strike and holds ALTAIR back. A struggle ensues.

ROBERT: You know not the things in which you meddle, Assassin. I spare you only that you may return to your master and deliver a message. The Holy Land is lost to him and his. He should flee now while he has the chance. Stay, and all of you will die.

ROBERT throws ALTAIR.

Blackout

SCENE 9

ALTAIR enters the fortress to meet with an aged Assassin in a black robe, ALMUALIM.

AL MUALIM: Altair.

ALTAIR: Master.

AL MUALIM: Come forward. Tell me of your mission. I trust you have recovered the Templar's treasure.

ALTAIR: There was some trouble, Master. Robert de Sable was not alone.

AL MUALIM: When does our work ever go as expected? It's our ability to adapt that makes us who we are.

ALTAIR: This time it was not enough...

AL MUALIM: What do you mean?

ALTAIR: I have failed you...

AL MUALIM: The treasure?

ALTAIR: Lost to us.

AL MUALIM: And Robert?

ALTAIR: Escaped.

AL MUALIM: I send you, my best man, to complete a mission more important than any that has come before. And you return to me with nothing but apologies and excuses!

ALTAIR: I did—

AL MUALIM: Do not speak! Not another word! This is not what I expected. We'll need to mount another force.

ALTAIR: I swear to you I'll find him. I'll go and--

AL MUALIM: No! You'll do nothing! You've done enough! Where are Malik and Kadar?

ALTAIR: Dead.

MALIK enters. He is clutching his left arm, which is covered in blood.

MALIK: No! Not dead!

AL MUALIM: Malik!

MALIK: I still live at least!

AL MUALIM: And your brother?

MALIK: Gone. Because of you!

MALIK points at ALTAIR.

ALTAIR: Robert threw me from the room! There was no way back,
nothing I could do.

MALIK: Because you would not heed my warning! All of this could
have been avoided! And my brother... my brother would
still be alive! Your arrogance nearly cost us victory today!

AL MUALIM: "Nearly"?

MALIK: I brought what your favorite failed to find. Here, take it.

Another robed man, presumably a lower rank ASSASSIN, walks by carrying a
treasure.

MALIK: Though it seems I have returned with more than just their
treasure...

Yet another ASSASSIN enters the conversation:

ASSASSIN: Master! We are under attack! Robert de Sable lays siege to

Masyaf's village!

AL MUALIM: So he seeks a battle! Very well, I'll not deny him. Go, inform the others. The fortress must be prepared. As for you, Altair, our discussion will have to wait. You must make for the village. Destroy these invaders. Drive them from our home!

ALTAIR: It will be done.

Blackout.

SCENE 10:

Scene by Jheanell Samuels, based on Pokémon Go! and the dangers of some places.

Pokémon Go

It is a sunny Saturday afternoon. ASH and MISTY decide to go for walk to try and catch some more Pokémon. On their travels, they see that there have been Pokémon sightings off into the distance. They decide to go after them.

ASH and MISTY are playing Pokémon Go on their phones. Moments in, ASH and MISTY spot a Pokémon on their phones. They stop and try to catch it.

Show video of Pokémon Go! gameplay on screen

Enter TEAM ROCKET

JESSIE: Prepare for trouble...

JAMES: Make that double...

JESSIE: To protect the world from devastation

JAMES: To unite all people within our nation

JESSIE: To denounce the evils of truth and love

JAMES: To extend our reach to the stars above

JESSIE: Jessie.

JAMES: James.

MEOETH: And Meowth.

JESSIE: Team Rocket blast off at the speed of light!

JAMES: Surrender now, or prepare to fight!

MEOETH: Listen to them kid, or we'll out your lights!

ASH and MISTY stare at them blankly.

MEOETH: Well, what are you still doing here?

MISTY: Do you guys even listen to yourselves when you speak?

JESSIE: What?

ASH: Soooo...you're good guys?

JAMES: No you idiot! Were you not listening to what we said?

MISTY: Uhh yeah... were you?

JESSIE: What do you mean, insolent child?

ASH: 'Unite people within our nation'...

MISTY: 'To denounce the evils of truth and love'...

ASH: Seems like something good guys do.

TEAMROCKET gob-smacked. There is a moment of awkward silence as they recall their motto.

MEOWTH: (To TEAM ROCKET) Wow! You guys really are idiots!

JAMES: That's it! Let's battle!

MISTY releases PSYDUCK

JESSIE: MEOWTH: Attack! Use scratch now!!

MEOWTH attacks. PSYDUCK gets hit.

MISTY: Psyduck, cloud nine!

PSYDUCK attacks.

The battle continues. In the heat of it all PSYDUCK starts to get worked up.

JAMES: Meowth, it's time for unnerve!

MEOWTH attacks. PSYDUCK faints.

MISTY: Psyduck! Nooo!

MISTY puts PSYDUCK away.

ASH: Pikachu, it's you!

Prepares to battle.

ASH: Pikachu, use static!

PIKACHU attacks. MEOWTH is injured.

ASH: Pikachu! Lightning rod, now!

PIKACHU's attack is a critical hit. MEOWTH faints.

JESSIE
& JAMES: Meowth !!

MISTY: I suggest you go or we will set Pikachu after you!

JESSIE & JAMES: Team Rocket are blasting off again!!

Exit TEAM ROCKET.

MISTY: That was awesome! Way to go Pikachu (High-five
PIKACHU)

PIKACHU: ikachu!

ASH: Yeah! You did great, buddy! Time to rest.

ASH: puts PIKACHU away.

ASH: Ahh man, that was too close!

MISTY: Yeah, that's the last time we wander off track.

ASH: Agreed.

They high-five.

Blackout.

SCENE 11:

All cast enter from both sides of the stage and position themselves across the stage. REMECAE steps forward and begins to recite her poem.

Finale – Written By Remecae Gordon

REMECAE:

Some heavy

Some light

Some dark

Some bright.

Fabrics of culture, differing in colour.

Some white, some blue yet neither shade nor material defines me or you.

Instead, adds variety to this life we have all been placed to be,

Woven intricately, cultural fabrics of diversity.

Layers of life we now see,

Allow us to know how we came to be, here, an intricately woven fabric of

humanity.

Let us bond on our similarities and common goals.

Focus less on our polarities and common foes.

Life can be too short, for some, too long.

Might we be ever content beings and get along before all is gone.

Because there are layers of life we now see,

Which allow us to know how we came to be, here, an intricately woven fabric of humanity.

Blackout

END





Kaleidoscope

Multi-faith Britain

Directed by Joan Griffiths with volunteer cast members who explored everyday life, explored themes, rehearsed, developed and performed drama.

'As a producer and active innovator in multicultural education and literature at BBC Radio since the seventies, I was delighted and honoured by the invitation to direct this part of the project, especially because I have greatly respected and enjoyed previous Brick Lane Circle projects. Through the art of drama, I learned more about how a variety of religious customs and symbols are interwoven in all our everyday lives, and how challenges can become steps towards positive sharing of our experiences together. I enjoyed the seriously playful experience of the interplay of ideas, personalities and surprises in improvisation, as well as the pleasure of making interesting new friends of diverse religions.'

Joan Griffiths , Bow Drama Group

"...Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity..."

P. B. Shelley

A sequence of original separate plays, created and developed by the cast: Ahmed Chowdhury, Kylie den Engelsman, Tara Khanom, Musalman Qualam, Sam Shakes; with ideas from Karen Chin, Akansha Wadhvani, Muhammad Ahmedullah.

1: A Bring and Share Fusion Picnic
The corridor outside the Manager's office
A local park

2: Journey of Faith
Inside an underground Tube train

3: Loving and Serving Each Other by Sam Shakes

4: Neighbours by Kylie den Engelsman

Starting from bedrooms in two houses early one morning

5: Separate or Together ?

The newly refurbished staff leisure area at the office

SONG: We Once were Worriers

by Musalman Qalam

Reflections in the Project

Sam Shakes (participant)

I am always involved in multicultural community activity. I also like to meet new people and do new activities that excite me. We often behave ignorantly because we don't take the time to understand others around us. If we take the time to understand others, then we get to see a different reality. Our fear, prejudice, and ignorance get in the way and hold us back from connecting to others around us.

None of us were professional actors, but we all shared common values and had respect for each other's faith. This came across in our expression as we developed the script over the course of the ten weeks.

When I was invited to join this project, it felt like a great opportunity to share some of my frustrations, anger and love. For many years, my observations of the impact of religions, faiths and cultural beliefs have been that they create barriers to harmonious relationships. However, I began to realise that love, peace and acceptance were powerful themes that also embedded religions, faiths and cultures. For some time, I'd been wanting to expose these similarities between religions, faiths and cultures to promote community spirit, and this project appeared to be the ideal platform to do so. Thus, I accepted the valuable invitation.

The process of creating scenes with people of diverse religions, faiths and opinions encouraged great self-reflection. I learnt a lot about myself and my ignorance with relation to knowledge of the basic principles of religions, faiths and cultures. Through the creation of scenes with others, my awareness increased, enabling me to understand how strong beliefs and fear can create barriers and hinder community spirit. This insight confirmed to me that there was a desperate need to highlight the similarities, and place the priority of religions, faiths and cultures to be of loving the human being, regardless of the 'difference'. It was an invaluable confirmation that spurred me to write the script 'Loving and Serving Each Other.'

Sharing these values through the 'art of drama' helped remove my fear of displaying my ignorance and beliefs. It was easy to explore my prejudices and express my passions, because with drama – anything can happen – a bit like life! And, drama seems to naturally encourage honesty – I guess that's because we can take off our 'masks' in the name of drama!

I was surprised at the quality of ideas for the scenes and how common practices like commuting, place of work and interactions with neighbours

were transformed to make ideal scenes for drama. Concepts that included subtle yet strong barriers to community engagement via foods, clothes, interpretation of Holy Scriptures and assumptions.

This project increased my awareness as to why our communities have battles; why we are so angry and where our intolerance stems from. I can now see clearly what we can do to co-exist and create a better society - love all, regardless of religion, faith or culture... Simply love.

Sam Shakes, Writer, Author, Actor.

I was surprised by everyone's acting ability. It is so much easier to act a part when our values and beliefs support the causes we are trying to act out.

Tara Khanom, Actor.

A Bring and Share Fusion Picnic

Cast

Business Manager

Staff: a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Jew

SCENE 1: Business premises.

The MANAGER is waiting outside her office, centre, looking pleased. As the STAFF enter left one by one, the MANAGER intercepts each to tell them in turn about the picnic.

MANAGER: Good morning...we're all going to have a fusion picnic – we'll meet and share all our own multicultural things to eat and drink – so, what are you going to bring?
A similar greeting and explanation to each worker.

CHRISTIAN: (enter left) Oh, well, I'll bring my special pork sausage rolls. Everybody loves them !...(passes on to exit right)

MANAGER:

MUSLIM: (enter right, replies) Halal beefburger... (exit left)

MANAGER:

HINDU: (enter left, replies) Dahl with onions...(exit right)

JEW: (enter right, replies) Smoked salmon bagels...(exit left)

MANAGER: And I'll bring my own delicious Fairy Bread... and a few beers and maybe some Pimms if it's hot and sunny. (exit)

SCENE 2: At the picnic in the park.

MANAGER: (enters, spreads or mimes spreading cloth , paper plates, napkins...)

ALL STAFF: (enter, carrying or miming carrying food).

MANAGER: Here we are in the Park ! Let's all spread out the food we've brought to share together. (to Hindu) What have you brought ?

HINDU: Dahl with onions.

MUSLIM: ...Halal beefburgers.

JEW: ... Smoked salmon bagels.

CHRISTIAN: ...My lovely pork sausage rolls – nobody can resist them !

MANAGER: Now we can all help ourselves to a bit of everything – mix & match...
(Awkward pause)

JEW: (hesitantly) Oh dear – I can't eat pork. It's forbidden. Because it's unclean.

MUSLIM: Nor can I – but I can eat kosher – and halal.

JEW: Is yours halal? No, I can only eat kosher.

HINDU: I can't eat any of those – I'm a vegetarian as well as Hindu.

MANAGER: Never mind - we can all enjoy my delicious Fairy Bread!
(hands it round, all take and eat – except Hindu vegetarian)

HINDU: Only if it's gluten-free...I've got an allergy to gluten.

ALL STAFF & MANAGER: (show sympathy, but enjoy Fairy Bread or the food they brought themselves).

END





Journey of Faith

The idea started in a museum setting but developed out into real everyday life.

Cast

Passengers: a Muslim, a Christian, an Agnostic, a Hindu lady, a Buddhist.

SCENE: inside a moving London Underground train.

Sound Effects Tube train moving, then announcement: "The next stop will be Mile End... etc." then SFX continues until sudden stop, causing simultaneous jolt by all, dropping their small possessions.

CHRISTIAN: (to Agnostic, picking up tazbi) Is this yours?

AGNOSTIC: No...

CHRISTIAN: It looks like a rosary...for Catholics...

MUSLIM: No. it's not a rosary. It's a tazbi - it's mine.

CHRISTIAN: What's it for?

MUSLIM: We use it for prayer, to chant the names of Allah.

CHRISTIAN: What sort of names?

MUSLIM: Er...Glory be to God...Praise be to God...God is the Greatest...

CHRISTIAN: How many names are there?

MUSLIM: There are ninety-nine beads. But I picked up some things as well – who dropped this?

AGNOSTIC: That looks like my CND badge.

MUSLIM: Yes, it's a badge – is it for a club?

AGNOSTIC: Yes, Ban the Bomb! The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament – it's been going for more than seventy years.

CHRISTIAN: And you still belong?

AGNOSTIC: Yes, because we're still threatening to blow up thousands of civilians, just as we did seventy years ago in Hiroshima.

CHRISTIAN: It's funny we don't hear much about it, then.

AGNOSTIC: No, because it's hidden away in submarines - you must have heard of Trident.

MUSLIM: Trident's for defence, and we need that...

- AGNOSTIC: You don't have to believe in a God to know right from wrong, and it's definitely wrong to threaten to kill thousands of innocent civilians far away, and pollute the whole world with radioactivity...!
- MUSLIM: (changing the subject to avert a rant) Anyway, whose is this necklace?
- CHRISTIAN: Oh, it must have got broken.
- MUSLIM: I've seen lots of ladies wearing this kind of necklace.
- CHRISTIAN: Do you mean with the cross? This is the cross of Jesus.
- MUSLIM: So it's Christian, then. Why do you wear it?
- CHRISTIAN: It's to remind us that we belong to Jesus. Jesus died for us on the cross, he died in all that pain, to take away our sins.
- AGNOSTIC: (indicating Hindu) Talking about pain, that lady looks as if she's had a knife in her face.
- CHRISTIAN: (to Hindu) Excuse me, are you all right? There's blood on your forehead.
- HINDU: No, I'm fine.
- MUSLIM: Is it a tattoo?

HINDU: No, It's powder, it's my bindi...I've worn it since I was married, for the sake of my husband. I put it as tindur in my hair parting as well...

AGNOSTIC: How do you put it on?

HINDU: It's vermilion powder, it comes in a little box...(mimes putting it on).

MUSLIM: When did you start wearing it?

HINDU: On my wedding day...The husband puts it on for the first time... It's a Hindu tradition to lengthen my husband's life, to pray for his long life... it's a symbol of my marriage.... But never mind me – is that person all right ? She hasn't moved...

CHRISTIAN: (to Buddhist) Excuse me – are you OK?

BUDDHIST: (with slight irritation) Peace... my meditation...

CHRISTIAN: Oh, sorry – is it religious?

BUDDHIST: (with slight chuckle) No, Buddhism is a way of life, rather than a religion. (relaxed) Without inner peace, outer peace is impossible. We establish peace in our minds and outer peace will come naturally. (regretful then stern) If we don't...world peace will never be achieved.

Next stop jolts all the passengers, who drop the religious items they have been holding. Muslim picks them all up and gives them back to the original

owners. All stand up and leave the train, talking quietly about their thoughts.

MUSLIM: What an amazing journey that was...a Journey of Faith !

END



Loving and Serving each Other

by Sam Shakes

TARA:

'Our judgement, anger and fear and prejudices hold us back from loving and connecting with each other.'

PREACHER:

[Christian with Bible]

Standing



In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

(with excitement)

Tonight I'm going to talk about relationships with people - our fellow Brothers and Sisters....

(softly)

for the good of Mankind...

we need to live in Unity – as a harmonious whole...

(boldly)

In order for this to happen... We must have a heart of Kindness, Love and Compassion. And of strength with Patience, Understanding and Counsel.

(calmly)

Therefore, I encourage you to Love your Brothers and Sisters, not because you LIKE them, but because you know they are DIFFERENT and that they are HUMAN BEINGS.

Picks up Bible and reads the following:

LOVE

'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, for brothers to dwell together in unity!' Psalm 133:1

'Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions.' Proverbs 10:12

SERVING

'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Matthew 25:35-39

'As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace...' 1 Peter 4:10

THE CAST enter the stage from different sides.

KYLIE: What do....?

AMHED: 'Why must...?

JOAN: How can...?

TARA: Tell us...

PREACHER: looks at all with open expression – but no verbal response.

THE CAST leave the stage.

PREACHER:
[Muslim with Koran]

Standing



In the name of God, most Gracious, most compassionate.

(with excitement)

Tonight I'm going to talk about our relationships with people - our fellow Brothers and Sisters....

(softly)

for the good of Mankind...

we need to live in Unity – as a harmonious whole...

(boldly)

In order for this to happen... We must have a heart of Kindness, Love and Compassion. And of strength with Patience, Understanding and Counsel.

(calmly)

Therefore, I encourage you to Love your Brothers and Sisters, not because you LIKE them, but because you know they are DIFFERENT and that they are HUMAN BEINGS.

Picks up Koran and reads the following:

LOVE

In the name of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate.

Honor each other: 'O mankind! We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know and honor each other (not that you should despise one another)...' Chapter 49, Verse 13

SERVING

In the name of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate.

'...Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity or in adversity, who restrain (their) anger and pardon (all) men - for God loves those who do good.' Chapter 3, Verses 133-134

In the name of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate.

'... It is the freeing of a (slave) from bondage; or the giving of food in a day of famine to an orphan relative, or to a needy in distress...' Chapter 90, Verses 12-17

In the name of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate.

'You are the best people ever raised for the good of mankind because you have been raised to serve others, you enjoin what is good and forbid evil ...' Quran (3:111)

THE CAST enter the stage from different sides.

KYLIE: What do...?

AMHED: Why must...?

JOAN: How can...?

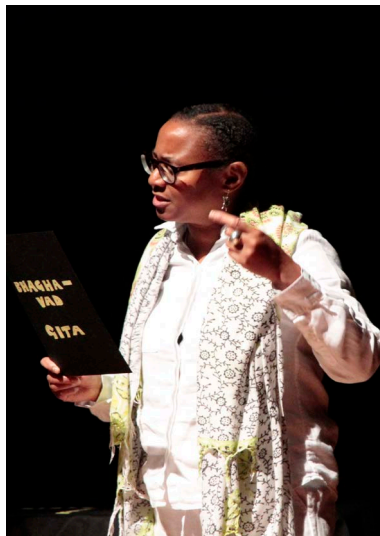
TARA: Tell us...

PREACHER: Looks at all with open expression – but no verbal response.

THE CAST leave the stage.

PREACHER:
[Hindu with Bhagavad Gita]

Standing



Om (symbol of Hindu) Shanti (Peace)

(with excitement)

Tonight I'm going to talk about our relationships with people - our fellow
Brothers and Sisters....

(softly)

for the good of Mankind...

we need to live in Unity – as a harmonious whole...

(boldly)

In order for this to happen... We must have a heart of Kindness, Love and Compassion. And of strength with Patience, Understanding and Counsel.

(calmly)

Therefore, I encourage you to Love your Brothers and Sisters, not because you LIKE them, but because you know they are DIFFERENT and that they are HUMAN BEINGS.

Picks up Bhagavad Gita and reads the following:

LOVE

‘The one Love who is incapable of ill will, and returns Love for hatred.’

‘Thesenseshavebeenconditionedbyattractiontothepleasantandaversion to the unpleasant: a man should not be ruled by them.’

‘They live in wisdom who see themselves in all and all in them, who have renounced every selfish desire and sense craving tormenting the heart.’

SERVING

‘Hewhodoesmywork,wholovesme,whoseesmeasthehighest,freefrom attachment to all things, and with love for all creation, he in truth comes to me.’ (11:53–55)

THE CAST enter the stage from different sides.

KYLIE: What do...?

AMHED: Why must...?

JOAN: How can...?

TARA: Tell us...

PREACHER: Looks at all with open expression – but no verbal response.

THE CAST leave the stage.

PREACHER:
[Jew with Torah]

Standing



Shalom (Peace)

(with excitement)

Tonight I'm going to talk about relationships with people - our fellow
Brothers and Sisters....

(softly)

for the good of Mankind...

we need to live in Unity – as a harmonious whole...

(boldly)

In order for this to happen... We must have a heart of Kindness, Love and Compassion. And of strength with Patience, Understanding and Counsel.

(calmly)

Therefore, I encourage you to Love your Brothers and Sisters, not because you LIKE them, but because you know they are DIFFERENT and that they are HUMAN BEINGS.

(Picks up Torah and reads the following:)

LOVE

‘Just as we love ourselves despite the shortcomings we have, so should we love others despite the shortcomings they have.’

SERVING

‘You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am the LORD.

Leviticus 19:18

‘All men are responsible for one another.’ Talmud, Sanhedrin 27b

THE CAST enter the stage from different sides

KYLIE: What do...?

AMHED: ‘Why must...?’

JOAN: How can...?

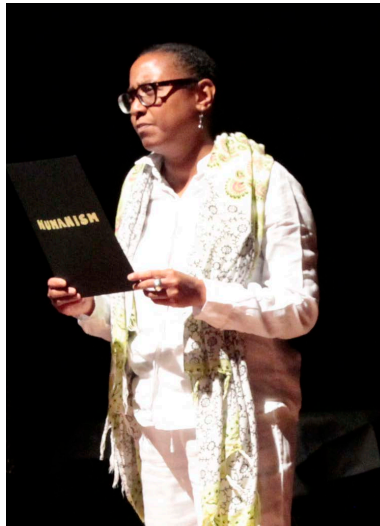
TARA: Tell us...

PREACHER: Looks at all with open expression – but no verbal response.

THE CAST leave the stage.

PREACHER
[Agnostic: Humanism]

Standing



(with excitement)

Tonight I'm going to talk about relationships with people - our fellow Brothers and Sisters....

(softly)

for the good of Mankind...

we need to live in Unity – as a harmonious whole...

(boldly)

In order for this to happen... We must have a heart of Kindness, Love and Compassion. And of strength with Patience, Understanding and Counsel.

(calmly)

Therefore, I encourage you to Love your Brothers and Sisters, not because

you LIKE them, but because you know they are DIFFERENT and that they are HUMAN BEINGS.

Picks up Humanism book

THE CAST enter from different sides

KYLIE: What do...?

AMHED: Why must...?

JOAN: How can...?

TARA: (demanding tone): Tell us...

PREACHER looks at all of them.

THE CAST gather round, listening with enquiring expressions, each holding one of the Holy Books .

PREACHER (questioning tone):

Whether there is a God, we may not 'know', but we 'believe'?

And from this uncertainty or certainty - we're all saying the same thing... just in a different way?

We're saying that... Loving and Serving each other is important...

The WISDOM is throughout...

And remains the same – a bit like TRUTHS?

PREACHER picks up the Humanism book.

I came to know FAITH through the Supreme Mind...

I came to know LOVE through the Universal Intelligence...

I came to know SERVING through God...

And, I came to know PEACE through You.

ALL standing with books.

END



Neighbours

By Kylie den Engelsman

CAST

Girl A

University Student. Living at home. Hindu or Muslim? Wears summer clothing – long trousers/skirt.

Girl B

University Student. Living at home. Christian. Wears summer clothing – shorts, T-shirt and trainers.

SCENE 1:

Bedrooms. GIRL A and GIRL B wake and begin getting ready for their day. GIRL A and GIRL B mirror each other's actions with minor differences.

GIRL A says prayers? While GIRL B reads Bible.



GIRL A and GIRL B both put makeup on.

GIRL A puts on Hijab or Bindi while GIRL B adds clip to hair.

GIRL A and GIRL B grab text books and phones and leave their respective rooms.

SCENE 2:

Bus stop.



GIRL A enters, checking bus times.

GIRL B enters, checking phone.

[Either the dialogue is pre-recorded and the audience can hear their thoughts, or the actors speak dialogue on stage but it is obvious the girls cannot hear what the other says as they don't respond to the words].

GIRL A: Two minutes. Good. I'll have plenty of time.

GIRL B: Where's the bus? Two minutes. Good – loads of time.

GIRL A: I wonder if Kadra will come in. I can't believe the exam is today. Did I pack my highlighters? Yep. They're there. And spare pens.

GIRL B: I've got everything, right? Yep. Pencils, erasers, pen, spare pen, ruler... Paper? Do I need to bring spare paper? I guess I can tear it out of my diary if need be. Did I pack that?

GIRL A: Where is this bus? I'd better not be late. How many questions is this one again? Ten I think he said. I hope I pass... Dad will kill me.

GIRL B: Ten sections. Four long answer, two short, multiple choice. At least I should get some marks there. If I fail this exam, mum will kill me.

GIRL A: I'd better pass... what if I fail?

GIRL B: God, what if I fail?

GIRL A: (noticing GIRL B) I really like that hair clip. Looks good.

GIRL B: I don't want to fail. I won't. I won't fail.

GIRL A: She looks familiar... where have I seen her before?

GIRL B: (noticing Girl A looking at her) What are you looking at? Have I got something on my face?



GIRL A: I think she's in my tech class. I've not seen her by herself. Stop staring she'll think you're weird.

GIRL B: I wonder if she has an exam today too. That's a nice scarf/
Bindi (?) I wonder if they have to wear that every day. Don't look too long.
She'll think you're weird.

GIRL A: I'll bet she thinks I'm hard core religious.

GIRL B: I'll bet she thinks I'm a slut for not covering my legs.

Bus arrives

GIRL A: Oh thank goodness.

GIRL B: Here we go.

GIRL A and GIRL B enter bus. There are only two seats available. They are next to each other.

GIRL A sits first

GIRL A: I should take the window seat. But I don't want to have to push past her later. Maybe we're getting off at the same stop.

GIRL B: A seat! She better not hog both of them. Or sit on the aisle. I hate that. I want to sit down. Hopefully I get off first so she won't have to push past.

GIRL A and GIRL B sit next to each other, both looking straight on without acknowledging each other. They both pull out textbooks. GIRL A shuffles and realises GIRL B is sitting on her bag handle.

GIRL A: Excuse me! You're on my side!

GIRL B: Sorry! It wouldn't happen if you kept to your side.

GIRL A: Great, just what I need. Your attitude.

GIRL B: I swear, busses are the worst. I hate this. I just want today to be over.

GIRL A: I just want today to be over.

GIRL B: Exams have to be the most stressful thing in the world. Why do they make us go through this? I'm so stressed. I can't handle it.

GIRL A: I wish exams were over already. I'm so stressed. I don't know how I'm going to cope with two more years.

GIRL B: I feel like I'm the only one this stressed.

GIRL A: I don't think anyone is as stressed as me.

GIRL B: I wish I had someone to talk to about it.

GIRL A: I wish I had someone to talk to about it.

Bus arrives at final stop. GIRL A and GIRL B go to push button and leave bus.

GIRL A: Oh, she is getting off here.

GIRL B: Oh, we're getting off together.

The following lines are spoken directly to each other and acknowledged

GIRL A: Good luck in your exam.

GIRL B: You too.

They leave

END



Separate or Together?

Cast

Business Manager

Planner

Staff: a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew, a Hindu

SCENE: A newly refurbished area at the office. A table and chairs right for eating.

Enter left MANAGER and PLANNER.

MANAGER: Has all the refurbishment been finished?

PLANNER: Yes, this is the new leisure and refreshment area for your staff.

MANAGER: Great refurbishment! They'll really enjoy bringing their lunches in here!

PLANNER: (pointing at visible or invisible down centre microwave] Yes, there's the microwave.

MANAGER: Only one ? But they'll all be bringing their own food.

PLANNER: So? They can all share this one. What's the problem?

MANAGER: They'll all think they're contaminating each other's food... some may be halal, some may be kosher, some...

etc... it'll just be awkward... they'll need to keep it separate.

PLANNER: So what shall we do?

MANAGER: We'll just have to provide several separate micros, maybe five!

PLANNER: No, we haven't got the budget. We can only have this one.

MANAGER: (looking towards left) Welcome, welcome all you staff to your new area!

STAFF: (Enter left with plates & boxes)

MUSLIM: I've brought my lunch. Where's the micro?

CHRISTIAN: There it is. Let's put ours in. Mine's a ham toastie. (puts it in, slight pause, takes out and to table to sit and eat)

JEW: Toasted smoked salmon bagel for me. (puts it in, slight pause, takes out and to table to sit and eat)

MUSLIM: Mine's a halal beefburger. (puts it in, same action...)

HINDU: Vegetarian dahl and rice.(puts it in, same action...)

MANAGER & PLANNER: (join in a High Five)

MUSLIM: Why did you do a High Five?

PLANNER: Life goes on!

END



A song

By Musalman Qualam ©2017

We once were worriers
What's to become of education?
What's to become of knowledge free?
What's to become of my local library?
What's to become of me?
Why don't you answer me?

Kee hobore, forah leka?
Kee hobore, Mukteer sintah?
Kee hobore, Umarr madrashah?
Kee hobore, Umarr Doon-e-yah?
Otorr, DeooNah kenorr?
Bolloh na? Bolloh na? Bolloh na?

What's to become of the common people?
What's to become of aristocracy?
What's to become of the monarchy?
What's to become of me?
Why don't you answer me?

Kee hobore, gowah munush?
Kee hobore, Metick fash?
Kee hobore Hasan Raja?
Kee hobore umarr doon-e-yah?
Kee kortah? Kee kortah? Kee kortah?

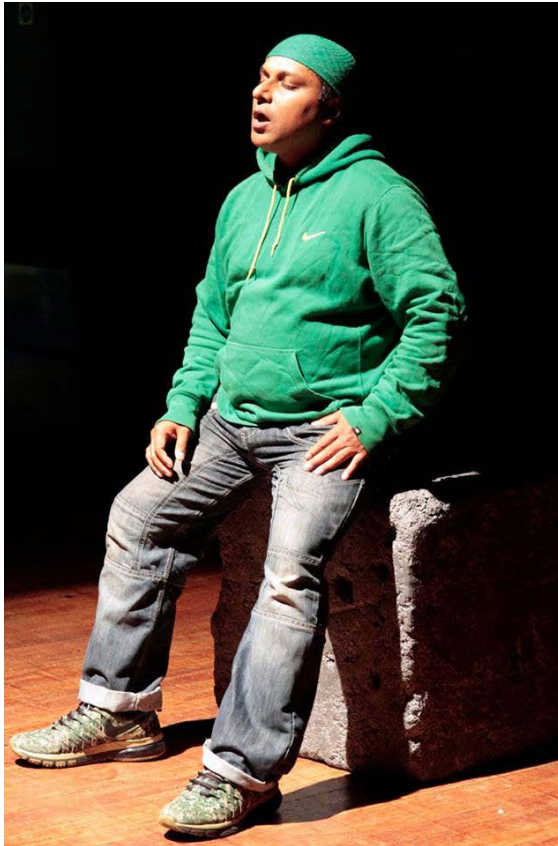
What's to become of information?
What's to become of this so-called serendipity?
What's to become of my emancipation?
What's to become of me?
Why don't you answer me? Why don't you answer me?

Kee hobore, moner sintah?
Kee hobore, Allah kudrotiy?



Kee hobore, umarr foricah?
Kee hobore umarr doon-e-yah?
Otorr, DeoNah kenorr?
Kenorr, kenorr, moner kiso no
Kenorr, kenorr, moner kiso no

Why? Why? Why? It doesn't really matter?
Why? Why? Why? It doesn't really matter?
We once were worriers, before Google and internet.
We once were worriers, and now we worry a little less
And now we worry a little less.



JOURNEYS

Multi Routes into Britain

A Verbatim Project (Mr. A. Ibrahim, Mrs. M Ibrahim, Ms. M Gordon, Mrs. A Al Mahdi)

Dr. Canan K Salih

Written and Directed by Dr. Canan Salih



Reflection on the Project

By Tasmia Tahia (Participant)

“Free Like a Bird” was an exploratory drama performance about the multi-roots and multi-routes of multicultural Britain, using original research through personal interviews.’

It has been a privilege to be part of Brick Lane Circle’s ‘Knowing One Another Through The Art of Drama’ - community cohesion project. The journey made us our own heritage, belonging from immigrant families. We used drama to improve understanding of migration and BME experience using creativity and original research to engage audiences and increase understanding of migrant experience.

The first step in devising the performance piece was to undertake original research, interviewing our friends and family members, asking them questions about their routes into Britain and also what they considered their roots to be.

The conversations revealed many anecdotes and stories about our loved ones which even we did not know. Their experiences as first-generation migrants, juxtaposed with my personal experiences of moving to the UK at the age of fifteen, not only gave me a better understanding of the emotional journey that migration brings, but also showed me how their struggles over the years have made this country the welcoming place that I walked (or technically flew) into.

Certain themes were highlighted within all the conversations each of us had, which became the starting point of our storyline. The journeys themselves were important elements of the change, as was the feeling of alienation and invisibility that each of our interviewees felt. For many, the stories of “streets paved in gold” turned out to be fictional, while the tensions between existing communities and new arrivals were another unwelcome reality.

We wanted to preserve the authentic voices and individual stories so we made verbatim (using the original vocal recordings as part of performance) a central feature of the drama. As migration and the subsequent changes are an experience shared by both the new migrant and the indigenous population, we used immersive performance techniques, such as sharing buttered bread, to include our audience in our performance. Sliced bread was particularly important to one of interviewees, who considered it part of her freedom in London.

The last sections of the performance focused on the changing roots and identities that our interviewees experienced as a result of their journey. The way different aspects of their identity changed over time was presented through drama, finally wrapping up with a spoken word piece, "This is my Identity", celebrating individuality.

The project has not only taught me of the journeys that others have undertaken and to understand their experiences, but also taught me valuable performance techniques and theatrics. I am extremely proud to be part of this project and hope that our shared journeys will help us to better understand each other and the value of the differences that make us individual and unique.

SCENE 1.

The stage has a projector screen upstage centre where a series of projected images and titles appear throughout the performance.

Projected Slide – ‘Free like a Bird’

Slide three – image of a plane

Centre stage there is a woman seated as if on a plane. The woman in the centre seat is nervous. She is tapping her feet (the only sound we hear). Taznia enters the plane and finds her seat beside the nervous woman.

Tasnia/Tasmia/Tania child

TAZNIA:

My first time on a plane... I was amazed. I mean, I didn't know what to expect but I know I wasn't scared. I was on my way to a whole new life, in England. I remember telling my mum that planes are the cheapest forms of transport. I thought you could just walk on, and get comfy seats and free food, just like that. When we were on our way, I remember really missing my dad. He went a few months before we did. I was only six years old.

Centre spotlight on the nervous woman in the centre seat.

V/O (Voice Over) MARCIA:

Yeah... We got a plane all right, and I tell you it was one of the scariest things I had ever come across at that age. Getting on a plane was scary, for the whole time I tapped my feet and, I was being told off for the whole, them hours, many, many hours.

And it was like tap, tap, tap, tap, because I was so scared, my dad kept telling me off ... telling me to stop tapping my feet, but I was so scared that, you know, all through it was tapping, tapping, tapping.

Then throughout journey, halfway through the journey we had to stop in America because something went wrong with the wing, so again that made things so so bad. It was like I just want to go back home to my country, I don't want to go any further, America was enough. I wanted to turn back and go back home. But we eventually got through it. We changed on to

another plane and got to England.



Being up in the skies was really, really great as the plane came in to England because the plane landed in the morning, in England. It was like the sunshine just came over the clouds, and everything, it was just beautiful just watching the clouds and everything up there. And that, I think that was the most wonderful thing, for me anyway. And I think out of the whole journey I think that bit, the sun coming up and you know seeing the clouds and everything like that was the best part of that.

Blackout

SCENE 2

Slide - 'Arrivals'

Tasmia walks on with a big bag and a rolled up duvet. She places them on the ground and looks around.

Music as she waits. Several people walk past but no one pays her any attention.

Downstage there is an old phone box (cut-out) the old phone box. Tasmia struggles to bring her bag to the booth and picks up the phone. She speaks in Bengali.

SM V/O (SARA'S MUM):

Well, this wasn't planned at all. What happened is that my husband who

lived most of his life in the UK, he decided to get married. So, he came back home and it was 100% arranged marriage; and yeah, he just proposed for me, and I agreed.

Blackout

SCENE 3.

Slide - 'First Impressions'

MARCIA VO:

OH MY GOD! The streets were not paved with gold. Because that's what we'd heard all my life the streets of England was paved with so much gold. I would've been able to go back to Jamaica and load a basket full of gold from the streets, but that's not what I saw, I was really shocked.

The houses were so close together that, I felt claustrophobic, I really wanted to go back home there and then. I couldn't believe that what I was seeing was really the England that everybody had explained to me that it was, and all those years, for 13 years I believed in an England that was totally golden.

Two actors bring on the roll of 'pavement' with a gold section. They place it downstage and begin writing words resonant to them about their first impression of London. They hold up the pavement for the audience to see what they wrote before placing it back on the floor and exiting.

Slide – Image of Sliced bread



Mrs M. (VO):

When I came (to) England, first (thing that) impressed me is “sliced bread”. We didn’t have in our country, and when I came and started eat(ing) sliced bread, oh my God, I couldn’t stop. I couldn’t stop! Every day I don’t eat meal, I eat sliced bread.

The city makes me happy, and then my freedom here. I feel like a bird. Freedom.

That’s why I am very very happy when I came here in beginning of...first when I came (to) England.

Tasnia enters and is buttering a slice of bread with jam, handing it out to the audience. During this exchange Ahmet’s VO begins.

Mr A VO:

Those days, when we came, there was so much hate from Teddy Boys, Rock Hairs. Every Cypriot who came to this country, they had to have a fight with this Rock Hairs and Teddy Boys.

Stage right-Teddy Boys and Rockers enter. Stage left-minority group enter. Each group look at each other menacingly. They circle each other with Tasnia in the middle with her bread and jam. Tasnia, centre stage, looks at both sides and hurriedly packs her bread and exits stage left.

Mr A V/O:

After a couple of years, everything is starting to get (to) normal because they start getting used to us.

The groups suddenly shake hands and exit together.

SM V/O:

To be honest, it’s not my first impression about Britain. I felt that I was an alien. I came from different planet not different country.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 4.

Slide – ‘Changes’

Music: David Bowie’s Changes

Slide – image of a bus

Three chairs are placed downstage centre. Tasnia enters and sits.

Slide – 1960s – then a series of images that depict the 1960s appear in succession.

Slide – 1980s – then a series of images that depict the 1980s appear in succession.

A bus conductor enters

BUS CONDUCTOR: Tickets please.



TANIA: Child.

BUS CONDUCTOR: 10p please.

BUS CONDUCTOR collects the fare, issues the ticket and walks out.
Slide

Slide – 1990s – then a series of images that depict the 1990s appear in succession.

TASMIA enters and sits. BUS CONDUCTOR enters.

SM V/O:

Oh, too many changes. First time, I came to the UK, it wasn't...I went through London; I remember that journey from Heathrow to where I live, and London was not clean city. Now, when you go out, like when you go in the streets, it's more clean than before. I remember the ticket, bus ticket, it was 80p, now I don't know how much is it, because at the moment, I am not using buses that often. Yeah, lots of things changed.

BUS CONDUCTOR: Tickets please. 50p please

TASMIA pays her fare. BUS CONDUCTOR collects the fare, issues the ticket and walks out.

Slide – 2000s – then a series of images that depict the 2000s appear in succession.

TASNIA exits, REMECAE enters and sits. BUS CONDUCTOR enters.

MARCIA V/O:

The BNP were there then, but we as people got on whether we were white, black, whatever, there was more cohesion in our society where we got on a bit better and there was no isolation coz the fact that with the BNP being there in the back ground, the rest of us people who had no qualms mixing with each other, mixed with each other. We were physically mixing outside in clubs wherever we went. There were so many places that we could meet up and go to be part of the whole community, really.

BUS CONDUCTOR: Tickets please.

REMECAE: How much?

BUS CONDUCTOR: 80p please

BUS CONDUCTOR collects the fare, issues the ticket and walks out.

Slide - 2017

TASNIA enters, swipes an oyster and stands looking at her mobile phone.

REMECAE and TASMIA take out a mobile phone.

Spotlight on TASNIA

MARCIA V/O: Whereas today it's more isolated in a way. Yeah it's a lot of isolation today.

Blackout

SCENE 5:

Slide - 'Home'

Mr A V/O:

Well after 57 years in London, I feel like home here.

Slide – Images of London



MARCIA V/O:

But if you're talking about a country then England, the UK, the United Kingdom that's my home, or as they call it Britain I'm not sure which one is which. It gets a little confusing to be honest, what am I?

I consider this place to be my home because wherever I live, breathe, eat, the place that is stable for me, that is my home.

Sound of Big Ben Chiming

Slide – image of Big Ben while TASMIA and REMECAE stand as if Big Ben.

Slide – image of Tower Bridge projected on the screen as REMECAE and TASNIA become the bridge.

Sound of Thunder and Rain – ALL CAST rush around stage with umbrellas, then open them, facing the audience.



Car horn and a Splash sound has them all jump back shouting 'hey!'

SM V/O:

My home would be somewhere I can live peacefully, somewhere I can earn my living, and somewhere I feel safe to bring up my children, that will be ideal home for me.

During SM's statement, NAZ takes off his umbrella and brings on the Duvet, sitting down. TASMIA joins him (handing her umbrella to TASNIA who puts it away and joins the 'parents').

Mrs M V/O:

Home: wherever is my children, my husband and my ... bed, this is my home.

All sit as if watching TV. TASNIA yawns, gets up and exits. NAZ lies down back to audience to sleep and TASMIA lies down facing audience at the end of the V/O 'my bed'.



Blackout.

SCENE 6

Slide - 'Roots'

TASNIA enters and stands centre (CS spot). Four people enter with the words 'culture', family etc around their necks.

Mr A V/O:

My roots. My roots are in ... we came from Turkey, into Cyprus, during Ottoman Empire, and my roots came from there.

Mrs M V/O:

Actually, my roots is my children. Wherever is my children, my roots is there.

They each wrap a ribbon around TASNIA's two wrists and pull away at her.

MARCIA V/O:

I've come from one place that was my roots, I've come to set up roots here which I have, with my children, because now my children's roots are here, so you could say my roots were back there from where I came but coming here to set up more roots with my children.

They walk around her, wrapping the ribbons around her. Then she pulls forward, and drops the ribbons.

SM V/O:

Now, after 15 years, I think I am partly British, partly Iraqi.

SCENE 7

Slide - 'Identity'

As each person's identity is heard from a V/O, a representative of that person enters with a placard and a keyword or phrase of their identity. They hold the card up.

MARCIA V/O:

My identity is me. I don't put my identity in a country. Wherever I go, it's just me that's going the country doesn't have to come with me. It's me that matter, and I am my own identity.
My identity is within me.

SM V/O:

I am a female. I am a teacher; and I am British. And Iraqi.

Mr A V/O:

Well, I describe my identity: I am Turkish Cypriot, Muslim and...and I feel like this is my home. (So you're British?) I am British.

Mrs M V/O:

I am Turkish, Cypriot and Muslim. I always (am) proud of it. My identity.

Blackout

END





Knowing One Another

A Brick Lane Circle Publication

SECTION 2

Knowing One Another Through Learning About Each Other's Origins and Migration

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Photography by Jawad Afridi

“In Swabi we have a tradition of hospitality to strangers. If a stranger comes to our village we ask him where he is from and offer him tea and ask if we can assist him in any way. It’s a tradition in the tribal areas of Pakistan.”

- Aqil, A Pashtun in London

“I think one thing that people find strange about Thai people is that they smile. They smile a lot. Anyway I usually have some British people coming up to me asking” - “What are you smiling about?
How dare you!”

- Kamontip, ‘Thai community in London’

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First and foremost we would like to thank the Big Lottery Fund for providing us with the financial support for making this project possible. As a result we were able to work with volunteers from different cultural backgrounds and experiences, who were given the platform to pursue their passion whilst developing new skills and meeting new people - leading them to bring out a collection of wonderful and incredible stories from the diverse voices of London.

Rich Mix

We would also like to express our immense gratitude to Rich Mix for providing us with meeting spaces for our workshops, training, discussions and a venue for the end of project celebration. The space has offered the perfect platform for creative thinking and learning about new cultures

Facilitators

We would like to thank a number of individuals who helped the project in a number of ways, including supporting our two information and community consultation events on 23 April and 24 June 2015.

Ejel Khan and Faridha Karim helped with running focus groups sessions and the following individuals delivered short presentations on eight different London communities as follows:

'Surma to Thames' by Ehtashamul Haque

'An insight into Somalia' by Zara Haid

'Poles and Polish culture' by Eva Pietrzkiwicz

'The Chinese people in London' by Kat Yu

'Eritrea' by Senait Mebrahtu

'Proud to be a Cockney' by Ray Sparra Everingham (Cockney Heritage Trust)

'People in East London from Vietnam' by Quan Tran

'Three thousand years of Tunisia' by Hatem Kocht

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Use of Image

We would like to thank Gary Neate of www.neatemedals.co.uk for providing us with a photograph of an 'INDIA GENERAL SERVICE MEDAL 1936 - 1939 BAR NORTH WEST FRONTIER 1937 - 39

Authors

Gregory Choi (Yun Hin)
Fathima Begum
Halima Khanom
Jawad Afridi
Karen Lennox
Katasi Kironde
Mahmudul Chowdhury
Priyanka Basu
Rubia Dar
Ahmed Mustak

Designers of the original book published in April 2015
Zeus Rodma, Akvile Terminaite, Edwood Burn

Project managed and book edited by: Faridha Abdul Karim



Forward

In the late 1990s, my class of East London fifteen-year-olds spent an afternoon with a group of students of the same age from a Parisian banlieu. They had a similar demographic: culturally diverse, working class and urban. Despite language barriers, they got on well, sharing ideas about fashion, music, police harassment, racism and career hopes. The matter, however, on which they could not agree, even after a long debate, was the place of their diverse culture and beliefs in school. The French students insisted that, when they went to school, they left their religious and cultural identity at home: at school they were all secular and French and their cultural differences were not discussed. They were adamant that if they expressed separate identities in school, it would be a recipe for division and conflict. My students could not accept this: if you don't learn to understand the ideas, beliefs and culture of your friends, they said, then how can it be a true and honest friendship? Two girls - one British Nigerian Christian, the other British Somali Muslim - said that their differences were the 'spice' of their friendship and the process of challenging each other, debating and sharing was strengthening that bond on a basis of real knowledge and understanding of each other. They are now in their thirties and still close friends.

The 'communities' we Londoners belong to are shaped by family, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, friendships, where we travelled from and where we happen to be living. We inhabit all of these - sometimes all at once and sometimes one at a time - and the hybrid identities that we experience continually change and develop. While celebrating these multiple identities each of us carries, we need both to encourage our shared sense of ourselves as Londoners across cultures and to value distinct communities in an environment not of paternalistic 'tolerance' but of an equality that allows criticism but respects difference. To achieve this requires us to make the effort to understand and communicate each other's cultures: to learn about each other. Knowing One Another promotes this understanding at the level of people's daily lives in illuminating ways. When Rubia Dar looks at Aqil Imran looking back at us as he rides the tube his family find exciting, the process tells us as much about London as about Pushtun culture. Katasi Kironde's fascinating piece about how Ugandan eating habits reflect the interweaving of South Asian and Central African food that now finds expression in London kitchens, reminds us how food is so often a standard-bearer of cultural contact. Chilli Muwogo shares a mixed ancestry with chicken balti (Birmingham Indian), deep pan pizza (Italian American) and

fish and chips (Belgian Jewish). From the encounters that happen all around us and a snapshot of which are reflected here, new hybrid cultures develop like samboosas.

This city full of people born somewhere else has in the past always brought diverse communities into close contact, sometimes easily and sometimes not: Iberians in Roman Londinium, Scandinavians in 9th century Lundenwic, Tudor Africans, medieval Flemish weavers, Irish navvies, Eastern European Jews and lascar sailors from Bengal, Somalia and Yemen. Their histories have shaped this city as ours continue to do: whenever we have a window into lives in the past, the rewards of understanding are rich. These writers, as they explore and record the lives and experiences of fellow Londoners from different communities, contribute to a collective memory that hopefully will ensure that when future readers look back at our time it will not be a selective history.

Martin Spafford

Martin Spafford is a retired history teacher from East London and a dedicated campaigner of a diverse and inclusive history curriculum which promotes minority history, social justice and human rights.

Introduction

The Knowing One Another publication brings together an incredible range of stories from members of London's diverse communities living in the top 21st century world city. It is the culmination of a year-long pilot project delivered by the Brick Lane Circle with funding support from the Big Lottery Fund. The project engaged ten volunteers from London's diverse communities to discover and learn more about each other, including their places of origin, through the use of social media, interviews and internet searches.

London is a very diverse multi-cultural city and the levels of diversity are deepening and widening every day. Diversity brings positive benefits as well as unease and community tension arising from the myriads of cultures and faiths living side by side. The project sought to make positive contributions, through an innovative platform, towards improving community cohesion and better understanding between London's diverse communities.

The initiative was set up as a pilot project to explore and test new ways of challenging negative stereotypes and prejudices faced by all London's communities - minority ethnic and recent arrivals as well as long established groups. The main aim of Knowing One Another was to help volunteers from London's diverse communities to undertake research into each other's history and cultures and share their findings with the city's wider communities.

The publication is a compilation of articles and illustrations produced by volunteers from different cultural and professional backgrounds studying or working in London. Each volunteer became involved in this project due to their passion for changing the narratives that have marginalised sections of British society and to illustrate the positive hybrid cultures and themes that have either emerged or are in the process of emerging as a result of the 'meeting' between different cultures. We invited people from all walks of life to participate in this project, and were lucky to have attracted a cross-section of people as volunteers. They were provided with training in research methodology, photography and social media, and supported with continuous help through the duration of the project.

This publication offers the reader an opportunity to engage and learn new things which were relatively unknown about some of the diverse groups who live in London. In some articles, the reader is invited to search through the streets of Brick Lane to learn about the historical Jewish East End and take a culinary journey from China Town in central London to the Silk Road

Uyghur restaurant in South London. In other articles, the reader is offered a glimpse into the struggles, dreams and ambitions of recent migrants and an insight into their musical and architectural heritage. The reader is also introduced to the hybrid cultures from East Africa and the transition being experienced by the Bangladeshi folk musical genre in London as a result of the changing landscape.

In the Brick Lane Circle, we believe that empathy is the key to community cohesion. We hope that this publication will help promote greater understanding, co-existence and the mixing of London's diverse communities through the process of learning more about each other's contributions, cultures, experiences, struggles and ambitions.

A Pushtun in London

“In Swabi we have a tradition of hospitality to strangers. If a stranger comes to our village we ask him where he is from and offer him tea and ask if we can assist him in any way. It’s a tradition in the tribal areas of Pakistan.”



By Rubia Dar

I’ve always had an interest in Pakistan’s culture and history. In recent years Pakistan has been in the news due to its role in the war on terror and the increased amounts of terror attacks it has faced since 9/11.

Because of this ongoing conflict, which has put the tribal areas of Pakistan into the spotlight, I wanted to explore the culture of the Pushtun tribes of this region.

My parents’ generation migrated to the UK in the sixties and this history has long been documented. I thought it would be interesting to explore the experiences of recent young migrants from Pakistan. What has brought them to the UK? What are their hopes, dreams and aspirations, and how might their experiences differ from my parents’ generation.

In particular, I want to focus on a region of Pakistan which has been linked to much of the conflict and that is the tribal belt - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Pushtun tribes from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were split between Afghanistan and Pakistan after the British Raj implemented a borderline called the Durand line between the two countries to strengthen

its control over the northern parts of India. The Pushtuns have their own codes and practices and I wanted to hear about their unique culture and traditions and how they are viewed in Pakistan, as well as their experiences of migrating to London.

Aqil is a young man in his twenties who comes from a village called Swabi in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Although it is not in FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) the region where much of the current conflict is concentrated, he has much to say about the particular cultures and traditions of the Pushtuns and the challenges they face. He thinks that Pushtuns often get a bad press but that they have very close networks and social structures with their own codes and practices that make them independent. He's from a tribe called Yusufzai and his village Swabi which is quite big, with a population of half a million people. It has no market square and is very old.

"We have a very strong community and we have our own system and regulations, and everyone looks out for one another. We have a social gathering place called Hujra which is a place where the men folk gather and play games, discuss issues, cook together and generally socialise. It's a place where the elders and youngsters can come together. We often go there and listen to stories from our elders and it's also a hub for gatherings during weddings and funerals."

The region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa lies in the Hindu Kush and has a long military history. During the British Raj this area was called the North West Frontier but in recent years it has been renamed to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During British rule in India in the tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa there was a non-violent campaign led by Bacha Khan against British military rule. At the same time there were also Pushtuns who fought alongside the British in the Second World War. Aqil tells me his mum's dad was in the British army and his father's dad Nasser Hussain was against the British. He was a fervent nationalist who supported Bacha Khan. They used to often argue amongst each other about their views.

As Aqil describes his upbringing he offers to make me a cup of tea and disappears into the kitchen. He's gone for a while and I hear him rustling about, first putting on the kettle and then see him put the cup of tea into the microwave after the kettle has boiled. I realise he's probably not used to household chores or making cups of tea. Coming from a community where there's a strong network and people look out for one another – must be strange when you find yourself on your own in a foreign country. He returns a few moments later with a cup that looks very milky and the tea to taste is too sweet for my palate.

He tells me, "We have our own tribal leaders made up of elders and each one has a different role. We have leaders that deal with internal disputes amongst tribes, and who are actively involved in resolving tribal differences and grievances. If you need something from another tribe then your leader will go to the other tribe and meet their leader and they will sort it out between them. It's a very strong network which cannot be broken."

His mum's dad was in the British army and his father's dad was against the British army



His face lights up as he starts speaking about his village. I ask him whether he feels this traditional way of life is under threat. Many places in Pakistan, including the city of Peshawar which is the capital city of KP, have seen a number of bomb attacks over the years. The Taliban come from the Pushtun tribes and I wonder how coming from this region impacts on people like Aqil. "I think our way of life and our bonds are getting stronger," he says, "Yet there is suspicion about us and our ways."

He thinks people view the traditions of the Pushtun to be outdated and

backward but he says they are independent but can still learn a lot from other cultures too. He talked to other members of his community who had been to the UK to find out what life was like in London.

I ask him if he's found it difficult to adjust to life in the UK.

My First Day in UK

The first day I came to the UK I stayed in Bradford. I didn't feel immediately out of place because there is a big Pushtun community there. I also found a place similar to a Hujra which I attended. I was with a group of guys and we all sat together to eat and listened to music. It was like being back in Pakistan. On the next day I went to Brighton and that's when I really felt that I was in the UK. I found that people don't like speaking to others and apart from an old lady smiling at me I felt quite alone. In Swabi we have a tradition of hospitality to strangers. If a stranger comes to our village we ask him where he is from and offer him tea and ask if we can assist him in any way. It's a tradition in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

HUJRA

The Hujra seems to be a central place where most of the men will gather. It's a place where all social activities take place, from weddings to funerals and social gatherings. It's a place for the menfolk to sit and tell stories and where the younger men sit and listen to stories of their elders. The men will cook together and eat together and Aqil seems to have fond memories of it.

Some of the socialising is around cultural activities like dancing and sports. Khyber Pukhtunkhwa is known for a popular dance called Attan.

ATTAN

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in particular in FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) of Pakistan, every tribe has its own style of Attan (tribal dance). Although Aqil's tribe is not known to practice this form of dance, as it's mainly performed in FATA, it's still a popular cultural activity in the region.

Aqil tells me, "Even though we don't practice it, if I were invited to

attend a wedding amongst one of these tribes then I would dance the Attan out of respect. Attan is said to have its roots in Zoroastrianism and Sufism and every tribe has its own version marked by different steps. It's supposed to take the dancer into a trance-like state. Others ascribe the dance to the invasion of Alexander the Great tying Attan to the ancient "Pyrrhic Dance", a war dance that was part of military training in both Athens as well as Sparta. The Attan is carried out to the beat of the Dhol (drum) but various types of Attan are also accompanied by other instruments like Sarangi and Baja.



MUKHA

There is a popular local sport played in Swabi called Mukha. It's a form of archery and is played with a long arrow and a very large bow. Mukha means target.

It's only really practised amongst the Yusufzai tribe.

"We play it from the start of spring to the start of summer between

February – May. The tradition goes back over a thousand years. The elders play against each other and the youth play against each other. We also play Mukha when a man asks for a bride's hand in marriage. He is given a target to shoot and he cannot take his bride until he hits the target. My grandfather, who was in the army, was very good at Mukha and he would always hit his target."

Mukha is a dying sport and there have been moves to try and revive it in Pakistan.

Life in London

"My job at the O2 arena involves meeting a lot of pop stars. People like Justin Timberlake and Lady Gaga. I don't have any idea about who they are but I get to meet their fans who come from all over the world and that's interesting. One of the nicest people I have met is Dolly Parton. She also comes from a close-knit community in America and she told me how there is no community system in her home town anymore."

I find life in London very busy and it's tough making new friends. In Pakistan we have our families and tribes and there's always someone to talk to. I find in the UK to make new friends you have to attend activities and take up hobbies to meet people. Last year I used to play football and cricket and made a few friends. In Swabi we were a community so I had many friends. But in the UK since coming here I have only made about four or five friends.

I am studying Maths and English so I can go on to study aeronautical engineering in college. I am also holding down two jobs. I work weekends at a KFC and during the week I work at the O2 arena in Greenwich. It's been tough settling here. I came after I got married to be with my wife who is from the UK. She suggested coming here to get my qualifications. My life here is spent mostly - eat, work and sleep, eat work and sleep. There's no time to meet with relatives – well, basically, not even my relatives have time for me as they are busy too. Life here is very fast and everyone is busy. Sometimes I feel like I want to go back to Pakistan.

Best of all I like the opportunities that London has to offer but I don't like the fact that people don't talk to one another here. I've met people from other cultures and I have Nigerian and Algerian friends.

One of the best things I love about London is the tube. In Pakistan I used to often travel by bus and sometimes you have to cling onto the bus on the

outside while you are travelling. But here I like the fact that all I have to do is sit on the tube and it takes me to where I have to go, even though I have to travel quite far to go to college at the moment. Whenever I talk to my family members they always ask me did I take a ride on the tube. They think it's exciting. It's similar to how you would feel taking a ride at Thorpe Park.

Humans of Peshawar



By Jawad Afridi

“What is your greatest success in your life?”

“I have been the best at everything - from farming crops to shooting guns. I have achieved many goals in my life but what makes me most proud is, when I listen to people praising my kids.”

“They are my greatest success.”



“Can I take a photograph of you?”

“Yeah sure, also write this stanza from a poem I wrote:

“Don’t blame the youth when the elders are wrong,

Don’t blame the followers when the preachers are wrong

And don’t point fingers at your neighbour when your own kids are wrong.”



"I had my finger cut during work today."

"Why don't you take off and go visit a doctor?"

"Oh no, I have to restart working as soon as the bleeding stops, there is no-one else who will take home bread for my family."



"When I completed the 12th grade I was told by my parents to go out and look for a job, they told me I was done with my studies and that now I have to contribute to the family earnings. Instead I went to medical school and applied for admission in MBBS. I worked hard and became a doctor, the first one in my family. I brought up seven kids: 3 sons - a paediatrician, an engineer and a lecturer - and 4 daughters - a doctor, a pharmacist and two teachers."



"I am serving as Youth Governor at the National Youth Assembly & NBF Young Book Ambassador. Formerly, I also served as Youth Federal Deputy Speaker & Youth Minister for Special Persons at the National Youth Assembly. I received B.S (hons) degree in the discipline of Biotechnology from the University of Peshawar KPK & currently pursuing a Masters Degree in Business Administration from the Institute of Management studies, University of Peshawar. I am working on many platforms for the betterment of youth in general, but especially for those with disabilities."



"I believe that It's a lie to think you're not good enough. It's a lie to think you're not worth anything. We don't need legs to walk, as we have got wings to fly."

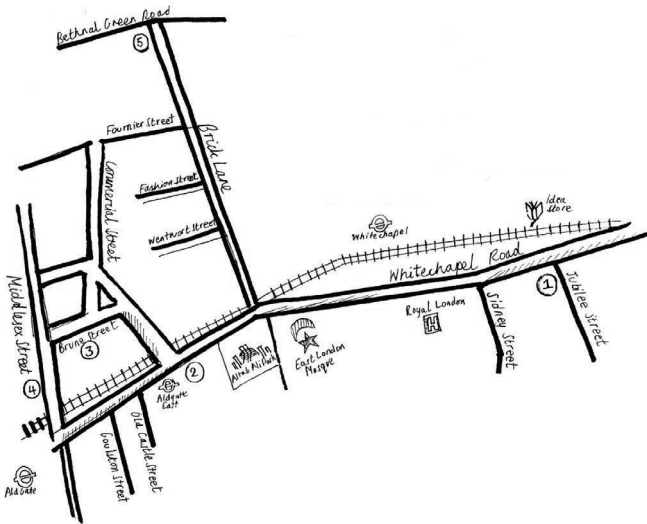
Noorena Shams, aged 17, is a multi-disciplined sportswoman, an award-winning artist, and an entrepreneur from Dir, a beautiful scenic valley of Peshawar. She was the under-13 regional cycling champion who went on to be one of the youngest athletes to represent Pakistan in the Olympics. Noorena was the youngest player to serve in the under-19 female cricket team, which she has been part of since 2012, and is ranked as one of the top players in the Pakistan squash team.

In 2010 Noorena also became the youngest artist to receive the 'Artist of the Year' award from the National College of Arts in Lahore. She continued to retain the title for the following two years. Recently she won the Gulgee Arts Award.

In the sphere of entrepreneurial work, Noorena not only has her own T-shirt brand but is an active member of the Women Business Development centre in Peshawar and the Chamber of Craftsperson.



Jewish East End Bites



By Halima Khanom

The East End of London offers a unique space with a distinctive history of being the first home of various immigrant communities. The wave upon wave of migration in and out of the East End began in the seventeenth century with Huguenot refugees, followed by Irish weavers and then Ashkenazi Jews. The current image of the East End is mainly associated with the Bangladeshi community and the more recent 'hipster' migrants from across Europe. For this project I wanted to focus on the journey of earlier migrants, in particular the Jewish migrants.

Food is often a good way to explore the journey of a community, especially as it is part of the culture and tradition every community carries with them wherever they may go. This article has been designed as a supplement for the reader's visit to the East End. The map points to the restaurants that are mentioned in this article. The East End Jewish Community may not exist in the way it used to, but has left intriguing traces of its culinary contributions to this corner of London.

The mapping of the Jewish East End Bites offers an opportunity to trace the shift spatially, whilst making accessible to the reader the architectural, experiential and indeed the flavours of the Jewish East End that remain today.

Background

Jewish migration to London can be traced back to the eleventh century and is still evident in street names such as 'Old Jewry' in the City of London. Currently, approximately 196,000 Jews reside in North London, some of whose families can be traced back to the earlier Jewish settlement in East London. 'Jewish' is often used to describe a person's ethnic background, culture, religion, or a combination of some or all of these factors. There are over 149,000 Jews in London, which equates to over half the Jewish population of the UK.

Early Jewish migration was subject to the attitudes of British rulers who either recognised the vital role the Jewish community can play in British society, or succumbed to the rampant anti-Semitism that had gripped much of Europe at the time.

In 1656 Cromwell allowed Portuguese Jewish merchants to open a synagogue in Creechurch Lane, Aldgate. For the first time since 1290, Jews were allowed to worship openly in England. A Jewish elite class developed by the eighteenth century made up of merchants and brokers on the Royal Exchange, Jewish diamond polishers, tobacco workers and many street traders, such as old clothes buyers and hawkers of stationery, medicines and oranges.

The next wave of Jewish migration to London took place in the late 1800s. From 1881 to 1914, Jewish refugees began their journey to London, fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe, increasing London's Jewish population from around 35,000 to 150,000. These newcomers settled in East London and brought with them distinctive trades, such as tailoring, shoe-making as well as baking and cooking. What is remarkable about Jewish cuisines is that they reflect the flavours and styles from over seventy countries in which the Jewish diaspora is located, and are often referred to as 'nomadic' cuisines.

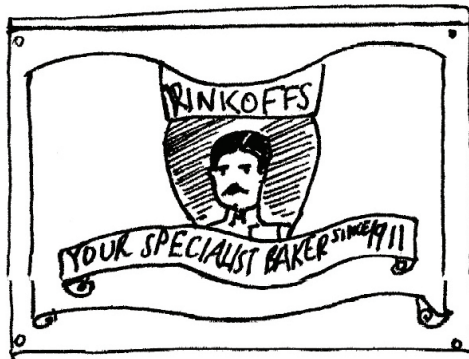
The Jewish East End Historical Tour:

The Jewish East End Bites tour starts at Jubilee Street, accessible from Mile End Road.

Rinkoff Bakery, 1911 (Follow Mile End Road towards Whitechapel, until you come across 'Rinkoff Bakery Thro' Arch' sign)

Rinkoff's is a force to be reckoned with in East London, though it may not seem that way looking at this small shop. Set within an East End estate,

and only visible via the 'Rinkoff's Thro' the Arch' sign, it is often overlooked by passers-by, unless they decide to investigate the glorious smell that rolls out from the estate.



Rinkoff was opened in 1911 by Master Baker Hyman, who arrived in London in 1906 fleeing the massacres in Kiev, Ukraine. The original premises stood in Spitalfields and moved to its current premises by Jubilee Street in 1971 (along with another premises in Vallance Road, a few streets down from where you stand now).

Bloom's, 1920 (Walk along Whitechapel High Street towards Aldgate East Station, stop at Burger King).

Although still quite busy as a high street Burger King restaurant, it is quite hard to imagine that this was the site of Bloom's Kosher Restaurant,

a common household name for the Jewish family in London and seen positively as a kosher icon.

Bloom's was opened in 1920 by Morris Bloom, originally based in Brick Lane serving Ashkenazi-style food. In the early 1930s, the restaurant moved to Old Montague Street and then to Whitechapel High Street in 1952. The two previous premises were destroyed as a result of Second World War bombing. The restaurant flourished in this location. Due to its popularity, and as evidenced by the shifting demographics of the London Jewish community, another branch was opened in Golders Green. The Whitechapel branch closed in 1996 due to a shift in demand in the style of food sought after by the local residents.

If you look above the Burger King sign, you may notice a symbol still bearing the mark of the Jewish East End.

Restaurant 1701 in Bevis Marks Synagogue, 1701 (Walk along Whitechapel High Street, towards Aldgate Station, turn right on Middlesex Street)

Restaurant 1701 was situated within the courtyard of the Bevis Marks synagogue, a Sephardi Synagogue. Opening in 1701, it offers a fusion of cuisines prevalent in Israel which are a combination of traditional Jewish flavours with either a Middle Eastern influence or imbued by flavours from other parts of the world.

The restaurant was open right up until January 2015. This is a surprise to the dining community, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who had enjoyed the Michelin-recommended restaurant. Management is keen that the restaurant will resume soon, either within Bevis Marks or another London location. Soup Kitchen for the Jewish Poor, 1902 (Walk along Middlesex Street and turn right into Brune Street).

The story of Jewish food not only traces the changes in the flavours and style of the cuisines in response to the changing environment, but it also tells the story of the poverty experienced by the Jewish refugees in the nineteenth century and the support network established by the more affluent members within the community. More than two million Jews left Eastern Europe between 1881 and 1914, prompted by economic hardship and persecution. Once in London, these hardships did not cease, as Jewish migrants competed for jobs against other migrant labourers.

Earlier waves of Jewish migration, however, had already led to the formation of established elites, who financed initiatives to support the new arrivals. The Soup Kitchen for the Jewish Poor is an example of this and was originally opened in Leman Street alongside a Jewish Shelter in 1854, and moved to Brune Street in 1902.

The Soup Kitchen was a staple community pillar throughout its use until it closed in 1992 but the original building remains, which has now been converted into flats.

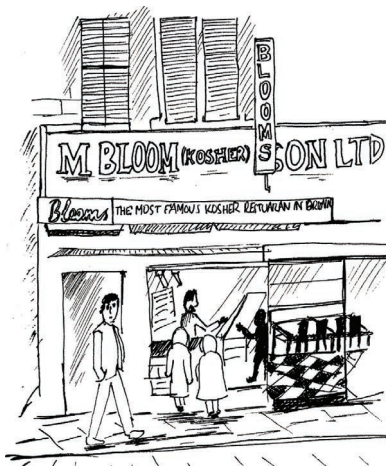
The Beigel Shop, 1855 (at the end of Brick Lane, towards Bethnal Green Road).

Known as the oldest bagel shop in the UK, opening in 1855, the Beigel Shop still sells its original bagel recipe. Part of the Eastern European Jewish culinary tradition brought to London by Polish Jews, the bagel is now enjoyed universally.

Moving out of the East End

After World War II, as general prosperity increased, a large section of the Jewish community moved out of the East End, taking residence in the suburbs of Stoke Newington, Golders Green and Stamford Hill. This is characteristic of East London history - often a brief starting point for incoming poor migrant communities, who move on to more affluent areas as they begin to go up the economic ladder.

Although the East End no longer hosts the vibrant Jewish community, the Jewish East End lives through the culinary experiences as mapped by Jewish East End Bites, as well as the living memory of North London's Jewish communities. The persistence of this vital community history into 2015 is a testament of the vibrancy and versatility of the Jewish community.



Please note, this article traces a very specific history of the Jewish East End through food. Further information and a more extensive account can be found through the Jewish East End Preservation Society.

Bangladesh to Britain

Grandmothers, Mothers & Daughters



By Karen Lennox

There is a long history of migration from Bangladesh to Britain, stretching back to the 17th century, although it was not until the 1970s that significant numbers of women as well as men began to arrive. Many families settled and stayed in the East End of London; Tower Hamlets still has the largest British Bangladeshi population in both London and England.

For the first generation of women arriving in Britain, adjusting to a new country could be difficult. Many did not speak English and found themselves isolated without the support of their extended families, and struggling to come to terms with unfamiliar customs.

In Bangladesh we would never go out in front of people who weren't family, even if they were my father's friends. But here, even if there are twenty men, we are walking down the street. In this country, men and women all sit around the table together to eat. When I first came over, the suddenness of that experience felt bad. Now I'm used to it.

Wanting to find out more about the experiences of different generations of British Bangladeshi women, I went to talk to a group of girls in their first year at an East London secondary school. They told me about their grandmothers' and mothers' journeys, and their own interests and ambitions.

Five Girls in London

Jamila, Ayesha, Zayba, Jasmina and Hafirah talk about their family histories, their interests and their futures.

The families of Jamila, Ayesha, Zayba, Jasmina and Hafirah migrated to Britain for a variety of reasons - to join family members already living in London, or in the hope of finding well-paid work and, most importantly, a brighter future for their children.

Hafirah describes her parents' decision to move to Britain and some of the difficulties they faced, adjusting to a new country.

"My mum and dad came here because they wanted a brighter future for us, because - in Bangladesh the education is good, but the competition for being first - they didn't want to put us through it, so they wanted to come to Britain. They wanted our lives to be a bit easier."

"My mum came from Dhaka and when she first came here her English wasn't that good, so it was a bit of a struggle. But, day by day, my mum and dad went out trying to find work and it was like an adventure, because they were mixing with the public. At first they worked in an elderly people's care home, so from little conversations like, 'Can you help me up?' they learned a lot. So, little by little, they built up their confidence to speak and they got better at it."

Ayesha's mother first came to London as a young girl and decided to stay for good when she was expecting her first child.

"My mum moved from Bangladesh when she was 11, with her parents. She was living in a village, a really small village in Sylhet, near my dad's village. It was a farming area, mostly farming animals like sheep for meat."

"My mum's family made frequent visits back to Bangladesh and during one visit my mum found out that she was going to have my brother. They wanted him to be born in England, so she quickly came back to England. That was 18 years ago. Since then she hasn't been back to Bangladesh."

Jasmina's grandmother was the first woman in her family to make the move to Britain. Jasmina talked to her about the contrasts between Bangladesh and her new country ...

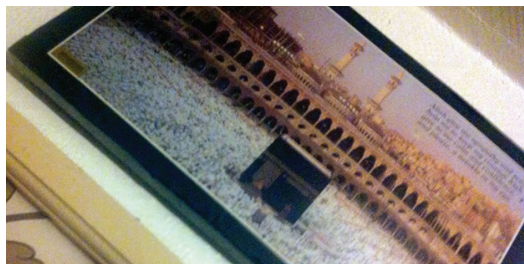
"My gran came here when she was about 24 years old. She's been here a long time, around 40 years. She came from Sylhet city and when I asked her what it was like when she used to live there she said the schools were quite rough and very competitive."

"When I asked my gran - did she like London better, or does she prefer Bangladesh - she said that she has mixed feelings, because London is better

for their children, their future, and they had more work opportunities. But in Bangladesh they find it more relaxed, so when they go and visit they don't ever pre-book their flight to come back. They'll just make their stay longer and find excuses to try and stay there for as long as they can. So I think she probably likes Bangladesh better. She likes the fact that there are fields and much more space there. And she likes that you can pick your own fruits and they're fresh. She used to grow fruits and vegetables in Bangladesh, but when she came to London she had to buy them."

Culture & Faith

Jasmina took photographs of objects belonging to her grandparents, items of culture and faith that keep alive her family's Bangladeshi heritage: a paan tray; prayer beads; a special salwaar kameez embroidered and decorated with sequins, made in Bangladesh and worn for Eid; a prayer mat; a traditional hand-fan; a local Bengali newspaper; and souvenirs of her grandmother's pilgrimage to Mecca, the Hajj.



The five girls are keen to recount what they know of the Hajj, and looking forward to making their own pilgrimage in the future.

That's in Arabia. It's a picture of Saudi Arabia, Makkah. My nan and my uncle, and I think my grandad, have been on the Hajj. I want to go. If you're a woman you have to go with a man. Jasmina

There's a black stone there and if you kiss it, it's like all your sins have been taken away. All the bad stuff. It's really impossible to do though, because there are so many people there. Zayba

Some people think if you go at night no-one's going to be there. But day and night, every single minute, there are people trying to touch it. Jasmina

In our religion they say that the stone was actually white, because it fell from heaven. But as people's sins went inside it, it became black. Hafirah

You know, if you read the whole Qur'an you get a reward. It's as if you've been to Makkah once.

But I think you still have to go for Hajj. Zayba

Crossing Cultures - A Miscellany of Interests

Photographs taken by Hafirah, Jasmina, Ayesha and Zayba.



I got this medal last year.

I do judo at weekends. That tournament was my first one, and I got silver.

- Hafirah

I knit. I'm an elderly lady! I love knitting, it's so much fun. I'm making a scarf and the wool is multi-coloured, so when you knit it there are colours in layers. I have a doll's house, a miniature doll's house, and I knitted a little blanket for one of the dolls. Crochet is popular now, but I like knitting.
- Hafirah





I want to move to Brighton - my uncle lives there and it's so different. And Zoella lives there too!
- Jasmina

I'm into baking. My auntie works in a bakery and she has her own shop. I went into her bakery and she helped me make cakes. I'm into music as well - I play the piano and the clarinet. We play a lot of Tchaikovsky. My favourite is the Sugar Plum Fairy.
- Jasmina



Future Ambitions

For Jamila, Ayesha, Zayba, Jasmina and Hafirah, their families' willingness to face the challenge of moving to another country has provided opportunities not available to previous generations of women.

Jamila talks about her grandmother's life and her own hopes for the future...

My nan was born in 1941. She didn't have much education because the teaching wasn't that good, so her parents just took her out of school. When she was very young her parents got her married. She has 9 children and 6 of them were born in Bangladesh, that's 5 of my uncles and my eldest aunt.

She's the main person in our family.

There are two things I would like to do - be a journalist and go round the world, because I love writing stories. I do a lot of writing at home and I love taking pictures. Or I could become a teacher, because my little cousins love playing teacher games and even their mums says, because of me, their English and Maths have become better. Or a fashion designer. I love fashions so much and I help friends and families with fashion advice.

Hafrah and Jasmina both want to become doctors.

I want to be a doctor or a chemist, something like that. Something to do with biology, because I like seeing blood. I like dealing with injuries. Probably hospital work, I just like taking care of people. I might get married when I'm 61! Hafrah

I want to become a doctor. And travel - I want to go to New York.

Jasmina

Ayesha is interested in medical research and pharmacology.

Zayba wants to travel to Japan.

What does the future hold for girls in Bangladesh?

Our:

daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, grandmothers, cleaners, cooks, gardeners, carers, home improvers, house repairers, animal rearers, crop growers, water drawers, fuel gatherers, needleworkers [many];

teachers, dressmakers, birth attendants, rice workers, tea estate workers, fruit pickers, brick yard labourers, road builders, rice cake makers, garment factory workers, embroiderers, cooks, quilt makers, shopkeepers, market stallholders, weavers, confectioners, jewellery makers, basket makers, spinners, cleaners, domestic helpers [some];

doctors, midwives, lawyers, academics, politicians, artists, graphic designers, journalists, photographers, entrepreneurs, police officers, cricketers, footballers, fashion designers, scientists [few].

Much depends on family circumstances: girls from poor families are more likely to be married at a young age and rarely get the opportunity to complete their education and take up a career.

Girls' education has, in fact, become a touchstone for socio-economic change in Bangladesh and many agencies, governmental and non-governmental, national and international, are committed to fulfilling the UN Millennium Development Goal to promote gender equality and

empower women.

Educated girls turn into empowered women, and the empowerment of women leads to massive improvements in quality of life for everyone, especially the poor.

Bangladesh women's political empowerment impressive: PM

The Bangladesh Observer, Tuesday, 9 December, 2014



Crossing Cultures - Identity & Achievement

For Hafirah, Jasmina, Ayesha, Zayba and Jamila, British and Bangladeshi ways of life are mingling and melding into something new. As they talk, they obviously feel a strong connection to their Bangladeshi heritage and

enjoy describing and explaining their culture, particularly their faith. But sometimes a sense of Bangladesh as the 'old' country contrasts with 'contemporary' London.

I think it's better here. Bangladesh is more retro, kind of old, they have a different kind of lifestyle. Here's more modern. - Ayesha

Time and distance separate two countries and two similar, yet different, cultures evolve. Some things are kept.

When [my mum] cuts vegetables she uses a daa, a kind of knife that you hold between your feet. On special occasions, like Eid, everyone makes different types of chicken, like tandoori chicken and they brush on chillies. - Zayba



Highlighting women's contribution to raise their status in society

The Daily Star, Bangladesh, Sunday, September 28, 2014

Why women matter More needs to be done

Editorial, The Daily Star, Bangladesh

And some things are left behind ...

I don't speak Bengali, because everyone speaks English at home. I only know numbers

up to ten and how to say 'Hello'. Ayesha

In finding and creating their own unique identities, the girls can look to a number of remarkable British Bangladeshi women as role models, women who are enriching society with their expertise, imagination and new cultural perspectives ...

Judge Khatun Sapnara Professor Nazneen Rahman, Institute of Cancer Research Dr Yasmin Khan, Paediatrician in Neurodisability Dr Irene Zubaida Khan, Chancellor, University of Salford Dr Halima Begum, Director of Education, British Council East Asia Lisa Aziz, News Presenter Yasmin Khatun, Reporter & Producer Shapla Salique, Musician Tahmima Anam, Author Ruqsana Begum, Kickboxer & Muay Thai Champion Captain Naveen Rahman, British Army Officer Baroness Pola Uddin, House of Lords Monica Ali, Novelist Nina Hossain, Newsreader Rahima Begum, Human Rights Activist Nadia Ali, Radio and TV Presenter Rushanara Ali MP Rezia Wahid MBE, Artist.

Textile artist Rezia Wahid embodies cultural enrichment in her work. She creates fine, translucent, handwoven textiles, inspired by and subtly echoing Bengali muslins and silks, yet encompassing the influences and inspiration of many different cultures in her use of materials and techniques. She works with Egyptian cotton, Chinese silk, English merino wool, and with Japanese kasuri and Bangladeshi jamdani techniques. In 2005 she was awarded an MBE for her contribution to the arts in London.

Air, peace and tranquillity: words that are part of Islam and Islamic Art

and Architecture, all influence my work ... I feel peaceful, spiritual and inspired when I enter a mosque or pray. At the same time I am inspired by nature as well as the historical, fine and delicate cotton muslin or silk sarees of Bangladesh. The phrase 'Baf-thana' meaning 'woven air' is used to describe these textiles, which triggers a magical thought within me and inspires me to weave.



Thai Minority in The UK

By Geogory Choi

The long-acclaimed multicultural London is the home of over 270 nationalities with over 250 languages that can be heard spoken throughout the city. The different cultures and diverse heritages of the Londoners have made the city one of the most dynamic and lively places in the world. Although the South Asian community is the largest minority group in London, there is a growing visibility of a new South East Asian community, especially from Thailand, who make up a large section of the recent arrivals. The Thai community, however, is still an invisible community. Even if the Thai take-aways/restaurants around most of the street corners of London are a visible manifestation of the Thai community, very little is known about their stories and dreams that have led many to take the journey to Britain to create a new life.

I have decided to focus on Thai women as I found that in Britain the negative stereotypes are often targeted at the female section of the community. In the following interviews, I explored the journey of Sukanjan, who came to Britain over 20 years ago after marrying an Englishman, and Kamontip, who works at the Thai Buddhist temple in Wimbledon.

“I think one thing that people find strange about Thai people is that they smile. They smile a lot. Anyway I usually have some British people coming up to me asking - What are you smiling about? How dare you?”

First Story: Mel's Mom, Sukanjan Chuaiprasit

Mel is a classmate of mine from the School of Oriental and African

Studies (SOAS). Her mum, Sukanjan moved to London 20 years ago.

“Everyone in Thai is quite entrepreneurial. There are a lot of little shops and businesses. One day they might be selling food and the next they might be selling something completely different.”

Experience in Thailand

Sukanjan grew up in a very typical big family in Bangkok, living with her parents along with nine brothers and sisters. During the interview, she kept stressing the importance of family in the Thai culture. Although occasional chaos and struggle was common in the house, the neighbours and relatives were all willing to give a hand to the family. There were a lot of people in the house so it was always very busy. In a working class family, money was always scarce. Things seemed to turn much easier once all the brothers and sisters had grown up. They moved closer to the city centre to start a family business, as described by Sukanjan, “a typical little Thai shop.”

The Temple and Buddhism

For Sukanjan, her faith and the Buddhist temple has always been the heart of her community. In fact, she kept on stressing the importance the temple played in her life. It is the place where the community gathers together for social activities and a space for spiritual retreat and blessings. Normally there are five to six big ceremonies a year. She used to visit the temple every Sunday as a family day out, which involved meeting other families and friends, and lots of festivities. The Thai temple thus functions as both as a space for spiritual attainment and performing rituals and as a platform for a community hub.

Migration of Love

The fate that led her to Britain started twenty-five years ago. It is a rather romantic story. Sukanjan met her husband in Bueng Kan in the North of Thailand by the Mekong River, where they both worked at a refugee camp. However, after they started dating she was transferred to another camp near Bangkok, while her husband remained in Chiang Khan. It was an eleven-hour bus journey from Chiang Khan to Bangkok. Despite the distance and the length of journey, her husband would visit her every weekend. Meanwhile, during the week, they sent lots of letters to each other. After three years of long-distance relationship, they decided to get married. Sukanjan and her husband decided to move to Britain after she became pregnant with her eldest daughter.



The weather, becoming a mother and a housewife in London

Like many new migrants, Sukanjan found adjusting to the cold British weather quite difficult. Coming from one of the warmest regions of Southeast Asia, this is not hard to imagine. After giving birth to her second daughter in London, life became more difficult as she found herself feeling alone in the house with a toddler and a newborn baby. Sukanjan's husband

spent long hours working, as they had very little money. Although she was used to surviving on little money, being away from her family, relatives, and community left her feeling isolated and lonely. She also found it difficult to find places to visit for making friends. The absence of a Thai temple, which was the community hub back home in Thailand, along with English language being a barrier, made it difficult for her to meet new people and feel part of a community.

Adjusting to new life

After Mel and her sister started going to school, Sukanjan was able to enrol at a local college to improve her English. She also started becoming friends with other parents at school. She feels it took her about five years to settle in her new home and find her feet. However, the people in her area were not as friendly as those in Thailand.

Although Sukanjan was becoming more comfortable with speaking English and adjusting to her new home, she made sure that her children did not lose connection with their Thai heritage. Her children are able to speak fluent Thai.



“Our lives revolve around Buddhism”

Second Story: Kamontip Evans

It was a rainy afternoon when I visited the Buddhapadipa temple in Wimbledon. It is a Thai Buddhist monastery. In fact, the Buddhapadipa temple is the first Buddhist temple in the UK and one of the most popular London attractions with tourists who are completing their theological studies or simply hold a fascination with world religions. I met Kamontip Evans in the canteen. She was chatting with a potential student who considered participating in the class for meditation. Before the interview, Kamontip took me on a half-hour tour of the temple, from which I gained a brief picture of its services and activities.

The interview with Sukanjan illustrated the importance of temples in Thai culture and society. Therefore, I decided to learn more about Thai temples and how they provide support for the Thai community in London.

The functions of the Thai Temple

We commenced our interview in a small room next to the canteen. Kamontip volunteers as a guide for the temple: however, she does a lot more than just delivering tours. I had to shorten the interview as she needed to help with meditation and Buddhism classes. She was also booked in to organise a funeral in the evening. This pretty much illustrates the functions of the Thai temple, and the tasks carried out by the volunteers show how dedicated the community members are to serving the temple. Kamontip tells me that the temple acts as a support service for Thais living in London: the monks are always available to listen to people's grievances.

The temple is currently planning to organise an event to celebrate the Thai New Year, known as Songkran, which takes place in April each year. This involves a religious ceremony and many celebratory activities. Hundreds and thousands of Thai people come to the temple to get blessings in the New Year. Songkran is also referred to as 'The Water Festival'. Kamontip tells me, "Thai people come here [to the temple] to pour water onto Buddha and make a blessing." She also mentions the 'Floating lotus ceremony', which takes place in mid-November. "It's a festival! We float a ship with a lotus", she says.

The temple also organises cultural events, such as the Thai beauty contest. Don't get me wrong, it's not the kind of contest you come across on TV shows. It is a competition about Thai costumes. Occasions such as the

beauty contest and Songkran bring the sparsely populated Thai community together and help them develop new networks and relationships. During the interview, I started thinking about Sukanjan and the isolation she felt due to the absence of a Thai temple twenty years ago. It seems that the temple revolves around every aspect of a Thai person's life. Kamontip tells me that when a Thai starts something new in their life, such as opening a new restaurant or moving into a new home, the monks from the temple are always invited to visit to bless the new chapter in their lives.



Stereotypes

When asked about her perception of the outside attitude towards the Thai community, she laments that there seem to be a lot of negative news and impressions among the public. She feels that stories related to prostitution, corruption in politics and military coups tend to dominate images related to Thai society. Kamontip bemoaned the fact that people only get to learn about Thai society through mainstream media who never really talk about the true and positive nature of Thai culture and society, such as activities revolving around temples, which actually constitute a big part of most Thai people's lives. Kamontip told me that these days there are a lot of

Buddhist temples around the UK, including Wales and Scotland, and that nearly every big town, such as Northumberland and Warwick, has their own respective Thai temple.

Kamontip and her philosophy of Maipemrai...

I think one thing that people [find] strange about Thai people was that they smile. They smile a lot. Anyway I usually have some British people coming up to me: What are you smiling about? How dare you?

Kamontip used to be a university lecturer and a radio producer in Thailand. We can rightly assume that she was living a relatively cosy middle-class life in Thailand. So why did she give up that life to come to the UK? Interestingly, it was exactly because of her career in teaching - the boring, tedious work of teaching at a university - that encouraged her to get out of Thailand to further her exposure to different life experiences. At first she had plans to finish her PhD in the UK before going back to Thailand. However, after becoming a mother, and since her children were born in the UK, she made the decision to settle permanently in the UK.

Unlike most recent migrants, Kamontip did not find it exceptionally difficult to adapt to the new environment. She lived in the United States for several years prior to moving to the UK, so when she came to London language was not a problem for her. However, she did experience certain confusions regarding the differences in attitude towards life between the British and the Thai. She found that the British tend to be a bit too serious sometimes.

Kamontip introduced me to the Thai concept of 'Maipemrai', which means 'it doesn't matter'. She tells me that in Thailand, people say 'Maipemrai' when faced with a stressful or difficult situation. People would just laugh about it due to the philosophy of Maipemrai - whatever life brings, it will all be okay in the end. Kamontip was surprised to find that British people find it offensive to laugh about everything. She also feels that British people, especially those living in London, live quite a stressful life, which is a big contrast with what she experienced back in Thailand.

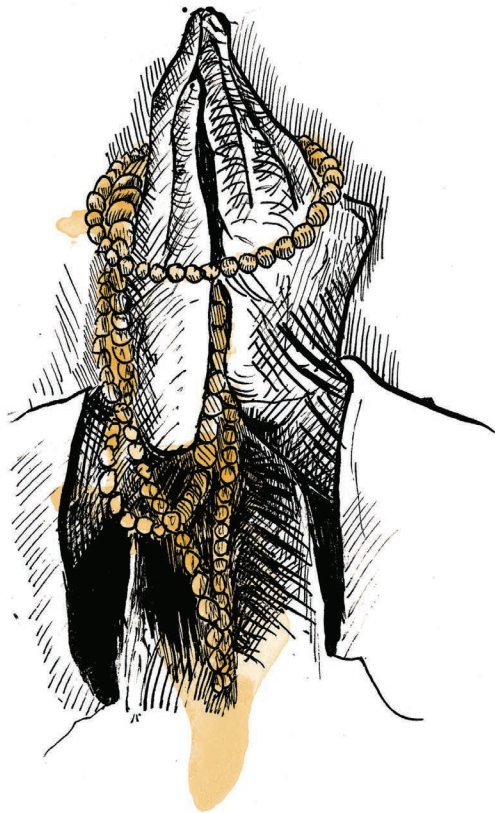
Conclusion

From Thailand to England, from home to abroad, the challenges faced by Thai migrants are a good illustration of the way new arrivals from various backgrounds cope with life in London.

During my research for this project, I found that new migrants from

the minority communities in general inevitably experience culture clash and confusion, yet over time they are able to overcome these challenges as they learn more about the new environment. I also realised the absence of a platform that the minority communities could benefit from to express their views and to challenge the negative stereotypes often portrayed by the media. The stereotypes and prejudices experienced by the invisible communities are often as a result of the lack of awareness among the mainstream society. I hope the story of Sukanjan and Kamontip provides a little glimpse into the diverse experiences of the Thai community, in particular the Thai women.

*I am really grateful to Sukanjan and Kamontip for giving their time for this project.



Hybrid cuisine

Food, Language and culinary mash-ups in indigenous British Ugandan and South Asian Ugandan cultures

By Katasi Kironde

Having spent part of my early childhood in Kampala, Uganda, many of my culinary experiences were influenced by the time I spent there. Whilst at school in London, I recall being corrected by a friend about my pronunciation of "Samosa". I pronounced it sam-boo-sa, and was quite adamant that my pronunciation was correct. After all, that's what we called it in my family. It wasn't until much later that I realised that many of our culinary cooking styles were influenced by the migration of Indians to Uganda in the nineteenth century. As well as trading and constructing the East African railway, the migration of South Asians through the Indian Ocean led to the introduction of new food such as, spices, apple bananas, and cooking practices. Somewhere along the way, indigenous Ugandans had adopted Indian cooking styles into their culture. Samosas, pilau rice, curry powder and chapattis had become central to our palates - and I had little regard as to how they ended up on our plates.



“Traditionally Ugandan food was boiled, but the idea of frying rice with onions, what is popularly known as Pilau rice, was an Indian import. Even rice was not traditional Ugandan fare; our own cereals are traditionally millet and sorghum”

- Charles Okwalinga

After a recent stay in Uganda, I began to reflect on the perception of interactions between indigenous Ugandans and South Asian Ugandans in Britain. It is rare to learn about contemporary dynamics between British Ugandans of different backgrounds in popular media. Much of what is presented in the British media tends to focus on the 1972 expulsion of South Asians from Uganda by General Idi Amin which led to the exile of 90,000 people, mainly to the United Kingdom, Canada and India. I became curious about how food could be a unifying factor and how it could cut across social and ethnic barriers. To find out just how the samosa became a samboosa, I decided to reach out to British Ugandans from different ethnic backgrounds, to explore how non-traditional foods have become acceptable and integrated into their daily lives.

Charles Okwalinga, who came to London in 1991 from Uganda, runs an East African restaurant, Mama Jumbe's in Forest Gate. According to Charles, “Traditionally Ugandan food was boiled, but the idea of frying rice with onions, what is popularly known as Pilau rice and a favourite with my clientele, was an Indian import. Even rice was not traditional Ugandan fare; our own cereals are traditionally millet and sorghum.” At Mama Jumbe's, chapattis are a staple and made from wheat flour dough but prepared with less oil. Ugandans traditionally boil or steam their food, but the use of curry is also a big influence and can be found in seasonings and slow-cooked stews which are served with indigenous mains such as groundnut soup, boiled sweet potato and vegetables and matooke, a green banana which is peeled, steamed and pounded into a mash. Samosas are also popular snacks and are prepared with savoury fillings such as curried vegetables, chicken, rice and meat.

Charles recalls that before the expulsion, many Indians had opened

restaurants and cafes, and the influence of cooking food for sale came from the South Asians. "We'd never really cook food for sale; we'd cook food to eat. So when they cooked to sell, these dishes were the most common. People wanted something different; these are the things that were being sold." Generally, older Ugandans who have settled in London have good connections with the South Asian Ugandan community, as many settled in the same areas and the first food supplies from Uganda to the UK were initiated by South Asians. Many Ugandans find comfort in eating in Indian restaurants due to the familiarity and the memories they evoke of being back home.

"I can tell that the fact that we are from East Africa has a big impact on the food we eat, because if I compare it to people I know whose parents are directly from India, it's very different. And when you go to restaurants that are Indian, there is that influence. It's very noticeable to someone like me who has it in their family." - Binita Mehta

Recently, I also began to wonder if the British South Asian Ugandan diaspora had brought any Ugandan cultural practices with them after the expulsion. I learnt that South Asian Ugandan cuisine incorporates typically Ugandan staples such as groundnut stews, cassava, a root plant locally known as muwogo or mogo in the central, western and eastern regions of Uganda, and matooke. These ingredients are incorporated in South Asian Ugandan homes but prepared with Indian flair. A common snack is muwogo which can either be baked or deep fried and served with a spicy sauce or with chilli powder, salt and tamarind chutney.



Often recipes are passed on by older generations cooking with younger

generations amongst families; for others, they are enjoyed at weddings and recreated at home. South Asian Ugandan restaurants can be found in areas originally inhabited by South Asian Ugandans from the initial migration, such as Harrow and parts of North West London. Sakonis, which has branches in Wembley and Harrow, offer South Asian Ugandan inspired snacks such as chilli muwogo. Some restaurants have references to East Africa in their names, from Safari in Finchley to Zanzibar in Edgware, and some also serve dishes evocative of Africa such as 'Nairobi Chicken'.

For British-born Binita Mehta, 24, who is of East African Indian and Scottish heritage, there's a visible fusion of African and Asian cultures in her family's home, "I can tell that the fact that we are from East Africa has a big impact on the food we eat, because if I compare it to people I know whose parents are directly from India, it's very different. And when you go to restaurants that are Indian, there is that influence. It's very noticeable to someone like me who has it in their family". At a recent celebration, after winning a position as a Councillor in Watford, Binita explained, "at my victory party we had muwogo on the menu and that's quite weird for a lot of Indian people, but very much central to East African Indian heritage". Other East African-Indian mash ups in Binita's home include fried matooke bajiya, battered green banana, mogo chips, either dry battered or thin cuts like crisps and a hybrid chilli paneer which is baked muwogo in a tomato sauce.

Kitchen vernacular

Language also seems to have become hybridised for the East African Indians. Swahili, which is widely spoken in East Africa, can be easily traced in the East African Indian vernaculars, especially within the space of a Gujarati kitchen. Binita muses, "I was brought up to say bakuli and kisu, which means bowl and knife, which I considered part of my mother tongue. It was only until I took GCSE Gujarati at the age of 14 that I realised they were actually Swahili words!"

Mira Manek, a British Indian living in London whose parents came to the UK from Uganda in 1972, shares that, "chilli muwogo, fried matooke, and muwogo crisps served with lime and chilli powder, and matooke curry with all the Indian masalas in a rich tomato gravy are dishes we have regularly at home. Chevdo is another fried concoction that comes from Uganda rather than India and something that most East African Indians living in the UK indulge in." In Sunil Shah's family, an Oxford based

part-time artist and curator who was born in Kampala to Indian parents and came to the UK in 1972 when he was three; there was an adoption of eating non-vegetarian dishes. "I think this influence came from East Africa, where Asians away from the 'motherland' were open to new experiences and cultural habits. This included eating meat, chicken, fish and consuming alcohol."



Food and identity

For some South Asian Ugandans, their "African-ness" is defined by their connection to culture through food and other influences but, for others, these characteristics have faded due to a lack of relevance in their everyday lives. Sunil sees a fading of "African-ness" in his family and less of a connection. "Without the direct influence of Ugandan or East African culture, many cultural habits, for example, food or the use of language, become replaced by new habits which then go towards forming new cultural norms." Others such as Binita see Africa being very central to their identity due to their upbringing, "I was connected to my ACS African Society at University, because there's that joint identity there, you know what *muwogo* is and *matooke* and you can eat it together. We definitely have that mutual understanding. To me, it's closer than the connection to India because it is

more recent..Personally, my family and I are much more connected to Africa, as it is where my cousins live. We still have many African ornaments in our house.”

The food we eat can have deeper meanings and connections for those that consume it. From evoking memories of the past, to continuing strong bonds with places, food is not just food. It can contribute to forming our identity and connecting us to legacies and places. Just as identity is fluid, so is food. Through food we can develop new cultural practices. It’s warming to see Ugandans of different backgrounds integrating non-traditional foods into their daily palates and to see a shared appreciation of them despite their diverging histories. Food has the ability to unify. I am grateful for the hybrid nature of my family’s palate: a life of solely boiled and steamed food would have been dire. And although I didn’t find out how samosas became “sumboosas”, I have a deeper appreciation and understanding of their journey.

Going Global in a New Package

Reception of “Kobi’r Larai” in the UK

By Priyanka Basu

“I do not miss the episodes of Kobi’r Larai. They re-create the rural ambience for you exceptionally well.”

Kobigaan or Kobir Ladai is one of the numerous performance genres that employ the form of verse-duelling or poetic contest. It engages two poet-singers (kobiya) and their team of orchestra and chorus (dohaar) in a long-standing debate. The musical practice is found both in West Bengal and in Bangladesh, especially in the rural spaces where a single performance can go up to 12 or 14 hours depending on the topic of the debate and the interest of the audience. The topics of Kobigaan range across a number of issues, both religious and social. However, like any other folk performance genre, Kobigaan has also adapted to modern technological changes, thus moving out of the villages to urban fairs/festivals and even to television shows and video-cds. In this essay, I focus on a television show called “Kobir Larai” which is aired by Channel 9 in Bangladesh and is also catered to Bangladeshi viewers in the UK. Following from a viewing of the shooting process of “Kobi’r Larai” in Dhaka and an interview with Channel 9 staff in London, I try to bring out how Kobigaan is tailor-made for the reception of a trans-national audience.

Ethnic media may choose to present its programmes either in the ethnic language or in a bilingual format. The promotion of language forms a vital part of the broadcasting tendencies of these media. On the other hand, media scholars like John D. H. Downing add musical culture and religious expression as additional elements in the ethnic media mix, the most common elements being those of language and dialect. Secondly and more importantly, Downing shows how ethnic media tends to circulate within three different sectors, namely, indigenous nations and communities, recent migrants and settled subordinate ethnic groups. It is therefore essential to speculate in depth on these two functions of musical culture as part of the ethnic media and within the more specific context of how they are

manoeuvred in a programme like “Kobi’r Larai”.

“Kobi’r Larai” is aired every Sunday at 9:15 PM on Channel 9 in Bangladesh. The producer of the show, Ruhul Tapas, was asked by the Chairman of the Channel to come up with something different and yet reflecting clearly the authenticity of Bengali culture. Channel 9 is broadcast free-to-air and covers a broadcast area spanning from Asia to Europe. A range of entertainment and sports programmes are telecast regularly on the Channel, which sums itself up as:

Channel Nine is the first ever fully fledged satellite Bangla entertainment channel bringing audiences a new generation of programming. Channel Nine is a free-view Bangladeshi satellite TV station. The test transmission started on 8th Apr. 2011. Channel Nine features top quality productions with focus on popular drama serials, games shows, children’s programmes, reality shows, comedy shows and sports.



As we browse through the live streaming of the promotions of this wide range of programmes on the channel, we find that music and musical shows constitute a major segment of the telecasts.

In November 2012 I viewed the process of shooting of “Kobi’r Larai” in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This shooting process was for some of the episodes of Season II of “Kobi’r Larai”. It included some of the performers or kobyials whom I had already documented performing in village performances in Chandpur and Pirojpur. The production set in the show, located inside a seemingly abandoned warehouse-like structure, represented an attempt to replicate a Kobigaan performance space in the village. The raised platform

functioning as the space of performance resembled the traditional Kobigaan (or Jatra) space – a rectangular stage open on all sides for the audience seating. The two groups of dohaars were seated along the breadth of this rectangular space which was further adorned by a colourful shamiana. The audience here faced the performance and were seated as in a proscenium space. The set or designed performance space in Season I represented a closer replication of the rural scene and the essence of Kobigaan being that of a rural genre of performance. This set shows a mud house with an open courtyard, a shading tree in the background and windows lit with lanterns. The audience is either completely absent from this space or has a faint presence. Both the promos for Season I and II highlight the space of performance; one of the promos of Season I shows only this constructed rural scene with the general background score for the programme.

The process of shooting for the episodes revealed a distinctive pattern that was later and further clarified by some of the episodes of Season II. The episodes run weekly for an hour each with a host conducting the sequences of “Kobi’r Larai”. Each episode (in Season II) begins with the host, Arup Rahee, singing a folk song from one of the many genres across Bangladesh and then introducing the topic of debate along with the contesting performers. For example, in one of the episodes that highlighted a debate between Radha and Krishna, he sang a popular number from the love episodes of the characters, introduced the topic of debate, and introduced the performers who were to role-play Radha (played by Aleya Begum) and Krishna (Khurshed Alam) in the debate. The programme is executed with a number of advertisement breaks in between which is structured in a way such that they alternate between the paanchali (narrative arguments) of the performers. In elucidating the format of the show and in pointing out its difference with the “authentic” Kobigaan they generally perform, Sadananda Sarkar says, “In the limited time-frame of one hour, we can only begin with a dhuya (song), move directly into the paanchali, and finally end the debate with a milongeeti” (concluding duet). However, for performers like Sadananda who call the television performances “contractorygaan” (singing on contracts), the limited format of Kobigaan is still a drawback for the audiences’ understanding of the performance. Despite such shortcomings, however, they agree to the fact that broadcasting the show on Kobigaan allows the circulation of the otherwise lesser-known genre among the global audience.

To come to the context of the reception of the show in the UK, let us see how Channel Nine UK promotes itself:

Channel Nine UK is the first ever fully fledged satellite Bangla entertainment channel bringing audiences a new generation of programming. A young but vibrant popular brand, Channel Nine UK has cleverly combined the deep-rooted cultural aspects along with a progressive platform to highlight the different facets of Bangladesh both home and abroad.

Channel Nine UK features top quality productions with focus on popular drama serials, games shows, children's programmes, reality shows, comedy shows and sports. It also features a huge variety of local programmes especially focusing on the Sylheti-Bangladeshi viewers in UK and Europe.

Both the "deep rooted cultural aspects" and the "different facets of Bangladesh both home and abroad" are indicative of the fact that the Channel's aims both in Bangladesh and outside of it are to focus on the way the "Bengali-ness" of cultural objects is to be received by its viewers. A pertinent example in this case would be the children's programme, "Esho Bangla Shikhi" (Come, Let's Learn Bengali) that presents performance abilities (in the form of recitation in Bengali, songs etc.) of Bangladeshi children born and living in the UK. The purposes of fulfilling audience choices with regard to "home and abroad", however, needs to be viewed as following separate but converging trajectories: serving the national public and presenting for the ethnic minority. Channel Nine UK, characterizing itself as a representative form of the ethnic media, says:

We offer a strong platform for viewers and advertisers to provide the best possible service in Ethnic Media. This in turn will provide all sponsors and advertisers a sound platform to reach out to the wide Bangladeshi audiences throughout Europe. Our concentration is to serve the local community, involve ourselves further with local community projects and provide a platform to enhance CHANNEL NINE UK as the best Bangla Entertainment Channel in Europe for every generation.



Let us then consider the reception of “Kobi’r Larai” in the UK where the show is immensely popular especially among the considerably large Bangladeshi population (where the Season II episodes of the show are running currently) and has mainstream sponsors (or British companies) like Lyca Mobile, O2, Dialer Code, Landlord Insurance and TRS. Telecom companies are keener on sponsoring the show since a large number of Bangladeshi as well as Indian (Bengali) viewers settled in the UK call their home countries using their telecom services. They as sponsors are also responsible for managing the scheduling of the show. The show might also extend its scope towards including Jatra-Pala. The TRP for the programme is 300,000 or more (this is based on viewership and monitored by sponsors). The process of TRP collection is quite complex and can be compared to the way each click on a website is the way of counting its viewership; the TRP collection is also an expensive procedure which is carried out regularly and mainly by the sponsor of the show. “Kobi’r Larai” is not available for streaming on the UK website and thus does not become a more interactive content as far as the audience interactivity in media is considered. In the words of Mohammed Zahirul Islam (Head of Post-Production, Channel Nine UK):

Our viewership does not consist of many Indian Bengalis but mostly Bangladeshis. Channel Nine UK is the first of its kind in airing such programmes on the folk songs of Bangladesh. The popularity of Channel 9 rests mainly on the broadcasting of sports (it started with the Bangladesh Premier League) and music.

Interestingly, the UK equivalent of the channel undertakes the job of tailor-making the show (as it is broadcast in Bangladesh) to fit the schematics of telecasting in the UK. The broadcasting system in the UK segment of the channel is responsible for the following functions with regard to the pre-broadcast editing of the show:

- Recording a number of shows from Bangladesh simultaneously
- Shows are then gradually segregated
- Bangladeshi commercials are dropped out
- Shows are re-edited and modified
- Local commercials are inserted

This process of editing and modification is carried out by only one person who is also responsible for the transmission of the show. A large number of calls come regularly from viewers who call mainly:

- If the Channel fails to broadcast the show on the scheduled day
- Generally to inquire about the programme

To express their gratitude for airing a programme of their choice
Requesting for more new episodes of the show (reason for the telecasting of Season II)

The audience does not look for any innovation in the way the programme has been structured. The audience complained vehemently when the programme was temporarily suspended for six months in 2012-13. During this time Channel Nine UK started re-telecasting the old episodes which had a good viewership but the audience constantly called for new episodes. Channel 9, though it claims itself to be part of the Ethnic Media, aims for the larger Bengali community in the UK (both Indian and Bangladeshi). In conclusion, it can be said that "Kobi'r Larai" as a show that re-formats Kobigaan to acquaint the local (Bangladesh) and the global (UK) audience with the Bengali cultural traditions of "home" is one of the many ways of adapting music for trans-national reception. It shows how communities perceive the cultures of "home" within the local setting and how it upholds a sense of belonging to the diaspora abroad for whom music forms a means of connecting to their roots.

From Silk Road to London

The journey of the Chinese Cuisines

By Fathima Begum

Leicester Square, the heart of London, where the famous Shaftesbury Avenue meets the M&M World, where the major Hollywood films are premiered alongside the space overlooking the statues of Shakespeare, Hogarth and Charlie Chaplin; here lies Chinatown, the essence of Chinese food and its cuisine in the Capital. Well decorated with all things that illustrate the Chinese culture and heritage, the Chinese food market provides a beautiful glimpse of the diversity within the Chinese community living in London. The Chinese cuisines of the city have gone through a noticeable change over the years. The taste and style of Chinese food which was once dominated by the flavours from the region of Canton, brought over by the older generation of Chinese migrants, has now become more reflective of the various regional tastes and styles of food enjoyed across China. The emergence of the regional Chinese restaurants is also bringing out the minority Chinese communities into the spotlight.



Initially set out in Limehouse, old Chinatown had everything. It provided a home away from home for Chinese dock workers and local migrants who

were mainly from the Cantonese region. Since the 1970s, London has seen a shift of Chinese restaurants opening up in most areas in the city. Early on, these restaurants were unable to source out authentic Chinese vegetables and spices; so each restaurant had its own patch where they could grow local Chinese produce. As for the spices, they had to rely on dockworkers to bring them along when they came over to work. Chinese food also became infused with British culinary tastes, giving the Chinese cuisines a distinct westernised style with sweeter flavours.

In recent years, however, it has become easier to source out Chinese ingredients with the arrival of numerous Chinese supermarkets across London, aimed at providing the authentic Chinese ingredients. There is a private joke among the Chinese living outside China, about the 'Chinese Stomach'. Chen Ye, a student from Beijing currently studying at the University of London, says, "The Chinese have adapted many aspects of the Western culture; however, there is one area that refuses to be westernized: it's the 'Chinese Stomach.'" This means that, no matter where in the world a Chinese may go, they will take their food with them. Not surprisingly, for the recent migrants from China, the more traditional British Chinese food is seen to be orientated towards a westernised palate. For Chen Ye it lacks the spice she is used to enjoying back home. The spicy Chinese cuisines can be found in regions such as Hunan and Sichuan.

In fact, it is the recent migrants who have revolutionised the Chinese restaurants by shifting the focus more towards the regional cuisines. While the restaurants are returning back to authentic Chinese regional food, some aim to cater for both the existing Cantonese crowds as well as the new arrivals.

Silk Road in Camberwell is an example of the way regional food of China is becoming a hit among food enthusiasts. Set in a busy Camberwell high street, Silk Road is a local Chinese restaurant but is one of a handful of restaurants which serve Uyghur food. Uyghur food is local to Northern China, Xinjiang. It is an infusion of the Turkic Muslim heritage mixed with the fiery spices of Chinese food. Uyghur food is traditionally served as a roasted lamb or chicken on a large platter shared by everyone around the table. Uyghur culture is very family-orientated and revolves around its community and involving everyone. It is a combination of traditional Middle Eastern/Turkish food such as Shish and served on a bed of noodles. The other popular dishes include spicy dumplings filled with lamb, chicken or vegetables and chilli flavoured broths filled with freshly made noodles.

The technique used for cooking meat is similar to that in the Middle East and Turkey, which involves cooking the meat at a high temperature

in a hot oven over a long period of time. The spices used are distinctively Chinese and reflect the legacy of the Silk route which ran through the desert area of Central Asia, transporting goods and spices from India and the Mediterranean.

The popularity of Silk Road is a testament to the impact of recent migrants in changing the image of Chinese cuisines. Although such restaurants are responding to the demands of the new vibrant Chinese migrants, they are also being embraced by the culinary adventurers of London.



Londoners from the Land of the Setting Sun

Morocco



By Ahmed Choudhury

With London being the melting pot that it is, it's not surprising to come across cafes and restaurants specialising in cuisines from different parts of the world. As an artist who is interested in the arts and crafts of various cultures, what I find particularly fascinating are the various geometric and Arabesque patterns and motifs that are consistently used to design the interior of Moroccan cafes and restaurants.

I often wondered whether the inspiration behind the design was to merely enhance the culinary experience of their customers or was there more to it. So when I was offered the opportunity to participate in the Knowing One Another project, I decided to find out.

I visited my local Moroccan restaurants and cafes to ask whether there is a story behind the décor. Every shop I visited, I was given the same response. Primarily the inspiration behind their décor was nothing more than to beautify the environment with designs associated with Islamic themes. The answer was not surprising as geometric and Arabesque shapes and patterns are very harmonic and beautiful as well as sacred. As a curious person, my

quest for learning about different cultures and their arts and crafts led me to inquire further into the Moroccan community, both in the UK and In Morocco.



Moroccans in the UK

There are about some 65,000 – 70,000 Moroccans currently living in Britain. Moroccan migration to Britain took place over four phases. First, during the 1960s many unskilled workers came to the UK, predominantly from Northern Morocco such as Tangir, Larache, Tetouan and other surrounding areas. London was the most popular destination for them but many of them also settled in other towns, including Slough, St Albans, Crawley and Trowbridge. Second, in the seventies many families of those Moroccans already in the country came to join them. Third, the eighties witnessed the arrivals of more ambitious, career-minded young

entrepreneurs and semi-skilled professionals into Britain, originating mainly from Casablanca and other major cities. Fourth, the more recent phase was during the nineties that consisted of professionals coming directly from both Morocco and via European countries, mainly France.



Moroccans in London

Pockets of Moroccans can be found throughout London. However, the largest concentration of the community can be found in the North Kensington area. This is a very close-knit community with a strong sense of a Moroccan identity, even amongst the second and third generations.

Golborne Road is a well-known area for a high presence of Moroccans, where there are many shops, restaurants, cafes, community organisations, supplementary schools and mosques led by the community. It is no wonder that Golborne Road is often referred to as Little Morocco. A few roads away from Golborne Road is situated the famous Portobello market, which is the world's largest Antique market, where one can find many Moroccan food and shop outlets. Popular community centres serving the Moroccan population in the North Kensington area include The British Moroccan

Society, Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre and the Moroccan Youth UK.

Morocco at a Glance

Although I visited Morocco a few times prior to getting involved with the Knowing One Another project, my latest trip to the country was more interesting than ever, as this time round I was more interested in exploring the people, their lifestyles and cultures in a bit more detail.

The land of the setting sun, 'EL Magrib el Aqsa' or Morocco as it is more commonly known is a country steeped in rich history, biodiversity and traditions that never demise with time. It is the home of the famous fourteenth century traveller and geographer, Ibn Battuta (1304-1377). I am deeply attracted to the country like thousands of others who regularly fly there to enjoy the sun, the people and the beautiful varied landscapes, from the rugged dry terrains such as the Atlas Mountains to its breath-taking sandy beaches of the Atlantic.

During my visits to the country, I was struck by the wonderfully diverse peoples and landscapes. There are Muslims, Christians and Jews living side by side, happily co-existing since the Andalusian times, despite Islam being the dominant religion. I was also impressed with the linguistic skills of the inhabitants. They are generally multilingual due to their colonial history. The Moroccans speak French as well as their national languages, Arabic and Berber. However, many can speak at least four to five different languages, including Spanish and English. Some can also sing really well in Hindi! I say this because I was once followed by a charming young man in Marrakesh all the way to the hotel entrance singing a very popular Hindi song. I gave him a few dirhams that brought a smile to his face. Hindi films are quite popular over there as well as other foreign films such as Egyptian and American. Some of the main cities I visited during my various trips included Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakesh, Tangir, Essaouria and Agadir. As I toured the country from town to town, I was really impressed with the level of consistency found in Moroccan arts, crafts and architecture. The Fondogs (hotels), Babs (gates), Riads (traditional houses) and Kasbsas (fortress) were really awe inspiring. Moroccan interior design that I experienced was bursting with colour and dazzling with motif tiles and textiles. It is no wonder that the western artists and interior designers are increasingly adopting these designs into their works. I myself was so attracted to these

designs I could not stop clicking my camera.

Rabat

Rabat, the capital city of Morocco, founded in the twelfth century, is a city with a visible western influence. It is surrounded by many western-style cafes and restaurants as well as many designer clothes shops popular in the West. McDonalds, KFC, Burger King and other fast food chain outlets are also very popular places, in particular amongst the young. In contrast to many other parts of Morocco, such as Marrakesh and Fez, there are fewer Madrasas and Mosques in the capital. However, I was awe-inspired by the magnificence of the Hassan Tower – a beautiful historic site, situated on a hill overlooking both Rabat and Sale. The Tower is an unfinished minaret of the Great Hassan Mosque, which was constructed under the supervision of Caliph Yacoub el Mansour in 1196. Unfortunately, the project could not be completed due to the Caliph's death. Had it been completed, it would have been the second largest mosque in the World, with a capacity for 40,000 worshippers.





Casablanca

Casablanca is the economic heart of the country. It is a port city, originally known as Anfa. Its original architecture was destroyed in an earthquake, but was later restored in 1755, and was given the name Dar el Beida (The White House) or Casa Blanca in Spanish. It is a true archetype of a modern metropolis. I was amazed to see the great number of Hotels that were there. You are literally spoiled for choice. There are many modern office blocks and expensive apartments, serving well for the ever-growing middle-class population as well as the many thousands of tourists visiting there. Cafes and restaurants buzzing with people give it a true sense of energy and dynamism. The city does not seem to ever go to sleep. I was astonished to see how lively the people were even though it was getting quite late in the night. I saw young children playing outside, older men sipping traditional tea and coffee, couples taking romantic strolls and groups of friends standing by the cafe singing beautiful songs. It was certainly characteristic of the North African culture where days are spent working and evenings are spent in the cool weather enjoying tea, nice conversations and music. In fact, Moroccan wedding celebrations begin at midnight!





Marrakesh

If you are an artist or an art lover, Marrakech is the place. I found the city to be very enthralling and enchanting. The city was built in the eleventh century by a powerful religious Berber tribe under the leadership of Youssef Ben Tashfine. It was the first capital of Morocco and is also known as 'The Red City'. Before visiting the city I had no idea about what to expect. I did not undertake any background research and had no idea that I would eventually fall in love with it. One of the most charming characteristics of the city is the sense of adventure that resonates when walking through the maze-like Central Square/Jemaa el Fanaa. The square has remained as the jewel in the crown to this day, just as it had been since its inception. I was really fascinated by the array of things that were happening there all at once. Equivalent to an open air theatre show, the square was being surrounded by snake charmers, strange-looking men making money out of monkey shows, and storytellers - telling tales of old and faraway lands. There were also musicians and magicians, making a living out of entertaining their audiences. The square is surrounded by many small and large coffee shops and restaurants, fruit stalls selling all kinds of exotic fruits as well as many artisan stalls selling fancy handicrafts, rugs and souvenirs. The buzz does not end in the square. Each path leading away from the square is also filled with waves of little souks and shop outlets that can keep any soul busy for a very long time.

Essaouira

A beautiful coastal town which lies in the southwest of the country linked to Marrakesh by a recently upgraded road, home to the argon plant. The houses are painted in White and Blue, a truly refreshing colour that complements the geographical environment. The scenic view is just truly breath-taking and my mouth still waters from the memory of the delicious seafood I ordered in one of the restaurants just a little walk away from the Medina. The Medina itself is a really adventurous site, consisting of souks along alleyways selling the most exquisite souvenirs and handmade arts and crafts.





Eritrean community in London



By Mahmudul Chowdhury

I first came to know about Eritrea while undertaking history classes on the World Wars at Cambridge High School in Dubai, (UAE). There, we were taught about the federalisation of Eritrea after the Second World War.

Whilst working at a Starbucks café in Harrods in around 2006, I served a coffee to an Eritrean lady who started to discuss the origins of coffee with me. We spoke about the journey of the coffee beans to the UK which goes back to the 1600s. The Eritrean port Adulis was at the forefront of trade between Yemen and other nearby cities. The lady told me that it was through the contact between traders from various parts of the world at the port of Eritrea that the coffee beans first emerged in the cafes of London.

Since that meeting I hardly came across any Eritreans. I did not meet anyone during my time as a student at the University of Westminster, nor

through my social networking events. This really puzzled me as I assumed there would be a visible Eritrean presence in London since Eritrea was once a British colony (1941 - 1952).

This curiosity inspired me to find out more about the Eritrean community for this project.

Who are the Eritreans?

Eritrea has a mixed Afro-Asiatic population that is divided by religion and language. There are nine ethnic groups in Eritrea, which are:

1. Tigrinya - Central highlands of Maakel and Debub
2. Tigre - Western lowlands across the northern mountains to the coastal plains.
3. Saho – Red Sea coast (Foro) and the hinterland south of Asmara and Massawa and the highlands as far as Hazumo Valley.
4. Afar - Also known as Dankils, along the south-eastern Red Sea coast and on the Dahlak islands.
5. Hedareb - Also known as T’badwe in western Barka (Tessenei) and Sahel.
6. Kunama - Around Barentu.
7. Bilen - In and around Keren.
8. Nara - Also known as Baria, on the western slopes and Barka plains.
9. Rashaida - Northern Red Sea coast.

There are two major religions in Eritrea, Christianity and Islam. According to the Pew Research Center, around 62.9% of Eritrea’s population in 2010 adhered to Christianity, and 36.2% followed Islam. The remaining 0.9% of residents practised other religions, including traditional faiths and animism.

Eritrean Communities in London

Eritrean Communities are generally dispersed across north, west and south London and there are thriving communities situated in Neasden, Finsbury Park, Shepherds Bush, Camberwell, Stockwell and Brixton. They have established cafes and restaurants in London. One of the most well-

known Eritrean restaurants is Mobus, located at Harrow, and Adulis at Clapham Junction.

According to the 2011 UK census, there are approximately 17,300 Eritreans living in England and Wales.

Suleiman Hussain is an Eritrean human rights activist who came to Britain in 2003 after fleeing persecution from the Eritrean government

Interview with Mr Suleiman Hussain

The interview with Mr. Suleiman Hussain was set up at an Italian cafe near Finsbury Park station. This is a popular cafe amongst the local Eritreans who use this space as a social hub. Mr Hussain is fluent in Italian which I observed while he ordered our beverages from a waitress. That made my mind flash back to the history books of my youth which had informed me that at one stage Eritrea was under Italian colonial administration. No wonder the Italian loves coffee.

He was born in Asmara, the capital city which is locally known as Asmera. Mr Hussain belongs to the Sah-speaking group. His family still lives in Eritrea.



Saho

The Saho community make up 5% of the population, inhabiting the coast and the hinterland south of Asmera and Massawa. They are predominantly Muslim and are known as great pastoralists.

Some Saho members are sedentary farmers who have settled in the highlands of Akele Guzay. Honey is an important part of the Saho diet and the people are also known as good beekeepers. In the past, they were also renowned as warriors, and were often enlisted to escort trade caravans between central Ethiopia and the port of Massawa.

The Saho are organised in patrilineal descent groups. The leaders, elected by the male assembly, are known as rezantos, and were formerly the military chiefs in times of war.

The colonial debris and current world affairs have had a huge impact on the region. Eritrea was at one stage colonised by Italy (1882-1941) and then became a colony of the British Imperial administration (1941 to 1952). In 1952, after Ethiopia gained its independence from the British Empire, a deal was signed which made Eritrea part of Ethiopia. Eritreans have been in a political battle ever since. However, after its independence in 1991 the political conflicts did not end. The current government has been subjugating the population and challenging the opposition. Due to these political problems, many Eritreans were forced to flee to other countries, such as the UK.

In the last ten years there has been a marked increase in the number of Eritreans coming to the UK and claiming Asylum on the grounds of political persecution in their country. Mr Hussain believes that most Eritreans prefer to come to the UK as they feel more welcome here than in any other parts of the world. The English language and the diversity in the UK also play a role. Education in Eritrea is taught in the English medium and people generally make an effort to learn to speak English. As a result it is easier to access education in UK, which is also regarded in high esteem back in Eritrea. Most Eritreans wish to go back to make a better life for themselves so, naturally, many are currently in education. In addition, cities such as London, being the home of various cultures and communities, have helped the new arrivals to feel safer in the UK than in any other parts of the world. Safety and acceptance seem to be the key factors for the Eritreans, who are seeking a temporary home until the troubles end in their country of origin.

The vast majority of the newly arriving refugees from Eritrea are young

people of military age. Since 1994, National Service became mandatory in Eritrea for all citizens, males and females. Consequently, all citizens who are between 18 and 40 years of age are expected to undergo six months of military training and twelve months of unpaid service. Initially, people did not seem to have a problem with the idea of serving their country and in fact there was a significant degree of enthusiasm. However, the situation changed dramatically when the border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia broke out in 1998. The servicemen are required to remain in the military until excused and it had also become compulsory for those that had previously served in the military to return back to serve their units. As a result, many young people had no choice but to flee the country.

Interview

1. How have current world affairs impacted on different religions in Eritrea?

Generally speaking, current world politics have had a negative impact on Eritrea. The country's already poor human rights conditions have been made worse by the continued conflict and warfare while the living conditions continue to deteriorate. The combined effect of all these factors has led to a record number of refugees living the country during the last ten years. While it is difficult to say there has been no impact on the social fabric and to predict what might happen in the future, current world politics does not seem to have a huge impact on the peaceful coexistence of Eritrea's different religious communities.

2. How did these political problems arise?

During the scramble for Africa in the nineteenth century, Eritrea was one of the three countries in Africa that were colonised by Italy. Following the end of the Second World War, with the defeat of Italy by the British army, Eritrea came under the control of the British military administration and its fate was decided by the major world powers that had won the war. Post-war Eritrea became federated with Ethiopia, a country that was an ally of the then world powers. Ten years later, Ethiopia unlawfully annexed Eritrea and this triggered the longest war of independence anywhere in Africa, during which tens of thousands of Eritreans had to flee Eritrea to

seek refuge elsewhere.

Unfortunately, the situation continued even after the war had come to an end when Eritrea achieved its independence in 1991. This is because an authoritarian government took power in Eritrea and consequently the conditions of the Eritrean people continued to deteriorate. This was further exacerbated by the resumption of the fighting between Eritrea and Ethiopia that broke out in 1998 barely seven years later. The war continued for two and half decades but peace between the two countries is yet to come. Although some deep-rooted causes within the two nations have played a part in this lasting battle, unfortunately current world politics is playing a major role in this regard. For all the above reasons, the phenomenon of refugees fleeing Eritrea is not a new experience but has been continuing for the last five decades.

3. What were the reasons for choosing Britain?

Newly arriving refugees need a system that would help them to feel safe and begin a new life in their host country. The British system is one that is designed to help them integrate into the host society which I believe is one of the main reasons why refugees prefer to come to Britain. This is based on my personal experiences as well as what I have learned working with refugee communities. When I first came here some ten years ago, not only did I feel safe but I was also impressed by the extent to which Britain has become a multicultural society.

Britain not only has an adequate structure to deal with the basic needs of the newly arriving refugees but there is also a great deal of political will by the authorities and a society that is relatively more tolerant and more open. In fact, it is quite easy for refugees to develop a sense of belonging in the British society that is becoming increasingly more multicultural and multi religious. Besides, I am impressed by the continuous attempt to improve the system in order to cope with the needs of a continuously evolving society. There are, of course, other reasons why refugees would prefer to come to the UK rather than elsewhere in Europe. For instance, English is taught at all of the education institutions in Eritrea and therefore many people find life in Britain easier compared to other places where language could be a barrier.

Biography

Jawad Saleem Afridi

I belong to Khyber Agency (A tribal area in Pakistan). I have a degree in Telecommunication Engineering and currently completing a Masters in Engineering Management. I am also planning on pursuing a PhD in the field of Engineering Management. I am a visiting lecturer and a professional photographer. People often tell me that photography and teaching are two different fields and that I should only choose one as a profession. However since my passion lies in both fields, so why choose one?

Priyanka Basu

Priyanka Basu has completed her PhD on “Bengali” Kobigaan: Performing Communities, Histories and the Cultural Politics of “Folk” on a Felix Scholarship under the supervision of Prof Francesca Orsini at the Department of South Asia in SOAS, London. She has published on Music and Dance Studies in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes including the ‘Indian Journal for Gender Studies’, ‘Nukkad Janam Samvad’ and ‘Arshinagar: Baul Fakir Utshab Patrika’. She has taught at the Department of South Asia in SOAS and at Bethune College, Calcutta.

Fathima Begum

I’m not very good at introducing myself. If you ask my friends, family and colleagues, they’ll agree on one thing - that I’m loud and I probably could talk to a brick wall! My inspiration for this project comes from the love of food and experimenting different cuisines. I see cuisines from different parts of the world as an important avenue to understanding and respecting cultures of the world. I love to taste different flavours and spices and am always up for a challenge to try out new dishes. I have a passion in interfaith work and therefore have been involved in several interfaith projects across the UK, participating in various activities including curating interfaith exhibitions. I have a degree in History and Politics from

Goldsmiths, University of London.

Gregory Choi (Yun Hin)

I am currently completing my degree in History and Politics at School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Now this is my second years in London as a student. As a newcomer to London, I find myself living in a multi-cultural city, which is something extremely new to me. I was born and bred in Hong Kong, where I spent my entire childhood and teenage life before choosing to study abroad in England. Since I am still young I would like to explore London more.

Mahmudul Chowdhury

Mahmudul Chowdhury is a freelance photographer, who is an avid traveller. He is an international citizen born in Tokyo, to Bangladeshi parents. Mahmud has a degree in Information Systems. One of his proudest moments has been to volunteer as part of the production team for the Rio Flag Handover ceremony in London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

Ahmed Choudhury

Ahmed Choudhury has completed his BSc in Community Sector Management in 2009. He is passionate about community development work, social anthropology, religion, history, and arts and crafts of different traditions. He has undertaken various Community Development roles in the field of Health, Social Welfare and Youth Work. Currently Ahmed is working for the NHS. During his spare time Ahmed like's to spend time on painting, photography, acting and Drama as well as reading and writing short stories.

Rubia Dar

Rubia Dar is a documentary and television Producer. She has produced programmes for the BBC, Channel 4 and US broadcasters Discovery and National Geographic. As a proud east Londoner she's interested in the changing face of London and its ever evolving communities.

Katasi Kironde

Katasi Kironde is British Ugandan and grew up mostly in West London. She's lived in Saudi Arabia, Canada, and most recently Uganda. Her interests include international development and Diasporas and culture. She has a Masters in Social Entrepreneurship from Goldsmiths University and holds an undergraduate degree from University of Sussex.

Halima Khanom

I am interested in the history of migration in London, particularly East London. I have a love of maps, both historical and contemporary, both navigational and impressionistic. In the past three years, I have explored these interest through my various roles within the heritage sector, at organisations including the Royal Geographical Society [with IBG], the Museum of London and my current role is at the Imperial War Museum.

Karen Lennox

Karen Lennox is a documentary photographer who has worked on projects in Europe.

Zeus Rodman

Hi, I'm a Designer & Photographer based in the UK & Canada. If you like the design of this book and would like to see more projects I have worked on, please check out my portfolio at Zeusrodman.com

Akvile Terminaite

Akvilè is an illustrator and designer who is using mixed and digital media to experiment with formats and displays of illustration. Her portfolio consists of editorial work, experience based objects and pitches for digital platforms. If you would like to see more of her work please visit her

Edwood Burn

Edwood Burn is an illustration graduate, currently living and working in Kingston upon Thames. He grew up in Walthamstow, East London. His work includes reportage documentary drawing, portraiture and painting. He has a keen eye for detail and love to capture the characters he meets.

Project end celebration / book launch 20 April 2016

