

t h i n k

diversity



EDITION 2

Different Journeys,
One Destination



welcome

Kia ora,

Thank you for taking the time to read this magazine, we're excited to have published our second edition of Think Diversity magazine, the very first diversity magazine in Aotearoa.

The magazine consists of stories and thoughts on what diversity means to a number of Kiwis from all over New Zealand.

We are a very ethnically diverse country with a wide array of ethnicities ranging from the indigenous Māori to our Europeans brothers and sisters, Asians to Pacific Islanders, North Americans to South Americans, Middle Easterners to Africans and so on. Diversity is all around us. It exists in the core of our structures and institutions, communities and workplaces.

As a country, we have done so well in accommodating those who have decided to resettle in NZ from various countries and backgrounds. Those who resettle in New Zealand are often presented with so many opportunities that have helped them reach their potentials. Without a doubt, New Zealand is a great example of a very caring and accommodating nation.

Think Diversity magazine brings together not only people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, but also careers, religions, cultures, values and so on. Our mission is to bring New Zealand's diversity to life via print and digital media and, in doing so, to inspire our audiences to be more curious, more open-minded and more engaged with their neighbours. We believe that understanding leads to empathy and that empathy leads to a whole host of other good things – compassion, harmony, inclusivity – that will contribute to making the world a better place.

We hope to share this magazine nationwide, with the goal that everyone who reads this magazine and subsequent publications – whether you are company CEO, year 10 student, political leader or anyone in between – will be inspired to think more deeply about what diversity means to you.

As you read, the only thing we ask is that you try to forget your day to day role, your age and experience, or the status you hold within society. Rather, focus on the fact that we are all equal in our humanity; that whilst our cultural backgrounds might be different, there are some universal values that we all share and cherish.

Ashleigh Ali-Aziz

Founder

Contributors



Mohammed

What makes our world unique and special is our differences. Imagine living in a world where everyone looks the same, thinks the same and speaks the same. How boring would that be? Diversity is not just what you see from the outside but also about what you learn from someone's inner self. You don't really know a person until you talk to them. Diversity to me is being in an accepting environment that provides a person with an opportunity to express their true inner self.

Karen



Being African I have always been familiar with Diversity. Africa is a large continent with many different countries. Everyone is different and there are so many different cultures and traditions. Moving to New Zealand widened my perspective on Diversity. I learned that diversity is more than we think. What makes you and me individually diverse is not only our cultural backgrounds but it is also the difference in personalities, different ideas, body shapes, skin colour, eye colour and more. Imagine living in a world where we all look really the same? That would be boring. Diversity brings excitement. To everyone struggling to fit in, accept themselves, embarrassed of their culture; just remember it is what makes you special! Embrace it, love it. Because it is you. You make the world a more diverse place.

Eric



The diversity that we see around us every day is a gift from God, and diversity takes many forms. The many different ethnicities, cultures, religions, colours, geographical features, thought patterns, opinions etc. all contribute to the wonderful tapestry of life, from which we can all benefit.

The first edition of the Diversity magazine, entitled 'Aotearoa, equally different' which shared contributors' thoughts on diversity, was amazing, and graces many coffee tables around Aotearoa. This second edition, entitled 'One Destination, Different Journeys', takes the conversation to a whole new level, with contributors sharing their deepest thoughts and feelings about their experiences of moving to New Zealand. These stories can serve as both a guide to new immigrants in how to deal with their own challenges, as well as a textbook for educationalists, social workers and other support agencies in assisting with policymaking around these challenges. Share the love. Share the vision.

Weaam

Diversity is not just about race or gender but about ideas and mindsets too. When we surround ourselves with people who are different to us, in any shape or form, not only do we learn and grow from each other but we work towards a society that is more tolerant and understanding. A society which has these attributes, is a society where people are kind to each other and one that functions well. Diversity in our lives, workplaces and activities shouldn't be a box we tick, but so natural that it doesn't even need to be mentioned. As they say, Diversity is an action, inclusivity is cultural, and belonging is a feeling, and I want everyone to feel like they belong.



Kundistan



The concept of diversity is not limited to certain factors or components. We are too unique, complex and individualistic to box ourselves in and conform to labels. The world is not as simple as just black and white. By looking past the labels, and the expectations associated with those labels, we allow for more constructive conversations about diversity to happen. In order to grow as individuals, and consequently as a population and society, we need to step out of the bubbles we live in and expand our worldview through the media, content and knowledge we consume. It is not until we begin to burst our own bubbles that we begin to realise how small our own experiences are and how diverse the world really is. This is where true growth and knowledge begins, and what we need is to understand the intersectionality of identities.

Fanoq

Diversity is a beautiful thing, accepting others and even your own diversity is what we need to grow and become a more inclusive society. By doing this we become a world where a youngster grows up accepting others' differences, including race, culture, gender, physical abilities and faith. A place where the goodness of each other's cultures and beliefs is used to make the world a better place and the only difference between us is in those who strive to make a difference through good action. New Zealand is the perfect place for this and with the wide range of people here, you the reader, are the start to making this a reality. Be the small change that future generations need.





“ To me, diversity is oxygen. It is social oxygen. It is the most important part of social well-being and I am so glad that I realised that and stopped trying to fit into an invisible mould.”

Ala

It was at the ripe age of nine that I learnt what diversity meant. I had just moved to New Zealand and was confronted with the reality that not everyone in the world looked, spoke or understood the world the same way I did. It was a shock to my system. I remember it like it was yesterday – I went to school for the first day, and had a sausage from the sausage sizzle, because everyone else did, so why not? I bit into it and realised straight away – this isn't something I've ever had before. It was a pork sausage. When I told my parents about it after school that day and they explained to me that the other kids might have pork, but I don't. I realised then that I was different. It wasn't a sad realisation or a scary concept. It was exciting. I didn't even know what pork was before that day! I wanted to know what all the kids did and ate that was different.

From that day forward, totally by accident, diversity became the centre of my existence. I was so excited to know all the things I didn't know, I tried it all. I ate feijoas and avocados with my friends, we walked around in bare feet and tried spicy food. We celebrated the Chinese New Year and went to the Marae and even to church! Man, was it fun! I still do this now – I jump on the knowledge that there's something new I haven't heard of or tried, and I make it my mission to try it.

For me, diversity means more than just different skin colours or different languages. It means a totally different lens. It's like, every time you talk to someone, you get to put on a whole new set of 3D glasses and see everything totally differently. I can't imagine what life would be like if you had the same set of lenses on all the time. So dull.

Every day I seem to learn something new that I did not know. I didn't know that when I read a sentence, and someone else reads the exact same sentence, their experiences and brain-wiring mean they'll interpret it entirely differently to how I would, almost always. I didn't know that there are so many different parts of a person's identity that make them unique and different and we should never put them in a 'box' because of one of those things.

I'm Arab and Muslim, but I don't think that's what makes me 'different'; it's my personality quirks or my eccentric dress sense. There was a time when I was younger and coming to terms with the concept of 'diversity' that I wanted to change everything about myself to fit the status quo. I wanted to change my hair colour, my skin colour, my native language, my accent, even my parents because I wanted to be like everyone else. My liberation came on the day that I realise there is no 'everyone else', because every single different person is different and that's an awesome, awesome thing. I know now that life would be nothing without diversity. If everyone thought the same way, what would you talk about? If everyone saw things the same way, would there be such thing as art? Isn't the beauty of art, whether visual or written or spoken, that it depicts a feeling or thought that someone had, and as a viewer, you look at it to interpret their thoughts or feelings and make sense of them within your framework of thoughts and feelings?

To me, diversity is oxygen. It is social oxygen. It is the most important part of social well-being and I am so glad that I realised that and stopped trying to fit into an invisible mould.



“Get out of your comfort zone, learn the language and customs, mix with good people, and you will find that Kiwis are warm, friendly and inviting, and this will have a positive influence on your life.”

Amy

I arrived in New Zealand from Beijing in January 2002 to support my son, Yuchen, who at the age of 13, came to study English at Howick College. I was expecting some challenges, but was optimistic about coming, with a possibility of maybe staying long term. There were certainly challenges, mainly because of the language barrier, but for the sake of my son, I stuck it out, learned English as fast as I could, decided to make New Zealand my home, and married a Kiwi 5 years later. My husband, Eric, also has an article in this magazine.

In China, I was the chief editor of a large newspaper, and in 1996 won an award for top advertising revenue. I also hosted an 'Economics of Beijing' radio program on consumer affairs, and Chinese readers may remember me as Tong Tong, so moving from this security to an unknown situation in another country was a major step for me. I found life quite different in New Zealand, the customs, the rules, the laws, the environment.

In China, probably because of the sheer number of people, everything moves at a fast pace. For example, if you are sick, you go to the hospital and are seen fairly quickly. In New Zealand, you make an appointment with the doctor, and may be seen in a couple of days. Everything here is more laid back, and this is good in some ways, but it takes a bit of getting used to.

Doing business in New Zealand is quite different. Here you can do it on your own, whereas in China you are reliant on people to help you along the way, and this comes at a cost. People in New Zealand are generally more honest and more friendly, but there is still underlying racism here. I felt safer in China than in New Zealand, and I guess 'safety in numbers' has a lot to do with this.

Weighing up the pros and the cons, New Zealand is a better place to live, but I encourage everyone moving to a new country to try and immerse themselves in the language and culture of the country, and they will then appreciate their life much more. Eric and I have many friends from many different ethnic backgrounds, and this really enriches our lives.

I initially got very homesick, missing my family, and although online chat facilities such as WeChat are amazing in allowing us to keep in contact, it's not quite the same, so I usually return to China once per year, around the time of Chinese New Year. I enjoy this, but I am always looking forward to returning to my new home after a few weeks.

I now work as a teacher, teaching English to mature Chinese residents. This is a big step for me, seeing I spoke no English 18 years ago. But it is so rewarding, as I am able to share the importance of learning the language, as well as helping the students in sharing my own experiences in adapting the New Zealand way of life.

In summary, I love New Zealand, but this is because I made the effort. My advice to all new immigrants is... Get out of your comfort zone, learn the language and customs, mix with good people, and you will find that Kiwis are warm, friendly and inviting, and this will have a positive influence on your life.



“ I use this medium to implore you: Leave your bubble of comfort. Learn to listen – and then listen to learn. Continue to build each other up; when people make mistakes, forgive and teach them.”

Josh

I attended schools in East Auckland and the majority of faces looked like mine. I never felt out of place because of what was in my lunchbox, but I was astounded when I found out the most common name in the world was likely Muhammad, and not John Smith. I had never heard of a Muhammad, so how could it have been the most common name?

In my short 19 years, I've heard a few of these facts which have each caused me to re-evaluate how I see the world. Growing up in a white family, in a white neighbourhood, surprisingly, leads to a white world-view. Cultural awareness must constantly be strived for, and it starts with the discovery that not everyone celebrates Christmas.

I feel that cultural awareness is best taught through immersion - whether it's asking the person next to you for the table etiquette in a Lebanese café, engaging in a seminar on North Korea, or attending a 3-day course on modern social leadership. It's comfortable to go to Uni, attend lectures (or not), chat with a friend or two, and then go home. But any form of growth doesn't come from doing the same thing as yesterday. Educating yourself out of ignorance is optional, but it's the least you can do.

It's too easy to stay within a sheltered bubble and socialise with people that look and dress and talk and eat the same way you do – especially when you're in the majority cultural group like I am. At University, I've had the joy to meet a wide range of individuals. Striving to understand others has become a gateway to rich friendships and opportunity. Although I often make mistakes, I'm able to learn, and those around me are patient enough to educate.

We have a shared space for Global Studies students at the University of Auckland. It's established as a safe space to ask genuine questions, receive thoughtful replies, and engage in healthy debate. I'm deeply appreciative for how this space has been foundational to my understanding of the wider world. I'm very aware that people with my background should not overstep in the conversation about ethnic diversity. I've needed to recognise my role, as an ally, to advocate for those who are struggling to be acknowledged, heard, understood. I'm eager to graduate and work towards a community where everyone feels as though they belong, but in the meantime, I'll probably be correcting a family member's outdated choice of words.

I use this medium to implore you: Leave your bubble of comfort. Learn to listen – and then listen to learn. Continue to build each other up; when people make mistakes, forgive and teach them. We must be inclusive in the efforts for ethnic inclusion. We must not stop working until all individuals of New Zealand feel a sense of belonging, and enjoy the privileges I have had all my life.

I'm confident about the future of cultural inclusion. As the faces around the classroom continue to diversify, our country will become a better home for us all.

inclusion



“we can build a diverse community where everyone is valued and able to fully contribute.”

Sue

In my professional life I hear lots of talk about diversity and its undoubted value and potential for virtue. But the benefits of diversity in everyday life are far more profound and have deep roots in my life. My childhood was spent in a bicultural Maori/Pakeha rural area of the Bay of Plenty where my father was the principal of a small primary school. Living in two worlds was normal but the community was divided; community events took place on the marae or at the War Memorial Hall not far from the school. But wider diversity wasn't talked about or acknowledged. There were a few share-milker families from the Netherlands, and occasionally we picked up young Mormon missionaries who were hitchhiking between centres. Their accents were fascinating and their sticks of chewing gum completely exotic!

What I didn't know at the time, was that my mum's maternal relatives were of Jewish descent but somehow through the rigours of migration and in order to avoid discrimination, had abandoned and disguised their ethnic and religious diversity to become Presbyterian. This heritage was hardly ever discussed in the family, a reflection of the ethos of a melting pot at the time. Nevertheless, my great grandmother (and her father) both signed the Suffrage Petition in 1892. Universal suffrage wasn't passed in Parliament that year, but the ground swell was built for the 1893 petition which led to all women in New Zealand gaining the vote. To me this illustrates the multilevel nature of diversity at work and the way in which diverse members of society can work together for the benefit of all.

So, moving from a pretty monocultural family childhood it's a big stretch (on the surface anyway) to my current family life with an African partner of 20 years and my four decades of work campaigning for refugee rights and diversity in all levels of our lives. That work too is multi-layered. Our contemporary population is driven by immigration policies which have regularly promoted access to some groups over others. Campaigning to reinstate family reunification for Somalis within the refugee quota in the mid-1990s (and again in the last couple of years), and for the refugee quota to be open to refugees from all areas of the world and all religions was a practical way in which diversity can be built at a policy level. In the 1990s I was one of the founders of the Auckland Refugee Council (now the Asylum Seeker Support Trust). With the assistance of the legal adviser in the then Race Relations Conciliator, I ensured the Council's constitution stipulated that the President and 51% of the Executive Committee were from a refugee background. This made me unpopular with many; but it was passed (although later rescinded). Self-determination within organisations is crucial for diversity; so too are practical policies and processes. A practical example was when I was the Head of the Refugee Education Programme at AUT based at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre we employed a teacher from Laos whose surname was 13 letters long. The HR Department sent him a memo informing him he'd need to change his name as the computer couldn't cope with a name that long. After a very brief discussion, we wrote back informing HR that he'd had his name longer than they'd had their computer, so they needed to change it! This is a small example among many of how advocating for full inclusion in all aspects of policy and practice in organisations, we can build a diverse community where everyone is valued and able to fully contribute.

Alongside my professional work, I'm active in the crafting community, which has at last taken diversity seriously and mounted a challenge to racist business owners, pattern designers who appropriate others' cultures and the surface representation of diversity through the use of BIPOC models. Much of my energy goes there these days.

I am writing this on Eid al-Adha and today when I heard my Chinese opera singer friend who lives in Mt Roskill spontaneously sing a waiata in perfect harmony with my Maori artist friend living in Otahuhu in the gallery at Corbans Art Estate, I was deeply moved; because that's the sort of diverse world I want to live in.



“ Diversity is an asset which needs to be nurtured and as it flourishes, it builds a trail of peace, respect and tolerance in the supercity of Auckland and Aotearoa New Zealand.”

Jennifer

The first pair of arms to cradle me after my birth was the epitome of diversity. My mother of mixed heritage with parentage and ancestry links to Afghanistan, British India, Guyana and Solomon Islands was born during the Second World War period in Levuka, the first capital of Fiji. Born into a Muslim home, she received her education in a Catholic school, Marist Convent. My father has ancestral links to North West frontier in Pakistan and Rajasthan, India. Both my parents have fluency in three languages including the indigenous Fijian language enabling them to enjoy friendships across the diverse communities in Fiji and the diaspora.

Growing up in Fiji, “Diversity” surrounded me in my home, school, community, and workplace although I didn’t have to use the word and understand its meaning in English. Diversity as a word began to feature in my vocabulary of the English language upon my migration and settlement in Aotearoa New Zealand. I grew up in a household which was diverse in ethnicity, spirituality, opinions and as young children we became conscientious to social justice, race relations and indigenous issues. My siblings and I gained cross cultural competence skills from our parents and elders enabling us to traverse the complexities of ethnicity, faith and nationality which became essential tools post the first coup in 1987 in Fiji.

Four generations ago my forefathers had arrived in Fiji from Afghanistan, British India, Guyana and Solomon Island to contribute to building up the sugar economy and nation building of the country. Despite their loss and family grief, social networks, displacement and trauma, each generation made significant milestones in a new homeland whilst aspiring for the wellbeing of future generations. The impact of the first coup in 1987 in Fiji shattered my world of diversity, picking up its fragments and trying to piece it together was rather challenging. As a consequence, a heart wrenching decision was made by our family, which was to migrate to a country where we could begin a new life surrounded by peace and safety.

The month of July is a significant month for our family as this year marks thirty-one years of our arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand. A new chapter marking the beginning of starting life in a new country and the loss of the only homeland that I had known. It also marks the birthdays of my mother, the matriarch in our family, my niece and my son, bringing much hope and joy to our lives. On the 22nd of July 2020, I attended an Investiture Ceremony at Auckland’s Government House because as part of the New Year Honours List 2020, I was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to refugee and migrant communities.

Upon reflection of my thirty-one years of living in Aotearoa New Zealand, “Diversity” is amongst the many transferable skills that I arrived with and which continues to embody my personal and professional life. Unlocking the door of the world of Diversity in Auckland’s supercity has, and continues to provide opportunities to celebrate the ethnic diversity of the city, form friendships with individuals and families from around the globe, breaking down barriers, perceptions and negative stereotypes of people from certain ethnicity and faith groups. An organization whose employees reflect the diversity of individuals from different ethnicities, sexual orientation, gender, skills, qualifications and age will have a high level of outcomes as different ideas and opinions will be valued. Economically it contributes to strengthening trade links globally.

Post Covid-19 recovery, Diversity is an asset which needs to be nurtured and as it flourishes, it builds a trail of peace, respect and tolerance in the supercity of Auckland and Aotearoa New Zealand.



“nothing is impossible in your life, especially when we are living in a country like New Zealand which empowers us to take pride in who we are and own our identity.”

Zahra

Kia ora koutou and Salaam Alaikum,

My name is Zahra, a first-generation Afghan, Muslim from a Hazara background. Aotearoa- New Zealand has been my home since 2004. I am the youngest of eight and have a large family! I have a great relationship with all my twenty nephews and nieces and take credit for being the favourite aunty!

When I first arrived in New Zealand I was taken aback by the beauty of this country and the warm welcoming people who greeted us at the airport. I remember the only things I knew in English were the alphabet and the numbers from 1-20 which made it quite difficult for me to communicate. Thankfully, with my passion and age, I was able to have proper conversations within six months of settling in Otautahi, Christchurch, which is currently my hometown.

As I grew up, the city became more and more diverse and my passion grew even more for the multiculturalism and diversity of Aotearoa. I remember the first job I had was when I turned fifteen, and my first bosses were a Korean couple who were amazing and taught me how to use chopsticks. I always had a good relationship with my employers. My second job was at Subway, after we moved to a new neighbourhood, which was more convenient for work as it was just a few minutes' walk away from our home. My new employers were American. I really enjoyed working there, and then they sold the business to a Chinese couple who were again so kind and caring. I never felt singled out at my workplace. Everyone respected me for who I was, and they respected my values.

As long as I can remember, I have been involved in many different youth activities in my community and the wider community in Otautahi. Aside from studying applied science, I am currently sitting on the board of Multicultural Advisory Group at the Christchurch City Council, and am the Community Engagement Advisor at the Canterbury Resilience Foundation, which is an organisation led by the youth, mainly focusing on building resilience in the community and building bridges between different communities across Canterbury.

My community activities have led me to a new path in my life. I contested the 2019 local body elections as a candidate for the Christchurch City Council, and also took pride in being one of the first under-30 Muslim wahine candidates, campaigning as a list candidate for the Labour Party.

I enjoy sharing my story with people as a way to empower them by telling them that nothing is impossible in your life, especially when we are living in a country like New Zealand which empowers us to take pride in who we are and own our identity. Throughout my life I've learned people are open to learning new things, and the best way we can create a more inclusive society is to engage, communicate and interact with people from diverse backgrounds and reach out to help them thrive and reach their potential.

I would like to acknowledge my family, especially my father Ayob Hussaini who always gives me wings to fly, who along with my mother have sacrificed so much for me and my siblings, and to acknowledge all my friends and people who have always supported me throughout my life journey.

I'd like to end this with one of my favourite quotes that drives me every single day,

“You presume you are a small entity, but within you is enfolded the entire universe”



“We are the next generation Kiwis and diversity will always be at the forefront of our efforts.”

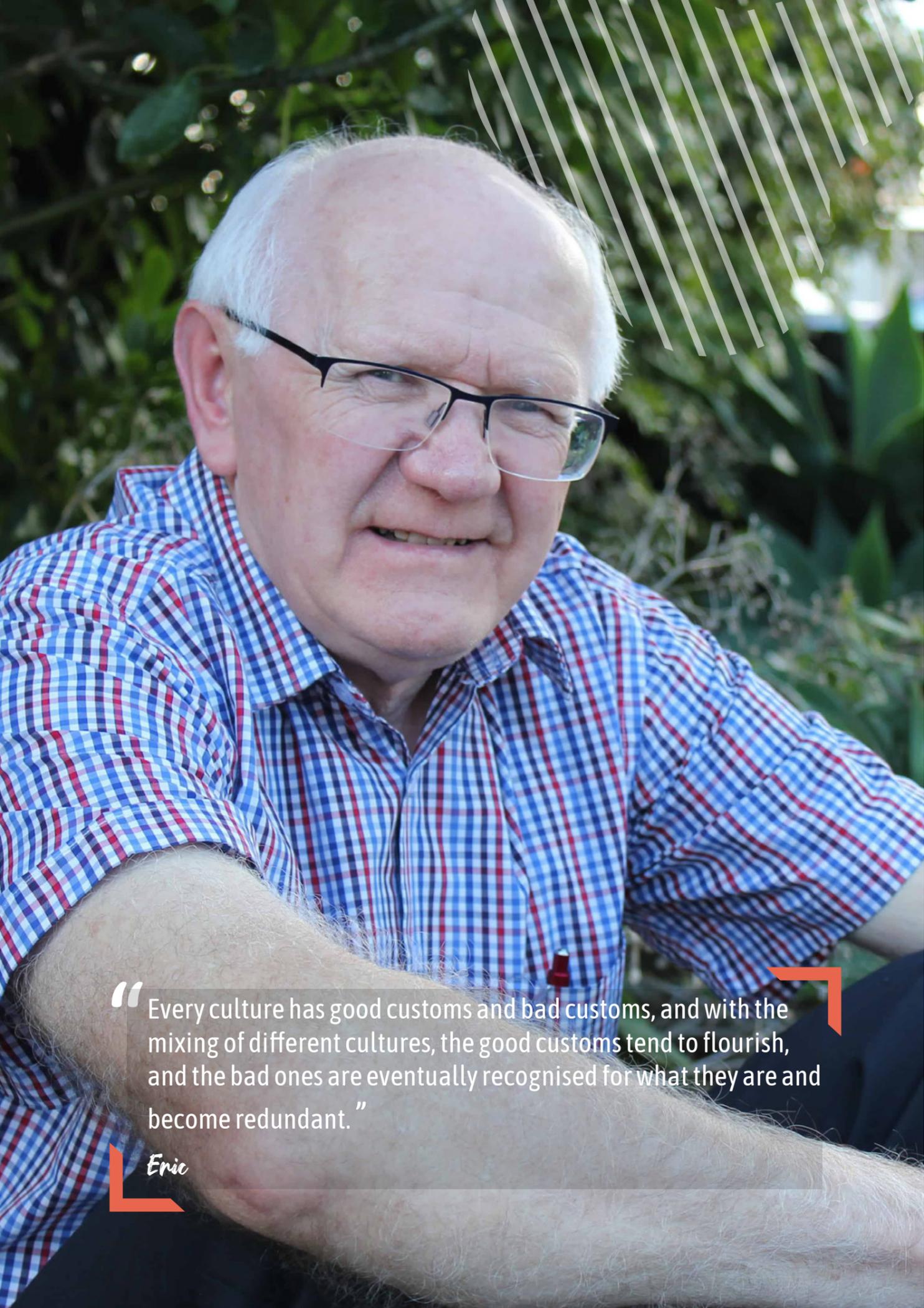
Yohanna

My name is Yohanna, and I am a New Zealand born Eritrean. I am a first generation New Zealander and my family's journey to New Zealand has in many ways been the best decision they could have ever made. Both my parents are proud Eritreans and decided to migrate to Sudan where they lived most of their teenage years. It was in Sudan that my parents received the news that they would start a new life in New Zealand. The 'journey of resettlement' for my parents started in Eritrea, followed by Sudan and luckily enough ended in New Zealand. It's imperative to note that resettlement does not initiate and end in the country of destination. It begins the moment you pack your bags in hopes for a better future; the very moment you begin your journey.

Being a first-generation Kiwi has its perks. I have been exposed to two very different cultures at different ends of the spectrum, yet somehow find that where I belong in essentially two worlds. The traditions, norms, language, customs and food of my Eritrean culture have been cultivated by my parents and this has been passed down to me to embrace. New Zealand takes precedence on becoming an integrated society and has moved away from the philosophy of assimilation that was endorsed by colonialists and perpetuated for decades. Diversity is now at the core of New Zealand's values and is what makes NZ somewhat different to its neighbours and the rest of the developed world. The repercussions of the lack of diversity results in division and isolation, especially in marginalised communities, due to the minimal interaction they may have with the larger community. Differences need to be embraced, differences need to reach mutual understanding, differences also need to be celebrated because differences encourage and increase our knowledge pool. It is only when we step outside of our comfort zone and learn new ways of living that we discover more about the world we live in. I urge anyone who does not see the beauty in differences and diversity to visualise a world where everything is expected and everything is 'normal' for us, to realise that there is very little opportunity in that world for learning and for celebrating.

I intend to give back to NZ what I have extracted from it. Education is what NZ gave me and I intend to reciprocate in terms of the time and energy in return. I have benefitted enormously from Aotearoa, and I am forever indebted for all the priceless skills, knowledge and values I have gained. Although as a New Zealander I am entitled to these things, it does not make it any less significant, and does not lead me to appreciate this any less. My ultimate goal is to give back to NZ through the medical workforce, working with patients who have communication disorders that have resulted from events such as stroke, traumatic brain injury, head and neck cancers etc. I intend to do this after completing my Masters Degree in Speech and Language Therapy at the University of Auckland. I am currently a first-year masters student, who is honoured to be one of the very few New Zealanders to study in this rewarding field. Prior to this, I completed a bachelor's degree in 2018 at the University of Auckland in Health Sciences, majoring in Population Health. The knowledge and skills I have gained through the NZ education system has played a part in moulding my identity, as I have ventured through my future possibilities and ultimately landed in a program which will always define a part of me; the part of me that enjoys working with vulnerable people and being able to see progress in people who work consistently to improve their communication skills and overall health.

Diversity has not impacted my life, but the empowering connotation of diversity has. Being confident with who I am and where I belong in this world has allowed me to step foot through any door with confidence and integrity. Diversity has allowed for people like me who may not look like the typical kiwi, to feel kiwi, to not only feel heard but understood. We are the next generation Kiwis and diversity will always be at the forefront of our efforts.



Mine is not your regular immigrant story. I immigrated from England with my parents in 1958. The population of New Zealand at that time was around 2.3 million, less than half of the current population. The population mix was quite different then, with most immigrants originating from Europe, mainly the UK. Therefore, the change in culture for me was negligible, and it didn't take long for an 11-year-old to adapt.

The biggest change for me was not wearing a tie to school, but that was a British tradition that I was more than happy to drop. Now I find it mind-boggling that the British would put on a tie to go and work in the garden. Another British tradition which I find many people from the UK still adhere to is their fixation on mealtimes. They seem to have breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner and supper at specific times of the day. The only change being that in the UK we used to have dinner in the middle of the day, and what we now call dinner time was called teatime. So, don't be surprised if your British friend invites you to tea and gives you a meal. Personally, I dislike getting my sustenance according to the clock. I eat when I'm hungry, and in that respect, I am not a good advert for healthy living, but I suspect that is part of being a kiwi, an overweight kiwi.

I find the evolution of customs and traditions fascinating. Every culture has good customs and bad customs, and with the mixing of different cultures, the good customs tend to flourish, and the bad ones are eventually recognised for what they are and become redundant. This tends to bring about improvements in society in general, and the moderation from cultural extremes makes the world a more comfortable place for us all. Since my arrival in this wonderful country, the ethnic mix has changed significantly, with a large number of immigrants coming from Asia and South Africa, and indeed from many different cultures. As one who sees the whole human race as members of one family, I welcome the changes. I have a Chinese wife, friends from many ethnicities, and I eat a huge variety of international foods. New Zealand is a much richer country as a result of these changes, and I pity those that don't see the spiritual benefits of this wonderful diversity.

While not having experienced racial prejudice myself, unfortunately it still exists in New Zealand. As a Bahá'í, I am determined to do my part in promoting the oneness of humanity, and I have been involved with the Race Unity Speech Awards, as Auckland regional coordinator, for many years. The Awards provide an opportunity for years 11, 12 and 13 students to not only improve their oratory skills, but work alongside like-minded students in bringing about awareness of the cancer of racial prejudice, with a view to eliminating it so that we can all live in a more harmonious world.

There are two processes occurring in the world; one is destructive, the other constructive. Embracing the amazing diversity that we have been gifted, is a vital part of the constructive process, and it is helping to make the world a far better place.

I raise my hat to the Eyeview Ethnic Trust for playing a significant role in the constructive process. The production of the 'Think Diversity' magazine and the wonderful work it is doing in promoting friendship, love and harmony among all peoples of the earth, regardless of their ethnicity, is a major achievement. Keep up the good work, as we are indeed all one family,

“Every culture has good customs and bad customs, and with the mixing of different cultures, the good customs tend to flourish, and the bad ones are eventually recognised for what they are and become redundant.”

Eric



“To be honest, I wish I was white. They just have it so much easier.”

It cracked my heart a little, hearing these words come from my fellow Taiwanese friend during a recent conversation. She was the very first friend I made at school, after sitting alone on the steps at lunch for weeks after starting because I was painfully shy. Seventeen years later, I still remember how she came up to me and said Ni hao — in the perfect tones Mandarin learners spend years stumbling over — and it was like the sun coming out after a stretch of rain.

So when she said that, my first emotional reaction was anger. How could she regret her Chinese-ness, when it was the first stepping stone for me to feel like I belonged somewhere? I wanted to tell her how silly she was to feel like that, but I couldn't. Especially not once I remembered that my childhood self had felt the same way.

We grew up in Hamilton and attended a rural primary school which was 95% Pākehā. Despite being one of a handful of people of colour, I was never bullied for my race. But because I looked different and did different things at home and ate different food, I couldn't help but feel like an alien. You can try all you like but you can't ever seem to shake away the deep discomfort driving a rift between yourself and everyone else. It wasn't until I made some new friends who were Asian and other people of colour at my urban high school that I began to start exploring what it meant to be an Asian-New Zealander. I'd accepted that I'd never be trendy and glamorous and un-nerdy like my white friends, but at least we could be different together.

It wasn't all smooth-sailing from then. As I grew older, everything that comes with teenagehood and carving out your place in the world became a catalyst for war in my mind. The tensions between growing up in Western culture and trying to retain Eastern values became a constant source of internal back-and-forth.

In the last few years, the identity of Asian diaspora has evolved significantly. When Crazy Rich Asians came out, seeing traditions I used to hide being portrayed so boldly brought me to tears. At the same time, I'm embracing the traits I've inherited from the country that's raised me, through supporting tino rangatiratanga and drinking far too much sauvignon blanc for my own good.

It's heartbreaking that there are plenty more young Asian children in New Zealand praying desperately to be someone other than who they are. I wish it was as easy as telling them to accept the things about themselves they can't change, to take pride in it, and to just focus on making the positive changes they can, but it's never that simple. My vision of an Aotearoa that truly is at home with diversity is one where we all see colour and celebrate how much it enriches our society. The onus is on all of us to create room and space for people who don't look like us and who don't benefit in the same ways we do by the colour of our skin.

Ultimately, we don't ask for much - we just don't want to experience the consequences of being othered anymore.

Celine



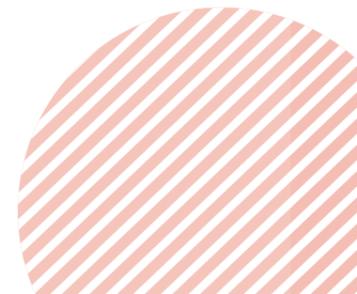
Reflections

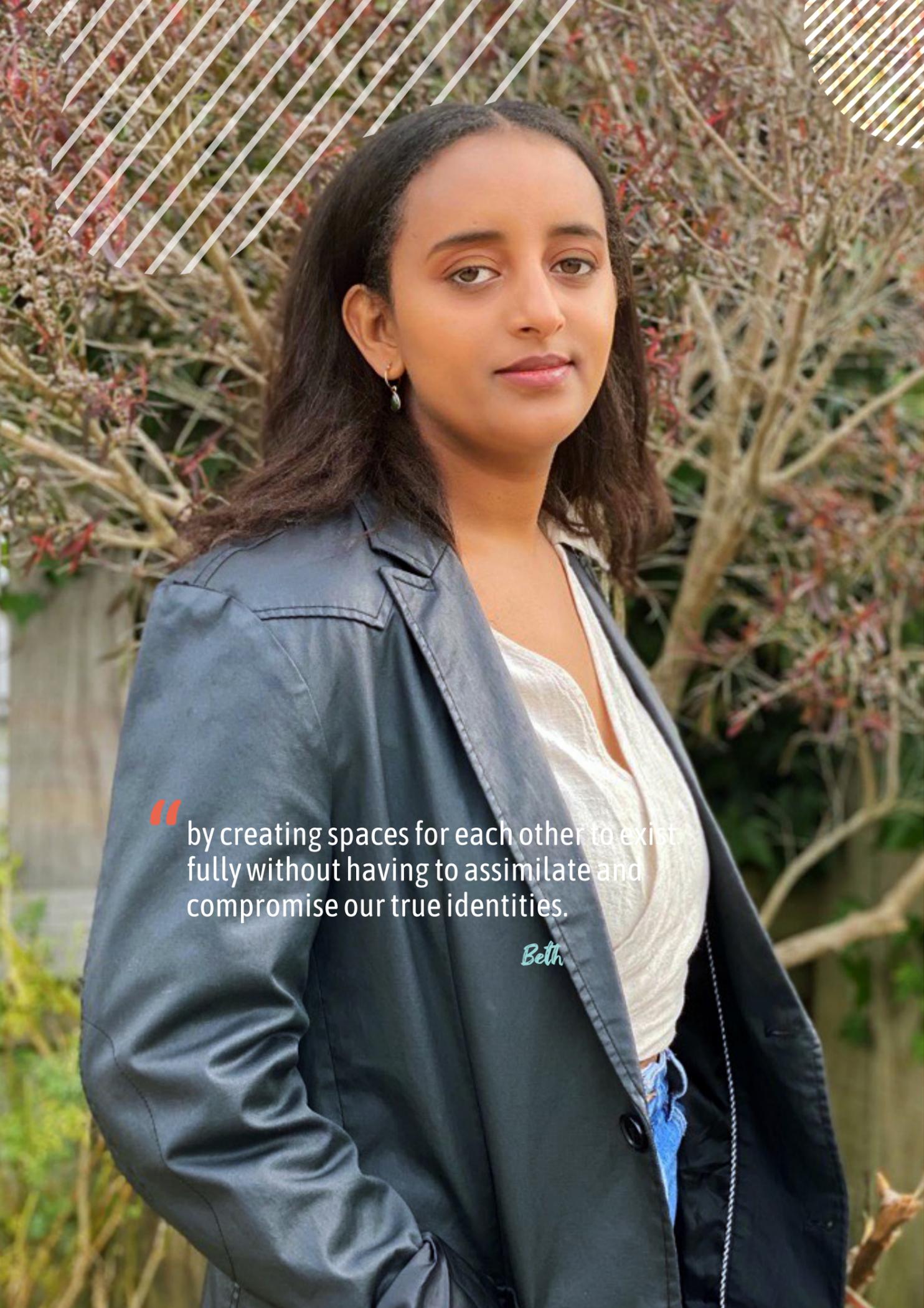
The moment I came to the realisation that apparently every other toddler did not understand Arabic in New Zealand, was when my little sister had sprinted out our front door and partook in a lengthy conversation with our kiwi next door neighbours who, bless their souls, looked at her like she was from another planet. It dawned on me that the New Zealand I was born in didn't perfectly align with the Middle Eastern household I had been brought up in.

It's not exactly a conversation my parents directly would have with me. How are you supposed to tell your daughter on her way to kindergarten that the other kids only speak English, don't have Baklava for dessert, and oh yeah, haven't got parents that fled their war-torn countries to ensure their kids have a peaceful life? It wouldn't have been the easiest conversation. For this reason, the fact that we hadn't grown up like most of the other kids was sheltered from us until we began to see the differences for ourselves. It starts off fairly simple, your lunchbox content just doesn't seem to fit the same aesthetic as the others. I had absolutely no clue what fairy bread was and neither did my mum when I rushed home adamant that she asks the fairy to bring it over before kindy the next morning so I could have the same lunch as Samantha and Shannon. Even as a child, you pick up on things. It was a naïve response at first of course, "why are my friends eating the Rashuns chips? I thought you're not allowed to have them!". It was frustrating that we were different. With age, this contributed to a reluctance to showcase the side of me that had been constructed at home. We started off wearing our traditional clothes proudly on International Day at primary school, our Galabiya's reflecting gorgeously in the sunlight and the boisterous and bold colours catching the eye of all the other kids, distinctly standing out. By the time intermediate came around, we were in jeans and a t-shirt, hiding a tiny Iraqi badge underneath our jackets, just to get the participation points.

The beginning of high school also meant we were attempting to go above and beyond to fit in and really suppressed anything that deviated us from the social norm. Luckily, being exposed to like-minded people and seeing positive, relatable posts, memes and videos on social media surrounding first-generation kids made us realise it is an absolute blessing to have grown up with another culture. It is with the most fondness that I look back at my last years in high school, where I truly embodied and embraced my Middle Eastern roots and spoke about my parents' homeland with admiration and hope. The Baklava at shared lunches, the passionate school assembly speeches about instilling empathy in everything we do, and of course, showcasing our glorious Galabiya's on International day with grins of pride were definitely highlights. We all can contribute so much to genuinely making a difference in how we view cultures, to compliment and take the time to understand one we weren't brought up in, validates the culture and allows us to nurture and grow an environment where everyone can thrive and succeed. For the record, our kiwi neighbours ended up learning some Arabic to keep up with the chatty toddler next door.

“ We all can contribute so much to genuinely making a difference in how we view cultures, to compliment and take the time to understand one we weren't brought up in, validates the culture and allows us to nurture and grow an environment where everyone can thrive and succeed”
Tobi





“ by creating spaces for each other to exist fully without having to assimilate and compromise our true identities.

Beth

“How come you came to New Zealand? ” , “Where are you really from?” are questions that seem to be common when you are a person of colour in New Zealand.

They seem pretty simple yet I can never find quite the right answers to answer such questions. The right answer is “how long you got?” because it is not a question you can answer with just a few sentences.

My resettling experience in New Zealand was almost like an out-of-body experience. It felt like I was living in a reality that was not mine because there was a disconnect between what felt like two different worlds and realities. On the one hand I had to figure a way to navigate through a whole new country where I was all of a sudden a minority while on another I had to figure out ways to still hold on to my culture and identity.

A lot of third culture kids, including myself, go through this journey of not feeling western enough for the western society and not feeling cultured enough in their communities. I believe this comes from the lack of representation of real diversity and lack of people in our communities being in control of the narratives that have been told about us. There seems to be a narrative that victimises immigrants and people of refugee background. We as a community need to take control of the stories being told about us in order to achieve real diversity in the media.

We as a country need to do some unlearning and decolonising the country we call home by creating spaces for each other to exist fully without having to assimilate and compromise our true identities.

I first arrived in New Zealand at the tender age of 15, from a very small, laid-back, soccer-crazy town called Ba, in the western side of a tropical country called Fiji. It was a huge contrast in terms of demographics, since Auckland was a very vibrant and modern place compared to Fiji. It would be fair to say that I also experienced my first culture shock. I had left my own loved-ones back home, and felt overwhelmingly sad about that. It isn't easy to settle in a new country with no family and friends, so the transition was a sad, and at times a lonely one. This was in the days before social media even existed!

I started my schooling here in New Zealand at a Muslim School in Mangere, Auckland. Later, I joined Mangere College. Initially I found myself alone, and felt I didn't belong as I felt different to those around me, hence making it a little difficult for me to be able to form relationships with my peers. Being a teenager didn't help either. You are at an age where you want to desperately fit in and be accepted for who you are. The school itself was very understanding and tried to accommodate me. They provided me with a prayer room to be able to pray during the day and gave us the opportunity to attend the Friday prayers at the local mosque.

Soon I began making friends with students from Pasifika backgrounds and started forming connections with them. They had so much aroha for me and welcomed me into the fold. Soccer was a welcome distraction and took my anxiety away when I felt alone or different to other students at school. Soccer paved the way for me to belong. It gave me purpose and new meaning. I was able to make friends and felt I was part of a group.

New Zealand is one the most beautiful places to live in. New Zealand has been named the third most beautiful country in the world, and boasts of rolling green hills, majestic mountains, breathtaking fjords and an amazing diversity of landscapes from one island to the next. I think New Zealand is one of the best places in the world to live, work and study. It is one of the happiest countries in the world and hence makes it one of the most resilient too. The opportunities and systems in place ensure that each citizen is looked after in the best way possible. Certainly, when I compare it to other countries in terms of opportunities and beauty, I am thankful.

I have always felt very welcome and people are very accepting of the fact that I am a Muslim here in New Zealand. Overall, my experience has been a wonderful one. Twenty-three years later, I am married to my beautiful wife, Nilufa, and have been blessed with three boys. I feel privileged to be bringing my children up in New Zealand.

I am a teacher at Conifer Grove School, teaching children from a range of backgrounds and different family dynamics, and work amongst a diverse group of colleagues. Being a teacher has allowed me immensely to help children who are in similar situations to mine, and make their transition into a new country or school more pleasurable by making connections with my experiences, and thus forming lasting relationships with my students and their whanau.



“I feel privileged to be bringing my children up in New Zealand.”
Mohammed

“ Although as humans we share more similarities than differences, we still (as individuals) have a great variety of human characteristics that makes us different and unique, and these differences are essential aspects to enrich humanity.”

Ohoud



My story starts from the age of 21, when I took a life-changing religious decision to wear the headscarf, which is called the 'hijab'. An appreciation and respect for hijab was instilled in me from a formative age, and I made the decision to wear it when I felt ready as this was an important step to take to complete my religious obligations and strengthen my spiritual connection. The hijab to Muslim women is more than just a head covering, it is a full embodiment of modesty and a symbol of faith, a combination of how we speak, behave, and treat others in addition to how we present ourselves to the world through what we wear.

I knew wearing the hijab was going to be a challenging journey for me because I knew I would stand out and it would change the way people view me. I felt this way partially due to the certain representation of circulated media and literature of what it means to be Muslim. These images depict an oppressed, voiceless woman who is a victim in her patriarchal religion. However, this is not our reality. Although in NZ we live in an increasingly diverse society, this one-dimensional image is being stamped on almost every Muslim woman, and we are frequently still judged for our reasons to wearing a scarf in a modern society and often encounter false notions about what it signifies. Prior to wearing the hijab, I haven't encountered many personal struggles and I felt like I could easily fit in. The first challenging encounter I had with the hijab was at a retail shop I was working in at the time. Making the decision to wear the hijab and turning up to work with it on forced the attitude of the managers and head office staff to change completely towards me. First, they asked me to take it off because "it does not look good in front of customers" and then they asked me to resign if I didn't want to take it off. Their approach seemed harsh and I was put in an emotionally charged situation as I had to explain the meaning of this to me and to my religion. Following a few meetings and many discussions about me wearing it at work, they eventually agreed to it. Being new to the hijab at the time, I learnt that I could easily change people's negative views and perceptions by educating them about the importance of the hijab to Muslim women and that the hijab is not something that changes who we are as individuals, but it is a marker of our religious identity and expression of empowerment. It gives me a sense of class and uniqueness, and not getting caught up worrying about the demands of society. Therefore, I learnt that no one's voice is stronger than my own, and fear is always almost conquered by strength. Education can help fight ignorance and embody cultural awareness, promote acceptance, and create a richer, warmer and more accepting culture.

Although I wear my hijab with confidence, I do sometime feel as though I am a stranger around non-Muslims, I feel less accepted and non-approachable. I feel as though I have to strive to portray a positive image as a Muslim woman to subverts labels and false associations and show people that Muslim women are in control of their lives, they're not shying away in their homes like the stereotypes might suggest. We are endlessly spoken for and spoken about. It is time we got to speak for ourselves. While hijabs have become normalized in the mainstream media and the fashion world, many stereotypes continue to exist. My experience with the hijab taught me to be more tolerant of negative attitudes and I learnt to accept myself with my values and beliefs as a Muslim Kiwi. I believe everyone needs to stand tall and walk proud, regardless of what others may think. Not everyone is nice or tolerant and some people will continue to make unkind comments, stare, and glare, or make someone feel excluded. Never be ashamed of your identity, background, or religion. Own your diversity and the identity that empowers you.



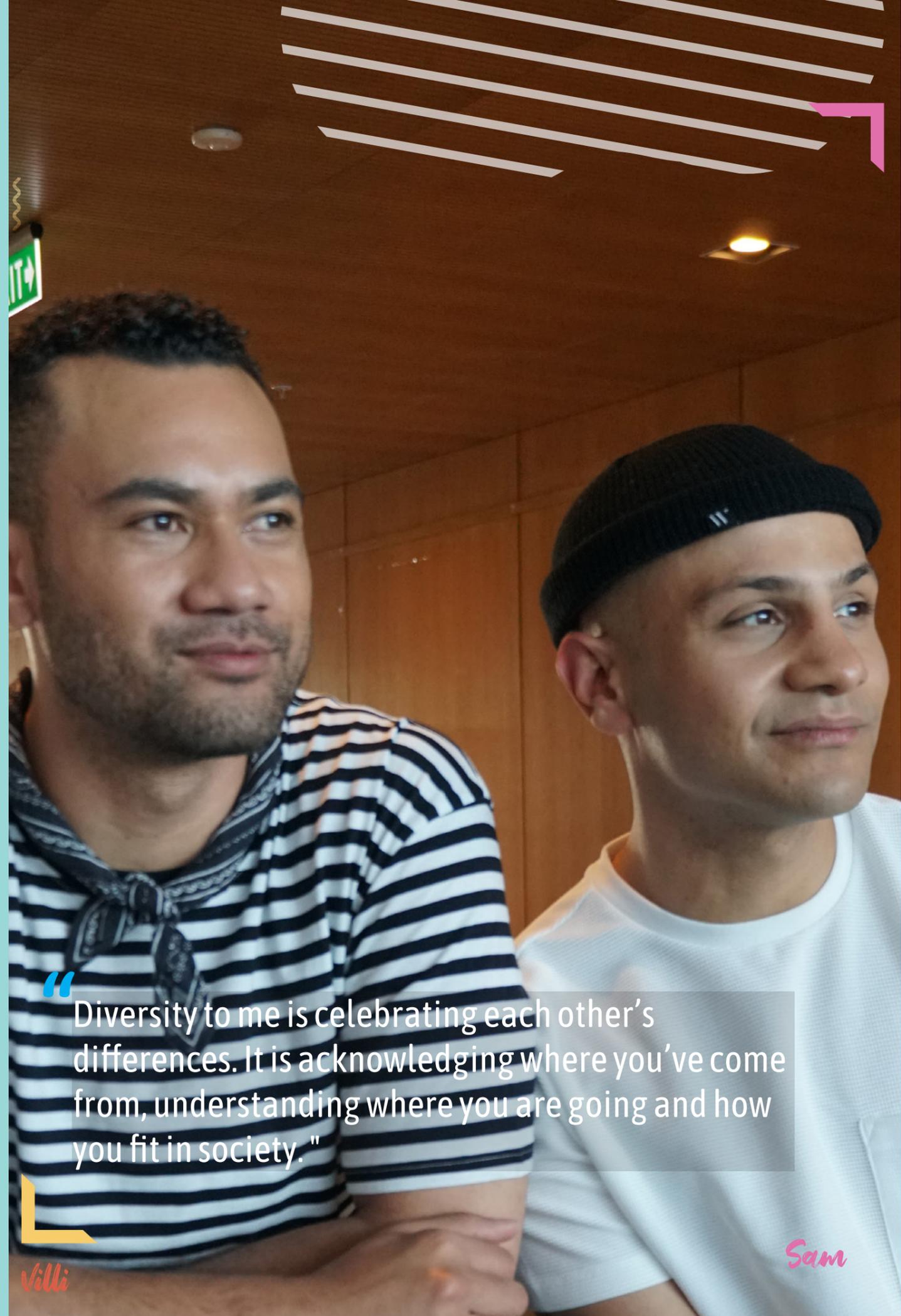
“ Diversity is so important to our society because we need to be more inclusive of other people and show them that we accept and respect who they are.”

Michelle and Audrey

My name is Michelle and my sister is Audrey. I'm studying for a Bachelor of Business, and Audrey graduated with a Bachelor of Business, majoring in marketing and Human Resources. Together we run a Women's online clothing boutique "Ferox Boutique". We are originally from our beautiful country of Zimbabwe and we moved to the 'land of the long white cloud' 11 years ago. It's been an experience. When we first arrived in New Zealand, we were surrounded by unrecognisable faces. Our experience at school was not so delightful; it was a lonely place. As we grew up, we knew that we were different by the way we were treated by people around us.

Neighbours shouting hysterically "Go back to your country", or people not sitting next to you in class because of your colour. It was almost as if racism was normalised here. No one stood up for us; all we got was silence. At first, we felt rejected, but things have gotten a lot better. We now see issues like racism and discrimination being discussed in schools, along with flyers and social media coverage around New Zealand. People of colour stopped aspiring to sit at tables where they have to bring their own chair, squeezing in between folks, repeatedly convincing them why they should be there. Now we see more safe spaces for immigrants to unapologetically express themselves while empowering others. New Zealand is becoming a more diverse country but of course there's still room for improvement. We feel more accepted in New Zealand because people no longer judge us based on our skin colour.

Diversity is so important to our society because we need to be more inclusive of other people and show them that we accept and respect who they are. We are happy that my parents chose Aotearoa.



“Diversity to me is celebrating each other’s differences. It is acknowledging where you’ve come from, understanding where you are going and how you fit in society.”

Villi

Sam

Sam -

Diversity? Hmm, tough one to try and describe as the word has so many facets. Diversity is New Zealand, it is us. Diversity to me is celebrating each other’s differences.

Growing up as an immigrant in New Zealand in the mid-90s in the eastern suburbs of Auckland was hard because I did not speak any English. Quick background, Mum and Dad are from Iraq. They had to leave in the 80’s because my dad was a target of Saddam Hussain who wanted him dead. So, they moved to Dubai. That’s where I was born and we knew we couldn’t be there forever so we came to New Zealand.

I felt like a complete outsider, like I did not belong, and I was immersed in this culture that I did not understand. I was lucky I came to New Zealand when I was 7 as I was able to pick up the language quickly and I was able to adapt to the culture surrounding me. My sister was 6 years older than me, and I know she struggled more than I did in trying to fit in.

In my teens I also struggled as I was living in two worlds; the real world and where my parents lived. Their expectations were very high, and they sometimes did not tolerate behaviours that were normal in western cultures. I would constantly ask the question “why are we here if your mind is still back home?”

The struggle was real, as in my early teens I started to realise in intermediate school that I was gay.

I wanted to suppress it and make it go away; it obviously does not work that way. Fast forward a few years and I was in college where everyone knew that I was gay, but I would never admit it because I did not want to bring shame on my family. Homosexuality is illegal where my parents grew up, and there was no education around this. So, I did not blame my parents for not accepting me at first; that is just how they were brought up.

Skipping a few years, I met my partner, Vili. We have been together for 12 years and although it was hard at the beginning to gain acceptance from my mum, we were patient. We were not forceful, and we were able to educate her on love and acceptance. Now that my mum sees us as two successful young men sharing a life together, she has changed her perceptions of what it is to be gay. You know an Arab mum loves your partner when she cooks the house down for them. I know I am lucky that I got a happy ending, and I realise that many gay people living in the Middle East will be fighting this perception every day. How do we change that? My story is proof that education is key. Teach your elders, and do not impose or force your perceptions on them.

Villi -

Diversity to me is celebrating each other’s differences. It is acknowledging where you’ve come from, understanding where you are going and how you fit in society.

Born and raised in South Auckland as a first-generation kiwi I was exposed to diversity from a young age. Growing up in the 90s was definitely a melting pot for diversity through a Polynesian lens. My parents immigrated to New Zealand from Tonga in the 70s, and first settled in Grey Lynn. Through gentrification my parents then settled in South Auckland – Otahuhu, where I was brought up for most of my life. I was fortunate enough to attend schools in the area that celebrated culture, and really encouraged their students to learn and participate in other cultural activities.

I guess growing up in an environment where I felt as part of the majority group made life a lot easier. I guess there is a sense of community whether it comes from school, church, sports or family. It wasn’t until I started at University, fresh from high school, that I truly understood what the true meaning of diversity was. Here I was exposed to more cultures and now accepting my own sexual identity, I realised I was now part of the minority group. Through my years at university I came to realise that I was the “Other” - not only am I brown but I’m also gay. Having to juxtapose between the two, really shaped me to who I am now. At times I felt I was living in two worlds, juggling between being a Kiwi-Tongan raised as a Catholic and that of being proudly gay in a predominantly white community (at the time) was a little challenging for me.

However, being exposed to the Arts community during my time at University was where I made meaning of who I am and how I fit in this world. Thankfully through mass media I was able to draw inspiration and find references to how the world sees me. I now champion the fact that I am different and seek to find diversity as it is what helps educate not only myself, but everyone else I choose to surround myself with.

Now coming to terms with who I am, the true meaning of diversity is me. A man born into a low socio-economic background, taking every opportunity he was given, and now living life with an amazing partner working in an industry that allows me to be me.



My name is Latifa and I was born and raised in Auckland, the city I still live in and call home. On my mother's side, I am a fifth generation New Zealander, hailing from the state of Gujarat on the west coast of India. On my father's side, I'm first generation, also Gujarati, but from the beautiful and friendly Fiji Islands. Double diaspora living is as complicated as it is enriching. Add my Muslim faith into the mix, and you have some interesting conversations on your hands. 'Where are you from', you ask? Honestly, sometimes, even I don't know.

Life as a Fiji-Gujarati Muslim New Zealander with a disability (long identity title that is) has given me great opportunities, but I would be lying if I said it has always been easy. Being born in New Zealand means I never had to justify my right to be here. But it does mean I get a lot of assumptions about how cultural and religious I really am. How much do I really know about my heritage? I get tested on it with subtle, patronising questions. And the surprised looks I get when they find out I know my stuff. It's great.

Like I said though, it is complicated. You're never quite brown enough for the brown crowd, and never quite white enough for the white crowd. I have lived my life constantly straddling between multiple worlds and altering our behaviour, mannerisms, and conversations to fit into the space at the time. It's hard to decide whether this is a good thing or not. Yes, it is good because you can adapt to any situation, which is a valuable life skill. And no, it's not, because you never quite know who your authentic self is without any outside forces.

As I've grown, I've realised that many of these assumptions made about ethnic kids born and raised in the "west" result from one-time conversations people have had, or based on what they have seen on the news. Both of these platforms are but a snippet of what the reality is. With our complicated communities, some are completely inaccurate, but that is another conversation. These phenomena dictate how we navigate our worlds, which is on eggshells. The result of accepting these limited interactions is never-ending discrimination, spiralling trauma and mental health issues, and as we experienced last year, violence.

That is why I love to tell stories. The only way to shift the narrative out there about minorities and marginalised groups is for people within these groups to take control of their own narratives and show the world exactly what our lives and realities are about. We don't just need to write to get our messages across. It can be through any avenue that comes naturally to you. Writing, public speaking, art, community work, or debate – these days even your clothes make a statement. All of these actions, when done authentically, will harness a more inclusive and understanding world.



“The only way to shift the narrative out there about minorities and marginalised groups is for people within these groups to take control of their own narratives and show the world exactly what our lives and realities are about.”

Latifa





“ I realise now the importance my parents gave to faith and culture and how grateful I am for that. Because of that, I’ve grown up with very strong values and beliefs and my identity plays a huge part in my everyday life. ”

Zahra

I grew up in a predominantly 'white' affluent society where I was the only Indian and Muslim kid in my school, let alone whole suburb. Not known to me at the time, I always subconsciously searched for representation and understanding amongst my peers and teachers. No one was really interested in learning about my identity, language and culture and without thinking, I almost hid it away because I felt it wasn't important. When I was not at school, I was immersed in community gatherings, Sunday Quran classes, Indian functions and Bollywood movies and music. I listened to Qawaali's with my dad on the way to school but never in a million years did I have the courage to share this with any of my peers, they wouldn't understand.

As a 10-year-old I knew very little about the importance of being proud of who I was, nor was I actively taught to celebrate it. I felt I was considered different and I longed to share more about myself with a friend, role model, teacher who would understand, or someone who essentially shared a similar ethnic and cultural background to me.

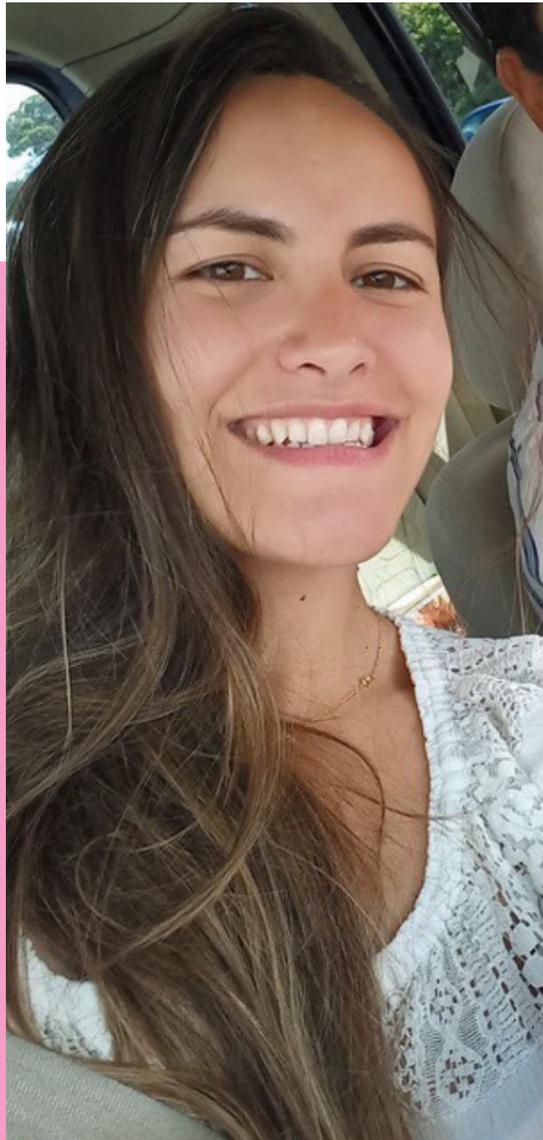
Fast-forward to high school, my school was filled with a diverse range of students- Asians, Indian, Somalians and Afghans. Naturally, I felt a place of belonging and fitted into various friend circles; making peers across the school. I found myself finding out more about myself and what made me 'me'. Our school also made an effort to celebrate culture and language within the school and integrate it into day to day learning. Teachers and students made a genuine effort to connect with you, understand you and remember the things that were important to you.

Although New Zealand today has a thriving range of ethnicities and is predominantly multicultural, I still find myself at times a victim of 'ignorance'. Usually the racism that is the most common is the type where it is subconscious. It is not in your face, it is not always direct and sometimes it is not even intended to hurt the other person. However, whether we like to admit it or not, the people of New Zealand suffer from racism and ignorance on a daily basis. This stems from lack of knowledge and unless people educate themselves, this will never change. 15th March 2019 was proof of this and undoubtedly the racism and lack of knowledge that had consumed one individual that day changed the country forever.

On the contrary, the acceptance and inclusivity we have seen since then has been immensely phenomenal. I realise now the importance my parents gave to faith and culture and how grateful I am for that. Because of that, I've grown up with very strong values and beliefs and my identity plays a huge part in my everyday life.

Ironically, I also became a teacher, and today I am lucky enough to have a beautiful ethnically diverse class who all have their own story to tell. My students range from varying ethnic backgrounds and come from the Philippines, Tonga, India, Afghanistan and Somalia. I ensure I celebrate their ethnicities every day and teach all my students the importance of understanding one another and being open minded, accepting and including one another despite race, ethnic or any language barrier.

I hope we continue to celebrate and be proud of ourselves and remind each other that the diverse range of flowers in a garden make it that much more beautiful.



“ I can say that after all these experiences I am a different person. I live in the present and appreciate the simple things.”

Gabriella

I came from Brazil to New Zealand in March last year, 2019, to study English and return after 5 months. I hadn't any plans to stay, but New Zealand, little by little, was conquering me, mainly because of the safety, the nature and the quality of life.

I used to live in São Paulo, the biggest city of my country, with 11 million people, in an apartment with my parents, my sister and my little dog. I had just graduated from a really good university and, to be totally honest, I didn't want to come, but I needed to improve my English fast, so, I came.

When I was boarding the airplane I was so scared and so sure that I would want to go back to my comfort zone as soon as possible; after all it was my first time out of my country, the first time travelling alone and the first time so far from my family. I arrived on a Saturday and I went straight to a hostel in the city centre of Auckland. I didn't know anyone, and all of a sudden the girl that had lived with her parents all her life, was using the same toilet and cooking with people from different countries and cultures. It was a new life.

I lived in hostels for 5 months, meeting people from several places. I had incredible experiences and I made some really good friends. After all this experience, the scared girl that boarded that airplane didn't exist, and after 5 months and I decided that I wanted to stay here.

After almost two years I can say that it was not an easy process, and I thought about giving up several times. The country is beautiful, the quality of life is unquestionable, but you miss your family almost every day. Sometimes you just want to speak your own language, eat the food from your country, well, some days you just miss everything, but that is normal, and in the end you just realise that you belong here.

It was hard getting used to several things, and even now I sometimes find it difficult to adapt. I came from a 24/7 city, with all kinds of food, people everywhere and several things to do all the time, and when I arrived here it was weird that after 6 or 7pm everything is closed, and after 9pm during the week it is hard to see people on the street. The mall closes at 6pm, except maybe 1 or 2 days at 9pm, and for me this was crazy since in my city they close at 10pm every day the cinemas work until midnight. And food? Well, you can find real restaurants, not only fast food, even at 3am if you want. I came from a place as multicultural as Auckland, and I used to eat Japanese food at least one day a week, and for us, Italian food was our food. Because of this, sometimes when people ask me about the traditional food in my country, I don't know what to answer, because it is a huge country, with influences from different countries and with a huge variety of food. Even so, it was so hard for me to get used to the food here, everything is fried and it is so hard to find healthy and cheap food, while where I came from not only the junk food but all kinds of food is really cheap and easy to find.

It can seem crazy, but another thing that was hard for me to get used to it was the safety. Here you can walk alone at night, leave the windows of your car open when you stop at traffic lights, and you don't need to hide your phone when you are walking along the street, it is wonderful, but it took me months to do these things here without fear.

Another challenge for me here was working in bars, and also as a cleaner. They were really hard and physical jobs, but this made me see life from another perspective and it was a huge learning experience for me.

I can say that after all these experiences I am a different person. I live in the present and appreciate the simple things. Of course, there are several things to get used to when you decide to live in another country and immerse yourself in a different culture. Going out of your comfort zone is not easy at all, but it brings a lot of learning, opens your mind and brings happiness, so it is totally worthwhile.



“ Diversity is the foundation of beauty and the only way of ending racism is by embracing and understanding each other’s differences.”

Manwan and Musab

Born in New Zealand, and growing up in a predominantly white and Asian region of the North Shore of Auckland, the concept of diversity has always been something that we admired. We always generated diversity wherever we went, whether it be at school, at work, in the mall, so pretty much everywhere we went. Being exposed to such a vulnerable position made us realise that we are different. But due to the way our parents raised us and also being the two youngest in a family of ten, we were able to take this daunting position and make it an advantageous aspect to our lives on the North Shore. Being two of the very few black people on the North Shore, we were given the opportunity to give people a different perception of ‘black’. Of course, people had the stereotypical idea of what a black person is supposed to be, whether that be a gangster, a thug or whatever name you want to use. Growing up, we realised that being black on the North Shore was such a gift, as we had the rewarding chance to introduce the concept of ‘black excellence’ to the North Shore, an area deprived of seeing the true potential of ‘black’. We wanted to show people that ‘black excellence’ is where a black individual excels and shows the relentless values of dedication, determination and devotion, just to name a few.

Throughout our lives, on the North Shore, we were able to create our own identity as we did not have many people that resonated with us and our experiences. As Muslims and African Arabs, we taught ourselves to embrace all corners of our identity and let them all shine at once. Being Sudanese Kiwis, we were raised to take the best of both worlds, in order to create the best possible versions of ourselves.

Our advice to anyone that adds diversity to the community in Aotearoa is to understand that you should always be proud of yourself, and that you should never change yourself to fit in, but rather let the society change itself in order for you and your people to fit in. Take this opportunity to educate the people around you about your culture and identity, to open their minds and reduce their ignorance. As a minority in New Zealand, think of yourself as a gem, so rare, so precious, so unique, and so divine and fine like halal wine (non-alcoholic).

Diversity is the foundation of beauty and the only way of ending racism is by embracing and understanding each other’s differences.

We are no less Black than Muslim, no less Muslim than Kiwi, and no less Kiwi than Sudanese.

Understanding



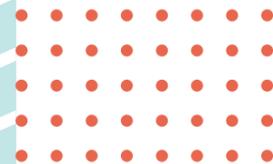
“I've learnt the importance of diversity as New Zealand is such a diverse nation, as well as the stories people from different cultures share and how they shape future generations..”

Michaela

My name is Michaela and I'm from Zimbabwe. I arrived in New Zealand around 2005 when I was about 6 years old. Although I was brought up with Shona and English, two of the three official languages of my country, I barely spoke English. I was quite shy at first as I was the only Zimbabwean and African kid throughout most of my primary and intermediate years. Later on, by being involved in various small clubs and playing sport, I started to feel accepted in New Zealand. From knowing the librarians by name to interacting through weekly netball tournaments and weekly piano lessons at school, I started to see the beauty of what New Zealand had to offer in terms of broadening my scope, and me being able to connect to a wide range of people from various cultural and religious backgrounds. By actively participating and engaging in the environment that I was in, I started to gain my voice and my confidence to be a proud Zimbabwean girl in a foreign country.

I learnt to embrace my differences and see them as my strengths, not my weaknesses, to boldly declare where I came from in front of a group of people and be comfortable standing out as the only 'melaninated' young lady in an environment where there were not many who looked like me. Throughout the years, I have realised how fortunate I was to be able to interact with people from all backgrounds and in doing so it has become one of my biggest assets. I know that when many think of foreigners, immigrants or expats, there is usually a negative connotation associated with them, and this could be due to a variety of factors such as exposure to diversity, upbringing, education and the stigmas society has placed upon immigrants. Whatever the reason, many forget that these are people who have had to relocate to another country that is completely foreign to them and generally work much harder than they are given credit for, because they know what it is to build a life from the ground up for themselves as well as their families.

I've learnt the importance of diversity as New Zealand is such a diverse nation, as well as the stories people from different cultures share and how they shape future generations. Whether or not I'm fully accepted in New Zealand doesn't matter to me, however I do know that I'm accepted by those whom I call family and friends across oceans and borders both in New Zealand and around the world. Thus, I can say with confidence that being an immigrant doesn't define me, and being accepted does not bother me, because I am just one young Zimbabwean-born, New Zealand-raised woman who has the potential to create her own path.





“

My wish is that the celebration of individuality and respect for uniqueness that permeates the New Zealand education system will form a strong foundation for a cohesive society that thrives on its diversity and is globally exemplary.”

Naina

Diversity. This term evokes in me a sense of pride in my individuality while fueling wide-eyed wonder and appreciation for what makes others unique. To me, diversity is simply recognising that we are all different, yet the same.

I grew up almost overexposed to the term “Unity in diversity”. The concept of being united without the need for homogeneity and being diverse without breaking apart was vigorously promoted as a prerequisite to national strength reinforcement and societal progress in my country. As young students, we were taught to marvel at the multifaceted extraordinary patchwork of cultures and ethnicities that represented our country. The idea was that we were a gigantic physically, culturally, heterogeneous group of people whose dissimilarities were just like variegation on a single leaf.

So basically, this concept of Unity in Diversity was like a permanent stage backdrop to our early learning. Honestly, though, I did not quite grasp the complexity and importance of this term till much later in life.

A little context here. I was born in the northernmost part of India in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir to a Kashmiri Muslim family. My father, a reputed scientist, was heading a Government-run research institute, and his workplace was a melting pot of cultures from many corners of India. Belonging to the only Muslim family in our large residential complex, I was cognizant of being different from a young age. But it was a good different if you will. One of my earliest fond childhood memories is a massive outpouring of neighbours and parents’ colleagues to our home for Eid celebrations, and my family participating in Diwali and Gurburab festivities with enthusiasm.

There was the occasional benign back-handed comment which I took as a curiosity. Either I was too young to care or too naive to take offence. All in all, my childhood was enriched by experiencing lots of different cultures from varied parts of India, and that gave a positive dimension to my personality and outlook. Cut to 2020; sadly, Kashmir is classified as the most militarised zone in the world and has been witness to unprecedented levels of violence and destruction. Over the years I saw that stage backdrop of Unity in Diversity being reduced to the status of a prop and finally ending in tatters. A gut-wrenching reminder that while we thrive when we embrace diversity, we suffer when we are unable to provide a positive and safe environment for our dissimilarities to manifest themselves. But I believe that universal truths have a way of reaffirming themselves. I experienced this when a serendipitous chain of events led my young family of four to New Zealand.

Circa 2016, our bags packed for a permanent move from India to the UK, my husband and I spontaneously decided to make a holiday trip to New Zealand. We were Residency holders but had decided against moving here considering the distance from India. That trip played a decisive part in our decision to move to Aotearoa. One of the first things that struck me on arrival was the all-prevailing sense of calm and peace here. In all fairness, that may be attributed to the contrast in population and density vis a vis India. But that feeling of calm anchored me to New Zealand. As luck would have it, my husband was offered a good role at a leading organization. This egged us a little further towards choosing to stay on.

Having worked in the UK earlier, I had an idea of what life could be like if we moved there, but these were completely uncharted waters for us. We were primarily concerned about what the move would mean for our young children. I am happy to report that our children have thrived on the experiences the wonderful educational system here has to offer.

Our attitudes can be shaped by our experiences, they say, and I have witnessed the welcoming and inclusive nature of New Zealand first-hand. While there have been a couple of acrimonious encounters as well, my wish is that the celebration of individuality and respect for uniqueness that permeates the New Zealand education system will form a strong foundation for a cohesive society that thrives on its diversity and is globally exemplary.



“ New Zealand is a great country to live in if you are up to the task to live with your own sacrifices, enjoy the diversity, the magnificence of the countryside, and enjoy the comforts of a secure living.”

Mateo

I arrived in New Zealand to study for a Diploma in Business in November of 2017 at the age of 24, full of expectations, optimism, good energy, but mainly fearful of the uncertainty of the new challenge. With no one in the country that I know, and my first time living away from my lovely family (Mom, two little sisters, and a brown labrador), with no cooking skills at all, I knew that I must get the best out of this experience. I finished the course as one of the best in the class while I was working part-time at nights as a bartender. After graduating, I was lucky enough to put my skills to work as the Marketing Coordinator of the New Zealand School of Art and Fashion, helping domestic students from different backgrounds to learn long-lasting skills on fashion, jewellery, and arts.

In Colombia, I was involved in different jobs from a young age across diverse industries from insurance, finance, automotive, and marketing services, and I was used to a very fast and competitive paced life. Being raised in Medellin, one of the most dangerous cities in the world, made me an absolute pacifist, and it gave me a richer appreciation of this experience called the 'life after'. I lost my dad at the age of 13 as a result of the violence in which we lived in Colombia. He went "missing" and after a few years he was legally defined as 'presumed dead' (even though we still don't know what happened to him). This was a turning point for me to man-up and help my mom and sisters as much as possible, financially and emotionally, and to improve their quality of life.

I feel that life is a lot different in New Zealand. The customs, the rules, the laws, the environment; they all are more than great. Also, I believe these are an example for the rest of those countries in development. Everything is more laid-back, and it personally helped me to slow down and appreciate being present in the moment and to enjoy the beauty Aotearoa has to offer. Although sometimes I get homesick, after 3 years without returning to Colombia, I miss the festivity and unity of the Christmas season at home, birthday celebrations and the warmth of being around my loved ones, but living in the amazing country is totally worth the sacrifice. As a Colombian, I can relate to people from the Pacific as we also have big families and are very family-orientated warm people.

Adapting personally for me was quite easy. I consider myself as a citizen of the world, and I'm very keen and open to trying new food, new customs, new beliefs etc. I was used to more western gastronomy, but in New Zealand I discover the wonders of Thai, Chinese, Korean, Indian food etc. Also, living in this country gave me the confidence of becoming a vegetarian in support of our Gaia and the force that unites us all.

I met my partner Gabriella here in Aotearoa a year ago. She is from Brazil, and even though we are from the same continent, we are equal and different in languages, customs and traditions, but living in New Zealand has given me the opportunity to be in touch with people from so many different backgrounds, and it constantly excites and impresses me, and makes me want to wander on this beautiful planet.

I am currently working on the side on my own company called Chill Vibes Co NZ, which is all about creating the vibe, while helping people and communities grow spiritually, mentally and physically. This is a big step for me, but I believe in our local government policies, economics, and how the society is based on mutual trust. In summary, New Zealand is a great country to live in if you are up to the task to live with your own sacrifices, enjoy the diversity, the magnificence of the countryside, and enjoy the comforts of a secure living.

Thanks for reading, and I wish you all the best in your life.



“The differences will always be there and it's very difficult to make friends outside people with the same culture as you. But this however does not stop us from working together to achieve a goal, such as in my experience at work; working together to solve a problem that is beneficial for everyone.”

Freely

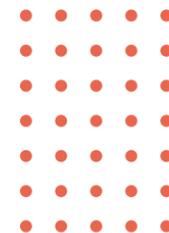
I came to New Zealand in 2007. At that time, Zimbabwe was going through hyperinflation, which at one point was on the verge of breaking the world record of hyperinflation. The decision to come to New Zealand was due to the pressure of the Zimbabwean economy. I came here as a refugee in hopes to pursue my dream of giving my children a future. Leaving the country was the only logical decision to ensure that their futures would be secure. During this time, New Zealand was recruiting workers around the world who were specialists in telecommunications, and I was one of them. The promise was that as soon as I get into New Zealand, I could apply for residency and would automatically get it without needing to wait for two years. The opportunity was too good to be true and I took it.

There was a big culture shock during my transition from Zimbabwe to New Zealand. I had to learn and understand how New Zealanders think and act. I lived in Queenstown for the first three years and the biggest challenge for me was the weather. Coming from a place that was constantly sunny, I found it hard to adjust to the harsh winter of Queenstown. Seeing snow for the first time was shocking. I didn't understand what snow was until I got to New Zealand.

I came to New Zealand as a Telecom-communications worker, and I am still doing the same thing, but have worked with different companies. In Zimbabwe I managed to do my Bachelor of Commerce and specialised in Marketing. I started to do my Masters in Strategic Marketing there and had a year left, and that was when I got offered the opportunity to come to New Zealand. I left without completing my masters and I did a Post-graduate Diploma in Business and Administration at Massey University and completed my Master of Management. Although I have completed my degrees, I realised that personally I am better off sticking with telecommunication as my main source of income as I am able to gain more from it than with business.

When I came to New Zealand I was accepted. Maybe it's because I came here under the qualification of the job, so people looked at me as a professional and treated me with respect. Yes, racism is everywhere but I can't say that it is very much prevalent in New Zealand because by and large New Zealanders are accepting. Maybe the acceptance is because of their history with the Maori and other minorities who came before us, but the story could be different for others. I have heard other refugees tell me their experiences with racism in New Zealand, and when I listened to their stories it just made me wonder if we are living in the same New Zealand due to the contrast in our stories.

The diversity aspect of New Zealand all depends on who you mix and mingle with. It is however very difficult to have that mix of whites, brown and blacks without feeling a bit of segregation. At work you may be together but the way we live our lives is different. This is due to people's different cultures and lifestyles. I think of diversity as water and petrol. The two don't mix. We can pretend to be mixing but the segregation is still there. I think of diversity like this; a car needs water to cool the engine and petrol to run the engine to give power. Those two don't work together as friends, but they are very important for the purpose of running the car. This sometimes is the same way with diversity in people. There will never come a time where diversity will finally be gone. The differences will always be there and it's very difficult to make friends outside people with the same culture as you. But this however does not stop us from working together to achieve a goal, such as in my experience at work; working together to solve a problem that is beneficial for everyone.





My name is Oscar and I am Nigerian as well as a New Zealander. I was born here in NZ and I was raised in Nigeria until I was 17. Whenever I tell people this part of my story they are usually surprised or confused, actually maybe a mixture of both reactions. It is really as simple as it sounds. Anyways, when I finished secondary school and had written all of my exams, it was time to start applying to universities. My dad told me to apply for any school in NZ and I was really surprised as I never thought I'd be going to NZ. Of course, I was troubled that I was going to be going alone to NZ as it became an everyday topic with my mom at home. Well, I did apply for AUT and submitted all the necessary documents. Even at this stage, I didn't take the whole "you're going to New Zealand" thing seriously. Fast forward a few weeks and as I was preparing to attend a university in Nigeria to do an A-level programme because initially I thought AUT had not responded to me, which turned out to not be true, as I didn't check my emails to keep updated. A few days before I was about to attend the Nigerian University, I checked my email and saw an offer of a place. I showed my dad and he scolded me for not checking my emails early enough; after which he made arrangements to send me as soon as possible to NZ and sort things out by myself. Shortly, I left Nigeria and it was really sad as it happened so fast. I did not get to tell a lot of people that I would be leaving and that was devastating.

When I landed at the airport in NZ, I had made arrangements for someone to drive me to the city where I dropped my luggage and got settled. From that moment, I knew my life had just started again. I knew absolutely no-one and I had to resettle without any guardian. I fixed things with AUT the same day that I landed; I had a sense of responsibility and urgency for some reason that day. It was so funny because I knew exactly where I was going and what I was going to do. It almost felt like I was running an errand for my mom.

Settling into my new normal was both rough and funny; a lot of what I had learnt over time was by trial and error. I could never figure out why people had to wait for the green light before they crossed, even when the road was car free! I remember I had a lot of limitations with the things I was allowed to do because I was not 18 yet. I guess resettling in NZ was just me trying to learn the norm of the society and knowing the way of life as an average New Zealander. Money was one of my main challenges as the exchange rate between naira and the NZ dollar was enormous. Because of this, I had told my dad to stop sending me money because I was going to look for a job. I got small jobs here and there, working at Eden Park, doing some cleaning jobs, etc. The friends I made at uni also really helped me a lot because we were all living together, so I had somewhere to sleep at least. Although they were facing their own financial and everyday problems, they really let me stay with them for free for a couple of months until I was eligible to get an allowance from the government. They really saved me a lot of stress because prior to when I met them, I was paying a huge sum of money, bearing in mind that I had come to NZ without any parent and I did not have a consistent job. In general, I believe that I was very well accepted by the majority of people that I met on a regular basis; and these people were not of the same background as me. They were European, Indian, Chinese, Iraqi, African and many other different ethnicities. In fact my closest friends and the people I interact with on a daily basis are literally from every habited continent on the planet. So I think that speaks a lot about diversity and acceptance of diversity in NZ.

It's been 3 years since I was that 17 year old boy who moved to a totally different part of the earth to restart his life. I have learnt so much from being independent and meeting different people; I have formed long lasting relationships with people and created bonds as well. Currently, I'm doing a BSC in physics and mathematics at the University of Auckland and I've got a year left to finish my BSC. There are personal and academic challenges that I face on a daily basis, and that I hope to overcome those challenges sooner or later so that I can tell that story someday.

“ I have learnt so much from being independent and meeting different people; I have formed long lasting relationships with people and created bonds as well.”

Oscar



FUJIFILM Business Innovation staff in Auckland taking part in Pink Shirt Day to show support for diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

AT FUJIFILM BUSINESS INNOVATION

As a Japanese-born, Kiwi-raised company with a diverse workforce, we are a truly multicultural business. Our employees come from many different countries and backgrounds, and while cultural differences can occasionally be challenging, our guiding principle is that all employees are expected to treat and respect people as people.

Our recruitment does not discriminate against gender, race, cultural or sexual orientation, age, religion, pregnancy or disability, and we pride ourselves on our diversity and being an equal opportunity employer.

Our aim is to ensure all employees feel welcomed in the workplace. We have launched several new initiatives this year to foster greater inclusivity across our branches, including a huge company-wide turnout in support of Pink Shirt Day, and installing a prayer room at our head office in Auckland.

We have a truly dedicated team of employees crossing many generations. Some employees have been with the company for more than 40 years, offering a solid knowledge base and an invaluable support system.

Our management training programmes promote awareness among managers to help understand and appreciate cultural differences within their teams as

a key strength. This training is to ensure participation is encouraged and that everyone is provided with the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

We also recognise the unique challenge of gender equality in the broader technology industry, where just 23 percent of employees identify as female.*

However, we are pleased with our progress in this area, as 32 percent of our employees identify as female. We continue to make strides in this area to ensure gender diversity is present at all levels of our company in New Zealand and will continue to evaluate ways to maintain benchmarks for female employees well above the industry average.

Our people are the key to our success, and with a strong, diverse and supportive team of resilient people committed to our customers and organisation, we look forward to the success of our next chapter.

*MYOB Women in Tech Report 2018



It doesn't matter what business, industry or sector you work in, or how big or small your company is. Your success will be defined by your people. They are the most important asset you have, and to ensure a long-term sustainable future, you must have a clear people strategy that inspires, motivates and ensures that all people, no matter what their role is, work together in harmony to deliver the company's objectives."

Peter Thomas
Managing Director



Not only is FUJIFILM Business Innovation a diverse employer, it is an inclusive one too. Inclusion is key to a strong company culture, and ultimately contributes to the growth and long-term success of FUJIFILM Business Innovation – so it's a no brainer. Our people strategy must motivate every employee to embrace their diversity, because they matter and their voice should be heard."

Rachel Knight
HR Business Partner

FUJIFILM BUSINESS INNOVATION IS PROUD TO CONTINUE OUR SUPPORT OF THINK DIVERSITY MAGAZINE AND THE MISSION OF THE EYEVUE ETHNIC TRUST TO BUILD UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION FOR DIVERSITY IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND.

SUPPORTING DIVERSITY: NZ POSTCARDS TO NZ

In February 2020 FUJIFILM Business Innovation was pleased to support a diversity-themed art installation at The Performance Arcade festival in Wellington as part of its community sponsorship portfolio.

Designed to celebrate the myriad cultures that call Aotearoa New Zealand home, the concept of 'NZ Postcards to NZ' was to allow participants to create and print postcards that feature the people, ethnicities and cultures of our nation and send them to others. The copy at the back of every postcard contained a greeting from an ethnic language, the project logo and the tag line: "Celebrating NZ's 200 ethnicities and 160 languages."





At Eyeview Ethnic Trust we firmly believe that understanding is the key to respect, empathy and compassion in society; that if we take the time to understand differences – in ethnicity, background and upbringing, religion and choices – we will appreciate and respect them more.

And, in recognising the differences, we will see more clearly the things that we all share, such as joy, grief, compassion, family and love. In other words, our shared humanity.

Once we reach this place of mutual understanding, respect and appreciation, we believe the benefits to society as a whole will be immense. Negative stereotyping will be dispelled, as will preconceived biases and the fear that often comes from ignorance. Tensions that currently exist between different cultures will fade and our communities will become safer, more collaborative and happier places to live and work.

The Think Diversity magazines are to give our readers an insight into the importance of cultural diversity and an understanding that being different is not just okay, but something to be celebrated. New Zealand is a wonderful cultural melting pot, and we hope that this gives you a flavour of the richness just outside your door.

Ash Ali-Aziz

Thank You

We would like to thank our contributors for sharing their wonderful stories with New Zealand. Special thanks to FUJIFILM Business Innovation New Zealand Limited and Target Education for their support.

It's fantastic to see big organisations recognising the importance of diversity in our society, and also believing in Eyeview Ethnic Trust and what we're trying to achieve.

Help us build a more inclusive New Zealand

Whether you are a corporate, an organisation or an individual, we have a range of ways in which you could support our initiatives. If you support our goals, we would love to talk with you. We are looking for more sponsors, and will give them the recognition they deserve.

Please get in touch to find out how we can work together to build a more inclusive New Zealand.

Email: info@eyeviewethnictrust.org.nz

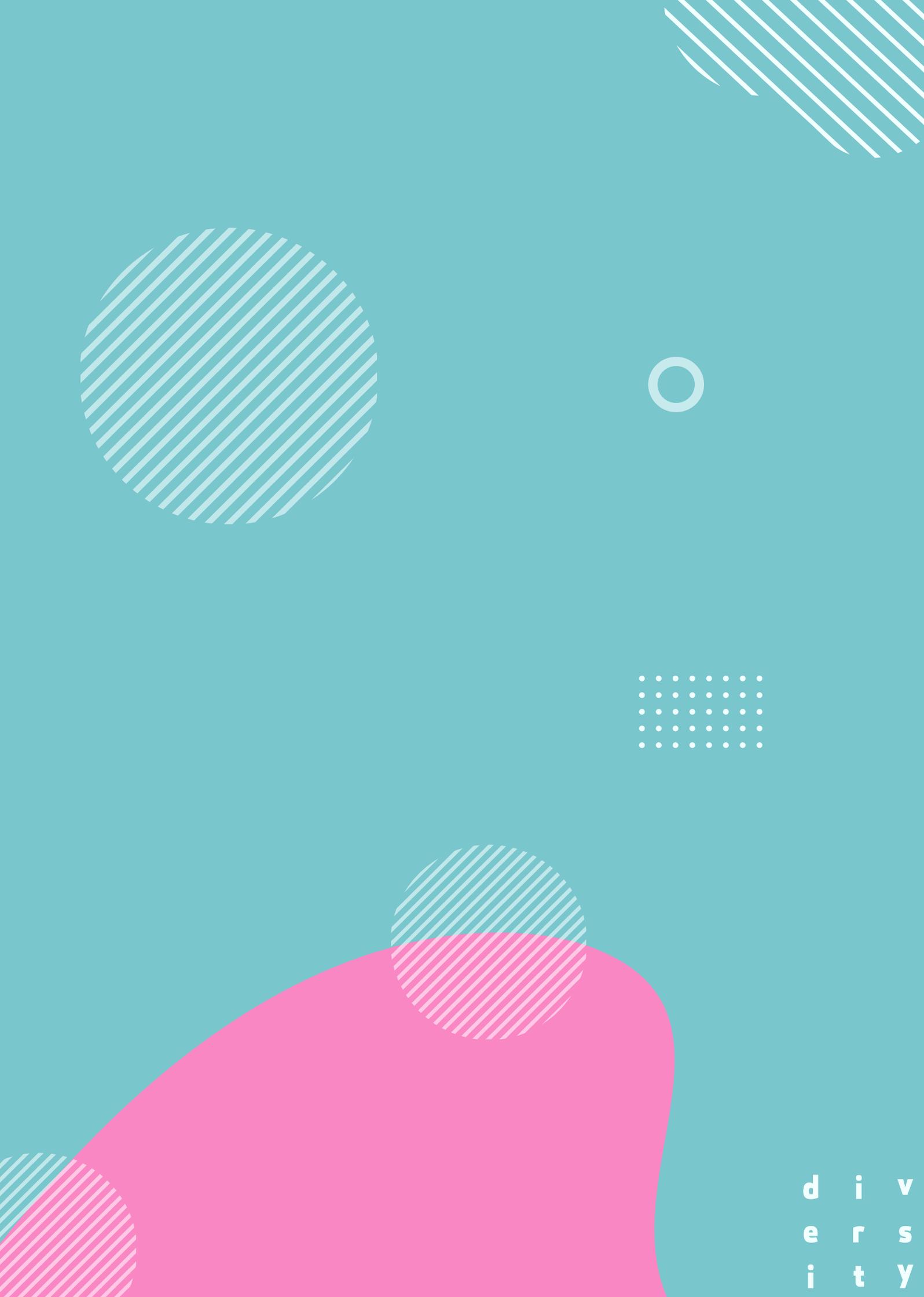
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Designed by [Faroq Nasim](#)





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