

Second Place

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It's just not cricket

There are two types of racism I usually encounter, the cool covert, 'I'm not racist but just checking where your loyalties lie "who do you support in the World Cup?" ' racism or the very cool 'we're with our friends so we're just going to scream "Paki" at you and increase our street cred racism. Between these two there were many other blurred lines, things that white people say because they're curious but shouldn't, these are normally things that are offensive to brown people but they are so used to the questions they don't take offence 'where are you from? Not Surrey, where are you really from?' for instance.

I'm an average kid, no real hardships in my life, from an average family, living an average life. I love gaming, I love music and I love eating, this last hobby is a bit of a problem, leading to my being a tubby brown kid in a very posh predominantly white private school of athletic boys. I should've just got a 'rush me' sign and pinned it to myself, I was an easy target. This didn't deter me however from my love of chicken and eating it. I wished I would eat less but my insatiable hunger meant that just never happened. I go to a catholic school, the ethos of fairness and sharing, of accepting and being accepted is wonderful to me. Why doesn't this always translate in our real world? Being one of the only Muslims in a catholic school didn't matter at all, it was an accepting place where the teachers would share and impart knowledge and I could draw comparisons directly with my own faith. In essence it was learning the same thing, just in a different language. I loved this, I loved the peace you found in the notion of god, of things being preordained and most importantly that everything will work itself out in the end.

My gran calls me a coconut, apparently my privileged education means I might be brown on the outside but inside I'm all white. I get that a lot, at the mosque, at my cousins house 'posh white boy', at cadet practice I often hear 'don't blow me up terrorist! Shaan's a jihadi, he's got a gun'. So here I am, on a pendulum swinging from Paki to Coconut, unwanted to unfamiliar. Not ever really being accepted by anyone hasn't made me think I should change or adapt, mainly I don't know where to start or how? How can I be browner? Or how can I be less brown? Sometimes the very question makes me laugh. I don't feel sorry for myself, it would be ridiculous, the country is full of kids like me. Third generation brown kids, who grew up sitting with their Indian grandfathers watching them rooting for India in the World Cup while putting up the Christmas tree in your otherwise English households. It bothered the English though 'why do you support India? You're English' I asked my friend born and bred in Surrey 'why do you support Leeds football club?' He replied 'because my dad does'. Some things are just familial heritage, some things are just because India have a great team.

Overt racism though hurtful is so much easier to deal with, you can answer back, confront, discourse. It's the covert one I hate, it leaves me seething inside, like someone lit a small match in the pit of my stomach and though the smouldering flame is burning me, it feels rude to do anything about it. 'Why are all terrorists Muslim?' Well the majority of terrorism is carried out by white supremacists but though they get cast as 'lone wolfs' (which I've always thought is quite a flattering macho term, any crime committed by a Muslim is an act of terror. I can address these overtly ignorant questions. Question like 'Where are you from? Surrey? No before that, where are you really from, where are your parents from? Also Surrey? No I mean before that, where are your

grandparents from?' This is the most ridiculous line of frequent questioning I ever encounter, why does this question even get asked? What will you do? Do you think I have connections to cheap saffron dealers? Are you curious about the weather and food of a country that you have no idea about yet? What clarity will my lineage provide to you? Apart from assisting in making some form of bias opinion on what I must be like 'aha Saudi, oppressive, aha India, must do yoga, aha Morocco, what the heck does that mean?' Other than these biases I can't imagine why the interest. I'm clearly British, sitting on the fence- not out of choice, waiting to be embraced by my people, whoever they may be.

I know lots of people who have suffered endemic and outward racist assaults that have left life changing damage, so I feel a bit self-indulgent talking about myself in this way, but this isn't a once in a while attack, this is just how most brown kids live in England. This is the average story of an average boy. I am the friend when people say 'I'm not racist my best friends brown', I'm the kid who is always explaining his lineage and I'm the kid always fake laughing when other kids ask if there's a bomb in my backpack. I'm the kid that gets rushed at break for no reason, I'm the kid who loves India as his cricket team like it's a guilty secret and I'm the kid who loves England because it's his home. I'm the kid who loves his catholic school and his Muslim faith, if they can both coexist within me why can't I coexist in a brown and white world?