

[00:00:00.170] - Matt

Are you struggling to look for work after finishing your education? Or maybe you're in a relationship you're unsure about? Are you having a quarterlife existential crisis? Are you in your twenties and don't know what the heck to do with your life? You've come to the right place. Hi, you're listening to A Cup Of Growth, the drink for trying-to-be-adults. This podcast is brought to you by Mags and Cass, where the girls talk about how to confidently navigate your twenties. Let's ride the struggle together.

[00:00:26.810] - Cass

Hallo!

[00:00:27.530] - Mags

Hello!

[00:00:28.570] - Cass

Welcome back to another episode on A Cup of Growth.

[00:00:33.450] - Mags

That was a very nice intro.

[00:00:35.290] - Cass

I know! No, but seriously, welcome back. You're listening to Cass and Mags. In case you didn't know at this point in the podcast, but you're listening to Cass and Mags on A Cup Of Growth. And on today's episode, we're going to be talking about identity and belonging.

[00:00:55.970] - Mags

So beautiful!

[00:00:57.090] - Cass

I know, but often not talked about enough. We hear all of these things about being true to yourself and all of those things-

[00:01:09.580] - Mags

But what does it mean?

[00:01:11.000] - Cass

Literally, what does it all mean? And obviously there's a big thing, whether you see it on, I don't know, movies or if you read it on a romance book, it's like belonging-

[00:01:25.230] - Mags

Social media.

[00:01:27.950] - Cass

ASMR.

[00:01:33.790] - Mags

Sorry, I should have said trigger warning, if you like. What is it- was is it called mysophobia or whatever? The thing where you don't like sounds? Anyways, sorry if you struggle with that.

[00:01:47.970] - Cass

Lol! But anyways, yeah we're going to be talking about that today and just expand your horizons of conversation and ask yourself you know 'who am I?' Getting existential now. 'Who am I, where do I belong and what does it all mean to me?' And later on, you'll have another interview.

[00:02:12.030] - Mags

We have two interviews.

[00:02:13.520] - Cass

I know. Not one, but two interviews!

[00:02:16.260] - Mags

Girl!

[00:02:17.020] - Cass

I know! Proper podcast now, if you didn't notice. But yeah, you'll hear about all about that later. But for now, Mags, what does it mean to belong and have an identity?

[00:02:34.450] - Mags

Don't get me so existential, is it 07:00 p.m.? Yeah, good question. Obviously, I think it's in our nature to feel like to have that need to belong. And I think it is a way for us to shape the way we look at ourselves and our identity and know who we are in relation to other people as well. And what I guess I've struggled with is coming- like having dual nationality. So where you come from sort of two different backgrounds and cultures and sort of social settings, I guess. It can feel hard to belong because in one country I feel like I don't belong, and then the other I feel like I don't belong. So, it's like I'm just going to stay in the Channel. Yeah, I say this is where I belong in between France and England obviously. But no, it can be a bit of a struggle. And as well, when in one country, someone tells you "oh, my God, you're making mistakes in that language" and then the same in the other. It's like 'well, where do I fit in?' Because I feel like both, but it feels like people don't understand that. That's why I think, as you said, it's not talked about enough where we really need to educate people on how it is and how it feels like for people who are either biracial or have dual nationality and how hard it can be for us to fit in because in one place we'll tell us 'well, you're not this enough', and then in the other 'you're not this enough'. So, it's like 'what am I?' 'Am I just not enough in general?' Or whatever. So yeah, obviously I haven't struggled with biraciality because I come from just two white backgrounds. Okay but I guess I can come from a place of where it's like people make stereotypical jokes about your nationality and stuff and it's just like, it's so passé, and it's just like 'shut up'. Come up with original jokes that I'll actually laugh at! Anyway. So, it's just a little rage moment. But yeah, I think identity is something that you build up throughout your life. I think that you are not set in stone in one identity. I think that can change and evolve depending on what your values are at the time, your experiences as well. Because I think there are aspects of your personality that stay very ingrained, and they're like the foundations that stay there. And then you have sort of the interior that you can kind of redecorate and move around and change, which are things like- I cannot think of examples right now, but if you think of examples, let us know. But that you can change because they either make you a better person or they just don't represent a side of you, so you want to change it. Anyways, I'm rambling. But yeah, I think as well, a big thing that comes with belonging is understanding and having a deep connection. And if you don't have that deep connection, that's where loneliness kicks in. So, that's why I think it's so important to feel like you belong in a space or a community or somewhere, because then you have that connection with other people that makes you feel understood and validated. But anyways, Cassandra, darling.

[00:06:32.270] - Cass

I kind of am on the same page as Mags in the terms of I have dual nationality, and I am biracial.

[00:06:43.660] - Mags

So you've got the double combo.

[00:06:45.530] - Cass

Yeah, I'm a nice cocktail, you could say. Unlike Mags- like Mags comes from two different white backgrounds, but I come from an Asian and a white background. So growing up, it was very difficult to you know grow up in a Spanish environment and not belonging because I didn't look the same. So,

it was very othering, and I felt very like an outcast basically. Until I met my dear Johnny, and then we were outcast together growing up. But the thing about belonging as well like Maga said, it's like finding a place where you're actually comfortable with and that can be with people or you know your home or even yourself. And that's actually something I write a lot in my poetry is like- I always say that I'm a lone wolf trying to find my way home because I never belong. And see, poetry at its best-

[00:07:58.440] - Mags

I can tell in your eyes how proud you are-

[00:08:00.857] - Cass

I know!

[00:08:01.280] - Mags

And rightly so!

[00:08:04.410] - Cass

And so, it was always like growing up, like I said, it was- I was never Spanish enough because I looked Asian. And then I came to England and it was like "oh no, you look Spanish". And it was such a clash of I've grown up all my life thinking that I look too Asian for someone now to say that I actually look more white than Asian. And I was like 'right, so what do I do with that information?' And obviously looking different but knowing that I have two different backgrounds obviously impacted loads of my identity because, just like Maga said, you don't fit in one category enough and you don't fit in the other category enough, so where is the middle ground where you can stay and feel like 'okay, I'm all right with being this'? And so, for me I feel, or at least until I came to England, I felt very much Spanish. Like my whole personality was Spanish, and I talked very Spanish.

[00:09:12.990] - Mags

You embodied like the whole culture and everything.

[00:09:15.460] - Cass

Yeah but in terms of Asianness, I know a couple of word and then it's the food. And that's why I feel like I have a very strong connection with food and how I think that that's a gate to another culture, because you get to know a lot from the food. And I know I don't know enough of my Asian background. And that's why I felt like I was always trying to strengthen my white side because I didn't have enough of my Asian side.

[00:09:54.190] - Mags

Do you- Sorry to interrupt, but I want to ask a question. Do you wish you learned more about your Asian background and you embodied it more?

[00:10:02.640] - Cass

Yeah, I guess so. Yeah, definitely.

[00:10:05.730] - Mags

And that maybe you'd even learn the language all the way through?

[00:10:09.990] - Cass

Yeah, because I can understand it. I just cannot take it. I know words and words like- even like, I was telling this to my mom the other day, like when you come around, I sometimes say words in Filipino, but you know what I mean just by the context. And I never feel like you question me about it because you already know what I'm trying to say. But those are like things that I wish I knew more of. And it wasn't until very recently that I started really questioning my identity and really realising that I've been- I grew up feeling very ashamed of my Asian side because that was the factor in my appearance like that really made other people not want to be around me basically, because it was these stereotypes of obviously being Asian. Like I've said before, you are very smart and you do loads of Maths, and you're incredible at math.

[00:11:13.990] - Mags

And as we learned last episode, you're supposed to have big boobs.

[00:11:18.570] - Cass

None of those I have. I am still smart, but not as smart-

[00:11:24.330] - Cass

Well debatable.

[00:11:24.330] - Cass

Oh thank you!

[00:11:24.730] - Mags

I'm joking!

[00:11:26.170] - Cass

Savage! But those are things that I'm supposed to embody. And I always joke with my mom about this. Like I was born, and for some reason, I went all into the letter side, all the literature side, because my mom forgot to pass me the Math gene. And that's why I'm not a Math prodigy. I could be rich by now, okay? I could be like-

[00:11:49.890] - Mags

Girl, come on!

[00:11:51.140] - Cass

Solving some type of coding thing for the government or something. I don't know. I don't know.

[00:11:58.020] - Mags

You don't only need Maths for that, so don't worry.

[00:12:02.310] - Cass

But yeah, it felt like very I was always looking for something because I always felt like something was missing. And that's why I always felt like I never belonged, and I never could feel like I was okay with the people I was around, or I wasn't really comfortable with myself because I was like there's just something missing. Like I don't know what it is, but there's something missing. And it wasn't until very recently, like I said, that I started exploring this. And this is where one of our guests, or at least both of them, really made that impact on how I view my identity and how I view myself and where I come from and my backgrounds and stuff. And I guess it's just like a learning experience. I feel like when you're growing up, you kind of reflect on a lot of things that you did when you were a kid and even when you were a teenager and even right before your twenties and stuff. And you keep realising things, and you keep saying 'oh, I wish I've done this differently'. 'I wish someone had taught me about this'. 'Why didn't I know about these things before?' And I feel it's because, as if we haven't said this before, there's not enough representation on media. There is representation. We're seeing a lot of people from different backgrounds and stuff, but I think that being mixed is not talked about enough because you come from two different groups, and you're in this grey area of 'what am I?' basically, and I'm just going to put it out there, because you did mention this before about you cannot really say anything because you only have two dual nationalities, and they're both white. That doesn't matter. You still come from two different backgrounds-

[00:13:48.210] - Mags

I guess, yeah.

[00:13:48.760] - Cass

And then we talk about this a lot, where Maga always says like she feels more French with her family, and then with other people, she's like more English.

[00:13:59.890] - Mags

But it depends. With some family members, I'll be like- it's like I'm constantly juggling, but that's fine because me and all my siblings are juggling, so we get each other in that sense. And I think with you as well, I'm comfortable juggling it because you're also half and half. But then with people that are strictly one thing, I can- sometimes I can tell that they don't fully understand, and it's not their fault, because this is, as you said, something that's not talked about enough, that's not got enough awareness about. And I think sometimes, yeah they say things that they think are going to be funny or they're humorous, or they're meant to be light hearted, and it's like actually 'I get this all the time. It's getting a bit enough now'. And you don't realise how much sometimes how much words can have an effect. And then you go back and think about it, and you're like 'actually, you know what? This is not good for me and what I'm trying to figure out right now'.

[00:15:00.370] - Cass

Yeah, and basically, when you're trying to figure out, you always have this input from other people who only know from your background, the stereotypes from your background.

[00:15:13.770] - Mags

Exactly.

[00:15:14.240] - Cass

So, for example, with French people, they will say "oh, you're very classy and you only eat croissants and you like a baguette"-

[00:15:20.960] - Mags

"You eat snails, baguettes, you're rude". Which is kind of true, there are people yeah, there's a stereotype, because there are some people like that, but it's not the majority. And that's what annoys me and pisses me off, is like stereotypes-

[00:15:37.780] - Cass

Stereotypes generalise people.

[00:15:37.780] - Mags

Stereotypes generalise people. And then people put those stereotypes on you and you feel like your identity is reduced to stereotypes. Like you cannot be nuanced, and you cannot be different from that stereotype. And I think sometimes people do that judgement without even realising. Like, it's so subconscious, because it's ingrained in the stereotypes in the society that they've been brought up. But it's like 'no, I don't eat snails'. They are disgusting, just for your information. Although, I do like bread and garlic, so that doesn't help my case. I'm joking.

[00:16:15.470] - Cass

But yeah, definitely. So, with stereotypes as well, that's as much as I knew from my Asian background. So, like I said, the whole thing of being smart and being good at Maths and all of that, but also, it comes so hard on you, these stereotypes, when you're dating or when you're on the thing or the thought of having a relationship. Because then that's what's interesting about you to other people. So, I don't know, like Maga, you're being French like you're good at French kissing, or I don't know.

[00:16:52.880] - Mags

Yeah, I've had that before, which is really cringe because I don't know if I'm good. I'm not the one that's being judge of that, because I don't kiss myself. So, I don't know. But I've had the thing they're like, 'oh yeah'- well I've had the thing as well "it's like, because you're French, you're instantly more attractive and stuff". And it's like, thanks. I'm just the commodity, that's the only thing that makes me attractive is that I have a bit of French blood or something. What about my personality, my hobbies? Everything else about me? It's so reductive.

[00:17:27.220] - Cass

It's the same for me, which is like the stereotype I got the most was the sexual bit.

[00:17:38.050] - Mags

Yeah, but I think that's also a Spanish stereotype saying how wild you are and how crazy, like loca and shit!

[00:17:48.790] - Cass

You're such a party animal, and you're so extroverted and stuff. Like Asians are introverted and Spanish are extroverted. Where am I in that? Yes, because I'm both depending on Asian.

[00:18:01.920] - Mags

And not all Asian people are introverted, and not all Spanish people are extroverted. Do you know what I mean? It's more nuanced than that.

[00:18:07.800] - Cass

Yeah, but it kind of like- I get this a lot, and this is where one of my poems come from. But I got, for being mixed and for being Spanish and Asian, I get called 'exotic' all the time. All the time. Like, "oh you're Spanish like oh, that's so exotic" because-

[00:18:30.760] - Mags

Girl, it's literally in fucking Europe.

[00:18:33.250] - Cass

It's like people think of the beach and the nice weather and the nice food and stuff, and it's like so exotic. And then Asia as well is like very like-

[00:18:44.070] - Mags

Tropical weather.

[00:18:45.120] - Cass

Tropical. And people think of tropical and they think "oh, it's so exotic". So, that's like- people's way of calling you in a nice way when it's really not nice.

[00:18:58.410] - Mags

Don't say that to people. It's not a compliment.

[00:19:01.030] - Cass

Because you're just without intending to or even if you're flirting and stuff, it is sexualizing someone.

[00:19:09.230] - Mags

Yeah.

[00:19:09.810] - Cass

Do you know what I mean?

[00:19:11.120] - Mags

I guess with you as well, it's something that you struggle with, maybe the whole Asian fetishisation, especially from white cis males because I know that's like a thing that happens quite often, and you've told me about this.

[00:19:27.140] - Cass

Yeah. So, it is a struggle and obviously when you're trying to find yourself, it's like right 'so I am attractive to some people, but I'm not attractive enough'. Like, 'I'm very outgoing with some people, but I'm not outgoing enough'. 'But I'm introverted, so I'm not really a party animal'. So, do you know what I mean? There are so many things that are just like- people like learn from you, like the three first things that are on the surface, and they just think 'oh, that's enough, like, I don't need to know any more about your personality or whatever you do because I got the three things that I need to know'.

[00:20:04.420] - Mags

Yeah, the stereotypes.

[00:20:05.640] - Cass

Yeah. And so I'm just saying that if you come from loads of different backgrounds, and you are struggling with your identity and stuff, you're not the only one. And especially when you're in your twenties, it's so difficult because, I don't know about you, but identity as well is kind of like influenced by the people you're with especially your friends and stuff. And you might have heard this before, but you have different faces for the different groups of people you're with. So, you have a different face for your family, and you have a different face for your friends, and you have a different face for work and all of that. And all of these are identities as well. It's like the persona you give to other people.

[00:20:52.960] - Mags

Yeah. The image of yourself you project to others in different settings.

[00:20:57.870] - Cass

Yeah. And is that different to who you really are?

[00:21:02.690] - Mags

Or is that just variations depending on context and social situation?

[00:21:06.900] - Cass

Precisely.

[00:21:07.560] - Mags

And environment?

[00:21:08.700] - Cass

Yeah. So, sometimes when you extract yourself from that, it can be very draining. And also, it just makes you feel like there's no reset, as if like there's no base one where you can just rest because you're just trying to juggle so many things for so many different people that when you stop, you're like 'actually, who am I in between all of these, and where do I belong in all of this?' Because I think even though belonging and identity are different things, they can often very much so combine.

[00:21:48.300] - Mags

Yeah. They intertwine quite a lot.

[00:21:50.560] - Cass

Yeah. And so, I think that when you're in your twenties, you're trying to figure yourself out and trying to figure your shit out, it can be very difficult to pinpoint different bits about yourself and trying to analyse your group of friends and your partner and your family and all of this. And it's like, what do I do? Basically.

[00:22:13.290] - Mags

Yeah.

[00:22:14.140] - Cass

But that's our experience with it. And guess what? We have two more people joining us to continue this discussion. So, first off, we have Shaniece Martin, who is a poet, and we met her at university. She is currently doing her PhD on, I'm going to sabotage this, and she's going to tell me off, when she's told me loads of times of what she's doing, but she's doing Indian poetry. And she uses her writing and, well what she's studying, as a way of expressing herself and finding herself and identifying herself-

[00:23:02.430] - Mags

And educating, I want to say as well.

[00:23:04.480] - Cass

And educating others, which she does, and she's a great inspiration for that. And secondly, we also have Talya, and Talya is an actress and she's absolutely amazing. I met Talya before, you did. I introduced you to Talya. For people who don't know, I'm a poet, and not too long ago, I had one of my poems become a play for a festival, and this poem was talking about mixed race, and the producer from this festival put me in contact with Talya for her to play my piece. And Talya and I just connected so much on the piece about being mixed race, and we connected on so many things, and I saw myself in her and she saw herself in me, I hope. And I just thought that they would be so great at talking to us and see about their experiences with identity and belonging and how they've crafted their ideas and how they educate others through their craft and so, without further ado, this is-

[00:24:22.630] - Both [Mags and Cass]

Shaniece and Talya!

[00:24:25.030] - Cass

So we're going to kick it off, and I'm going to ask you, what does it mean to you to belong and to have an identity?

[00:24:35.370] - Shaniece

You're starting big. You're starting with the big questions! I think they're very different things, but they also, like you're very lucky if you feel like they're connected together. I think to belong is to feel a comfort, is to feel safe, feeling part of something beyond just you as an individual, I'd say. And I think identity is more who you are in an individual level, and I think the belonging can bring that together, whether it's with a different community or with people that you meet. I feel like identity is really about the personal, it's about who you are, who you project to be and how that is received by other people. I always feel like whether you find somebody who matches your identity or understands your identity, I think that's the biggest thing is when you feel like you belong.

[00:25:30.570] - Talya

That's quite a difficult question, actually, that you're starting off with. I think to belong means that you're comfortable. It doesn't always have to mean that everyone agrees with you or that there is no sort of conflict, but it's that you feel cared for and that you feel that you can sort of not put on a facade. And just like, if you want to flop around on the ground, that's fine. No one's going to judge you for that. I think there are so many parts to having an identity. There are obviously the defining physical features, your eye colour, your hair colour, things like that. But then it's also who you grew up with, what you believe in, whether it comes to religion or some law, whatever, all those kinds of things. But then it's also the school you go to, your education, the way you speak. All those things, I think, collectively make your identity, definitely.

[00:26:35.310] - Cass

And what do you think, for you, have you struggled to find your identity, whether it's because you're a mixed race or because you don't fit into one group and your personality and stuff like, what you think that is for you?

[00:26:51.090] - Shaniece

Yeah, I think for me, when I was younger, I don't even think I knew that I was mixed race, or I didn't know that I was of colour. I literally didn't have a clue. I was pretty whitewashed, I'd say, because I went to a very white school. I lived in a very white village, still do. Trying to get out of it! But yeah, I just didn't have a clue that I was of colour until I was probably on the playground and someone said a really racist comment to me, and I went home and asked my parents what it meant, and they were just like a bit shocked, I think, by what I'd said. And I just kind of brushed it under the carpet a little bit because I don't think they knew how to react to that. And then eventually, as I grew older, I realised that I did have this mixed identity. I realised that I belonged to two worlds, two groups, and I needed to find a way to navigate the two because I think I used to really resent my sort of Indian identity and Indian heritage because it felt dirty. I feel like it was the thing I got bullied for so I was like 'this is such a negative thing, I need to erase it totally, I need to fit in and not be that person'. And it's not until, as I've got older, when I came to uni, saw a lot of people that looked like me, and I sort of thought there's something to be said by being mixed race, and it's something to be celebrated, it's not something to be sort of hated for or hate yourself for. So, I think I did have a bit of identity crisis when I was younger, but I think going to university and studying what I do with poetry and being mixed race and really trying to understand that has allowed me to really understand my identity, as well as being a woman and all of these other things that play a part. I think at first it was something that was really difficult for me to understand, but I feel like I've slightly now know who I am, and I'm still learning who I am at the same time.

[00:28:42.870] - Talya

Yeah, I think that I notice it changes depending on who you're with. For example, when I'm with my friends from my international school that I went to for twelve years, I never think about my sort of identity as a biracial person because it's normal for people there to- it's not that they're mixed because lots of people were Indonesian there. But everyone spoke English and then everyone also spoke Indonesian. And we sort of kind of transitioned in and out of that. But then when I went to parts of Indonesia that maybe were more rural, I would feel very white because I spoke English fluently, and people would look at me and go 'oh, you're so white' and say that verbally you know. And then I would go here and obviously I look way more Asian here compared to people who are actually fully white. So, it's- it very much depends on who I'm with, like which country I'm in, but it's never really bothered me, I've always found it quite interesting, and I like to laugh about it.

[00:29:56.990] - Mags

Yeah, that's an interesting approach, I like that. Laugh off the haters.

[00:30:04.610] - Cass

We did talk about this, but forgive me, I forget what half and half you are, so-

[00:30:13.740] - Talya

I'm not actually biracial, to be honest, because I'm mixed, but not exactly in that formula. So, I'm sort of like three quarters Indonesian and then my grandma is Australian. Yeah, I don't know how to say it, so I just go with like, if you want to call me biracial like that's fine because I don't math. What is the math of that?

[00:30:41.070] - Cass

Right, sorry about that, because I accidentally no, I told Maga that you were like half Canadian or something, and I forgot it was Australian. I was like, I might be wrong about it, so I have to ask because I was like, I know the Indonesian, I don't know the other.

[00:30:59.250] - Talya

And it's also interesting because obviously, even within Indonesia, it's different parts and the cultures are also completely different. So, even though I'm not half white or half Indonesian or something, there are so many different cultural influences that make up my identity.

[00:31:15.990] - Mags

That's very interesting.

[00:31:17.380] - Cass

Yeah, that's very interesting because connecting it back to you Shan, I know that you also have loads of different backgrounds apart from being Indian, but I've only learned that recently because of your poetry. But could you talk a little bit more about your family background?

[00:31:35.310] - Shaniece

I think for me, it's really difficult. I think there's so many things in my family that make it difficult. It's not like 'oh, this person's from India and this person's from England'. It's not like that for me. So, my mum's parents are from Kenya and their parents are from India. So, there's already like a double knowing of a culture. It's not just like a one straight arrow to one country, it's just so many other countries. And I think, that's one thing to explain: when people- when you say you're Indian, people assume 'oh, your grandparents from India'. Well actually, no sorry to disappoint, but they're not. There's like a whole complex journey to that. And on my dad's side, so he's actually adopted, so he doesn't know his identity. On his birth certificate, it says nationality unknown, so he has no idea what

his nationality is. All he knows is that his mum was English, and that's it. So for me, that side is very clouded. I have no idea. And I think, it was really trying to come to terms with the fact that he's chose to not find that out. And I would choose to not find that out in order to respect him but also trying to understand that my grandparents came from Kenya and India and trying to get your head around that culture whilst being British and trying to understand what that means at the same time. I think it was all of these things that I felt were separate. They couldn't be together, and I couldn't have it all in me. Like it's like I needed to pick one or pick one to be stronger than the other. And I think, that's why I inherently chose being sort of this white, British sort of outlook, and I sort of really neglected being Indian or being- anything to do with being Asian. And I think, being mixed race allowed me to do that a little bit because I'm not as dark as some people in Indian culture, or I don't have certain features that are very beautiful features to have, but I just don't have them. I think that made people really confused, but it also allowed me to hide that side of me even more. So, I think that's why it has these lines, and it never felt like a whole being. I just felt like I had these different categories, and I was trying to navigate who I was in these different zones.

[00:33:37.990] - Mags

That's very interesting.

[00:33:39.340] - Cass

Yeah. Obviously, I can relate very much so to what-

[00:33:46.730] - Shaniece

Yeah, of course!

[00:33:46.730] - Cass

Especially in Spain, I feel like it's just as whitewashed as it is here in the UK, just because of I guess it's just Western culture as well. We have all of these- like media is so focused on white skin and white nationalities and stuff, and it's not until recently when you started seeing all the representation from all different cultures and backgrounds and stuff, but yeah, I definitely had kind of same experience as you. And it wasn't really until I befriended you, and I heard your poetry that I was like 'actually, I have to think as well a little bit about my identity and why I've always felt like I had two bits of me and stuff. That's why I adore you'.

[00:34:36.550] - Shaniece

Well, I'm glad my poetry could help because I think I wrote that poetry to kind of help myself navigate. It was my only way to sort of navigate it and just write it out. So, I'm glad it can help other people navigate this weird world that we live in.

[00:34:50.270] - Cass

Yeah, literally. I don't know if you Maga know this, but like last year when I had this Commonwealth Exhibition thing that I think I told you about Shaniece that I was part of this exhibition, that was right at the same time when Shaniece and I got in contact again, when you started doing your PhD and stuff. And I think we started going to open mic together. And then I had the exhibition again, and it was through going out with Shaniece and stuff connected to the exhibition when I wrote Exotic.

[00:35:22.570] - Mags

Really?

[00:35:23.270] - Cass

Yeah.

[00:35:23.850] - Mags

That makes a lot of sense.

[00:35:26.170] - Cass

Exotic was actually inspired by Shaniece and what she wrote. And I remember when I wrote it, which is when you came with me to Fire and Dust. When I wrote that, I sent it straight to Shaniece and I was like, this is what you inspired me to write.

[00:35:42.960] - Mags

There you go.

[00:35:43.620] - Cass

And I don't know if you know this Shaniece, but that poem actually became a play last month.

[00:35:52.590] - Shaniece

I did see this play called Exotic, and I was like 'what is this?' And I thought back to that poem, and I was like 'no, surely not, surely not'.

[00:36:00.230] - Cass

It is! It was that poem.

[00:36:06.310] - Shaniece

That's so good!

[00:36:06.310] - Cass

Yeah. I remember when I met with the girls I worked for to do the play and stuff, I was like 'Yo, girls. It all came from my friend', you know what I mean? If I hadn't had that click, I wouldn't have had that poem. So, that's why you see- not only I'm your number one fan, but you give inspiration as well every single time I tell you that.

[00:36:30.890] - Shaniece

Oh, I love that! I feel like you always say the nicest things that it always makes my heart feel like so full, and it makes me feel so understood as a person as well.

[00:36:41.730] - Cass

Yeah. Shanice has wrote like two, almost three books now. I think you're working on your third collection now. She's been showcased at the Central Library and everything. So, you've put your work out there, people can only dream of that- you've done it through your PhD. So, that's incredible. So yeah, I'm just giving like a slight plug here to shout out.

[00:37:14.570] - Mags

I was going to say! I think it's worth it, so it's fine.

[00:37:15.100] - Shaniece

I'd rather you do the plug than me.

[00:37:21.310] - Cass

In case I didn't say already that I was your fan, like the plug might have said enough, but yeah. Going back to the conversation that we're having, do you think- like what do we gain from belonging?

[00:37:38.530] - Shaniece

I think we gain a better understanding of who we are, who we are when we feel like we connect with other people. I feel like there's who you are as an individual, knowing your identity, but when you belong, you realise what makes you feel like you belong, what makes you feel like you know who you are, how you connect to other people. And I think that's something that it so- it's such a complex

thing, having relationships with people, whether it be friendships or romantic relationships. But, I think when you find your people, no matter what level it is, that's when you feel this sense of belonging, and that's the most important feeling because it's like no weather. I feel like as soon as you feel like you belong, you feel like you understand who you are. And you can see yourself from a bit more of a distance because when you look at yourself every day on the inside, you're sat inside yourself. But, belonging makes you see yourself from the outside, and it allows yourself to feel like, yeah, that sense of comfort and home doesn't make you feel lost anymore. Like you try to navigate who you are because you belong in this space or you belong with that person or a group of people. And I think it's hard to find, but when you have it, it's one of the most important feelings and it's something that you can't get unless you're surrounded by other people.

[00:38:59.870] - Talya

I think you gain a sense of peace because you're not trying to be someone you're not comfortable pretending to be or playing, but then you're also not pushed beyond what you're comfortable with. But at the same time, you are inevitably around other people to feel like you're belonging in a situation. So, then you are still being pushed to sort of move in a space with others. Yeah. So, I think you gain peace as you're navigating through life with all these different people.

[00:39:46.970] - Mags

Yeah, I agree. I was going to- I'd just like to add on to that quickly. It's like how they say there's a difference between being alone and then lonely, because loneliness actually comes from not having deep connections with other people. It comes from not feeling understood or not feeling like you belong anywhere. So yeah, I agree. Very important to belong-

[00:40:09.900] - Shaniece

Yeah, definitely.

[00:40:11.250] - Mags

Feel like understood by others in a way. Can belonging be taken away from you or can you only ever choose to leave?

[00:40:23.750] - Shaniece

What a good question. I think belonging can be taken away from you if you allow it, and I think we're all very human, so we're very vulnerable at times and unfortunately it does get taken away. I think it can get taken away from you. Not necessarily that feeling, but it can be damaged by not necessarily that person who you felt belonging with, but if someone says something about that belonging or that relationship or that person or that connection that you had, I think that can damage it. I know that when I feel like I belong, whether it be around other people who are mixed race, and I talk them about something, they're like "yeah, totally get that". Or whether it's about my friends who are

willing to understand, educate themselves, or I just feel like when you've got that click with somebody or a group and you feel like 'these are my people'. But if someone comes along and says something like "you don't belong here" or you know throws you off like that, I think that can really take that feeling away from you. And it can create a distance, and everything that you've built up can sort of feel like it wasn't there to start with because I think it's something that's really hard to get, but so easy to be taken away by other comments. I know like- being British, for one, and being mixed heritage, I've really battled with trying to belong, and being British, it sounds really strange, but just being able to call myself that feels quite odd. But, I think I've had people say really passive racist comments to me and essentially saying that I don't belong here or "go back to where you've come from", and that can make me feel like a real disconnect in the country that I'm born in or the place where I was born. It can really make you feel that disconnect and makes you struggle to reconnect with that again. I think as much as other people in other situations can control your sense of belonging, you can make us feel like you belong if you realign your mind to these comments and realign your mind to how people say things and how you take them. I mean it's hard, and I'm not saying don't cry and just be resilient because I feel like that's often what it said, I think to be said of not allowing other people to damage what you've worked so hard to create, really.

[00:42:37.570] - Talya

I don't think it's something that can be taken away from you, but you can transition out of belonging. I don't really think it's- yeah, I think to put so much weight on the feeling of belonging or something to where you can sort of blame someone for making you feel like you don't belong or that you did something or to guilt trip yourself. I don't really believe in that. But, I think people change and where you are in your life changes quite frequently maybe, and the people you want to surround yourself with also changes as you go through different stages of life. So, I like to think of it more as transitioning out of feelings of belonging.

[00:43:25.090] - Cass

I like that thought, transitioning and stuff, because not a lot of people think like that. They're like you know- there's always some type of different mixed feeling with that. But, I think the idea transitioning from- especially because you're growing up, I think that's the perfect term for it.

[00:43:42.470] - Talya

Yeah. Because if you sort of say that, make it this really big and sort of permanent thing, then you're just putting a nail in your coffin. Like, as soon as you get kicked out of the group or something, it's the end of the world. But it's not really. I mean, it sucks. I cry over it or whatever when I lose a friend, but it's a part of life, and I think it's something you learn to be okay with as you grow up. I used to be that child. I remember having conversations with my parents when I stopped being friends with my best friend in second grade or something, and it was the end of my world. I was crying. I blamed myself, I blamed them. I just couldn't deal with it. And my parents would sort of look at me and go "oh, my gosh, so dramatic". And that would make me cry more obviously at the time, but now I realise why they were sort of laughing at me or just kind of "whatever, this is just a phase". Because I mean, they've gone through it, and they've come out the other side.

[00:44:46.730] - Cass

Yeah. I guess it's hard, though, because one thing is when people have gone through it, and they know the experience of it, compared to when you're actually going through the experience for the first time. And sometimes when someone tells you like "oh, it's okay"-

[00:45:05.650] - Talya

It doesn't feel okay to you.

[00:45:07.240] - Cass

Yeah. Like, I'm feeling it right now. Why can't you like just accept that I'm feeling it right now? Like, I don't care. Like, I get that you've pass through it, but accept that I'm going through it now.

[00:45:16.920] - Talya

Exactly. And sometimes what you need is just someone who will listen. Sometimes I tell my mom, 'I am going to rant, and I don't need you to do anything, just sit there'. So, now she's learned to give me a warning and say, "do you want my advice?" Because back then, back in the day, no, just kidding. I'm still 19. She would just give me unsolicited advice and then I would get upset because, I mean I didn't ask for it. And so now she knows. Good for her.

[00:45:49.470] - Mags

Yeah, that's very common with parents. I feel like they just feel like their role is to always give advice and guide you through every experience you have. But sometimes I think you just want to feel it and experience it like raw.

[00:46:04.530] - Cass

As well as like- even with friends or partners and stuff. It's like you have a different background than I do and different circumstances than I do. What happens to me now? It might not be the same to you because of who you are and your identity and your background and stuff, but I'm dealing with it because of my circumstances. You can judge it and say, like "oh, it's not that big of a deal and stuff", but it wouldn't be a big of a deal to you because of who you are, but it's a big deal because of what's happening to me.

[00:46:37.070] - Talya

Sorry, go ahead.

[00:46:40.350] - Cass

No, no! I was done.

[00:46:40.350] - Talya

I even think saying something like not "oh, I know exactly what you're going through or feeling" whatever, but saying something like "I get what you mean". Even that slight change, it can be helpful. Because, for example, with my sister, when she talks about some person who did whatever to her, I know what she's talking about, and I can sort of identify with something similar, but I don't know exactly what's happening, so I try to tell her "oh, I get what you mean, and I'm so annoyed for you", or something like that, instead of pretending like I know exactly the situation she's in. But it's very hard. And I try to change my vocabulary even just that little bit. But it's obviously a process. Yeah, it's something I started trying to do after my grandma told me "don't say that something is impossible or that you can't do it. Just say it's a challenge". Because just by saying that, then you're already changing your mindset and making it something that you can go through, just it's hard.

[00:47:47.910] - Cass

I like that.

[00:47:49.050] - Mags

Yeah, that's a great way to put it.

[00:47:51.460] - Cass

Oh, my God. Talya is beyond her years here, giving us a line of advice.

[00:47:57.210] - Talya

It was the affirmations, guys.

[00:48:03.290] - Mags

Always work.

[00:48:04.140] - Talya

Guys, get yourself people who will give you affirmations.

[00:48:11.050] - Cass

I gave you all the affirmations, girly.

[00:48:14.110] - Talya

I didn't even pay you.

[00:48:20.110] - Cass

Are there benefits from being an outsider? And if so, does this way outweigh the costs?

[00:48:27.810] - Shaniece

I think there are benefits. I think it gives you a very unique perspective on things. I think a lot of the [inaudible]- because you're technically multiple cultures or multiple people at the same time, and you feel like you embody so many people. But, I think that can be said for a lot of people. Everyone who you meet in your life has a certain impact on you. And [inaudible] who we've met. So, I think all of that definitely adds up and gives you that unique perspective and give you a different outlook on things. It can give you an attitude, and I think above all, it can really make you empathise and sympathise with people who really struggle with identity and belonging. Because when you felt like you don't belong or you don't know what your identity is, you can really empathise with people who also feel the same way. And I think it makes you feel more aware of how those people feel, because I think it's easy to walk around and think about yourself realistically and think 'oh, how do I feel about this?' But what about the other people that are still struggling? Just because I feel like I've got a grasp on my identity, it doesn't mean that people aren't still struggling, but I think it allows me to strike up those conversations because I can really relate to that and really relate to that feeling. Do I think it outweighs the cost? Um, sure? I think- I'd love to sit here and be like- but I think you can go through some really difficult times and would I have rather not have had those difficult times? Maybe, but they equally make me who I am, so I think it's a really difficult question to answer, but I think in some ways it does outweigh the cost, but in some ways the costs are really hard to get through and get over really.

[00:50:14.630] - Cass

Definitely.

[00:50:16.390] - Talya

Yeah. I think there are benefits to being an outsider because if you're always comfortable, you don't have room to grow, and you're not challenged. And maybe if you always belong, although I said before that even in belonging, you'll obviously have disagreements and things like that, to face the challenges of being an outsider gives you a different perspective, and it's a different kind of challenge. You'll have to navigate working together with people a lot and feeling like an outsider. And it's like 'how do I communicate with you? I don't really feel comfortable, I don't really know you, I don't want to work with you, I don't want to see your face', but we still need to make something

together. That's something I often feel when I do group work in you know theatre or whatever it is I'm doing. And I think it teaches you a lot because you have to learn to get on with it, even when you don't want to. And even though you should set boundaries, you still have to get things done sometimes. And being an outsider gives you the skills to do that regardless. It makes you more adaptable, I guess. Yeah.

[00:51:36.910] - Mags

Definitely.

[00:51:38.430] - Talya

Do the challenges outweigh or what was it? Do the benefits?

[00:51:43.420] - Mags

Yeah, if so, does it outweigh the costs of you know?

[00:51:49.650] - Talya

I don't know if I- thing is, I don't think being an outsider is that big of a deal. I think it's completely normal, and everyone will belong at some points in some places and also be an outsider. So, I would not think of it personally as something that it's like 'oh, does this outweigh that', or it doesn't feel like a traumatic experience. I mean, obviously there are times where it's like it can be a very serious thing being the outsider, but in a general sense, I think it's a necessary thing in life, and I think everyone has experienced it, or if you're a tiny baby who has no enemies, then you will experience it. Yeah.

[00:52:37.330] - Cass

Do you always belong with the same self or do you create a different self in different spaces?

[00:52:51.110] - Shaniece

Good question! All that's coming into my head is you know that film Split where he has so many different personalities that's all that's coming into my head. Not that I'm like that, by the way. I think I used to, I think I really used to try and adapt and mould myself to different people, different situations just because I felt a bit like insecure probably in who I was. And I only felt like the people that I belong to would understand who I am, and the people that didn't- I needed to be somebody else, probably somebody more Westernised or more sort of white. And I didn't really want to talk about being Asian in any sense of the form. I didn't want to talk about having family that weren't from here because I knew that would lead to certain conversations that maybe I didn't want to have, or I didn't want to go down those avenues too. But, I think I've learned to just be me. And I've learned that if someone doesn't want to take me for me, then that's fine. I'm not everyone's person, and I totally get that. Not everyone's my person, it's fine. But, I think I've just learned to just be me

and to really embody who I am. I think as a poet, you'll know, Cassandra, you try and be a poet and somebody in that poem and then try and be somebody outside of it. Whereas I think now, and I used to say 'oh, yeah, my poem is roughly based on me', I would never say 'this is me and this poem'. But like over time, I will happily say 'yeah, this is about me, and this is about what I've gone through', because that is me. And why should I shy away from it? Why should I ever feel embarrassed by who I am in any sense of the form? So, I think through poetry, although it allowed me to disguise who I was in certain areas, it's also allowed me to embrace who I am and just be sort of raw and bare for everyone to see, and like take it or leave it, really. I'm just me. And I will continue to be that. Because I think being true to yourself allows life to be so much easier than trying to juggle who you think you should be for other people.

[00:54:58.270] - Cass

Yeah, definitely.

[00:55:01.550] - Talya

Just really giving me one of my modules like performance analysis. I promise we talked about this. Yeah. Anyway, it's giving me twice behave behaviour. Yes, basically the answer is yes. We perform a version of ourselves. We perform different versions of ourselves, depending on who we're with and our situation, just because as humans, we have lots of things we have to do and things on our mind, generally speaking, and we perform certain selves because that's what's convenient. You won't go into a job interview with some muddy clothes that you just rolled around in the fields in because you know that's not professional. And that is 90% of the time, 99% of the time, not what a job interviewer is looking for, and everyone knows that. And we conform to those ideals or whatever because that's what we know to be the right thing. And, yeah, we do that with every situation, whether it's going downstairs to make a coffee in student accommodation or eating breakfast at a fancy hotel. You're going to possibly wear something different or walk in a different way because that's what you think you should be doing. And some people have a problem with that like "oh, we should just feel comfortable doing whatever we want, we should break down norms" and whatever and yeah, okay, good for you. But, I also think sometimes we overthink it, and it's a part of life like you'll always do it. You'll never be able to not perform something because everything has been performed by yourself before or by someone else before, and that's why it's a norm. Like, why do people wear white at a wedding? Because that's just what's been happening for many, many years. Sorry, I think I just got carried away by theatre stuff.

[00:57:16.970] - Mags

I love the theatre perspective. It's great.

[00:57:22.750] - Talya

Yeah, that's what I think.

[00:57:24.750] - Mags

Okay, there's just one more question. Is it difficult to possess a sense of belonging when we are unsure of our own identity?

[00:57:36.210] - Shaniece

Yeah, I think it is because I think you struggle to know where you belong. And that's why I think they do go together even they are separate things at the same time and separate dealings. I think if you don't know who you are as a person and your identity, it's really hard to know who you belong to then, because you don't know what it is you're looking for. And I'm not necessarily saying that for me like, being mixed race, I didn't go out looking for other mixed race people to feel like I belong. I just was starting to be able to talk about who I was and what my identity was and that allowed me to feel like I belong with certain people who were willing to understand that or willing to have conversations about it. Like I don't have loads of friends that are mixed race, and I don't have loads of friends that are from different you know backgrounds, but I try and allow myself to talk to as many people as possible and connect with as many people, no matter what their identity is, just so I can have those conversations. Unless you are able to know who you are, how you meant to explain to somebody else who you are and create that sense of belonging and that feeling. So, I do think that the two are really connected and that you do need to know who you are and what your identity is in order to find a group that you can relate to.

[00:59:01.470] - Talya

I think my answer to the previous question helps make it easier, because you don't need to figure out who you are to be able to be a functioning human in society. That doesn't mean you're functioning at your highest sort of level and with purpose, but you don't need to have figured out who you are in order to live a normal life I think. And it's a process. Remember how I was talking about transitioning? I kind of feel that finding your identity or being the person you want to be, that's a very overrated concept because who you need to be in that moment will change all the time. Like your circumstances will change. I mean, I assume that the person you are going to be or need to be as a mother of three children under five or something is going to be different than someone who's single at the same age because you obviously need to survive in a different way. And I think that's okay. Yeah, I think surviving will lead to thriving, but you have to survive first in order to thrive. Yeah.

[01:00:23.020] - Cass

Okay, I have a quick question for you, Shan because obviously you're the older one from us in this group, not to shame or anything because Talya is still in her late teens, going into becoming a woman. What do you think is the obviously, now that we're in our twenties stuff, how do you think your perspective on identity and belonging change when you grow up, compared to what you were thinking when you were a teenager, for example?

[01:01:00.050] - Shaniece

I think you stop pigeonhole-ing. I know that sounds really weird, but I stopped saying, like 'oh, this person can only belong here because they can relate to that person'. I used to very much think that I could only belong with people who were exactly like me, whether that in some way, shape or form, whether that be through race or being a woman or being British, whatever it was. And then I sort of thought actually, this isn't the case. I don't need to be friends with people who are liked me. Neither do I need to find people who are exactly like my mix or whatever it is, my gender, it doesn't matter. I felt like I now in my twenties have realised that it's just about finding people who you feel that connection with or a comfort with, and that's what is the most important thing. It's the hardest thing to find, but yeah, it's the most beautiful thing to have. But yeah, I think that's what I say in my twenties, and I think with identity as well, I think you just become less apologetic. Your identity is who you are. You don't go around picking parts and be like 'yeah, this is me'. You are who you are at the end of the day. And I think it's just about owning that. And I think in your teen years it's like you've got to be like your peers, you've got to be liked. I think that's the thing in our teens, and that's the problem, you've got to be liked, and we're all seeking validation. Whereas I think in our twenties, we become a bit like 'you know what, I'm in my twenties now, I'm allowed to be who I want to be', and you come into yourself a lot more. I think that's what I found anyway. And I think once you're away from certain environments, like for example, like school, you're able to come into your own and that allows you to really identify whoever- as whoever you want to be, and someone is bound to accept you for that.

[01:02:44.450] - Cass

Definitely. And then in terms of your poetry, I'm going to give you another plug here. In terms of your poetry, what do you think was the first poem that you wrote that you were actually like 'this is kind of like, I'm getting who I am now after writing this'. Or was it inspired from that thought, basically?

[01:03:09.690] - Shaniece

I think for me this sounds strange because it's only a poem that I wrote about two or three years ago. It's like My Honest Poem. Like I read it at the start of every reading that I do in a new place. I think for me, I called it My Honest Poem because it is me being honest, and it felt like it was me being honest about who I am for the first time. I think before I used to write about situations I've been through or other people, or I never really used to write about Me the I. And I think in that poem that's for the first time I kind of laid all my flaws out and just sort of read it and thought 'this is who I am, this is me being honest'. So yeah, it took me what, probably like six years of writing poetry to write a poem that I felt like 'yeah, this is me'. But, I got there in the end, and I think then my whole style of poetry just changed to become quite unapologetic, always having a really intentional meaning or purpose behind it. Whereas before, I think I just used to write, and it was like my diary of people or situations, and then I'd disguise it as 'oh, this is somebody who I know'.

[01:04:24.870] - Cass

Yeah, definitely. Bringing it back to you, Talya, because obviously we love to talk about art here. And apart from Shan's poetry in your case, because obviously we know that you're doing drama, you're a bit of an actress. How does- is your craft influenced by your identity, like in different roles and stuff? How you identify with those characters because there's something in you that identifies with them,

and it's kind of like bits of your identity, or because you feel like there's a bit of in those characters where you're like 'oh, I kind of belong in this setting', or stuff like that?

[01:05:09.890] - Talya

This is actually a good question to ask right now because I'm auditioning for something tomorrow. And when you audition, sometimes you just get given a list of all the characters and then you have to choose which one you're reading for. And I was actually thinking about this just recently. Why am I drawn to some characters and not others? And the answer is, it's not always for me personally it's not like 'oh, I'm Asian, so let me play the Asian girl', or something like that. Especially unless it's like specifically 'oh, this person has to speak with an Irish accent and blah, blah', I might not go for that character. But then, I choose characters based on things I'm interested in or I've seen. So, for example, like the character I want to read for tomorrow, like her husband is a poet and things like that. And I really think writing is very romantic, and I like artsy guys or whatever. I don't even have a boyfriend right now, so it's not informed by me personally at this current point in time, but it's informed by a fantasy I might have. So, it's kind of like, yes it is informed by my identity, but not really. Maybe some delusional aspects of my identity. And when I do play a character, I don't go into a character by thinking about how it connects to me personally. I don't think I've ever been that kind of person. I'm very much- I'm very physical with it, and I get into it by doing a certain routine. So, like for example, with every show I have a different preshow ritual and that suits the feeling I need to get in my body to play that character. Yeah, so I wouldn't say it's a very personal thing for me to play characters. That's why I can be very intense in a scene and just walk it off because it's not from my personal experience. Yeah, I don't know if that made any sense.

[01:07:29.630] - Cass

You did!

[01:07:30.580] - Mags

You made plenty of sense.

[01:07:35.150] - Cass

I was going to ask another question, but you kind of answered the question I was going to ask with the question I just asked you. But, I guess if I had to ask another question, I would say what would you say to, because obviously we are doing this podcast to inform other people around our group age, or people going to come into their twenties like yourself, who don't always have everything figured out, so especially I think the terms of coming to being yourself and being your truest self and finding your identity and stuff like that, who you want to be is like such a thing when you're growing up-

[01:08:14.180] - Talya

Right.

[01:08:14.180] - Cass

Especially, I think, as women, we have so much pressure on it because there's already so many pressures of "you're a woman because you have to reproduce, and you're a woman and you wear these things", and people look at you in a certain way and already think they know what you actually have to be and who you have to be and what you have to do and stuff like that, and that's not only women obviously, it's obviously men and people who are trying to find themselves, and obviously we're not going into the sexuality bit, but that's a bit of identity, so what would your advice be for someone who's trying to figure their shit out basically?

[01:08:58.750] - Talya

I would say don't try- don't idealise don't convince yourself that you'll get to a point where you'll have your shit figured out because you're never going to reach it. You're never going to get to a point where you go 'oh, I figured out how to live my best life, 100%, all the time'. And if that's what you're working toward, you're just going to be disappointed all the time because it's not realistic. And I think we need to stop promoting on social media like "oh, do this so you can be happy and then maybe in your thirties, you'll find out who you are" or something like that. You might learn more about yourself because obviously the more you spend time with someone, including yourself, you learn things about how you function or maybe 'oh, I should do this because that helps me and that doesn't help me', but just be patient with yourself. I don't have life changing advice, but I struggle a lot with this, but I just have to let myself be okay with struggling sometimes. Like if you're in a phase where you just are depressed, then don't fight it because, I mean, you want to get better, obviously, but you don't hate for yourself and go 'oh my goodness, I can't believe I let myself spiral' because that's not productive either.

[01:10:20.790] - Cass

Yes, that's absolutely perfect. How about you, Shan? What are your words of advice?

[01:10:28.410] - Shaniece

I think my advice is like stay true to who you are. It doesn't matter what anybody says or what anyone tries to criticise about you or if anyone tries to tell you who you are. I feel like everyone's always trying to be like "no, but you're this, you're that". Actually, I'm exactly who I'm supposed to be, and I am me, and take it or leave it. You don't need other people telling you who you are. You need to know who you are and tell them who you are, it's not the other way around. And I think, yeah, have that conversation with yourself like 'this is who I am'. Tell people that and don't allow people to say, "this is who you are" and put you in a box that you don't belong in.

[01:11:07.910] - Mags

That's great advice.

[01:11:09.150] - Cass

Beautiful.

[01:11:09.620] - Mags

I like that.

[01:11:10.090] - Cass

That was beautiful.

[01:11:12.230] - Cass

So, hope you enjoyed that conversation with our lovely, lovely ladies because we certainly did, and we certainly were so excited to bring them into the podcast to you know make this conversation happen and educate you guys and encourage you-

[01:11:34.940] - Mags

Give it a little bit more substance and give you a bit of refreshing sort of experiences, not just us all the time. Get some different perspectives, I guess.

[01:11:45.140] - Cass

Indeed. And I hope that from this conversation, you actually, even if you're not from different backgrounds and stuff, you get to think to yourself 'well, I'm not alone if I don't know who the hell I am'.

[01:12:01.240] - Mags

Yeah, because this can be applied to just an identity crisis in general. Figuring out who you are and stuff is very complicated, and I guess you do have the added weight when you are either biracial or have dual nationality, but it's still valid to not know who you are and where you belong when you're just from one place. And it is a really big thing that I think for centuries, humankind has struggled with is identity and who we are.

[01:12:32.820] - Cass

And I think it sprouts a lot from what philosophy comes from and our ideas and our religions and stuff like who we are, where we come from, where we belong and stuff like that. So, you're not alone if you're battling with all of these ideas because everyone is all of the time.

[01:12:54.470] - Mags

You'll figure out.

[01:12:55.420] - Cass

Yeah, and this is a learning journey. You don't have to set yourself in stone because everything changes, and you are able to change every second, every minute, every hour of every day, and we all learn, we all change, and nothing is set in stone. You can always change who you are to whoever you want to be and be whoever you want to be. And so, for this next week's blog post, you'll be delighted with some difference to our post, because we're going to share with you a small collection of poetry and other arts, talking about identity, mixed race, belonging and all of the things that we've discussed in today's episode, and I hope you enjoy.

[01:13:55.580] - Mags

Basically yeah, we're just going to have that blog post basically next Monday just dedicating it to celebrating identity and dual nationality and biraciality and all that stuff. So, hope you enjoy. And meanwhile you can follow us on our socials, @acupofgrowthpodcast on Instagram and @acupofgrowth on Twitter and TikTok. If you would like to see the blog post, visit our website at acupofgrowth.co.uk, and while you're there, sign up to our newsletter, so you get early access and exclusives to what the next episode is going to be, what the next blog post is going to be and any other things that are coming on the podcast.

[01:14:41.450] - Cass

Yeah, leave us any comments. Continue the conversation with us on socials. If you want to contact us, DM us on socials, or if you're very fancy, send us an email at enquiries@acupofgrowth.co.uk. Send us any feedback or reviews, it helps us, obviously, grow the podcast and improve the content that we put out there for you. But, I think that's all from us for today. So, spread the love, stay humble, and we'll see you on the next episode.

[01:15:19.100] - Both [Mags and Cass]

Bye!