

Speech.

Hello Everyone. My name is Arjun Kapoor.

Before I begin, anyone wanna take a guess as to where I'm from? Bill? Thomas?

When people try to guess what my ethnicity is, or where my family migrated from, they usually half right. Some try and guess based on my name (which is Indian in origin), others try and guess based on my accent. The ones that get it closest are those that do both. But they always miss a large chunk of my background in the process.

My family's migration story to Australia begins with my great grandfather's grandfather. Who moved from India to Kenya right after the turn of the century. You see, back then the British were building railways in Kenya as they did with all their colonies. It was largely to help 'develop' the region. By develop I of course mean, extract as many resources as possible. To their credit they wanted to keep their 'workers' healthy. This is where grandfather's grandfather comes in.

He migrated to Kenya as a doctor, to help treat specifically the brown people. Apartheid was rampant, but normalised. Eventually he ended up making a solid life for himself and family, who enjoyed an expansive lifestyle up until 1983, (when my dad was 8). It was then that civil unrest gripped the nation through a coup. This was why my family left Kenya. As a chartered accountant, my grandfather had the choice of moving to either the UK, Canada or Australia. Well, I think we all know where he ended up going. It was the palm trees of the St Kilda beach that ended up convincing them to come here. They were living in a coastal town known as Mombasa that had lots of Coconut trees - see the similarities?

When he first arrived, he was in year 2. He was the only migrant in the entire Primary School down the road: GWPS (the same one I went to); But back then, it was called Glen Waverley Heights Primary School.

There were few immigrants of Indian origin in Melbourne, to the point where my dad tells me that there was only 1 shop that stocked Indian foods, that was all the way in Clayton. So basically the entire Indian community of Melbourne would be there. Now, there's way more! Just in Kingsway I saw at least 2 on the way here.

Back then, 'The Glen' as we know it was just a Target and a Safeway (now Woolies). The Glen Shopping centre had since bought multiple Ovals from Glenny High, to expand with the explosion of immigration into the area.

By the time my dad got there, to Glenny high (or Glen Waverley Secondary College as we know it today), the one just down Kingsway, also the one I am currently attending), The demographics had flipped. By the time he was in year 12, ready to graduate, ~9/10 of his school were of international origin, thanks to the migration explosion.

Back then, it was very difficult for my dad and his family to stay connected to their culture: There were hardly any temples, festivals were celebrated at home with a few people, and there weren't even many Indians in Melbourne at the time, massive difference to now.

You'd be surprised to find an Indian in the street, and even more surprised to find an Indian that spoke the same language as you, as there are over 20 different languages in India.

And it would be EVEN rarer to find Indians from Kenya (like getting struck by lightning type of rare). So much so: that the few Kenyan-Indian friends my grandparents made back then, come to family gatherings today as family. I didn't even know this, until I began asking my dad about this for this very speech. I was seriously shocked to find that some of the people I grew up calling Uncle and Auntie weren't actually related to me!

Today, in the city of Monash we enjoy a plethora of amazing cuisines, cultures and experiences. We see people from all different walks of life, each with their own stories, experiences and dreams. This would not have been possible had Australia not been as welcoming and accepting of different people arriving here and calling Australia Home.