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In Brazil, every day I'd wake up and have a fruit salad for breakfast. The sweetness of the mango, acidity of the kiwi, and heavenly taste of the lychee (my absolute favourite food) made me feel alive, or at least alive enough to start my day at 7am. When I arrived in London and went to my first Sainsbury's I was shattered to see so many of the fruits I usually enjoyed back home were not available or simply terribly tasting... I know, I'm picky with what I love. It took me some time to adjust, but I found a way to incorporate berries, apples and other regional fruits into my breakfast concoctions, and I have to say, I don't really miss my Brazilian fruits all that much anymore.

I guess, with friends, it kind of worked the same way. I lived in Brazil during my 10 most important formative years, and during that time had a very close group of friends that didn't change, except for that one odd one that left us because of their dad's job or something of the sort. I was used to knowing my friends by heart, I knew what annoyed them and what could make them laugh, and they knew the same about me. I would see them every day; we'd speak either Portuguese or English, discuss the same topics, eat the same foods, learn the same things. Altogether, my life, my friends, and I were quite predictable, like married couple settled in their routine, we didn't venture outside of our comfort zones all that often.

Moving to London not only gave me new ingredients for my fruit salads, it gave me new ingredients for my life. My new friends were from around the world, some from France, Romania, Italy, Hong Kong, South Africa, to name a few. Each one different from one another, with their own cultural backgrounds, and even if from the same country still distinct. My first few weeks in London were anxiety ridden. Not necessarily in a bad way, but all the new stimuli-being in a new place, meeting an immense amount of people, not knowing who I would actually end up being friends with or who would end up as a simple acquaintance- made me go a bit crazy.

Yet every time I met someone new I felt a bit less ignorant. Each person telling me the story of where they're from and their reasons for being in London more than made up for not having taken History or Geography A-Levels. I arrived thinking I had taken a courageous choice leaving my family and coming here, but really, most people I were meeting had done the same.

With everyone being so different, I became less afraid to be myself. While in Brazil I was scared to wear certain clothes, or say certain things because of what my friends would think and because my "Brazilian culture" told me it wasn't cool, in London I could experiment. The pink power suit I had in the back of my wardrobe made its first appearance on one of my (many) London nights out with my worldly entourage, and instead of them making me feel like I was playing dress up for an 80s party, I was accepted as I was, crazy, a bit flashy, and very pink.

My first few weeks of university were spent surrounded by people I had never met before, yet felt I had known for years. We were spending every hour of our days together, because even though we were all from different places, we were all in London for the same reason, facing the same fear of being somewhere new and not knowing anyone. 70% of these wonderful people were French, so not only was I thrown into a new environment with new people, I was also involuntarily listening to and consequently learning a new language. What at first all sounded like "bah oui, croissant, Madame, bonsoir", turned into phrases I could actually comprehend (although I can mostly only still order a croissant). I can proudly say that now, when I go to France and am faced with the challenge of speaking French with strangers, I can manage to string together a bunch of words to make some actual sense, usually after a glass or two of wine. Or shall I say, VIN.

It has not all been smiles and flowers though. When greeting people, I am used to giving a kiss on the cheek, which in London has put me in a handful of awkward situations, from mistakenly denying a second cheek kiss to the French or Italian, to accidentally lip grazing a British person when they were surprised by my faces close proximity to theirs.

Granted that isn't the most serious of problems, yet it still happens more often than not. Regardless, meeting people from around the world not only allowed me to revise my pre- established ideas of culture, it also allowed me to explore myself, and be myself, at a greater level.