

# Everything, Everywhere, All at Once

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Home. Formally described as a place that one resides in permanently, mainly as a member of a family or household. Before I was even a year old, my parents began moving around. Traveling to Uganda was the first time my mom and I ever boarded a plane, I couldn't even utter my first word when we moved, but I learned English through a British children's show and even developed a British accent before my parents sent me to daycare, then I picked up an Ugandan accent, and before I could read my first sentence I was transferred from my home again and moved to D.C., a city where the teachers couldn't understand me and I was stripped of the short-lived accent. Three-year-old me quickly adapted to the American scene and stopped pronouncing the "t's" in words like water. The American accent stuck, but my residence did not. I moved abroad, and my *American* accent wasn't understood. Everywhere I went, my mom would have to translate my English into English, but in *her* accent, or I would always have to repeat my words and make sure I enunciate the t's. Although I'm grateful for the opportunities and the empathy that I've gained from traveling around, the multiple homes and multiple areas of belonging have made it hard to have a stable sense of identity. Every country that I move to, a new physical identity comes with it. In my home country, I am the white-washed girl who can't speak her own language; in Vietnam, I was the black girl, and here, I am the introverted, shy girl with a name no one can pronounce. I have been one out of five of the black girls in my grade, and the five-letter, three-syllable name of mine, which shares the same alphabet as most English-speaking countries, has always been a problem for me. The one memory that constantly replays in my mind is a day during my freshman year of high school, when I moved back to the place my accent belonged, and when I thought I would experience the American dream. I was seated in my engineering class and on my 10-inch green stool with my two other friends. A girl we had just spoken to a week ago stopped at our table, and when she came by, she whispered in the other girl's ear, "What is her name again?" thinking that I wouldn't hear. My name is branded on me. In the grade book, my birth certificate, my passport, and even this application. So everywhere I go, I am someone else. I am Ah-Nee-Sue, Anne-Sue, Uh-Neh-Sue, and Uh-Nee-Sah. I take the identity of whichever place my name is pronounced, the white-washed girl, the black girl, and the girl with a foreign name that no one can say.