

“Are you not from here?” An odd question to be asked to a presumably Caucasian-American woman. My lyrical essay entitled, “Mayflower” represents how a Swedish-born woman struggles to share her identity as she is constantly being presumed to be American. I learned that sometimes her own respective stories and culture is “eclipsed by the whiteness of her skin.”

My photograph is framed by shrubbery and a tree. This is to give the feeling of being unnoticed or unimportant, much like how my interviewee feels when she tries to celebrate, talk about, or express her own culture. Similarly, the subject in my photograph feels and looks more hidden. Out of the hundreds I took, I decided to choose this photograph because of the woman’s expression. She looks as if she is searching, much like my interviewee is trying to search for herself while being caught in between two distinct identities. I chose to juxtapose the quote next to her image so the viewer looks twice; my subject does not look like the stereotypical American. Asking “Are you not from here?” starts to probe the viewer’s preconceptions about her.

For this project, I used Photoshop to do Split Toning and Gradient Mapping on the photo to create a grayscale image with a hint of a neutral color. For my photograph, I used the gradient called Sepia 2 and customized it to make the darker browns more prominent. This contrasted nicely with the background gradient called Selenium 2. For my text, I used the font Courier. The font is mostly composed of straight edges and thin lines. The font is not distinct in any way to emphasize the point of my interviewee’s feeling of being hidden. I used the Warp tool in Photoshop to make my text fit my subject’s outline.