‘Minha filha, tens que estudar para que sejas uma pessoa nesta vida’

(Translation) ‘My daughter, you must study so that you can be someone in this life’ – I remember my parents telling a younger version of me. With that, they do not refer to just being, but to be, beyond being. To stand out, to challenge, to excel, to fail and come back stronger. To not let where you have come from define who you will be. These words have created a much bigger dream in my mind. It has led me to where I am now and moulded me into who I am today.

I have been here all my life, but I cannot ignore my internal turmoil of belonging and identity. Even though I am British, I am not British. I am a Londoner. A distant insider. A close outsider. A Portuguese and Angolan Londoner.

I say I am a Londoner because of what being a Londoner means to me. Being a Londoner, and studying in London, represents a multiplicity of identities, cultures, countries and nationalities. Although Cass has students from all over the world studying away from their home, London allows you to find ‘home’ through food, TV shows, specific areas and societies. Places where you can feel that small part at home, even if your home feels, or is, miles away. Students carry and share home through personal experiences and journeys shared in class discussions, encouraging a more culturally inclusive and global perspective. A few have shared their own ‘home’ with me when they share personal stories of their pets in Ukraine, when we went to the Indian restaurant to experience ‘home’ food, or when they educate me of the business/societal norms in their home countries compared to here. My friends and I, the perfect embodiment of what it is to be and study in London.

London has made me shown me all differences, not as a manner of division, but of *unity*, and SOAS University built me into a challenger of societal normal. Yet, Cass Business School stands out as a mediator of what is and what could be in our society. A place to challenge and critique, yet also acknowledge what is. Acknowledge the flaws, the gaps, the injustices and the structural inequalities, but know that I am more than these. That we are all so much more than these. I can challenge and critique with my acquired knowledge, knowing that I have the tools to be able to grow into a leader of change. From the career sessions providing us training on presentations, to lectures on leadership and negotiation, and the sharing of various thoughts and approaches to a single problem based on individual cultural backgrounds. It is the culmination of all these and many other occurrences which show me who I can be, and what could be for all of us.

I am talking about my journey. My discoveries. My personal multicultural experience and beliefs.

Yet, I am sure many can relate. You see, London's inclusivity and diversity means it has become a relational place of being and of studying. A place where people can come together and merge what appears to be separate identities, cultures and beliefs into a sea of commonality and bonding, clashing and complementing each other to create a common ground – or at least somewhere you can learn from. My story is different. Rather than perceiving it as a 'challenge', I see multiculturalism as who I am. It is my family, my peers, my lecturers, my tutors, the people beside me on the train. It is me. While at the same time, it is so much bigger than me. It is all of us.

When life lays out all that is in a seemingly objective way, Cass has a way of showing you all that you can be. Individual dreams and aspirations seem more achievable, 'challenges' are merely temporary obstacles and the staff and peers grow to feel like your home away from home, the source of encouragement, motivation and support you need to guide you through this tough period. A place where learning is not bounded by solely books or journals. Knowledge surrounds you. Sometimes it can feel like sooooo much information thatallyouwanttodoisscream

STOP!

I need a break. Take me to where you feel at home away from home. Share your abundance of experience with me, ask me about my background. Let's momentarily escape into your world, let me share my world with you, and let's learn from each other.

From an older version of me, to you, mama e papa (mum and dad) – it's taking a while, but I think I'm getting there. I think I've found a home, outside my home. Cass is somewhere which I feel that I can *be*, beyond being. A place we can all *be*, learn and share, together, beyond just being, knowing that this is just the start of greatness.