

mixed-race / bi-racial / multi-cultural / métis / mulatto / hapa / mestizo / words & words / none describe my reality / born in the land of my mother / thousands of miles away from my father's rivers / then taken to another continent / forced to learn a new language / often confused for Latinx / awkward at my high school's Asian Club because I don't look Japanese or Korean

I search for the word to encapsulate my flesh's DNA / a word that would make my feminist grandmother & my witchy great-aunt proud / a word showing snow-encrusted mountains & flood plain deltas / a word mixing jute & potatoes / a word not erasing the taunts of my first-grade Polish classmates - jeering & laughing at my ebony eyes & my perpetually tanned skin / a word not erasing how I straddle two cultures - not knowing either because neither accept me / a word capturing my mother's denial of my ethnicity / a word capturing my father saying I can't visit him in Bangladesh

what word do I choose? / one that will answer the what-who-where are you from / I'm not half or multi- / but aren't I a combination of many? / a combination not often encountered / a bone people want to chew / eager to categorize / have to pick one or the other / I stitch my own identity / tapping into my ancestors / my blood guides me / running hot & cold / mixed / not mixed-up / I know who I am / I am rootxpansive / my roots expanding from South Asia to Eastern Europe to North America / my roots - not torn - not fractured - only growing longer & strong / stretching across cultures / adapting & thriving / rootxpansive / a knowing of who I am no one can take away