

## Ruhi Manek



“Pick One.”

“Though I am of Indian descent, I’m also a 3rd generation Kenyan. I was born in Nairobi, but grew up in Eldoret. I never questioned being both Indian and Kenyan—simultaneously, constantly, and indivisibly—before coming to the US. For people here it is truly shocking; when I tell them I am from Kenya, they usually say something like, “but your parents must have been born in India, right?” For me, it was always natural to be both. It’s so hard to explain because I don’t know anything that is not both identities at the same time, because I have never had to separate them. I grew up speaking Swahili and Gujarati at the same time. I would be listening to afro beat non-stop, while watching tons of Bollywood movies at home. In the US, as much as I can articulate how merged it is for me, I have more trouble getting people to understand that. There is a much greater need to categorise and deconstruct.

Before I became president of the Yale African Students Association, I was worried about what my skin colour would mean. I didn’t know it if would change the dynamics of the organization, or affect how YASA presented itself. To some extent, it’s part of the reason I wanted to take on the position in the first place; I want to be able to change the narrative so people like me can feel they have a place in the “African students association”. I have always loved home, and am very defensive of home despite all its flaws. Coming here means I want to help tell our own story, because for the longest time stories have been told about and for us. It is time we do that for ourselves.”

Our wonderful Ruhi Manek opens her heart (and beautiful smile!!) for our second #HumansOfOISS story!

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BgA2UWmndj0/> [1]

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**Links**

[1] <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgA2UWmndj0/>