



Katerina Bampos

My mother

- my multiculturalism hero

My mother is, and always will be, the most remarkable woman I know. Her resume reads like the pitch for a feminist superhero designed to inspire and empower millions of girls: professional athlete, former military police officer, punk, politician, counter-terrorism expert, and bi-lingual. Her path to becoming bi-lingual is unlike most of my Greek friends' parents.

My mother is a blue eyed, blonde hair, freckled, true-blue, rugby watching, meat pie eating Aussie. She met my father, a first generation Australian hailing from Corinth and Nafpaktos, love bloomed and shortly after a wedding saga to rival My Big Fat Greek Wedding took place. Nine months

later I was, as she sarcastically puts it, untimely ripped from her womb and brought into the world almost killing her in the process. I was the physical embodiment of the multicultural family my parents had created with my father's thick black hair and my mother's light blue eyes.

As all of you reading this will know independence and privacy are not Greek words. I was raised by a village of omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient thias and yiyias who made sure that my first solid food was lamb cutlets and that I could hold a conversation in Greek before I could say my first word of English. My mother, rather than doing what many would in her situation and walking away from an overbearing and traditional culture, took it in her stride and learnt with me. We navigated the world together. That doesn't mean it was easy or fair.

I remember one evening when I was five and my mother took me to Marrickville Metro after work to get the weekly groceries. She was clearly exhausted and determined to get in and out with as little fuss as possible but I stood in front of various fruit and vegetable displays demanding that she translate the signs for me. Of course many of them she didn't know and those she did I challenged her on; I interpreted her exhaustion as apathy to my confusion and I responded as all frustrated