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My name is Mikhara Ramsing. I am a gay South African Indian Australian woman. I grew up in Durban, South Africa as a fifth generation South African Indian. When I was 14 years old, my parents, two younger sisters and younger brother immigrated to Australia. We first lived in a country town on the border of NSW and VIC called Albury-Wodonga. This provided me with a wonderful introduction to Australian culture and I still fondly recall beautiful moments spent playing alongside the Murray-Darling River, visiting my friend's paddocks to learn how to ride a horse, to partaking in my first sausage sizzle!

I was 16 years old when we moved to the bigger city of Brisbane, QLD. Moving schools at that age was difficult as I found it harder to make friends and more so it was also the time I was beginning to understand my sexuality. I was scared of what the implications of this may be so I threw myself into my academic, music and sporting life and was proud to become School Captain and start an ongoing fundraiser to support an orphanage in Kenya.

I hold a double honours degree in Law and Economics at The University of Queensland. Throughout my time at university, I loved being involved in the student clubs, playing an active role on the UQ Law Society to volunteering for various not for profits focused on youth leadership. This grew my passion for youth empowerment, enabling me to volunteer in schools across Brisbane and regional QLD as I facilitated workshops for young people to learn about communication and team building skills.

In 2014, I was part of the founding team that oragnised IMPACT! Youth Social Enterprise Conference which exposed me to the power of social enterprise. No longer did I feel I had to choose between my volunteer work and making a living, I could combine the two and create a business that focused on social impact maximisation. This inspired me to write my Economic Honours Thesis on the social entrepreneur in an evolving economy.

After university, I secured a position as a graduate economist at Deloitte Access Economics in Sydney. Moving to Sydney in 2016 was an important milestone in my life as I purposefully chose to liver in the Inner West, known for its diversity and inclusion, and I chose to be open about my sexual orientation at work, a privilege that boosted my self-confidence. Sydney gave me the courage to finally bring my parents into my identity.

After eight long hard years of trying to bring my parents into my identity, understanding all the fears we had built in our heads, the lack of understanding between us, I wrote them a letter. My letter of understanding. This was the turning point for my parent's and I relationship.

With my parent's blessings, a huge dark cloud lifted from my head, I could dream bigger than before. Anything felt possible. Having my family stay intact was the most important thing for me. This gave the courage to pursue my dream of being a social entrepreneur.

After 10 enjoyable months at Deloitte, I used my savings and moved to The Channon, in the Northern Rivers NSW. I wanted to be in a community that supported social causes and I wanted to specifically work with the regional and rural youth of Australia where youth suicide statistics were the highest.

In 2017, I started two social enterprises: Ground Chai, a chai company whose profits would fund skills workshops for rural and regional high school students, and Ethnic LGBT+, Australia's first national website providing resources, support and a safe place for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) LGBT+ people to share their stories, access resources and support.

I knew in order to best serve the rural and regional communities I wanted to work with, I had to go to them. I wanted to learn first-hand what challenges they were facing and what life was like in rural Australia.

My partner and I built a tiny home on the back of a box trailer, purchased a ute over Christmas, and in August 2017, set off for 5 months to travel 40,000 Km (the circumference of the Earth), across 72 communities in QLD, NSW, SA, VIC and TAS. Where I could, I would work with High School students on how the world of work was changing and expose them to entrepreneurship skills in the hope they would feel better prepared for their future and more connected. Our journey is documented on Instagram as Tiny Pioneer.

At the start of this year, I had the privilege to work with a national not for profit, Global Sisters, pioneering their GLO program for young women from refugee and migrant backgrounds. I personally had the awesome experience of getting to work with 190 young women across QLD, NSW and VIC, exposing them to entrepreneurship and design thinking principles to enable them to start their own small businesses as a form of economic empowerment.

As an Australia-ASEAN Emerging Leader 2018, I also had the privilege of meeting with the Foreign Minister and attend a roundtable with the Prime Minister to discuss the importance of youth leadership in the Indo-Pacific region.

I am currently immersed in my Westpac Social Change Fellowship from July- December 2018. Westpac has given me a gift to grow as a community leader. I am using my fellowship to document the stories and learnings of LGBTIQ organisations and individuals in America, India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam. I am also co-convening the Human Dignity Festival in Hong Kong November 2018. Working with 7 global human right defenders, including India's first openly gay prince- Prince Manvendra, we are convening in Hong Kong to bring an intersectional perspective to protecting and championing human rights on the 70th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

I believe stories save lives. It was sharing my story that enabled me to see myself. When we share our stories, we allow others to do the same. My vision is to create a more inclusive Australia through storytelling. I encourage you to share your story and create the space to enable others to do the same.