

Telling our Stories, Finding our Roots, Exeter's Multi-Coloured History Interview Transcript

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Does the name Nikoleta have any significance?

Yes, my name is not Bulgarian, it's actually a combination of two Greek names Niko and Leta and when you combine those Greek names together its Goddess of Victory, so I think that's quite interesting.

You are originally from Bulgaria?

yes

How long have you been living in Exeter?

2 ½ years.

And how come you moved here?

My mum lived here for 10 years before I come and she really wanted me to start school in England because to improve my English because you know English is.. everyone's speaks English it's a world-wide language, yes and that's the reason I moved here because of my mum.

And what was your mum's profession?

She's a nurse.

And how did it feel like being separated from her?

In the beginning, because I was quite young, because she left when I was 6, so I didn't really feel it because I lived with my grandparents, but as I started to get older, I felt this like absence of my mum so I was very sad. But then my grandma filled for her and so yes, I was ok with it.

Do you have any memories of the first time you came to Exeter?

Yes the first time I came to Exeter wasn't to settle and live with my mum, it was for a holiday and the first thing I remember, I was really excited, because I had never been out of Bulgaria before. Yes I was really excited and I was ready to experience.

Do you have any family here in Exeter except your mum?

No

They are all in Bulgaria?

Yes

What form of communication do you have, to like communicate?

Internet and Skype and mobile phone

What do you like and dislike about living here?

What I like about it here is because they have a lot of shops and places to go, and whereas in Bulgaria, I didn't really go outside of my home town and here it's cheaper to go outside of Exeter and..., like the life-style, I like the life-style more. What I dislike is the weather, it's really annoying because I come from a hot country, we have four seasons there and here it's only cloudy and the weather is not really nice, and it's always raining.

Does it snow in Bulgaria?

I love snow, the thing I dislike about England is that they don't have snow here.

As much

Yeah

Do you like living near the coast, the fact that Exeter is quite near the beach?

Yes I do, I really like it.

So do you go to the beach often?

No, because of school and my mum works and she doesn't have like holidays as much as we do at school. We don't really get a chance to go out much to the coast as before, because the first couple of months when I came here to Exeter, we were going to lots of different places, like near the coast but now because we have exams and work and... We don't travel as much as before

The place you were from in Bulgaria, is it inland?

Yes

So it's quite good to have a different environment?

Yes

What festivals do you celebrate? Are there any traditions you follow as a Bulgarian?

We have New Year like here and Easter but we have like, name days, if you're named after a saint, like St James or anything like this, you celebrate like a name day.

Do you have one?

Because my name is Nikoleta, St Nicholas is it? Yes, it's the 6th of June, no the 6th of December.

Because St Nicholas is like Santa Claus, I think

I don't know

Is there a support group for people from your culture in Exeter – people that are all Bulgarian, people that like talk?

No, although the people I know in Exeter are mostly Bulgarian, then British or from other cultures because when you're in a different country, you're kind of looking for Bulgarians and looking for people with the same culture as you.

So when the first time you came to Exeter, did you have culture shock – was it hard to adapt?

No, I adapt quite quickly. I like to experience different things, so I was excited to learn it.

Do you find it hard to make friends here in Exeter?

No, not really. Because I like speaking a lot and if I like someone or I can feel that they are nice, I talk a lot.

Do you miss any of your friends back home?

Yes, most of my friends are in Bulgaria and my family is there. I have only my mum here, so it's quite hard because my grandparents raised me since I was little, so I miss them and because I know lots of people who live in the same area as me and when I go to Bulgaria, I am with them like 24/7 – yes it's quite hard.

Do you think having friends help you cope?

Yes

What do you think of schools in Exeter? The curriculum?

It's quite different, the one thing that got my attention the most was because in Bulgaria, it's a poor country, and here we have computers in every room and you have those boards, and in Bulgaria it's only a classroom with a board and a desk. Yeah, that's basically, we don't have any technologies or the

technologies are really old. Because we have quite a lot of students there and it's really hard to re-build a school, or just add new things to it.

What about the people themselves in the school?

In Bulgaria the people are quite racist, if they see someone overweight or Asian or with a different skin colour, they will be quite racist. And here they just... because lots of people from other countries are coming in England and UK, I think that people are quite used to it so they are not racist here, and I think this really helps to build friendships.

So you yourself are against racism?

Yes

And by living here, has that influenced your views?

Yes

Do you find it quite different that in England it's like a hot pot of different nationalities where in Bulgaria it's just Bulgarians?

I don't know really. But I think it's really good that different people are coming into England, so we can experience the cultures. In Bulgaria the people are open only to Bulgarians and they don't really want to know other people's cultures and don't want to accept them, and I think Bulgarians are really limited when it comes to culture. I think it's really good that in England, the range of cultures and people [inaudible].

Do you consider yourself British or Bulgarian?

Kind of both, because there's a lot of things I like best in Bulgaria but there are a lot of things that I like here as well. So maybe both.

For example, like what do you miss there and what do you like here?

The one thing that I really miss in Bulgaria, is maybe the tradition. Yeah, the tradition, because we celebrate, for example New Year, and like those name days and Christmas and Easter those really big celebrations. We actually paint eggs, like for example here, they give chocolate eggs and in Bulgaria we paint eggs and it's really interesting there and we don't have this thing in England, and yes that's the thing I miss: traditions.

As yourself personally, do you think you are more British or more Bulgarian?

More Bulgarian.

Do you find it hard to make friends with British people compared to different groups?

No

Do you play any sport?

I do not, but I like badminton, yeh.

Is there a sport in Exeter that you learnt that you didn't before in Bulgaria?

No, because Bulgarians like sports even though they don't good at Olympics, they do like sports. In Bulgaria sports are really important in schools. Whereas here we have PE only twice a week, but there we have it every day. We focus not only on one sport, we focus on a different range of sports, it's not only one sport that we do like for a month, it's a different sport every day. I'm good at sports, I just don't like them.

Back to the curriculum, you know, is there are difference in the amount of lessons in Bulgaria and England?

Yes in Bulgaria we have different.. for example on Tuesdays, we have about 6 lessons and on Fridays we have 4 or 5, yeh we have 5 lessons in Bulgaria usually but they don't last as long as here. Here it's 1 hour and in Bulgaria it's 40 minutes or 45. And we have a break, a 10 minute break between each lesson, and we have a big lunch, a long lunch for half an hour, 40 minutes but that's quite long in Bulgaria. Whereas here it's 2 hours then break and 2 hours then lunch.

Do you find it easier here or over there?

There. In Bulgaria. Because, I went to Bulgarian school longer than here so I'm kind of used to it, and it's so hard for me now because I always think we have a 10 minute break between the lessons.

So what languages do you speak?

I speak English and Bulgarian.

What language do you feel most comfortable in speaking?

English.

Speaking?

Yes

But writing wise?

English

Do you speak better English than you do Bulgarian?

Yes, I do.

Why do you think that is?

Because my mum and I don't really speak Bulgarian because my mum's boyfriend is English, he kind of feels disconnected if we speak Bulgarian, so I need to speak English most of the time. And I don't want to speak in Bulgarian in school because I'm the only one. Yes I only communicate in English, I don't really speak Bulgarian except with my grandparents.

Would you like to have more chance to speak Bulgarian?

Yes because sometimes I forget which word, I mix the languages, I say an English word with a 'a' after because in Bulgarian we have 'a' at the end of a word, and it's really weird for me, because if I want to say "Ma I'm going to take a shower", I say "shower-a", which is kind of annoying because it's like a habit of mine and I don't want to forget Bulgarian and it's happening slowly.

Can you teach me some Bulgarian?

What do you want to know?

How do you say: my name is...

[Bulgarian] Samantha..

And the funny thing about English people is that, British people is that they don't know how to say the 'r' like 'rr' they don't know how to say that, so my friends most of my friends when they want me to teach them something in Bulgarian, we have this sound like 'rr' but they can't say it, so it's like hilarious

Like what?

If you want to say work, it's "rrabota" they say 'rabota' or something. It's really funny, I make fun of them most of the time

Do you watch any like any TV dramas that are British?

I don't really have a... yes I do, but it's not my choice because we don't have.. I don't have a Bulgarian channel at home, they don't seem to have Bulgarian channels here, because I like watching TVs but most of the time on mobile phone or internet. I watch 'You've been Framed' that's like a show that makes fun of people. It's really funny though. If I want to watch something, I watch a movie, but it's all in English so I don't have a choice of watching dramas or movies in English.

And what kind of music do you like listening to?

Korean pop. I also like pop and hip-hop but it's Korean pop the most.

Do you think it's got to do with your friends?

Yes

What kind of... explain to me more about this.

K-pop: Korean pop, shortened to K-pop, like most of the people in my school know it but only because of one song.

What song is that?

Gangnam Style and because KPop is becoming world-wide I think it's really good that I know about it and most of my friends know of it, because it is becoming well known not only in England but in America the most.

Is it well known in Bulgaria?

No, not really but it's actually a Bulgarian friend of mine that introduced me to K-pop and I know a couple of people who know about K-pop but it's not really popular in Bulgaria, I think it's mostly, it's world-wide, it's mostly in America, because K-pop artists work with American artists and this makes it global.

If you were asked the question: 'where are you from' what would you say?

Bulgaria – I'm not really proud to be a Bulgarian, because there are lots of crimes there and... But there are lots of good features as well like landscapes, tradition.

So there are good things and bad things?

Yes

Can you tell us a story a kind of traditional story about Bulgaria?

We have this threads like it's white and red, like mixed together and I don't know how to explain it, you put it on your hand and you wear it like a symbol and the history behind it is basically: when Bulgaria was involved in the war, there was a famous person called Khan Asparukh he told his sister that if Bulgaria wins the war, he will send the white thread to his sister, as a symbol that they won the war, and he will attach the white thread to a bird, like a pigeon, and as the pigeon travels like to get to this place where his sister is, it injured its leg, so part of the thread became red, so it's white red so as a symbol of winning the war, we wear them on the 1st March and for good luck, we put them on trees after March.

So what message would you like to give to Exeter about you being Bulgarian?

Because of the experience of seeing, don't judge person by their looks.

What would you like to change about Exeter?

I wish that more places for people under-age, under 18.. because the places that you can go are really limited and there are certain days, like celebrations, where people of the age of 16 and 15 or above, no below can go, like clubs. Not to drink alcohol, just have fun, it's really limited now. So yes I would like to have more of this.

When you are older, do you think you will stay in Exeter?

Maybe

Do you like living here?

Yes

Do you have any sort of ambitions or dreams?

Yes, I want to become a vet, since I was little, I really wanted to become a vet. In Bulgaria this is limited, because I don't know why, but pets are not really popular in Bulgaria and whereas here, pets are really popular because a lot of people have pets. Yes, I want to become a vet and maybe I will stay here in England.

And you would do that profession in Exeter?

Yes, or move somewhere else, London maybe.

Thank you.

Thank you

End of interview