

even have transpired on my previous blue Indian passport. Ten years ago, as part of naturalising as a UK citizen, I sat the Life in the UK test to demonstrate my understanding of constitutes living within British borders. Ten years later, it is only when I am sitting on that flight to Columbus, exhausted and relieved at once to have made it, that the test's actual relevance strikes me. It seems that it wasn't so much about demonstrating my knowledge of constitutes life within the UK, as it was about granting me the license to cross borders *beyond* the UK, aided by the credibility of the red British passport. While I have always theoretically known this, almost a decade later on this occasion I experience the realisation that alongside granting me a permanent Life in the UK, passing that test sanctioned me the mobility to move across borders in ways than I had never been allowed to before as an Indian citizen. I experience this in an intrinsically embodied way. Life in the UK has thus simultaneously enabled me a Life Beyond the UK in ways that I both benefit from and feel extreme discomfort about, every time I travel.

Transparently Present

Grant Tyler Peterson, Brunel University London

When I was diagnosed with stage IV cancer in 2006 while living in England, I decided to return to the United States for treatment. In the UK, I had faced months of delays and misdiagnoses and learned later that the NHS's support for sarcoma, a set of rare and often highly aggressive cancers, was sorely underdeveloped at that time, particularly in regions outside London. In the US, I was incredibly fortunate to receive treatments that saved my life, helped me beat the odds, and more than a year later, return to England. Once back, I relied on doctors in both countries, world experts in sarcoma no less, working together across London to California to monitor my recovery.

When applying for citizenship jointly with my US civil partner in 2011, I naively assumed my circumstances would be considered under 'special circumstances' of the otherwise strict 'residential qualifying period'. This is the requirement of not being outside the country for more than a total of 450 days in the past five years. Surely, I thought, my near-perfect score on the UK Life Test and demonstration of 'commitment to the UK' and 'good character' would be considered alongside the medical evidence justifying my extensive travel history that totalled 465 days abroad. The representative, however, explained that medical treatment was not an exception. I respectfully challenged her, and she called the London Home Office to nominate my case for consideration, only to be denied. My cancer-recovering body needed to be on germane UK shores for longer. After years of struggling with the internal borders of my highly medicalised body, I now found myself struggling through the specificities of my body's highly politicised cross-border geo-historiography. With Foucault's idea of a 'plurality of resistances' in my mind, I wondered if one solitary miscalculation of 15 days on my application would have been actually caught by the Home Office.

My civil partner did not need to commit such an offence, and earned his citizenship because he had stayed in the UK while I was treated in the US. Not long after, I re-applied as a dependent – where my body's geo-historiographical presence was recognised under different criteria. When I uttered the Austinian speech act that is the UK's Oath of Allegiance, sang 'God Save the Queen' in my camp musical theatre voice, and grabbed a blurry picture with the Queen's portrait, I queerly and self-consciously celebrated my new status.





GRANT PETERSON WITH THE QUEEN'S PORTRAIT. PHOTO PROVIDED BY AUTHOR.



The glass paperweight given to me by the city of Bath as a token of my citizenship spoke all too well to the discomforting transparency expected of human bodies to articulate their geographical historical presence. Not ignorant of my privileged position as a white man from the United States, I held the paperweight and shuddered as I contemplated how such procedures are likely to be disproportionately enacted on and against bodies of colour, disability, HIV sero-status, or bodies from the southern hemisphere, or countries associated with fundamental extremism – to name a few. Living in a body habituated by border-piercing transparencies of MRIs, CTs, PET and X-rays, the procedures of the naturalisation highlighted for me the externalised geographical transparencies of in-border presence expected of UK-compliant bodies, or citizens-to-be – a weight I walk around with to this day.



becoming—not British

Jen Parker-Starbuck, Royal Holloway, University of London and Joshua Abrams, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

We mostly studied for the Life in the UK test on one long car journey, driving back and forth from London to southern France, where we were traveling to a joint birthday party for friends from France and Belgium, a couple whom we knew from our time in Northern England. The weekend-long house party, held at one of their parents' house in the mountains, brought together friends new and old, many from across Europe. We met people from Spain, Italy, Germany, France, each of whom was asked to bring a gift of their own specialist practice—these included dance lessons, academic talks, cooking, a soundscape under the stars. There and back Jen read the content and asked the test prep questions aloud, while Josh drove. That trip marked a clear sense for us of becoming—not British, but part of a larger European project. We had been in the UK for just under five years, and had seen this as exciting for us and Zeena, Jen's then 9 year-old daughter. We took the test with the hopes that the recently discretionary decision to grant children citizenship with a parent would also allow Zeena access.

Writing this today, roughly halfway between 23 June 2016 and 29 March 2019, it is difficult to avoid thinking about the importance of Europe to our decision to gain dual citizenship, key to our own privilege—both before and after taking the test. The 2017 rankings from Passport Index show the UK passport slipping in 'power' (measured through visa-free travel), from joint first place in 2015 to joint fourth in 2017. (If all else remains the same post-Brexit, but EU countries choose to require visas for UK passport holders, the UK would slip to 29th, currently shared between the UAE and Uruguay.)

