



**SEJAL SHAH** lives and writes in Rochester, New York. She has been invited to speak about art, race, and mental health at Columbia University, Mount Holyoke College, and Princeton University, among others. Sejal is the recipient of a 2018 New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) fellowship in fiction and recently completed a hybrid story collection, which includes images, archives, and objects. Her writing has appeared in *Guernica*, *The Guardian*, the *Kenyon Review*, *Lit Hub*, and *Longreads*. She is currently at work on new nonfiction about invisible disability, neurodiversity, and reimagining mental health.



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# SEJAL SHAH

## *THIS IS ONE WAY TO DANCE: Essays on Race, Place, & Belonging*

A NYT Sunday Recommendation, NPR Best Book of 2020, and Lit Hub Best Reviewed Book of 2020

“

Shah’s essays meditate on the Asian American bodily experience... of racialized hypervisibility and hallowed invisibility.

—*Chicago Review of Books*

Shah navigates the shifting terrain of various labels [and] what it means, ultimately, to belong.

—*BOMB*

Each of these pieces captures what it means to be a citizen of a country that may never claim you as its own, to imagine your own brilliant fullness beyond its peripheral gaze.

—*Mira Jacob*

A striking self-portrait.

—*Publishers Weekly*

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“

A marvelously observant memoir, not only of Shah’s parents’ generation...but also of her own generation’s search for love, for a notion of home.

—Kiran Desai

*This Is One Way to Dance* deftly explores the intricacies of...what it means to be ‘American’ in our increasingly diverse nation.

—Dinty W. Moore

Crossing cultures, crossing genres...this book rescripts what we think we know about identity.

—Dawn Lundy Martin

A narrative and lyric collection...filled with as much dancing and joy as sorrow and pain.

—Victoria Chang,  
*Los Angeles Times*

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## ***THIS IS ONE WAY TO DANCE,***

Sejal Shah’s debut essay collection, is a meditation on what it means to make oneself visible and legible in a country that struggles with race. In linked essays spanning twenty years, Shah, the daughter of Gujarati parents from India and Kenya, explores the personal, cultural, and geographic distances between people and places, both real and imagined. *This Is One Way to Dance* has been honored by the CLMP Firecracker Awards, IPPY Independent Publishers Book Awards, Foreward Indies, and Nautilus Book Awards.

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### **Interview in *BOMB***

with Rudri Bhatt Patel

***BOMB:*** If language and place is a marker of belonging to a particular culture, can you ever fully belong? Are you always an unreliable narrator of your heritage?

***SS:*** Most narrators are unreliable: we are both the authority on our lives, but also our vantage point is not a panoramic, omniscient perspective!...For me, fragments confirm what we know: any narration is partial.

***BOMB:*** “Where do you come from?” is a question that carries multiple triggers. Do you think you are doing less explaining a decade later?

***SS:*** No one owes anyone a rundown of their racial or ethnic history. If I answer India, it suggests that race and heritage trumps my lived experience as American. It also erases my family’s Kenyan history. When do we get to just be American?

### **Interview in *Lit Hub***

with Anjali Enjeti

***Lit Hub:*** You’ve called writing a physical practice, and dance is one of the major themes in the book. How has movement influenced your storytelling?

***SS:*** The book is a series of gestures and movements, sound. I moved a lot in some of the years I wrote about and I wrote about the past: so movement in time and movement in space, place, geographically. Having studied dance for many years, and especially having studied modern dance with Garth Fagan Dance was part of my aesthetic and artistic heritage...Fagan draws from ballet, modern, and Afro-Caribbean dance and is associated with the Black Arts Movement. I saw in his choreography an example of how to foreground your cultural influences without translating them.

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Find a full list of interviews, reviews, features, excerpts, and companion essays at [SEJAL-SHAH.COM/PRESS](http://SEJAL-SHAH.COM/PRESS)