

Living & Thriving Abroad in Spain & The Netherlands with Nia...

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SPEAKERS

Niana Rice, Deanna Denham, Christine Job

- N** Niana Rice 00:00
For me, my essence is basically to live life on my own terms. And because I refuse to settle for being one thing, I've kind of always look for the answers in my environment. And if I'm in Chicago, or if I'm in Spain, it's like, I'm trying to always look for my reflection in the places that I am. And then the experiences that I get, and because of that, essence, that desire to kind of always be learning and always be changing, it's kind of made me a traveler, just to explore and to get as much as I can, from this life, as long as I can.
- C** Christine Job 00:50
Hey, everyone, welcome to flourish in the foreign, a podcast that elevates and affirms the voices and the stories of black women living and thriving abroad. Because you know, what? We do, we do. And we are out here and we do this. So thank you so much for tuning into the first episode. It really means a lot to me. During the creation of this podcast, I really realized that it was not only a labor of love, but it really was something that I wish had existed. For my 17 year old self and my 25 year old self, the goal of the podcast is really to become a resource bank, of just amazing and fantastic stories about black women told by black women living abroad, and they're just varied experiences. Being a black woman in any part of the Diaspora is not a monolithic experience. It is varied and deciding to move outside of your home country is not a monolithic experience. It really is

determined by your values, the things that make you you. And I'm hoping in this podcast, that the various incredible stories that are shared, really inspire all of you, listeners, but also, hopefully, that you see yourself and you resonate in these stories of these just dope women. Something that I talk about to people who asked me about living abroad, is I tell them that moving outside of your home country makes you so awake to your life, because you don't have the luxury of kind of sleepwalking through every day. familiarities everything is kind of different and strange, even if you move to a place where you speak the language fluently. You know, culture and bureaucracy, small everyday day, nuances and nuisances really take a toll. And it really makes you very alert to the things that you not only like, but also the things that you value, and also the things that you need to live a life well lived. I'm also hoping that these stories just help you to maybe think a little bit more deeply about the life that you're currently cultivating. And help you to be a little bit more intentional, as well. And so let's get straight to the first episode. The first episode I'm so excited to share with you is the story of actually a very dear friend of mine, Diana. And we met each other while living in northern Spain. And Laurie Aha. And we were both language assistance at the time. And her story is fantastic. But don't take it from me. I let Nana tell you about it.

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Niana Rice 04:08

I think I really got that done desire to want to change my environment, mainly from my childhood, and spending summers with my dad in Texas and exploring like California with him. So like I would spend my summers with my dad but in Chicago, I have one life and then in the summer it was like this, this freedom that I would have to just kind of be on the road with with my dad and I would get to spend time with him. So I don't know if it was just maybe missing his contact during the year and knowing that when I get to travel, a lot of great things happen first, I get to see my dad and I get to see and experience things that most people where I came from don't really get to do so I had like this duality of My life and I was still, just like all of the preconceptions you have about what makes sense to you, gets thrown out the window. And we would just go and explore all kinds of things and without any plan, and I think I started to feel like identify very positively with that. And maybe in some ways, it was therapy for me. But I felt like I lost this part of myself. And I can kind of be anything when I was traveling. The very first time I got on a plane, I was three years old. And I was flying to go see my dad and I, I think at the time, I had never flown on a plane. And I was so young, I didn't really remember what my dad's face look like. And so it was just this really interesting adventure. My mom just drops me off at the airport. And I'm like, a little girl with all these breads. And I flew to Arizona, and I got off the plane. And I was just like, what this place is so different than anything I've ever seen before. And yeah, you know, when you spend time you have separate parents like that one parent kind of becomes the fun parent. So no matter what, what's going to happen

after that first plane ride, I was gonna love it regardless.



Christine Job 06:15

And I Anna and I bonded over the fact that we both started traveling solo, at really young ages as unaccompanied minors on airplanes. I don't know if you can travel that young anymore by yourself. But hey, it was the late 80s and early 90s. It was crazy. Oh,



Niana Rice 06:36

there's a small sense of abandonment at the at the other side of this story is like, there was nobody to fly with that.



Christine Job 06:43

Like,



Niana Rice 06:45

the funny thing about my story, which I was like, What am I gonna go into the complete real story, but we are being real. So the thing was, you know, my dad is not on my birth certificate. So I was not supposed to be going to see him I supposed to be going to see my uncle. Because the airline wouldn't allow my mom to let me go on a plane to see someone who is not a direct relation of man if it's my father than he needed to prove he was my father. So he's not on the birth stick. How can he prove it? So I'm three and my, my dad's mom and my mom are trying to remind me of my life that I need to tell these people, when I get on this plane to tell these white people, then that's your uncle. And when you see him and you say, hey, uncle, and I'm like, Okay, and then like you cannot say Is your dad, you have to tell them that you're five, I was also supposed to be five. And I was like, Man, this is a lot. This is less. So I'm nervous. Get on the plane. And I'm saying goodbye to everybody. And I sat next to this Chinese girl who's also fine single. And the whole time she was showing me all her money. And I'm trying to convince her to give me give me a 20. Right. We're just bonding. I don't remember her name or anything. She end up giving me a five. She's like, I'm not giving you 20 I'm like, Come on, give me a drink. She ends up giving me a five. I feel so excited. We lead and I see my dad and I'm thinking how am I going to know for sure that's my dad. I see him I said. And I ran for him. And he just let out his arms and grabbed me and he has you supposed to call me You forgot



Christine Job 08:16

so we chatted about how her love of travel began in childhood, but really continued as she grew up. And as she traveled across the country for internships in upstate New York, and even at my alma mater, the University of Georgia, but also about her opportunity to study abroad.



Niana Rice 08:37

I went to a small liberal arts university in southern Indiana University of Evansville, I don't think anyone has ever heard of it. I think we had this really strange study abroad advisor who was like really quirky, and she would give presentations. So I knew early on that I wanted to study abroad somewhere I just didn't know where even though I did have an appointment with the lady and she predicted I should go to Denmark to Copenhagen, it'll be the best thing that's exactly where you belong dial in. And I was like, Yang got them Copenhagen dollars, though, I gotta say so close. So I ended up studying abroad in Costa Rica. I did one semester there. So I did I think, ecology and field ecology there while I was in Costa Rica, and I put that in quotations because, you know, I mean, they weren't going to get very much out of us. You just spent a lot of time traveling and studying mostly I did a lot of outdoor like little research projects with the, with the school because it was a university in the suburb of the capital of Costa Rica. So it was in the mountains. It was a little bit smaller, which I really enjoyed. But I mean, we were surrounded by beautiful forests and everything and everything's like a bus ride away. So we would go into the jungle and like counting insects and things like that. It was amazing. I was lucky that my credits transferred. So I really didn't have any problem. And I used my last eligible year financial aid on going to Costa Rica. So we were a group, I think of 50 Americans, that was a exchange program at that university. And there weren't any other universities doing anything there. So we were the only group. But all of our classes were basically together. And we had a lot of American teachers who were who are either living in Costa Rica who I came down to do it, but they weren't. We were all from different universities. And I think out of the 50, there were, there was me and another black dude. And then like five mixed people as brown brown mix, people kind of formed a little crew, almost all of us had host families, so that you're at least all on that same schedule as coastal Costa Rican people and eating the same food, your host mom would provide you with all your meals and your lunches. She would pack your little lunch in the morning. I wasn't so lucky with my host family, my first host families, she started off nice, and we had a maid because I think most people in Costa Rica, like if you're lower middle class, you have a maid. And she had this rule where she wanted me to wear a robe when I would go from my I have my own bathroom in my own room and I would literally cross one step from my bathroom to my bedroom. She was like, I want you to buy a robe. And I was like, Well, I didn't bring a robe. And I'm not gonna buy a robe. Like I'm wearing a towel as one step. But she was very

concerned about her husband seeing me or something. I was like, okay, you know, cuz her English was good. I was just like, I know what you want me to do, but I'm just gonna do this little step real quick. She just didn't like like vanish had a lot of rules. She would make me tuna sandwiches, just take the can and dump the tuna on the bread. I didn't spread it out. So we had these little personality quirks that we didn't like, and she wanted me to come home at night. And I'm like, I'm not coming home. Because the dog would bark when I get home real late. But you know, we're traveling abroad like we out in the streets girl

C Christine Job 12:19
back

N Niana Rice 12:20
home for dinner. I'm not eating dinner tonight. I'll see you later. Then I went to a more relaxed, browner host family and girl, it was great. It was awesome. There are lots of black coastering like black, black. Most of them live on the Caribbean side. And I would go to that town that Caribbean side like every other weekend. Costa Rica was, I mean, that is just like beach life. You got your flip flops on, you know you're eating pineapples. Instead of buying a bag of chips, you're buying some slices of mango, it was just, ah, what I think the best time in my life is like when you're studying abroad and you're somewhere that you just love, you have no responsibilities. That is traveling. That's that's that Good. Good. I will say that was probably the end of like a easy time in life. You know, now I'm 36. So that was a at the end of Costa Rica was a tough time because I ended up leaving due to my mom getting sick. And then my mom passed away 13 days after I came back from Costa Rica, that that I think, took my life on a different trajectory. I focused on finishing school. Then I went right into working and I worked for about five years in and then I just quit my job because I wanted to travel and I was trying to figure out like how maybe how to get back to the person I was before going through the grief of losing my mom. And I wanted I knew I wasn't gonna really heal the way I needed to heal stain, you know, in Chicago, and it that's when I was like, No, I can't I can't keep doing this job. Like everything is okay. Like I got to go figure out myself a little bit and like figure out who I used to be. And yeah, I quit my job in order to travel and then I came to Spain like two years later,

C Christine Job 14:18
she goes from company card to bicycling around town and doing numerous odd jobs. She finally lands at a restaurant where she learns about a program where you can live and work in Spain. One of her fellow servers puts her on to this program. They both apply. But

only Diana goes and her family used to her traveling. don't really believe her when she says that she'll be back at the end of the contract

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Niana Rice 14:52

they knew was coming because I mean I always travel so they just like okay, you're gonna live in Spain to go for eight months. And I kept telling everybody because the contract is for eight months, technically, but you had the option to renew a second year. So I was like, at the most, I'll be gone like 16 months. And people were kind of skeptical, like, Nah, you're gonna leave forever. And I was like, Girl, I laugh about it now. So many times people would just would predict that I was so much into now, all I know is I needed to leave. I got to Madrid. And I immediately immediately fell in love with Spain, but I had been there before but this was different. I saw the country as this. You know, like when you see somebody that you like, really physically attracted to, like, they have a perfect body like you're in a gym, and they're like, just got through it as saying, you look over and they got like, abs and everything is sexy. That's how I feel about saying, Yeah, you got a country over here like this country is Dion. Mountains, check, force check, beach check. But it goes on and on with Spain,

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Christine Job 16:09

she moves to Spain, about one month before the contract begins and falls absolutely in love with the country, but has to attend with the excruciating task of trying to find an apartment in Madrid. In September, when all the university students have returned, and are also looking for housing.

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Niana Rice 16:30

My ex in the US had a friend who lived in, in like a suburb of Madrid. So she was like, yo, you can come stay with me until you find an apartment. But she had like two kids and I was sleeping on one of her kids bed and he was getting mad every day. He'd be like, yo, When is she leaving? And they thought I didn't know no Spanish, but like, the little kid didn't care. He was like a wit. I want my bed and I was like, Oh my god, I can't, I can't do it anymore. So then I just went to a hostel and got my phone got my WhatsApp, you need WhatsApp in Spain, if you're gonna live there. If you're going to talk to anybody, you can't do it without WhatsApp. I ain't gonna lie. I had two ginormous suitcases. So the pressure was on there are no elevators in Madrid. If it's the full flow, that's really the fifth slow and you're gonna walk all the way up with luggage, I took the very first apartment I saw very first. So yeah, and then I moved out of there like a month later because the guy was insane.



Christine Job 17:36

So Nana went to Spain with a program that a lot of other North Americans go to Spain initially with the North American language assistance program. And the assistance are called auxiliary is the Spanish word for assistant. And they basically go there to help with pronunciation and culture, experiences. And responsibilities really vary from auxiliary toggle ER and region to region. You just need a college degree passport, no criminal history, and the ability to fill out an application. You get a student visa, health insurance and a monthly stipend that ranges from 1000 euros to 700 euros depending on the region you're placed. And I should also mention that auxiliary hours typically work only 12 to maybe 1618 hours a week. So you have plenty of time to take on more classes, perhaps take on odd jobs, take a Spanish course. And of course, travel,



Niana Rice 18:47

my teaching experience was pretty positive. I was lucky that when. So when you go to a school, some schools will have one opposite a guy. That's what we call the people who are a part of this exchange program, you're called to the artist. So at my school, there was a total of four of the artists. And one of them was a black guy from DC. And he had been there the previous year and his Spanish was gray. And we just really clicked immediately. So I was lucky that he was there because when you get placed in the program, you get a contract with the name of the school. But you don't know anything about school. So you contact the previous auxiliary artist to get the Intel like Tell me what the school is like, what what schedule Are you working? So they kind of meet with you before the contract starts and kind of like help you like answer any questions. Plus, they're probably going to be your first friends, your first people that you meet in the city because you've arrived. The other thing is that you're kind of a language ambassador. So you want to instruct them about our lives. They're very curious about where We come from what we know what we do and especially if you're black like they have been absorbing popular American popular culture and especially, a lot of that is black culture. So I think the last school year I taught him the good Anya, the kids was in love with me goes and like they will see me hug like, yeah, that way. Like, Oh, wait, wait, I'm supposed to be teaching Hold up, turn me up. And I'm about to teach. And as the kids who don't know, anything like what is happening, like yeah, without like, incorporated into my lesson into some people who like, again, for some of y'all out there that know what's so, you know, there, it's just to kind of bring your culture I talk about black American life I talk about like, on Columbus Day because they celebrate, I'm like, what we not going to do is celebrate Columbus today. And here's a presentation why. Anti Thanksgiving? My role always would be to even my students who can't speak really well. I want them to want to speak to me. Like the trick is to get them to want to talk because that's the first part of language learning is to inspire someone to I, I've got a sentence to say, Justin Bieber is worse than Taylor Swift. Like, I've got an

opinion. I like Justin Bieber, like, oh, and you also like English now. No, no, no, no. That's gotcha go girl

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Christine Job 21:32

told you this way, girl. Something that most expats living in Spain, really bond over, at least in the first couple years of living in Spain, are the various ways of how to adapt to Spanish culture and the Spanish quirks, like Spanish people really like walking three to five people abreast, like across the sidewalk, and not leaving any room for any other people to pass. And they don't really have the same concept of personal space, as is customary in the United States. And they're definitely a nosy people minding everybody else's business and openly staring and gawking at anything. And everyone. And of course, the language. You know, they say that learning a language is always best when you're immersed. But there's a lot of things that come up while you're being thrown into the deep end.

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Niana Rice 22:35

The Mediterranean mindset from compared to the Chicago mindset is like, off and on. We don't really we don't we're not like that all the touchy feely. The you know, being late, like late, late, like 10 minutes late is not late. That's late. you late? This meeting started two minutes ago, girl, I'm charging for this part of the class. Now. We might get an extra 10 minutes at the end, because I got five more classes. Um, the the staring I think, bothered me slightly at the beginning, because people was always staring at me, and I would just stare back at them, and then they would look away and I'd be like, okay, like, that's annoying. Stop doing that. And I couldn't take being immersed in Spanish at first, like I would avoid it. Avoid going into any situations where there were no English speakers. Because it would make my head hurt. It was hard. It was really I think the first year I didn't try to speak any Spanish. I was like, No, but having a partner who was Spanish really helped. That's, I think that helped, because I was forced to deal with it. But I hated it. I hated it so much. It wasn't until the I think my third year that I could spend a whole weekend in Spanish and not find it annoying, or get anxiety about it. So it takes time.

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Christine Job 24:12

As I mentioned before the language assistance receive health insurance as a part of being in this program. And the health insurance really is dependent on which region you're placed in. And unfortunately, my Anna had to utilize that health insurance for her first year. Being in Madrid.

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Niana Rice 24:33

The health insurance varies per comunidad so depending on where you're placed, that's that's going to be that state that will purchase a private insurance policy for you. It depends on where you are in Madrid I had I think we had Matt Frey. We had a pretty decent one. It was one that had like a skyscraper downtown. I don't remember the name, but my surgery was Very, very easy. All I had to do was go to a doctor or I just went to an emergency room with my issue. And they were like, okay, you need the surgery, okay, we're gonna do it on this day, you know, whatever. Like, they don't care. They don't say, oh, how is where's your money, nothing is on my insurance card, everything, I swiped the card, if I have the card, they perform everything. And then the bill comes later. But I didn't receive a bill because it was covered under my insurance. So it was it was great. And the aftercare was amazing. I had to go back every day for nine days for them to take care of the wound, completely covered. And I've had time off from work to take care of it. And I've had, like I said, my colleagues Come with me from work, to the teachers that I work with to doctor's appointments, because they were worried they're like, No, we want to make sure we understand. Because we you talked about when surgery were why we're going like, okay, it you feel better when you have someone there, but people were very understanding that was my experience in Madrid. Of course, experience is very, I don't know, how everyone's mental medical experiences are. But I also don't have any preliminary things or I don't have any, you know, conditions that I brought with me. So I don't take medication for anything.

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Christine Job 26:24

I asked Nyan about her thoughts on the black community in Madrid. And her experience as a black American woman in Madrid as well.

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Niana Rice 26:35

I met all kinds of black people, black Americans that were living there illegally, and was still working on trying to get their, their tar hit that company thought yeah, I'm like, you grow, you just came on vacation, you just stay. Other people. I mean, there's, there's so many of us that have been there for like 5678 years, and they just come and they just stand you run into them on the street. easily. You see each other like all the time. So I think if you like a little bit worried about coming to Spain and not having that type of sense of community, in Madrid, you're gonna have everything because you have so many African communities there. There's all the places to get your hair, like any kind of expressions, hair, whatever color, like it's all already there, right in the center in Madrid. It's not even the outskirts, it's in the center. So



Christine Job 27:29

it's just a little



Niana Rice 27:29

bit more hip. And it just has a better feel to it. I think in it, people just enjoy it more than say, Barcelona plus is cheaper than Barcelona. The Metro is just perfect. And then you have lava PS, which is where I used to live. And I just loved that part of town. It's just more it's more on the pulse of things. I think my first year there was a riot because the police tried to evict someone out of an apartment because they weren't paying their rent, but they were they were dying. They were in hospice. So like they had cancer. And of course, at the end of their life, they were still in this apartment and the police tried to come and evict them. Well, the whole barrio was like, not today you won't. And he just literally beat the police up. I watched them get in there, then everybody's throwing rocks. The whole neighborhood is like nah, son. Yeah. And I take a nobody out here they covering, they got an event screwed screwed out, they had to back up reverse all the way out to the barrio. And they had to come back with like real manpower, though. But the whole neighborhood was lit after that, like people were just in the street, just screaming. And I was like, see, that's what I want, you know, a little rough around the edges is some of the stuff that I experienced is kind of annoying. Is it the worst in the world? No. But is that enough to make it okay? No, it's still like, no one should have to put up with any of this racial bull stuff. I think there's two sides to being a black American than just being a black woman. The thing I quickly learned in Spain is that the moment someone knows I'm American, they cast me with a different light and a different opinion. And I'm still black, but at least you're an American. That's kind of like, I've always felt that that little like relief from them. In general, when they find out that you're a black American, and it's more about curiosity than just the they see a black woman and it's a negative stereotype. So that I think is always going to be there no matter who you are and where you are. I didn't have a lot of negative experiences in Madrid, about being a black woman, but I know that that was I that was is like something that was just particularly to me because I do have friends that also had some negative things in Madrid. But that for me, the biggest thing about the Spain and being a black woman is there, the Spanish male, assuming that you're a prostitute, there is nothing in my mind about being black in Spain, that even compares to the anger that I feel when that happens. And the situations that people have put that they put me in when I'm just walking down the street. That to me is one of the hardest things to deal with. Yeah, it's a tricky slope over there. If you can a couple of negative experiences, I think you can start to create that wall when it comes to interacting with the Spanish male, sometimes they like not all of them, but of course, the old man for sure all of them, I just would love to just make them see what they're doing, you know, as being something that's wrong to do to women, period, whether I'm a sex worker or not, I'm at the grocery store.

So how about you wait.



Christine Job 31:11

I think everyone listening probably knows that Spain is a pretty homogenous country. Most people in Spain are white. However, there are second and third generation people from other ethnicities in Spain as well. I've spent some time thinking about this, like reconciling my viewpoint as American versus



Niana Rice 31:37

like the Spanish mindset. And I've had this conversation with Spanish people, because they treat all of the people who do not look Spanish as the country that they originate from. They don't see them as a part of Spain is the the greater envelope. And I think as Americans, we have an ear that is not a hard jump to make like, I don't care if my Mexican American classmate is the first one born here, the second one born here, if they speak English with me, and an accent that doesn't have an accent, I assume they're just American. I don't know where from their parents are coming from, but it's really easy to include them. When I think of America. I'm including them, and my thoughts or something. But of course, I'm not white. So that's what a white American thinks is probably different. But here you could be five generations deep neglect, Chino, nerr, nerr, nerr. I am you you are me, we the same we just about like, how do you not include me in your greater idea of what this country is. And that is something I think, you know, me and my husband talk about a lot like if we were to have kids, where we would want them to grow up. And even though I got a lot of negative things to say about the US, it's like I would want them to at least understand what it's like to be black in America. I still like coming from where I came from, even with all the negative things, but to be black and like have a little black half black half Asian kid in Spain is do I want my kids to go through that because a lot of my black students, I've had moments with them. They've never had a black teacher before. It was my second year in Leon. And I was in a school in Leon that year, and there was this little black girl in one of my classes. And she was spicy, like home girl, she was a leader. So she was a part of the cool click in the class. And they was they was third or fourth year, fourth grade, third or fourth grade. And so she was funny. So she cracked jokes. But she also like to get in people's faces and tell them what's what she also like, everybody would want to be on her good side, because when she wasn't in the mood, the whole class felt like we was all under her, her spell. And she would also be subject to them ridiculing her at the end of the day. Like they could always be like mega, you know, or whatever. And that would just put her back in her place. But she would come back with more aggression. She would never be like docile or quiet, always clean, always had her hair done. Just high energy sit down, you know, like sexual girl. And she will get into conflicts. And immediately

because the Spanish white child will be late. And she will be angry, the teacher would just assume that it's hard causing the problem because she's mad throwing her book, you know, that's how she expressed herself. And so she didn't express it, the way that they Garner sympathy. So they would very often put her to blame. And a lot of time she was to blame. But sometimes she wasn't. And when she wasn't, she would feel very frustrated. So I like one day she was just being like so and she was like girl Come outside. And she was just started crying and she's just like, I'm tired of this. I'm tired of them being you know, making comments because I'm black because I'm black. Hi, I'm tired. And I was like, Oh my god, like, I fell for her because I was just thinking like, I grew up. And when we would have a white teacher, we knew it was time to play. Like, we're not giving this teacher no satisfaction. We just be crazy. And when a black teacher come back boy was we in shape, like, you know, the feeling of being taught by someone who looks like you. She was like, I've never had a black teacher. You're my first black teacher. And I was like, Oh, I just felt so sad. Think like how hard it must be to grow up in a little small town in Spain. And your mom is working all the time. And she was like she that her mom worked all the time, and that she didn't get to see her very much. And that she was sad about that. She gets angry. And I'm like, Yeah, but when you angry, you cannot hit people and go crazy. But I just saw it as her expressing this extremely frustrating situation. And having all these white people tell you that your emotions are wrong. And I didn't think she was reacting wrong. I think she was reacting the way black people react. Not like Spanish people. You can judge her in the same way. And we had a good year, but she was Gosh, she would get on my last night. But she always hugged me. As soon as I came in, she just felt like I was her teacher. So she will be pushing everybody away. Like I Anna has finally come for us to have our class. I'd like groceries. I got tons all these kids fantasy. I'm sitting here today and who won't say some everybody like that. But I can't approve this behavior. But I prove. So I yeah, I think it's hard to be black in Spain. And in a rural area, maybe even in the city, I felt a lot of guilt there. Because I knew that I had to say was I was American, I would immediately be treated different. And I will have access to things that this person who was born here who deserves it will never have access to.



Christine Job 36:52

Throughout our conversation, Diana had been making fun of me. For my thin skinned ways. It was February, when we recorded this episode, and I was shivering in Barcelona. It was 50 degrees Fahrenheit. And she was making fun of me, because she's from Chicago, and she lives in the Netherlands. But I'm from Atlanta, and I used to live in Miami and I was cold. And so we got to the topic of how she ended up in the Netherlands.



Niana Rice 37:23

How did I leave sunny Spain for wet Netherlands? Love. That's what that's what got me here. Yeah, my husband is Dutch. So that's why I now live in the Netherlands. And as an auxiliary, you have a ton of time to travel. And I was actually traveling in the Netherlands and I met my husband. And it wasn't like a plan. You know, you don't plan to fall in love with someone who lives like 100 miles away. But I did. And we did the long distance thing from the Netherlands to Spain. And then I convinced him to move to Spain. And that was great. And we live together in Spain for a while. But then when you're abroad and you get married to someone, it's like, okay, for you to really enact your European rights, you kind of need to be on someone's home turf. So either we're in his country in Europe, or we're in my country in the US. And so for me to kind of get get all of my rights to work outside of being an auxiliary are for him to be able to really earn a lot of money in his career field, we kind of needed to be back in the Netherlands where his family all lives and where we have more rights to the resources that we can get. We really don't have any rights in Spain is as much because he didn't have like a permanent situation in Spain, so we had to have to choose. And so now we're in Utrecht, which is where he had a place to stay already. And we've been here almost, I think, a year and a half. Now I'm not in sunny Spain anymore. And it's sad, but we're making it work here in the Netherlands. That's a whole nother type of culture that I had already gotten used to the Mediterranean culture. And now I have to deal with Western Europe again, like somewhat American, but not too weird mix of being kind of related to our culture, but not related all the way. At the end of the five years, I had got more Spanish. And he had like, really, I had assimilated into it. I knew the way the culture worked. And here it was. I didn't know the way the culture worked, and I didn't Understand even a little bit of the language, and I didn't feel welcome. I think that's the difference between the North and the South of Europe like this, the northern countries up here and the ones down south, especially for alarm. If you even show a little bit of effort, they'll quickly like, incorporate you into whatever they're talking about. And here's Dutch people are more shy, and not as social. And I had already became like a Spanish person. And then I got here and I'm like, No one is talking. Why is it so quiet in the grocery store? No old lady is bugging me with Hey, you gotta find me the thing I'm looking for, like, expand. The old ladies like now you're doing my shopping? Where? Where is this? You're like, yes, yes, sir. Here, no one would dare speak to you like, or strike up conversation with you. So it was really tough. And I think the thing that helped was being able to work quickly. And for me, like when I'm in new in a place, I just watch people, I could just watch him like, Okay, how do you do this? Like, how do they talk to each other? And, like, what are the rules? When are you supposed to do this? And I, I started watching them and found out that I'm not so curious about these people. I'm not interested in their culture or their history as much as I was in Spain. So I think that was more tough for me. I think the difference between assimilating to from the US to Spain and then from Spain to here is that I had a level of the language, not just a baseline understanding of Spanish and you know, and encountering it. That helped having the language but the culture was

shockingly different. But everywhere English is spoken here. So it's very easy to get on a deeper level with someone here than in Spain. If you have a language barrier. I think I've quickly gotten over the first hump. But I still find myself banging my head against the cultural norms here. And not really wanting to assimilate the way I thought it was curious to be able to adapt to the Spanish life, I'm less curious about being able to adapt to Dutch life, if that makes sense. They have all these old colonies of people who have come back and they live in the Netherlands and there they have these communities of Surinamese people of Moroccans. What else Turkish, there are a lot of Turkish here. And then in Suriname, it's so mixed with the Latin American Africa, India, Indonesian, and then my husband, he's half Indonesian. So they're also a big giant part of the population here. So it has a smaller version of kind of what's kind of going on in the US. However, there are some things that does, people aren't so good at and then they pride themselves on being tolerant and they are tolerant, but they don't accept and I think that blinds them to a lot of things that go on in this country. And for the most part is pretty easy. Christmas time is tough, because they have the tradition of sort the peat, which is when they wear blackface, basically, and they are really kind of resistant to the argument that this is racist, and they're quite violent against the protesters and anytime you complain about or even point out any criticism against them, they're number one as like, well your country's racist and go back to your country if you don't like it like they straight up are like that. So it can make it tough, but it's not all of them in the cities. The four major cities creates like a geographical zone and they call it the Randstad. That part of the Netherlands has the most kind of progressive people were like Amsterdam, you're not allowed to wear blackface during the Sinterklaas parade, they've just outlawed it like the government will not make their parade have blackface but that doesn't mean regular people are not going to just go around in blackface. So the tide is changing but their resistance to it and like just talking to people, it it like really sours you because you're like, Oh, I thought she was cool. But here you are telling me how it's a tradition. And it's for the kids and why am I making it about me like it ain't about me kids don't care if you're wearing black pink, purple. I know what one thing you don't get Afro and pink lips and gold jewelry because you slide down a chimney now that is just fact. Will you agree on that they're like mom,

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Christine Job 44:56

the subject of resilience really always comes up in conversations, I think among expats, because to not only move abroad, but to live and to really sustain, create and cultivate a life abroad really requires a form of resilience, right? continuing on it is frustrations and comparisons to your home country and being tired at how hard this is and why it is so hard when it says something stupid, I just want to order something off the internet, or I want my package to come Why is it stuck in customs for 5 million days, you know, those little things that requires a little resilience to you learn the language, learn the customs,

learn the bureaucracy, you're going to be uncomfortable a lot. That's just how it is, I think

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Niana Rice 45:52

you, you definitely will learn that you can be way more flexible than you give yourself credit. And not even that you learn that you kind of have to be, like ready to be uncomfortable for a significant part of time that that is always going to be the process of growth of any kind of growth that that moving to the next culture is gonna be so uncomfortable, because it's gonna take a time for you to get used to it, but there will be something on the other side. But are you willing to kind of go through that period when the honeymoon is over? And it's just like, Oh, this is just like life where I was before? Except I really gotta have my shit together. Can't Is it like, all is great here on out is there's always going to be a challenge no matter what, it's never boring that I will. I haven't been bored in years, like whether the experience is extremely good, or just a muffin, Dame type of activity. It's always under that fresh new, I have it being in another from another perspective. So yeah, if you like excitement, good excitement and bad excitement. It's all exciting. It's

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Christine Job 47:17

like, oh,

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Niana Rice 47:18

getting a library card. I still haven't done it yet. But I'm like, Oh, god, that's gonna be an experience. Like, maybe not if I was in the US. But here, because it's a whole nother procedure, you're gonna learn a whole nother way of the way people organize books and organize the way that they lend those books out. Every culture is different. So I'm kind of excited about this new book library card that I'm about to get if I was to tell someone Oh, yeah, I'm getting my library card, you're like, wow, okay, that's not a thing. But it becomes somewhat more exciting when you know, you're gonna be getting a new library card, a new country, and you're gonna learn about this new way of doing something. So many things happen to me so many I make so many mistakes like big old giant ones. Even in language, I may say the exact opposite of something. I mean, I am a non stop, like source of entertainment for myself. And for the people who are watching me flail through this. This country is like, why do you even think that's not how it works here. I'm like, Oh, well, just embarrassed myself. None of that I'm never bored. Like, this is just another

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Christine Job 48:28

day. And finally, I asked her, What kind of advice would she give to people who are looking to move abroad, and particularly for people who are ready abroad, wanting to sustain themselves, indoor switch career fields, and she really let y'all have it,

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Niana Rice 48:47

I think to be like, really just first organized, have all your paperwork, either someone in the US holding on to some original copies, you know, just keep your financial paperwork prepared. Because once you're over here, you may find like you said that you need to access some paperwork, you need to get something formalized. Some international certification has a designated person who will be your go to person who can handle reading your mail and who may need to yo I need to send her birth certificate here to get a stamp in DC. I would recommend having someone as your designated onpoint person, usually it's probably your parents or something. But just make sure that someone's got who can look at your paperwork and kind of help you with that. Because you never know what might happen. You might lose your passport, anything can happen. So always have like someone in the US I feel like that can handle that. Try to talk to as many people that have already done or gone to where you're going really go out and make connections with them via Facebook or meet up. They're usually especially if you're a black, there's probably a group in that country already. Like if they're there already. Dude, use those resources and come with like, you know, some real questions, do some research on where you're going use the search function, please do research on the place that you're going to research neighborhoods, top five neighborhoods in Madrid, I looked at all the neighborhoods, and I had three that I had already felt like were my vibe. And when I found those, I looked for other bloggers or vloggers, who had traveled there and what their experiences are. And I look at the Google Map and see what kind of restaurants are there or not do the Google Sheets, are there brown people there? Like I kind of had an idea about the country that I was going to before I went, so like, what's the vibe in the Gothic neighborhood in Barcelona? That's a completely different question. Where should I live in Barcelona? Like, what? What's your question? You know, like, just remember, there are people that are going to help you but please do your own research know what you want out of a place? Like, do you like living in a city? Or do you want something more chill? Like, kind of figure those things out before you just move to a place and expect it to kind of all come together and just be ready to be uncomfortable. Don't expect to go there, like you literally should expect to be like, Okay, the first one is gonna be lit. month two and three, I'm gonna be like homesick, unless you are really rich, and you have family there, you're probably going to experience that no matter if you were changing states in the US, or moving to another country, there's going to be a peak and then you go down. And once you know it's coming to you can recognize a you can weather that unusual downtime that you're going to naturally feel when the honeymoon has kind of came to

come to an end. And be flexible, flexible hustle, be on your grind, think of ways to make money and know your worth people come here and they're like, well, I don't have any experience doing. Girl, don't leave with that be like, yes, I do that. And I do this. And in the meantime, go on Google and figure out how to do those things, and then do it, I think you always need some foot in the door. And I think that comes back to what you said about resilience. You You have to be resilient in the way that you're willing to do it in. You know, if you are okay with teaching, then go the if you're coming to Spain go the teaching route. And becoming honestly odd are many programs that will give you at least that first year. So you can kind of like take the pressure off of trying to find the work. And you can kind of enjoy your life because you have very good work life balance. Do that. If you are like no teachings, not for me, I want to be in, say, marketing, then yeah, get online and try to connect with people who are already living in Spain and doing that. And you can do that through LinkedIn through meetup. But here's the reality, how's your language skills? Like? What else do you get underneath just I have a marketing degree, that's not enough. Are you willing to learn Spanish Are you currently in a program then lead with that while you're applying, and I'm in the process of learning Spanish or I am, I've got an A two and I'm working on my B two certificate, it's not going to be just filling out your resume and applying you're going to have to find another in to the job, it's not going to be your traditional pathway, you've got to kind of create your own path. And a lot of it, like you said is living a more active life like all of your experience has to do with you actively participating in it, be it language skills, be it you know, dating a person from that country and using that it's to your advantage either through the opportunities you gain through them going out in meeting people, and being awkward and uncomfortable just because you need to make some connections where you you know, you've got to figure out where you're missing and how you can get in and you got to attack it from all angles. It's not gonna be a to be nothing about living abroad as a newbie. But if you are resilient and you hustle, and you're always like, trying to make it to whatever goal you have, that's the kind of energy you got to bring to make it long term because I applied online that ain't that's not how you get job. That's how I got my job here. I didn't just apply online I called recruiter in Dutch and I had only been here a couple months. And I asked in Dutch if they spoke English. And the guy was so happy it was like of course I speak English and then I said well my quote I had a fake question about a job posting and they placed the number so I made up a question to ask and the guy was immediately like all please send me your resume. I'm ready. Oh please, I want to I want you to apply This job, and I ended up getting the job. And now I work for them. I have a one year contract with them. So I didn't just put in my application and hit Send and hope that I get the job in the Netherlands where they speak English, I took a chance I need to do something more drastic, I need to call directly in Dutch people don't really do this. So I use that to my advantage. For me in the US. That's something that I do all the time when I have a problem with the company I call directly and you get a startled response. So I thought I'd shake them up and it worked.

And now I have a job. So I'm like to take the girl out of Chicago to get back to Chicago out the girl. Get me some I'ma get me a job.

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Christine Job 55:48

Nana is a dear friend and a dope woman as you all can tell now, so you guys need to go ahead and take her advice. And if you want to follow her on social media, you can follow her on her Instagram, which is at bomb chic love. All of her information will be in the show notes of this podcast. I hope you guys enjoyed your story. Nyan is great. And for more information about her, check out the show notes, and the website of flourish and the foreign. If you liked the show, go ahead and subscribe and rate the podcast five stars. leave a review on Apple podcast or wherever you listen to podcasts. And if you're interested in supporting the podcast, this labor of love, but labor nonetheless, please share the podcast with all of your friends on all of your social media channels. And if you feel so compelled, please consider becoming a Patreon supporter of the podcast. That's where I'll be creating the flourish in the foreign community dropping behind the scenes videos, and have live q&a with some of the podcast guests, and so much more. Patreon is a monthly subscription service you can decide whatever level of support is most comfortable for you. Special shout out to Michelle quarry of frequency media based in Atlanta. She is a dear friend and also an incredible businesswoman. And Podcast Producer. She has a podcast production company called frequency medium. And she really gave me the encouragement to start this podcast and access to her amazing course on starting podcasts. So thank you love you. Also special shout out to my brother Zachary Higgs, who created a music for this podcast. So if you found yourself bopping along, that's my brother. And if you're looking for beats, or music production, music for your podcast, your YouTube channel, whatever, definitely check him out. His Instagram is at ZO h underscore 15 and all of his information, the website and stuff like that will be in the show notes of this podcast. All right, that's it for this week. Bye. On the next episode of flourish in the forum,

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Deanna Denham 58:46

it is a little bit rude Loki to kind of speak if you're in a meeting to speak languages that not everybody understands. And they do that if they want to kind of keep me out of the conversation. And it's not really with malice or anything. It's more like, I just need, like, I need to get something passed me real quick. But so it is fun to like, follow up on their question in English like oh no, I think that date is good. And they're like, Oh, you speak Cantonese. I'm like, no, not really, or else like a little bit here and there.