

Transcript

Episode Title: Taking a Career in HR Abroad with Barbara Robinson-Cole - Flourish in the Foreign

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Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:00:00]

There's really no point in going abroad. If you want to try to recreate your American experience in someone else's country, that's not going to work. And you're going to be disappointed and frustrated, it starts really with an open heart and an open mind, be very conscious of your own intent. And if your intent is to transplant your American life minus the racism to someone else's country, that's probably not the best strategy.

Christine Job [00:00:31]

Hi, everyone, welcome back to *Flourish in the Foreign* a podcast that aims to elevate and affirm the voices and the stories of Black women living and thriving abroad. Why? Because we do this. I'm your host, Christine Job, and I am the creator, producer, editor, everything are of this podcast. Welcome. Welcome to our new listeners. Thank you so much for coming. And thank you so much for tuning in. Again, if you have been listening to the podcast for a while, as many of you know, players, the forum is crafted by me lovingly every single week. And this process is a labor of love, but labor nonetheless. And because podcasting is not free. It takes time, money and resources to produce this wonderful show for you. I'm asking you all to please consider supporting the show you can support this show in two basic ways. One is monetary and the other is non monetary. The monetary ways to support this show is becoming a subscriber to the podcast Patreon page, you can go to www.patreon.com/flourish forum. And I'm actually going to be doing something really cool which is when we get to 10 Patreon subscribers, I will be dropping a second episode that week. For all of the listeners. If you haven't become a Patreon subscriber, definitely consider becoming one now. And also, I'm going to be starting the live q&a as with our podcast guests fairly soon. You can also catch up the show at dollar sign *Flourish in the Foreign* if you want to do one off contribution. And now on to the non monetary ways to support the podcast, which is to please share the podcast, tag the podcast across Instagram, Twitter and Facebook at *Flourish in the Foreign*. tell people why you love the podcast and tell your favorite blogs, magazines and other podcasts, tag them in your social media posts. And also go ahead and review the show and give the show a five star rating on Apple podcast and leave review. It's really important and it only takes about 30 seconds. And it helps a show to get found in organic searches. So if you are really enjoying the show, and if you really believe that Black women's voices and stories should be elevated and affirmed and listened to please go ahead and review the show today. All right, that concludes the support portion of the show. On

to our next story. Today's story, we have Barbara and Barbara is an incredible woman with such an interesting story. I'm going to let her tell you all about it.

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:03:37]

I'm Barbara Robinson Cole. I'm 51 years old and I live in Madiba Jordan. I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and I joined the Navy when I was 17. My first duty station outside the continental US was Honolulu, Hawaii. When I was a kid I had a really interesting childhood in Pittsburgh. It's a pretty blue collar working class town. But my family operated a daycare center in our home. And our primary clientele were international students from the University of Pittsburgh. My childhood friends were the kids in the daycare center that were from all over the world. And they came to us with their culture and their language and their clothes and, and their food. And I had this early exposure to the concept that the world was much bigger than Pittsburgh. There was a part of me that thought if those kids and their families could come to Pittsburgh, that someday I would like to go there to wherever there was that they were from. I think that was my early exposure to the idea that you can go places living in Pittsburgh, I was surrounded by great friends and family, but mostly people that never left. And there was a guy on our street who was about a year or two older than me and he left for the Navy. He stayed in touch by writing these letters and sending pictures. And he sent me a picture inside a letter of himself and he was an ordinary guy lived down the street. He was just just a neighborhood guy, one of us. And he sent me this picture of himself dressed in his Navy white uniform, standing in a gondola in Venice. While some girls might have looked at that picture, and thought swooned for the guy, I swapped for the location, and I thought, if, if you can get to wear that cool, uniform and see the world, I think that's what I'm going to do. So it led to a conversation with recruiters, and ultimately joining the Navy. I was an intelligence analyst for 25 years. I enlisted right out of high school. at mid career, I picked up a scholarship to college, went off to college, and then was commissioned as an officer and finished out the second half of my career as an officer. Until I retired.

Christine Job [00:06:00]

I asked Barbara to tell me about her journey to Jordan. How did she get there? Why Jordan,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:06:07]

what was a two year process to move to Jordan, I was actually dating someone who was a fellow, Navy retiree. And he shared with me that he just had this desire to live outside the US again. And it really resonated with me because it was something that I had wanted to do for a long time. And life just kind of got in the way. He got a job offer to move to Jordan. And he asked me what I thought and of course, I thought that's amazing. And you should absolutely go. And

he did. I spent the next year coming to Jordan for periods of time. So we could spend time together and I could see the country and we just decided to get married and I would move to Jordan with my children, but they were 10 and 13. My husband works at the Kings Academy. The King of Jordan actually attended boarding school in the US, and about 13 years ago decided that he wanted to replicate the international boarding school experience that he had in Massachusetts. And so he created his own Academy here in Jordan. He went to Deerfield Academy and King's Academy here in Madiba is often referred to as Deerfield and desert. It's beautiful 140 acre campus with kids from over a dozen countries. And it's really an amazing experience I brought my sons here to visit. They loved it, they were able to see themselves here and going to school here. That was a part of the decision making and we made the move together as a family.

Christine Job [00:07:48]

I asked Barbara to tell me about her transition to living in Jordan, and any kind of adjustments her and her family needed to make. To get settled.

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:07:58]

I knew Jordan was a safe country for a solo woman traveler or a woman with children. I had no concerns about personal safety that allowed me to rent a car, drive all over the country with the boys, sometimes by myself, get to see the area. And that really ease the transition. Once we moved, I had a real strong baseline of the geography and the cities where I needed to go to do certain things that really helped some of the adjustments where Jordan is in the desert, but he gets all four seasons, it's cold in the winter, we had to make sure that everyone brought proper clothing and snow boots and things they weren't necessarily expecting to have to need here. But they did. probably our biggest adjustment to moving to Jordan was the language. Although English is widely spoken, as with any visiting or moving to any country, it's really important, I think, for everyone to get a basic understanding of the language, your top 10 phrases, and, and words that you'll need to be polite, and establish relationships with people, just common courtesies, and not just language, but also customs and cultural understandings. The boys and I really invested in that both of my sons had Arabic language classes in school, intense language classes. And then I did tutoring on my own and that really helped but for sure, understanding the language was probably our biggest obstacle, but absolutely doable.

Christine Job [00:09:29]

I asked Barbara if she felt comfortable with the cultural norms of Jordan, and how she adjusted to complying with them.

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:09:37]

Sometimes we think about Arab countries is where they'll be restrictions on how women can move around the country alone. Jordan is a place where women move very freely throughout the country alone are very independent. It is not required to wear a head job although it's a parliamentary monarchy, there's a king but there's also a parliament. The Queen herself is not hijab, wearing A woman, and it's probably 5050. In the country, women that are covered and women that are uncovered, you're not required to cover your hair at all. But you may find yourself in spaces where if you're the only uncovered woman, you feel like you're drawing a little too much attention to yourself, you obviously need to be covered if you're going to Islamic religious spaces. And even some of the Orthodox Christian spaces in Jordan require headcovering. Just keep a scarf in your purse, in your car, and be prepared to just put it on to be respectful of the local culture. There's even a mall that we love to go to that is really popular with with locals, and the local Islamic community, but not much tours. So most of the women that are there are covered for whatever reason. And when I go to that mall, I cover but absolutely be bold and seeing the country when I came here last year with my son's we drove up to see the Roman ruins of drash. It's there well preserved Roman ruins, that are just incredible to see, we hired a tour guide. He wasn't an official tour guide. He's because there are a bunch of guys hanging around that solicit themselves to you as tour guides. I like to do that. Because it gives you more flexibility, the ruins closed, we had an extra hour with this guy because he knew all the police and we just stayed behind. And there were other unofficial tour guides doing the same thing. And we had this amazing experience touring the ruins with this guy. And well when it was done. He had such a good time with us and Jordanian hospitality is on matched in the region. It's what they're known for. At the end of the tour. He said, Okay, now we go to my house, you can meet my mother and we can have tea. We called his mother and we said, Oh, no, we have to get going. And he said, No, no, no, we have to do it. They have this aggressive form of hospitality. And because I had spent time here before I knew that that was the reputation if we went, we went to this guy's house who who we had never met before the tour, we met his mom, his dad, his uncle who had been a singer in old Jordan, and he's saying for us, all of his siblings, nieces, nephews, and we're still in touch with that guy. These are the types of experiences that you have to be open to so that you can get the full flavor of Jordan or any place where you're going. But see have country breathe it in, have the experiences, meet the local people make local friends, and just do all the things.

Christine Job [00:12:31]

I asked Barbara to describe the cost of living in Jordan,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:12:35]

the cost of living in Jordan, it fluctuates widely depending on where you live in the city of Amman, which is the capital of Jordan, it has a comparable cost of living to the east coast of the United States, rent is a little bit lower than you would probably pay in the DC area where I lived last. Food is a lot less expensive, groceries are a lot less expensive. But clothing and small appliances, things from a store that you would compare to like a Walmart or Target or something like that tend to be more expensive here than they are in the United States. And it's really odd. Some food items are categorized as a high end import item. breakfast cereal, for example, things like frosted flakes are considered a normal item, not a high end import item, you can get a box of Frosted Flakes for three or \$4. But Fruity Pebbles is a high end import item and cost about \$8 a box.

Christine Job [00:13:36]

I want to know about the health care system in Jordan. Was it readily accessible and was it affordable.

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:13:43]

Unfortunately, when we first moved here, my husband got sick, and I got an up close and personal exposure to Jordan's health care system. The good news is Jordan has world class healthcare. And I was blown away by the quality of care, the attentiveness of the staff just everything from beginning to end that he received on hospitalization and after it was really amazing. And I learned in that process that Jordan actually is a medical destination. For the Middle East region. People travel to Jordan specifically for health care, both required health care and optional health care like cosmetic surgery or cosmetic dentistry. It has a very modern, highly developed medical system. Most of the doctors are trained in the West have careers in the West in the UK or United States and then later in their careers returned to Jordan

Christine Job [00:14:41]

Barbara brought two of her sons to Jordan. I wondered about very actions to move into Jordan, and how well they were adjusting to the new country.

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:14:50]

They're now 14 and 12. They've had an amazing experience here. I'm excited. I wanted them to have this experience of living abroad. of seeing the differences in cultures and communities and how people interact in ways that are similar and different from the United States. And it was everything that I hoped for, and more they love. Jordan Jordan is very kid friendly, family oriented. I let them go hiking through the cliffs of Petra up to the Indiana Jones spot where you can look out and see the Treasury building, I let them do that by themselves. And it was a little bit hard stopping but I wanted them to have that confidence building experience of exploring the ruins and working together to pull each other up over the cliffs and, and there were other tours around them that helped along the way. And it was just an amazing experience. They've made local friends, and they've made friends from all over the world. That's important for them to understand that there are good people, and people who share your values and people you would gladly call friends from lots of different backgrounds. And that's exactly what they did. And I love that they had that experience. My older son of the 14 year old attended King's Academy, my younger son actually attended a Jordanian school, and most of his day was an Arabic. That was a challenge. But they did give him a translator and a tutor. And he actually did very well, in spite of the fact that it was a local school. expats tend to gravitate towards private schools here in Jordan. And you would expect to pay pretty much what you would pay in the United States, somewhere between eight and \$12,000 a year. There are a number of independent schools here that cater to the expat community and to Jordanians that want that Western international school experience, Jordanian schools are going to be entirely in Arabic, if you're moving to Jordan, and you're not an Arabic speaker, that really is an option for you. My younger son school had a lot of English spoken and English speaking teachers, but it was still heavily in Arabic, a student might ask a question in English, the teacher would respond in English, but the subsequent discussion about the concepts or the context of whatever the question was, would be in Arabic. So experts will probably look for independent schools, private schools, or religious schools that meet those needs for their children.

Christine Job [00:17:23]

I asked Barbara described to me what she thought the impact of living abroad had on her kids,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:17:29]

I think the impact has been similar to the impact of being exposed to international children and our families daycare had on me, I think that's been the impact on them. They now have friends from Indonesia and Europe and other parts of the Middle East that they want to go visit. And as they talked about college, there have been conversations about going to college in Europe, where some of their friends are headed off to college here from the high school, it's broadened the conversation about what's possible for them in terms of education, and in terms of travel. It's made them sensitive, my 12 year old has two close friends that he's made here. One is Jordanian and one is Chinese. What he's learned is while we're acutely aware of comments that

we don't want made about our ethnicity, he's become aware of things that are sensitive to other cultures, meaning every culture has its sensitivities, everyone has boundaries around what's acceptable and not acceptable. And it's heightened to the awareness that our experience is not just about us. It's a collective experience about our humanity, and the humanity of others and needing to be sensitive and inclusive, and focus more on the things we have in common, what the intersectionality of our commonality is, and how that helps us be friends or colleagues or build and work together in a positive way. And how to check privilege and how to check offense, when someone says something that isn't appropriate, or whether they're talking to you or they're talking to a friend of yours from another culture, feeling confident enough to say that's not going to work. Yet, we don't do that here. I've watched that growth in them. And I love that growth in them.

Christine Job [00:19:12]

I was curious to know if there was a Black community in Jordan. And what was Barbara's and her family's Black experience

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:19:20]

in Jordan. There really isn't. We're actually only African American family at Kings Academy. And it was not an issue for us. We did stay connected to our community back home, our friends back home, we made local friends. And we have found Jordanian people to be incredibly warm and welcoming to the point where we've been able to have really honest and open conversations about race with them. And that's been really helpful for us. But there is not necessarily a thriving Black community here in Jordan per se, if that's something that's really special. For people that are looking for places to x pack to Jordan, would be a challenging place to identify that in. I just posted a funny story about being here in Jordan with my sons, we went to McDonald's. And there were some Arab ladies next was at the table, and they were speaking in Arabic. And they were trying to figure out where we were from. They couldn't hear everything we were saying, but they were trying to figure out where we might be from in the world. And my son overheard them, and for whatever reason, their conversation turned a little bit ugly and disrespectful and his words. And so he turned to them in Arabic. And he said, Hello, aunties, where are you using these ugly words? It's, but I'm like, it's not nice. And they were shocked that he said that in Arabic, and it was kind of a pet moment, but it gave me such joy, be able to surprise people with how you've adapted to their culture and their language and their place. There have been so many of those types of moments.

Christine Job [00:21:00]

I wanted to know if you're dating and politics affected Barbara and her family while living in the country? And if so how. So

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:21:09]

Americans are often thought of as wanting to be treated with American exceptionalism. That's not going to happen in Jordan. People trust their government, are there some disputes over labor and there are protests about increase in teacher wages, but the pandemic specifically showed us that people respect and trust the government, because the government has a people first mentality and its policies and its actions are very much that way. We benefited from the mentality and the actions of that government, but not because we were x patch, just because that's how the government responded to the needs of all of the people that were affected.

Christine Job [00:21:47]

I also wanted to know if Barbara felt that the politics of the United States still affected her and her family, even while they were abroad.

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:21:57]

They affect us because we stayed connected to the conversation with the death of George Floyd and the ensuing protests, and riots and elevated discussion about police brutality, it's given us an opportunity to continue to conversation with our sons here at home, but expand that conversation to include our friends. Here in Jordan. We have family meetings where a family back home or zoom, where we talk about the issues that everyone's concerned about participating in protests, staying safe being heard how we can support local politics back home. And we're still connected. We're still Americans. We're still African Americans. And we're always be connected to the politics back home.

Christine Job [00:22:42]

I asked Barbara to tell me about the Jordanian response to COVID-19 and her impressions of the response.

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:22:49]

Jordan, actually, for a really small country in the Middle East has gotten a lot of positive international attention for its handling of COVID. Its health minister, it's the Jordanian Dr. falchi, if you will, he has become something of a local rock star. He led the initiatives to lock down the country very, very early, earlier than your earlier than West. He followed what was happening in China very closely and led the decision making on locking down Jordan very early in the pandemic since early March. The campus was on a full lockdown, you could not leave the campus of the school. And no it was nobody in or out. And most of the country was locked down. People were restricted to home isolation. One of the things the government did right away is they knew that one of the things that would make people most uncomfortable about home quarantine is food insecurity. They took the local city buses, they disinfected them and turn them into mobile supermarkets. And they filled them up with produce and fresh bread. This is a fresh food culture, people shop almost daily. They don't stockpile like we tend to do in the West. They buy fresh fruits and vegetables and fresh bread from the bakery pretty much daily. The government recognize that and stockpiled buses with food stores and drove around to neighborhoods and made announcements that they were present and people were able to come out socially distance and get the food that they needed. And then they bagged up the remaining fruits, vegetables and bread and they left it on the median strips of communities just in case people needed it and didn't make it to the bus. They just wanted people to know they were aware and that people would be taken care of. And I thought that was incredible, which is really mind blowing to me, because sometimes we have this disconnect between people in power and people in elite positions of what the real day to day needs are of the average citizen and to see senior leadership immediately. Identify what the needs would be of the common Jordanian person and family and respond to that so quickly was thought it was remarkable. Well, as a result, Jordan has, right now still less than 1000 cases, and it had less than a dozen deaths due to COVID. Now, some of that can be attributed to limited testing, because one of the reasons why they lock down so aggressively and so early was because Jordan has something around 3 million refugees from neighboring countries and its health minister recognize they could not afford for all these people to get it, they began to very strategically use their testing resources to close the borders and test at the borders, and test in refugee facilities. And anywhere where there was a reported case, they shut down that city, or that community within the city, and did widespread testing to identify any hotspots, it was really strategic on their part, to utilize limited resources in the most effective way possible. And it worked.

Christine Job [00:26:09]

Barbara is a business owner. And I was really curious to learn more about her business going global with Barbara, and how she managed it. in Jordan,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:26:20]

I started going global with Barbara, and put together tours and travel programs for youth organizations, for individuals and adult groups that just needed someone to map it out for them and hold their hand for a trip that would help them have that international experience that they envisioned for themselves. I just believe in the power of travel, to broaden our horizons and our perspectives and even see our own lives ourselves and our home countries better by gaining this broader perspective. I wanted to provide opportunities for as many young people and even adults who are reluctant travelers or fearful travelers to have this experience. Sometimes we just need someone to show us the way. I have two children here with me and Jordan, but I actually have four sons altogether. My older two sons are in college and in the States. And I began traveling with all of the kids very early on because I wanted them to have a global perspective on themselves and on life. And I want that for all of our children. So I have two locations that I'm focusing on right now. One, I have a highlights of the Hashemite Kingdom tour. And I also have a group trip for Paris. Paris is what I call my heartbeat city, just the vibe, the energy, the food, the friends that I've made there, for lots of people that want to go to Europe, Paris is just an ideal location. But the tour is unique. It's not just about seeing the Eiffel Tower, it is specifically structured and designed with African American youth and adults in mind, you will take the Black history tour with entree to Black pairs, you will visit the places where Richard Wright and James Baldwin lived and worked and Josephine Baker, you will come to have a greater understanding through this tour of the connection, this symbiotic relationship that has been in existence for generations between African Americans and the city of Paris. As recently as a few years ago, tiny haec coats relocated to Paris to have the experience of Baldwin as a writer. He wanted to see what inspired him and how the energy changed his writing and influenced him. It's something that's gone on for generations. And there's such a value looking beyond the touristic icons of Paris, and looking deeper into the relationship that our community has had in the United States and in Paris. And we put together a panel discussion with with African American expats living and working and studying in Paris, and they meet with our young people and talk to them about why they made the decision to study in Paris and what their experiences have been like and, and the answer their questions. And it's just an amazing exchange, where you see these young people looking into the faces and hearing the voices of people that look and sound like them. And you can feel them growing to a place where they could see themselves, possibly making that same decision. And that's an incredible experience. It's exactly why I created going global ninth to 12th grade has been my target audience. It's a great experience for young people to have their questions are so insightful. And often they do ask questions about relevant social topics like what's happening in the us right now. Is their police brutality in France has been an issue for you. Are you afraid of the police? Is there discrimination? It's an age where their questions have mentioned And they can process their responses and the culture and try new foods and all of the fun things that you do when you travel, they can take it all in and they can process it and be transformed. I have parents that want to want their kids to repeat the trip. And I've said eventually, I will allow them to come back when your college age to help out with the troop of chaperones and mentors. And that's a great way for them to remain involved with the program later on. But right now I have limited spaces I'm taking first time travelers only

Barbara is an international talent acquisition specialist. And I want to learn more about how she transitioned into the second career.

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:30:38]

Like all veterans, when we're coming to the end of our careers, we all have these questions about what we're going to do once we retire, how our skills will translate to the outside, if you will. And for me, I knew I wasn't necessarily interested in staying with an intelligence related job, I enjoyed my last tour in human resources. I focused on that in my resume. And turns out that there was a robust healthy market for recruiting HR professionals with international experience. One of my jobs in the military had been as a mobilization manager with the Joint Staff getting troops and sharing they were ready from a training, medical Family Readiness perspective in order to deploy overseas. Well, companies that have large contracts overseas, but are based in the US. We're looking for a recruiter that had the ability to take a project that required high volume, rapid staffing of anywhere from could be 25 to 200. People that had to go through the gates of readiness, background checks, qualifications, education, medical, all of those things and get people on flights overseas to work a project. And I took my experience from the military, coupled with my experience in HR and parlayed it directly into a career in international recruiting, and talent acquisition. And it went well, I just continue to take on bigger projects take on more challenging projects. And a lot of the places where I was staffing project for places that I had been deployed to myself, I was able to speak to candidates about the challenges of being stationed in the Middle East or what they could expect and how to prepare their families for long term separation that came directly from my military experience, I was able to develop cultural awareness training and Family Readiness Training, and things that some of these companies had never had before. And it positioned me to just Excel and do really well. And I actually ended up really loving the work, construction, engineering, and defense work are the primary areas that I stopped

Christine Job [00:32:47]

being that Barbara is an international talent acquisition specialist, I had to ask her what was her advice about getting a job abroad,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:32:57]

there are a number of ways that people in the US can look for international opportunities, you can start with LinkedIn, watch a quick YouTube video on Boolean search strings if you don't already know how to do it, which is to build a search string that will connect things like international recruiter, or location and your keywords about your career field, build a search string phrase, and you will be amazed, you will get a list of recruiters that may be staffing

projects or have staff projects in the past, you can shoot them a message and say, Hey, I'm interested in going to this location, or I see your company just want a big contract. In Europe in Italy. I'm interested if for any openings that you may have coming available, there's some research involved. That's one way of using LinkedIn to your advantage, you can use the jobs tab on LinkedIn. But searching for recruiters and companies that are staffing positions is a more advanced way of doing it and can be really effective. I do as a recruiter get emails from people that have run these searches. They follow the news about contract awards. And they reach out to me. They know that the company wants something and they want to be considered early on and I add them to my database of people that I'll potentially communicate with saying, hey, jobs are posted, please apply those kinds of things. Reach out to recruiters that operate in the spaces that you're interested in. The other thing is good old fashioned USA jobs.gov. You can build search alerts, job alerts, using keywords. Again, use effective keywords. Don't use too broad terms. Narrow those down, don't put necessarily education. If you're an English teacher, put English teacher or put teacher plus English plus the country that you're interested in, build effective search strings and effective job alerts for yourself. And it will help you get those weekly or daily updates on new positions that have been posted. Those are two really good ways. The third thing to do is there are a number of large agencies that staff overseas opportunities, specifically in education search associates is one. Connie Sandown is another one. There are some staffing agencies again, takes a little bit of online research to identify them. But you can create an account with an international placement agency. There is usually a small fee associated with that, because you're basically doing an advanced interview, they interview you, you provide your resume, your transcripts, your background, check your medical, anything that they require to place you. Once you go through that process, and you're in the system, and they begin to share your information with dozens or hundreds of potential employers, you begin to get interest. And it's kind of one stop shopping for a lot of schools and higher ed institutions overseas.

Christine Job [00:35:55]

I also wanted to know if she had any advice for new graduates who wanted to start their career abroad,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:36:03]

a lot of international schools have teaching fellow positions like here at Kings, we have a robust teaching fellow programs that specifically for people recently graduated from college, whether they've majored in education or not, it's a great way for young people to get introduced to international work, and have housing provided a lot of our teas come because they decided want to do two years here, pay off student loans, save money, get some real life work experience, and then transition back to the States. If they're focused on returning to the States, they now come with this amazing two years of international teaching experience or more. We

had a young teacher here, who was an astronomy major from college. And he was brought here because kings was building the country's first observatory. And that was his project, he taught astronomy, but he also helped design and implement the the observatory here at the campus for recently out of college graduates look for teaching fellow programs or international internship programs that are looking to attract expat students into the local job force into the local school staff in order to bring that the western education experience and perspective into their classrooms, companies and organizations.

Christine Job [00:37:26]

my conversation with Barbara was so great. And she really provided some insightful advice. For women who are thinking about going abroad,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:37:37]

I would say just do it. So many of us women live the early phases of our life. For other people, we whether we're mothers, or we're married or single, we wake up and realize that we've been working according to someone else's narrative, what field we're working in how we're living, where we're living, there just comes this time, this moment where you just have to ask yourself, Is this what I really want to do? And is this where I really want to be? And if the answer is no, then begin to dig deeper and figure out what that looks like for you. What could that look like? Would you consider teaching? What would you consider doing? Would you consider volunteering, I have no women in your 50s that join the Peace Corps. I think that's amazing, then that might not be where you end up being for the next 10 years. But it might be that hard left turn out of your life and out of your narrative that you need in order to put some daylight between how you live in the United States and where you're going to live and how you're going to live going forward. Be bold in choosing to do something completely different. But put some safeguards in place yourself financially, emotionally, but encourage yourself and feel empowered to get out there find other women that have done something similar. There's whole communities of women out there that have made this move, to live their best life abroad. And for many of us, that's exactly where we want to be. We just need that moment of self realization and actualization to just make that happen. I love the saying that you are under no obligation to be the person you were yesterday and you are under no obligation to be that same person tomorrow. Like sometimes being a nomad is about where you live. And sometimes it's about what you do, and how you do it. It's be an explorer in your own life. Try something new, if it doesn't fit doesn't work for you. And certainly if it makes you unhappy or brings you stress or anxiety in a way that you are not loving, let that go and move on to the next thing. It's okay. It is entirely okay to to explore different options and be open to new possibilities professionally and personally and geographically. I know people that they had a dream of going to a certain country or certain city and then they got there and realized didn't like it at all was a terrible fit. That's okay. That's not a fail. That's part of the journey. You went, that's the important thing you went,

you experienced it and you learn and now you're empowered to make a different decision. Just continue to explore in your own life. Ignore the haters. Ignore the naysayers. People speak to you negatively out of their own fears, their own hesitations, their own limitations, that has nothing to do with you. It doesn't make you inconsiderate, or selfish, you are the protector of your own energy, your own spirit, your own life. For a long time, I was waiting for someone to come along to say, yes, living overseas is exactly what we should do. And no one came. You know, that didn't happen, I had to make the decision on my own. And it turns out, that's actually the best way to make the decision, if it's what you want, because you it's what you dream of. And you may try it. And it is everything you dreamed of and more, and you may stay abroad. Or you may try it and feel like what I really want is did short or long term experiences. But I need to go home and be in the familiar and continue to journey in my own original space. And that's okay, too.

Christine Job [00:41:13]

She included some real deal practical tips to get abroad successfully. And obviously lay a foundation to stay abroad,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:41:22]

I would encourage everyone to do their homework, get their coins together. And plan for a short term or moderate term visit three months is a really nice amount of time. If you spend the time wisely, you can get a tourist visa, get a lot three month rental of an apartment. And if you stay in a major city, you won't need a car. If you want to stay some more, somewhere more rural, you can do a long term car rental, find out if they have Uber, like get your transportation plan together. And then just go and immerse yourself in that place. Know what the customs are know what to expect. Reach out through these wonderful expat communities we've have now for people of color on Facebook, for Black people, specifically on Facebook, that people that are planning to move abroad have been abroad recently, or long term, we're all out here. And we're now more visible than ever. And so build your network, build your network and reach out and prepare yourself and be prepared to be open and let go of your idea of what's normal or what you have to have. We all have those friends, you travel overseas, with people and they spend the entire time complaining about the food is too foreign, or they only want to eat with their person to or whatever you can get western style food and Jordan. But wherever you're going, there's really no point in going abroad. If you want to try to recreate your American experience in someone else's country, that's not going to work. And you're going to be disappointed and frustrated. It starts really with an open heart and an open mind that we do come sometimes with some biases about what quality of life means what standards of living are, what comforts are required for you to feel at home, we let some stuff go in order to be all in on new destinations. And otherwise, it's kind of a waste of time, be very conscious of your own intent. And if your intent is to transplant your American life minus the racism to someone else's country, that's

probably not the best strategy. Do your homework about what's wonderful, what makes Jordan or wherever you want to go wonderful, and be all in on embracing that. I mean, when people say they want you to come to your house, they mean that they want you to come to their house, and they don't mean for an hour to me for like four hours to have like a multi course meal and coffee and tea and then dessert and to meet some relatives and like it's a whole thing. So if that bothers you, you're gonna spend a lot of time here saying no. And then what we find is some people that for Jordan is not a good fit. They say no to the invitations, and then they're saying, Hey, I feel so isolated here. Do you have any suggestions for making more friends? Well say yes, except some of these invitations. It won't hurt you to be inconvenienced or made uncomfortable in a different type of social setting. People will invite you to their home that don't speak English. They'll have a child or cousin or neighbor that speaks some English or a lot of English, calm and act as the translator you could end up spending all afternoon with people that you don't even speak the language with. We've done that. And it's not the same as getting together with your friends and family back home. But don't look at it through that filter. Look at it and appreciate it for what it is. And and ask someone Hey, I got an invitation to some hotels. Is it typical to take something should I take a big good or cover dish or some fruit would I offend them or would they appreciate that Like get feedback from people that you meet that you're connected to that helped you with the transition. And you can be a gracious guest. Everybody we meet doesn't become a lifelong friend. But we don't make lifelong friends unless we put ourselves out there a little bit to be open to these new experiences and these new people in new ways.

Christine Job [00:45:20]

I want to know where Barbara saw her and her family in the future, was it Jordan, or somewhere else,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:45:27]

we're going to do a rotation back in the United States, but keep one foot outside the US. Our time is wrapping up here at the school here in Jordan. And my husband actually got a job in LA. But my desire is to remain outside the US. My work it with my business is primarily outside the US. I'm looking at buying a house in Portugal, I'm working with a real estate agent that works with expats that are not in Portugal at the time of purchase, that's going very well. And we're just being very open to where we will ultimately end up. But I think we've committed to a nomads life right now we're going to do a rotation in the US. And with long term goal of being outside the US. It's just, it suits us better as a family.

Christine Job [00:46:19]

I had to know why Barbara and her family had chosen Portugal,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:46:23]

Portugal, because it's still an economy that it has not escalated the way other economies have in that region. It's still very affordable. We are both military retirees, and they have a D seven retiree visa, that you just need to be able to show income, consistent monthly income in order to meet the requirement and we meet that requirement. We're looking at countries that have the retiree golden visa, if you will, a lot of countries that requires large business investments or property investments. Some countries like Portugal and Panama don't require that at all, you just have to show that you have consistent income, and you're not going to be a burden to the local government services and economies. And you have to get your own health care which we have as veterans, we made a list of countries that had those types of ease of transition visa programs for retirees, and a high quality of life rating. That's a great weather, low crime, highest safety ratings, strong buying power, based on your budget, what you can get in terms of housing, cost of quality of life, you'd like to eat out a lot, what does that cost entertainment, access to major airports or major train stations that you can travel throughout the region of Portugal has all of that it has a strong Black community. And we've networked with other Black families that have made this move that have lived other places in Europe and experienced a lot of racism and discrimination and bias. And they have not been made to feel that at all in Portugal is not a utopia. It doesn't mean there. There isn't some thing there. It means that in their extensive experience, Portugal has been the most warm and the most welcoming. And because we've heard that from multiple people, it's drawing us in that direction.

Christine Job [00:48:19]

I asked Barbara, what was her personal definition of wellness, and how had traveling and living abroad influenced that definition of wellness for her?

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:48:30]

You know, it's interesting. For so many experts, and I'm included in this, we talk about how being outside the US brings our stress level down. It's not that there aren't things you have to be concerned about. But there are different things I have experienced that sense of freedom and lack of fear and just a boldness living outside the United States. And that has directly contributed to my personal sense of wellness. I breathe easier, I move easier. In exfat spaces. I just do. And I walk more I walk every day, I'm out walking around campus, walk through the city, walk through the communities, if I need to go to the grocery store, sometimes I'll Park car a ways away and I'll just walk to the market from my car, just like and stop in the little shops and talk to the people and just breathe the city in and it fuels me and rejuvenates me. And just the

sights, the sounds the smell. I love that it does something that directly enhances my mental and emotional well being. It just does. It's hard to the other thing that I would say is be intentional. If you've struggled with any type of depression, anxiety, anything check into the local mental health community. Mental health is a huge medical market. in Jordan, you can find therapists you can find counselors for children for Teenagers for adults, there's marriage and family counseling, they believe in it, you can find someone to talk to, if you need to continue whatever therapy regimen you had in the States, or you want to start something new to support your transition, absolutely reach out and, and do that. Do all of the things that help just enhance you and spoil yourself and make yourself feel like you are loving on yourself and connecting to the most positive divine energy around you, whatever that means. If it's religious, that's fine. If it's physical exercise, if it's meditation, if it's yoga, whatever it is, like be intentional in identifying those resources for yourself, and be all in on giving that to yourself.

Christine Job [00:50:45]

Thank you so much, Barbara, thank you so much for sharing your story. And if all of you want to keep up with Barbara, you can follow her on her social media,

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:50:58]

you can go to my website, it's going global, with Barbara calm. And you can check out my travel resources, my blog, articles that have posted about traveling life here in Jordan, just kind of all of it and there's information there about my tours. Obviously, we're not operating right now because of the pandemic. But we certainly will be once this is all over with We will be back up and running. And I'm thankful for the clients that had trips planned during this period that are just putting everything on pause like I am in just waiting because their desire to go to Paris or come to the Jordan has not changed is not the word at all. By COVID. I'm really thankful for that. But please visit me online, you can follow me on Instagram at Barbara underscore letter I number for bt, on AIG and on Facebook at going global with Barbara.

Christine Job [00:51:53]

Thanks so much for listening. I appreciate you coming back every week and supporting the show. Again, please be sure to rate and subscribe to the show. So Barbara spoke about how to get a job abroad and to listen to our extended talk about her advice on getting a job abroad. Everything from dealing with agencies searches how to evaluate a compensation package relocation everything, you can actually become a Patreon subscriber and get that bonus episode. Here is a snippet from that bonus episode. Barbara gave more amazing advice about getting a job abroad. And specifically with different job search engines.

Barbara Robinson-Cole [00:52:44]

One of the things I would do is I would understand what job search engines different regions of the world use while LinkedIn is popular in the US. And in Europe. It's used in the Middle East. But the other large search engine for job placement of resumes is bait be a whitey.com. If you're looking for the Middle East, and or the Maghreb region of North Africa, if you're looking in those areas, which use bayt.com. Bayt has tremendous resources similar to LinkedIn will it will show you how to format your resume for the region. different regions require different types of resumes, things that legally we don't put on our resume in the United States, like our citizenship or our marital status might actually be required for the country that you're applying to. So they'll work with you and help you to reformat your resume into something that's likely to get hits in the local market.

Christine Job [00:53:45]

If you have any questions about living, working, thriving abroad, please go ahead and send me those questions via dm on Instagram at *Flourish in the Foreign* and I'm going to try to answer some of these questions on a future ID live. That is all for today. Thank you again for listening and supporting the podcast. It means so much. And thank you to Zachary hakes, who produced the music for this podcast. So if you're looking for some original music for your podcasts or your next project, please go ahead and check him out. I will put all this information in the show notes. And until next time, please take care of yourself and see you next.

Christine Job [00:54:32]

On the next episode of *Flourish in the Foreign*. I started in the French Pyrenees, and I ended up on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. So you walk across the country. At that moment, I just knew that all things were possible. I knew all things were possible. I knew that I was capable of anything. It wasn't going to be easy and it wasn't going to be romantic and it wasn't going to be without some Growing Pains, but I developed the confidence in that moment that I could do anything. And I could be anywhere. I have learned to live this quite minimalist lifestyle because I'm carrying everything that I need on my back. And so after I walked the Camino, I was like, I can do anything in the world. And I like Spain. And I think I'm gonna move to Spain.