

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

Matt Bowles: Hey everybody, it's Matt Bowles. Welcome to The Maverick Show. My guest today is Agnes Nyamwange. Originally from Nakuru, Kenya, she went to college in Kampala, Uganda, for her bachelor's degree in Management Information, and then did her master's degree in Business Administration in the United States. With over 10 years' experience in the healthcare industry, she currently teaches life support to healthcare providers, but she has built her practice with a completely location independent infrastructure so she can run her business remotely while traveling the world as a fulltime itinerant nomad.

She speaks three languages: Kisii, the language of her tribe; Swahili; and English in which we will be conducting this interview today. She and I have just spent three months in West Africa together on an absolutely epic adventure, so it is my pleasure to welcome to the show Agnes. So good to have you here.

Agnes Nyamwange: Thank you for having me.

Matt: We just opened a very nice bottle of burgundy, and this is a white burgundy, so we're going to be drinking through that over the course of this episode. And I just wanted to have this interview on the last night of our West African trip. We are recording this in Dakar in Senegal, right on the coast. And I want to just open it up, though. We'll reflect a lot of the trip and share stories and that kind of stuff, but I want to just open it up a little bit in terms of getting your story and talking about your path to nomadism and all of that.

So let's just start with growing up in Kenya. One of the really, really interesting things that I learned about you that I didn't know before we started traveling – and I'll just put this out there, and then I'll let you tell your origin story. But when we started traveling together in Nigeria a few months ago, every time you would turn on the television, it would be an Indian show or a Bollywood movie – 100 percent of the time. There was no – there was nothing else that would be on the TV, 100 percent of the time. And I was like “that's amazing.”

And then we learned our shared love of Indian food and all of that, and you had told me that you grew up in a primarily Indian neighborhood in Kenya, which is amazing because I just spent about a month in Kenya last year, and of course there is a

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

substantial Indian community there and the Indian food is amazing. But that, I thought, was really amazing and really shaped a lot of our trip because we would hit the Indian restaurants in every single city that we went to as the first order of business together, and we eat the same spice level as well, which was nice. But, maybe just tell a little bit about kind of growing up in Kenya and the Indian cultural influence in particular.

Agnes:

Well, until I was in fifth grade, from like first to fifth grade – because after fifth grade, I went to boarding school – I grew up in an Indian neighborhood, of course with the rest of my family. We used to play together with all the Indian kids and I guess when you grow up as a kid, you are living the life you're living without even thinking about it. So, for the longest time, I used to understand Gujarati, and then I went to boarding school and completely lost that. And I, later on in life, learned that it's one of the hardest languages to learn. And I regretted not being able to maintain that language because you had to know what someone's mom is saying.

If you know how the Indian culture works, everyone stays in the same house – the grandma, the kids, their parents. So, if someone's mom starts yelling upstairs, don't think you're safe because you're not their kid. Because when it comes to getting whooped, you all of a sudden find yourself getting slapped and you thought you were safe. So, that made me learn – and most of us kids – it made us learn Gujarati because it's like, okay, you need to know when someone's mom speaks and what she's actually saying before she gets to you. So, that's how we did.

And then also, we ate food that they made at home. And I remember you asking me, "Which Indian foods do you enjoy and to which restaurants?" I actually have eaten more home-cooked Indian food than I have in restaurants, and most of the time when you're eating, they're not mentioning what the food is. So, a lot of the foods that I ate, I didn't even know the name. And actually, most of them have not even eaten them in restaurants, so I have no idea. But that's my Indian experience.

Matt:

That's amazing. And you and I have really, I think – it's been very interesting because Kenya is, of course, a former British colony, and so a lot of Indians went to Kenya, a substantial population.

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

And as we've been going through West Africa – particularly in the form of British colonies – so particularly, we found an amazing Indian restaurant in Nigeria and then one of the best, I'm going to say, that I've ever been to anywhere in the world. Outside of India and maybe Kuala Lumpur, Accra in Ghana has just unreal Indian food. It was so amazing.

And it was really fun because our crew really appreciated that. So, it was me and you, and then our friend Anu rolled with us for a little while, who is Indian. And so, we could just go out to these spots and eat the native Indian spice level, and really enjoy and appreciate that kind of food, so that was really awesome.

But then continuing, as you grew up in Kenya, you then also moved around a little bit, and then ultimately went to college in Uganda, right? So, I'd love for you to share a little bit about that piece of it and how that was.

Agnes:

That was more interesting because it was the first time I had been outside of the country. So, adapting to a new environment – I was already used to boarding school – but it's different when it's in a place that people don't understand the language. And for the first time, I'm in a place where there is no immediate rules and regulations that the nuns had in boarding school. So, it was some kind of freedom as I can say because it was a Seventh Day Adventist school, so there were rules. For example, we were not allowed to wear trousers, and we were expected to go to church every Saturday.

So, a lot of the things I enjoyed in Kampala – going clubbing and drinking, and anything else – they were against the rules. We were supposed to only stay in school and go to church. So, I had to sneak out on Friday, and make sure that my bed looked like it had been slept on, and then go clubbing. And because I had – you needed to make sure that the Matron knows that you're a good girl. Because if she knows that your room never causes trouble – they check every night to see if you slept in your bed. But if she never has any trouble with that side of the building, then she never came there, so we were lucky that way.

And part of it was a respect thing. If she catches you wearing clothes you're not supposed to, you just say, "I'm sorry." Because

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

most people would be rude to her, so she appreciated that, and we just never had any trouble.

Matt: And how lit is the club scene in Kampala?

Agnes: Kampala is one of the places, if you've never visited clubbing, you should go there. There are mounds of free dancing, and I usually hate places where I'm going to the club and people are sitting down, not a single person is dancing. In Kampala, it was mostly outdoors. And even in closed areas, there is a culture there that shaking your bum is the biggest element in dancing. So, they were different.

And that's not new in African culture, but it's more just watching people enjoy themselves. I remember we'd get there at 10:00 at night and we'd not sit down until 6:00 a.m. You'd leave there so refreshed, you are ready to study. I don't know about that morning, but at least my happiness element was enough to last me the long week of strict rules and regulations. I looked forward to my weekends.

Matt: Yeah. I was in Kampala last year just for a relatively short visit, but I rolled with our mutual friend, Brenda – shout out to Brenda – and she took me to all the right spots, and it was unbelievable. As you said, it bumps until 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning, outdoor venues, amazing DJs, and people are just so into it. It was unbelievable. And to be honest, that experience last year in East Africa, when I went to Kenya and I went to Uganda and I went to Tanzania, inspired me to want to see West Africa.

Because when I was at these clubs, they were playing unbelievable music I've never heard before – all the latest afro beats, all of this stuff. And I'm using Shazam from the dance floor to figure out what they are, song after song after song. And at least 50 percent of the music was all from Nigeria. So, I was like I have to go to Nigeria. And that's how sort of the impetus for this trip began because then it was like which would I want to roll with to Nigeria. So, then I hit you up.

Agnes: You happened to ask me about that when I had just come from a club in Italy. It's completely Nigerian. They only play Nigerian music, and I don't know why they have a lot of South Americans

there and more especially from Brazil, the element of – anyone who has been in Brazil knows how they love to dance. So, that element plus the Nigerian – the vibe in that club is like one I've never experienced in my whole life. So, when you were like I think I might go to Nigerian, I was like hit me up because I am obviously going to Nigeria.

Matt: Yeah, you were all in from day one, which was totally amazing.

So, with your trajectory then – so you did your bachelor's degree in Kampala and Uganda, and then from there you eventually came over to the US to do your Master's and work for a while. Can you share what that experience was like?

Agnes: Wow, I don't where to start. This might date me a little bit, which I don't care – I'm 37. I stayed in the US for 12 years. When I first started – because I'm just explaining this because I know a lot of people don't really quite understand how the migration process works in the States. So, I went there for my master's, and the US doesn't have proper channel to go straight from finishing school to actually having residency and maybe citizenship once someone's finished with school. So, they have this ballot system where you have to draw. If there is a company sponsoring you, they send an application in of which they only – I think if you have a master's, they pick 85,000, and the applications that they get are in millions.

So, the chances of you getting picked are very slim. My company that I worked for tried it three times, three years in a row, and they did not get it, and by that time, I was already illegally in the States. So, just to give you a background, once you get to the States, students are not supposed to work. I come from Africa – even remotely rich family I come from – so I had to work. So, part of that – me working – was illegal already to begin with. But I needed to work to finance my master's degree because I was there as a student, and if I don't go to school, then I don't have status, which means my visa becomes invalid.

So, I worked 16-hour days, working for \$9 an hour being a CNA, which is a certified nursing assistant. Those are the people who, if you go to assisted living, the elderly, and also to hospitals – they're the ones that help with dressing the patient, showering the patient – doing just all the basic stuff that the person needs that they can't

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

quite do. So, I was doing this job to finance my very expensive degree. And because I didn't really have any savings, I don't even understand how I was doing it. Because my tuition – I was in a quarter system and I was paying \$5500, and I know it went up I think in my second year.

But, think about that while earning like \$9.65 an hour, and having to pay rent and all the other expenses that come. In Minnesota, you drive. You can't just take public transport. It just doesn't work because you have to be up and around in the winter, and the bus system is not reliable. So, that's the background.

And then, once I finished my master's, I stayed with the same company because I couldn't switch positions because I didn't have the paperwork to switch positions. And at that point, I had already become illegal in the country. So, I was illegal for five years. The company I was working for got me even into a management job because I was doing very well in that company. And they wanted me to be legal again, and they wanted a proper structure so that they could maintain me. And they tried filing it – they were using attorneys to file for paperwork for three years consecutively, and I didn't get in.

And during that process, I had already been – I came straight from being a CNA. Immediately when I graduated, I got into my management position, and then even a little bit after that, I was overseeing operations for five of their buildings. So, it was just an interesting experience in terms of dealing with racism, because the first assisted living I worked in that I became a manager for is in the suburbs of Minnesota, which is majority white. And they are not afraid. And by saying this, I don't mean everyone in Minnesota is racist. But in that particular area, majority of the people I was working with did not want me there.

So, I had to work twice as hard to try and make it because they were like they've just put her there; she doesn't know a thing. She just came from this bottom position and now she is a manager. I became a manager of some of the people who had watched me work as a CNA for seven years. Most of them were not happy because they had been there for longer than I had been there. So, I had that pressure, too, and I had some of them telling some of the employees that oh, you don't need to do what she says because she

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

doesn't know what she's doing.

So, I had that stress where I had to work three to four times as hard to make sure I don't fail because I need to prove a point. I'm worthy of this; I can do this. I have the capability to do it, which is the reason why I ended up getting promoted a lot faster and got to an even more senior position. Because my building started financially doing well; the operations were doing well. And even I changed the dynamic where people did not want me. And they made it very obvious even when we were having meetings that they didn't think I was capable of doing the job, which I proved them wrong.

And they ended up being more receptive toward me, which I'm very grateful, by the way. That was like if there is a greatest achievement I've achieved, that is one of them. Because I would enter a room and literally, you could feel the chill of everyone telling you, not verbally telling you, but you know they are like we don't want you here and we're not afraid to show you. But with me, I just decided I have to survive. What other way do I have? So, I'd walk in that room and I'm like I don't even know what your problem is because I'm super-excited to be here and hi, my name is Agnes.

And I remember in that building, because my office was right at the entrance, I'd know so-and-so's son doesn't like me. And I would intentionally make sure when I see them from the parking lot, I'm the one who welcomes them to the building. And I'm like, "Hi, how are you today? Your mom is doing this-and-that." And then give them details that they weren't very willing – they'd rather go and ask their aides than me – but I just made it intentional that I have to keep talking to them and keep reassuring them that everything is under control.

But also, part of that was I was literally working day and night. And doing even stuff that usually a manager wouldn't do, like show up during a shift, actually work a shift, and see what's not working to fix it, which is not a managerial position. But I'm like what do I have? I need to make this work. So, it was a very eye-opening moment.

Matt: How did that play out as you continued to work in that

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

environment? Because you were in the healthcare space for 10 years before you started nomading fulltime. Right?

Agnes: Yeah.

Matt: And so, how did that dynamic play out over time both in terms of the racism and in terms of the corporate work hours?

Agnes: I wasn't necessarily required to work that much, but because I was under so much pressure, which I can't change my job and I am in this environment where people are always waiting for me to fail. So, I just worked and worked until a point that my phone was ringing nonstop because I think, in a way – I always think I had made people to become so dependent on me because I made myself so available. And also, I would take my laptop to a club and sit at the corner. Who goes with a laptop to a club? Okay, that is me. I'd sit there. They already knew me there. They'd give me my martini and I would be typing away as everyone's enjoying dancing around me.

And that got me to a point where it started to affect my health, and I didn't have a name of what was happening to me. So, I'm this super-active person who has the alarm clock waking me up at 5:00 every day, and the moment that alarm goes off, I jump out of bed and I'm ready to roll. And mind you, I went to bed at midnight or even a little past midnight. So, I was running on like four hours of sleep and working nonstop.

So, when the one episode happened, I couldn't get out of bed and I didn't know what was wrong with me. So, I decided to call the hospital and say I need to speak to someone because I don't know what's wrong with me. Like nothing hurts, but I just can't get out of bed. I have zero energy. And then I started having really, really bad anxiety. I'm talking about where you feel your heart is just racing. I don't even think I knew where my heart was until I had anxiety.

And I remember telling the person on the phone that I can understand why people commit suicide. It's a terrible, horrible feeling to have, and there is like this deep sadness that comes with it. What I explain to people is it's like you're drowning and you don't know what to do. You can't swim; you can't do anything. And

everyone around you doesn't even notice it exists. So, at that time, they told me oh, it sounds like you have depression. I'm now googling depression because I had never had a diagnosis like that and I didn't even think about myself as someone who would get depressed. I was already super-woman, doing everything.

So anyway, I started educating myself about it. And then also, I went to the hospital that time and they gave me medication, and for the first time, I was actually feeling so much better. I didn't realize how much effort it was taking me to even get up in the morning and do things the whole day. So, I think I had already suffered from depression for a very long and I was already compensating by doing so much work.

So, at that time, I continued to take medication. But the problem is that the medication started messing up with my weight. I love french fries; I can eat them all day. And I started to realize like that french fry I'm eating, I'm gaining like 40 pounds in three months. And that's so much. It goes from like a whole closet – after three months, nothing would fit me. So, I was like I'm super-happy. I can do this, but I'm literally killing myself.

And that's when I went to a gynecologist one day and he asked me, "How are you doing?" And all of a sudden, I start bawling so much and he got shocked. He was like what's wrong? And that's the first time it really dawned on me how miserable and how sad it is that I'm actually taking medication to try and get through the day. I'm like I'm destroying myself.

So, I just went straight to my workplace and I remember typing the email. Usually, in my job, you give two weeks before you resign, but I knew my position. I was holding so many documentation keys and stuff, and I knew two weeks wasn't enough. So, I told them 30 days, and I remember them laughing. They didn't believe I was actually quitting. And I just told them 30 days. And two days before I had to leave, they were like oh, where can we find this, where can we find this? And I'm like no, I am done. I can't do this anymore.

And that's where the self-reflection started coming in. I sat on my couch at home for the first time – the expensive couch that I had bought. And at this time, I was living in a very expensive

apartment because I was being paid very well and was not using my money on anything because I did nothing really. I just sat on that couch for like three months just eating potato chips, french fries, and watching Netflix. And after I got to that point, I started self-reflection. And I'm like I need to get back to work soon because I'm emptying my bank account at a very high rate. But I also decided I need to take care of me because if I don't take care of me, I cannot take care of anyone else.

And I started making life changes. First of all, I decided I need money, but I don't need it that much at the expense of my health. So, I decided work hours – I need to have boundaries on my work hours and have them strict. And then also, the pay – I need to get fair pay. And then, I needed to start doing something other than work. So, to me, I've always wanted to travel since I was a kid, so I started traveling. I started traveling within the US, where I would – and I remember my friends making fun of me because they're like oh, you are always gone. It's because I started finding the fulfillment in travel where it made me so happy, I want to do it again.

So, I would come home, work for a bit, and that's when I started creating my first business. It wasn't making that much money. It was for SEO, but it helped me at least pay my rent and make sure I'm not emptying my account. And then also, because I created my own job, I didn't need to show anyone any credentials, which was huge because I was illegal to begin with, and that's how everything began.

Matt: So, when you started traveling, and you started feeling the fulfillment of travel, and then you started expanding that, and then you started traveling internationally, and then you started doing all that. Can you take us a little bit on that journey? And maybe just start by reflecting back now with all of the travel that you've done, and what that's meant to you over the course of your life. Let's just start with a really broad question. Why do you travel? What do you get out of it? What does travel mean to you?

Agnes: Travel means to me everything. I think everyone needs to travel because it has been the most eye-opening. If you think you know a lot of things, you need to travel and realize how little you know. And I love that. I love change, and that's why the nomad lifestyle is

perfect for me. Even if it gets stressful sometimes, like you get somewhere and the Airbnb is not quite right, or just things are not properly placed, that's perfect for me because I've noticed I thrive in dysfunction. So, everything that has gone wrong usually in my life ends up being a stepping stone to something good.

So, travel has been very eye-opening. And then, I've learned how people do things. I remember I've met kids who have started traveling when they were young, like when they finished high school, and then I've met people who started traveling as digital nomads even before technology. And they tell you their experiences, and I think I'm in the best generation ever in terms of travel. Because I reach somewhere I don't understand something, I just pull out Google translate and we communicate.

And then, there are places where I've pulled Google translate, the person's not able to type because maybe they just don't have the education. I have them speak to it and it actually types it down and I translate it. I'm like how lucky are we? We have so much access, and the people who did it before us didn't have that. I remember a guy telling me "I had a compass and a map," and I cannot even believe that because I don't even think I've seen a compass besides the iPhone compass. Travel has become very, very easy.

I've gotten people who are like how are you able to travel? It must be expensive. I'm like actually, I use less money than I could use if I was in the States for the same period of time. I use sometimes half or even less than that to travel. So, that leaves enough money for flights and for extra stuff, especially West Africa – we needed more money. I don't mind using it because I know I'm going to go to other places where that money is going to still stay in my account because it's just cheaper there. And it doesn't mean that you deny yourself everything. You get everything, but it's just a lot cheaper.

Matt:

Right. Can you talk a little bit now about exactly what it is that you do right now? Because you have – when you describe what you do, initially people are going to be amazed that you can do it remotely and you can do it from anywhere around the world. But you have structured it with a completely location independent infrastructure, so you can be in Europe or Asia or Africa or South America, or wherever, and you can do it consistently. So, can you just explain

what it is that you do and then how you structured that to do it remotely?

Agnes:

First of all, I need to start by saying I was forced into a situation where I had to think “now that I'm a digital nomad, how am I going to monetize this profession that I still have” because I need a quick way to make money. So, initially I used to have – for life support, anyone who knows CPR, you're doing compressions on mannequins. Someone has to be there to watch you do compressions. And I was doing that right to the period I became a fulltime nomad. I started traveling a little bit in 2014, but mostly in 2015, but I was an off-and-on nomad where I would go for three weeks and then I would come two weeks and work really hard, and then go for three weeks. So, I was an off-and-on nomad with a home base.

But when I went fully nomadic last November, I had to think of a way to make what I was doing work. So, for the first thing, I had to get rid of mannequins because I wouldn't have access to the mannequins to begin with, and I wouldn't have access directly to the people I work with. So, I eliminated the basic life support class because of that reason. I do provide it on a case-to-case basis, but it is only for the advanced providers because I don't have a way to evaluate someone who is an amateur and know whether they'll do well with that basic CPR.

But, if someone has been a doctor for 20 years, they are required to get certified every two years. So, I know they have enough experience. They've done it multiple times, so all they're looking is for just updates – what's new nowadays and stuff like that. That I can do. So, I'm only dealing with updates and not basic training. And then, what I started doing more of is the advanced providers. And the reason why I chose the advanced providers is because they already have the knowledge. All they need is to update themselves just the same way as they would do CPR.

So, that's easy for me to do because I don't run any risk of having my certification pulled because I gave certification to someone who doesn't know what they're doing. I've done what I do for eight years, so I can talk to you for two minutes and know if you know what you're talking about or not. Because that stuff, unless you've learned it from school, there is no way you can do a Google search

and know that stuff. So, that's how I built my company around that. And I changed it a little bit also in a way. I used to Skype my – what I have them do is do the online part first and then come to me and I check them off in terms of knowledge.

So, what I do is I ask them questions and then they respond to me. And if they say something wrong, I don't usually say, “oh, you’ve got it wrong. You can't be certified.” I tell them the right answer and exactly why it is the right answer, and why what they told me was not correct. So, I kind of educate them in what they're doing. So, I've only done mostly advanced providers for that reason. It's less risk and when I was doing Skype, I would see them and see the person. It was more for the interaction purpose.

But I got to a place like Bolivia – the WiFi is so shady where I can't see the person I'm talking to. Sometimes it disconnects because it's using so much on graphic. So, I switched to phone call, and then phone call worked so well that I didn't need to all of a sudden find a good background that looks more professional. I didn't have to dress up anymore. I can work in my pajamas. I can literally be at the airport and move to a place where they're not doing announcements. I've done that by the way, during a layover.

So, it gave me more flexibility. So, nowadays I have good WiFi, but I never went back to Skyping because I'm like phone calls work just as good.

Matt:

Well, I love the concepts, too, that you're putting out there in terms of how you thought about and navigated your way through building something that would work in a digital, nomad, itinerant lifestyle, because you were an expert with an enormous amount of experience in life support training, CPR training, all that kind of stuff.

And then, when you asked the question “how could I do this remotely,” part of your answer was “well, some of it I can't. And so, I'm not going to do those things remotely. I'm going to focus on the niche within this segment that I can absolutely execute completely remotely consistently and at high quality, and I'm only going to serve the portion of the market that I can serve remotely.” And then you developed that as your niche and your expertise, and then you’ve been doing that from South America, West Africa, and

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

Europe, and wherever else.

Agnes: Yeah.

Matt: I want to also ask you about being a digital nomad and traveling the world on a Kenyan passport, because that's a very different experience than trying to travel the world on an American passport. And I wonder if you want to start with what happened after you and I spent about three weeks together in Brazil last year. And you had been a resident in Minnesota for over a decade – something like that – eight years or so.

Agnes: Yeah.

Matt: And then, you and I were in Brazil for three weeks together last year, and then do you want to start with what happened upon your attempt to go back to Minnesota?

Agnes: Let me start with a little bit of a backstory. People will be able to understand this better. First of all, remember when I said I was illegal? I was illegal for five years. I finally decided to be legal. So, for me to be able to have access and be able to travel, I needed a visa that requires me to go in and out of the country freely and didn't have the limitation of time.

And so, after my long research of five illegal years, I decided the only option that will work is student. So, I signed up for this degree that I knew I was never looking for, but thanks to it, I know how to type now. So, I went back to Kenya and got a student visa so that I could have the access of in and out.

So, fast forward to the period you're talking about. When you have a student visa, you have to show two documents at the border. One of them is your visa and the other one is a document they call the I-20. The I-20 is usually provided by the school. So, the 18th of December last year, I had just come from the nomad cruise and I had spent three weeks in Brazil, and I was about to go, a week before Christmas, back to Minnesota. And when I got to Miami – this is partly my fault because I had not checked my I-20 before I left the States. So, when I got to the border, my visa was fine because it's a visa for five years, but my I-20 was expired.

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

And the reason why I didn't check it is because usually when you're given an I-20, you're given it for the period of your visa. So, I had that, but I ended up having a medical emergency where I had to take a semester off, and they printed me a new I-20, and I forgot to check the dates. I didn't even think about it, not forgot it. I didn't think about it. But what happens is, when they give you a semester off, they give you an I-20 for just that period. So, before I left the country, I was supposed to go back to school and get another I-20, which I didn't because I didn't realize that there was a period for which I had to go and renew or have it reprinted.

So, anyway, I get to Miami and the guy is like your I-20 is expired, and I remember I'm like there is no way it's expired. Anyway, he tells me, "You have to go back to this place. We have many officers who can deal with your case." So, I go back there and sure enough, I look at my I-20. It is expired, which they have a right to not check me through immigration because if you require two documents to get in and one is expired, it's a valid reason. So, I tell them I can just email the officer in my school or call and have it faxed over and they say no.

So, I knew they'll refuse me to get into the country and I was like okay, that's going to be fine. I guess I have to figure out a way out of here, especially since I only have \$300 in my bank account. But I was like I'm not going to worry. I can go to Mexico. I can call someone to bail me out or something like that.

So, I get to this place and they start processing me and they're like just so you understand, you're not under arrest. And I'm like okay. But they start treating me like someone who is under arrest. First of all, they don't allow me to have my phone. All my luggage gets locked up in this other room. Then, I get taken to this room that is written "Women's," which is literally a detention center. So, they have a detention center at the Miami airport in case anyone they didn't know.

And then, you get into this room. There are no windows. The only tiny glass thing that is there is right by the door and I think it's for the people like the security people to look in. And then they have cameras, and the light there is so bright you can't even sleep, and they never turn it off. So, you don't know whether it's day or night because they don't even allow you to have any watch or anything.

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

So, that place is literally meant to drive you nuts. I was there for 36 hours where they brought like tuna and water, and I have tuna. The only way I can eat tuna is if the sauce is so good, then I can try and eat tuna. Other than that, dry tuna is just something I'm not touching.

And I remember they had two mattresses on the floor, and I'm looking at those mattresses. I'm like I bet you there are bugs on those mattresses. They were so dirty. And they had some blankets there, and the mattress had this depression. And I'm like I wonder how many people have been here, and I wonder how long they've stayed here. The reason why I think I was released even after 36 hours is because they kept asking me, "When are you going to make your call? When are you going to make your call?" Because legally, they're required to give me one call.

And for me, the reason I didn't use the call is, first of all, I knew there was no lawyer who was going to be able to get me out of here because I lack the I-20. And then secondly, I wanted to be able to use it in case I started getting arrested in there, I have that option. So, after 24 hours, I kept asking them, "When am I supposed to get out of here?" Because legally, there is an amount of time they can't hold you because technically, you are not under arrest. So, they put me on a flight – pretty much that's deportation – they put me on a flight back to Brazil.

And the way they do it is they have two officers walk with me, and then they came and put me in another room that is another detention place they have, but this one didn't have any mattresses. It just had a bench. There were nail scratches or I don't know what people are using because I knew they don't allow people to have anything with them. I figured maybe it might be like nails or something. But people drawing on the wall, and then there was like a lot of tissue paper put on the ventilation system. And I'm like they put people here until they completely go crazy. And I'm like this cannot really be the right way to treat people.

And then, of course, they don't allow you to have your camera – I mean your phone – because they don't want that stuff documented. But I looked at that place; it made me very sad. So, anyway, they took me to the place where the plane was, gave my passport to the flight attendant, and the flight attendant is only supposed to give

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

me the passport once I get into Brazil, which she did. When she gave it to me, it had like this marker of someone who had disfigured my passport and wrote a certain number to a point that I got to the Argentina Embassy, and they were like there is no way we can even begin the process of your visa without knowing why you have your passport disfigured like this.

So, I'm like I guess you have to talk to the American Embassy, and I remember they sent me even with my passport to the American Embassy to go and get a written reason why my passport is disfigured, and they were not willing to give me one.

Matt: So, you got deported from the United States back to Brazil, which was the country that you came from.

Agnes: Yeah. Because they kept telling me the only way you can correct this is to go back to your home country. So, I'm like if you're going to deport me, why would you deport me back to Brazil? Why wouldn't you deport me to Kenya? But I don't know what their reason was.

Matt: They wouldn't send you back to Kenya, though. They said you have to go back to Brazil.

Agnes: Mm-hmm.

Matt: Okay. So, they send you back to Brazil, and then there you are in Brazil, and then what was your next move at that point?

Agnes: So, I'm back in Brazil. I have \$300 and no source of income at that point, because remember my business was onsite. And I'm thinking like first of all, the airlines name that took me back was really nice because I got there and they were like you don't have any relative or something – they didn't know what to do with me. So, they put me in this hotel by the beach, which was really nice, for a day, and then I was to figure out what I'm going to do next, which I was really happy because I was broke.

So, I go to Expedia and I find this apartment that is like hotel rooms that they rent as apartments, and it was like \$45 a day. And I look at my budget and I'm like \$45, but I looked – well, what options do I have? So, I get in that \$45 apartment. It's close to

Christmas and I'm almost running out of money, and that's when I came with this idea. I can still use the same skills I have to make money, I just need to change it this way. It took me three or four days, and then I came up with a plan. So, once I did that, I was rolling like I've done this forever.

And then, after that, I also – Brazil, I ran out of days. I went to renew my visa for Brazil and then they kept telling me “come tomorrow, come tomorrow,” because they didn't know what to do. Because I guess not many Kenyans go to Brazil and ask for visa extensions. So, they didn't really know what to do with me, and then the day before my visa expired, I find out I have to leave the country tomorrow. So, I start looking for which are the visa-free places I can go to that are close by because I'm broke. I cannot fly very far.

So, anyway, I find Bolivia which has visa on arrival. I get there. I didn't even know this. They charge a fee for their visas. So, I get to Bolivia, I don't even have accommodation booked. So, I know a savvy way of – because they always want you to show them the flight when you're leaving. Well, I didn't have an exit plan because I was like I'm in Bolivia to make enough money so that I can be able to survive through my business. So, I didn't know when I was leaving. So, I go to – it's called www.returntickets.net – that is a website that someone made that makes fake return flight tickets. And I'm typing.

I remember one time I almost had a heart attack because this Bolivian guy comes over the shoulder to see what I'm typing, and I'm like oh, shoot. My plan is just about to fall apart. And good enough, he happened to not be able to read English, so I'm like, oh my God, I just dodged a bullet. So, I make that fake return ticket that they needed. I book an Airbnb, and then I go back and they give me a visa. That cost \$120 – remember I'm broke – and I'm like how am I going to survive? And then they said, “It's a month.”

So, I'm thinking okay. So, after a month, I need to figure out where I'm going, which I had already researched. There is no country in South America other than Bolivia where I could enter before getting a visa. I need a visa for every single country in South America. So, the other country I needed to go to was Panama. When I looked at the tickets, they're almost \$600. I can't afford

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

that. I need to start making money fast. So, I stayed in Bolivia which was perfect because I was able to just buy food from the grocery store and then live at Selina. Thanks to Selina – they have reliable WiFi.

So, I stayed most of the time in Selina, and then the local flights within Bolivia are like \$30 and they don't charge for luggage. So, it was the ideal place for a broke person to go and try to build a bank account.

Matt: And how was your experience in Bolivia ultimately? So, aside from the financial duress and all of the chaos that was going on in your personal life, what did you think of Bolivia in general, and how was your experience?

Agnes: I loved Bolivia. I thought the cable cars were a super-interesting way of seeing the landscape, especially because of the altitude. For people who have never been on the altitude, when you're going even just a few stairs – it could be even five – you feel like you have been working out for days.

Matt: Because you were in La Paz, right?

Agnes: Yes.

Matt: Which is, I think, the highest city in –

Agnes: In the world.

Matt: Yeah, I think that's right. Certainly in the Americas, and I think in the world as well. The altitude is super-high.

Agnes: In the world. Yeah.

Matt: And that's where you were based.

Agnes: Yeah. And then, the altitude where the airport is is even higher, and the cable cars can get you there. And then, the cable cars – and if you've been to La Paz, the traffic is insane. So, the cable cars really help you avoid traffic. You just go – they've extended – I think they have 16 lines now. You can literally see every corner of that city just going from one cable car to another cable car. And

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

they have them labeled in terms of their color.

Matt: Yeah. And the quality is insane. They were literally built by the Austrian cable car manufacturers that built the cable cars in the Swiss Alps and the gondolas and stuff. They're unbelievable quality.

Agnes: And they have WiFi. I'm like I would be chilling on that car. I'm just like in Heaven right now. I'm just looking down. I'm browsing. I'm showing people how much my travel is fun.

Matt: Posting to your Instagram page.

Agnes: No, I started doing a few stories because there is no way anyone can capture all this.

Matt: For sure. Awesome. All right. We have to talk about West Africa because I was in regular touch with you throughout this period. I remember I was touching base with you every few days. I was checking in with you in Brazil and Bolivia, and how are things going, and did you get your stuff sorted out? And it was a crazy thing that you and I were in touch throughout that experience.

But throughout that entire experience, even despite all the stuff that was going on in your life, what was amazing was that you were completely committed to this West African trip. You were like yep, I'm 100 percent in. I'm going. Let's make it happen. It's happening. It's done. I'm going to find a way. It will happen. I will be there.

Agnes: Now that I'm thinking about it when I was telling you I'm going, I did not even have money. I guess it's the power of just trusting in yourself because I'm like, okay. And it's funny because there was not even one moment where I was like I don't think I'm ever going to go on that trip. I knew I was going. I was going. I didn't know whether I was going to walk to West Africa or swim, but I was like it's going to happen.

Matt: Right. Yeah, it was amazing because you were 100 percent confident that this will happen and by that time, I will be there and I will figure out a way to get there because I really, really want to go. And it was awesome because we really custom curated our

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

crew that we traveled with. And we had a few different friends that met us along the way for different points. Somebody would come for a month, or somebody would come for another three weeks. But we really customized and curated our crew that we rolled with because West Africa, I feel, is the type of place where you really need to roll with the right squad.

Agnes: Because there's a lot of hardships and they come. And I feel like most – like in Europe, US, even South America – I think the travel there is a little bit easier than it is in West Africa due to a lack of resources sometimes, and also the difference in how we communicate things like time and stuff like that. Like someone will tell you there's WiFi, but there is no reliable, consistent internet. There is like internet sometimes, but they consider they have it, which they're right. But when you're having to make phone calls for it, it isn't there. Or sometimes it doesn't even exist.

Matt: Right. Well in our Airbnb, for example, when we rolled in in Nigeria, which was our first destination, and it was an Airbnb that was supposed to have all of the amenities and all of this kind of stuff, and we roll in and there's no WiFi.

Agnes: Yeah. And I like, too, that the guy came in to try to fix it. I don't think that WiFi has ever worked. We finally are the ones who suggested the solution.

Matt: Right.

Agnes: We started purchasing our own WiFi, then he realized it was a very overpriced Airbnb, and he didn't want to live there because we had a choice of not finishing the month there. And he was like I'll pay for your cell phone connection.

Matt: Right, which is an important workaround by the way. In countries that don't have solid WiFi, in many cases, the data package that you get on your phone – 3G or 4G data package – will be faster, better, and more consistent than the WiFi. So, if the WiFi is ever slow and really bad, or if it's inconsistent – if the power goes out as happened multiple times a day in Nigeria – you can use the data and you can tether your computer through your phone, or you can use a hotspot or something like that with the data package. And that's actually a much more consistent way to remain online than to

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

try to find WiFi hotspots and stuff that have all sorts of varying levels of connectivity.

And so, we knew that because the squad that we rolled with were pretty experienced travelers, and so that's what we were doing. And then ultimately, yeah, we negotiated with the Airbnb host to pay for that in lieu of the WiFi not working and all of that kind of stuff. So, we worked around it. But I feel like the squad that you roll with is definitely really, really important because especially when you're going to places like that, and you don't know exactly what your experience is going to be like. Right?

Agnes: Yeah.

Matt: Some of our Airbnb experiences were fantastic and delightful, and some of them were quite challenging where the electricity is going out, the water is shutting off.

Agnes: I mean completely like no water for three days.

Matt: Right. Like the water doesn't work and it's not coming back on for an indefinite period of time. What do you do now? And you have to be with people that are going to be able to handle those situations, 1.) With good spirits, and 2.) To actually be creative in terms of a workaround alternative, what do we do now type situation. Right?

Agnes: Yeah. I'm almost grateful because I think my US experiences have shaped me in how I deal with stress. I experienced so much to a point that nowadays, every unfortunate thing I see is that's the best part because to me, I see like that is a stepping stone to a new opportunity.

Matt: Well, it has genuinely been amazing to travel with you for three months. You are one of the most inspiring people that I have traveled with ever, and there is a variety of reasons for that I think.

I think your emotional intelligence is extremely high. So, when – going through three months together, you experience a lot of things in each of our respective lives. And I've gone through some particularly challenging personal things over the course of these three months. And I feel like your attentiveness to my emotional

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

state as a travel companion who's living in the same Airbnb was so astute, and you have been able to interact with me, for example, in a way that you've been able to say the right things to me at the right moments just based on how you can tell that I'm doing. And so, that alone has been amazing and very meaningful to me.

And then also, I think, when general things become stressful. Something like the lights go out in the apartment and whatever happens, you are able to immediately make a joke about it and laugh about it and put it in perspective, and make me and the other people laugh about it as well. And so, things that would normally be stressful to someone, you're able to create humor in those situations and make light of them and help either me or whomever else we're rolling with sort of get through that. And I think your contributions to the group that we were traveling with have been really amazing and inspiring. And I think that's one of the reasons why I roll with you.

Agnes: I'm glad to roll with you, too. I mean we need to come to your skills.

Matt: Go ahead, go ahead. I'll let you take it.

Agnes: My favorite still, so, we are in Nigeria, we are seated in a VIP section that has white couches with blue lighting – it looked amazing. And then, there is a sunset in the distance. But we are seated listening to amazing music that was being reflected on the screen, and I love when locals dance. And because they saw Matt is a white person, so I'm sure like the guy runs to us. He wants us in VIP because he knows we are here to spend big money.

So, we get there and Matt picks the menu, looks at the wines, and I always let him pick the wine because he knows his way around the wines, and I like that. So, he's like can I see the bottle? They are brought there because he has this app on his phone that he uses. It helps him select the best wine and also for the best price. So, he looks at the wine, he looks at the straw price, and then he looks at the menu, and it says – and this is just an example, let's say it says \$20. Nigerians use Naira, so it's not even close. So, let's say the menu says \$20. Matt looks at the waiter. The waiter almost like passes out. He's like can I get it for \$10?

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

And that is me. I've never seen him do his negotiation before for the menu. This is me at the side laughing my – like I could not contain it. I could not stop laughing. Because I'm like never in my lifetime have I ever thought that a menu can be bargained. You just touched me. That's why I say you're street savvy. You know your shit.

Matt: Well, you know your stuff, too, in terms of the street savvy because – and I feel like that's really important – because as we rolled through a number of these countries, you come across things like checkpoints where cops or military are trying to shake you down for money and bribes, and that sort of thing. That's very prolific and you'll see that all over the place there. And what's really important is that you roll with people that are on the exact same page and they know how to handle that. So, I had 100 percent confidence in you that I knew how you were going to handle it, and you knew how I was going to handle it.

And so usually, a lot of times they might stop the car, maybe the Uber driver or the taxi driver gets out, says a few words to them, and either talks their way out of it or maybe gives them a couple of dollars or something, and then gets back in. You don't even really know about it and then they keep driving. But sometimes, it's a little more involved than that. And so, I feel like that one night – it started I think in Nigeria. Right?

Agnes: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Matt: We were staying on in Lekki, which is sort of the more bougie kind of island area. It's just off the mainland. We had gone to Nigeria primarily for the nightlife and the music, like that's really what inspired us to go there, and we were just not finding what we were looking for on the island based on a number of reasons. We knew some Nigerians and they were all then out of town when we got there, and we just –

Agnes: Our plans failed.

Matt: All of our local connections just fell through one after the other. So, we're trying to navigate around by ourselves on this island and we're just not finding the nightlife scene that we're looking for. It's either super-bougie places where people just sit around and order

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

bottle service, or it's just, it's not what we're looking for. And so, what we start doing is we start asking the taxi drivers. Where do you go?

Agnes: Oh, that was the best idea.

Matt: Where do you go out to the nightclubs? And they're well, we don't go out here. This is where we go, onto the mainland, and we're now doing our legit local research and figuring it out. So, you and I were like okay, we're going to the mainland and we're going up near the red light district and near these other places where they actually have the really super local clubs. And so, you really can't go to a club before 1:00 in the morning or so because there's literally no one there and nothing happening.

So, it's after midnight, getting close to 1:00. We're in a taxi. We're going into the mainland and the cops – I say cops, probably military. So, they pull our Uber over at a checkpoint and we're like, okay. Well, we've seen this before. I assume the Uber driver is going to get out and do something. Nope. They come, they point at me, and they point at you, and they're like “out of the car, now.” And so –

Agnes: And this place is like pitch black. There is no light whatsoever besides the car.

Matt: Yeah. It's 1:00 in the morning. We're probably 45 minutes from our place. We're right near the red light district area of Lagos, and the military is getting us out of the car just to try to shake us down. And so, we get out of the car. These guys have automatic weapons. They ask us for our IDs. We give them our IDs. And then at that point, they start asking us for money to get the IDs back.

Agnes: Yeah. I'm like I need my passport.

Matt: Yeah. And what was important in that situation is that I knew exactly how you were going to handle it, and you knew exactly how I was going to handle it – which is that we stood strong, and we didn't give them anything. And the exchange took about 15 minutes or so, and we made it very clear that we were not going to give them any money and that we were not going to be –

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

- Agnes: Fall for whatever corruption they were trying to do.
- Matt: Exactly. And that we weren't going to do that. And then eventually, 15 minutes later, we got our IDs back, we got in the taxi, and we got out of there.
- Agnes: Yeah. Just a tip for the people who are ever going to travel in Africa – and I'm telling this especially for Americans because I've hung out with you guys a lot – is don't try and be smart in front of a cop in Africa. They will completely wash you. You kind of just play their game and just treat them with respect, and of course, we have like no respect for someone who's corrupt, but you have to play their game. Otherwise, you're going to make your life so hard it's not worth it. So, you just – even if they ask for money – just say, “I have no money.” And they know you have money, because they looked in my purse. But I'm like I'm legally in Nigeria, and I already showed them my visa, so I don't need to pay to be here.
- Matt: Right. But I think that's right. Of course, you always want to be sort of smiling and charming, and sort of be polite in all of those situations. Right? It helps you get out of it.
- Agnes: Yeah. You're laughing while you're like no, I have no money.
- Matt: Right, exactly. So then, at least you're polite and you're charming and all that kind of stuff, and then you just keep saying the same thing and you keep standing strong, and you get out of it. Although sometimes, you need to take a little bit more concerted action like we did in the Ivory Coast when they tried to shake us down.
- So, we were in the Ivory Coast for about four days, and we were taking a taxi to the airport. And you were in the back talking to your mother on the phone, and in Swahili – I couldn't even understand what you were saying. And you're in the back speaking to her and I'm in the front, and the driver gets pulled over at a checkpoint on the way to the airport. I want to say we're maybe 10 minutes away from the airport.
- Agnes: Yeah, it was super close.
- Matt: So, we were pretty close. But 10 minutes out, gets pulled over at a checkpoint. Again, driver gets out. I assume he's going to talk our

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

way out of it or do whatever it takes to get through it. No, driver comes over to my window and he says, “You need to pay – it was something like the equivalent of 20 US dollars – in order for you to get through this checkpoint.”

Agnes: And our ride was how much?

Matt: Less than that for sure. That was way more than the whole taxi ride. And so, I looked up at him and I said, “That's not going to happen. You need to go negotiate this.” And negotiate our way out of it because we're not paying that. And so, he goes back to the military, or the cops or whoever it was, and then comes back to the window, and he says, “You have to pay \$20 to them or I can't continue this ride and take you to the airport.” And I looked at the guy and I said, “Well, then I guess we're not going to continue this ride and we're not going to get to the airport then, are we?”

And so then, I open the door. I got out and I looked back and I said to you, I said, “Agnes, we're getting out of the car.”

Agnes: That was the best part. Because I came to think about it after, I'm like, I actually like – he says we're getting out, I just got out, and I knew it wasn't the airport because it was the middle of like this town. And then I grabbed my luggage, and as I'm driving it across the street, I'm like “so why are we leaving?” And I was talking to my mom on the phone, so when she got back on the phone, I told her what happened. And she was like “and you followed? Why do you make people do this thing?” I'm like “oh no, it's because I'm traveling with this white guy that's a different breed.” And my mom is super surprised because she's used to like white people being prim and proper, you know British type, so anyway.

So, the reason why I had to explain to her how you are different breed is because she thought I came up with the idea because I usually come up with crafty stuff. But I'm like “oh no, no, no – this one is not pinned on me.

Matt: So, as I looked back to you, I was like Agnes, we're getting out of the car. So, I got out, you got out, we opened the trunk, we got our luggage. Right? I said to the cab driver, I said, “Listen, I'll give you the money that takes us up to this point in the trip, whatever, but we're rolling out now.” And then, you and I just take our

luggage and we start rolling it out toward the highway to hell, another cab and go to the airport in a different direction, a different route, not to go through the checkpoint.

And then, as we get closer to the highway, you can see the cab driver and the security guys talking to each other, and they're like "what is going on? This is crazy. We've never seen this before." And all of a sudden, they all collectively start waving us back over, and they're like okay, you can go without paying anything. So, we go back, we put our luggage back in the trunk of the car, we get back in the car, and we go to the airport. And we made it through three months of West Africa without paying a single bribe. But, how was the nightlife? Mainland Nigeria, Accra, Dakar – how has the music and the nightlife been?

Agnes:

I love watching people in their natural environment being free and doing their thing without worrying about what anyone thinks around them. If I go to a club, I want to see people dancing because I enjoy watching people – local people dance their local music. In Nigeria mainland, like I wish we discovered that place ahead of time. And Nigeria doesn't have a lot of tourists, and also it's very, very hard to navigate. So, we got to discover that later on – that all these recommended places, it's actually the people from those businesses that are actually posting content on the internet instead of the tourists or people who have been there before.

So, this resource that we were using for travel wasn't really working. It started working when we started asking the Uber drivers of places they would themselves go. Because when you suggest to them "can you take me to a nice place," they automatically think about a tourist place. But we're like no – where would you specifically as a local go? And then, that's how we ended up in mainland, and I think that's why we got terrorized by that cop stop, because I'm like I don't think they've ever seen any white person show up around here because it's very local. I call it "go local." It's like the best thing you could ever do in travel. If you want the real, authentic place to go, go where locals go.

Matt:

And I feel like the clubs in West Africa that we ultimately have found have been unbelievable. This place right here in Dakar that we were at two nights ago until about 6:30 in the morning. You know, some of these spots in Accra, like Kona and some of the

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

other places we've found – I mean, just unbelievable.

Agnes: The thing about Lagos mainland that I completely fell in love with and I would – until almost a week before, we stayed there for a month – a week before we left Nigeria, our experience was so bad from all those reviews that were supposed to be nice that actually became stale and overpriced, and no quality. In mainland, you can eat food that's so much cheaper and better quality than most of those expensive, overpriced places.

But when we went to mainland a few days before we left, and there was a club and it was full of locals just dancing their music. And then this one music – I don't even know the name, but their beat dropped and over 200 people just bend down, and I'm like whoo, what just happened? It was almost like someone cast a spell and like the wind just came and everyone. But the only people who did not bend was us, and it was because we didn't know the music. Now I know that music, like I hear it and just go down the same way they did.

But it was like that is the power of culture and how much they enjoy their local lifestyle. They don't have so much in terms of monetary stuff, but when it comes to their nightlife and the simple things in life, they actually are fully participants in it. And I saw that when we went to Ghana. We went to this café called corner, and the people there started to dance and all of a sudden, everyone goes down. I'm like okay, that's Nigerian beat. Like, I got to be cool as the Nigerian people in the crowd based on their dancing. It was super-epic.

Matt: Yeah. And then we were about to leave Kona that one night. It was like 2:00 in the morning and all of a sudden, they switched DJs. And we were walking out and we just did an abrupt U-turn. Because they brought a new DJ out. You remember that?

Agnes: Yes. And I was, like I immediately, because I was like oh, I'm tired. I'm ready to go home. And this DJ comes and all of a sudden, I'm like, oh my God, his DJing skills are off the chain. So, I turned on my phone and I'm like I'm recording the whole of it. I recorded until my phone died. He kept coming with different music. And you know, anyone who has done DJing, and I can't say I'm a professional, but when I listen as a dancer and I'm dancing to some

music, especially when it's multiple languages from multiple continents, it's very hard for someone to mix that and still have the crowd still enjoying the music.

But this DJ had something about. He'd go to Nigeria; he'd go to US. He'd use even a phone ringtone. I hear like ding, dang, dang. I'm like is that someone just called the DJ? He actually used a phone ringtone to make the switch. And the way he did it was so smooth and still respecting to this style.

Matt: That DJ was crazy. He was literally dropping tracks for 5-15 seconds per track, and he was just going from one to the other to the other. So, it would be like from hip-hop to a local afro beat, to a Caribbean reggae song, back to a hip-hop song. And in the first 10 minutes, he probably went through like 50 tracks. It was insane. I feel like the nightlife in West Africa has some of the best that I have seen anywhere in the world.

Agnes: You need to come to West Africa. Remember the Fela show? It was off the chain, genuine, original music danced by locals, and they show you how it's done. I've never seen – the West Africa trip has been very eye-opening to me. Because I thought I knew great clubbing based on my world travels, but West Africa is hands-down, like you're never going to get something like that anywhere else in the world.

Matt: It's been really interesting, too, for me in particular to see the mix of music and the confluence of different music types, and to sort of understand the history of a lot of this music. Because you have initially the West African slave trade where all of these West Africans were taken over to places like Brazil and the Caribbean and the Americas, and then – so you have all this West African musical influence in the music forms that developed in those areas.

So, you have reggae coming up in the Caribbean, and hip-hop coming up in the US, and all these different musical styles coming up from Brazil, and they all have this very West African influence. And then, as those art forms develop in those areas, you have then a return of those art forms to West Africa, where there are all of these people that are adopting, in some cases Rastafarianism even, and certainly the reggae music that's coming out of the Caribbean, and certainly hip-hop music that's coming out of the US and things

like that. And so, you have this really interesting, kind of dialectic, circular relationship there in terms of musical influences between those regions.

And then when the DJs come on, they just drop this incredible mix of African stuff, Caribbean stuff, American hip-hop, and it's just amazing to see the confluence there, particularly when you understand the historical context.

The other thing that we've done, I think, as we've been experiencing West Africa, in addition to the nightlife and all of the super-amazing parts about the culture is that we've also gone pretty deep into the history. And we've been intentional in all of the different places that we've gone about looking into the history of slavery, and going to the museums and taking the tours, and really understanding what the history of West Africa is all about with respect to that transatlantic slave trade. Do you want to share any reflections on how that has been?

Agnes:

That has actually been very – like it has gone really deep, and I honestly feel like I don't think I can go through another slave area where they kept slaves. And the one that drew the line for me was Goree Island in Dakar. They showed us this room that was seriously – they used to keep infants here. And I'm like keep infants here, what do you mean? It's the most messed up shit I've ever heard in my life. They have this room that's windowless, has no windows. And what they were saying is they kept children in trays where the only time they saw a person was during feeding and maybe when they were changing them.

But these children were only taken care of by the people that they were using as security people, who were mostly of African descent or who were mixed kids – and by mixed kids, I mean like black and white. And it's because that was more of a privileged position to have during that slave trade. And I'm like how long did they keep them here? They were like until they were 18 and then they would send them abroad the way they did with other slaves. And to me, in my head I'm thinking these kids did not have a chance.

And at that point, I completely started just tuning out on these slave things. I'm like that's where we draw the line. I cannot do it. And I think that might be the last slave place I visit because I felt

so sad.

Matt: Yeah. It's been unbelievably intense. And that's why it's super-important, I think, when traveling – in addition to all of the fun stuff and all of the exciting stuff, and all of the nightlife and that kind of stuff – when you travel, you also take the history seriously about the places that you are. In addition to going out at night and clubbing and all of that, to actually learn about the history that shaped these places. Right?

Agnes: Yeah. But do you feel that with digital nomads, when we do things, it's more the good stuff that comes out versus the bad?

Matt: Yeah. I think it depends. Well, in terms of your question about digital nomads, when I go to places, I certainly try to understand the history of those places. So for example, when you go to a place like Phnom Penh in Cambodia, to try to understand the history of the genocide that was committed by the Khmer Rouge. You can go and they actually have also turned it into a museum, the detention center where they were torturing and killing people. They have a whole history of that. It's very gruesome and it's extremely intense, but it's really, really important to understand that history.

Or when I go through Germany. I went to Dachau, which is a Nazi concentration camp, and it was extremely intense. It's really, really difficult to go to those places. But I think for me, it's really important to understand the horrors of human history whether it's a genocide – in Europe, a genocide; in Asia, slavery. In Africa, the transatlantic slave trade of course was also a holocaust in and of itself, just literally the number of people that died on the transportation route alone, not even including the horrors of slavery. So, I think it's really important to understand that stuff.

And one of the reasons that we travel is that it's very, very different to walk through the places that you and I walked, and literally to stand in the room that you described, than it is to read about it in a book. You can read about it. Oh, a history book. Here's a history book and here's what happened, and this and this and this. But when you're standing in the room, you just explained what that felt like to stand in the room where it actually happened.

So, I feel like when we travel, that's one of the single most

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

important things about it is that we get real history lessons about what really happened, and you can actually feel the emotional impact of it and understand it at a much deeper level.

Agnes: How do you feel about the exposure of the negative versus the positive in terms of the experiences we get? And more specifically, to the slavery and the dark side of history I might say?

Matt: I think it depends on who's exposing it and who's spreading it. You know what I mean? I think it really depends on the person. I think there are a lot of people that have very thoughtful reflections on the experiences that they have, and I think the more people that can see what you and I saw, the better. Right? Like the more Americans, for example, because America was obviously one of the central places where the West African slave trade went, which obviously shaped the entire African American experience up until today over the last 400 plus years. So, the more people that can see and walk through the places that you and I walked through, and to hear the narratives, and to understand the stories and to understand that history, I think the better. Right?

Because what you're saying. If people don't understand that history, they don't understand what happened, then I think it's a lot more difficult for people to understand what's going on today. Because the things that are going on today are directly connected to the entire history.

Agnes: I'm thinking about in my head when I'm asking this question is I'm thinking about in Minnesota, it was very interesting. Because I met people who had never gone – they live in Minnesota – never gone to Wisconsin that's right next door. So to me, I'm like the only way they can understand experiences that you and I are going through is going to be through social media. Because there is a probability they will never leave their home state. Do you think they get proper representation of the negative?

Matt: No. I mean look, there are no digital nomads here that I know of. Right? Other than the people that we roll with.

Agnes: That's true.

Matt: But, the people that we roll with know what's up. Right? I mean

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

like we have rolled with a handful of digital nomads here that have met us here. Many of them are from here. They're West African digital nomads or they're people that are down with the struggle in general who are down with going to places like this, and we went together with them to these places. Right? But for the supermajority of people, yeah, they're not coming here. But let's take that, though. Even the people that go to Bali. That's fine; you go to Bali. But Bali is in the country of Indonesia. Right? How many people understand about, for example, the very recent ethnic cleansing in East Timor?

Agnes: Or Myanmar.

Matt: Yeah. Or the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya in Myanmar. Or all of the different regional things that are going on in Southeast Asia which are just horrific, atrocious things. Are people conscious of them? Are they aware of them? Are they paying attention to them? Are they learning about them when they go there? Some people, I certainly hope so.

Agnes: Yeah. I think for the travelers, they are already getting the experience, but it's more about the people who don't have the opportunity to travel or choose not to travel.

Matt: Yeah. And even when you do travel, though, you also have choices in terms of how you travel and what you expose yourself to. We could've easily chosen not to go to any of those places. That's a very easy choice.

Agnes: And that's the one thing that's very important to me in travel. I do not want to be the person who's always staying in 5-star hotels and never visiting the actual country where the people live. Markets everywhere. Clubbing is usually part of it, and also because I enjoy that part of things. So, I do it.

Matt: Right. That's how we roll. That's why we roll together.

Agnes: Right.

Matt: Awesome, Agnes. All right. At this point, are you ready for the lightning round?

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

Agnes: Okay, let's see what lightning has to give. I listen to your every podcast, so yeah, throw it.

Matt: Let's do it. All right. What is one book that you would recommend to people to check out? It can be any kind of book. I know you read a lot of novels. You read books in a lot of different genres and reading is really important to you. So any genre – what is one book you'd recommend to people?

Agnes: The one book that made the biggest impact in me that made my life, I think, may view life differently was Think and Grow Rich.

Matt: Awesome. What is one app or productivity tool that you're currently using that you would recommend?

Agnes: Google Translate now that I'm traveling everywhere and I don't understand the language. By the way, the top languages I want to learn are – I already know English – so I want French; I want German; I want Spanish, which I'm currently learning. And then maybe I'll learn Wolof for West Africa. I mean, since we are in West Africa, we have to put them in above. By the way, Wolof is the language that we've gone through. I feel like it was already in Nigeria. Every country we've gone through, people speak Wolof. So, yeah, Wolof is on the map.

Matt: Awesome. If you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to yourself to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Agnes?

Agnes: Don't give a shit about what people think about you. Just be you. I've spent so much energy – I think I got into depression having this perfection image about myself that wasn't me, and it almost drowned me. So, don't give a shit.

Matt: That's good advice. If you could have dinner with one person who's currently living today – could be anybody – celebrity, author, public figure – who would you choose and why?

Agnes: I want to meet with Oprah Winfrey, and it's because she had this humble beginning that she came from. I want to understand how she came from there to there, and I mean like hanging out with her on a daily basis for a period of time. And also, I love the fact that

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

she supports Africa. She has a school in South Africa that she supports women becoming who they are. Women have been suppressed for too long in South Africa. We need to be on top, of which the main goal is women – cheers to you. Because we went to the fish market, and I am telling you those ladies know their rights. They're so aggressive. And I'm saying this in a good way. You're not going to mess with them.

Matt: Awesome. What are your top three favorite travel destinations that you've ever been to?

Agnes: So, the first country that I fell in love with is Norway. But, I have to say, everyone says winter is a nightmare. But I met a guy who was from Norway when in Bolivia at the kitchen, and I remember saying, "Oh, you're running away from winter." And he's like no, we love winter. So, I think I might change my perception about winter. But Norway is the first one. They have beautiful landscapes.

And then the other country I loved was Bolivia. The people – they're so hospitable and they liked that I was black and different. I don't think there are many black people in Bolivia, so I just thought they treated me so well for being in that country for the first time. And for the first time, I felt tall. I am 5'4", so I'm not very tall, but I felt tall for the first time. So, I love Bolivia.

And then, the other is my country, Kenya.

Matt: And if people want to come to see West Africa, where we have just spent three months, where would you recommend that they start? What would be the best city to have a first West African experience in?

Agnes: I feel like for a solo traveler who is unsure about West Africa and has never been to West Africa, Accra would be the perfect place to start. And the reason for that – that city is very well set up for – even when you Google anything like places you want to go in Accra, the reviews are very legit. And it's very safe to walk around there. We walked any time of day and night.

Matt: All right, last question. What are your top three bucket list destinations, places that you've never been, that are highest on

your list right now you'd most love to see?

Agnes: I want to go to Thailand. And I don't know whether Chiang Mai would be my first place in Thailand, but Chiang Mai is what digital nomads always talk about, so I want to see the digital nomad hub in Chiang Mai because everyone talks about it, especially in terms of studying the digital nomad lifestyle. So, Thailand is very up on my list, and I would love to visit not just Chiang Mai, everywhere in Thailand.

And then, another place I would like to visit is also Mexico. And Mexico, I'm going there for the food. I'm a foodie. But also, because it's so close to the States, it's an option to a lot of people as a place to live and I want to experience that for myself because I'm looking for a new home base. I want to live in a country where people want me to be there. And the States, at this point, is not one of them, so I'm going to close shop and open it elsewhere.

And then, third country – New Zealand. I want to go to New Zealand. The landscape – I can't wait to see it.

Matt: Nice. Well, there's a possibility I'm going to roll to New Zealand later in this year, so if I do that, I will let you know and we can reconvene and have another epic adventure.

Agnes: I'll be like I'll be there.

Matt: Amazing, awesome. Agnes, this has been so fun and it's been so awesome to have you on the show. Let people know how can they contact you, get a hold of you, follow you on social media, and see what you're up to.

Agnes: My travel is always on Instagram, and you can find me on Instagram at @aggiesworldtravels. And Aggie is spelled as A-G-G-I-E-S, world W-O-R-L-D, travels with an "S", T-R-A-V-E-L-S. Now you can find me.

Matt: Awesome. Now, we are going to link all of this up in the show notes, so you can just go to one place at www.themaverickshow.com, and find all of the stuff that we have talked about in this episode and all of Agnes' contact information. This has been amazing, Agnes. Thank you so much for being on

The Maverick Show Episode 46
HOST: Matt Bowles
GUEST: Agnes Nyamwange

the show.

Agnes: Thank you for having me on.

Matt: All right. Good night everybody.

[End of Audio]

Duration: 99 minutes