

INTRO: This is part two of my interview with Nicole Phillip. If you have not yet listened to [part one](#), I highly recommend you go back and do that first because it provides some really important context for this episode. If you have already listened to [part one](#), then please enjoy the conclusion of my interview with Nicole Phillip.

Matt Bowles: I would actually love now to talk a little bit about your journey to becoming a full-time travel content creator. I think a really good place to start would be just rolling the tape back a little bit and talking about your career path. You mentioned that you were going to college, you were studying journalism. That was your career path. You ended up getting jobs at some of the premier places to work as a journalist, New York Times and so forth. So, I would love for you to take us a little bit on that experience. I know you worked on the 1619 project. For folks that aren't familiar with that, I would love for you to share a little bit about what that was and what that experience was like and just what your life was like in corporate America and what that trajectory was like for you before you transitioned out and became the travel content creator that you are today.

Nicole Phillip: Throughout my career, I just had always wanted to be a journalist. I have wanted to be in journalism probably since the 8th grade. I was like the editor in chief of my eighth-grade yearbook. Then I got into the newspaper. Then I was the first editor in chief of my high school yearbook, and I went on to study journalism. I decided to do broadcast journalism along that path because I had a writing class. That teacher was just not trying to give me that A. And I was like, okay, you know what, maybe this writing part isn't for me. And so, I decided to switch to broadcast because I did like a multimedia assignment that I actually got my first A on. And I was like, oh, it seems like multimedia is actually my thing. I should really be working with video and audio and stuff like that.

After that, I was able to land my first job working as a contractor within ABC News and worked my way up to eventually becoming an associate producer there. So that's the national news organization. And I, like every broadcast journalism student, wanted to be on camera. I'm not going to lie. I was one of those people. I wanted to be on camera. I wanted to be. I thought I wanted to be on camera and be a news person, a new person whatever. But I was like, but I'm not wanting to go to Iowa and start there. No shade to Iowa. I'm not trying to go start in Iowa, because usually that's like the path. You start in smaller markets, and you work your way up.

And I was like, no, I'm not trying to do that. I'm good. I need to be now, right now. Put me on the national whatever. So, I did start doing, like, on camera stuff for the digital thing that they were trying to start up. This was around the time when live streaming online started really becoming a thing. It just wasn't the right environment, though, for me to do what I wanted to do. Eventually I was like, okay, it's time for me to move on because livestreaming was a thing. The New York Times reached out to me, and I was hired by them to become a live interactive news editor. So, I was basically producing live streams for them.

And there came to a point where they're like, okay, we're going to turn focus away from live interactive news. But hey, the magazine's working on this thing called the 1619 Project. Do you want to see what that's about? Do you want to go try and help them out? They might need some live streaming help. And I'm like, sure. Now, this is before we even knew what the 1619 project was going to become. And so, for those who are not familiar with the 1619 project, it is probably one of the biggest projects the New York Times has ever produced that seeks to explain how black history. Black American history is a quintessential part of the foundations of the United States of America, basically, that there would be no United States of America if not for Black Americans.

There would be no democracy within the United States of America without Black Americans. And that's what that project sought to show to the world through a series of articles, essays, and there was multimedia components and all of that. So, my role on that project was I did handle some live streams. I did do some live events, and I handled live streams for them. But then I also did some UGC content for them. So, I basically interacted with readers and got their perspectives from their family histories as well as their personal lives. On things like how slavery was taught to them in school. People would say things like, they were told that enslaved people were workers and not that they were enslaved and that the Civil War was fought over economics and things like that. Just like the misinformation that we are taught in school.

I remember, even for myself, I remember when they tried to teach us about slavery when I was in the fifth grade. They chained us all together and made us reenact slavery, and they made us lay underneath our desks and interact. Being enslaved on a boat, which was a very strange experience for fifth graders and doesn't really explain anything except for just trauma. It just was not a great way to teach children about slavery. And then I also had people share their family histories, I believe it was if they knew of any enslaved people in their family, I believe, and sharing, like, their stories. And so curated some things on that. Those are the two roles that I had. And then also leading their social media rollout. We're getting to the social media aspect of things now. So also handled their social media rollout for the 1619 project. So, this also included reaching out to Barack Obama's assistant and stuff like that to, like, do outreach to get them talking about it. Anyway, after the 1619 project was done, I stayed there for maybe about six months or so.

And then at the top of 2020, I went to the Daily Beast and became the social media manager, senior social media manager. Also. Throughout this time, I'm also writing, and my content has always been focused on race and the black experience. That has always been my focus, especially since that time in Italy, like, everything just kind of changed for me. And I wanted to champion black voices, black experiences, and make our voices heard as best I can. So, I was writing as well while I was at the Daily Beast. And then the pandemic happened. That's when I left New York, and I came back to Orlando. And while I was here, I transitioned to doing social media at NBC Universal.

But I was, like, starting to really get tired of journalism. I was starting to really get tired of the conservative nature of legacy media. And that's not because everyone's like, basically a Fox News super conservative. That's not what I mean necessarily when I say conservative. I mean that you have to present yourself in a certain way, act in a certain way. You can't really have opinions. You can't look a certain way. And I didn't like that. That's why I was like, oh, you know, I really want to be on camera. But then it didn't feel like being on camera was, for me because of the expectations of what on camera journalists needed to have. I can't have two nose rings and wear circle glasses and have locks. And I started thinking, well, then maybe that's just not for me. That's why it was cool to go into the New York Times.

But I also was always drawn back to being on camera in some way. And I do live streams once in a while for the New York Times, do live streams once in a while for the Daily Beast. Daily Beast was when I first started kind of coming out of my shell, and I allowed myself to wear my nose ring. So, mind you, this septum ring I've had since I was 20 years old, I never showed it because I was working in legacy media. And for the first time, I actually started wearing it about seven years later when I started working at the Daily Beast, because it was a little bit more of a relaxed environment, and I was working from home. Working from home is, for many Black people, allowed us to really be ourselves. And then, as I told you, I was working for NBC Universal. And then along came TikTok. So along came this new medium. Actually, I

think that TikTok was around a little bit before. Before I had actually started working at NBC Universal. But people started being able to share their thoughts in a place without gatekeepers. People were free to say whatever it is they wanted to say. And I was finally starting to get to a place where I felt more and more comfortable getting out of my show. And then eventually I was like, let me give this TikTok thing a try.

And I just started posting, started sharing some opinions. Sometimes they would be about student loans. Sometimes they'd be about dating. I was just kind of, like, talking. And then one day, one of my little opinions shot off, went crazy. It was like 300,000 views. I just posted it, walked away, went to bed, woke up. I was like 300,000 views. I know y'all were listening. So, then I started posting a little bit more, and I'm like, okay, people care about what I have to say. I was led to believe maybe that people didn't want to hear from me, but I wasn't the right fit to be sharing opinions and stories and whatever, because that's how legacy media made me feel.

So, I did that for a while, and I think I got about 55,000 followers or so. And at the same time, I had moved into working in tech, social media marketing, because, like I said, I was kind of done with journalism, moved into social media marketing for a tech company. And it was during this time I started just kind of feeling like, you know, corporate really isn't for me. I thought it was just journalism wasn't for me. I'm like, nah, they're all like, corporate, just corporate. Like, I just don't like this. And the reason why I don't like this is because I don't know how to shut the fuck up. Like, I don't know how to just to work in corporate, you need to be okay with shutting the fuck up and just letting people do things and letting it roll off the shoulder and not say anything. And I've never been the type to just let people do whatever, say whatever, you know, and I do not say anything.

And when you are a Black woman, that could be so detrimental to your career, because as soon as you push back, you're angry, you're aggressive, you're this, you're that. It doesn't matter how smart you are. It doesn't matter what your expertise is. They don't actually care about your opinion. They just want you to say yes. You know, it just got to a point. And it's not in just one particular company. Just is just like, in general, where I was like, all right, I can't do this anymore. Because the type of person that you have to be in order to climb the corporate ladder to be in corporate America is not the type of person I'm willing to be. And some people can do it. I cannot.

And so, the opportunity arose for me to do a mutual separation from my company, and I did it. And that was at the top of last year. And I haven't stepped foot in corporate America since. So obviously I had been traveling since the Italy experience, and I had never really stopped. But my lens in which I viewed the world had changed. I was now more aware of how I was treated when I was in different spaces. And so, I just always kind of took a mental note of that. And then there was sometime in late 2023 where I was like, you know, let's see how a little travel review would do. Because once in a while, I would pop off because of something I said about Italy, and I was like, how about I just give a full review, start doing some little reviews? They started doing really well. And then I started saying, okay, well, how about I start posting these reviews to [Instagram](#)? And then they started doing really well. And this is the first time I have just really started growing.

I started growing at a pace that I had never grown at before on social media. And I realized I was like, oh, this is my calling. Like, this is what I'm supposed to be doing. This is what people want to hear from me. This is how I can help people. Talking about dating and politics and stuff like, that wasn't necessarily what people wanted from me. This is what they want. And so, I leaned into that. And then I left corporate

America to fully pursue this at the top of the year. And the rest is history. And here we are now, I'm talking to you.

Matt Bowles: I want to ask if you can share a little bit about your journey and process for building your personal brand and 'finding your voice'. So, you sort of identified your niche. You want it to be in the travel space, and then specifically looking at the experience of Black travelers and niching down and focusing on that. And then once you identified that niche and that's where you were really getting a lot of traction and people were really responding to your content and you felt that that was your lane that you really wanted to go into, how then did you develop your, let's just call it, personal brand Persona? Because right now when I go to your content and I watch your [Instagram](#) reels, you do this deadpan humor which is interwoven with these really, it's socially and politically substantive content.

It's also valuable and interesting travel experience content and advice. And then it's also humorous. And I love watching your reels because they're amazing in all of those ways. And I will say this, I went back through a lot of your content and when I went to your early stuff on [TikTok](#), it was different, it wasn't the way it is now. And I'm curious if you can just take us on that journey to quote, unquote, finding your voice and doing what you do now and what that process, kind of behind the scenes process was like. Because I feel like there's a lot of aspiring content creators or people that are actively doing it that are still trying to sort of figure that piece of it out. And I feel like you've really nailed that. I'm wondering if you can just share a little bit of your process in getting there.

Nicole Phillip: Well, part of it is perhaps a little unfair because I am a social media strategist, so I also have that professional background in that. So, I really know how to double down on what works and how to identify what works, which maybe other people don't necessarily always have that sort of background. But yeah, you're right, my original or my earlier videos, they were very different in a certain sense. There was a lot of holding back in some respects in some of my older videos. And I do what my friend calls my journalism voice, which she hates because there was a little bit of this is how you're supposed to present, this is how I'm supposed to be versus this is who I am.

So, I started really just talking to the audience, the way I actually speak, as you've probably been able to tell from this conversation, like this is actually me. This is really how I speak. As I started seeing that people were responsive to me, I started giving more of me and it kind of made me feel comfortable with giving them the real me in terms of production changes and things like that. Like as you get money, you know, you, you add a little something more like as it starts proving itself out and I'm like, okay, this is worth it. I'm buy the nicer camera, I got a nice light, now I'm a buy a nice light, things like that. Then okay, I'm going to invest a little more in the actual production. And now as you've also seen through my videos, the visual aspect of my videos has also changed because of that branding aspect. But I think that part of the evolution of a creator and that's going to happen with most people. You kind of start out a little bit more scrappy and then you do become a lot more, I guess put together as time goes on.

And also, a lot of my older content was not travel focused either as I mentioned dating or just my random thoughts and stuff like that. So, once I chose to double down on the travel niche, I do still do some one off here as my opinion type videos, but I do try to keep it a little bit more focused so that I can have a clear brand. Because one thing I noticed that once I started leading into the travel aspect, my following really started growing. And what I pulled from that was I was making it very clear to the people what they're getting from following me. Because when I had 50,000 followers, yeah, it was great to get 50,000. But like I

said, I was talking about racism, and I was talking about dating. Then I was talking about things that are expensive, then I was talking about health.

It took me a year and a half or two years maybe to get to 50,000 followers. And then I gained 162,000 on [TikTok](#) now, so I gained 110,000 in just one year. At a certain point I realized it's because you need to have consistent content so people can know if I follow you. This is what I'm getting because they come to your video, or they come to your page, and they like this travel review. They want to make sure that this is what you do, not just this is a one-off thing before they follow you. But I am also curious, as I'm answering your question, what would you say that you particularly noticed about the difference between my older videos to now? Because then it would help me also speak to that.

Matt Bowles: So, first of all, the way you do the dryness of your humor is very consistent in a lot of your videos. I find myself laughing out loud as I'm watching your videos. And also, I think the editing and the pacing of the videos is also really intentional and really augments the flow of that for the viewer. And as I went back earlier or even when I watch your long form content, like I think your long form content and YouTube is also a little bit different from the way you do your short form content. So, I noticed that you tailor your content to different mediums. I like your YouTube videos for the long form. Like I'm going to now take you into the Arctic Snow Hotel and I'm going to take you through it. I'm going to show you all this cool stuff and it's like this longer form thing and you're sort of commenting on it, but your short form stuff, it's so terse and punchy and you have humor in there that's like so dry and so just deadpan as you're going through something. And I am finding myself laughing out loud.

But then I'm like, this is really intentionally done in a really impressive way and the editing and the pacing and stuff like that. So, I feel like you've really found your stride and it also stands out to me as well. I follow a lot of travel content creators, obviously, as you know. I mean, I interviewed a lot of them on this podcast. You and I know a lot of people in common that are in the space that are doing this. And I really feel like you have found not just a niche, but you have found a way of conveying information that is really Nicole Phillips specific. I feel like from your content, you're really the only one that I know that's doing it like this exactly the way that you're doing it. I'm doing the broader category. I'm doing the niche category. But then the way I'm presenting it to you, right. And my personality and my individual brand persona is very distinct from the way that other people are presenting it. And I feel you've carved that out in, like, a really masterful way.

Nicole Phillip: Thank you. And that is also very intentional because I am aware that there are a million and one travel creators, and then there are 500,000 creators that are focused on race. And I've thought about, well, how am I going to specifically stand out? And one of those ways is my personality. So, this isn't a fake personality that you see when I am very much more like Barbara Walters presenting the news. That's the fake personality I'm trying to beat away. Like, that's the broadcast journalism in me. Like, that's the one that I'm trying to work to push into a corner and let the real Nicole shine.

So, what I'm doing is I'm really just pushing myself to speak more. How I would tell the story to a friend. Literally what I create, what you see is how I would tell the story to a friend. It's even actually if you pay attention to my writing, it's even how I write. So, like, those quick cuts and almost asides and stuff like that, when you read my writing, I do have a lot of that one line, like two line that I would break and then put a little two words there and keep going. Like, that is actually kind of how I even write. And that's how I think, and that's how I speak. That's how I retell stories. The editing aspect of that comes from my journalism background. So, I understand beats, and my ear is trained to hear how long is too long of a beat to keep pacing and things like that.

So, editing is very, very intentional to keep people's attention, as with anyone who's editing. So, it's not unique to me, but it is very intentional to keep people's attention. And just the way in which I'm delivering it, it's not something that I'm not practicing it. I'm really just talking how I'm talking. And I'm also a pretty harsh critic on myself. So, I'll say something and then I'll be like, that's stupid. You know, I'll reach, watch your back, and be like, if I'm like a stranger watching this, I would think that you were speaking way too slow. I would be like, this didn't hit. You need to find something else that hits more I do that a lot. Probably some of the lines that you laughed at the hardest were maybe like a third attempt. And I was like, nah, it's not quite hitting. You got to come bring it back, bring it back. Say something else, you are going to hit them.

And then that's how it works. And then also I think if I were to name my creator Superpower, it would be that three second hook. And that's one thing that I really try to nail down within everything. And I would tell anyone to make sure that you nail that three second hook within your content. And so, I became a lot more intentional with that overtime about making sure I have that hook as well.

Matt Bowles: So, I would love to ask for some of your tips for folks that are listening, that are creators, that are trying to grow an audience. Any additional tips that you have in terms of the biggest leverage points for growing an audience to over 250,000.

Nicole Phillip: So, niche down. I used to think that, as I just mentioned, my content was kind of all over the place, right? I thought I didn't need to have a niche. I thought I was going to be that one person that just could, their niche could be talk about anything. And I've told my friend, I'm like, well, you know, there are a lot of famous white girl influencers who don't necessarily have a niche, and they can get millions. So, you know, I don't need one. But at the end of the day, it's going to be very helpful to have a niche and make it something that's a very clear value added for the viewer. So, you have your niche, then you find that differentiator. I chose travel as my niche.

My differentiator was that I focus on the experiences of Black people and people of color, then find a series. So, what made me pop off was I found that series that was going to be unique to me. I'm reviewing different tourist destinations for Black people and people of color. That is my review series and that's what really started to take off for me. So, find that. Find something that when people see, they can only get from you, and they know it's from you. And then don't be scared to post the content. Just post the content. Don't wait until you're ready. You'll never be ready. Just post it and be as consistent as possible with not just the type of content, but about how often you're posting. And then above all, always have a three second hook period. If you post twice a week, you have to have a three second hook. If you don't even have a niche. You have to have a three-second hook.

And that's something that I feel like is so imperative because I see a lot of videos from people and I'm like, okay, that could have done better if you had just really hooked people with those first three seconds. And unfortunately, a lot of people, I feel like all short sometimes with that three second hook. That's going to be key to getting engagement. You get people engaged with the hook and the content and then you get them to follow you by having that sort of serial content and that sort of consistency within your content so that they know what they're getting from you.

Matt Bowles: All right, so personal question now, as you are creating these travel vlogs of your trip, how do you balance staying present in the moment and actually having and enjoying the travel experience and being in the moment versus documenting the travel experience?

Nicole Phillip: It's very hard. The one thing that I do try to do is I do try to have moments where like I take my content quickly and then I'm done. Like I'm just phone down. Especially if I'm doing a review. I probably only need to know if it's a particular activity or a quick activity. I probably need just like what, two 30 second clips and I can cut that up and do something with it. Sometimes I'll cut myself off and then the rest of the time is just to enjoy. If for instance, I'm being paid to go to the Bahamas to review a resort, I made sure that they gave me five days so that I can have three to four days to take content and then one day to just enjoy being in the Bahamas. So, I do things like that.

And it does get kind of hard to be in the moment simply because when you are a content creator, kind of everything does become content. As you know, every moment, everything you do can really just become content. But I try to be very self-aware and also not be an annoying friend. You know, hey, take this picture. Can you take it? There are so many times where I would just take the L, like in a photo that looks bad or a video that looks bad because I asked my friend to do it. And I'm like, I'm not going to ask them twice. They are on vacation or they're here to enjoy this moment. I'm asking once, I'm taking the L if it's bad and it is what it is. Promise I will never be that an annoying friend, you know.

But I will just say it is very hard. But I'm also in a moment of hustling. I'm in a grind moment because I just started this, it's only been a year or so. I still do or I still have had a contract social media strategist job. I'm not yet full-time content creator status where this is just my job. So, I'm still in grind mode. And until I get out of grind mode where I can just take a vacation and not have to have my phone in my hand and I don't need to make content out of it because my bills are good and paid and everything's all good, I'm going to have to be in this moment and I'm all right with that.

Matt Bowles: So, you have already though gotten a number of pretty significant brand deals, and I would love any tips you have on brand deals, collabs, that kind of stuff for how people can monetize their content.

Nicole Phillip: So, when it comes to brand deals and collaborations, you have to make it easy. So, make sure you have a link tree with a Google form for people to fill out to reach you or an email or something to make it just easy for brands to reach out to you. The second thing, you're posting good content. As you post good content, as you post content that goes viral, brands are going to see brands are going to want to come to you. You need to make sure that your page is ready. You need to make sure that your bio is ready. All the videos if I'm Microsoft and I go to your page because I saw a viral video about computer something and I'm thinking about working with you, the rest of your page got to be ready to go. It should not be a bunch of photos that you would not want to present to Microsoft in a portfolio. So always be ready to go. You never know who's looking at your page.

Second, make sure you have an electronic press kit or a media kit or something that is ready to go and have that linked in your bio in your link tree so that any influencer marketer who can go to your page can go look at that for a snapshot of who you are. Make everything super easy for them. The second thing, brag about yourself. I think that too many creators sleep on LinkedIn when they're a TikTok creator, an Instagram creator, or a YouTube creator. But LinkedIn is where the influencer marketers are at. LinkedIn is where the people who work at the brands that you want to work with are at. And so, when you hit your 17 million views on a video, find a way to humble brag about that on [LinkedIn](#). Be part of the conversation about how social media is working, the different changes that are happening. What are you seeing?

Be a part of the conversation so that you can be seen in the different feeds of all these different social media managers and social media marketers who are going to be eventually looking for people and then

potentially might want to work with you. Put it in your LinkedIn bio. I mean, my [LinkedIn](#) bio, it says 250,000 followers, travel creator, all of that. And I say this because my very first collaboration came because someone saw me on [LinkedIn](#) and saw me bragging about myself on [LinkedIn](#). So, I wrote an essay for the Today Show. The Today show asked me to write an essay about my travel experiences. Today.com, I posted about it, and this person from AT&T was like, hey, I saw that, and I thought it would just be really cool to work with you. And then he reached out to me, and I want to be very honest that as I give this advice, that a lot of the deals that I have gotten came to me because of just how I've been presenting myself online and posting and humble bragging and making sure it's easy to contact me.

So, I haven't been doing as much groundwork as other people have, like pitching and stuff like that. I have pitched a few times, but I do think it's more helpful too if you can get connected with an agency that can pitch for you so that you can have that backing, that level of professionalism that it adds and level of authority that it adds to having an agency pitching for you. Yeah, AT&T TripAdvisor was through a connection that I had. They threw my hat in the ring, told them, hey, you're looking for travel creators. I know one. But she had been seeing my work. And then they reached out to me.

The State Department didn't even know the government was. Well, I guess I should always know the government's watching me, but I didn't know they were watching me that hard. And then they reached out to me. But a lot of it's just presenting yourself to be selected for them to want to reach out to you, and then also just cherishing the connections that you have made. We talked about my journey, and I do want to say that I don't regret anything. I don't regret even my time in Italy because if I didn't experience what I experienced in Italy, I wouldn't be doing what I am doing today. I don't regret the time I spent or feel like it was a waste of time I spent in the journalism industry because I've made so many great connections in the journalism industry that someone pitched my name to someone at the Today show who was looking for a travel writer.

So, they pitched me and asked me to write this essay that led to the AT&T collaboration. TripAdvisor is because I knew someone at ABC News who had been following me and was watching my work and then told TripAdvisor, hey, you're looking for travel creators. You should reach out to this person. So just thinking about, you might already know the person from whom your next opportunity is going to come from. And so, you need to make sure that everything that you're posting is always every video is like a portfolio of your best work because anything can go off and anything could be that opportunity for you.

Matt Bowles: Nicole, when you think back about all of your travel experiences, from the Italy trip all the way up to the stuff you've done, most recently going to the Arctic Circle and all that kind of stuff and everything in between, how do you think all of this travel has impacted you as a person?

Nicole Phillip: I think it makes me a more interesting person. Like, to be honest, it's kind of a flex to be able to say I was at the Arctic Circle. It's a conversation starter. And it also helps me, sounds corny but, understand the world better. So, like, as I'm reading headlines and stuff like that about the world news and things like that, it helps me to understand, like, okay, I can see, you know, the far-right movements in this country. Yeah, that made sense. When I was there, I saw this, this, that, and the third. Oh, yeah, the, you know, the indigenous people. When I was there, I spoke to someone, and I did hear that they were going through XYZ. So, this story, I get it.

Like, it helps to just understand what's going on in the world a little bit better. But first, for the most part, like, the main thing is it's cool. I'm cool as fuck now. I'm known as the babbling friend. I know as the where you at now? Girl. I'm that girl now. And I love it. I love it.

Matt Bowles: What advice or tips would you have for Black folks who are at the earlier stage of their travel journey?

Nicole Phillip: Don't let racism ever stop you from seeing the world. Because if we let racism stop us, we would still be sitting in the colored section of a movie theater if we let racism stop us from doing things. And this black history, the story of us across the diaspora is that of triumph, overcoming so many things that were stacked against us. And we can't do that by staying within our comfort zone. We cannot do that by staying exactly, honestly, where white supremacists or racists would want us to be, which is away from them and in our own little box. So, like when people tell me those things, well, why don't you just go to Africa? Or I'm not going to such and such country because of racism.

And I'm afraid of dah, dah, dah, dah. But I'm like, you know how many racists or white supremacists would be clapping their hands to hear you say that? Good. Don't be in my country. I don't want you here. This is exactly what we want. That would just make them so happy if you would just stay home. It's an act of defiance to go out and see the world. You deserve to see the Coliseum. You deserve to see the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican. You need to go. Don't let my experience in Italy stop you from going. You should go. You should see the world. You should go to every country that your heart desires and not be held back. And the thing is, you, if you're even following my work, would be better prepared than I was. And that is my goal, to make sure that you are better prepared than I was.

Matt Bowles: Nicole, for people that would like to meet you in person, you are going to be speaking at the [WITS Travel Creator Summit](#) in New York City on Saturday, May 17. What are you going to be talking about for people that would like to attend the conference and come to your session?

Nicole Phillip: So, the focus of my conversation is going to be about how to succeed and build your brand in social as a person of color and being authentic within this space. And I came up with this idea before everything that's been going on. I think it's an even more important conversation now. Like, how can you still show up as a member of a marginalized group and be authentic in a world in which DEI is constantly under attack, in a world in which people are afraid to even say that phrase? A lot of what I'm going to be discussing is going to be around that. How can you be authentic if you are from a marginalized community and still balance that authenticity with working within this industry and getting brand deals and trying to succeed here in this space?

Matt Bowles: Well, I will say that [WITS](#) is one of my very favorite travel conferences. I attended last year in 2024. I'm going to be there again this year with you at your session in 2025 in May in New York City. There's going to be a bunch of other Maverick Show guests at [WITS](#) as well, folks. If you would like to come through and meet everyone in person and hang out, you can even get a discount. I have a link for you if you just go to themaverickshow.com/wits, that's WITS. There you can get a \$75 discount off of your ticket. And then join me and Nicole and a whole bunch of other Maverick Show guests and amazing people at a really incredible travel conference.

Nicole, let me ask one more question and then we'll wrap this up and move into the Lightning Round. Why are you so passionate about continuing to travel and to see new places? What does travel mean to you today?

Nicole Phillip: I can't even see who I am anymore without traveling. Being able to travel is what makes me my fullest, most authentic self. I feel like I thrive best when I am out, thrown into an unfamiliar environment. I have to make friends, talk to strangers, and try to navigate an unfamiliar situation. That's when I thrive best. Like, I kind of start getting antsy when I'm in Orlando for too long because I'm like, oh, this is. No, I need to be somewhere. I need a challenge. These everyday interactions at the grocery store. No, I need to be someplace where I don't know the language and I have to figure it out. And so, I just feel like I'm my best self when I'm abroad and when I'm having these experiences.

And I think that it's continuously shaping me into a better and better person. I don't travel to, like, try to change people's perceptions about Americans or Black people or none of that. When I travel, it's all about me. I'm not worried about what other people are going to think of me. I try to be my full, authentic self and use this as an opportunity for myself to grow. Grow in my knowledge, grow in my confidence. You have to be very confident to travel by yourself, especially because you can't really have fun and meet new people if you're kind of in your shell and yourself. So, it really just challenges me and pushes me to be a better and better version of myself every time I step outside of this country.

Matt Bowles: All right, Nicole, I think that is a perfect place to end the main portion of this interview. And at this point, are you ready to move in to the Lightning round?

Nicole Phillip: Let's do it.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it. All right. What is one book that you would recommend that people should read?

Nicole Phillip: Anything by N.K. Jemisin. I am in love with her. You should probably read [The Dream Blood series](#), start there.

Matt Bowles: All right, who is one person currently alive today that you've never met that you would most love to have dinner with? Just you and that person for an evening of dinner and conversation .

Nicole Phillip: Issa Rae. Easily Issa Rae. She's my birthday twin. We are both Capricorns.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, knowing everything you know now, if you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Nicole?

Nicole Phillip: You're going to be great. They don't matter. Everyone who like they, she'll know who they is. They don't matter. And you're going to be great. And I know you don't see it right now, but there are so many people who are going to think that you are so amazing and are going to value you and value the words that come out of your mouth. And you, the girl who used to take her glasses off and throw water in the mirror because you couldn't look at yourself are going to rock the fucking world.

Matt Bowles: I love that. All right, of all the places you have now been, what are three of your favorite destinations you would most recommend other people should definitely check out?

Nicole Phillip: Can all three of them be in Colombia?

Matt Bowles: They can. They can, absolutely.

Nicole Phillip: Yes. Let me big up Colombia. Go to Cali, Cartagena and Medellin, the three big cities in Colombia. Go there.

Matt Bowles: All right, what are three of your bucket list destinations, Nicole, places you have not yet been, highest on your list you'd most love to see?

Nicole Phillip: I would really love to go to Accra, Ghana. I would love to go there. I want to go to Jordan. That's another place I really want to go to as well. And Brazil. I'm a little scared of Brazil. I'm not going to lie, in a similar way as I was scared of Cali, but Brazil.

Matt Bowles: All right, Nicole, we have now come to the most important question of this interview. I'm about to ask you to name your top 5 hip-hop emcees of all time. But before you name your five, let me just ask you what you love about hip-hop music and what hip-hop means to you.

Nicole Phillip: I love those hip-hop feels so empowering. When I listen to hip-hop, it makes me feel a way that no other genre of music makes me feel. I feel empowered. I feel like I can take on the world. I feel like a badass. I just feel so good. Like when I want to get in the zone, when I want to shake off something that might have made me upset or made me sad or whatever. And I turn on some hip-hop, like that really just changes my whole vibe, changes everything for me. And that's what I love about hip hop. And I also just love that hip hop is so deeply rooted in blackness, in Black American culture. And just the influence there, that is just. It's just so uniquely black and it's touched the world. So many different musical genres are influenced by the beats and the rhythm and all of that of hip-hop. And I love that. Obviously, it's not the only, you know, Black American inspired genre, but that one, hip-hop, it just means a lot.

Matt Bowles: Now, do your followers already know your top five or are we breaking a Maverick Show exclusive here today, Nicole?

Nicole Phillip: This will be exclusive. I don't think I talk much about music unless they're looking at my Spotify wrapped.

Matt Bowles: Alright, a Maverick Show exclusive, folks. You heard it here first. Nicole Phillip, who ya top five?

Nicole Phillip: Okay, so my top five of all time, in no particular order so nobody has to come after me.. Definitely, we got to say Biggie, Tupac, we got to throw Kendrick in there for sure. And I love Megan. Megan is definitely up there. And who would be my fifth person? I would say Nicki Minaj because she really reopened the door for a lot of female rappers and all that. There was like a lapse. And then you saw Nikki come back and that kind of reopened the door for people to have an appetite for female rappers. And I think that really puts her up there.

Matt Bowles: I love that list. All right, Nicole, I want you to let folks know how they can find you and follow you on social media and check out your amazing content. I also want you to let folks know about the services that you offer and if folks are interested in working with you, how they can do that.

Nicole Phillip: So, you can find me on all platforms at N-C-O-L-Philip, no 'S' on all platforms. And I am starting up a Patreon. So please look out for that. I'll be sharing that more on my [Instagram](#). And in terms of the services that I offer, as I mentioned, I am a social media strategist. So, if you are looking for help on how to grow your social media platform as a content creator or as a business or anything like that, I offer consultations and other forms of social media help. Like I can build strategy decks for you and pretty much

walk you through your growth from start to finish and even content creation help. If you are a brand who is looking for someone who you need to create content for them to kind of get you off the ground, be that face for you. I also offer that as well.

Matt Bowles: Alright. And if you want to come through to the [WITS Travel Creator Summit](#) and hang out with me and Nicole and a whole bunch of other Maverick Show guests in person, you can get a special discount at themaverickshow.com/wits and we are going to link up everything that we have discussed in this episode, including all the ways to find and contact Nicole at one place in [the show notes](#). Just go to themaverickshow.com and go to the show notes for this episode.

Nicole, this has been absolutely amazing. Thank you so much for coming to the show.

Nicole Phillip: Thank you so much for having me. This was so fun.

Matt Bowles: All right, good night, everybody.