

INTRO: This is part two of my interview with Eileen Ivette. 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 Eileen Ivette.

Matt Bowles: I would love to talk now about the content that you have been creating independently as part of [Black Latin History](#) and the award that you won at the Black Travel Film Festival, which I was supposed to be at, by the way. Shout out to Anita Moreau and the amazing team that organizes the Black Travel Summit and the Black Travel Film Festival, which is a part of that. I was supposed to be there, had my plane ticket, had my Airbnb booked, everything was all set. And then this Hurricane Milton happened. They had to delay it and by the time they rescheduled it, I had a conflict. Cause I had to be in Thailand speaking at a different conference in Bangkok. So, I was not able to go but you won this award. Can you share just what you want to give you props for that. Share what the award was that you won and then share a little bit about why you won that award and what you've been doing with these stories on your platform.

Eileen Ivette: So, yes, I won Best Travel series for Black Latin History, which was super exciting. And since launching Black Latin History, it's had a few different ways of existing on the Internet. But I think the current way, the way we won Best Travel Series is the best way for it to exist is basically these in-depth YouTube explainer type videos but also travel guides showing people how they can find Black history, black culture, black tours when they're traveling. And so, the episode that was shown at the festival was the Cartagena Travel Guide episode that I did. And truly, I think I won because if you think of a lot of the travel content that exists out there now, series and shows, there isn't one that approaches it in the way that Black Latin history has been able to, right.

We're giving you the history we're giving you this very documentary feel to it. But then we're also showing you, hey, if you book this tour, you can experience this as well. And so, I'm incredibly proud of being able to win that and show that there's an audience that really cares about this type of content, that really wants to travel in this very specific way as well. So, we have our little mini episodes, which are like Bombay in Puerto Rico and what tour and what instructor you should go with, and Black History of Rio's Carnival and how you can experience that. And what a Black Rio immersion tour. And just having these little mini episodes showing you the history, but again, showing you how you can experience this living history as well while you're traveling to these destinations.

And this year I really want to expand it and do more because that Cartagena episode was a three-person team. It was me, I edited it, I did the voice, I did the sound. I hired a local Cartagena director, and he had his assistant with him. And so, he did some of the drone footage, I did some of the drones. It was literally just the three of us running and gunning this episode. And then I had to put it all together, find the story, edit it all together. Just really, really hoping that I can do more of that this year with more destinations. With the Panama talking about how reggaeton really started there and the Panama Canal and how so many west indie cultures are in Panama because of the canal and Garifuna culture in Honduras. Just like going to different parts of Latin America and showing these communities. But also, if you're going to be here, here's where you should stay, here's where you should eat as well. Here's how you can continue supporting black businesses in these places. But also, if there's not a black-owned hotel, I recommend this place because it's really pretty and you can relax and you can still be on vacation while learning.

Matt Bowles: I want to go a bit deeper on some of these because I have learned a lot from watching your content. I have also really enjoyed the way you incorporate your personal experience into the place and

what you're doing there with a lot of this historical context. And I'm wondering if we can start just in El Pacifico and if you can share a little bit about the historical background of the Afro Colombian community there and then particularly the development of Afro Colombian music. Because some of the work that you've done really gives the social and political context of Curacao and Cumbia. And then all the way up to the present day, you just put me on to a group called ChocQuibTown, which I have been listening to for the past week. Yes. And I'm wondering if you could share a little bit about the music and then the social and political context for it.

Eileen Ivette: Yeah. So, the music element in my content comes from the fact that my family lived in Cali, right. Cali is the salsa capital of the world. I grew up on salsa music. Music is kind of the way that I've been able to always feel connected to my Colombian culture, to my identity, to that side of my life. They say Colombia is the land of a thousand rhythms. And we have so many sounds, so many folkloric sounds, so many new sounds. And a lot of the popular music that Colombia is known for is because of beautiful, brilliant musicians from El Pacifico. So, one of Colombia's biggest salsa groups of all time is Grupo Nietzsche, and they are from El Pacifico, they are from Quibdo, if I'm not mistaken, which is in the Choco region, which is northern Pacifico. And where my family is from like southern Pacifico, right. They're like the biggest salsa group of all time. I have a video that I need to finish editing about them. But even their name was basically a statement of resistance and rebellion and re-owning our blackness in Colombia.

And in terms of folkloric music, because of Pacifico's isolation to the rest of Colombia, a lot of our sounds are very much what our ancestors created. It's very much the thing that was created centuries ago. Especially like these are sounds that I grew up on that I haven't seen a lot of people talk about. But I just know, because my family plays it and we're around it. So, I applied for a Fulbright. I wanted to do research in Colombia, in Cali, to research guru Lao, because Kurla is one of our most understudied folkloric genres from El Pacifico or at least understudied in the English language. Let me say that. And so, I really wanted to just spend a year in Colombia researching, interviewing people, all these things. I made it as a semifinalist, but ultimately did not get selected for the Fulbright. And I was heartbroken.

But I remember talking to Mesi Walton. She is a professor at Howard, but she had done a Fulbright a few years ago to Venezuela. I was talking to her about the project, and she was like, listen, even if you don't get the Fulbright, you made all the connections you need to make. You know all the people. You have family there. You can go to Colombia anytime and work on that project anytime. That research anytime you want to. So, she was like, whether you get the Fulbright or not, don't lose sight of your project. And I was like, she's right. It did take me two years later to actually act upon the fact that, wait, I do have family here. But music has always been the way that I have connected to Colombia and how I've always felt connected to Colombia regardless of where I'm at in the world. I'm going to play my salsa, I'm going to play Korola, I'm going to play Chirimía music, which I just discovered the year before last when I went to Medellin for the first time.

And it was so interesting discovering Chirimia music, because Chirimia is from El Pacifico, but it's northern Pacifico, so that's not what I know. That's not what I grew up in. So, it's still the regional differences of it all. But music, I think, is a big way that the Afro Colombian community has always stayed connected and has always been able to share our messages. And when you listen to the words of the songs and don't just dance to them, you realize they're talking about a lot of real stuff, like what it means to be black in Colombia, what it means to be black in the world, political things within Colombia. There's just so much

depth to the music. And so, when I first launched Black Latin History, I solely was thinking it was going to be a short form series. And so, I was like, okay, what are some verticals that I can put under that?

For me, like I said, my family's from El Pacifico, so I'm always going to try to put our culture to the forefront because when people think Colombia, they don't think about us. I was like, oh, I should do a series called Somos Pacifico. Got the idea for the name because ChocQuibTown has a song called Somos Pacifico, but highlighting all these beautiful, intelligent artists that come from El Pacifico who make amazing music. I was able to do one episode, and then I have a few episodes scripted that I just have not been able to get to editing. But I did the episode on ChocQuibTown. And it's really crazy how life works because I met ChocQuibTown for the first time ever when I worked at Complex. One random day at work. Well, I'm like, ugh, I'm trying to get out of here. Someone was like, hey, can you join this meeting? It's some Colombian artists and we just need to fill up the space. They were supposed to come the day before, but they schedule conflicts, so they came today. And now we don't have it set up the way we were supposed to. So, I was like, sure.

And I walked in and went to Howard, you don't get starstruck. We're used to seeing celebrities, right? I was audibly gassed. I was like, what? That was the first time that I had ever been starstruck. Because when I didn't expect it to be them and two, I was like, wait. Because there was only two of us who were Colombian who knew who they were. Everyone else is these random group from Colombia. And I'm like, do you know what they mean to us? Afro Colombians, what they have done for us? And so that was the first time I met them. And so, when I was going to do the Somos Pacifico vertical and highlight a few artists, I was like, I definitely need to start with them because one, they're the biggest. But two, they have a really interesting story, and they have really good music that I know people would really like to listen to. That is how that video came about. And you found it, you see it, you've come across the music. And at that time, I think I had a playlist I had created, including conjunction with that video that included different Afro Colombian artists, different genres. So, there's salsa on there, there's hip hop, rap, there's salsa, choke.

There are these sounds that artists have created in newer years that draw from the folkloric music to today and make these new sounds and stuff. I could talk about music all day. I could talk about Afro Colombian artists all day. I love incorporating music into what I do, into my content. Even if you pay attention to the sound songs that I use for videos that I'm not doing voiceover, I'm probably just doing clips on. I always try to use a black artist from that area. So, if it's a Brazil video, I'm trying to do somebody who does Brazilian funk and is Afro Brazilian. Those are like little things that a lot of people don't notice. But I can't just use some random song that's trending right now. It doesn't fit the vibe. So, I use a lot of ChocQuibTown music. I use a lot of Alexis Play. He's an amazing rapper, also from El Choco. His music is everything. It's very high octave, but that man can rap. He is so good. I finally got to see him live for the first time that month. I live in Medellin. I was oddly at his Soundcheck two years ago during Petronio, but I didn't get to see their performance that day, but I was at their Soundcheck, and so I was like, holy shit.

Who would have thought these little [Instagram](#) videos that I'm doing would have me here at Soundcheck with these people that I've looked up to, that I've listened to throughout the years, that I've fallen in love with their music and what they're saying. And then there's this new kid. His name is DFZM, and he is so good. I think he recently just turned 20. But he is from Buenaventura, which is very exciting because we haven't had a really big artist from Buenaventura, I feel like, since Junior Jane, which was a rapper who unfortunately died a few years ago, we haven't had a big artist since him. And so DFZM, that boy can rap. And I love the fact that he's very much New Age, Columbia, New Age music, but none of his music sounds

the same. Some people say he's the next Drake of Columbia because he can do melodies that very melodic music, but also do this super trap, hard bars, I'm that guy type of music. And he was on that song that came out last year called +57, which was J. Balvin, Karol G. Some people call it the Colombian Avengers. And I was like, the White Colombian Avengers, because there's no way that they did this song and didn't include ChocQuibTown. They included DFMZ, which was great, and I loved it, and he has the best verse on it. But that song also irks me because I was like, y'all are making a song that's supposed to be the Columbia anthem. And y'all only included one Afro Colombian artist. That was so crazy to me.

Matt Bowles: Well, the other musician who I understand is also from Bueno Ventura is Petronio Alvarez.

Eileen Ivette: Yes.

Matt Bowles: And I'm wondering if you can talk about Petronio Alvarez and now the festival named after him.

Eileen Ivette: He made the song Mi Buenaventura, which is our anthem. It's Grupo Niche remixed it. There are so many versions of that song to this day. But every single time we are going to yell. We're going to yell it from our lungs, you know, shout out to him for giving us the classic and being the artist that he was, to leave this legacy that is now the Petronio Alvarez Festival. I am so happy that I got to experience that because it is something I have been researching for two years. And I was like; I really want to go. And I don't know why it took me so long to go, because my grandma lived 10 minutes away from there. It was down the street. I just had to go to see my granny. It was so crazy to me. But I finally went, and I was like, wow. It felt like homecoming. It felt like Howard Homecoming in the sense of everyone whose. Everyone's there. It feels like a big family reunion. There's good food you can buy from vendors. There's. There's music, there's concerts.

Everyone's just having a good time, happy to be there, happy to be black. It was a really incredible experience. I hope I get to go again this year, because every time I see the videos now, I get a little bit of FOMO, and I'm not somebody who gets FOMO easily. And I'm just like, I miss my people. I miss my Columbia crew. I miss my Cali crew. And there's just some really amazing designers and businesses and dancers just doing really dope stuff in Cali. And so, I'm really happy to see that they're getting platforms to put their genius out into the world and connect with people globally, thanks to social media. And as I always say, I am grateful that I get to be one of the people who yells from the mountaintop that black people exist in Colombia. We're here. We're thriving. We're geniuses. We have these really dope ideas and concepts. Come see us. As long as I can be a connector and showcase and highlight and amplify, as I always wanted to do since the whole reason why I got into journalism, I'm super honored, and I'm going to keep doing it well.

Matt Bowles: Big shout out to Cali. I have spent probably four months or so in Colombia, and one of those months, my most recent month, was in Cali, and it was just spectacular. I have been telling everybody about Cali. It's just a truly amazing city. But I'm curious for you, you obviously have a long historical connection with the city, with your family, and everything else. So today, when you talk about Cali, maybe for people that haven't been, maybe for people that are thinking about a trip to Colombia and wondering if they should include Cali in their itinerary, what do you find is so special and wonderful about Cali? What would you put people into why? Even if it's not festival season, why should they definitely go to Cali?

Eileen Ivette: I think Cali is worth going to at least for two to three days out of your itinerary, because Cali is Cali. Okay? There is nowhere in Colombia where you are going to get the same energy, the same vibe, the same friendliness, the cuisine. Cali. I know they're trying to be the next top tourist destination in Colombia, and I really hope they're able to. And I hope that when they're able to, they're still able to keep what makes Cali so beautiful. But I say if you're a music lover, if you're a salsa lover, Cali is where you need to be, because we live and breathe music. We live and breathe salsa. Oddly enough, I do recommend traveling for festival season in Cali because that way you're able to get the best of everything. Everyone is out, everyone is there. And Petronio is a free festival. So, you're really just paying for your flight and your hotel if you want to buy food there. And coming from the US Dollar, it's like five dollars for a soup, a plate of fried fish, rice, and a drink.

It's very financially accessible. If you're coming from the US dollar, I do recommend traveling for festival season because city tourism has done a good job to make these festivals free and accessible to those who are from there and to everyone. And again, back to if you love salsa, go during December and Christmas for La Ferias, which is this big salsa festival. And you get to see all these salsa legends come out and do concerts, they are their little carnival parade as well. And there's just salsa everywhere. I love Cali, but I do always say, if you are someone who is really, truly looking for an authentic experience, who is maybe a little more advanced than a traveler, who's not like, I'm just trying to take pictures at this location. I'm really trying to connect with the community and things of that nature. Cali is where I would recommend going.

Matt Bowles: And a lot of listeners of this podcast are digital nomads who are just traveling around the world, posting up for extended stays in different places with no permanent base, which is what I do. And so, if you can stay in Cali for a month or so, you can just get so much deeper into what that city is all about and really just be a resident there and just vibe and get in the flow of that city. I mean, it is an incredibly special place. And speaking of longer-term stays, you mentioned that you lived in Medellin for an extended period. And I want to ask you also about Medellin, what you love about it, and you have done some fantastic content on that as well, highlighting the Black Joy Parade, highlighting your time in Comuna 13. Can you share a little bit about what some of the Medellin highlights were for you?

Eileen Ivette: Yes. Medellin is a city that surprised me in all the best ways. So August 2023, I ventured off for a six-week solo adventure throughout Colombia and Brazil. In Colombia, I was making stops in Cali, Medellin, San Andres and Cartagena. So out of those four cities, I thought Medellin was just going to be like a quick two day stop. I didn't think much of it. I didn't think I was going to like it. I know a lot of people travel here. I should go experience it, see if there's a black community, see what I can do, make some content, call it a day. Boy, was I wrong. Medellin was amazing. It is one of the most beautiful cities I have ever seen. There's so much greenery, it's within the mountains. I love Medellin. But I always say the reason why I love Medellin as much as I love it is shout out to Origin and Culture. Shout out to Drea and the team at Origin and Culture because they are an organization who is very focused on connecting people with the Afro Colombian community and throwing events for the Afro Colombian community in Medellin.

Oftentimes when people think of that city, they don't think that Afro Colombian people exist there. But it is a 20-minute flight from El Choco, which is the blackest region in El Pacifico. So, a lot of people end up moving to Medellin for university and end up staying there. So, a lot of the Afro Colombians in Medellin are either from El Choco or their parents or grandparents are from El Choco. And so, when I was doing this journey, I was able to experience the Black Joy Parade, which pays homage to a tradition from El Choco during the Saint Francis Festival, which is called Abunde. And a lot of people think it looks like New

Orleans Second Line dancing, which do have a lot of similarities. New Orleans Second Line and Chirimia music have a lot of similarities in the percussion instruments that they use and how the music sounds.

So much so that I think was it last year, the year before last, the Jazz Fest in New Orleans, their honorary country they invited was Colombia, and it was for Chirimia music. And so, I thought that was really beautiful. But to be able to experience that, to be able to experience something completely different than the Colombia and El Pacifico region, I was like, oh, this is lit. Like, they're just. We're just like, we're oh, this is fun. But also, Dre was able to reserve an Afro Communal Trece tour for me. And so, my tour guide, Yarleison, love him, he was great as well. He is Afro Colombian. He's lived in Comuna 13 for some time. He's from El Choco, if I remember correctly. And he's a rapper tour guide. One thing you learn about Afro Colombians is they wear many hats. They do many things there, especially in Medellin. They are so creative but also have these super serious jobs.

But he was able to take me through a Comuna 13 tour that was really focused on the legacy of hip-hop in the community, how that was able to transform the community, and how Comuna 13 is about 40 to 50% Afro Colombian, black community, and just really like the history and the dark history, to be honest. But how that community, if it was not for community efforts, Comuna 13 would not be the tourist destination it is today. I think I fell in love with Medellin so much because origin and culture was able to curate a very black and immersive experience for me and tailor it to what I love when I travel, which is I am trying to find my people and my history and what does that look like? And to be able to find that in Medellin, where I was just. I don't care about the city. I don't think I'm going to like the city and love it so much so that I was. I need to move here for a month, take some Spanish classes, really be here, host a group trip so people can also experience it. Tour operators and people are just so important to making sure that the experiences are what they are. And they also make my job as a content creator who's trying to highlight these businesses and these communities so much easier because it's, oh, you have a black joy parade. This is great. I know people are going to want to come to this and travel to this, but this is also embedded in history and our culture. And on the outside, it just looks like we're parading in the streets, but actually it's partying with a purpose.

Matt Bowles: Well, you are now starting to lead trips for people that would like to go and immerse in and experience Afro Colombian culture. Can you share a little bit about that and what is coming up?

Eileen Ivette: Yes. I'm hosting an Afro Medellin group trip on Juneteenth weekend, actually. So, June 19th to the 23rd. This really excited. I have three spots available left, but right now it is 12 black woman travelers which makes me really excited to be able to take this group, for them to experience a little bit of my culture but also experience something new. I keep saying very black, very immersive, very lit experience. They'll be able to do the Black Joy Parade, the Africa Muna Tresa tour that I did, the Chirimia and Currulao dance class. Basically, anything that I have posted on my Medellin platform has been included in this itinerary. It's a custom itinerary. I'm just really honored that these women have trusted me with their money, with their time, with their energy to come on this group trip. And we're having a ball and we're going to have so much fun. Every restaurant we're eating at that's included in the itinerary is Afro Colombian owned businesses. And so, this trip is very much about directly benefiting and putting our tourism dollars back into black communities in Medellin. And hoping I get to do one to Cali this year as well for Petronio. But I would love to take a group of 10 travelers to Petronio because there's really nothing else like it out there.

Matt Bowles: All right, well, we will link up in the show notes to all of this stuff so folks can get more information if they're interested. And Eileen, I have also so got to talk to you about Brazil.

Eileen Ivette: Ah, I love Brazil.

Matt Bowles: I told you; I spent at least four months in Colombia. I have also spent at least four months in Brazil. I was most recently in Salvador de Bahia for a month. I have spent two months in Rio. It's just one of my all-time favorite countries on the planet. And you have done some incredible content around Brazil, including the roots of samba music and carnival. And you highlighted the Black Rio immersion tour and some really incredible things. So, I'm curious if you can just share a little bit about your experience in Brazil, what some of the highlights were and maybe unveil some of that lesser-known history for folks here that you have done such important work researching.

Eileen Ivette: Thank you. So that trip, the content from that trip was part of that six-week cell adventure I went on where everyone thought I was crazy for going to the two most “dangerous countries” in South America. And I was like, are they dangerous or do they just have a lot of black people? And so, I wanted to find out for myself. And thankfully I was safe the entire time. And I'm doing this research about blackness in Latin America and how am I going to do blackness in Latin America and not go to Brazil. Which has the biggest black population in South America. Yeah, I spent nine days there and I went to Rio for a few days because I'm a researcher by heart. I was scrounging the Internet trying to find Black Rio historical immersion type of tours and I came across a company called [Afrotrip](#), which is an Afro Brazilian owned agency. She is actually from Rio herself, Carina.

On her website she had these two tours called the Black Rio Immersion Tour and Black Salvador Immersion Tour. I was like, oh, that sounds exactly like what I am looking for. And when I say that the Black Rio Immersion tour was the most eye-opening and immersive tour that I have ever been on. I loved that tour. But at times it was very, very hard to hear history because it is in the Little Africa neighborhood in Rio, which historically was where some of those ships first disembarked. And so, hundreds and thousands of Africans who were stolen from their homelands disembarked at this port in the Little Africa neighborhood. And the port still exists. And you can go to it and stand there and see it. And it's just very gut wrenching. Historically, there's ancestors here, there's just so much trauma here.

And my tour guide, Dandara, also amazing, she basically mapped it out for me. She was like, so they would disembark here and then they would go down this street with the houses, they get cleaned up, fed, and at the end of the street where this bus stop is now is where they were sold. And I was just like, what? And she was like, yeah. And now you see it's just business here. A lot of people from here don't know this history, don't care to know this history. A lot of us in the industry are trying to preserve it and make sure that it doesn't get demolished for a new building or something like that. And so that was one aspect of it was like this gut wrenching, heartbreaking history of enslavement in Brazil and me working on that Latin America try to eliminate black people piece. I knew some of the history. I knew that Brazil was the last country to abolish slavery in the western hemisphere. I knew these things. But I never thought that I would be there, right there in it, experiencing it.

And there was also on the tour, we stopped at the new black cemetery where this family, they bought this property and as they were digging up and trying to build the foundation, they found bones and skeletons of those who were stolen from their homelands, who died on the ships, and they were just discarded it in this unmarked grave basically. And so, you can walk in there and you still see the skeletons and the bones. And you see these pictures of what slavery looks like in the Brazilian sense. Those parts were just so heavy, right? It's just very heavy. But what was also really beautiful about that trip was that you go to Samba City,

which is where the top 10 samba schools from the previous year of Carnival are building out their floats and their costumes for Carn.

Well, Carnaval, as they say. So, they're building out these floats, and you get to go behind the scenes. And you can't record anything in the float area. Because I think people forget that Carnival is actually a competition between ensemble schools. It is not just pretty floats and people dancing. It's a competition they are trying to win. I think it was like \$10 million or something like that. They spend eight months out of the year prepping for this one moment. They have; I think it's 60 minutes. That from beginning to crossing the line, the entire ensemble has to be out. It's a competition. So, they were like, please do not record anything in this area. But you're seeing these floats that are made of Styrofoam.s And you're like, how in the world do they make it turn and flip? In the final production, you're seeing all of this. And then they take you into a room where they teach you about the Asiata, which is like the black woman who basically is the reason why Carnival in samba as we know it today exists and why it's as big as it exists today.

And she is from Bahia, and her and other aunties brought that Bahia culture and that idea of celebrating life through music and dance to Rio. And were able to have these samba parties in her backyard. But at the time, samba was criminalized because it was directly linked to Brazilian African spirituality. And the European elites were very scared of that. As the story goes, it wasn't until the president, at the time, he had a infection that no one could cure. Tia Sierra was known as this healer. And so, she was able to cure his incurable disease in three days. And he asked her what she wanted. And she basically said that we want samba. Don't criminalize this. Accept my community, my culture. And so that's how it became Carnival as we know it today. Started essentially in her backyard. And traditions from her backyard. So, you're learning that in part of this tour. And then to end it all off, you get to try on old costumes, and you learn how to dance samba. And you're just, ah, this was so cool. It was a little traumatic, but at the end, the black experience is not all about trauma and slavery and that part of our story.

Through that, we've had resistance, we've had joy, we've had celebration. And so, I love that they were able to walk you through all of that in this one neighborhood. Even the art in the murals there are just very black power. We're proud to be black. And one of the murals called Etnias Mural, is this world-famous mural, and it's, I think, the biggest mural, if not in the world, at least in South America. And it's in the Little Africa neighborhood. And people don't realize that it's in the Little Africa neighborhood. And it doesn't have any historical correlation to the history there. But this draws in tourism, and people will go there, take that picture, and not know a single thing about the rest of the area. And so even Pedro de Sal, which is the salt rock, but it's where people go to party Monday night and Friday night, I think. And it's in the Little Africa neighborhood. All these tourist attractions are so deeply embedded with history, and they're so beautiful. And so that was real.

And then I went to Salvador because I was like, there's no way that I do black Brazilian history culture and don't go to Salvador, which is said to be the blackest city outside of Africa. And so [Afrotrip](#) had a black Salvador immersion trip, and she mixed it in with a food tour. So, I was able to eat traditional Salvadorian food, which is very similar to the food we have in El Pacifico. It's a little spicier, but still a lot of seafood. There was this cucumber onion salad that tasted exactly like something. My mom makes that to me, I was like, wow, there are so many similarities here. And a lot of Nigerians also find a lot of similarities there, because in Salvador, they've been able to maintain a lot of Yoruba culture, which you can tell because the Orishas and Candomble are so embedded in that city. So, it was interesting to see black history from a different perspective and how it goes from a spiritual aspect. I think Salvador is very spiritually inclined.

You'll see those Orishas and everywhere, you'll hear people talk about spirituality and religion everywhere. Like, it's just so part of them. I don't know. It was those two places. They were just very transformational to me. I could talk all day about what I learned there, but people need to go.

Matt Bowles: They do need to go. And these are the stories that need to be told, and you are telling them on your platform in a really incredible and compelling way. And so, we're going to link that up in [the show notes](#). I want people to go and watch this stuff directly. You are also doing an in-person workshop called How to Craft Scroll-Stopping, Binge-Worthy Videos at the upcoming Wits Travel Creators Summit which is in downtown Manhattan coming up in May 2025. And by the way folks, if you would like to come through for that amazing live event, there's going to be a bunch of Maverick Show guests there. And you can actually get a discount because Beth Santos, the founder of *Wanderful* puts on the Wits Travel Creator Summit, has been on the show a couple of times and she has offered Maverick Show listeners a \$75 discount. So, if you would like to come and meet Eileen in person and hang out with us and other amazing Maverick show guests, you can get those discounted tickets at themaverickshow.com/wits. And then you can come join us there. Eileen, let me ask you one more question and then we'll wrap this up and move into the *Lightning Round*. When you think back about all of these travel experiences that we have discussed over the course of this episode, how do you think that all of that travel has impacted you as a person?

Eileen Ivette: I feel like, especially if you're on TikTok, there's the diaspora wars, right, where everyone is, oh, Black American culture, oh Nigerian culture, oh Black UK London African culture, you know, like the diaspora war wars. I've never believed in the diaspora wars, but I think traveling has really solidified that for me. And the fact that there are so many more similarities between us in this diaspora across the world than there are differences. The way that the ancestors were able to maintain so many of the same culture and just call it different things, same food, same music, same dance styles, same ways of wearing hair and just named it completely different things based off the colonization language and creating creole languages to figure out how to talk to each other and things like that I think is incredible and I think it should be celebrated more. And I think we need to stop arguing and really just be like, you know what, our ancestors fought really hard for us to even be arguing about this dumb stuff.

So how about we celebrate it and go experience it and see, oh wow, that cucumber salad in Salvador really tastes like something my mama made the other day. Or oh Bomba really sounds like Garifuna music sometimes. Or New Orleans second line really sounds like Colombian Chiri Miya music. You know what I'm saying, for me, traveling has just really been ancestral and just a dot connector. It's really made me be like, wow, our cultures are so beautiful. Yeah, I may not be Sierra Leonean, but I sure do know what palm oil and cassava. I think traveling has just solidified that we are better together and stronger together as a community than apart. And we need to find ways to continue being a community globally and support each other and support our traditions and being open to the differences and understanding why those differences exist. The point is we are a community, and we should be connected, and we should be celebrating and feeling very familiar and comfortable, going to each other's spaces and knowing that you will be welcomed in these spaces because we are a community.

Matt Bowles: Well, I think that is the perfect place to end the main portion of this interview. And at this point, Eileen, are you ready to move in to the Lightning Round?

Eileen Ivette: Let's do it.

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

Eileen Ivette: [Children of Blood and Bone](#), which is a fiction book.

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

Eileen Ivette: Issa Rae. Easy.

Matt Bowles: All right, Eileen, 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 Eileen?

Eileen Ivette: Dream bigger.

Matt Bowles: Eileen, what are your top three Favorite Travel Destinations you have been to so far that you would most recommend? Other people should definitely check out.

Eileen Ivette: I'm biased. So, Colombia is number one. Brazil and then Puerto Rico. I think Puerto Rico's an amazing place to travel solo.

Matt Bowles: All right, last question. What are your top three Bucket List Destinations, Places you have not yet been highest on your list you'd most love to see.

Eileen Ivette: Japan, Switzerland and Sri Lanka.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. I have been to all three of those. So, when you're ready to plan those trips, Eileen hit me up. I want you at this point to let folks know how they can find you, follow you on social media, connect with you. If there's any brands listening to, might want to do a collab with you if people might be interested in learning more about the trips, the upcoming stuff you have going on. How do you want people to come into your world?

Eileen Ivette: So, you can follow me on all social [@eileen_ivette](#). If you're a brand listening, I love doing very culturally immersive travel content. So, holla at me if you are looking for something from that angle. And if you want to watch Black Latin History, you can follow us on [TikTok @blacklatinhistory](#) and you'll see all of our short form content on there.

Matt Bowles: All right, we are going to link all of that up in [the show notes](#). So, all of the ways to find, follow, contact Eileen, as well as direct links to everything we have discussed and your discounted link. If you would like to meet us in person at the [Wits Travel Creator Summit](#), all of that is going to be in one place. Just go to [themaverickshow.com](#) and go to the show notes for this episode. Eileen, I am such a big fan of everything that you are about and everything you are up to. Thank you so much for coming to the show.

Eileen Ivette: Thanks for having me. Thank you for the conversation. This was really good.

Matt Bowles: All right, good night, everybody.