

Matt Bowles: My guest today is Cara Celeste West. She is better known as the digital nomad mom on social media, where she has nearly 300,000 followers. She is a family travel creator. And lifestyle blogger focused on helping her community live and travel abroad. Cara and her husband sold everything to become a world-schooling family in 2023 and now travel the world full-time with their two-year-old daughter,

Cara. Welcome to the show.

Cara West: Thank you so much. Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited.

Matt Bowles: I am so excited to have you here. Let's just start off, though, by setting the scene and talking about where we are recording from today. Unfortunately, we are not in person. I am actually in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Asheville, North Carolina, on the east coast of the United States today. And where are you?

Cara West: We are actually visiting some family and friends in Austin right now. So, it's been really lovely.

Matt Bowles: I have to say, I have not spent a huge amount of time in Austin, Texas, but the time that I have spent there was incredible. The last time I was there, I was in town for the South by Southwest Conference in 2019, and it just blew my mind.

Cara West: Oh, I know Austin's grown a lot. I moved to Austin almost 10 years ago. And honestly, I miss those rent prices.

Matt Bowles: Well, for people that have never been to Austin, if folks wanted to visit Austin, what would you put them on to at this point? What would you recommend about Austin?

Cara West: I think that one of the best things about Austin is the food. Like, the food scene here is incredible and there are just so many places to go to, but my absolute favorite places are actually on the east side of Austin. I feel like the east side of Austin still has the Austin charm like before all the Californians including myself moved to Austin. So, there's so many just really cool mom-and-pop places still. It's really trendy but also still has that kind of Austin grunge feel to it. So, I love the Austin east side.

Matt Bowles: Well, talk a little bit about where you grew up. I know you lived in a couple of different places, as did I growing up, but talk a little bit about your journey growing up. And when you think back, as you were growing up, how did your initial interest in world travel start to develop?

Cara West: So, I was born in Houston, but I grew up in California and I think one of the things that was really cool about growing up in California is it's just such a diverse state and I just had friends from all different nationalities and ethnicities, and I had one friend in particular who I met in middle school. And we were really good friends in high school and her parents actually her mom was Hispanic, and her dad was from India and they traveled a lot so when they weren't in school, they traveled and we actually had a track system because there were so many kids in schools that they really needed to figure out how to like disperse the population over the years.

So, we had year-round schools, but what I loved about year-round school actually was that it allowed families to travel during the off-peak seasons. They did a lot of travel because of that. And they would tell me about them going to Mexico or going to Europe. And my family was not financially stable like that at the time. And I would always just like to beg my parents, like, I just want to go. I just want to travel. And that

was just something that I just saw just how kind that they were. And I just felt it was because they were just exposed to just so many different cultures and traditions and just different people and ways of thinking. And they were just one of the kindest. Both her and her brother were just so kind. And I just knew that when I had kids, I really wanted to teach my kids through learning through travel.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing that you had that vision for doing that with kids before you had kids that early on. So, can you talk a little bit about the rest of your trajectory? Obviously, you've now made that a reality but talk a little bit about just your career trajectory and your family life before you made this leap. What was that path like?

Cara West: So, my husband and I, when we met, really wanted to travel, but both of us were just like not in a financial position at all to travel. I mean, my husband would be glad if his car made it to work every day. Like that's where we were financially. So, we worked hard, and around 2020, I mean, everybody just reevaluated life, right? And I just got a remote job back in 2019 and I was so excited because this was going to allow us to start traveling more.

And we took our first trip to Hawaii. We got engaged and we came back literally the week after we got back, the entire world shut down. So, like it was the perfect time to have taken that trip because we wouldn't have done it either ways. So, we ended up thinking about like, well, what do we want our life to look like?

And we were paying all this money for this beautiful apartment in a really popular area of Austin. And we were like, we can't go anywhere. We can't, we're just in this box. We're paying for a box. So, we had this idea. I'm actually converting a van. Originally, we wanted to do an RV, but we couldn't get a loan for an RV. We thought about a tiny house but couldn't get a loan for a tiny house. Cause a tiny home and an RV are priced at like 15 or 20 percent. And it's also looked at as like a luxury purchase and not as like you want to use it as your home. So, because we didn't have any assets to sell, to basically buy it like a home, we were like, okay, what can we do?

So, we were watching all of these YouTube videos. We saw this couple who converted a Ford transit connect, which is the much smaller version of the big Ford Transit that you see. And so, we were like, okay, like we can make this into a mini camper. So, we did that and converted it. It took us like two months to convert it out. And then we used it one time and found out we were pregnant. And we only had two seats in that, so we couldn't use it. So, there was that dream, but after we sold it, we got a little bit of a profit from it because we had basically flipped the van into being a cargo van to this beautiful mini camper.

And so, we ended up taking that money and put it towards our getting out of our debt. And we ended up getting this incredible opportunity after having our daughter to go to Portugal and partner with a company called Boundless Life. And we went out there and we created content for them, for their program. And it was life-changing because after spending three months in a different country, we thought, wow, life is so different, and we want to keep doing this. This is everything that we've dreamed of. And we thought it was going to be domestic travel, but after traveling internationally, we thought, yeah, like we're hooked, let's sell it all. And let's do this full-time.

Matt Bowles: So, I want to break down some of the elements involved in being a full-time digital nomad family, especially with a two-year-old who's growing up while traveling the world. And I think the first thing that I want to talk about is the educational component of it. Can you explain the concept of world schooling? What is that all about? How did you come across it? And what does it mean?

Cara West: The universe is so serendipitous because I've always known that I wanted to do this. I wanted to teach my kids through travel, but I didn't realize that there was a term for this. There was a whole community around this. And I started talking about wanting to travel because at the time I was actually doing more food blogging.

So, I was a vegan food blogger and one of my followers was, "Hey, I'm going to invite you to this group called World Schoolers". And I was like, "What is this?". And she was like, "These are other families who also travel with their children as well. And I think that they're going to be a great resource for you". So, I ended up reaching out in that community and I said, "Hey, does anybody play around with this idea of living in your home country for part of the year but part of the year you travel? And if you do that, like logistically, how do you even do that? And I had so many families comment on how they do it.

But one family in particular had talked about Boundless Life. What I really loved about that particular program and why we continue to do it now is that it provides education for our daughter. And they teach in the Finnish Montessori style. So, she's very independent. It's all about giving them the agency over their learning experience. And that's really important to me because I feel we're kind of being conditioned by going to traditional school. And I just really want her to learn the things that she's interested in. And also, to not feel rushed. Like I talked to a lot of other people who have kids maybe a year or two older than her and they're talking about all these things that they need to be learning.

And I'm like, "Oh my gosh, like this is so advanced. They're only four or five". And I just really want her to enjoy her learning experience and being able to go outside and play and just be a kid and enjoy that time so, and Boundless Life does offer that and so you know people do world schooling in all different types of ways it might be a world schooling hub that they meet up for where it's maybe a month, two or three months.

But one of the things I really like about Boundless Life is, you know, it's three months at a time, and now they offer a four-week program. So, you can kind of bounce in and out of it as you need to. And it's nice because you can still keep a home base, but you can go spend three months in a different country and still be supported and have community around you.

Matt Bowles: Well, let's definitely talk a little bit more about Boundless Life and what they are up to and what they offer. You know, it was really interesting for me to read through their whole offering because I have done a number of work travel programs as a single nomad, I have patronized companies like Remote Year for example. And I did a Remote Year program back in 2016 and this is a program where the company Remote Year organizes a 12-month round-the-world itinerary for remote professionals. And then you just pay a monthly fee, and they take care of all of your accommodation. You live in a different city every month for 12 months on four continents.

They take care of your coworking space access. They take care of all your flights between places. And it's basically like turnkey digital nomading with a community built in. And when I did that from 2016 to 2017, it was interesting because I was literally talking with the people that were involved at the high level, the executives of that company. And I said, you know, the next big move in this space is going to be to create this for families. And I said, if you guys were to do that, if you guys don't do it, somebody else is going to do it. And they're going to create this, but they're going to add an education component there so that the kids can have a social component.

They can have an educational component. They can have a childcare component. Whoever does that is going to like crush because all of these nomads in 2016 that are living this life, are going to want to continue doing it, but with kids. And you guys don't currently cater to that. So, whoever creates that is going to crush. Like, I literally had that conversation in 2016, and then I see what Boundless Life is doing. And I'm like, this is amazing. Like, this is so great. They jumped on that because it was so clear that there was such a need for that. But for folks that have never heard of Boundless Life, can you share a little bit more about the details of what they offer and then what your experience as a family has been like with them?

Cara West: Yeah, absolutely. So essentially what they offer is I like to call it the office flow travel packages for families in a way that is turnkey. So, when you show up to the destination of your choice you get furnished housing, you also have education for your child, and then you also have access to a co-working center and then there's also local Staff that's on the ground there to support you as well. And you're traveling with other families during your cohort. So, if you choose a three month or a four-week cohort, you might be, you know, 10 or 20 different families will be on your cohort, but it's really nice because there are events that are, you know, are sponsored through Boundless Life during your stay.

So, where you might meet up with other moms or dads for lunch or birthday parties for the kids. And then there are also two different excursions that you can sign up for, very similar to a cruise ship, or you can sign up for an excursion. Yeah, it's just, it's been such a great experience for us, and we've done Portugal. We've also done Syros, Greece, and now we are going to be doing Bali this summer with them.

Matt Bowles: Can you talk a little bit, just for folks that are curious about how the actual education component works. And I know they have obviously different levels. Your daughter of course is two, but they do education all the way up to 12 or so. But can you talk a little bit about it? Cause you had a really nice blog post where you broke out a bunch of the different aspects of how they structure things in terms of connection time, mastery time, quest time, nature time, cultural immersion, endeavor time, and these sorts of pieces. So, for parents or maybe expecting parents who are interested in doing this with young kids, what is that educational experience looks like? And what have you found as a parent watching that?

Cara West: I think one of the things that I really love about Boundless Life, although they have incredible pillars for the kids and just really getting them immersed in nature and immersed into the local culture. One of the things I love is that even though there's a different level, it goes all the way up to 12, I know that they're going to be launching their trailblazer program soon, which will be for teenagers. But right now, it only goes up to 12, but one of the things that I really like about it is that they merge the kids in the schooling program.

So, there's a lot of times where the older kids are with the younger kids. One of the things I think is just really beautiful to see that's just so natural and innate for kids is their ability to care for each other. And the older kids are just hypersensitive and aware of the younger kids and just the way that they care for them or they're watching out for them. They're guiding them. Like, it's just, it's so sweet and it's something I've never seen before because, you know, normally most of the time the kids aren't interacting with each other if they're in different grade levels. And so that's been really amazing. And also, for, at least for our daughter, it's been great for her development because she's around, you know, kids that are four, five years old and six years old, and she's talking a lot earlier than a lot of other kids because she's just been exposed to being able to have conversation with the older kids. So that's been really amazing. And the teachers are just absolutely incredible. The staff is just so caring and they really love and they're passionate about what they do.

Matt Bowles: Well, I know Portugal is one of your all-time favorite countries, and I as well have spent many months in Portugal. I try to go through it probably every year. I was just there this past year for a little bit. I have many friends and many things that I love about Portugal, but I would love to hear from your perspective, especially as a family traveling in Portugal.

First of all, when you did the Boundless Life thing, I was, it was interesting for me to read that you were not in Lisboa, you were based in Sintra, which is really interesting. So, tell folks a little bit about Sintra and how that was to be based there, but also some of the other places you've been in Portugal and why the country is so special to you.

Cara West: Oh, my goodness. Portugal is absolutely home for me. I have never felt somewhere that has just spoken to my soul in a way that Portugal has, and one of the things we also like to about Boundless Life is they like to typically pick locations that are close enough to some of the main cities. But for far enough for you to feel like a local.

So Sintra is about a 45-minute, an hour train ride outside of Lisbon. And it's basically where royalty used to put their palaces and their castles. And so, it feels like you are literally living in a fairy tale town because you look out your window and you see three different castles and it's just so absolutely stunning. And what we just loved is that we could just easily take a quick train ride in to go to Lisbon or also to Cascais, which is right on the water. It's a beautiful little sea town. And we also love that we could easily get to Porto and to the Algarve by taking the train. So, the metro system is amazing there.

But also, one of the things that we really love just as families is the Portuguese are just some of the nicest people. Just genuinely kind people that you will ever meet. And there were so many times that we were just met with just acts of kindness that people didn't expect anything from us. Maybe didn't even speak any English, but one thing, in particular, I remember happening was Zora, our daughter, she was having a meltdown on the train, and the lady next to me, she didn't speak any English at all, but she saw that I was struggling as a mom, just, you know, trying to console her on the, on the train ride and she offered to take her and to have her look out the window.

And, you know, it was just, it was the kindest thing, but we were met with that time and time and time again there. And I also really love just how much they value family and children, and every time we were in line, whether it be for a restaurant or checking out at, at the grocery store or buying clothes at a store, we were met with, you know, you have a child, you should go front of the line. And there was no if, ands or buts about it. And nobody was upset that we were going to the front of the line because they recognized that we had a small child and that's just a courtesy for them. It's just the norm. And after being there and being so stressed as a new mom in the U.S., I thought this is how it should be. This is how we should be valuing children and mothers and families.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask you about your experience living on a Greek island. Can you talk about how that was as a family?

Cara West: Yeah, very similar to Portugal, I feel like. Especially because Syros, Greece, it's about 45 minutes of a ferry ride from Mykonos and about a two-and-a-half-hour ferry ride from Athens. But it's one of the only islands that has more of a city feel. A lot of the other islands feel like a traditional Greek island, but Syros is actually the capital of the Cyclades islands. So, it does really feel like more of a metropolitan city, but you still get that island feel. And one of the things we really loved about Syros was that it was just

one of the most amazing locations, it's a unicorn location. It's got everything you need within a 10 -to-15-minute walking distance. You can easily rent a car for 35 Euros a day and go to all the different beaches that are there. You can hop on the ferry and go to Mykonos, hop on the ferry, go to Santorini.

And the people are so kind because it's such a small island as well. Everybody knows each other. And one of the things that I will never forget, we were walking in the square that they have there at night and it was probably about nine or 10 o'clock and the kids were just out playing. They had a movie projected out on the square for families. The parents were sitting around the square having wine and beer and coffee at the cafes around the square. And I just thought, "Wow. This is such a safe place". I've never experienced this before, except for being at like Disney World, where I've felt that type of joy and excitement when you go on the main street.

And this was just a regular Saturday night in Ciros. And it's one of the reasons why we're going back in April. So, we're super excited about it.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask you about traveling as a vegan family. I know food is a big thing in your life and it's very important to you. And so, for vegan folks, do you have any travel tips, and can you share some of your experiences as a vegan traveler in particular?

Cara West: Yeah, absolutely. So honestly, the best thing that we do, we use happy cows, just like most vegan travelers. And also too, when we're planning our own accommodation, we try to look and see where the top restaurants are vegan, vegetarian-friendly restaurants available. And we try to plan our stay around that. So, we do a lot of planning ahead of time. So that helps a lot. And also too, one of the reasons why I think we really do like European destinations is because they tend to have a lot of vegan options. Even when we were in Ortona, Italy, which is a small little medieval town right outside of Florence and Tuscany.

And we were surprised that they even had a lot of vegan options just in the small town as well, too. So, I just think Europe is just light years ahead, unfortunately, of the U.S. And so, it is really easy to be vegan or vegetarian as well. So, it just takes a little bit more planning for sure, but there are much more options than you would actually think. Especially now, I feel like because people are much more open and aware of sustainability when it comes to animal agriculture.

Matt Bowles: What have been some of the top vegan food experiences around the world? Are there any particular places, moments or locations that come to mind that you want to shout out?

Cara West: Honestly, Portugal really surprised me. I think if you're a foodie, Lisbon and Porto are incredible destinations just for food in general. And one of the things my husband and I could not get over when we were in Lisbon was how all of the restaurants, their vibe, and aesthetic match the food, and there's so much thought that's like putting into your overall experience. And I'm such a foodie. So, I think that that's why Portugal is so high on my list because they just do it right when it comes to the aesthetic and the food, incredible.

Matt Bowles: Well, one of the other things I want to ask you about that I've really appreciated about your content is you make some of your content, particularly for the black community, the African American community. And you'll talk about, here's how I felt in terms of safety as a black woman in this location or that location. And as you're traveling around the world, you do a lot of that. Can you share a little bit about at this point in your journey, some of your reflections on navigating anti-blackness globally, and what you've experienced in the world compared to the United States, for example?

Cara West: Yeah. And you know, it actually was really interesting because when I started looking into this on TikTok, I remember going to some black creators, their pages as expats and someone, and I can't remember who the creator was, but they had mentioned our experience as black travelers is very different than that of a white travel blogger. And I never thought about that, but I almost thought about it as like, that's. It's such actually a positive thing because a lot of times when you're traveling and you've got people in the service industry or the hospitality industry, they tend to be people of color and there's this thing of you can relate.

And the experience is actually really positive. And I just never thought about that at, wow, there's not a lot of representation or perspective of how our travel experiences as black travelers or even black expats living abroad. And one of the things that's really hard to convey to African Americans who have not traveled abroad is that the world is not a scary place, and honestly, I've experienced more racism and more anxiety being in the U.S. than I ever have abroad. And there are times where, you know, you might get stares, but I feel like that's more because you're in a local area, especially like in Greece. They call them the neighborhood grandmas, you know? They know everybody, and they know everything about everybody, so if you're new coming in, they're going to stare at you, but it's nothing to be offended by. It's just that they don't know who you are.

I have found that being black abroad has been a really incredible experience. And honestly, if anybody has the chance to do it, they should just experience it because it's actually way more peaceful abroad to be black than it is to be in the United States.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask you about your lessons and reflections and maybe even tips at this point for traveling with a toddler. I feel like there's a lot of parents that I know when they have kids that age, they're like, when they get older, then we'll travel with them. You have been traveling full-time with a toddler, and I want to ask you for lessons, reflections, but also tips for parents who are considering it with perhaps a toddler at that age.

Cara West: I would say go for it. And the reason why I say that is because when you wait till, they're older, they have their own interests and passions and things that they want to do, they want to have their friends around them. And I feel like this is the perfect age, especially even before them being a toddler, like they're so mobile. You just take them with you so much easier. You got to take a few more things with you as far as stuff and packing, but it was actually easier to travel with our daughter before she started really walking and talking. And now it's still a great opportunity for us to travel with her. And there's a few different things that we have.

We are invested in our Amazon fire tablet for her, which has been amazing because we download books and games and videos for her. And I mean, it just, it can keep her occupied for hours, honestly, especially on those long-haul flights that we have to do. I mean, it's been a really great experience and I feel like one of the things that I was worried about when I became pregnant. I thought, "Oh my gosh, I'm going to lose out on my dreams to travel the world". And what I have found is by traveling with my daughter, I now get to see the world in a very different perspective because to see her interact with locals or to see her, you know, one of the things we always do is we always look for the moon wherever we are.

And just those little things that she gets to experience or the new foods in different countries. And it's something that I wouldn't have appreciated because, for her, everything is new, you know? And so, I just get to experience her travel and it's more memorable and even more special that way.

Matt Bowles: That is so lovely. I want to also now ask you about your path to becoming a professional content creator, you have now over 300,000 something followers on social media across your channels and everything else. You have brand deals. You have all sorts of things going on. Can you share the path to becoming the digital nomad mom on social media that you are now?

Cara West: Yeah. Thank you for asking that question. Cause people see me now and I'm like, Ooh, I'm like, if you could have seen me 2017. Trying to figure this out because it is really tough, and I think people see travel content creators or food creators and it seems like it's an overnight thing but it's really not. There's been so much that I've had to learn over the years from photography to videography to learning the ever-changing algorithms and also still being able to figure out how to authentically be myself and tell my story or stand up for the things I believe in, even if they're not popular things to be in support of.

So, it's been definitely a journey, but I started wanting to do food blogging. My friend and I, when I had moved to Austin, I thought, wow, Austin is such a cool place for foodies, and she was a foodie. And so, we started a food blog together. And then I ventured off on my own, doing my own food blog as a vegan food blogger. And it really wasn't until I became a mom that I really started to get into more of the travel space. I had kind of introduced it a little bit on my vegan social media pages before that, because I thought there's definitely a niche here for vegan travel that's not being fulfilled. So, I kind of started talking about travel then, but it really wasn't until I became a mom that I was like, oh my gosh, get me out of the U.S. How do I do this? And I'm going to just voice my frustrations and concerns.

And it really wasn't for me when I started my TikTok. It really wasn't about creating content on there. It was really just about voicing my frustrations as a new mom living in America. And then it quickly snowballed because I'd been in the travel industry. I've worked in travel and hospitality for the past 10 years, and it really kind of started this content around, well, let me just share my knowledge of what I know and just help people, whether that's finding better deals for hotels and vacation rentals, or what visa programs are out there for people to consider, or what countries are offering people to move there for free, you know?

So, I just started creating a lot of resources for people and my page just honestly took off and, you know, I started getting all these opportunities and I just slowly transitioned from doing food really from just being primarily travel. So, I do post about, you know, my food adventures every now and again, but for the most part, it's all family travel.

Matt Bowles: I want to ask at this point and in today's social media landscape, what tips or leverage points would you recommend for people who are trying to grow social media audience?

Cara West: I know it's so cliché, but just being yourself is the most important, like figuring out who you are, what content resonates with you, what content are you passionate about trying different things.

Like I think people are so worried that they have to stick to one thing when they first start out. And that is true, but you're going to have to kind of throw spaghetti at the wall and see what sticks. And once you start seeing that the algorithm likes certain types of content, then you can start making more of that because you know that there's an interest there. And that's exactly what happened to me. I made all different types of videos on TikTok until I really started homing in on wanting to do digital nomadism and travel. And that's what really stuck. And that's what I started making more and more content of. And also, to the power of series. And creating a formula for yourself because humans love repetition.

And so, if you can create a formula for all of your videos, that gives people this sense of comfort or familiarity, your page is going to grow because they know what to expect from you. Even though the content in the video is always different. If you have the same hook or the same ending, it really does help people to connect with you more because you're giving them a safe space almost because I know what to expect. And then also to just like thinking about what topics are trending. And I think at least in today's social media world, I feel like it's really about having, you know, discourse and discussion with people. And that really actually boosts your engagement because if people have something to talk about in the comments, the algorithm sees that as, oh, people are engaging with this. It's keeping people on the platform for longer. So, let's push it out for more people to see. And I think that has a really big push for people, to grow their content and to get to their target audience faster.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask you about monetization at this point as a professional content creator. Can you share any lessons or tips for folks that are looking to monetize their content?

Cara West: Absolutely. If they want to monetize their content, I really feel like it's really important to talk about the brands, the products and the services that you already use and you're passionate about. And I know that there's a lot of controversy about this in the industry realm because everybody wants to get paid.

And I totally agree with that. But at the same time, while you're getting started, being able to showcase how you're passionate about a brand and also to interacting with that brand's page or talking about their products. You have to be able to show what you can offer a brand as well, too. And that's the biggest advice that I can give to people is, you know, start talking about those products and putting product placement in your page so that when brands are ready to work with you, they see that you're capable of being able to talk about their product in a way that resonates with your audience and that your audience is interested.

Matt Bowles: And there's a middle ground too, right? Which is that a lot of these brands have affiliate programs that virtually anyone can sign up for, and so you can do that, and you can still get some level of compensation for talking about what you like and then giving an affiliate link there. And then do you have any other, maybe monetization avenues or channels beyond just landing a brand deal?

Are there any other ways that you've monetized your content or that you would recommend people think about it? Should there be multiple streams of income from your content? How do you think about a content ecosystem?

Cara West: Yes, I think it's so important to start creating your own products and services, especially as you create a community, you have a loyal following, being able to create something that resonates with your audience, but also is in connection to your content.

So, for me, I've been investing in starting to do digital products, selling courses, eBooks for my community, also doing consultations and coaching for people who want to start becoming digital nomads or want to start their journey and living abroad. So, there's so many different avenues that I have as far as to create location independent streams of income. And that's really what I teach my clients as well as, you know, how do you turn your passion into creating something that can provide you with income and multiple streams of income that will allow you to be location independent?

Matt Bowles: Well, the other thing I want to ask you about is your choice, which I have so appreciated about your content to use your platform to speak out about social justice issues, human rights issues in the world, and I think that is so important. And that is one of the things that drew me personally to your content

and to you as a person. And I'm wondering if you could just talk about that, because I think there's a lot of people that don't do that. And right now, as we're recording this, the genocide is going on in Palestine. That is one of the issues that you have spoken out about on your platform. And I'm wondering maybe if we could just start with that and talk a little bit about that. Can you share a little bit about your journey in learning about the Palestinian struggle and the genocide that's going on and your decision to speak out about that on your platform?

Cara West: I was so naive to everything that had been going on for the past 75 years. And I think many people have been in the same position of just kind of being in the dark about what's been going on and it truly is the power of social media and why I tell people that social media is life-changing because anybody can go viral now today and it means that your life can change overnight and I think that the information that we've been able to get about what's happening from people who are living in Gaza is changing the world, is changing the way we treat each other, the way that we look at life, the way that we show empathy for each other.

I think this is a turning point for humanity, even more so than COVID. I think COVID was an awakening for a lot of us, but I feel this is really shaking people to their core, because we've never seen something like this and had access to see it. Right from the tip of our fingers and also that the truth hasn't been able to be shared like this before. And so, when I was on TikTok I started seeing all of the videos and getting the information and educating myself and following Palestinian creators and really understanding what was going on and I think honestly what was even more challenging for me was that I would look out at the sea in Greece and go I'm just a sea away.

And I think in America, we feel so far removed from what's going on, but there, I was really shaken by that. This is happening. I could drive there. Like that's how close this is happening to me. And I really wanted to speak out about it. And I felt I would be disingenuous as a travel creator. To talk about places and people but turn a blind eye when things like this are happening in the world.

And I just think as a global citizen, you can't just always show the good. You also have to show the struggles that people are also having. And also too, just being able to travel and meet so many different types of people and cultures and just having more empathy. This travel does that to you. You just have more empathy because you know what it's like to be in a position where you need help, where you can't read a sign, where you can't, you don't know how to do your laundry.

It's just simple things, you know, and you don't know the language and people are willing to help you not because they expect something from you, but because they're just good people. And you realize there's so much good in the world and there's so many good people. And. Yeah, like, why not? Why not speak out about it? And I know people are afraid to speak out about it, but I hope that there's enough people speaking out about it now that it's made it safer for people who either didn't have enough information at the time or didn't want to feel ostracized for speaking out about this genocide that's going on.

Matt Bowles: Well, I have appreciated your content and you so very much for everything that you have been doing on that. We, of course, are going to link up all of your social media handles and everything else in [the show notes](#) so that folks can follow you and come into your world because you are doing really important stuff. I want to ask you a few final questions before we wrap this up and move into the lightning round.

Just reflecting on the impact that travel has had overall. And I think I want to ask you three questions, but I want to kind of go in this order. I want to ask you to just personally reflect on you as a person when you think about Cara and the reflections that these experiences have had on you. The second question I want to ask you is about how it impacted your relationship and your marriage, your relationship with your husband, what impact has there been there for the travels?

And then the third question is about your daughter, and what impact you think the travel has had or will have on your daughter as she grows up? So those are kind of the three areas, and you can take them in any order you want.

Cara West: Thank you for asking this. This is actually really interesting for me to think about. I think what the impact that travel has had on me is actually less of the travel, but the grit I have had to have to make this life a possibility. And I keep telling myself, if it was easy, everybody would be doing it because it's been really hard. It's really hard to even as exciting as it sounds to like we sold it all and we're traveling the world.

Like it's really hard not having a home base sometimes and it's hard parting with your things and you constantly are doubting yourself because this is just not normally how people live life. So, you're constantly, am I making the right decisions? Am I doing the right thing? It's really tough to just like stand in your truth sometimes and really honor what it is that you need to be happy in life and to put your happiness first because your friends and family may doubt you as far as the decisions that you're making or put their own fear and doubt in your mind and just really having to center yourself and calm your mind and know that like you're making the right decisions for yourself and your family.

So that's definitely something that I've learned through this experience with my partner. I think I've just learned of how strong we are as a couple, as a partnership, because he left his job to be able to be a stay-at-home dad and for us to travel and just how supportive he is of me and in my business as a content creator. It has really just improved our relationship overall because we just see how much support we have for each other. And also, like, we're with each other a lot now because before he was working a lot as a restaurant manager. So, we're together like 24/7 now. And you really are like, okay, I really like you because we're in each other's space.

And two, you're traveling in small spaces too. Sometimes like we were in the small little hotel in London. And it wasn't even big enough for the two of us, let alone a three-person family. So, you really start to realize how much you truly love each other. And I feel for our daughter, what it has really given her, I just feel she's just going to have this love for life because she's going to look back and we're just creating the coolest baby book for her.

And she's going to look back and just go, wow, my parents were wild. They did all this. I just love how much fun she's having on our travels and all the things that she sees. And at the end of the day, though, my goal is to teach her to be kind and to care for people. And I hope that what she sees on our travels and how many people have helped us and have just cared for us, simply because we're human beings too, then she will take that with her for the rest of her life and really always put humanity first. So that's what I hope we aim to teach her in our travels.

Matt Bowles: Well, I think that is an amazing place to end the main portion of this interview and at this point, Cara, are you ready to move into the lightning round?

Cara West: Oh yes. Yes. I'm excited.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it. All right. What is one book maybe that has significantly impacted you over the years? You'd most recommend that people should read.

Cara West: The book that honestly changed my life and probably the trajectory into traveling is [Eat, Pray, Love](#). It's one of my favorite movies, but the book is even better.

Matt Bowles: 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.

Cara West: I would have to say she's also an influencer. Her name is Nabella. I think she's just at Nabella. And I love the brand that she has created for her and her family. And she has come from nothing and parents of immigrants. And I would love to just sit down and talk with her because I'm obsessed.

Matt Bowles: Carol, what is one travel hack that you use that you can recommend to people?

Cara West: Oh my gosh, travel credit cards all day long because they have so many perks and we just pay for everything on our travel credit cards because we have to pay for them anyway, so we might as well get the points and miles.

Matt Bowles: Knowing everything that you know now if you could go back and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self. What would you say to 18-year-old Cara?

Cara West: Dump that boy and buy a one-way ticket.

Matt Bowles: Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! That is amazing! All right, Cara, of all the places you have now traveled, what are three of your favorite destinations you would most recommend other people should definitely check out?

Cara West: For sure, Portugal, top on the list. Greece as well. And a place that I really liked a lot that shocked me was Berlin, Germany.

Matt Bowles: What are your top three bucket list destinations? These are places you have not yet been, highest on your list and you would most love to see.

Cara West: Switzerland, Japan, and Dubai.

Matt Bowles: I have been to all three of those. So, when you are ready to plan those trips, Cara hit me up. I have some great recommendations for you because those are three very incredible places.

All right, Cara, 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 I do that, can you just share a little bit about what Hip hop music means to you and why you love hip hop?

Cara West: My mom, she just played all different types of music for us, but I feel like I always really gravitated either to like really ethereal music or Hip hop. I'm either in a calm state or I need to be motivated, and that's like what Hip hop does for me. It just puts me in this very motivating trance.

So, I'd have to say my top five. Missy Elliot, of course, is the goat. I'm going to have to say Megan the Stallion because she's from Houston. She's a Texas girl. And I'm also going to have to say, Mary J. Blige. I just think that she is so phenomenal. And I actually got to see her perform a few years ago, actually before COVID in Houston. And she was incredible. Then I definitely have to say every party in high school, E-40,

and also too, I absolutely love him. He has so much influence on what Beyonce has been doing recently. And his name is Tobe. I can't remember how to pronounce his last name, Tobe Nwigwe, I believe it is, but he's from Houston. He's an up-and-coming rapper. The visuals of his videos are stunning and him and his wife. I mean, they integrate their family and everything that they do. He's such a family man and we're obsessed with him.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, Cara, I want you to let folks know, first of all, how they can find you, how they can follow you on social media, and also let folks know about this digital nomad course that you have, how people can work with you and how you want people to come into your world.

Cara West: Yeah, absolutely. So, if anybody's interested, they could follow me over at Cara Celeste West. I'm on Instagram, on TikTok, and on YouTube, and then if anybody is interested in kind of breaking into the digital nomad world, or wants help finding remote work, or moving abroad, just not sure where to start, that's what I'm here for to help with.

They can book a session with me by just clicking that link in my bio on any of those platforms and you can book a call with me as well as sign up for any of [my courses](#). And the great thing is I also offer an affiliate code for any of the courses. So, if people want to sign up to be an affiliate for the course, they can, and they can start earning money right away.

Matt Bowles: We're going to link all of that up in [the show notes](#). So, folks can just go to one place at [themaverickshow.com](#). Go to the show notes for this episode, there you're going to find all of Cara's social media handles, the link to her course, and everything else that we have discussed in this episode.

Cara, this was amazing, thank you so much for coming to the show.

Cara West: Thank you so much, I appreciate it.