

INTRO: This is part two of my interview with Kylah Williams. 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 heard [part one](#), you know, we're about halfway through our bottle of wine, so please enjoy the conclusion of my interview with Kylah Williams.

Matt Bowles: Well, Kylah, we have to talk about Mexico City. Can you share a little bit about your experience moving there, landing your Fulbright Binational Business Award after grad school and what it was like when you got to Mexico City and we're living there?

Kylah Williams: Yeah, Fulbright is another thing you should look into. If you are not really ready to step fully into corporate, you still want to travel. You don't always have to be working full time, but you could be teaching English, getting a grad degree, or doing a research grant in other countries around the world. And Fulbright will allow you to do so and also will give you a little bit of a stipend to carry it out. So, when I had graduated from my master's degree, I had done a project with the Smithsonian on engaging Latino families. And with that project I got to interview Latino families in Spanish, create screeners, questionnaires, all those things. Just continuing to further and advance my love for Spanish in business, honestly. So, when I had gotten to a point a quarter of the way through my grad program, I was like, I knew I'm not ready to go into the full-time corporate world yet. I still have more that I want to see. And I was looking into Fulbright and my advisor was like, you should apply to the Fulbright Binational Business Fellowship.

Initially, I wanted to go back to Chile, but I was like, hmm, this could work. So, I ended up looking into it. And it was a program that allows you to work full time at a Mexican multinational company, take MBA courses at a private university in the country, travel, immerse yourself, experience Mexico City, all while getting paid. I mean, you're not getting paid top dollar, but, you know, an experience is top dollar to me. So, I was okay with it. And I ended up applying my master's program, and I got selected. It was one out of 16 people. It's a very prestigious program. I think people are starting to find out more about it because I posted a lot about my experience, and I've been getting an influx of potential candidates, like, hey, can you help me through my application? I'm interested. Tell me more.

So, if you're interested in combining those passions, I highly recommend you look into this. But when I touched down in Mexico, I felt like this is exactly where I was supposed to be. I was in a professional high, just having gotten my master's. I was in a Spanish high, having experienced all those experiences in different countries. And it was time for me to combine them. Working at Casa de los Leones, which was a luxury tequila company in Mexico City, as a bilingual business analyst slash strategist, slash a lot of things. It was still on the newer end of the business, but I got to step foot in a lot of parts of it, and it was great.

Matt Bowles: How comfortable and familiar did it feel given your background that you talked about of spending so many years in a super majority Mexican immigrant school? And being so immersed with Mexican people and Mexican culture when you finally got to the country, how did that feel?

Kylah Williams: When I was younger and I experienced those things, it felt like the best thing in the world. But then being able to experience *Día de los Muertos* in Mexico, I was in Guanajuato at the time, San Miguel de Allende. Incredible. People really go all out with the ofrendas, which are offerings to people who have passed on as a way to commemorate them. People really like the *pan de muerto* was a traditional bread that they would have around all bakeries. That's just a reminder of, hey, this is this season. And I remember coming on my team bringing it in. Everyone has to try *pan de muerto*. And I was like, okay. Oh, that bread was so good. It's a dough. It's a very plain dough with sugar on top. And everyone has, like,

different variations. Some can have canela, which is cinnamon, but the majority of them is just dough with sugar.

And it's just like a way to feel in season, you know how, I don't know, in the States, maybe putting up a Christmas tree might make you feel like it's Christmas time. You know, it was just one of those things where they knew the season because of the foods that were being served and around. And so, experiencing that firsthand, oh, it makes me want to continue to experience it because it's nothing like seeing how long these people have been preserving culture over years and then still go all out with it. But I think *Día de los Muertos* was big Christmas. I experienced some of the markets around the time the Independence Day. I got to experience two Independence Days in Mexico City. It was truly worth it. It felt full circle for me, having had those experiences when I was younger, to see it in real life with my own adult grown, matured eyes.

Matt Bowles: So, having lived in Chile and Spain and Mexico, how did your perspective and interest in cross cultural marketing approaches and multicultural advertising further develop in your experience in Mexico?

Kylah Williams: It made me have much more of an appreciation for people that are already doing the work, Businesses and companies that have already diversified across different borders. And it also made me reflect on my life and the United States as a black woman, because I feel like when I talk about marketing in English, it's not the same marking that is used to a black community. African American vernacular English versus Southern English versus New York vernacular. Everyone has different ways that they are accustomed to being approached in and talked to. And I think seeing that in Spanish allowed me to unfold the layers that this doesn't just happen in Spanish, it doesn't just happen in English, it happens in Japanese, it happens in Tagalog, it happens in Amharic, it happens in Arabic. Every single place has different regions that speak differently, that have different approaches in order for them to actually feel seen and be spoken to. And I think that brought it to life, having had those experiences.

Matt Bowles: And can you also talk about perfecting your Spanish fluency and learning the differences in Spanish dialects among these different Spanish speaking countries?

Kylah Williams: So, I learned Mexican Spanish again. I went to a school with predominantly Mexican students, teachers. So, when I went to Chile, I remember being like, oh, I'm fluent, I'm ready. Oh no. There was a learning curve because Chileans, number one, speak very fast. So, I'm used to a very neutral pace. And a lot of people will tell me that I have more of a neutral sounding accent, but it's because I think that's just how I was taught. But Chileans speak very fast. They're sarcastic, meaning there's a lot of innuendos in what they're saying. Some of the words that are used are just different.

In Chile, *traffico* is taco. In Mexico, taco is something that you eat. And then in Spain, I feel like taco is a heel or a *tacón*. It could be *tacón* as a whole. And when I tried to use some of those phrases across the borders, they didn't always land. And so, I would constantly ask, like, my host family, oh, that's not how you say this. *Me tinca* in Chile was I'd like to, *me gusta* in Mexico, *me apetece* in Spain. There are just those differences that don't translate as well to other countries. But that doesn't mean that they don't know how to speak it. That doesn't mean that they can't understand it. It just means that they say it differently.

So, I learned a lot. I think bro was also very common one. There are so many ways to say bro. Popcorn, a straw. Everyone has their own thing. And I think it made me realize that that's okay. Differences are to be

accepted and to be understood and to be learned, not critiqued, just because it's not what you're used to. So, I think it was definitely an appreciation that grew for language, and not just in Spanish, but in English, too, because I know that sometimes I'll say something to an older cousin or aunt, and they're like, what did you say? And I'm like, oh, you guys don't say that. But I do, and that's okay. So, it was appreciation, I would say, for those learnings, for sure.

Matt Bowles: Well, I know during that year, you also got to travel to Sao Paulo, Brazil. Can you share what your impressions were the first-time visiting São Paulo?

Kylah Williams: I must say that the minute you said the three places that were recommended for street art and São Paulo being one of them, I went down a spiral. I was like, wait a minute. There were so many pictures that I took of the art in São Paulo that I don't think I made that big of a deal of initially. But I remember mentioning I had gone to Beco de Batman. I remember walking down there, and there was so much street art on the wall, colorful street art. There's even this big sign that I feel like a lot of people who visit Brazil or São Paulo particularly, will take pictures at. And it just says Brazil and has the green and the yellow and all of the vibrant colors. But, yeah, that was a huge thing. I had never considered going to Brazil until one of my friends from my grad program was like, hey, I'm having my wedding. You know, we kept in contact. We were on the same team when we did projects together. She was like, I'm getting married. Would love for you to come. And I was like, absolutely.

So, I was able to go and experience Brazil for the first time and not like a mainstream context. We've talked about people who have expectations for places because they've heard a lot about them. But I don't think I heard that much about São Paulo before I visited. So, it was great to me. It was amazing to see how even on the outside of those big cities that people talk about, there's still so much culture, so much pride, and so much to do. I went to a very popular museum. I think it was the Contemporary Museum of Art in São Paulo. I also went to an island off the coast of São Paulo which was called Ilhabela. The bluest waters, mountainous backdrops, very pretty, had plenty of caipirinhas. I got to watch samba. I got to see live samba too, because she had some live performances at her wedding. But it was a great experience. I'm so glad that I peaced out for a little bit from my Mexico City life and was like, let me experience something new.

Matt Bowles: Yeah. I as well have only been to São Paulo for a relatively short period of time compared to the amount of time I spent in Rio. But it was just incredible. And I went there exactly what you said. I had not heard as much about São Paulo as I had heard about Rio. So, I had spent like a couple months in Rio and then I started meeting people and somebody says, my favorite city in the world is São Paulo. I was like, you've been to Rio? She's like, yeah. And I was like, and you've been to Tokyo and Istanbul and all these places? Like, yeah, yeah, yeah. And so, I was like, I got to go. And so, I went. And knowing the street art part of it and knowing, as you know, that I travel for street art, I went by myself. I was in Buenos Aires and I just flew to São Paulo alone and I booked a private full day street art tour. Now, São Paulo is absolutely massive. I mean, you're talking about a city of over 20 million people. I mean, this is just significantly bigger than New York City, right? And so, the city's huge, and there's all of these different parts of the city.

And so, I booked a full day street art tour with a street art expert driving me, just me in a car all around the city to all these different parts. And it was just so spectacular. And then when you get there, you also find out that it has one of the most spectacular culinary scenes in all of South America. So really, I would say the two cities in South America that compete for best culinary scene are São Paulo, Brazil, and Lima, Peru. And actually, this is probably a good transition to talk about Peru. Can you share what your experience was

like in Peru? Because you and I have done some of the same things, because I've seen your [Instagram](#) post about it, but you've also done some things that I have not done in Peru, like hiking the Rainbow Mountains. So, I would love to hear about that experience and just overall your impression of Peru.

Kylah Williams: I love Peru. I haven't been to Lima, so if you've been to Lima, you have one thing that I actually haven't done. But I landed in Cusco. And I don't know if it was like that for you, but landing into what feels like a historic town, that flight, the landing was so unique to me. I don't think I've ever landed in a city that way before. But you were so close to what felt like just the town. It was a unique experience. But oh, my goodness, where to start? Well, I guess we can start with Rainbow Mountain. So, part of my trip included a hike to Rainbow Mountain, which, if you guys don't know Rainbow Mountain is number one, requires effort for you to get there. So, it's not, well, you could take a horse or a mule, I believe, but we did it the OG way and walked. They give you a hiking stick, they give you some coca leaves, because altitude sickness is a thing. And your kind of just start hiking. You start hiking up a literal mountain. And once you get to the top, you see the layers of a mountain peel back that expose color, different shades of red, different shades of brown, and different shades of beige.

And it flows into this beautiful flow of art. But it's natural, it's not man made. And so, I remember when we got to the base, we were already tired at this point. And we were like, but we have to go to the top. Because the top is where you can overlook everything. But the top required a very steep hike in order to get there. And at that point, you're just a little tired. Again, this is not to deter anybody. You can do it. We were able to do it. And we're here to tell the story. But you get to the base and you're like, okay, let me just do this last hike. And you start climbing upwards and you see other people doing it, which is encouraging. But your stick really comes in handy to help you scale the rock. And once you get to the top, there was this lady who had two little llamas next to her and it was a photo op obviously, but it was just nice to see because llamas are very unique to Peru. I'm sure you've seen them when you were there.

So just sitting there at the top, they had little bandanas around their neck and she was in her cultural attire. But it made it feel worth it. They say if you didn't take a picture, did you really go? Which, yeah, I felt like I needed that picture to just prove that I made it up the mountain. But it was a hike, but it was very worth it. And again, if you don't feel like you're capable of hiking it, you can take a mule or horse at a little extra cost. But I think when I go with my group trip, I plan to hike it again because it's doable and it's an experience as long as you're breathing right. Maybe taking those coca leaves which help you level out that altitude sickness and it's a beautiful sight to see.

Matt Bowles: Can I tell you, Kylah, that the Rainbow Mountain, the reason I haven't been there is not for lack of trying. It was one of my greatest travel fails, I think in terms of my attempt to hike the Rainbow Mountain, I literally organized. I was the lead organizer for a trip of 17 people, including me, to hike the Rainbow Mountain. So, I booked this, I organized the logistics. We 17 of us, we're all in Lima, we're going to Cusco, we're going to hike to Rainbow Mountain. And I was planning to fly from Lima to Cusco, which is only a one hour direct domestic flight. Super easy, straightforward. Three days before the hike and I was going to hang out in Cusco, adjust a little bit to the altitude, do some fun stuff in Cusco, check it out and then be totally prepared for the Rainbow Mountain hike. What could possibly go wrong, Kylah? It was one thing after another.

The first day I show up at the airport to get on my flight, I forgot my passport. I'm trying to negotiate with them. I was like, it's just a domestic flight. I'm not leaving Peru. I'm just flying to a different place in Peru. Can I just use my driver's license? Like no, you have to have a passport if you're not a Peruvian citizen. So, I

go back to my place and then by the time there wasn't another flight that day, so I'm like Okay, listen, I have three days, I'll just go the next day, I'll get another flight. Next day I get to the airport early, I'm there, I got my passport double checked, ready to go, give them the thing, get on the plane. I'm sitting on the plane and they're like yeah, we're going to have to deplane this plane because it's not going to go because we got a mechanical failure. We get off the plane, they forced me to check my luggage, which I never do and then that took five hours to get it back and then there's no more planes to Cusco that day. So now I'm back again and it was just like one thing after another.

Literally by the time I get to Cusco Kyla, it was too late because as you know you have to leave preposterously early to hike the Rainbow Mountain. So, I land on the day of the hike but it's far too late because they get picked up at the hotel 2 o'clock in the morning or something to start this insanely early hike. So, I missed the Rainbow Mountain hike. So, all of my friends, 16 other people hiked the Rainbow Mountain on my coordination and I alone missed the hike. So, I heard about it but I have not yet been there. So, it is to be done on a future trip to Peru. But that's so exciting you're organizing a trip. Do you have details yet on when it's going to go and how people can potentially join if they want to see Peru?

Kyla Williams: Yes, I am planning it for 2027 actually. And we will be in Lima, we will be in Cusco. We will also be doing Machu Picchu, Huacachina. Did you get the chance to see Huacachina?

Matt Bowles: I did and I sand boarded the dunes in Huacachina and it was a really special and spectacular experience.

Kyla Williams: Yes, and that's been on my bucket list. So, I feel like when I make travel itineraries it's not just because I want people to go but it's also because I want to go. I love traveling and I want to experience that. There's going to be a boat tour around the Ballestas Islands in good spirit. There will be a wine tour. We'll be doing Rainbow Mountain, exploring culinary experiences in Peru, seeing Pisco Sour, Lomo Saltado and having those experiences. So, if you're interested in traveling to Peru, May 2027, be ready because we're getting ready to go and embark on a trip that might change your life, especially if it's your first time out of the country. Because I know Chile changed mine, and I always say that, so you never know. But as long as you're ready and open to learn and be a part of it, it'll be good.

Matt Bowles: I feel like for my month in Lima, almost every single night was Lomo Saltado and Pisco Sours. Every night, it was just magical. The food in Lima is completely next level. And the pisco sours, if you've not had pisco sours, they're magical. If you have had pisco sours but you haven't had one in Peru, it's a whole another level, so get excited for that.

Kyla, we also have to talk about Colombia. Can you share your experience, where you went and what some of the highlights were for you? How did you experience? What was your impression of Colombia?

Kyla Williams: Colombia I did solo. I did a solo trip to Colombia. I started in Medellin. Immediately off of the flight, I took a bus to Guatapé because I wanted to hike this Piedra del Peñol, which has a lot of steps. And I know we've been talking about altitude and, boy, I can't get enough of it because it was 740 steps of just straight upwards. But it was worth it because the views were so worth it. But, yeah, Guatapé was a colorful city. I got my first experience, I think, with like, Tuk Tuks, which was their way of getting around little tricycle rides. Also experienced those in the Philippines, which was interesting. But I did that for three days, two nights, and then I went to Medellin for, I think, four days and three nights. And in Medellin, I did paragliding experience.

Matt Bowles: I did that as well. Kylah, you have to explain this to people. So, first of all, doing it in Medellin, Colombia, is one of the most beautiful and spectacular and extraordinary places in the world to do it. So, I'm really fortunate that you and I had the experience to do it, but I had never done it before. So, for people that maybe aren't exactly clear on what exactly paragliding is, can you describe the experience of doing it in Medellin and what it's like?

Kylah Williams: Yes, three things; have trust, adrenaline and open your eyes. Because while it can be very scary, and when you're paragliding, you're essentially being flown in tandem with an instructor. Your legs are hanging free, you look down and you see your feet, and you also see the city. You also see the world beneath you, because it's open in that way. But the way that you kick off, in order for you to go on this experience is the guide tells you, just run and then sit when I tell you to sit. And these are very important cues to follow because they will.

Matt Bowles: Just to be clear, you and the pilot, you're connected to each other, but you're in front and the pilot is behind you. And you have a parachute behind the both of you. And you are told that you need to run towards the edge of a cliff. And you need to run off the edge of a cliff as fast as you can. As you're approaching the edge of the cliff, they tell you to run faster because if you don't run fast enough, the parachute is not going to catch. So, it's this totally counterintuitive thing where you're running faster and faster and faster off the edge of a cliff, Kylah.

Kylah Williams: And that's why I said you need to have trust. Because truthfully, it is so scary. And it's not scary in a way that I'm deterring you from trying it, but it's an experience that you can only do if you do it. And so, yeah, they tell you to run, and when they say lift your legs and sit, you have to do that in order for the parachute to catch wind and lift up so that you're being taken over the city. And I think that's what's beautiful about paragliding in Medellin is because Medellin is one of those cities that is very much tall buildings, but it has a background of mountains.

And so, when we're doing the paragliding, you're paragliding off of those mountains over the city. So, you can see all of that. I remember just screaming, but not in like a scare screaming. It's like, oh, wow, I can't believe this. And I know I had a couple videos because you can, like, rent a GoPro and they can film the experience as well. And you can hear me saying, this is crazy, because those are the only words that could come out of my mouth. But they'll take you around that allow you to see sights. They're very calm. So, it's not anything where you're nervous and then you're nervous in the sky. Ultimately, I did feel safe, but again, I did also trust that my pilot was able to carry out this experience.

Matt Bowles: So here is the other thing. Okay. I went with some friends of mine, and some of my friends are into more, shall we say, adrenaline, action, adventure. Type of sporting experiences than I am. Okay? And so, the thing is that you can sort of design the type of experience that you want. So, when you get up there, you run off the cliff, your parachute catches and you're floating around. Some of my friends chose to have the pilot do aerial maneuvers where they're literally flipping upside down and doing these types of different aerial maneuvers up in the sky while they're there, because they like that thing. So, when they were doing that and they went first, I was like, y' all go first. I was talking to my pilot who spoke no English and my Espanol is not very good, but I was talking to my pilot in my broken Espanol and I was pointing at what they were doing and I was telling him, *para mi no tranquilo, tranquilo, tranquilo, tranquilo*.

And so, then he's like, okay, *no problema*. So, then we get up there and we're floating. And as you said, it is exceptionally peaceful. It's completely silent. You're just peacefully floating above this preposterously

gorgeous scenery. And then once he noticed that I was comfortable and I was enjoying it, all that kind of stuff, he goes, do you want to do a little bit of stuff? And I was like, *no tranquilo para mi tranquilo*. And he was like, okay. And so, he did, and he was very respectful of my request. And we floated around and the wind that day was such that you were actually able to float around for the period of time and then actually land in the same place that you took off from. And so, it was just a really beautiful and legitimately just tranquil and really spectacular experience. But be aware that there are different ways you can experience that.

Kylah Williams: It's true.

Matt Bowles: Based on your personal preferences, you can know that in advance and let them know how you want to experience that. Kylah, I also want to ask you about your experience in the Dominican Republic, which is a place that I have not yet been to. I have so many Dominican friends and it's just ridiculous that I haven't been there yet. It's super high on my list. But what was your experience like in the DR?

Kylah Williams: I also did a solo trip to the DR. This was part of my Caribbean adventures. And I stayed in Santo Domingo. But when I travel, I like to walk. I like to leave my place and just walk. So, I remember going on a two hour walk to this big park in Santo Domingo and I just maneuvered the city as if I knew I was meant to be there. And I do also have the skill of speaking Spanish, which has helped me tremendously. But I think that just allowing myself to be allowed me to have a beautiful experience.

And when I was in the Dominican Republic, I found this tour on Airbnb experiences. It was this lady who was taking people around her Dominican hood. I've also seen some backlash on people having Americans visit those places to exploit them. But I feel like when you have locals that are bringing you into their home, whether it's for the monetary benefits or for the exposure, I felt like it was an amazing experience for me to see the different ways that people are living. And she spoke a lot about how colorism still very much exists in the DR. And how a lot of the Haitian people have come to the doctor and aren't getting the same treatment and even showed us some divides between Dominicans and Haitians because of some of those very much still rooted racism that exists in the country.

And I wouldn't have been able to learn that firsthand had I not had that experience. But I also met in a wonderful group of ladies who were also just traveling, wanting to know more and learn more, who followed me on [TikTok](#), which was really crazy. When I walked up, they were like, Ollie. And I was like, wait, in the Dominican Republic? This is crazy. But yeah, Gloria was her name. She welcomed us to her home. We had a home cooked meal. There's this fermented drink that they have in the Dominican Republic that's called Mama Juana and it usually sits for a long time with some type of not herb, but roots in it. And it eventually gives you the effects that alcohol might have. But it's a spiced alcoholic beverage that is made through fermentation and similar to wine, I guess over time it gets sweeter and they use that out like a way of keepsake for people to take. They'll give you a little bottle for you to take with you. Let it sit in a cabinet wherever you are. But Gloria, who was our host of this experience, let her us try some that she has had sitting in her house for years. And it was so good.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask you about your trip to Cuba, which is another place I have not yet been. That is incredibly high on my list. And when I was looking at your [Instagram](#) post about your Cuba trip, one of the things you wrote that really stood out to me. You said, "I decided not to buy a data plan for

this trip so I could disconnect, giving me no option but to rely on others who in turn made me feel so connected.” Can you share some of those moments of human connection that you remember in Cuba?

Kylah Williams: Yeah, there were a couple. There was one where I had gone to this restaurant. Everyone was raving about this restaurant that people should try if they come to Cuba. And so, I had gone, and I did not have enough cash. So, I had enough cash. But if you go to Cuba, they like the crisp bills. So, if your bills aren't crisp, they might turn them away. And that's kind of what happened to me. And I was unable to take money out from the atm. And so, I remember having to ask. And you can't pay with card, so I remember having to talk to the security at the place and just be, hey, do you think that you could come with me to the bank, try to take out money? Or maybe I can, like, send you money. And it was just this whole exchange of back and forth where ultimately, I was unable to take money out. He in turn, paid for my meal. And in the same breath, he was also like, if you'd like to go out another night, I would love to experience nightlife with you in Cuba.

And these are moments where, again, I just trusted myself because it ended up being such a great connection that I formed with this person because I trusted him to help me in the situation, who also had to help me get home because I, again, I had no data plan, no maps. So, I remember, like, walking and just having to check in, like, hey, can I use your maps to tell me where I'm going? Getting to a park, being like, hey, can I use your maps to kind of just make sure I'm going on the right way, getting to the next waterfront? Hey, do you think I can use your just really asking people to help me and them being very open and no silly business happening or reasons for me to feel unsafe. That was one experience.

I also remember I was out one night; they have tricycles also in Cuba. And that was a way to get around. And I was just kind of like having a conversation with one of the drivers of that tricycle. And he opened up to me about how he does this for a living, to make money for his family, because while they might not seem to have a lot in Cuba, they're happy because of the people that are surrounding them. They're happy because of the energy, things they don't have to worry about because of a lack of exposure and ability to get things into the country that have made them grateful for situations that they are currently in. And I think just those moments of connection meant so much to me, because usually I could spend that time talking to someone else on my phone, or I could spend that time scrolling on Instagram or just letting time pass by because I'm uncomfortable, because I'm scared, because I'm shy.

But in reality, just allowing myself to talk, be present and connect allowed me to have much stronger takeaways than I would have if I was an iPad kid or, you know, like someone who was very much just on my phone, not really trying to take in the moment. But it happened so much, and I'm grateful for it. I'm not saying I advise everyone to go to Cuba without a data plan, especially if you don't have other skills that can help you get around, like street skills. But at the same time, I think it was the best decision I could have made because I would visit Cuba again in a heartbeat. And people, whenever I say that are like, really? And I'm like, absolutely, because I had such a good time just connecting with the people there.

Matt Bowles: Are there other moments from your travels in other countries that you can remember where connecting with a particular local person really changed and fundamentally shaped your experience with that place?

Kylah Williams: Guatemala. 100% Guatemala. I visited Lake Atitlan with a friend, and we had the privilege of being able to have a personal chef that was making us meals every day. This personal chef was a lady who lived in a town nearby, would outsource all her resources, go to the mercado every day to get the

resources that she needed to make us food. And because I could speak the language and talk to her, we would just talk. She would be making the food. And usually when it's moments like that, it's like a privilege thing where it's like they might be cooking, you might just be out enjoying the views, which we did sometimes. But I think the other side of it was being able to just hear about her, hear about her family connected on Facebook. She'll message me to this day like, hey, how's it going? Just wondering if you're coming back to Guatemala anytime soon. And I think those moments make my heart so warm because it reminds me of a time when human connection was the value in life. That's what people really wanted.

And just knowing how deep you can get with someone by being able to hear their stories and listen to them and exchange your stories too. So, I think Guatemala was one of those places for me. And I also met when we went to a hike. It was the Naris del Indio hike. Our driver, he was a local Guatemalan, Guatemalteco. And we had such an intimate, vulnerable conversation about the politics and the state of Guatemala and the region and how the people are operating on survival mode, but they're also just grateful for what they have. And he talked to me about his kids and his family, and I remember taking a picture with him because we built a bond. It was like a great transfer of information from experiences that we both have that we could relate to. Especially as a minority in the United States who still has to deal with things. It's like being able to relate to someone who's also a minority. Well, they're not necessarily a minority in Guatemala, but are perceived as a minority in terms of the class of the country that they're from and those similar struggles that I think humanizes us and allows us to connect. So, I love having conversations.

Matt Bowles: Have you had other experiences like that as a black traveler around the world, connecting with other folks in other countries who are marginalized in their own homelands?

Kylah Williams: I would say I do often a lot of the places that I have been have been Spanish speaking in Latin America. So, me going to these places, I'm excited to talk to people because that's a way for me to practice my Spanish, also being able to understand. So, I think these conversations sometimes happen less planned. The intention isn't to learn about someone's history and all that they've been through, but I think that they're allowed to unfold in that way because we can understand each other. I would 100% say I have these conversations a lot because in English, I'm an inquisitive person. Our qualitative data is my forte. Talking to people, getting to know them, what drives them, motivations, all those things. So, seeing that kind of like translate to my travels and when I'm meeting new people, I feel like is the same type of beat. I want to get to know people. And that's what traveling is all about. And I'm sure you can relate. Many people can relate who experience life that way 100%.

Matt Bowles: And have you been able to connect with, for example, black communities in some of these countries that you go to and understand the Afro-Colombian experience in Colombia and so forth?

Kylah Williams: You know what, I will say that that is an area that I am excited to step into. For me, initially, it was just being able to get by and get through. And I think I've seen a lot more content from [Eileen Ivette](#), [Nicole Phillip](#), who have done a lot of work in Afro Latino communities and trying to unpack the history of these communities and these people that have sparked an interest in me to be like, you know what, this is the next step for me. I know that I can have the conversations now. Let's connect with people who look like me and be able to tell more stories of those people authentically. So, I'm definitely inspired. I will say in Mexico City, I have been able to interact with black communities. They weren't Afro Latino necessarily, but they were from the diaspora, all over the diaspora. And I think that was like a start. But I have such a passion for meeting more Spanish speaking black people. So definitely a passion. People who are doing the work. I commend you. I love it. Thank you. But I think that that's the next step for me.

Matt Bowles: Well, big shout out to [Nicole Phillip](#) and [Eileen Ivette](#), both of course, who have been on The Maverick Show. So Maverick Show listeners know them. If you haven't heard those episodes, we'll link them up in [the show notes](#) for this one as well. Highly recommend.

Kylah, I do want to ask you a little bit about building your social media platform and how you started putting out travel content and language learning content and sort of merging those two things and building your audience. Can you talk about that bilingual chick and how you have built that platform?

Kylah Williams: Yeah, "That bilingual chick" came alive when I was in D.C. I think being such a studious girl, working, also managing like three jobs because I had to make ends meet. I was also ready and, in a place, where it was time for me to show up as my authentic self. And my grad school year, I was like, let me just do it. For the longest time my brand was Kylah Williams, which is my name. And eventually I started to realize that this is a part of me that not a lot of people have gotten to know. And so, I rebranded to that bilingual chick and have been that bilingual chick ever since. And started off just telling honestly, if you've been around from the beginning, I used to do poems in Spanish and then unpack them. And then I started talking about life in Spanish.

Every once in a while, I do a Spanish segment of a video just capturing whatever was going on in my life. And then I got into Spanish slang because in English I love using some slang. So, I remember I had gotten my hair done and I was walking down the street and I was like, *Está dando*, it's giving. And that video went viral. And I think that that was another confirmation of, okay, people are interested because people like to talk just like me, you know, and not just talk just like me in English, but they also want to be able to express themselves in Spanish. And so, it identified a little gap that I feel like I've been trying to merge is just being the person that I wish that I saw growing up and learning Spanish, where I encourage people to not be shy about it, despite what level they're at, because I haven't always been at this level, and I'm still growing. It's not until I showed up for myself more that I got more confident in speaking.

So, I want to be that face where people who are learning another language know that it's different, know that maybe not everyone's doing it, recognize that it's awkward. It is awkward when you're speaking broken whatever language you're speaking, because you're still learning. And know that it's okay because at some point you can get to a level where you're combining your business in Spanish and doing the dang thing. So, I think that that's kind of where the inspiration comes from, especially in the diaspora, I'm going to say, because not just African Americans, even though that's my background, but in the black community, you know, there was a point where we weren't allowed to read and write. So, to be able to learn more languages and connect with more people, I think that that is something that I 100% push for, vouch for, stand for, and will always represent, especially because I lived it. So, I think that's where my brand is and how I want to continue to connect with learners every day.

Matt Bowles: Can you share some language learning tips? Either language learning through travel or just language learning at home, wherever people may be, especially for people who feel like languages are hard for them or they're not naturally good at languages because they didn't do good in their high school language class, and it wasn't something that really struck their passion. What language learning tips can you offer for people who would like to be better at speaking foreign languages?

Kylah Williams: My first thing is a perspective shift. Languages are learned. Obviously, there are some cultural things that make languages more innate to a certain person than other people. But I think that if people understand that languages are learned can definitely help you along your journey. When I started

the analogy of putting learning a language like getting your dream body, I think that resonated with people because it's like you don't just decide, one day I want to look like that, and the next day you look like that. It's a series of eating right, working out, training your muscles, resting your muscles, training them in different ways, doing different exercises that allow you to reach that goal over time. It does not happen overnight, but overtime that allows you to get to a level of Spanish or fitness or even in the kitchen cooking. A level of a culinary experience. With languages, you take it slow.

If you're recognizable, kind of learner, you are auditory if you like to listen, visual if you like to see, experiential, if you like being immersed real time and then kind of go from there. I think that experiential is probably the most effective because you have no other choice. You decide, oh, I'm going to go to Colombia. It's like, okay, and what are you going to do in Colombia? Just stand around? No, you're going to have to pick up some Spanish and start learning. So that forces you right off the bat. But there are small things. I do recommend duo lingo. I picked it back up and I have 100-day streak because I think it's one of those little reinforcements every day that helps you remember certain things. I have conversations with myself in the mirror sometimes, or when I'm cooking or when I'm on my walks, just in Spanish, allowing the words that I'm learning to flow, thoughts to flow in a cohesive way, and finding people to talk to. Following bilingual creators, not even bilingual. You could follow strictly Spanish speaking creators, watch Spanish speaking show, listen to Spanish speaking music. That will get you into that fully immersive headspace to where you're not forcing yourself to do it. It's just kind of happening around you. And I think that honestly could be the key for many people who are starting. It doesn't have to be a lifestyle change. It's just small things every day that make a big difference.

Matt Bowles: And I feel like also if there's a real, actual, real life use case that you personally are going to be able to use this like you said, if you're planning a trip to Colombia or somebody's going to join your 2027 trip to Peru and they want to get their Spanish up to a particular place by the time of this trip because they want to use it on this trip. That's a really awesome goal to have. And now you're really motivated to learn it for a particular reason because there's a use case, an end goal. And then when you're actually in the place where people speak the language, it just feels for me anyways, right. And I'm not anywhere close to fluent in these languages, but I travel around the different places and I try to get my language up to a certain level where I can have some at least basic correspondence with people that live there.

And I feel like when I do that, it was just so rewarding. Rewarding. There's just such a level of connection with local folks that do not speak English oftentimes. And if you can communicate with them in their language, it's just such a rewarding feeling of cultural immersion that for me, it's just so worth it to make the effort to get my language skills up to a particular level, wherever I'm going to be for an extended period, and then be able to interact locally with that. And that's just an incredibly different feeling than studying a textbook and taking a test and recounting vocabulary and that kind of stuff. Whereas if you're actually out and you're interacting with local people, it just feels so different, right?

Kylah Williams: It feels rewarding as the perfect word because there are times when I will randomly remember a conjugation and it flows perfectly that I'm like, wow, all of that work that went into it, for that to come out the way it did is just an amazing feeling. Or when people validate, they're like, whoa, your Spanish was so good. Or when I went to the Philippines, I learned a couple of things in Tagalog and it's just thanks. I sound so small and little, but thanks because it means a lot. I know that I don't have the full vocabulary, but to at least be recognized for a little bit that you do know the fact that you're trying goes a long way. Such a long way.

Matt Bowles: A long way. And for people that would like, like to be part of a community of language learners who are also interested in travel, you are starting the [Convo Club](#). Can you talk about what that is, what it's going to be like to be part of that community and how people can learn more?

Kylah Williams: Yeah. So, [Convo Club](#) is something that I want to launch by the end of this year. And the goal is to get language learners to come together to talk about different topics every week. So, these will be mostly one on one type of interactions with me. But also, I want to have bi-weekly meetups where people who have been in those sessions can come and just talk freely. For example, I watched *Love Is Blind* in Spanish. And so, we can just come in and *chisme* about everything. *Love Is Blind* in Spanish. What you learned about Mexican Spanish, because it was based in Mexico City. What you learned about Mexican Spanish, mannerisms, culture, also books. I don't know if anyone has read *The Alchemist*, but there's also [L'alchimista](#), which is right in Spanish. So, if you've read the English version and you're just trying to work on your comprehension, it's a place for you to be able to talk through words that are in the book or just ways that sentences are structured for you to be able to have the conversations.

And then music, I think music, as we saw with the *Bad Bunny*, super bowl, the Benito Ball who was playing, it was just a way for people to unite. And also, I know a lot of the videos that I had made for leading up to translating those songs went viral because people just wanted to know what was being said. So, it's a space for language learners to come together, talk amongst each other, talk with me, learn, and just build their confidence speaking. Because I think that is one of the biggest gaps that you guys have told me or my audience has told me and shared with me is that they just need people to talk and practice with. And so, I want to be that person. And I want people who are in the community to also serve as resources for other people that are learning.

Matt Bowles: Kylah, when you think back now about all of the travel that you have done, how do you think all of this travel has impacted you as a person?

Kylah Williams: Oh, my goodness. I feel like it has made me so well rounded. I think that my ability to connect with people that are coming from all walks of life has been improved. I think with people, if I would have stayed in California my whole life, I might only know one way of being. But I think having been exposed to so many different people with different cultures, different things that they consider normal, has allowed me to see that my way isn't always the only way. And I think that has made me well rounded, I think is the best way that I can say it, because I feel you can put me in any space and I'll find a way to connect with you. It might take a little time, but I can find a way to connect with you because I have a better grasp on how people move, think, and not collectively, but individually.

Matt Bowles: Can you share a little bit more about what you mentioned about finding community abroad and connecting with other Black diaspora travelers who are out here moving through the world? And any tips you might have for black travelers in particular who are at the earlier stage of their travel journey?

Kylah Williams: Facebook groups and WhatsApp groups. That is such a strong way for you to find those particular groups online before you land in whatever country you might be going to. In Mexico City, when I was there, there was a group called Black in Mexico. So, it's very much in the name what you're going to get out of the group chat. And I felt like that was the perfect place for me to connect with people from across the diaspora because everyone was coming in there seeking a sense of community. I've seen the same thing in Portugal. I've seen a black in Portugal, I've seen black in Colombia, I've seen black even more specific than just the country, but black in Cancun, but just in more specific regions throughout different

countries that have communities there. So, when you're looking, if you search in those keywords, I'm sure you'll find something because I have and it's been great to be able to feel connected before even arriving.

Matt Bowles: Kylah, let me ask you one more question and then we'll wrap this up and move into *The Lightning Round*. Why are you at this point in your journey so passionate about continuing to travel? What does travel mean to you today?

Kylah Williams: Travel to me is learning. Travel to me scratches a curiosity in real life that I feel allows me to get to know people that are different than me. I think when I went to the Philippines it really showed me that I know I've been stuck in my bubble of Spanish speaking countries, but outside of that I was still able to find similarities and differences across a whole different group of people that I think I want to know more about. There are so many places in the world to see and there's no reason for me to stick to what I've already seen. You know, there's still so much for me to see and I want more exposure. I want to know how people live. I want to know what makes people tick. I want to know what drives people.

I feel like I want to learn more about the people around me, the world around me, because as we know, the United States has become a melting pot and it's not like these places that I visit. I'm never going to see people that look like them again. I might run into them. And now I have a way to connect. And I know it's always so cliché when it's like, oh, I've been here. You're from Uzbekistan. Oh, I've been Uzbekistan. You know, just so it was super random, but it, and it's an example, but that's just a way for you to have an instant connection with someone that you just met. And I think you wouldn't have that if you didn't allow yourself to travel and see it. So being open to travel is never going to change for me. And I'm so, so grateful for the experiences that I had early on that really open those doors, because I cannot imagine a life had those doors not been open.

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

Kylah Williams: I think I am.

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

Kylah Williams: I would be cliché and say [The Alchemist](#) because I do feel like that reflects or mirrors my life. But I'm also going to recommend [The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry](#). As someone who was constantly busy and, on the go, the book has reminded me to slow down, appreciate stillness, the quiet moments and know that it's okay to breathe. You know, we live in such a rat race type of world in the United States. Sometimes that but slowing down, listening to your thoughts is good. So, I'm still working my way through that one, but I highly recommend it so far because it's allowed me to see a different version of myself that's not always on the go, but that's allowed to still appreciate travel, but slowly.

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

Kylah Williams: Issa Rae. I feel like I love Issa Rae and the brand that she's built for herself around being her authentic self. And she speaks a little Español, so that's obviously a draw. But absolutely love this show. Insecure. She wrote, produced and starred in it. And I feel like just picking her brain because we both have like similar goofy, silly mannerisms. Would be an amazing conversation over dinner. I would definitely love to link up with her. So, if you're listening to this Issa, if you ever get to hear this, like the riskiest said.

Matt Bowles: That would be an amazing dinner. All right, if you could go back in time, knowing everything that you know now and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Kylah?

Kylah Williams: Own it.

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

Kylah Williams: South Africa. Absolutely loved South Africa. The Philippines and I'm going to say Peru. Peru is my Latin America plug because we talked a lot about it, but it's worth a visit.

Matt Bowles: Well, we didn't talk a lot about South Africa. What about that country was so impactful for you?

Kylah Williams: I think it was the first time that I had been to the continent of Africa and I haven't been one to do my ancestry or really connect the dots with my roots. And I feel like for me it was an empowering experience being able to feel grounded in a continent that I resonate so much. Well, it was a country, but as a whole a continent of Africa that I resonate so much to and attribute so much of my history and culture to. And so I think being able to step foot scratched the itch for me. And while it might not have only just been South Africa because of its views, the food, the people, the music, the environment, just the sense of belonging that I felt there, that definitely contributed to me wanting to see more. So, if we talked later and I have been to more countries in Africa, that answer could change. But I say South Africa because it was my intro.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, last question. Kylah, what are your top three bucket list destinations, places you have not yet been highest on your list that you'd most love to see?

Kylah Williams: Tokyo, Japan. I must experience the Mario Kart in Tokyo, Japan, the Ramen in Tokyo, Japan. And I think there was some rice fields that I saw one of my friends had visited in Tokyo, Japan. That's number one. I say Turkey, Cappadocia again, it's more like experiences too that allow me to unfold. But Cappadocia, the hot air balloons there. And the third one would be, I'm going to say the Maldives, that typically go for cultural immersion. I feel like the Maldives would provide me the place to kick my feet up and relax. A little different than the pace of travel that I do now. And it's always been somewhere that I wanted to see, so I'm going to go with that one.

Matt Bowles: All right, Kylah, at this point I want you to let folks know how they can find you, follow you on social media, connect with you, and also let folks know how they can plug in and learn more about the [Convo Club](#) and about your upcoming trip to Peru.

Kylah Williams: Yes, so I am @thatbilingualchick across all platforms, [TikTok](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) bonus view, which is like an exclusive listening only platform for you guys. And I have all my links linked in my bio. If you want to join the [Convo Club](#), I have a wait list that I'm currently taking names for. So, when I do open those doors, the people that are in there will be the first to find out. And in terms of my upcoming trip to Peru, I will also be linking that in my bio and if you are subscribed to my mailing list, wait list, combo club list you will be able to be the first to go ahead and book that spot when those doors open. So that is me. That is who I am, and that's where you can find me.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. We are also going to link all of that up in [the show notes](#). So you can just go to one place at [themaverickshow.com](#) go to [the show notes](#) for this episode, and there you will find direct links to everything we have discussed on this episode, including all the ways to find, follow and connect with Kylah and come into her world, which is an amazing world to be a part of.

Kylah, this was such a special conversation. Thank you so much for coming on the show.

Kylah Williams: Thank you so much for having me. It was so nice talking with you, Matt and I look forward to continuing our conversations.

Matt Bowles: All right, good night, everybody.