

Traveling While Black: The ABC Travel Green Book | TIS Ep. 24



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NB. This transcript was generated automatically and uses British spelling

Hi, I'm Sharon, and I'm Lisa, and together, we're the Introvert Sisters. Welcome to our podcast.

What's happening with you - Introverts Uniting Separately - let's jump right in.

Well, the most interesting thing that has happened is that our female PM whom we love - we love and adore- has laid out plan for the future of the country, getting people back to work post Corona, revitalising the tourism industry, getting more people to take up the Barbados welcome stamp - in case y'all didn't know people are now allowed to apply to come and work from the island for a year. After completing the necessary quarantine and paying the requisite fee. They had 1000, they had 1000 applications in the first week and they've had more since. Anyway, Barbados is going to become a republic.

Official, official like it's really happening?

This is official, official like it's really happening, although you know it's been really happening a couple of times before but I think she means it. It's been really happening before to the point where they actually had plans in place for how it could happen. They had, you know, they have a programme that she said that we can basically dust off and see if it's still relevant. Right. Because, for those who don't know, Barbados is a former British colony, which became independent in 1966, and officially the Queen is the head of state, which applies to many former colonies. You know even places like Canada and Australia. Okay.

So, I don't think a lot of people know that.

A lot of people don't know that. In fact I think Canada is one of the few countries in the world, is one of the only other countries in the world that actually has the Queen on their currency. Right, well, right. So, the thing about this is that, you know, Barbados in particular has always had this reputation of being Little England, very, very very English, and there have always been mixed feelings about this whole republic plan. I, but I do think that as our PM put it, you know, we're ready to go it alone. It doesn't mean, it doesn't mean that you're not going to still be in the Commonwealth. It doesn't mean you're still not going to have ties with the UK, it really, it really is almost like a paper exercise that says, Okay we are fully, fully independent now.

My question is, I'm a big fan of Mia's. But, politicians will politic. And so my question is why now in the middle of 2020 of all years, you know, pandemic here and the world is falling apart and the orange one may get voted back and all that stuff is going on. Right. Why, why now, like why not next year? I mean it's already waited this long, why not wait a bit longer. Is there some, what is being gained by doing it right now in the middle of....

Well, your guess is as good as mine, Sis.

You're like a political analyst right?

Your guess is as good as mine. I actually have no idea why now. Although I will say that, you know, she's one of these, she's not an ivory tower PM. Okay. Prime Minister, she walks around, she meets people, even after she became elected, you know, so I'm wondering whether she has kind of taken the temperature and feels that the time is ripe for a change and she's going to be the one to drive it through.

I wonder, well I mean she also, you know, again politicians will politic, and one must tend carefully to one's legacy.

I think I think steering your country through a pandemic with no community spread counts as part of your legacy though.

Oh no. No, that wasn't, that wasn't. Okay, I 100% agree. You know that, but the legacy must be multifaceted.

I, I don't know about the timing. I do trust her brains.

They are amazing yes right.

So I feel like there's probably some good reason for it but we may not yet be aware of it. All right. Okay. And so far, she has proved trustworthy and I will continue to trust her. Honestly, I don't know that I mind, one way or another, I remember when it last came up, which I think was 20-30 years ago I thought, why, why, you know, why bother. you know, and now I think. Okay, fine.

So what's, what's the chatter been like on Facebook and in the twitterverse and so on, like,

Split. There's the "Why are we doing this in the middle of a pandemic" viewpoint. There's the "time for us to cut the apron strings and go it alone" viewpoint. And there's the "I don't think it's actually going to change much other than on paper" viewpoint. And depending on which social media feed you dip into or which time you might see any or all of those viewpoints.

And one thing I worry about, and I'm going to expose my ignorance here: is Guyana a republic?

Guyana might well be a republic. Yes. I think Guyana is a republic

But anyway, yeah okay so I mentioned I mentioned those two because you know that my recollection is that they took a hit fiscally, you know economically and so on, and so that that is a little bit of a red flag for me. You know currencies have been devalued, you know, there's been all kinds of fallout and so I wonder.

I don't know that they are related to becoming a republic unless there are costs to that that I am not aware of.

Okay, I am not you know I'm not, you know, Peter Wickham, you know, I'm not one of those people

yes yes,

I don't claim to have that level of understanding; it was just an association my mind I wanted to.... Yeah, that's right.

Yeah, I think they were affected by other things. Okay, because it's not like you know we're not colonies. So we're not getting funded overtly by the UK.

Right, okay.

The only thing that would occur to me, and I again I don't know because the Governor General acts as the Queen's representative maybe her office is funded by the UK,

Her wardrobe is funded by the UK.

I think she's taking a leaf out of our Liz's book, you know, There's definitely a certain sort of queenliness going on there, definitely, definitely, definitely. But yeah, so

So, I mean, other than that I don't know what it will change. Yeah. Anyway, I will watch with interest. Apparently we are going to become a republic by 2021 so let's see what happens.

So, um, that's a big change a big another big 2020 change

Have you got anything, how do you like my segue? I'm queuing up yeah yeah segue - and other big changes that are occurring and language has changed. Oh yeah, language has changed. Yeah. Since we're sort words are our thing both of us, but I think you'll skew a little more heavily miss Scrabble champion. I will never play Scrabble, by the way, ever.

No, no?

no, first of all I you know i don't think it's my thing. I think I turned myself off it because I realised, you know, when we were very young I would be crushed to smithereens. And I was like, this is probably not going to be good. I was a child. Yeah. But yes, but side note, so yeah, you are so into words. And so I've turned this over to you.

Yes yes yes yes, as Dictionary.com put it, 2020 has changed, language. So there are all kinds of new words: deadnaming. You know deadnaming - calling a transgender person by their birth name instead of the name they have adopted - gender inclusive needs no explanation. And the one that particularly resonates with us, Black with a capital B.

So here's,

here's what dictionary.com says about it. It says "the change "confers the due dignity to the shared identity, culture, and history of Black people," and "aligns with the practice of using initial capital letters for many other ethnic groups and national identities."

So they put some respect on this Black

Yes.

So, I'm a big fan I'm a big fan.

Yes, me too. So why are you a big fan?

It's about time. It's been too long, and language does matter. And, you know, although although we were kind of joking just know when we said you know they put some respect on it, that is actually, the initial cap is a visual marker of adding respect to Black people's identities and we, we obviously, we all know, we as an ethnicity, we have, generally speaking, been disrespected, disenfranchised, just generally, just generally dissed so this is this is a linguistic move in the right direction of the general global movement that is, and recalibration, that's happening right now so I am in full support.

Absolutely. Absolutely. I cosign everything that you just said. I think that it is important for us as Black people to see that visible sign of additional respect because you know, goodness knows there are many arenas in which we don't get it.

Yeah, because because the lowercase b signifies minoritization, literally signifies that yes so again. Exactly.

Yes, because let us let us not forget that, you know, Black and brown people are people of the global majority. Okay, we are indeed we are, you know, there will be fewer of us in some areas than others, but as a population. We are the majority population. Now that's a slight segue. But I say that to say that it is important to have that recognition. You know it is important to signal that shared identity. Yes, with the capital B. That's how I feel about it. I feel about it. Yes. Okay. But of course, that is not the only major change to have happened,

Ohh, really what other changes have there been?

believe it or not Merriam Webster has redefined the meaning of racism. Okay.

Yeah. Okay, so how did this... That sounds like a bigger change than capitalising the B in Black, like how did that come about,

Kennedy Mitchum age 22 wrote to the editors to say that the dictionary definition needed to be expanded to include systemic racism and the editors agreed. So let me, let be, let me give you an example of what that changed

I was about to ask like what was the definition that made her have that reaction.

Okay, so the old definition was racism is "A belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race." Okay, okay. But the new definition.

So my reaction ...I can see now that I'm actually reading it, because I never actually, you know until very recently, yeah, went and looked up definitions of racism. Yeah, it's so interesting because like nobody has the same definition,

no that's that's a whole nother story right,

that's a whole nother story, but by phrasig this and couching it as, you know, a belief. Yes, that one, that one race appear, it kind of sounds like if each individual person, individual people might may or may not have this belief. So I can see where additional nuance was needed.

Definitely, definitely, definitely needed because as we all know, you know it's not just like that.

It's not just like no I believe you're, you know, a white person or non POC saying, well, I just believe that I'm better than you are, because that was all it was and they okay fine you believe what you want. Yeah. There's much more to it and much more to it

so okay so the new definition has three parts. First, "a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race" - very similar to before. Next, "the systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another."

And then,

all right, Miss Kennedy Mitchum you did your thing

“a political or social system founded on racism and designed to execute its principles”, bam, bam,

right so actually the systemic the systemic portion is, yes, high level.

Yeah, it is it is it's very it's very nuanced. Right, it actually, it, it says more about what racism is and how it operates. So you know, as a Black woman I'm very happy to see that additional definition being out there. You know, if I were really picky I would like to see the systemic bit at the top, but you know, I'll take what I can get, right.

Yeah, it's gonna get there,

it is going to get there but it but it does better reflect the way in which systemic racism operates. It does better reflect the endemic nature of it. Yes, it does reflect the constant building blocks of racism that keep being dropped on Black people.

Oh wow.

All right, sorry you're gonna say something.

Let me see here the former definition. I believe that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities, and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race, um, you know some let's say a child you know in middle school, high school, whatever, looking at that is going to think okay well I don't believe that. And be done. Yeah, yeah, and be done. Absolving themselves of any deeper inquiry, of any responsibility.

Exactly.

I think that's why white people and some non Black POC have such a strong reaction to being called racist

Stronger than actually calling out racism. But anyway,

have a strong reaction to being called racist because they feel like it is an attack on them. Yes, not realising that racism is systemic. Exactly, yes so I could see where the old definition definitely needed to be to be updated and revised and again this is all part, you know the capitalization of the B in Black, the redefinition of the word racism, all of this, all of this is coming out of George Floyd.

All of this is coming out of George Floyd, all of this is coming out of the new civil rights movement. Civil Rights Movement, you know, that's what's happening that is that is what I believe is happening I think when you know when we look back on 2020, among many other things that we will look back on 2020 fo, you know, the murder of George Floyd, and the movement that that sparked or reignited, because it's not it's never really gone away. It's never really gone away. It's been sort of trundling along, but it definitely reignited renewed interest in equity and justice for Black and brown people. Yeah, and for other disenfranchised groups, as well

as because there are

there are many. There are many there are many, many to mention but you know

Yeah, indigenous groups.

You know we have to tell you, the aborigines in Australia.

They got a raw deal boy.

They have it just as bad if not in some cases worse.

Although, I was very happy earlier this year to see that Australia Supreme Court threw out a case which was trying to get an aborigine deported for some crime or other and and and the judge basically ruled that you know he was there first, you can't deport him. You know, exactly. So yes. Okay, so that is that on that for now. I'm sure I'm sure we'll come back to it. And so let us go to, in our world. Our main topic

Lisa, will you kick this off please.

I will indeed. So what we're going to talk about now is travelling while Black. Yeah. Well, well okay first of all let's talk about travelling period because, who is travelling right now anyway. Nobody, I certainly I certainly have zero intention of getting on a plane for a while, but I think you and I discussed and maybe it was maybe a couple episodes back that travel is something that we both love. Yes, and have been doing since we were children, and post post pandemic whatever that might be. We would definitely like to get back to travelling more yes shopping more regularly. So, you know, and while Black is one of our favourite phrases like you have an entire series. Oh yes. Writing your While Black series you know we've done on this show we've done introverted While Black,

So again today we're doing travelling while Black. And you, you actually wrote an article, kind of about, about this topic. Oh, while ago about I think you focused on it was business travel,

it was business travel that's correct

and the fact that you know you as a Black woman as a Black traveller, you have to raise your game in terms of your appearance and attitude. In order to make sure that you know you don't get more than the minimum amount of stoppage. Right. Basically to put it in a nutshell,

to put it in a nutshell I mean it's like code switching. But specifically

as relates to travel. Absolutely, absolutely. you know,

so a lot of us. Some people, you know don't don't make any adjustments, but a lot of Black people and people of colour do we actually do.

Yes we do.

Yeah. Yes we do. And yeah you know you change your change maybe you change your tone of voice. Some people go as far as to change their accent, the, you know, some of us change our mode of dress, etc etc. all of which is to say for our non-POC listeners, is that racism - this is tying it all together - because racism, again, it's just chemical it affects every part of life. And so, what non Black and indigenous people of colour experience is very different when travelling. Absolutely. As in when just going through life is very different from what like you will experience. Right, yeah. And so, you know, we have we definitely have to make adjustments and dating back to the Jim Crow era. Yes, there was. Actually, it was basically called a Green Book. Mm hmm. Right. Yes, and to put it very simply, it was identifying here are some Black owned, some some Black owned locations hotels, etc restaurants etc where it's safe, that you can that you can enjoy but the deeper side of it was here's where you won't get killed. Yes. Yes. Here's where you want yeah here's what you won't get harassed here's where you won't get profiled here's where you won't get turned away.

It seems it seems actually very, very pertinent as that new show now focuses on sundown towns. Right. So, so, you know, the fact is that there were places that you could go, if you made the mistake of going to certain places, you would not make it out alive The next day, you might not make it. Right, so it was it was it was needed. It was needed.

Yeah, it was absolutely needed. And so, um, you know, like we said as a Black traveller it's hard to find one part of it is just finding experiences that resonate with you, finding places where you feel safe. And so there's a brand new there, like I said, there was a Green Book back in the Jim Crow era, yes a brand new, ABC Travel Green Book. It's a guide by Martinique Lewis. And, yeah, she of course she was inspired by Victor Hugo Green who was the original creator, author of the Green Book. And, yeah, so it's meant to be a resource for Black tourists globally so I'll just keep it simple, I'll just read a little blurb,

yes.

Okay, that'd be the easiest way

“THE #1 RESOURCE FOR BLACK TOURISTS GLOBALLY

In a world where our history was purposefully left out and sometimes even erased, the ABC Travel Green book helps travelers realize that people of the African Diaspora are everywhere! This resource can tell you things search engines can't! Yes, there are Black people in Yemen. Yes, there are Black people in Turkey. Yes, the next time you take a trip to Quito travel further up north and spend a day with the Afro-Ecuadorians also known as the Esmeraldas. Wan't your hair braided in South Korea? The ABC Travel Green book can help you. Are you interested in the Black history tour in Israel? The ABC Travel Green book has you covered. This resource was created to celebrate Black culture and serve our communities. The ABC Travel Green Book, connecting the African Diaspora globally from A-Z.”

So, I, I am a fan. When I do start travelling again. I am going to get a copy. Yes. Oh my gosh. I mean, because, you know, there you, you always go to places, and you kind of look around and you know sometimes you get a vibe and you say I don't know if I should be even walking down the street, you know, we've all been to those places, right.

So do you have any, any memories of, like, sort of like, just sketchy things that happened or were you ever like actually turned away from anywhere, or

you oh well actually, one thing that I wrote about was going to a small town in France, and sitting there, yammering away to my white friend and you know we'd been there for like two and a half, three hours before we realised we were never gonna get served.

Oh wow. Right.

And you and I, of course,

a long time.

Yeah, we had a lot to talk about.

You and I have been to places where the you know they stick us down in the back, because, you know, so, so I think in terms of places to eat. Those are the probably the worst experiences. I don't know, I don't recall ever being turned away from somewhere, it doesn't mean it doesn't didn't happen, it's just that, you know, you know, after you've been travelling for decades, it gets hard to remember every single experience. As you as as you've asked that question there's something sort of niggling away in my brain but I really can't bring it to bring it to the forefront. What about you,

do you know, I'm trying to remember I'm trying to remember if that has ever actually happened. I don't know what the only, I guess my worst travel experience that I can recall, is the being on a train somewhere in the middle of Italy. Obviously I was the only Black person. Right. some friends of mine, we're doing an el cheapo across Europe, yeah. Train thing. And I don't even remember which town I can't call it a city. It was an old town that we got to. And, you know, the train conductors, or whoever they were and police basically wanted to hold me, because, yeah. I literally I thought I thought I might not make it out of here because they let you know the Brits and Americans through fine. Look at my passport. You know, you know he called over the guy called over, you know some others come on, look at this, you know this bizarre document. I was travelling on a Barbados passport as I still do. But they didn't quite understand what Barbados was what it was, oh my god, see I guess I guess they thought for some reason that the passport was fake, and tried to try to, they had me there for a minute. They held me there for a minute,

You just reminded me. You just reminded me of an experience in Venezuela. A group of us were heading off to on a you know an overnight bus trip to another town. Out of Caracas, and so somewhere in the middle of the night in the middle of the hills. The, the bus got stopped for them to check passports. Now, back in those days. I travelled then as I do now on a British passport. But I had two passports with me because my old passport was the one that had the stamp that would let me back into Barbados. I used to keep them strapped together, you probably recall this.

Right, yeah.

And so these 16 year olds with guns. That's what they looked like, you know, they might have been 18 but let me tell you those soldiers were not old enough to shave. Okay. Right, stopped and had me come out. They didn't speak English, so it kept being passed up the chain. Yeah right and so eventually they realised that okay it was fine and I got back onto the bus had to walk down to my seat in the back while all the other passengers stared, because of course we had held up the bus. So yes, it can be scary.

It is it is terrifying, like, like mine mine happened it was like, I still remember, you know, like it was to two or three o'clock in the morning I can remember is clear clear clear Yes Right, right. It's almost like some bizarre movie you know and the only thing that was missing was it wasn't raining outside that was the only thing that was, you know, like there needed to be danger music and some rain and it would have been a movie.

Absolutely, absolutely. So, so I think it's not that you're not going to go other places, it's not that you're not going to go to a variety of places. I think it's useful to have a resource that says, Okay, here is where you can find people who look like you look and here are the places you're going to be safe, and here are the places to avoid at all costs if you're a Black woman travelling alone, because that is important too

Black women travelling alone, especially, I actually there's somebody that I used to follow on IG

And you know she's travelling alone, a guy like, she's an influencer, she had her camera and equipment with her and again, you know, kind of like made small talk. And long story short he ended up stalking her, and stalking her and attempting to rob her. You know, so these are things that happened, and I think that this the ABC Travel Green Book is going to help out.

Absolutely. How, like you said, help women travelling alone, Black women and women of colour travelling alone to avoid those kinds of situations, and you can never really safeguard everything. No, but if you if you start off, if you start off a bit, a bit further ahead by consulting something like this I think it makes a huge difference.

I think it's always wise to travel armed with information.

Absolutely. Right, absolutely. Yeah, I agree. So you know maybe what you and I should do is, you know, we should plan a trip based on based on this green book. And then like two years from now, a couple years from now when people can travel again yeah and and then you know you'll hear about it on this podcast.

Yes, right. And I think, on that note, that is where we're going to wrap it up for today. Thank you so much for listening. This has been a fun episode. I've really enjoyed it and I hope you have to. Bye.

Remember, Black with a capital B Black with a capital B.

Bye. Bye.